

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *Eusebeia* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_eusebeia.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_eusebeia.php)

# ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

BARRY HOWSON

John Gill was the doyen of 18<sup>th</sup> century Calvinistic Baptists who withstood the rising tide of such teachings as Unitarianism, Deism and Arminianism with his many published works including a systematic theology and biblical commentary. He was considered champion of the faith by many even outside the Particular Baptist fold.<sup>1</sup> When Andrew Fuller began his ministry in the same denomination shortly after Gill's death, it would only be natural in light of both English culture and Baptist esteem that Fuller would view Gill's theology as thoroughly sound, and in need of little to no revision. Consequently, to challenge Gill's theology in any area would be a risky undertaking. This, however, Fuller did, more indirectly than directly, in two very important areas of Gill's theology, soteriology and eschatology.

In this article it will be shown how Fuller read Gill on these two theological subjects. How did he disagree with Gill, and in what specific places did he disagree with him? How did he use Gill to support his position? There are twenty-six contextual references to Gill in *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller* published by Sprinkle Publications in three volumes.<sup>2</sup> This could indicate that he did not want to challenge Gill when it was unnecessary, or that he was his own thinker, reading and interpreting others like Gill but not enslaved to any one person, only to the scriptures. It is most likely some of both.

In order to understand how Fuller read Gill, his reading of Gill under the two theological topics of soteriology and eschatology will be exam-

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

ined, and will be concluded with some general observations. The area where Fuller disagreed with Gill's soteriology is what has come to be known as Hyper-Calvinism.<sup>3</sup> Fuller used this term to describe the theology of the past generation of Calvinistic Baptists which included Gill and John Brine. Fuller was in complete agreement with the Calvinism of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, with great admiration in particular for the Puritans. He, however, believed that the 18<sup>th</sup> century brand of Calvinism, espoused by Gill and Brine, was a departure from the past, and more importantly from Scripture. In three of his writings he addresses Hyper-Calvinism. The first was his detailed response to Hyper-Calvinism in *The Gospel Of Christ Worthy of all Acceptation* (1781). The other two writings were responses to two London Calvinistic Baptists who took issue with Fuller's *Gospel Worthy*, and wrote works challenging Fuller's soteriology and defending Hyper-Calvinism. Fuller's two responses to these two tracts were entitled, *A Defense of a Treatise, entitled, "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation", containing a Reply to Mr Button's Remarks and the Observations of Philanthropos* (1787), and remarks on Mr. Martin's Publication, entitled, *"Thoughts on the Duty of Man relative to Faith in Jesus Christ" in Five Letters to a Friend* (1788).<sup>4</sup>

Fuller's use of Gill in these three works can be categorized under two Hyper-Calvinist teachings: 1) it is the duty of the elect only to believe on Christ for salvation, which includes its logical corollary, that the gospel is not to be offered to all people indiscriminately; and 2) eternal justification. But first this article will survey Fuller's move from Hyper-Calvinism to evangelical Calvinism with an eye on his references to Gill.

## THE HISTORICAL SURVEY OF FULLER'S JOURNEY FROM HYPER-CALVINISM TO EVANGELICAL CALVINISM<sup>5</sup>

In the early 1770s Fuller had espoused the Hyper-Calvinism of his Pastor John Eve and those of the London Baptists like John Gill and John Brine.<sup>6</sup> In these years the principal writings that he read were those of Gill, Brine and Bunyan.<sup>7</sup> In fact, he read almost all of Gill's *Body of Divinity* and found considerable instruction from many parts.<sup>8</sup> No doubt in these early years he was in agreement with much of Gill's soteriology. However, in 1770 there was a dispute in his church in Soham between Pastor Eve and some of the congregation over the internal/external power of individuals to do the will of God. This began the young Fuller's foray into the issues surrounding Hyper-Calvinism. He notes that:

About this time [1771] I met with a passage in Dr. Gill, (I think it was in his *Cause of God and Truth*,) in which he distinguished between a thing being 'in the power of the hand, and in the power of our heart.' This, thought I, is the clue to our dispute. Every man has it in the power of his hand to do good and abstain from evil; and this it is which makes us accountable beings. We can do, or forbear to do, this and that, if we have a mind; but many have not a mind, and none would have such a mind but for the restraining goodness or constraining grace of God. We have in the power of our hands to do good, but we are disposed to do evil, and so to do good is not naturally in the power of our hearts.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, as he was reading Bunyan and Gill during these years, he "perceived... that the system of Bunyan was not the same with [Gill's]; for that while he [Bunyan] maintained the doctrines of election and predestination, he nevertheless held with the free offer of salvation to sinners without distinction."<sup>10</sup> Fuller could not reconcile the differences between Bunyan and Gill but supposed that Bunyan was not as clear in his views of the doctrines of the gospel as was Gill.<sup>11</sup>

In the Fall of 1775 Fuller read Abraham Taylor's pamphlet, *The Modern Question*, which challenged the Hyper-Calvinist teaching on duty-faith. Fuller says that he was not convinced by his arguments until he came to Taylor's presentation of the gospel call of spiritual repentance and faith to the ungodly by John the Baptist, Christ, and the apostles. He writes, "This set me fast. I read and examined the scripture passages, and the more I read and thought, the more I doubted the justice of my former views."<sup>12</sup> It was in the next year that he began to change his views from Hyper-Calvinism to what now has been called, Evangelical Calvinism. Probably the key that convinced him of the rationale of his new position came in 1777, two years after his call to the pastorate of Soham. He read Jonathan Edwards' *Freedom of the Will* and saw clearly the difference between physical and moral impotence. This was an extension of Fuller's thoughts prompted by Gill in 1771.

By 1781 Fuller was convinced that the Hyper-Calvinism of Gill and Brine did not have biblical warrant, and consequently, wrote *The Gospel of Christ Worthy of all Acceptation*. As Fuller went to press, he mentioned that he did so for the "Cause of God and Truth." This was obviously a conscious quotation taken from the title of Gill's famous Hyper-Calvinist treatise.<sup>13</sup> Was this a subtle swipe at Gill's Hyper-Calvinism, or simply

a wise use of a phrase to declare his orthodoxy?

Several London Calvinistic Baptist ministers took issue with Fuller's *Gospel Of Christ* and wrote responses.<sup>14</sup> The first was by William Button (1754–1821) who was pastor of Dean Street, Southwork from 1774 to 1813. Dean Street was a daughter church of Gill's Carter Lane church, and Button's father was a deacon in the church under Gill's ministry.<sup>15</sup> In 1785 Button responded to Fuller's publication with *Remarks on a Treatise entitled, The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*. Button took up the mantle of Gill, defending the Hyper-Calvinist teaching of Gill and Brine. Button did not hesitate to refer to Gill's writings on numerous occasions for support.<sup>16</sup> Button was a staunch defender of "duty faith" maintaining that commands do not always imply duty but that they may simply be an extraordinary exertion of divine power, or give direction or encouragement.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, in order to defend his Hyper-Calvinism Button made the distinction between natural and spiritual holiness, and legal and evangelical spirituality in order to show the incapacity of Adam and Eve for spiritual or evangelical duties. Consequently, Adam's sinful descendants are not under obligation to trust in Christ.<sup>18</sup>

The other treatise in response to the *Gospel Worthy* was from the pen of a former Baptist antagonist of Hyper-Calvinism turned protagonist, John Martin. Martin was the pastor of Grafton Street, Westminster from 1774, and there fell under the influence of the London Baptist Hyper-Calvinists, becoming a staunch defender of its teaching. He published a series of tracts from 1788–91 under the title, *Thoughts on the Duty of Man relative to Faith in Jesus Christ in which Mr. Andrew Fuller's Leading propositions on the subject are considered*. J. W. Morris, a contemporary of Fuller, called them a "ponderous load of polemics." Martin's *Thoughts* were more emotionally charged than reasonable arguments.<sup>19</sup> His main point would appear to be contained in his rhetorical question, "Will any man tell me, that it is my duty to do that without divine assistance, which I can only do with."<sup>20</sup> For Martin, faith was not a duty but a gift, whereas for Fuller it was both a gift and a duty. This was incongruous to Martin. Consequently, he maintained that it is not the duty of the unregenerate to believe the gospel.<sup>21</sup> Fuller responded to Martin's tracts with *Remarks on Mr. Martin's Publication, entitled, "Thoughts on the Duty of Man relative to Faith in Jesus Christ" in Five Letters to a Friend*.

A couple of comments are worthy of mention at this time. First, Button and Martin were convinced that the Hyper-Calvinist position, so well systematized by Gill, was the true interpretation of scripture on

soteriology. In the heyday of the Enlightenment, Gill had used its rationalism to scholastically systematize the faith. Unfortunately, the emphasis on his reasoned systematization of theology seems to have forced him at times to interpret scripture to fit his system. Defense of the truth became more important than practice of the truth.<sup>22</sup> Secondly, Gill and others maintained that the warrant of faith has to do with believing that the Holy Spirit is working in you, and so indicating that you are one of the elect. Faith is therefore, subjective not objective. For Fuller inner persuasion (subjective) was not necessary to come to Christ, but that the gospel (objective) was a person's warrant to believe. Faith was a gift morally, but a duty naturally. Consequently, thirdly, Button and Martin did not grasp, or possibly could not accept, the philosophical argument made by Jonathan Edwards and Fuller of the distinction between natural and moral inability. All of these comments will become more apparent as we examine Fuller's use of Gill under the two headings of Hyper-Calvinism to which we now turn.

### FULLER'S READING OF GILL IN THE HYPER-CALVINIST DEBATE

*A) It is the duty of the elect only to believe on Christ for salvation which includes its logical corollary that the gospel is not to be offered to all people indiscriminately*

Fuller's three major writings that address this subject, with reference to Gill, pay much more attention to the "duty" aspect of the debate than the "free offer" aspect. Fuller often refers to both Brine and Gill on this issue of duty, but addresses Brine much more directly, challenging his position.<sup>23</sup> This is due to the fact that Brine directly addressed the question in his *Motives to Love and Unity among Calvinists*, even expressly denying "it to be the duty of men in general to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of their souls," positively stated as, it is not the duty of the non-elect to believe on Christ for salvation.<sup>24</sup> Fuller in his *Remarks to Mr. Button* confirms that Gill took no active part in the controversy of the "Modern Question" as did Brine, and that he only avowed the negative side of the assertion, which likely means that he believed that it was the duty of the elect to believe.<sup>25</sup>

It is interesting that in all three of these works all except two of the references to Gill are positive, primarily using Gill to support his position that it is the duty of all people to believe on Christ for salvation, and therefore the gospel should be offered to all indiscriminately. We will

look at each of these works in chronological order to see how Fuller used Gill, beginning with the *Gospel Worthy*.

Fuller refers to Gill only four times in *Gospel Worthy* and in each case he uses him for support. For example, the first reference is found in the section where Fuller argues that spiritual exercises which are connected to faith in Christ are represented as the duty of men in general. Here he maintains that all people/sinners are called to love God, to glorify God as God. To support this claim, he quotes from Gill's *Body of Divinity*<sup>26</sup> where Gill teaches that the creature loves God for Himself, that is, His own nature and perfections as they are displayed in creation, redemption and salvation. For Fuller, therefore, love is the duty of all humankind, and therefore, love to Christ is a spiritual exercise and the duty of everyone to whom the gospel is preached.<sup>27</sup>

Another reference in *Gospel Worthy* has to do with Adam's original state. Hyper-Calvinists would argue that it was not Adam's duty to fulfill spiritual or evangelical duties because he was under a covenant of works. Consequently, he was not suited to live unto God through a Mediator and so his posterity are under no obligation to live by faith in the mediator Christ.<sup>28</sup> Fuller argues that because Adam did not fulfill certain things as a duty, does not mean that his posterity are excused. Then he quotes Gill in support from *Cause of God and Truth*<sup>29</sup>:

That Adam in a state of innocence had the power of believing in Christ, and did believe in him as the second person of the Trinity, as the Son of God, because he was the Creator and Preserver. *And his not believing in him as the Mediator, Saviour and Redeemer, did not arise from any defect of power in him, but from the state, condition and situation in which he was, and from the nature of the revelation made unto him;* for no doubt Adam had power to believe every word, or any revelation that was or might be made unto him.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, Adam's posterity have the ability to believe in Christ and so it is their duty.<sup>31</sup>

Now we will turn our attention to Fuller's *Remarks to Mr Button* in which he references Gill eight times and almost always to support his own position, never to be critical of Gill.<sup>32</sup> For example, in his introduction, Fuller states that when Gill was engaged in other controversies (e.g. Arminianism) he argued in "our favour [Evangelical Calvinism] and that his writings contain various concessions on this subject."<sup>33</sup> So, when

Fuller's opponents argued that his own teaching on the "free offer" was verging on Arminianism, he responded that his arguments were the same as Gill's which were used against the Arminian Dr. Whitby in *The Cause of God and Truth*.<sup>34</sup> And no one would dare consider Gill as verging on Arminianism.<sup>35</sup>

Another example is found in section two, "On the Nature and Definition of Faith," concerning the subject of saving faith. According to Button both believers and unbelievers can "cordially receive the truth." His support comes from Mark 6 and Matt. 13, maintaining that "Christ's hearers at Nazareth, and the stony-ground hearers, cordially receive[d] the truth." Fuller challenges this interpretation stating, "the latter did not *understand* it, (Matt. 13:23; 1 Cor. 2:14,) and therefore could not cordially receive it." And concerning the "hearers at Nazareth" he writes, "They gazed upon the Lord Jesus, and bare him witness 'that he was right' as Dr. Gill says, 'in applying Isaiah's prophecy to the Messiah, but not that he himself was the Messiah;' much less did they cordially receive his gospel."<sup>36</sup> Gill's comment supports Fuller's interpretation that Christ's hearers did not cordially receive Jesus as the Messiah, and so therefore did not receive the gospel.

Several examples are found in Fuller's reply to Button's critique of his treatment of scripture verses that show that faith is a command of God. The first verse is found in John 12:36, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of God." Button maintains that these words "are evidently words of direction to inquiring people," meaning they were under the influence of the Spirit. But Fuller responds, "That they were inquiring people, is true; but not such as inquired from anything of a right spirit, which is what Mr. B[utton] must mean to suggest. They are called *the people* (v. 34) in distinction from the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus; and it immediately follows (vv. 35ff) what sort of people they were." To support his claim to a proper interpretation in a footnote after "the Greeks who wanted to see Jesus" he refers the reader to Gill's commentary on verse 34, which supports his own interpretation.<sup>37</sup>

Another verse where Fuller uses Gill's support for the "free offer" is found in John 6:29, "This is the work of God that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Button believes that "the work of God" in this context means a work that God should work in them, not a work which He requires of them. Button states that it is "very clear and plain, from the whole context, that this special faith is no duty."<sup>38</sup> In response Fuller enlists both Brine and Gill in support of his interpretation. Although

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

Brine and Gill did not agree on the sort of faith spoken of in the verse (Brine saw it as faith connected to salvation, and Gill did not), they did agree that “the work of God” is the work that is required of men. Fuller writes, “The Doctor [Gill]... does not suppose the *work of God* means a work that was to be wrought in them, but a work that was required of them. He [Gill] there explains it, not of an operation of God, but of what was enjoined by his ‘*will and commandment.*’”<sup>39</sup>

A third verse in this section where Gill is used in support of Fuller’s interpretation is Isa. 55:6, “So you should look for the Lord before it is too late. You should call on Him while he is near.” Button used Gill’s commentary on this verse apparently to show that the call to faith is only the duty of those that are under the salvific influence of the Spirit, not everyone indiscriminately. Fuller replies, “Mr. B. must excuse me in not being satisfied with a *part* of an exposition upon it from Dr. Gill. The whole of the Doctor’s words, I observe, are not quoted. *Abundant pardon* was never promised to such an attendance as this quotation makes to be their duty.”<sup>40</sup> Gill generally affirms, in the whole of the quotation, that it is the hearer’s duty to obey this command.

There are only two other places in this *Reply* that Fuller uses Gill, and again both in support of his position. The first is found in section five “On the causes to which the want of faith is ascribed.” In one place Button denies that pride, aversion to God and the like have any causal influence to prevent a person’s believing. The reason they do not believe, is because they are not of the elect (John 10:26; 8:47); they are not his sheep. Fuller, however, counters, “But suppose a being not of Christ’s sheep, here, to mean the same as not being of the number of the elect, this can be no otherwise assigned as the cause of their not believing than as we assign the absence of the sun as the cause of darkness. BECAUSE of God’s forbearing to execute vengeance, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil; but no one, it is hoped, will think evil excusable on that account.” In support, he then refers the reader to Dr. Gill’s *Cause of God and Truth*.<sup>41</sup>

Another place is found in section seven “On Spiritual Dispositions” where Fuller quoting Gill, states that the law “requireth *spiritual* service and obedience.” This statement Fuller had used in *Gospel Worthy* in support of his position that spiritual service and obedience is required of all people. However, Button took exception, and maintained that Fuller was mistaken in his reading of Gill, and that Gill “meant no such thing.” Button interpreted Gill to mean, “a serving it [the law] with our minds;

a worshipping God in spirit and truth, a loving it [the law] with all our hearts and souls, as well as a performance of all the outward acts of religion and duty." Fuller gives a rather interesting response, "What was Dr. Gill's meaning I cannot tell, nor is it worth while to dispute about it, as the opinion of the greatest uninspired writer is not decisive."<sup>42</sup> It is an interesting response because while it is careful and respectful of Gill, it accords him no infallible status as an interpreter of scripture. His opinion is not decisive because he is only an uninspired writer. He could be wrong in his interpretation and understanding of the scripture. Fuller is not saying here that in this case he is wrong, only that he could very well be, if Button's reading of Gill is what Gill meant.

The final of Fuller's writings that deal with Hyper-Calvinism is his *Reply to Mr. Martin*. Only two references are made of Gill and both are positive. The first has to do with Fuller's distinction of inability into natural and moral. Martin saw it as friendly to Arminianism. In response, Fuller asserts that this distinction was held by three of the greatest champions of Calvinism: Edwards, Toplady and Gill. He notes that Gill made little use of it, yet Gill declared "that the distinction of the *natural* and *moral* liberty of the will was of great service in the Arminian controversy."<sup>43</sup> The other example is found in the third letter in *Reply* that deals with love to God and divine things for their own excellency. Martin attacked the doctrine of disinterested love by associating it with Arminians, Mystics and Deists. Fuller answered that this does not make the doctrine erroneous. Then he lists Goodwin, Owen, Charnock, Gill and Brine as those who defended it, providing references for each one.<sup>44</sup> They all "defended a love to God and Divine Things for their own excellency in distinction from a love barely on account of their being advantageous to us."<sup>45</sup>

### *B) Eternal Justification*

The issue of eternal justification with regards to Gill was recorded in Fuller's *Memoirs*. It is here that he most directly opposes a facet of Gill's soteriology. He states that when he began his ministry he agreed with Gill that the elect were justified, declared right in God's sight, from the time of their election. He accepted the division of active and passive justification. Active justification is an act of God, taken up in the divine mind, an immanent and abiding act, internal to God and eternal. Passive justification is the act of God terminating on the conscience of the believer about the truth of their eternal justification, "a transient act

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

passing upon an external object." Gill maintained that passive justification is what the scriptures designate as justification by faith.<sup>46</sup> Justification by faith is the conscious recognition that a believer was/is justified.

At the same time that Fuller was rethinking "duty faith," he became dissatisfied with eternal justification because it did not "quadrature with scripture." He reasoned that if condemnation is the state or condition of a sinner whether elect or not, then justification is the state or condition of a sinner who believes in Jesus. Therefore, justification is only for believers. The sentence of justification is not a revelation or manifestation of something to the mind which was true before in eternity, but consists of the voice of God in the gospel declaring that those who believe in Jesus shall be saved.<sup>47</sup> For Fuller, justification is not a recognition (subjective) but a gospel truth (objective) that is to be accepted by the hearer of the gospel. Justification takes place when a person believes in Christ for salvation.<sup>48</sup> This was clearly in opposition to Gill.

## FULLER'S READING OF GILL IN HIS INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION

James De Jong in his *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640–1810*, stated that at the end of the eighteenth century Baptists followed either Gill's or Fuller's eschatology.<sup>49</sup> Concerning the influence of Gill's eschatology, John Rippon (1751–1836), Gill's biographer and pastoral successor, wrote in the early nineteenth century,

[Gill's] single Sermons, on this subject [sacred prediction], have been, of late years, some of the most popular of his works; and their deserved value has caused them to pass through several editions. These *Sermons*, with the two folio volumes on the *Prophets*, and his Exposition of the *Revelation*, have gained him unfading honours, and induced such who have made those parts of the divine writings their study, to say, that if the works of Dr. Gill pre-eminently embrace almost every branch of sacred theology, *prophecy is his forte*.<sup>50</sup>

How did Fuller's eschatology differ from Gill's, and what affect did it have on Calvinistic Baptists at that time?

Fuller's eschatology in a number of places was significantly different. First of all, Fuller was, anachronistically, a postmillennialist. He believed

that Christ would come in spiritual power to inaugurate the millennium or latter day glory.<sup>51</sup> At the end of this period Christ would return personally and visibly with the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment. Following quickly upon this would be the entrance of the saints into heaven.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, Fuller believed that the two witnesses of Revelation 11 had already been slain and raised,<sup>53</sup> that antichrist was in the process of falling,<sup>54</sup> and that the vials were being poured out in his day.<sup>55</sup> Fuller maintained that from the rising of the witnesses at the Reformation, and even while the vials were being poured out, the gospel would be spreading around the world.<sup>56</sup> He believed his day was a special time for the spread of the gospel.<sup>57</sup> Fuller writes,

Two hundred years have been thought to be the utmost point to which the pouring out of the vials can extend: they may terminate in less time: but if not, there is great encouragement for the friends of Christ in the promised progress of his cause *during this period*. We shall not have to wait for the Millennium, I say, ere we see glorious days in respect of the success of the gospel.... At the same time that her [church's] enemies are bleeding under the strokes of heaven, the 'kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.'<sup>58</sup>

In fact, it appears he believed that Christians could encourage the dawning of the millennium by missionary activity.<sup>59</sup> And he expected the millennium to dawn shortly.<sup>60</sup> In addition, Fuller did not believe it was the design of the prophecies to determine the exact time of the fall of antichrist by the 1260 days. In fact, this fall would probably be gradual.<sup>61</sup>

Gill, on the other hand, believed that the latter day glory<sup>62</sup> would not begin until the two witnesses were slain and risen, and until antichrist (eastern and western) had fallen at the time of the pouring out of the vials upon them. These things he thought might take place around 1866.<sup>63</sup> For Gill no effective spreading of the gospel to the heathen would occur until these things were fulfilled. Gill stated in 1750,

We are in the Sardinian church-state, in the latter part of it, which ... brought on the Reformation, and represents that; we are in the decline of that state: and there are many things said of that church which agree with us; as that we have a *name*, that we *live*, and are *dead*, the name of reformed churches, but without the life and

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

power of true religion ... and yet it is not totally dark ... it is a sort of twilight with us,... between day and night. As to what of the night is yet to come, or what will befall the churches,... they are, the slaying of the witnesses, and the universal spread of popery all over Christendom.<sup>64</sup>

Concerning the universal spread of popery, he preached,

The papists have got ground... But they have not as yet got the whole into their hands, as they will, and which they must, ere they can make this universal slaughter of the witnesses... and so all churches established by the laws of the countries where they are, or all those civil and worldly establishments, are fences and guards about the witnesses: so long as these are out of the hands of the papists, they cannot come at the witnesses, they are safe; but when these are gained over, then they will be slain, and not till then. Moreover, the witnesses have not yet finished their testimony; they are still prophesying... The slaying of the witnesses is yet to come, and will make the dismal part of that night we are entering into, and which will be accompanied with an universal spread of popery: popery will be once more the reigning, prevailing religion in Christendom.<sup>65</sup>

And concerning the gospel to places in the East like India, he states in his comment on the sixth vial,

To me it seems, that, through the fall of the Ottoman empire, way will be made for the kings and princes of the east, literally understood, to have and embrace the Gospel of Christ; for the Turks being destroyed, the Mahometan religion will decline, the Gospel will be carried into the eastern parts of the world into the those vast kingdoms and countries which lie in those parts,... so that the ruin of this monarchy will pave the way for the spread of Christ's kingdom from sea to sea, and from river to river, the river Euphrates, to the ends of the earth.<sup>66</sup>

One can understand in light of Gill's eschatology why some Gillite Baptists might consider the missionary activity of the Fullerites an impertinent enterprise.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, one can see why the Ful-

lerites looked at the recent history of heathen salvation (e.g. North America) as a precursor to the dawning of the millennium. This clearly shows that one's eschatology can greatly influence one's actions and, in particular, one's evangelism or missionary activity to the world. Could this have been why John Ryland Sr. was so incensed at William Carey for daring to go to India to convert the heathen, saying "when God wants to convert the heathen He will do it in His own time without Carey's help?" Does this not have lessons for us in our day of hyper-eschatological speculation? At the least, we need to be sure our eschatology is in harmony with the central message of the gospel—the salvation of sinners, Jews and Gentiles—no matter what our eschatological beliefs and timetables. Our preaching of the gospel and evangelism ought to be motivated by Matthew 28:19–20 regardless of what contemporary events in the world might appear to be the fulfillment of prophecy.

Fuller only interacted with Gill's eschatology in his commentary on Revelation.<sup>68</sup> So how did he read Gill? It is interesting that there are only four places where he refers to Gill, once on the vials of Rev. 16, two times on the witnesses of Rev. 11 and once in his conclusion to the commentary.<sup>69</sup> We will look at each instance in turn.

#### *A) The Witnesses*<sup>70</sup>

After Fuller makes some comments of the text of Rev. 11:7–10 he asks the question, "What are the facts which correspond with it?" And then answers, "It is thought by some that both the slaughter and the resurrection of the witnesses are yet to be fulfilled. If so, it is vain to look for corresponding facts in past events. This was the opinion of Bishop NEWTON, of Doctor GILL, and of other expositors of note. I cannot but consider this a mistake." Concerning Gill's interpretation he writes,

DR. GILL speaks of the war by which the witnesses are slain as being "the last war of the beast" (on chap. xi. 8); but the last war of the beast is that in which he and the false prophet will be taken; and in which the followers of Christ, instead of being killed, shall be victorious over their enemies, chap. xix. 20. It is remarkable, too, that both the slaughter and resurrection of the witnesses, together with the falling of the tenth part of the city, are introduced before the termination of the sixth, or second woe-trumpet. I question therefore whether these prophecies can refer to events of so late a date as this hypothesis requires.<sup>71</sup>

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

For Fuller, following Jonathan Edwards, the “persecution and the slaughter of the witnesses preceded the Reformation,” and was not an event yet to be fulfilled as Gill had maintained.

A second reference to Gill from Rev. 11 has to do with the “great earthquake” in which a tenth part of the city was destroyed. Fuller maintains that “the falling off of the northern nations from the see of Rome, which was an immediate consequence of the Reformation” is a good interpretation of the earthquake.<sup>72</sup> However, there are several particulars that do not agree with this interpretation. For example, Fuller writes, “No reason can be given why the seceding northern nations should be called ‘a tenth part of the city;’ nor do any events which attended the Reformation appear to correspond with the slaughter of ‘seven thousand names of men.’” Consequently, he writes, “All things considered, I know of no event that seems to correspond so well with the prophecy as the late revolution in France [1789]. Thus it has been understood by some of the ablest expositors, and that for ages prior to the event.” After citing Goodwin and Vitranga in support of his interpretation, he enlists Gill:

DR. GILL, in 1748, speaking of the earthquake, says, “Something yet to come is here intended;” and “I rather think the kingdom of France is meant, the last of the ten kingdoms which rose up out of the ruins of the Roman empire.” And in his note on chap. xiii. 18, he speaks of the destruction of antichrist as “quickly following the downfall of the kingdom of France, as the tenth part of the city, which should fall a little before the third woe came on.”

The revolution in France has been truly a moral earthquake, which has shaken the papal world to its centre.

Fuller concludes by using Gill’s comment on the earthquake to support his interpretation of the slaying of the witnesses,

If the opinions of GOODWIN, VITRINGA, and GILL be correct, and if the events which have of late years occurred be the accomplishment of them, the last of these writers must have been mistaken in supposing the slaying of the witnesses to be something future; for the fall of the city is placed after the slaying and rising again of the witnesses. If therefore the one be now past, so is the other.<sup>73</sup>

Fuller astutely uses Gill to disagree with Gill.

*B) Vials*

Fuller sees correspondence between the vials of Chapter 16 and the trumpets which begin in chapter 8, even though they are separated by more than 1000 years. In agreement with Gill, he writes,

It is on this principle that DR. GILL seems to have proceeded in expounding the vials. "The first vial," says he, "will be poured out upon the earth, designs those popish countries which are on the continent, as France and Germany, especially the latter; and as the first trumpet brought the Goths to Germany, so the first vial will bring great distress upon the popish party in the empire. - The second vial will be poured upon the sea, and may intend the maritime powers belonging to the church of Rome, particularly Spain and Portugal; and as the second trumpet brought the Vandals into these places, so this vial will affect the same, and bring wars and desolations unto them. - The third vial will be poured out upon the rivers and fountains of waters, which may point to those places adjacent to Rome, Italy and Savoy; and as the third trumpet brought the Huns into those parts, so this vial will bring in large armies hither, which will cause much bloodshed, and a great revolution in church and state. This comment on the vials, founded upon their analogy with the trumpets, bids fair, in my judgment, to be the true one; especially that on the first three which has just been quoted.<sup>74</sup>

Though Fuller agrees with Gill's interpretation above, he does not see the first vial as yet future, but is already being poured out, beginning with the French Revolution. He writes,

The Doctor [Gill] adds - "As yet I take it none of them are poured out, though some great and learned men have thought otherwise. As yet there have been no such devastations on the continent, as in France and Germany, as to produce the above effects; nor in the countries of Spain, Portugal," &c. This was doubtless the case in 1752, the year in which the sermon from which the extract is made was printed, but this is more than can be said in 1810!<sup>75</sup>

*C) Conclusion*

Fuller concludes his exposition of the prophecy of the Revelation with some practical application asking, "What are the signs of the present times? - What judgments may yet be expected to befall the nations? - What cheering prospects await the church?" His answer,

If the outlines of the foregoing commentary be just, we are now under the period of the vials, or that space of time which commences with the sounding of the seventh angel, and terminates in the Millennium. This is the period which appears to be marked in the prophecy; particularly in chap. x. 7. "But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets." That is, in the times in which the seven vials shall be poured out, the great designs of Heaven concerning the overthrow of the papal antichrist, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, as foretold by the prophets, shall be accomplished.<sup>76</sup>

According to Fuller, the dominion of the little horn of Daniel is about to be destroyed, and the kingdoms of the world will soon become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. The millennial kingdom will soon dawn. It is at this point he enlists Gill's interpretation of the vials for support. He writes, "Moreover, If the exposition of the vials by the trumpets, adopted from DR. GILL, be just, we are as yet but under the second vial, which for several years has been pouring out upon the sea, or the maritime papal nations of Spain and Portugal; and notwithstanding what has taken place, it may be suspected that much of it is yet to come."<sup>77</sup>

Once again we see Fuller not afraid to disagree with Gill where necessary, but also his willingness to enlist him in support of his interpretation. In addition, we see that though Gill wrote much on the subject including an exposition of the Revelation, Fuller only refers to him on four occasions.

**CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

There are five observations that we can make from our study: 1) Fuller wisely uses Gill in support, and does not look to disagree with him; 2) His use of Gill is a fair interpretation of Gill's writing, but sometimes using it for his own advantage and not taking into account all that Gill

meant; e.g. “Work of God” where he teaches both (see footnote 39); or misreading him, e.g. creature love to God (see footnote 26); 3) He only directly challenges Gill in two places which have to do with eternal justification, found in his *Memoirs* which were written in the late 1790s, and with the two witnesses of Rev. 11 which was written in 1810; 4) His tone of disagreement is one of respect but also honesty (Gill is not inspired); and 5) He only interacts with him in 22 places in his voluminous writings. Why is this? Is he simply following the pattern of past Baptist expositors who were hesitant to use any biblical authorities other than the Bible?<sup>78</sup> Or is it possible that he did not see Gill as a true Hyper-Calvinist? I doubt it. **E**

**Dr. Barry Howson** is Director of Religious Studies at Heritage College and Adjunct Instructor of Church History at Heritage Seminary, Cambridge, ON. He is the author of *Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions: The Question of Orthodoxy Regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys (C. 1599–1691)* (Brill 2001).

## ENDNOTES

1 Robert Edward Seymour, “John Gill, Baptist Theologian (1697–1771)” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1954); Curt Daniel, “Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1983); Thomas Ascol, “The Doctrine of Grace: A Critical Analysis of Federalism in the Theologies of John Gill and Andrew Fuller” (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989); B. R. White, “John Gill in London, 1719–1729: A Biographical Fragment,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 22 (1967–1968): 72–79; Richard A. Muller, “The Spirit and the Covenant: John Gill’s Critique of the *Pactum Salutis*,” *Foundations* 24 (1981): 4–14; Olin C. Robison, “The Legacy of John Gill,” *The Baptist Quarterly* 24 (1971–1972): 111–125; Eric Williams, “John Gill (1697–1771): Some Bicentenary Thoughts, especially on his Work on the song of Solomon,” *The Evangelical Library Bulletin* 47 (Autumn, 1971): 2–7; Robert Oliver, “John Gill: Orthodox Dissenter,” *The Strict Baptist Historical Society Bulletin* 23 (1996): 3–18; Graham Harrison, *Dr. John Gill and His Teaching* (London: The Evangelical Library, 1971); John R. Broome, *Dr. John Gill* (Harpenden, Hertfordshire: Gospel Standard Trust Publications, 1991); John W. Brush, “John Gill’s Doctrine of the Church” in Winthrop Still Hudson, ed. *Baptist Concepts of the Church* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1959): 53–70; George Ella, *John Gill and the Cause of God and Truth* (Durham, England: GO Publications, 1995); and Michael A.G. Haykin, ed. *The Life and Thought of John Gill (1697–1771): A Tercentennial Appreciation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997).

2 By contextual reference I mean to say that Fuller refers to Gill, though he might mention his name several times in that context. This is an adequate number of references for us to get a handle on Fuller’s reading of Gill, but is inadequate if Fuller were merely wanting to repeat Gill’s teaching for a new generation. Under-

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

standably, since Fuller's works were primarily written in the context of controversy, he did not recapitulate theology in the same way as Gill in his systematics or commentary. However, we might have expected that he use Gill far more than merely 26 times (on four occasions his reference to Gill sheds no light on his reading of Gill).

3 The question of Gill's Hyper-Calvinism is debated among scholars, but the majority recognize him as one. This will be assumed in this essay.

4 The works of Button and Martin are located in the Angus Library at Regent's Park College.

5 For a recent study on Fuller's journey see Peter Morden, *Offering Christ to the World: Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) and the Revival of Eighteenth Century Particular Baptist Life*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003.

6 Daniel, "Hyper-Calvinism and John Gill"; Seymour, "John Gill, Baptist Theologian (1697-1771)"; W.T. Whitley, *Calvinism and Evangelism in England especially in Baptist Circles* (London: The Kingsgate Press, n.d.); Peter Toon, *The Emergence of Hyper-Calvinism in English Nonconformity* (London: The Olive Tree, 1967); and R. Philip Roberts, *Continuity and Change: London Calvinistic Baptists and the Evangelical Revival 1760-1820* (Wheaton: Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, 1989); Barry H. Howson, *"Erroneous and Schismatical Opinions": The Question of Orthodoxy regarding the Theology of Hanserd Knollys (1599-1691)* Leiden: Brill, 2001, 133ff.

7 *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller, with a Memoir of his Life by Rev. Andrew Gunton Fuller*, ed. A.G. Fuller; rev. ed. J. Belcher, 3 vols. (reprint of 1845 ed., Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1988), I, 15; Fuller had a very high opinion of both Gill and Brine (Morden, *Offering Christ*, 58). Well into the Hyper-Calvinist debate, Fuller, in his *Reply to Mr. Button* (1787) calls Gill and Brine "great and upright men," who "thought for themselves" (*Complete Works*, II, 421).

8 Morden tells us he read almost all of Gill (*Offering Christ*, 30).

9 *Complete Works*, I, 10. Later this line of thought would be important to Fuller's argument against Hyper-Calvinism.

10 *Complete Works*, I, 15.

11 *Complete Works*, I, 10.

12 *Complete Works*, I, 15.

13 Morden, *Offering Christ*, 52.

14 Both men saw Fullerism as a slippery slope to Arminianism (Morden, *Offering Christ*, 58).

15 Morden, *Offering Christ*, 55.

16 For example, Button maintained that the biblical phrase "belief of the truth" means a reliance on Christ for salvation and to include both the cause and effect in the nature of true believing. Consequently, there is a distinction between believing the divine testimony and believing in or on Christ. In order to defend his position he used "copious extracts from the commentary of Dr. Gill, on the various scriptures urged on the other side, and leaves Mr. Fuller's arguments to shift for themselves" (J. W. Morris, *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, 273-4). Incidentally, Fuller agreed with Button's definition of "belief of the truth" but not its interpretation in support of Hyper-Calvinism, (Morris, *Memoirs*, 278).

17 Morris, *Memoirs*, 274.

18 Morris, *Memoirs*, 275.

19 Morris, *Memoirs*, 296.

20 Morris, *Memoirs*, 300.

21 But he believed that they should endeavour to do so using the means of grace. This was likely incongruous to Fuller (Morris, *Memoirs*, 299, 301).

22 This by no means implies that Gill was not concerned with practice, only that in his historical context, his emphasis was more on defending the truth of the faith through systematization. My contention is that because of this, in the instance of the free offer, he didn't let scripture speak for itself.

23 Brine is addressed at least 6 times in the *Gospel Worthy*, 8 times in *Remarks to Mr. Button*, and 2 times in *Reply to Mr. Martin*, and almost always in disagreement, interacting with Brine's *Motives to Love and Unity*.

24 *Complete Works*, II, 422.

25 *Complete Works*, II, 422.

26 Vol. 3, Ch. 9. This should be Book 1 Chapter 9. Gill is referring to God's elect in the context. This is a misreading of Gill. Gill wrote:

1. Love to God, Jehovah, our God, the one Lord; "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might:" this is what God requires of his people, and enjoins as a command to be obeyed; and it is but reasonable service; "What doth the Lord thou God require of thee—but to love him?" and says Moses in his name, "I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God" (Deut. 6:4,5; 10:12; 30:16), and this is the chief and principal, the first and greatest command, and entirely agreeable to the law and light of nature and reason. In answer to the lawyer's question; "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" Said our Lord, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment" (Matthew 22:36-38), hence the apostle says, "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). Concerning which love as a grace, for though it is a command to love, it is of grace to keep it, may be observed,

1a. First, on what account God is to be loved, and is loved by his saints.

1a1. For himself; because of his own nature, and the perfections of it, which render him amiable and lovely, and worthy of our strongest love and affection; as these are displayed in the works of creation and providence, and especially of grace, redemption, and salvation; to all which the Psalmist has respect when he says, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name," nature, and perfections, "in all the earth!" (Ps. 8:1), as God is great in himself, and greatly to be praised! great, and greatly to be feared; so great, and greatly to be loved, for what he is in himself; and this is the purest and most perfect love of a creature towards God; for if we love him only for his goodness to us, it is loving ourselves rather than him; at least, a loving him for ourselves; and so a loving ourselves more than him: indeed, such is our weakness and imperfection, that we cannot come at a view of the divine perfections, but by these means, through which they, and particularly his goodness and kindness, are made known unto us, and with which we are first and chiefly affected; yet hereby we are led into a view of his nature and perfections, and to love him for the sake of himself; which love, though it is not first in order, it is chief and ultimate, and comes nearest to the love which the divine Persons bear to each other, and to that with which God loves his people; which arises, not from any goodness shown

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

to him, or received by him.

1a2. God is to be loved by his saints as their “summum bonum,” their chief good; yea, their only good, their all in ALL; and so to be only loved: “there is none good but one, that is, God;” God, Father, Son, and Spirit, the one Lord God, the object of his people’s love; concerning whom they say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee?” (Ps. 73:25), and he may be loved by them as their portion now and hereafter, and as their shield and exceeding great reward; and yet their love to him not be mercenary.

1a3. God is to be loved by his people for the blessings of his goodness communicated to them; he is the fountain of goodness to them; he is good, and does good, and therefore to be praised and loved, even for the bounties of his providence; he follows with his goodness, and daily loads with his benefits; but especially for the blessings of his grace, with which he blesses his chosen in Christ Jesus; as electing grace in him; predestination to the adoption of children by him; acceptance with God, in him, the beloved; redemption through his blood; forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; regenerating, quickening, calling, and sanctifying grace, and all things pertaining to life and godliness. Which benefits bestowed, though they are not in quality the chief motives to love God, as before observed; yet they are in order first, and chiefly strike the affections, and stir them up towards the Lord.

1a4. The various relations God stands in to his people do and should engage their affections to him; for he is not only their faithful Creator and kind Benefactor in nature and providence; but in grace their covenant God and Father; and the direction to love him is usually, “Thou shall love the Lord THY God;” and David heaps up a variety of titles and characters, under which, and on account of which, he professed to love the Lord; “I will love thee, O Lord, my strength!” &c. (Ps. 18:1-3).

1a5. What greatly influences the love of the Lord’s people to him, and lays them under obligation to love him, is his great love to them (1 John 4:19), which love appeared in choosing them in Christ to eternal happiness, of his own free favour and goodwill; in the provision of Christ to be the propitiation for their sins; in the mission of him into the world for that purpose; in the free and full forgiveness of all their sins, for his sake; in drawing them to himself, in effectual calling, with his lovingkindness, having, for the great love wherewith he loved them, quickened them when dead in trespasses and sins; and in openly espousing them to himself in conversion, called, the “love” of their “espousals;” with all after manifestations of his love unto them.

1a6. The examples of the saints in all ages might be urged as motives to love the Lord; as of Enoch, Noah, and others before the flood; of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph after it; with Joshua, Samuel, David, and others; but especially our Lord Jesus Christ, in human nature, who, in the exercise of this grace, as in others, is an example to us (John 14:31).

1b. Secondly, the subjects of this grace of love, in whom it is, by whom the Lord is loved, and how they come by this grace.

1b1. It is not of men, nor is it in men naturally; it is not in any natural man, who is in a state of nature and unregeneracy; such are “lovers of pleasures,” sinful lusts and pleasures, “more than lovers of God;” yea, some of them are described as “haters

of God;" and, indeed, the carnal mind, in every man, is enmity against God, not only an enemy to God, but enmity itself; which denotes how great and intense, and what a rooted and implacable enmity there is in a carnal man to God, and all that is good: nor is there any love in the people of God themselves before conversion; they are "without God," without any knowledge of God, and love to him; they are alienated from God, and from the life of God, and have no desire after him, nor of communion with him; but are "enemies in their minds," in the temper and disposition of them; and which is shown by their "wicked works;" and in this state they were when Christ died and shed his blood for them, to make peace and reconciliation for them, (Col. 1:20,21; Rom. 5:10), which circumstance greatly illustrates the love of God in the gift of his Son to them (1 John 4:10).

1b2. The grace of love is of God; he is the efficient cause and author of it, as he is of every grace; the apostle John expressly says, "love is of God," of God, Father, Son, and Spirit; it is of God the Father, who is the God of all grace, and so of this (1 John 4:7), and "love with faith," are wished for "from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 6:23), and it stands in the first place among the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), it is wrought in the soul in regeneration, when other graces are, and is an evidence of it; for "every one that loveth is born of God" (1 John 4:7), and a man cannot love God until he is regenerated, and renewed in the Spirit of his mind, and is made a partaker of the spiritual circumcision of the heart, which is necessary to it, and which is promised (Deut. 30:6), this grace only appears with other graces, and when they do; there can be no love to God where there is no knowledge of him; according to that known phrase, "ignoti nulla cupido;" where there is knowledge of him, especially of him in Christ as gracious and merciful there will be love to him (1 John 4:7,8), where ignorance is there is no love; but it appears where knowledge is, and it accompanies faith: both spring from the same abundant grace (1 Tim. 1:14), faith, hope, and love go together (1 Cor. 13:13), as the subject of love is a regenerate man, the seat of it is the heart, not the head, nor the tongue, but the heart; it lies not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth; and true love to God is a love of him with all the heart, soul, and strength.

27 *Complete Works*, II, 362–3.

28 Brine, *Motives*, 50–51.

29 Pt. 3. Ch. 3.

30 *Complete Works*, II, 369. Fuller's italics. Not verbatim quote, but the sense is correct.

31 He also agrees with Gill's interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:47 found in Fuller's, "Answers to Objections on the nature of original holiness in our first parents" in *Gospel Worthy*. The answer addresses the state of Adam and Eve in their original purity. Fuller states that there are only two ways we can know anything about this state: 1) by the character of God as Creator; and 2) by the testimony of scripture. Fuller maintained that both tell us very little about the state of purity and innocence. Both Brine and Gill interpret this passage as referring to Adam's body and not his mind (*Complete Works*, II, 369).

32 The other two citations have been mentioned in endnote 31 and 35.

33 *Complete Works*, II, 422.

34 Part 1:63, 69, 118, 159, 160, 165; Part 2:88, 211, 215, 222, 226.

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

35 Also in *Gospel Worthy* Fuller argues that sinners are reprov'd for not believing because it is due to their criminal ignorance, dishonesty of heart and aversion of heart from God. Concerning the latter reason Fuller addresses Hussey and Gill using John 5:40 [they were not willing to come to Jesus to have life] Hussey maintained that Jesus was only referring to Israel's physical/temporal salvation (*Glory of Christ Revealed* 527, 615), and that in general, Gill would agree. But when his system is out of sight, Gill affirms Fuller's interpretation of the passage. Gill writes in his commentary, "Perverseness of their wills was blameworthy, being owing to the corruption and vitiosity of their nature: which being blameworthy in them, that which follows upon it must be so too" (II, 356). Here Fuller does not quote Gill verbatim, leaving out some words, but correctly.

36 *Complete Works*, II, 424. This reference is taken from Luke 4:22.

37 *Complete Works*, II, 429. Fuller cites Gill correctly.

38 *Complete Works*, II, 429.

39 *Complete Works*, II, 430. The last phrase is taken from Gill's *Cause of God and Truth*, Pt. 1, p. 154. (I have been unable to locate this quote). Actually Gill should be interpreted in Button's favour as well from his commentary:

"Ver. 29. Jesus answered and said unto them, this is the work of God.... The main and principal one, and which is well pleasing in his sight; and without which it is impossible to please him; and without which no work whatever is a good work; and this is of the operation of God, which he himself works in men; it is not of themselves, it is the pure gift of God: that ye believe on him whom he hath sent; there are other works which are well pleasing to God, when rightly performed, but faith is the chief work, and others are only acceptable when done in the faith of Christ. This, as a principle, is purely God's work; as it is an act, or as it is exercised under the influence of divine grace, it is man's act: 'that ye believe'; the object of it is Christ, as sent by the Father, as the Mediator between God and men, as appointed by him to be the Saviour and Redeemer; and believing in Christ, is believing in God that sent him. The Jews reduce all the six hundred and thirteen precepts of the law, for so many they say there are, to this one, 'the just shall live by his faith.'"

40 *Complete Works*, II, 430. This is a fair interpretation of Gill on Isaiah 55:6–8.

41 *Complete Works*, II, 437. *Cause*, Pt 2, pp.100, 222; and Pt. 3, p. 77.

42 *Complete Works*, II, 442. No Gill reference is given.

43 *Complete Works*, II, 724. No Gill reference given.

44 *Complete Works*, II, 729. For Gill, *Body of Divinity* Vol. 3, Chapter 9, and for Brine, *Dialogues*, 313–315. This should be Book 1, Chapter 9. Gill is referring to God's elect in the context.

45 *Complete Works*, II, 729.

46 *Body of Divinity*, Vol. 2, p. 797. (Vol 2, chapter 5). This is a correct reading of Gill.

47 *Complete Works*, I, 17.

48 *Complete Works*, I, 17.

49 James De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640-1810* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1970), 202. On Gill's eschatology see Crawford Gribben, "John Gill and Puritan Eschatology," *Evangelical Quarterly* 73 (2001): 311–326; and Barry Howson, "The Eschatology of the Calvin-

istic Baptist John Gill (1697–1771) examined and compared,” *Eusebeia* 5 (Autumn 2005): 33–66. Eschatology was very important to Gill. Rippon tells us that when Gill visited with people “he would seldom converse on trifles; but, touch the string of prophecy—the calling of the Jews—the latter-day glory... he was engaged at once, and out of the abundance of knowledge and grace, treasured in his heart, his mouth freely spake.” This is confirmed by his discussion of prophecy in the preface of his two volume commentary on the Old Testament Prophets as well as numerous sermons that were published on eschatological subjects. Some of the published sermons include, *The doctrine of the resurrection stated and defended in two sermons* (1731); *The Watchman's answer to the question, What of the Night?* (1751); *The glory of the church in the latter day* (1753); *The glorious state of the saints in heaven* (1756); *The superior happiness of the righteous dead to that of living saints* (1763).

50 John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late Rev. John Gill, D.D.* (n.d.; rpt. Harrisonburg: Gano Books, 1992), 74.

51 Fuller defends his postmillennialism and “spiritual” millennium over against Gill’s view of a “personal” millennium in *Complete Works*, I, 292–293.

52 *Complete Works*, I, 292–293.

53 *Complete Works*, I, 204.

54 In a circular letter of 1810 he writes, “We have seen the [Roman kingdom] subdivided into ten kingdoms, and the little papal horn growing up among them. We have seen the saints of the Most High ‘worn out’ for more than a thousand years by his persecutions. We have seen his rise, his reign, and, in a considerable degree, his downfall. ‘The judgment is set,’ and they have begun to ‘take away his dominion;’ and will go on ‘to consume and to destroy it unto the end’” (*Complete Works*, III, 362).

55 *Complete Works*, I, 205. Fuller believed that the first two vials had already been poured out. When he wrote his *Exposition of the Apocalypse* in 1810 or 1811 he maintained that the first vial was poured out “within the last twenty-five years” when France and the other continental powers were warring with each other. The second vial signified the wars “carrying on in the maritime nations of Spain and Portugal.” The third vial had yet to be poured out but “the wars...will ere long befall Italy and Savoy” (*Complete Works*, I, 205). Fuller adopted Gill’s interpretation of the vials (*Complete Works*, I, 301).

56 From the sounding of the seventh angel in Rev. 11:15 at the time of the Reformation “a signal is given of the progress of the gospel” (*Complete Works*, I, 204). And again in Rev. 14:6 after the victory over the anti-christian powers in the Reformation the angel with the everlasting gospel that comes is “the spirit lately excited to carry the gospel to the heathen” (*Complete Works*, I, 205). In a circular letter of 1810 after stating that it is not improbable that the voice of the seventh angel has begun to sound, he writes, “The glorious things spoken of the church are not all confined to the days of the millennium; many of them will go before it, in like manner as the victorious days of David went before the *rest*, or pacific reign of Solomon, and prepared its way. Previous to the fall of Babylon, an angel is seen flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth; and before that terrible conflict in which the beast and the false prophet are taken, the Son of God is described as riding forth on a white horse, and the armies of heaven as following him. The final ruin of the anti-christian cause will be brought upon itself by its opposition to the progress of the gospel” (*Complete Works*, III, 363). See also his article on “The Latter Days” where he states using Zeph.

## ANDREW FULLER'S READING OF JOHN GILL

3:8 that "the universal spread of truth and of righteousness shall be preceded or accompanied by universal judgment" (*Complete Works*, I, 642-643).

57 *Complete Works*, I, 269-270, 305-306. In a circular letter of 1810 he writes, "The time for the promulgation of the gospel is come; and, if attended to in a full dependence on the promise of the Spirit, it will, no doubt, be successful.- The rough places in its way are smoothing, that all flesh may see the salvation of God" (*Complete Works*, III, 363).

58 *Complete Works*, I, 303-304.

59 Fuller's good friend William Carey certainly believed this, and stated so in his sermon *Expect Great Things from God* and in his treatise *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (see De Jong, *As the Waters*, pp.178-181). Fuller hinted at it when he says, "Had we been more importunate in prayer, we might have been more successful" (*Complete Works*, I, 305).

60 In 1811 he states, "We see not yet the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; but we see that which is both preparatory and introductory to it" (*Complete Works*, I, 301).

61 *Complete Works*, I, 301-302.

62 For Gill, the latter day glory was the literal millennium which was preceded by the spiritual reign of Christ. Fuller saw the latter day glory and the spiritual reign of Christ as the same, not a literal millennium.

63 See note 59.

64 From the sermon *The Watchman's Answer to the Question, What of the Night?* in *Sermons and Tracts*, I, 50-51.

65 *Sermons and Tracts*, I, 52-53.

66 Gill's comment on the sixth vial in Rev. 16:12 (*N.T. Exposition*, III, 827).

67 I agree with De Jong that the motivation behind the anti-mission activity of some Baptists was Gillite eschatology (De Jong, *As the Waters*, p. 157). The response to William Carey's sermon to the Northamptonshire Association was assumed to be motivated by Hyper-Calvinism. Certainly the high Calvinism of some Baptists at this time would have buttressed this motivation but it was not the primary reason for it, eschatology was. Even by 1811 according to Fuller only the second vial had been poured out. Therefore, the sixth vial was still in the future in 1811. Consequently, one can see how the Gillites in the late eighteenth century could have looked at Fuller's missionary activity as presumptuous. For an article which touches on the differences between Gill's and Fuller's eschatology see W.R. Ward, "The Baptists and the Transformation of the Church, 1780-1830," *The Baptist Quarterly*, N.S. 25 (1973-74), 167-175.

68 The following is a general understanding of Fuller's interpretation of Revelation: 1) The churches of Rev. 1-3 are not prophetic but are addresses to specific historical churches only; 2) The sealed book is revealed in the seven seals which encompass the history of the church from the ascension of Christ to the New heavens and Earth; 3) The seventh seal includes the trumpets, woes and vials; 4) The first six seals deal with the time of the ascension of Christ to the fourth century; 5) The seventh seal deals with the time from the fourth century to the end; 6) The first four trumpets deal with the Germanic hordes of Goths, Huns, etc of the fourth and fifth centuries; 7) The fifth and sixth trumpet, and first and second woe address the rise of Islam to the 15<sup>th</sup> century (at the end of chapter 9); 8) Chapter 10 to 20 deal with the antichrist, papal Rome: its rise, and fall; 9) Chapters 10-14 are different

ways of looking at its rise and the church's persecution under it - three descriptions; 10) Chapters 15–16 are the events of judgment on the papal Rome at the end of the 1260 days just prior to the millennium; and 11) Chapters 17–19 are illustrations of these final events.

69 It should be noted that although Fuller disagreed with Gill on the millennium, he never referred to Gill in his comments on Rev. 20.

70 For a study on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century interpretation of the two witnesses see Rodney L. Petersen, *Preaching in the Last Days* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

71 *Complete Works*, III, 250–51.

72 *Complete Works*, III, 253.

73 *Complete Works*, III, 253.

74 *Complete Works*, III, 274–75.

75 *Complete Works*, III, 274–75.

76 *Complete Works*, III, 301.

77 *Complete Works*, III, 301.

78 This was brought to my attention by my colleague Stan Fowler.