

this life. Anybody who fears God, regardless of what they believe, is acceptable to Him. Any punishment in hell will be remedial.

This book would have been easier to read if Taliaferro had given a summary of his beliefs. It takes a little bit of digging, but those beliefs do eventually come through. At the core of these beliefs, Taliaferro is a universalist. He does little exegesis, and it is very unlikely that many will be convinced by his arguments.

I do, however, recommend this book. Based upon his own words, I assume that he is a believer. If so, he will be in the kingdom. But he is a believer who now denies many fundamental doctrines of the NT. Even though many say it is not possible, he shows us that a believer can indeed deny the fundamentals of the faith. As such, his value exists in being a warning to all of us. Any of us can make a shipwreck of our faith. If we do, we can even try to convince others to follow in those footsteps.

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Calvinism: A Biblical and Theological Critique. Edited by David L. Allen and Steve W. Lemke. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2022. 540 pp. Hardcover, \$39.99.

Until July 31, 2022, David Allen was the Distinguished Professor of Preaching and Director of the Southwestern Center for Expository Preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. Steve Lemke is Vice President for Institutional Assessment and Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. *Calvinism: A Biblical and Theological Critique* is the second book on the subject of Calvinism that they have edited together. The first was, *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (B&H Academic, 2010), which came about as a result of the John 3:16 Conference held in 2008 at First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia. Four of the original chapters from *Whosoever Will* are retained in the new volume, but have been “revised and updated” (p. 8).

In the new work, “the focus is not on Southern Baptists specifically, as was *Whosoever Will*, but on the broader evangelical world” (p. 8). It “includes authors from the Baptist, Methodist, and Arminian

traditions” (p. 8). The contributors “do not all agree on the security of the believer” (p. 9); however, “none of the authors in this project is a Pelagian, a semi-Pelagian, or a five-point Calvinist,” and all “join the long history of the church in affirming that Pelagianism is a heresy” and “oppose the ‘openness of God’ perspective” (p. 9). I would classify contributors Brian Abasciano, Roger Olson, J. Matthew Pinson, and Ben Witherington as Arminians.

Calvinism: A Biblical and Theological Critique is divided into three parts: (1) a Biblical and theological critique of the soteriology of five-point Calvinism; (2) historical issues with Calvinism; and (3) crucial theological, Biblical, and ecclesiological issues with Calvinism. Acknowledgments, abbreviations, and very brief information about each of the contributors precede an introduction by the editors, each of whom also wrote a chapter. The book concludes with an epilogue, a very good appendix on semi-Pelagianism, and name, subject, and Scripture indexes. I was surprised that there was no bibliography of at least the books and articles referenced in the book’s footnotes.

The first section of the book offers a critique of each of the five points of Calvinism. The chapters not only vary greatly in length, but are also of unequal quality.

Two-thirds of the first chapter on total depravity are spent on the concept of original sin. Although Adam Harwood does a thorough job on that subject, he devotes only eight pages to a critique of total depravity. The result is an inadequate treatment of the subject.

Chapter two on unconditional election by Leighton Flowers is, surprisingly, the shortest of the chapters on the five points of Calvinism. Unfortunately, it, likewise, is inadequate. The preeminent Calvinist proof text for unconditional election (Acts 13:48) is not even mentioned, nor are the subjects of God’s decrees and reprobation. The relationship between predestination and election is not discussed. The omission I find most glaring is the failure to interact with the most infamous statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith: “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass” (3:1).

Although limited atonement is the most controversial and disputed of the five points of Calvinism, it is actually unnecessary to the Calvinistic system. If men have the inability to believe on Christ

unless they are elected to salvation and called by irresistible grace, then whether Christ died for them makes absolutely no difference. They can't be saved no matter what. As the author of the massive work, *The Extent of the Atonement* (2016), David Allen is eminently qualified to write the chapter on limited atonement. He begins with a simple yet profound statement: "Limited atonement is a doctrine in search of a text" (p. 71) and concludes that "limited atonement is a doctrine that is hermeneutically flawed, theologically unsound, and logically defective" (p. 127). This is by far one of the best chapters in the book.

After a thorough discussion of what Calvinists mean by irresistible grace, Steve Lemke in chapter four considers what the Bible says about resistible grace. And how could he not do otherwise, since the concept of irresistible grace is nowhere to be found in Scripture? Lemke examines key texts affirming resistible grace in the OT, the NT, and the ministry and teaching of Jesus, as well as in the all-inclusive invitations in Scripture, in the Prophets, by Jesus, by the apostles, and in Revelation. He concludes that "the Scriptures contain significant evidence against irresistible grace," that "the Bible specifically teaches that the Holy Spirit can be resisted," and that "God's grace, by His own intent and design, is *resistible*, and choosing Christ is *voluntary* (guided by the conviction and convincing of the Holy Spirit)" (p. 150). Lemke then examines Calvinist proof texts for irresistible grace and finds them wanting. He also tackles the Calvinist theological arguments that "irresistible grace is required for God to be sovereign," and "it is necessary for God to receive glory" (p. 150). This is another of the book's best chapters.

In the fifth chapter, Ken Keathley writes about eternal security and assurance of salvation. His position "is very close to the once-saved-always-saved view" (p. 208). He believes that perseverance "should be understood as a faith that cannot be annihilated and therefore persists" and concludes that it "should be viewed more as a promise than a requirement" (p. 209). I was glad to see him emphasize that "there are rewards that are subsequent to salvation for the believer to win or lose" (p. 209). Although Keathley interacts quite a bit with Thomas Schreiner and Ardel Caneday, authors of *The Race Set before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (1991), he offers little interaction with Calvinism as a whole, relative to its fifth point.

The book's second section contains three historical discussions: Calvinism is Augustinianism, dissent from Calvinism in the Baptist tradition, and a Wesleyan critique of Calvinism. In the first, Kenneth Wilson destroys Calvinism's "biblical foundation" of "Augustine's deterministic interpretations of Scripture" (p. 236). He concludes that Augustine "baptized his prior pagan philosophies and religion into Christianity, resulting in an unrecognizable doctrinal conglomeration" (p. 237). In the second, J. Matthew Pinson contributes a learned and fascinating historical study that will be of special interest to Baptists. In the third, Ben Witherington offers not his own critique of Calvinism, but that of the Methodist theologian Richard Watson (1781-1833). One of the most important objections of Wesleyan Arminian theology to Calvinism is that it "besmirches the very character of God" (p. 288). It is unfortunate, though, that Witherington also uses his contribution to promote his Wesleyan Arminian theology. He muddles salvation by grace and slights justification. I am actually a little surprised that Witherington's contribution was included in the book.

The third section of the book "addresses a variety of crucial issues from theological, Biblical, and ecclesiological perspectives" (p. 10). These are expanded treatments of things that could have been addressed in the chapters on the five points of Calvinism: Romans 9, corporate and personal election, the character of God, determinism and human freedom, evil and God's sovereignty, and the public invitation. The contribution by William W. Klein on "corporate and personal election" is an especially welcome and necessary supplement to chapter two on unconditional election.

The epilogue by Trevin Wax is a plea for Calvinists and non-Calvinists to work together for the gospel. This is the other subpar contribution to the book. Trevin professes to be a modified four-point Calvinist (p. 483). That alone should disqualify him from contributing. Although he personally believes that "faith precedes regeneration," he qualifies that with the remark that "that faith, however, remains a gift of God and springs from the effectual call" (p. 483). But because Calvinism *does* maintain that regeneration precedes faith, I fail to see how Calvinists and non-Calvinists can agree on a gospel that they can work for together.

Calvinism: A Biblical and Theological Critique is one of the few thorough books against Calvinism since the publication of the revised edition of my book *The Other Side of Calvinism* in 1999. I recommend

it as a supplemental antidote to combat the resurgence of Calvinism in the Southern Baptist Convention.

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The Hope of Life after Death: A Biblical Theology of Resurrection.

By M. Jeff Brannon. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2022. 185 pp. Paper, \$24.00.

This book is part of the *Essential Studies in Biblical Theology* series, which traces central doctrines through the Bible, starting with Genesis 1–3. Since these studies are introductory, the intended audience consists of students and lay people. Brannon maintains that Christians focus on the death of Christ, but that little is written about the significance of His resurrection with regard to salvation and discipleship. He writes from a Covenant theology perspective.

Readers of the *JOTGES* will agree with certain points made by Brannon. He says that faith in Christ leads to eternal life (p. 4). Those who believe in Jesus have eternal life that has already begun (p. 95). The Gospel of John shows that Jesus gives eternal life to all who believe in Him and that the miracles the Lord performed were done to provoke faith (p. 136). John 3:16 says that eternal life is given through faith in Christ. The Gospel of John teaches that the believer has spiritual life in the present and will experience resurrection in the future (p. 104).

Brannon rightly points out that many have a wrong view of “heaven.” It will not be a place where believers sit around playing harps. He says that Christians will have various skills and jobs to do. They will also eat food (p. 162). Even though our bodies will be glorified, there will be a continuity between our present and future bodies (p. 157). Eternity will not be a place of misty spirits floating about. It will be an exciting place.

The author also correctly states that believers who die are with the Lord. He calls this the “intermediate state” (p. 147).

While these statements are accurate, Brannon is not consistent. Though not a major feature of the book, his Reformed theology comes through on certain occasions. For example, He seems to forget about having said that eternal salvation is by faith when he declares that the saving gospel includes repentance of sins and turning to God (pp.