

Trammel, Madison. *Fundamentalists in the Public Square: Evolution, Alcohol, and Culture Wars after the Scopes Trial*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2023. 133pp. + 30pp. (front matter) + 37pp. (back matter).

Trammel does remarkable yeoman research for the years 1920–1933 in the newspaperarchive.com database that includes Illinois, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, and uses important published primary sources. Previous studies on fundamentalists have relied on published theological works, periodicals, and manuscript collections. Trammel’s case study provides evidence, although limited by the geographical focus, for the conclusion that the Scopes Trial did not mark a defeat or decline for fundamentalism. The author’s “central question” is whether the antievolution crusade and Prohibition efforts square with retreat from the culture. His conclusion is that “cultural engagement” continued after the Scopes Trial (123).

Efforts against evolution, less visible before events in Dayton, Tennessee, intensified afterwards, based on newspaper coverage—in a number of articles and content. In coming decades, despite the ultimate legislative failures in states, a creationist movement sustained the long-term fight against Darwinism. Newspaper interest in fundamentalism and Prohibition peaked after the Scopes Trial.

The constituencies opposing evolution and alcohol were not synonymous; furthermore, Prohibition counted less toward fundamentalist identity than antievolution. While the book concludes that theological conservatives were the “strongest core of support for Prohibition” (61), it does provide nuance. For example, prominent Baptist leader Edgar Young Mullins equivocated on evolution, but he eventually joined forces against alcohol. Aimee Semple McPherson, Los Angeles Pentecostal evangelist, also serves as evidence for fundamentalist Prohibition efforts.

The book uses Lewis Sperry Chafer, president of Dallas Theological Seminary, an advocate of dispensational theology, as a case study on fundamentalist social action for the era. It concludes that this theology was inconsistent: it both encouraged social action (legislation banning evolution and alcohol) while theoretically focused on the second coming of Christ, who would bring the perfect society. The author concludes that “dispensational activists began to chart a practical theology of cultural engagement at the grassroots level by entering the public fray” (123). Integrating Chafer into the antievolution and Prohibition narratives—rather than presenting him in a separate chapter—would have improved the organization of the book.

The inclusion of Chafer, McPherson, and Mullins in the study raises the important question: should historians use them as evidence although they deliberately did not self-identify as fundamentalists? McPherson was Pentecostal, and few fundamentalists at the time cooperated with her. Many opposed her ministry. J. Gresham Machen, cited in the book, avoided the label *fundamentalist* but found common cause with them. Chafer and Mullins, more so, resisted the association. Their inclusion is appropriate for understanding context, but the “identity” issue needed to be addressed.

One of the best features of the book is the expansive meaning of *fundamentalist* and *evangelical*. The author borrows notions about “cultural engagement” (xxi) and the parameters of fundamentalism and evangelicalism from David W. Bebbington, a British historian who gives an international

understanding to the religious contexts. In addition, chapter 1 provides an overview of fundamentalist historiography.

The founding generation of fundamentalists between the wars opposed evolution and alcohol, but what did they support? They had diverse views on creation and time—literal, long-day, and gap theory. Some were Republicans and others Democrats. The newspapers covered omit the South and the West Coast. Prohibition Party candidate Robert Shuler was active in California. The Reformed wing gets minimal attention; Presbyterian James O. Buswell of Wheaton College was a staunch Prohibitionist. Machen opposed Prohibition, and it cost him a promotion at Princeton Seminary.

Fundamentalist cultural engagement post-Scopes is not a new idea. Several historians have focused on such a participation. Virginia Brereton concentrated on religious education and Tona Hangen on radio. David H. Watt and others (the author of this review included), see a more complex relationship to modern culture, from adaptations to psychology, consumerism, film, and political pluralism, as well as cooperation among denominations. A commitment to the standards of the modern university helps explain the movement's resilience. Keith Bates's *Mainstreaming Fundamentalism* on John R. Rice (missing in Trammel's book) is an example of the modern "book culture."¹ Daniel Bare's *Black Fundamentalists*, on minority participation,² is also absent in Trammel's study, as are women in the books by Margaret Benroth and Arlin C. Migliazzo.

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¹ Keith Bates, *Mainstreaming Fundamentalism: John R. Rice and Fundamentalism's Public Reemergence*, America's Baptists (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2021).

² Daniel R. Bare, *Black Fundamentalists: Conservative Christianity and Racial Identity in the Segregation Era* (New York: New York University, 2021). For a review of this work, see *JBTW* 2, no. 1 (Fall 2021): 103–5.