

Diaries, Manuscripts and Books:
Andrew Fuller 200 Years On

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Introduction

One of the great blessings of my academic and spiritual life, has been the privilege of handling the very sheets of paper that some of the giants of Christian history have held and wrote on, it is both very humbling and very challenging. My access to such documents began as a PhD student in Scotland, when as part of my doctoral work, I had the incredible opportunity of spending two extended periods being captivated by the sermons and other mss of Jonathan Edwards in the Beinecke Special Collections Library at Yale University. My first visit to the Edwards' Collection was in 1990, and from that point on I knew what it was that gave me one of the greatest pleasures, namely the privilege of holding and reading documents from great revival periods. These were Papers that gave me a direct, tangible link to the working and moving of God centuries ago, Papers that reminded me that these were real people who had been used by God and who called us to do the same, to follow Him and to pray that he might similarly use us. I never could have foreseen that it would be anything more than that, for at that point in my life, it was enough simply to be standing amongst the Edwards Papers, marveling at what God had done through him.

My first book came five years later, a compilation of extracts from the devotional writings of the Wesleys, including much that was previously unpublished from the Journals of Susanna Wesley, the mother of John and Charles.¹ If handling and reading original and unpublished pieces is exciting, and for me it is, then having the

¹ *Hearts Aflame*, (London, UK: Triangle Press, 1995).

opportunity of transcribing them and seeing them published, is simply incredible, but that is how God has used most of my writing history. Amongst my publications are three volumes of previously unpublished sermons from Robert Murray M'Cheyne with Banner of Truth. That was one of the highlights for me of all I have done, for M'Cheyne's *Memoir and Remains* was one of the first books I was given as a new teenage believer, and M'Cheyne's life in Christ became one of the greatest spiritual challenges to me.

This background is shared by way of introduction. 2015 marks the bicentennial of Fuller's death so I believed it quite appropriate, to share something of the life and legacy of this British Baptist. With my love for reminding the Church of her great heritage by way of transcribing and seeking to publish previously generally unknown manuscripts, it was a real joy and privilege therefore when I was invited to become part of the Andrew Fuller Project, under the indefatigable scholar Michael Haykin, especially when I was assigned the very Diary that Andrew Fuller kept during his years of ministry. Diaries for me are treasure troves of thoughts and ideas. In this, the 200th anniversary of the death of Andrew Fuller, it was felt very appropriate, to share something of this man's life and ministry, especially in regard to the Diary he kept, and which will soon be published in its entirety for the first time.

But who briefly, was Andrew Fuller and why does he matter? Born in 1754, Fuller is remembered particularly for his theological dismantling of the dominant hyper-Calvinistic system that plagued British Baptists especially, in the 18th and 19th centuries. It was also his groundbreaking work, *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*, which helped to launch the modern missions movement. Charles Spurgeon referred to Fuller as, "The greatest theologian of his century." Haykin has a great challenge to those who ask if study of Fuller is worthwhile:

Fuller exemplifies for me the best in Baptist thought and piety. He was rigorous in defence of the Christian faith and an unashamed Baptist (he did, after all, argue for a closed communion over against his close friends William Carey and William Ward). He knew that piety was the vital fire to ignite the coals of doctrine. His love for his family and friends was remarkable: Carey's three words when he heard of his death sum

it all up, "I loved him," he said. He was catholic and reformed in the best sense of those terms, and could well be described as a reformed catholic theologian, as Owen and Benjamin Keach have recently been so described. He was the main disseminator of Edwardsean theology in the UK in the nineteenth century, and true to his mentor, Edwards, passionately missional. Little wonder, Spurgeon rightly commented to his son that Fuller was the greatest theologian the Baptists had in the nineteenth century.²

In his Journaling, Fuller followed the well-worn path of recording his concerns and supplications, and then later adding the results or the answers to prayer that he experienced! What is discovered on studying his Diary is that though he was fairly regular in making entries, it is interesting how much the quality of what he records varies. Fuller is certainly no Cotton Mather in this regard, for it is written of the latter that, "Cotton Mather made a point of having at least one good action to set down in his diary on every day of the week." One does not find that true of Andrew Fuller.

Having said that though, Fuller did generally follow the tradition of writing mostly at night, in conjunction with the reflective mood of nocturnal secret devotions. Fuller also stands in the tradition of men such as John Beadle, who in his 17th century work, *The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian*, wrote the following:

That just as the state has its 'diurnals' of affairs, tradesmen keep their shop books, merchants their accounts, lawyers their books of precedents and physicians theirs of experiments, wary heads of households their records of daily disbursements and travelers theirs of things seen and endured. But Christians, who like stewards or factors must one day give strict account to their Lord, have even more to gain by keeping a journal. The godly man should 'keep a strict account of his effectual calling.' If possible, he should 'set down the time when, the place where, and the person by whom he was converted.' He should make note of all

² 'Is the study of Andrew Fuller and Fullerism worthwhile?' *Historia Ecclesiastica: The Weblog of Dr. Michael A.G. Haykin & friends*, July 23rd, 2011.

the men and means that God has at any time used for his good, especially the services of parents, schoolmasters and patrons. He will find it singularly useful to put into his diary 'what Times we have lived in, what Minister we have lived under, what Callings we were of, what Wealth was bestowed on us, what places of Authority and Command were committed to us.' Most important of all, the Christian should record all the mercies of Providence, all the answers vouchsafed by God to his prayers. 'Indeed what is our whole life, but a continued deliverance?'

One also discovers that Fuller was like many Diarists, in that he created his own shorthand system, a system that he employed over the course of his diary-keeping. John Wesley similarly created a most intricate system of shorthand, using all manner of obstacles to stop his code from being broken. It remained so, until Dr. Richard Heitzenrater succeeded in opening to the world, all the hidden passages in the Wesley Journals. It caused quite a stir at the time! Wesley had used his code for many of the entries he made during his formative years at Oxford, 1725-1735. Heitzenrater reported of how he had, "accomplished the monumental task of deciphering the complex web of numbers, letters, and minute marks." He described moreover, how Wesley's personal code incorporated two systems of shorthand, a changing cipher, innumerable cryptic abbreviations, a series of symbols, together with a variety of complex number schemes.

It is believed by scholars that such an involved code surely intended more than the simple saving of space. What we do know for certain is that Wesley's method, though admittedly probably more advanced than most, was by no means an unusual practice. Many of Wesley's contemporaries for example, would use systems of shorthand and codes both in their correspondence as well as journals. What came as something of a surprise was when Heitzenrater revealed that the entries he now opened to the world, did not cloak, "purple passages", but consisted rather of an abundance of the mundane: books Wesley read (over 100 every year), social action he undertook, and his rules for holy living.

The present writer has similarly, no evidence from his research, to think otherwise that the shorthand sections which appear in Fuller's journals, would turn out to be any different in their content. In fact,

where this present writer has been able to decipher shorthand passages, the material consists of the names of certain individuals being mentioned, or simply of a particular issue being reflected upon. More than likely therefore, the remaining undeciphered sections, were either Fuller's way of keeping confidences, or of maintaining some degree of privacy concerning his own spiritual life. It needs to be said however, that he isn't merely hiding what he sees as his shortcomings, for one is able to read his recording many times for example, how cold and unmoved by the people or by the Spirit he believes he has been, how dead and cold he believes his preaching has been, and how little of the Spirit he believes was evidenced as he preached.

One should discover when transcribing or simply reading Fuller's Diary, that it's a spiritually difficult task, for as one reads Fuller's own account of his life, one is inevitably prone to compare their own life with his. To do so, is I believe, both very humiliating and very challenging. For one soon discovers that this is the same Andrew Fuller who rides thousands of miles a year preaching and raising funds for mission and missionaries; who was writing some of the most profound Baptist theology seen; who was being used of God to break the strictures of the then dominant hyper-Calvinism; who was Pastor of the Baptist Church in Kettering for more than thirty years; who struggles to almost breaking point with his family afflictions, including the loss of his first wife and eight of his own children; and yet who repeatedly believes that he is doing so very little of real or lasting import. Demands and pressures on him were such that he recorded his wife as saying to him, "My dear, you have hardly time to speak to me!"

Of course, looking into someone's personal, private thoughts can at times, be rather awkward. Fuller like many Journal keepers, never expected and indeed, never wanted his Journal read by all and sundry. The idea of having it published would have bewildered him, we know this for on Friday, April 30, 1784 for example, he recorded these words in his Diary

Very little exercise today. What reason have I to pray for a revival in my soul! Surely I am to a sad degree sunk into a spirit of indifference: My soul cleaveth to the dust, quicken thou me. I earnestly desire these papers and books, if I should not burn them in my lifetime, may *never be shown, except to very few*

persons, after my death; for such a life as mine I wish never to be imitated.

When I read the life of one whom I think was a good man, I feel apt to account his acquisitions nearly the utmost that can be attained in this life. The fear lest any one should think thus of mine, makes me write this desire.

Fuller was not alone in the wish for his personal papers to be destroyed post-mortem, for as one recent writer on the subject argued, much material from the 17th century is lost for ever because the writers hid or destroyed it. Jonathan Edwards too, gave similar instructions regarding his manuscripts in the following century. We also have the account of Joseph Green, who at the relatively young age (as far as journaling is concerned), of twenty-one, gave these quite detailed instructions for the future of his commonplace book

And if I should dye before I have committed this book to the flames; I give leave to my nearest relation to look over it; but I give a strict charge to them not to expose it to the view of any; And it is my will that this book be viewed by none unless by one person which is nearest related unto me; and now I pray God to help me to write sincerely, humbly, and without ostentation.

It was a real concern for many, that unless the journal was later going to be used as valuable source material for an autobiography or Life, then it should be destroyed soon after the Journaler's death. Cotton Mather recounts such an example from the life of Nathaniel Rogers, who though it was known he kept a diary, "he kept it with so much reservation, that it is not known that ever anyone but himself did read one word of it: and he determined that none ever should; for he ordered a couple of his intimate friends to cast it all into the fire, without looking into the contents of it."

Mather by his own hand, went on to do the very same thing, "My Diaries, wherein I had written the Course of my Study and preaching, and the Resolves of Piety upon my Daily course of Meditation, I have thrown, as useless Papers into the Fire." What treasure has therefore been lost! But that is precisely the opposite of how it was regarded. Part of the rationale for their destruction, is that it would actually be improper for

devotional journals, the very products of one's intimacy with their heavenly Father, ever to be made public. Journaling was regarded as such an integral part of the secret life with God. We also know tangentially, that Beethoven's wish was somewhat similar, that all his music be burned after his death!

It seems that Fuller's concern was that we were not to think he had reached the pinnacle of what was possible as a believer, and therefore aim only that high - which was something which really troubled him. Fuller was only too well aware that he was still a sinner, saved by grace yes, but still very much residing this side of heaven!

Andrew Fuller's Diary is held in mss form at the Bristol Baptist College in England. They are uncertain as to when it arrived there or even why it was sent! The most likely probability is that because his son joined Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol, which really became the nucleus of the Baptist College there, he may simply have brought the diary with him and it stayed in Bristol.

The extant mss are incomplete. We know this to be the case, for the printed editions contain much more material than is preserved in handwritten form.

When the Diaries are finally published by De Gruyter, I have incorporated whatever material is available, both printed and handwritten, and that has resulted in a final word count of a little over 55,000 words, with entries beginning on January 10, 1780 and concluding on August 5, 1813.

In the course of my research, I have discovered that the printed editions and the handwritten originals do differ, sometimes remarkably so and not always for the most apparent reason! There are times when it's clear that the printed editions have added words to clarify the meaning, tenses of verbs were changed, names of people or places were omitted or abbreviated, and on occasions, sermon titles or content was added. But at other times, some very odd changes have been made, and these will be pointed out in the published volume. Fuller begins his Journal in a very appropriate spiritual way with a wonderful vow to God, a fresh renewal of his Covenant with God. He then follows this with detailed supplications: He prays that in the midst of all the religious activity of his day, that he would keep the simplicity of the Gospel close; that God would illuminate his understanding; that he would not be distracted by himself or others, from the truth of Scripture; that he would

continue to live a life of holiness; and that he would continue to declare the full counsel of God.

One major thing we quickly learn about Fuller, is something of just how much he read. In just the second entry of his extant Diary, he reveals his first book of interest, "I have been reading, in *Josephus*, the bloody reign of Herod. What pain is it to read those narrations where truth and virtue fell to the ground, and were finally overcome. I think it helps to enhance the idea of heaven, that this is a world were these shall everlastingly triumph."

From that reading of Josephus onwards, his Diary affords us a wonderful insight into his reading habits and preferences, some of which can be briefly shared here:

August 1780, he's reading one of his favorite authors, "Some savour today in reading Edwards on *The Affections*." That same month he says, "I found my soul drawn out in love to poor souls while reading Millar's account of Eliot's labors among the North American Indians, and their effect on those poor barbarous savages." The following month he is reading Edwards again, "Much affected this morning in reading Edwards's thoughts on evangelical humility, in his *Treatise on the Affections*. Surely there are many that will be found wanting in the great day. 'Lord, is it I?' I cannot help lamenting in reading in Mosheim's *Church History*, how soon, and how much was the religion of Jesus corrupted from its primitive simplicity!"

In February 1781, he is again reading *Edwards on the Affections*! And wishing that the Holy Spirit would open his eyes, and let him into the things he hadn't yet seen! In June he was,

"having some delight in reading Mosheim's *History of the Reformation* and his *History of the 13th and 14th centuries*. Really I am sick in reading so much about monks, mendicant friars, etc. I could have wished the history had more answered to its title - a history of the *church*, but it seems little else than a history of locusts. Some sacred delight in reading more of Mosheim on the coming forth of those champions of the Reformation - Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, etc., into the field. I think I feel their generous fervor in the cause of God and truth. How were the arms of their hands made strong by the mighty God of Jacob!"

In July he is back reading *Mosheim*, “whose partial account of the English Baptists would lead me to indulge a better opinion of various sects, who have been deemed heretics.” The following month he’s with John Owen, “In reading *Dr. Owen*, today, the end of predestination seemed sweet to me; namely, conformity to the image of God’s dear Son.” We then have a gap in the Diary and then it is resumed in July 1784, where he is reading Edwards to some friends, his *Attempt to promote Explicit Agreement in God’s People in Prayer for the Revival of Religion*, “to excite them to the like practice. Felt my heart profited by what I read and much solemnized.”

That same month he records having read part of a poem of John Scott on the cruelties of the English in the East Indies, causing he says, “*artificial famines, etc.*” As is so often the case with Fuller’s reading, it will often result in a response of praise or prayer, or a desire for a change of behavior in his life. “My heart felt most earnest desires that Christ’s kingdom might come, when all these cruelties shall cease. O for the time when neither the scepter of oppression nor heathen superstition shall bear the sway over them! Lord Jesus, set up thy glorious, and peaceful kingdom all over the world!”

Again, more of Edwards that month as he writes, “Read some more of Edwards on Prayer, as also I did last Monday night, with sweet satisfaction.” August he’s with Owen again, “Much pained at heart today read some of *Dr. Owen*. Feel almost a sacred reverence for his character. Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man! O that I might be led into Divine truth!” Then his thoughts turn to his own writing and preaching, “Christ, and his Cross be all my theme.”

“Surely I love his name, and wish to make it the centre in which all the lines of my ministry might meet! The Lord direct my way in respect to publishing! Surely he knows my end is to vindicate the excellency of his character, and his worthiness of being loved.”

October it’s Owen again but with little comment this time, “Rode to Northampton today for an exchange with Mr. R., but a poor day, except a little pleasure in reading some *Memoirs of the life of Dr. Owen*.” In the following two months, he is delving into the sermons of John Gill,

“Reading the above sermons all day today with some pleasure.” Then it’s Bradbury’s and Wilson’s sermons, some of which he says, “I find very profitable!” In January he records that he felt “very tender in reading more of Mr. Bunyan’s *Holy War*, particularly that part where the four captains agree to petition the King for more force.” He goes on, “that same month to read Cotton Mather’s *Student and Preacher* with some profit.” Also more of Bradbury’s Sermons, “with some profit.” He records in fact, that they showed him he was, “still the subject of wretched coldness and carnality of heart!”

The following month he read part of the life of Mr. John Janeway, “with much conviction and tenderness. O my life, how low to his!” “Feel desires to live like that excellent young man, whose life I read yesterday. But O how different is my spirit and life!” In July he records that he felt great tenderness, “in reading some remains of Mr. Mason’s, author of *Songs of Praise to Almighty God*. This appeared to be a life of prayer! But mine, O what is it?”

In February 1786, he records receiving *another* treatise written against him by Mr. Dan Taylor.

“It has rather tended to interrupt me in the work of the day, though I determined not to look into it till tomorrow. Monday I read the above piece. The author discovers an amiable spirit, and there is a good deal of plausibility in some things which he maintains. My mind has been much employed all the week in thinking on the above piece. The more I examine it, the more I perceive it is (though ingeniously wrought together) capable of a solid and effective reply.”

Then there’s a major break until January 1790, when he records he believes he has gained some ground in spiritual things. “I have read some of President Jonathan Edwards’s sermons, which have left a deep impression upon my heart. Have attended more constantly than heretofore to private prayer, and feel a little renewed strength.” But only two months later, he records that his progress had relapsed into indifference, “Yesterday I read President Jonathan Edwards’s 2 sermons *On the Importance of a Thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth*, from Hebrews 5:12. Felt this effect, a desire to rise earlier, to read more, and make the discovery of truth more a business.”

In 1791 his reading of Owen on Spiritual-mindedness had such an effect on him that he records,

“I feel afraid lest all should not be right with me at last! What I have of spirituality, as I account it, seems rather occasional than habitual.” He also records that he had been reading, “several Socinian writers, viz. *Lindsey, Priestley, Belsham, &c.*, and have employed myself in penning down thoughts on the moral tendency of their system. I felt an increasing aversion to their views of things, and feel the ground on which my hopes are built more solid than heretofore.”

There will be one other document included in the volume when it appears, namely Andrew Fuller’s Booklist, and it too is held as a manuscript in Bristol. The title page of the document says: ‘List of Books belonging to Andrew Fuller of Kettering, Secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society.’ The Catalogue is in his own handwriting and is signed, ‘AG Fuller.’ He numbers the books as far as 203 then simply starts listing volumes by name. It is calculated that he lists at least 350 separate works.

There are works by: Eusebius; Charnock; Bunyan’s *Holy War, Pilgrims Progress*, and *The Temple*; Gill’s *Body of Divinity*, and his nine volumes of Exposition (which he marks as belonging to the church); *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*; Calvin’s *Institutes*, and his *Commentary on Acts And on the Four Gospels*; and Locke on *Human Understanding*.

There are many hymn books including, *Erskine’s Serif Songs*; *Faucet’s Hymns*; *Rippon’s Hymns*; *Watts’ Psalms and Hymns*; and *Stennets Hymns*.

There are various collections of sermons, including those by Priestly; Gill; Stanhope; Evans; Erskine; Bradbury; Bellamy; McLaurin; Brine; Spring’s *Sermons to Children*; 2 vols. of *Latimer’s Sermons*; Prince; Shepherd; and Ryland.

There are many books on history and theological debates, including a *History of the Waldenses* and a *History of the Moravians*. There are

various biographies, including a *Life of Brainerd*; a *Life of Watts*; and a *Life of Grub*.

There are books of illustrations, as well as various Atlases and geographies.

There are several books on the subject of baptism, including Booth's *Pedobaptism Examined*; An American volume of baptism; Hall on *Infant Baptism*; and Richards on *Baptism*.

There are several Lexicons, Dictionaries and Biblical language works, including *Brown's 2 Volumes*; *Chambers in 2 volumes*; *Taylor's Lexicon in 2 volumes*; Greek Lexicons; 2 Greek Testaments; 5 volumes of the Septuagint; Hebrew Grammars; and *Van Der Hoot's Hebrew Bible*.

He has many American books, including volumes by Dwight; Hopkins; Bellamy; Isaac Backus; and Smalley.

Then there are books mentioned several times by Jonathan Edwards, including his *History of Redemption*. There are many of Edwards' Sermons, including 8 on Justification. There is also his *Miscellanies*; *On The Will*; *On the Affections*; *Qualifications for Communion*; *Edwards against Chauncy*; and *Last End of God*. There is also a copy of Stoddard's *Safety of Appearing*, and Bellamy's *True Religion Delineated*.

There are volumes too, on prophecy including Winter on *Daniel's Weeks* and *Prophecies applicable to the French Revolution*.

Of course, there are also several books on Shorthand, which he clearly utilized in his own Journals.

He includes various books by Owen, including *Understanding the Scriptures*; *Against Biddle*; *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts*; *On Justice*; and *On the Light of the Holy Spirit*.

Then there are numerous miscellaneous volumes, including Manning's *Diseases of Women*; a Large Family Bible (which must be priceless if his); Milton's *Paradise Lost*; Watts' *Improvement of the Mind*; Cicero's

Orator; 4 volumes of Hume's *Essays*; 3 volumes of Shaftesbury's *Character*; *Belsham Against Wilberforce*; and 2 Volumes of Paine's *Age of Reason*. He also lists many and varied pamphlets, including Dan Rice on 'Slavery'; Booth on "The Slave Trade"; "Thoughts on the Plan for Social Pay"; and Voltaire on 'Philosophy'.

He also lists what he terms 'Old mss and bundles of letters'. We can only wonder at the treasures that would have been included there.