Atherstone, Andrew, and David Ceri Jones, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Christian Fundamentalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. 715pp. + 20pp. (back matter).

Since the publication of Ernest Sandeen's *The Roots of Fundamentalism* in 1970, there has been a renaissance in historical studies of American fundamentalism. This hefty volume is the culmination of over fifty years of scrutiny of the movement. It is not a perfect work, but it provides a summary of relevant scholarship and makes a significant contribution to the literature.

In writing about fundamentalism, the handbook wrestles with a problem that plagues every scholar dealing with this subject—definition. Exactly what is fundamentalism, and who deserves the label *fundamentalist*? Many writers within the fundamentalist movement define fundamentalism in terms of their own practice and that of their constituency, which is limiting. One could limit a study to "card-carrying" fundamentalists, those who openly identify with the movement, but does such a delimitation do full justice to the movement? Brian Stanley puts the matter succinctly: "Defining fundamentalism, and distinguishing it from other styles of conservative Protestantism, is no straightforward task, as this Handbook well illustrates" (495).

The editors survey the definitions that have appeared in the scholarly literature (3–18), but they do not decide on a single option, instead allowing each author discretion. One result of this editorial decision, however, is that the contributors to this volume are rather diverse in their approaches. Paul Emory Putz blends common theological and sociological approaches as he identifies "common patterns" of fundamentalists (which he agrees are not universal), including "a predominantly white racial identity, a belief in dispensationalism, a commitment to Keswick spirituality, and an outsider perspective—a sense of cultural marginalization—influenced by adherence to strict behavioral standards" (419). Robert Glenn Howard and Megan Zahay are more theological as they note four "traits" of fundamentalists: "biblical literalism, spiritual rebirth, the need to evangelize, and the 'end times' interpretation of biblical prophecy" (652). Sometimes the interpretations clash. D. G. Hart gives a nuanced argument for why Presbyterian confessionalists such as J. Gresham Machen are not really "fundamentalists" (92–107), while John Maiden anachronistically identifies B. B. Warfield as a fundamentalist (167).

Mark Hutchinson deals adroitly with the challenge of definition. He notes that the term *fundamentalism* can be useful "on a local level" but "imposed across the board as a form of multipurpose 'swiss army knife' term, it can be misleading" (688). He identifies three categories of definition: "self-identifying" (those who actually label themselves as fundamentalist), "criteria identified" (those classified as fundamentalist, often by outsiders, by adherence to similar doctrines and ideas), and "other identified" (a term from outside the ideology, such as academics and journalists, to describe fundamentalists as "other" than the observer, those "not on our side") (691–95).

A particular problem faced by the authors is what to do with movements that are similar yet distinct, those sharing some characteristics and even sources with historic fundamentalism but rarely defining themselves in this way. Gerald King, for instance, sees fundamentalism, the Holiness movement, and Pentecostalism as sharing common roots in Pietism (133). Yet how far does such a

common source allow these movements to be treated together? Do we lose precision by generalizing too much?

The book has many strengths. Part I, "Historical Developments," may be the best section, with first-rate studies that include considerations of *The Fundamentals* (by Geoffrey R. Treloar), big-tent revivalism (Josh McMullen, summarizing his longer monograph[1]), Spurgeon and the Downgrade Controversy (Thomas Breimaier), the Scopes trial (Constance Areson Clark), Princeton and fundamentalism (D. G. Hart), and fundamentalism in Northern Ireland (Andrew R. Holmes). Each of these articles provides full accounts of the chosen topic with relevant and perceptive observations. Furthermore, the bibliographies in nearly every article are unmatched and a rich resource for anyone wanting to read more about fundamentalism.

Considering how often studies of fundamentalism focus on political or socio-economic interpretations, the handbook provides a commendable emphasis on theology (219–342), although it concentrates on topics seen as peculiar to fundamentalism, such as inerrancy, creationism, conversion, ecumenism/separatism, and premillennialism. The inclusion of conversion is notable, showing how fundamentalism draws from the broader evangelical heritage. An approach that would further enrich study of the topic would be to discuss the points that fundamentalists themselves identified as their "fundamentals" and what they taught about them. Doing so would give fair place to the role of theology in the movement.

Other topics may be useful to the reader, depending on his or her interests. Readers can delve into essays on education (home school, higher education), cultural practices (alcohol, popular music, sports), current issues (abortion, the environment), as well as standard academic categories (gender, sexuality, class, race). The drawback with some of these topics goes back to the challenge of definition. Not all of the individuals and groups discussed under these headings would identify themselves specifically as fundamentalists (Pentecostals, conservative Anglicans, CCM artists, etc.). The reader will have to discern.

Because the volume addresses such a wide range, conservative Christian readers will find some ideas that challenge them and others that they challenge. Yet there are certainly insights to be gained. Emily Suzanne Johnson, for example, notes how fundamentalists (and other conservatives) shifted from a traditional hierarchical view of gender roles to a more nuanced complementarian approach (450). She credits this development to the fact that women influenced the movement by filling the leadership roles allowed them in the fundamentalist subculture. But one might also suggest the change displays the tendency of Christians to respond to cultural challenges by closer attention to the testimony of Scripture. One of the values of history is helping Christians discern which ideas they hold are merely cultural and which are actually based on Scripture.

Of course, there are problems with the volume. Often the authors judge fundamentalism not on its own terms but according to the authors' viewpoint. There are specific critiques as well. Paul Gutjahr repeats Stewart Cole's mistake from *History of Fundamentalism* (1931) that the Niagara Bible

[1] Josh McMullen, *Under the Big Top: Big Tent Revivalism and American Culture, 1885–1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Conference put forth a five-point summary of essentials (226), when the "five points of fundamentalism" are a later development. Also, although C. I. Scofield attended the Niagara Bible Conference and addressed it, he did not lead it (227).[2] However, almost none of the contributions in this book are without some value. It provides an important resource in studying the history and nature of fundamentalism.

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[2] To give Guthjar credit, however, he has a brief, clear discussion of the Common Sense Realism school of philosophy—the idea that "all people enjoyed a 'common sense' that enabled thoughtful observers to recognize truth when they saw it" and that in addition to the normal human senses all people shared "a common moral sense . . . that intuitively moved them to act on truth when they encountered it" (220). Those who encounter discussions of Common Sense Realism in their study of American Christianity will appreciate his description.