

Andrew Fuller, No Calvinist

Never before have I written a letter to the editor of any periodical, nor did I intend to do so this time, thinking that surely someone else would “take up the cudgel.” Having waited several months, however, with no one else having addressed the problem that troubled me, I felt I should write.

I refer to the article in the April 1, 1997 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, entitled “If God Is Sovereign, Is Evangelism Urgent and Necessary?” I wish to make it clear that I have no problem with the theme of the article or its conclusion, but with several statements made in the article.

In the first place, Brother Allen Brummel suggests that Andrew Fuller was a Calvinist and a teacher of Calvinism: “Due largely to the theological influence of Andrew Fuller, a fellow Particular Baptist minister, Carey came to see that evangelism and Calvinism could be reconciled” (p. 297).

Now it is certainly true that evangelism and Calvinism can be reconciled, and it may even be that William Carey truly saw how they could be reconciled, but if he did, he did not learn this from Andrew Fuller. Fuller was most emphatically neither a Calvinist nor a teacher of it, but an enemy.

If Carey learned anything from Fuller, he learned Arminianism, Amyrauldianism, Grotianism, and Neonomianism, not Calvinism. Fuller’s views of man’s natural condition were Arminian; of the atonement, Grotian; of the extent and efficacy of the atonement, Amyrauldianian; and of the law, Neonomian.

In the quotation on page 297 of the *Standard Bearer* Fuller’s errant views of man’s condition are plainly stated. It is not clear from whom the quotation is taken, Carey or Timothy George (the author of the book referred to). In any case it does represent Fuller’s views. The last part of the quotation states: “The failure to believe stemmed not from any physical or ‘natural inability,’ but rather from a ‘moral inability’ which was the result of a perverted human will.”

This is nothing but regurgitated Arminianism, straight from the gullet of Fuller. He taught, as the quotation shows, that man’s depravity consisted *only* in an unwillingness to obey God’s law and to heed the gospel summons. As far as his nature was concerned he was perfectly *able* to do so, he only *would not* do so. This has been well expressed in the phrase “he could if he would.”

Thus Fuller emphatically rejected man’s “natural inability” and denied thereby also the biblical and Reformed doctrine of total depravity. This was the cornerstone of a whole aberrant system of “theology” which rejected substitutionary satisfaction for sin, a strictly particular atonement, etc.

While we certainly need articles in the *Standard Bearer* on missions, please let us not have Andrew Fuller held up as Calvinist or even as a friend of Calvinism, nor his views represented as a proper biblical “reconciliation” of God’s sovereignty and missions.

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