Clarion Review

Religion

Salvation Elucidated
James D. Wilmes
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Three Stars (out of Five)

Multiple Christian denominations have disagreed for nearly two thousand years now about what salvation is, how one receives it, and what its effects are. In *Salvation Elucidated*, James Wilmes explores the major issues surrounding salvation and provides scriptural support for his interpretations.

Opening with a chapter on the total depravity and sinfulness of humanity, Wilmes establishes the certain need for salvation. In the second and third chapters, he addresses a breadth of topics—from the validity of scripture and God's purpose for humanity to the role of Jesus's crucifixion. In attempting to cover each important subject briefly, however, the author leaves readers with only a cursory understanding of each and detracts from his primary focus.

A summary of the relation of faith and works to salvation is presented in the first half of chapter four; the application of John Stuart Mill's inductive inference analysis that follows, however, is unfortunately more confusing than enlightening. The fifth chapter, on Arminianism and Calvinism, recounts both schools of thought, explains where each has erred, and concludes with revised five-point statements for each. The remaining chapters are focused on addressing the (perennially controversial) unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, and Heaven and Hell at the end times.

Despite Wilmes's lack of formal theological education, his exploration of the issues covered demonstrates that he has thoroughly and thoughtfully read the Bible and consulted multiple biblical reference sources. The many diagrams, tables, and flowcharts provided throughout display complex points; explanations of Greek words used in the early New Testament text and how they have been translated into English help ground Wilmes's arguments in scripture. While the author surely meant these things to be helpful, many readers may find them to be confusing. Generally, though, Wilmes employs a writing style that is accessible for

adults who are looking for a discussion of salvation at a level below seminary texts but above popular spiritual self-help books.

Since Wilmes provides support for most of his conclusions, the assertions he makes without any scriptural, theological, or scientific citations stand out. Overall, *Salvation Elucidated* achieves its goal of explaining the author's interpretation of Christian salvation and related concepts. Theologically conservative and liberal Christians alike will find their views challenged by Wilmes's exploration of scripture. The text may be a helpful resource for ministers and laypersons who wish to consider the mystery of salvation in more depth.

William Gee