

Understanding Andrew Fuller: Life, Thought, and Legacies, Volume 2. Edited by Nathan A. Finn, Jeff Robinson Sr., and Shane Shaddix. Peterborough, ON: H&E Academic, 2021. ii + 168 pp., paper. ISBN 978-1-989174-90-6

This second of two-volumes supplies an introduction to Andrew Fuller, both as an impetus for further scholarship, and an encouragement to “Baptists and other evangelicals to engage deeply with Fuller’s writings, learn from his insights, and embody the best of his theological vision for the glory of God, the health of the church, and the sake of the nations” (p. 3). Not meant to be exhaustive, this compilation is illustrative, for the editors know the enormity of Fuller’s life and influence. Each author is a convictional Baptist, while the editors (Finn, Robinson, and Shaddix) are decidedly Southern Baptist. This work consists of essays covering a variety of Fuller thought, practice, and vision; serving as “an exercise in *ressourcement* of earlier Baptist thought for the sake of contemporary Baptist renewal” (p. 2). Eight weighty chapters well worth the investment, but three call for a closer look.

“*In Exhortations, Invitations, Precepts, and Threatenings*”: Andrew Fuller, John Owen, and the Free Offer of the Gospel (Ch. 2), Shane Shaddix traces the influences of Jonathan Edwards and John Owen on Fuller. John Owen’s fingerprint: 1) the harmony between election and free offers of the gospel, 2) the harmony between particular redemption and free offers of the gospel, and 3) the proper means of freely offering the gospel to the unconverted (p. 16). Jonathan Edwards’ touch is reflected in the ministerial *mandate* to call *all* people to repentance and faith, “They *can* do this because of their natural ability; they *will not* do this because of their moral inability” (p. 20).

Christ as the Criterion for Preaching: Andrew Fuller and the Abrahamic Narrative (Ch. 6), David G. Norman, Jr. describes Fuller’s aim for Christian preaching—each

sermon text must connect in some legitimate way to the person and work of Christ (p. 104). He provides numerous OT examples and gives several lessons gleaned from Fuller's preaching: 1) every sermon should have a thesis ... one of such importance that if obeyed it will result in eternal salvation, 2) incumbent that every sermon points the hearer to the cross ... cross-centeredness is that which distinguishes *preaching* from preaching the *Gospel*, 3) preachers need to beware the temptation to imitate the orator ... instead imitate the herald, and 4) press the invitation upon their hearers ... with earnest calls (pp. 114–116).

Finally (Ch. 8), Steve Weaver answers *C. H. Spurgeon: A Fullerite?* —for Spurgeon considered Fuller to be the greatest theologian of the century (p. 137). Weaver demonstrates that Spurgeon read and appreciated Fuller, but also consciously and proudly identified himself as a Fullerite (p. 138) i.e., a Calvinist who believes and practices the free offer of the gospel (p. 146). In fact, Fuller and Spurgeon preached similar messages on Jude 3 where Spurgeon credits Fuller's insights into four essentials to a common salvation: 1) need of a Savior (*necessity*), 2) sinners' faith in his death (*vicarious medium*), 3) *freeness* of his grace, and 4) the change of heart which it produces (*holy efficacy*) (pp. 153–154).

Nathan Finn touches on at least six themes running through this work (p. 3), just a couple are highlighted here. First, Fuller's *crucicentrism*, a deep concern for the doctrine of the atonement (though contributors may vary on Fuller's theology of the cross) (p. 3). The atonement permeated every area of Fuller's life, he even contended that the fundamental importance of marriage is “derived from the doctrine of the cross” and that “the common duties of domestic life are enforced from” the principles of the atonement

(p. 54). In every sphere, Fuller's approach was Christ-centered (pp. 103, 119) ... *the truth as it is in Jesus*, gave rise to the conviction that every sermon should contain a portion of the doctrine of salvation by the death of Christ" (pp. 101, 125). Failure to be crucicentric will have its destructive effects (p. 122) and "a sermon ... in which this doctrine has not a place, and I might add, a prominent place, cannot be a *gospel sermon*" (p. 104). Fuller refused to take liberties with the scriptural text to get to the cross (considering it a fundamentally dangerous practice with eternal consequences) (p. 113), though at times his inheritor Spurgeon did.

Next, *conversionism*, that is "God's sovereignty in salvation was compatible biblically with strong appeals for sinners to repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ for their salvation" (p. 3). As he studied the Scriptures and its preaching, Fuller discovered they were replete with "exhortations and invitations to sinners" (p. 8). The gospel's free offer was foundational to Fuller's theological, pastoral, evangelistic, and missionary endeavors (p. 29), so "preachers of the gospel must passionately exhort their hearers to repent and commit themselves to Christ" (p. 13). Charles Bumgardner asserts:

Fuller's renewed pastoral theology was expressed in preaching that "was *plain* in composition and delivery, *evangelical* [willingness to call the unconverted to Christ] in content and concern, and *affectionate* in feeling and application." Something similar may be argued for his church music as a reflection of his pastoral theology (p. 95)

Spurgeon the Fullerite felt that a man would defy his own conscience who preached merely on God's sovereignty at the expense of man's responsibility (p. 146).

Anyone interested in church history, Christian biography, pastoral ministry, or missions will welcome this volume to their library. This book is pastorally rich and missionally motivating. Where does *Understanding Andrew Fuller*—volume 2 belong? It

fits nicely on the preacher's shelf next to *Understanding Andrew Fuller*—volume 1 (H&E Academic, 2021), or Ryan Rindel's *Andrew Fuller's Theology of Revival: Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility in Spiritual Renewal* (Pickwick, 2021). Through this compilation, Finn, Robinson, and Shaddix remind us that, “without missionary activity, personal progress in the faith [will] be stunted” (p. 36). Andrew Fuller has taught us that we need “not [be] ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to *everyone* who believes” (Rom 1:16), to be sure, it is *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation*.

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