
40 Questions about Calvinism. By Shawn D. Wright. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2019. 303 pp. Paper, \$24.99.

On my bookshelves, I have several books in the Kregel Academic “40 Questions” series and find the format very practical, even if I don’t fully agree with all of the answers given to every question. However,

40 Questions about Calvinism is quite different from the other titles in the series. It is a polemic for Calvinism, as much as Loraine Boettner's *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination*.

I should have known this was the case because of the book's blurbs. It is recommended by Thomas Schreiner, Wayne Grudem, and Ligon Duncan. Duncan is the chancellor of Reformed Theological Seminary. The Arminian Matthew Pinson, who also contributed a blurb, says that he highly recommends, "this erudite and well-written volume for those who want to gain a fuller understanding of the Calvinistic system of thought." And that is exactly what the book presents as true—the Calvinistic system of thought.

Shawn D. Wright is professor of church history at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and one of the pastors at Clifton Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky. In 2007, he co-edited, with Thomas Schreiner, *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*.

40 Questions about Calvinism is divided into four parts: Introductory Questions; Questions about Salvation; Additional Theological Questions; and Practical Questions. Parts 1 and 2, which contain the bulk of the questions, are further subdivided into sections. Each section generally concludes with a summary and five "reflections questions." Some of the questions are split into two parts to help the author arrive at a total of forty questions (11 & 12, 16 & 17, and 24 & 25). The four parts of the book are preceded by an introduction. The book also contains a Scripture index and a "select" bibliography of "twelve resources—eleven books and one introduction to a book—arguing for Calvinism in a biblical manner as well as a recent comprehensive defense of the Arminian position" (p. 297). The one Arminian source cited is Roger Olson's *Arminian Theology*. There are no books mentioned in the bibliography, text, or footnotes that present the Biblicist position which rejects both Calvinism and Arminianism.

The structure of the book is deceptive. The five points of Calvinism are introduced in Question 2 and expanded upon in Questions 18-30. This occupies more than a third of the book. Other questions could easily be incorporated into the questions relating to the five points of Calvinism.

40 Questions about Calvinism contains every teaching of Calvinism found in any book in defense of Calvinism: Calvinism is equated with the gospel; to deny Calvinism is to deny salvation by grace alone;

one is either a Calvinist or an Arminian; the Westminster Confession and Canons of Dort are authoritative documents; regeneration precedes faith; God must grant repentance and faith to the elect so they can believe; lordship salvation; salvation is not certain until the final judgment; God made a decree or decrees in eternity past; God has foreordained everything; God is not responsible for sin even though He foreordained everything; the "world" doesn't really mean the "world"; "all men" doesn't really mean "all men"; election and predestination are to eternal salvation; and free will is an illusion.

The author doesn't hide the fact that this is a book to promote Calvinism. In fact, on the first page of his introduction he says: "My hope is that after reading this book, you'll be convinced that Calvinism is correct because you see its contours clearly taught throughout Scripture" (p. 9). Although the other books in the "40 Questions" series that I have seen are generally valuable books, *40 Questions about Calvinism* is not one of them. I do not recommend it.

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