

Is Irresistible Grace Unbiblical?

A Response to Steve Lemke's Arminian Objections

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The debate between Calvinists and Arminians continues to rage among Southern Baptists today, as demonstrated in the publication of *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, a volume of essays from the recent John 3:16 conference. In particular, Steve Lemke's chapter, "A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace," is dedicated to refuting the Calvinists position of irresistible grace, the belief that God effectually calls and regenerates the sinner from death to new life.¹ As opposed to the gospel call to all people which can be resisted, the effectual call is intended only for those whom God has unconditionally elected. The Calvinists position, sometimes called monergism, concludes that effectual calling and regeneration logically and causally precede man's faith in conversion.² Monergism stands in direct tension with synergism, the view held by Arminians that God's saving grace can be resisted. While God provides a prevenient grace to all, such grace is not successful unless man exercises his free will to cooperate with it. Therefore, for the Arminian, God's act of regeneration is contingent upon man's free will to believe. Consequently, faith precedes regeneration in the *ordo salutis*. Lemke argues that Calvinists have no biblical warrant in affirming the doctrine of irresistible grace. To the contrary, Lemke seeks to argue for the Arminian position, namely, that God's grace is dependent upon the will of man for its success and efficacy.

Space does not permit me to respond to Lemke's entire chapter, the first half of which focuses on his biblical presentation and the latter half on his theological assessment. The latter half consists of seven theological and philosophical objections to irresistible grace and compatibilism.³ Readers should consult the writings of theologians like Bruce Ware, John Frame, D. A. Carson, and John Feinberg who have extensively demonstrated the shortcomings of libertarian freedom (as well as Arminianism in general) and at the same time have ably defended a compatibilist framework.⁴ It is my purpose here simply to focus on that which is at the very center of Lemke's argument, namely, Lemke's interpretation of key Scriptures which he believes eliminate the doctrine of irresistible grace and instead support the Arminian view that God's saving grace can be resisted unless the sinner cooperates with it by his own free will (synergism). It will be demonstrated in what follows that Lemke's exegesis is erroneous, as he fails both to interpret Scripture in light of its full context and to take into consideration *all* of Scripture. Conse-

quently, not only is Lemke's rejection of irresistible grace unbiblical but so is his affirmation of synergism, which makes the saving grace of God dependent upon man's free will, thereby exalting man's free will over God's sovereign prerogative.

Problems with Lemke's Exegesis

1. Lemke fails to refute the scriptural distinction between the general gospel call to all and the special effectual call to the elect.

Lemke believes he has refuted the Reformed doctrine of irresistible grace by appealing to passages which say that sinners have resisted and rejected God. Lemke begins by appealing to Proverbs 1:22–26, Hosea 11:1–9, Psalm 78:10, Psalm 81:11–13, and Jeremiah 32:33 where Israel has turned her back on Yahweh, refusing to heed His call to repentance and life. Lemke then compares these verses to Acts 7:51 where Stephen rebukes the Jews for being stiff-necked, “always resisting the Holy Spirit” just as their fathers did. Lemke does admit that Calvinists do qualify their doctrine of irresistible grace by appealing to the outward, gospel call which goes out to all people and can be resisted and the inward, special or effectual call whereby God irresistibly draws the sinner to Himself. Unsatisfied, Lemke rejects such a distinction, arguing that it cannot make sense of the passages he lists because the “Jews, after all, were God's chosen people, and the entirety of the Jewish people were covered under the covenant, not just individual Jews But these divinely elected people have not only rejected Jesus as Messiah but resisted the Holy Spirit through many generations in history. Therefore, it would seem that God's grace is resistible, even among the elect who are eligible to receive the effectual call.”⁵

Moreover, Lemke also appeals to several passages in the life of Jesus. For example in Matthew 23:37 (cf. Luke 13:34) Jesus cries out that though He longed for Jerusalem, seeking to gather her children like a hen gathers her chicks, she was not willing. Lemke concludes that God's grace through Christ was resisted since man was unwilling. Indeed, if Jesus believed in an effectual, irresistible grace only for the elect then “His apparent lament over Jerusalem would have been just a disingenuous act, a cynical show because He knew that God had not and would not give these lost persons the necessary conditions for their salvation.”⁶ Lemke argues the same in Luke 18:18 where the rich young ruler refuses to follow Jesus for eternal life. “Jesus would not grant him eternal life unless he was willing to make a total commitment of his life to God, but the young ruler was unwilling.”⁷ And again, concerning Luke 13:24–28 where Jesus says it is harder for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven than a camel to enter the eye of a needle, Lemke states, “Of course, if Jesus were a Calvinist, He never would have suggested that it was harder for rich persons to be saved by God's irresistible grace than poor persons. Their wills would be changed immediately and invincibly upon hearing God's effectual call. It would be no harder for a rich person to be saved by God's

monergistic and irresistible calling than it would be for any other sinner. But the real Jesus was suggesting that their salvation was tied in some measure to their response and commitment to His calling.⁸ Likewise, in Matthew 21:28–32 Lemke argues that in the parable of the two sons the distinction between the two is not that one was a son and the other was not but rather that one son resisted and the other obeyed. The same is true in Jesus' parable of the vineyard where wicked tenants continually reject the owner, even to the point of killing his own son (Matthew 21:33–44). Here is yet another example, says Lemke, where “the key differential was whether persons were willing to be responsive to the Word of God.”⁹ Finally, Lemke appeals to the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1–23), where seed falls on different soils with only one sprouting up to life. “Again, the variable is not the proclamation of the Word [seed] but the *response* of the individual.”¹⁰

There are several major problems with Lemke's interpretation of these passages. First, Lemke fails to recognize the complexity of the term “elect” in the Old Testament. God elects Israel as His chosen people, but within Israel there are both those who are truly saved and those who are not.¹¹ Paul recognizes this in Romans 9:6 when he states that not all Israel is Israel. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish between historical election and eternal election. As John Frame observes, God can elect a nation in history but within this people God has eternally and salvifically elected only some to salvation while rejecting others.¹² Such a truth is evident in the New Testament as well. In his ministry, Christ elects twelve disciples. However, not all of these are eternally and salvifically elect as is apparent with Judas. The case of Judas is parallel to Saul in the Old Testament. While God has historically elected Israel and Saul as her king, not all within Israel, Saul included, are eternally and salvifically elect. Therefore, Israel is elected both for service and salvation but while all within Israel are historically elected for service, not all are eternally elected for salvation (cf. Romans 3:1–2; 9:4–5). While all of Israel has been circumcised not all have received the circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29).

Lemke applies certain Old Testament passages as if all in Israel were salvifically and eternally elected, an assertion which contradicts Paul in Romans 9. With such an assumption, Lemke then concludes that since Israel rejects Yahweh grace can never be irresistible or effectual. Lemke simply ignores the biblical distinction between a historical election and an eternal, salvific election. With such a distinction in mind one can rightly interpret these OT passages as a gospel call to all of Israel to repent, though only some (the elect) will be effectually called to salvation.

Second, Lemke insists that all of the passages quoted above cannot be solved by the Reformed distinction between the gospel call and the effectual call and yet Lemke fails to address those passages that the Reformed believe support such a distinction. Is one simply to take Lemke's word that such a distinction is unjustified when Lemke neglects to refute the distinction in the first place? To the contrary, several passages clearly support such a distinction. For example, in His

parable of the wedding feast Jesus compares two groups: those who were invited but did not come and those whom the King gathered (Matthew 22:1–14). Jesus concludes, “For many are called, but few are chosen” (22:14). It is clear in this passage that the first group received a general, gospel call or invitation that can be resisted and is for all people. However, the former group received a much different call. Indeed Luke’s account uses strong language to distinguish this second group’s calling from the first, for the master commands his servant saying, “Go out to the highways and hedges and *compel* people to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). Here the guests are compelled to enter into the master’s house, a calling very different from the invitation to the first group. Likewise, in Romans 8:30 the gospel call is distinguished from the effectual call. Paul states, “And those whom He predestined He also called, and those whom He called He also justified, and those whom He justified He also glorified” (Romans 8:30). If, as Lemke believes, there is only one call to all people then Paul’s argument is deeply problematic because it is not true that all those whom God calls He also justifies. However, Paul is here speaking of the effectual call, whereby those called will necessarily be justified and glorified.¹³ Calling is not contingent upon man’s will in this passage. Again the effectual call is evident in 1 Corinthians 1:22–24, “For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The gospel of Christ crucified is preached (gospel call to all) and Jews and Gentiles reject it. However, to those who are effectually called that same gospel is the power and wisdom of God which saves. As Welty states, “Clearly for Paul ‘the called’ are not those who merely hear the gospel but those who in fact embrace it. They are called *effectually*.”¹⁴ Many other passages could be listed in support of the distinction between the gospel call and the effectual call (cf. Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:6–8; 26:16–23; Romans 10:8–15; 1 Corinthians 15:1–8; 2 Peter 1:10; Jude 1), but it is evident that such a distinction is inherently biblical, contrary to Lemke.

Moreover, it is important to note that since this distinction exists in Scripture, all of those passages used by Lemke and cited above simply support the gospel call to all people whereby God commands repentance and promises eternal life. Yes, in these passages sinners resist God, but such a resistance is a resistance of the outward gospel call, not of the inward, effectual call.

2. Lemke fails to consider how total depravity impacts commands in Scripture to believe.

Lemke spends pages citing a number of passages which he calls “All-Inclusive Invitations in Scripture” (Joel 2:32; Matthew 7:24; 10:32–33; 11:6, 28; 12:50; 16:24–25; John 1:7, 9; 3:15–16; 4:13–14; 6:40, 51; 7:17, 37; 8:51; 11:26; 12:46; Acts 2:21; 10:32, 43; Romans 9:33; 10:11, 13; 1 John 2:23; 4:15; 5:1; Revelation 3:20; 22:17).¹⁵ According to Lemke, these passages (which he simply lists with

little commentary), disprove irresistible grace because in them God *commands* all people to repent and believe in Christ and *promises* that if they do they will inherit eternal life.¹⁶ However, Lemke fails to consider how the pervasiveness of depravity impacts the sinner's ability to act upon these invitations in Scripture. In other words, man is dead in sin, a slave to sin, and therefore utterly unable to exercise anything of spiritual value towards Christ, faith included (cf. Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1–5; John 3:3, 5). Yes, God does offer salvation to those who believe and, yes, Christ does promise eternal life to those who trust in Him, but this in no way implies that man is able to accept Christ, for Scripture everywhere affirms that man is unwilling and unable to will that which is good due to his slavery and bondage to sin and the devil. Man's depravity is so pervasive that his will itself is in bondage to sin and utterly helpless until God, by an effectual act of sovereign grace, awakens that dead sinner to new life, so that he may repent and trust in Christ.

3. Lemke fails to distinguish between God's revealed will and decretive will in salvation.

Lemke cites numerous passages where God is said to desire the salvation of all people (Matthew 18:14; 23:37; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). Lemke concludes from such passages that if God desires the salvation of all then it is preposterous to think that God would effectually call some while refusing to call others. Once again, Lemke disregards the biblical distinction between God's moral, revealed will, whereby He commands all to repent and believe, desiring the salvation of all people, and God's decretive will whereby He eternally and unconditionally decrees all things, including those who will and will not be saved (Genesis 50:20; Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 46:10; Daniel 4:34–35; Matthew 11:25–26; Acts 2:23; Romans 9:18; Ephesians 1:11). As John Piper and D. A. Carson have thoroughly shown such a distinction does justice to God's universal love whereby he desires that all be saved and God's particular, special, and saving love whereby he immutably and unconditionally decrees that only some be saved.¹⁷ Regarding the latter, God states, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated" (Romans 9:13; cf. Malachi 1:2–3).¹⁸

The Biblical *Ordo Salutis* and Lemke's Failure to Discuss Certain Scriptures

In reading Lemke's chapter against irresistible grace, one is struck by Lemke's decision to ignore a host of Scriptures which undoubtedly support irresistible grace. It is obvious by now that on issues such as the gospel call and effectual call as well as the revealed will and decretive will Lemke fails to discuss passages that support such distinctions. Had he taken advantage of his opportunity to deal with these arguments, he could have strengthened his discussion greatly. We must not speculate as to why he omitted this discussion, but without dealing with pas-

sages such as John 3:3–8, 6:37, 44, 65, and 1 John 5:1, the reader should conclude that his case is far from adequate and even further from proved. Such passages, nevertheless, deserve a hearing. First, however, we must address those passages that Lemke believes support the Arminian view that faith precedes regeneration. Lemke cites three types of passages.¹⁹

(1) There are a number of passages which state that if a sinner believes he will receive “eternal life.” For example Jesus says to Nicodemus that “everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And again in John 3:36 Jesus states, “He who believes in the Son has eternal life” and also in verse 40, “you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.” Others passages say the same (cf. John 6:51, 53–54, 57; 11:25; 20:31). Lemke concludes from these passages that to receive “life” or “eternal life” is to be regenerated and since one must believe to receive eternal life (or regeneration), faith always precedes regeneration. However, equating “eternal life” with regeneration is a serious case of eisegesis on Lemke’s part. Lemke simply assumes that “eternal life” in these passages is synonymous with God’s instantaneous act whereby He awakens the dead sinner. However, this is not how Scripture defines eternal life. As Schreiner and Caneday demonstrate, the phrase “eternal life” is not only a present reality but an eschatological reality and “by definition is life of the age to come.”²⁰ In Scripture, eternal life is said not only to be received in the present (John 5:24; 6:47, 54; 1 John 5:11–13) but to be received in the future (cf. Mark 10:17, 29–30; Romans 2:6–7, 23; Galatians 6:8; 1 Timothy 6:19; Titus 1:2; 3:7; James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). In other words, unlike regeneration, which is a one time instantaneous act that occurs at the beginning of a sinner’s Christian life, eternal life, as Leon Morris has shown, is an eschatological hope that pervades into the present but ultimately is received in the life to come.²¹

The point is made clear when one examines other passages (which Lemke does not mention) that use the phrase eternal life to refer to a gift to be received in the age to come (Mark 10:17, 29–30; Romans 2:6–7, 23; Galatians 6:8; 1 Timothy 6:19; Titus 1:2; 3:7; James 1:12; Revelation 2:10). Notice how it sounds if we equate, as Lemke does, eternal life in these passages with regeneration. For example, Jesus, responding to the rich young ruler states, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers ... for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time ... and in the age to come *regeneration* (eternal life)” (Mark 10:29–30). Likewise, Paul states, “He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, He will give *regeneration* (eternal life)” (Romans 2:6–7). Notice, if Lemke is right in equating regeneration with eternal life then in Romans 2:6–7 one must do works to be regenerated. Surely Lemke does not want to affirm works-righteousness but his logic, if applied consistently, inevitably leads to this.

(2) Lemke also enlists a number of passages that make receiving the Holy Spirit contingent upon man's initial faith. For example, in Acts 2:38 Peter states, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." And the apostle Paul states that "having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians 1:13). Other passages also condition the reception of the Spirit on belief (cf. John 7:38–39; Galatians 3:13; 4:6). Like eternal life, Lemke equates the reception of the Spirit in these passages with regeneration so that belief must precede regeneration. However, like his understanding of eternal life, Lemke is reductionistic. Lemke gives no reason why one should equate the reception of the Spirit with regeneration. Why not interpret the reception of the Spirit as the *result* of regeneration? Or why should it refer to regeneration at all? Why not to conversion, adoption, justification, or union with Christ? Contrary to Lemke, these passages are best interpreted as meaning that one receives the Spirit at conversion. As James Hamilton has demonstrated at great length, regeneration and indwelling by the Spirit are not the same thing but are distinct events.²² Since regeneration precedes conversion in the *ordo salutis*, these passages present no problem for irresistible grace.

(3) Finally, Lemke enlists a host of passages which say that if one believes he will be "saved" (Mark 16:15–16; John 1:12; John 20:31; Acts 13:39; 16:31; 18:8; Romans 1:16; 10:9–10; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Hebrews 11:6). However, just like the passages on "eternal life" so also with these Lemke erroneously equates "saved" with regeneration. Again, why should we interpret saved in such a narrow manner? Why not interpret saved as referring to adoption or justification? Or why not interpret saved as man's escape from hell in the age to come? To interpret saved as synonymous with regeneration is seen to be fallacious when one looks at how other passages would then have to be interpreted. Consider Matthew 27:42, where Jesus is on the cross and His accusers say, "He regenerated (saved) others; he cannot regenerate (save) himself." Clearly, such an interpretation is unwarranted. And again, 1 Corinthians 3:15 would say, "If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be regenerated (saved), but only as through fire." According to Lemke's understanding, Paul would be teaching that one is actually regenerated on the last day! It is obvious that Lemke has succumbed to a reductionistic interpretation by equating saved with regeneration.

As stated earlier, Lemke does not address the major passages Calvinists believe justify monergism. Such an omission creates serious difficulty when one examines the passages Lemke ignores. For example, in John 1:12–13 Jesus states, "But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." Conveniently, Lemke only quotes verse

12, concluding that it is man's belief which brings about the new birth.²³ Why does Lemke ignore verse 13? Verse 13 actually disproves the interpretation Lemke seeks to draw from verse 12. In other words, it is not of man's will but of God that the sinner is born of God and consequently believes in Christ.²⁴ Moreover, John says that they "were born" of God. The verb "were born" is an aorist, passive, indicative, indicating action done in the past. The implication is clear: sinners have the right to become a child of God because they have been born again. As Ware states, "That is, what accounts for them having the right to be God's children, and what accounts for their believing in Christ's name, is that they had been born of God."²⁵ Therefore, John makes it clear that the new birth is not conditioned upon man's will, but is completely and only the act of God.

A second passage Lemke never even mentions is John 3:1-8 where Jesus states, that "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Unless God first regenerates the sinner he cannot see God's kingdom in a saving way. Moreover, the analogy of birth itself precludes all forms of synergism. In birth the child plays absolutely no role whatsoever but is purely passive. Likewise, the sinner is dead in sin and is unable in any way to exercise any faith prior to the new birth. As Edwin Palmer keenly observes,

In birth a baby is completely helpless. He does not make himself. He is made. He is born. There is complete passivity on his part. Obviously a baby could not have said to his parents before he was born, "I determine that I shall now be born." And so it is in the case of a spiritual birth. That which is not yet born cannot say, "I will to be born." That which is dead spiritually cannot say, "I will to live." And that which has not yet been created can never say, "I will to be created." These are manifest impossibilities. Rather, as in the case of a baby, or creation yet to be, or a dead man, spiritual birth, creation, or life comes wholly at the discretion of the Holy Spirit. It is he who does the deciding, and not man. Man is entirely passive. The Holy Spirit is entirely sovereign, regenerating exactly whom he wills. Consequently, John could say that the children of God are "born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:13).²⁶

The sovereignty of God is again emphasized in the new birth when Jesus compares the sovereign freedom of the Spirit to that of the wind which "blows where it wishes" (3:8). The Spirit is not controlled by the human will but works as God pleases to bring about new life. As Thomas Schreiner rightly says, the Spirit's role in the new birth is sovereign because, like the wind, it works apart from human control (John 3:8). "The Spirit grants new life sovereignly and unexpectedly, producing new life where humans least expect it to occur. New life comes not from human effort or human accomplishment but from the miraculous work of God's Spirit."²⁷ Sinclair Ferguson states,

The New Testament's statements on regeneration emphasize the sovereign, monergistic, activity *of the Spirit*. The metaphor of birth itself implies not only a radical new beginning, but one which is never autonomous. The divine monergism behind it is spelled out elsewhere in antitheses: we are born, not of our own will, but of God's decision (Jn. 1:12); from above, not from below; *of the Spirit*, not of the flesh (Jn. 3:3, 5-6); of God, not of man (1 Jn. 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18); by God's choice, not our own; through his word, not out of the energies of an autonomous will (Jas. 1:18). The priority here is accorded to God, not to man. The reason for this is that man is 'flesh'.²⁸

Therefore, to conclude that man in some way cooperates with God in regeneration (synergism) or that man's will in the act of faith is the cause of regeneration, so that conversion causally precedes regeneration, is an assault on the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit and furthermore denies the proper meaning of the biblical imageries used of the Spirit's work in regeneration.²⁹

A third passage that Lemke ignores is John 6:44 where Jesus states, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Verse 35 demonstrates that coming to Christ is equivalent to believing. Therefore, in 6:44 no one can believe or exercise faith in Christ unless he is drawn by the Father. However, such a drawing is not for all people and cannot be resisted. Jesus states in 6:64 that "there are some of you who do not believe." John adds, "For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe" (6:64). Jesus then concludes by repeating what he said in 6:44, "This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless it is granted him by the Father." Ware correctly comments, "The only point that Jesus can sensibly be making by His statement in 6:65 is that those resistant to Him do not believe because they are not so drawn by the Father."³⁰

A fourth passage Lemke cannot answer is 1 John 5:1 which states, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him." Unlike the others, Lemke does actually cite 1 John 5:1 as a proof-text in his favor. However, 1 John 5:1 actually supports the Calvinist position that regeneration precedes faith. The verb "has been born" is in the perfect tense, meaning that it is an action completed in the past with continual results in the present. In 1 John 5:1 the continuing result is "believes," a present tense participle.³¹ Therefore, it is the new birth which results in belief. The same grammatical construction is also true in 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, and 5:4. God's act of regeneration is what gives rise to the believer's faith.

In conclusion, there are many other passages Lemke neglects such as Acts 16:14 where the Lord opens Lydia's heart so that she believes and 2 Corinthians 4:6 where God shines His light into our dark hearts to give us a saving knowledge of the glory of Christ. It is evident that Lemke does not take into consideration major passages that support the biblical view that regeneration precedes faith.

Lemke's Synergism Robs God of His Glory

John R. de Witt is correct when he states, "Arminianism essentially represents an attack upon the majesty of God, and puts in place of it the exaltation of man."³² Therefore, though Lemke refuses to admit it, he cannot say with Paul, "it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy" (Romans 9:16). This is apparent when Lemke states, "So at the end of the day, [man's] response to the grace of God determines whether the call is effectual."³³ According to Lemke, and in direct contradiction to Paul, it does depend on human will, for unless man cooperates God's grace fails to save. Indeed, Lemke's view is the exact opposite of Paul's for Lemke must ultimately say "it depends not on God's mercy, but on human will or exertion." Though unintentional on his part, Lemke has set aside the majesty of God and, as John Owen stated, substituted an exaltation of the idol of free will.³⁴ ☹️

Notes:

¹ Steve W. Lemke, "A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace," in *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 109–162. Please note that Lemke's objections at times are almost identical to those of Kenneth Keathley. However, this article will focus strictly on Lemke though much of my criticisms can be applied to Keathley as well. See Kenneth Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 101–36.

² This order is a *logical* order not a *temporal* order. Lemke fails to understand this when he criticizes the Reformed *ordo* because a person could be regenerated on Wednesday but not have faith in Christ until Sunday. Lemke, "Critique of Irresistible Grace," 139–40. For several excellent defenses of monergism, to which this article is indebted, see the following: John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955), 88–105; Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 68–112; Edwin H. Palmer, *The Person and Ministry of the Holy Spirit: The Traditional Calvinistic Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1974), 77–86; Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 708–721; Bruce A. Ware, "Effectual Calling and Grace," in *Still Sovereign*, eds. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 203–228; Robert A. Peterson and Michael D. Williams, *Why I Am Not An Arminian* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 20–41, 92–191; Greg Welty, "Election and Calling: A Biblical Theological Study," in *Calvinism: A Southern Baptist Dialogue*, eds. E. Ray Clendenen and Brad J. Waggoner (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2008), 195–215. For an evangelistic application of this doctrine see C. H. Spurgeon, "The Spirit's Work in the New Creation," *Spurgeon's Expository Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1977) 9:117–127.

³ Lemke lists what in his view amount to the seven deadly sins of Calvinism: (1) Irresistible Grace Can Lead to the Denial of the Necessity of Conversion, (2) Irresistible Grace Reverses the Biblical Order of Salvation, (3) Irresistible Grace Could Weaken the Significance of Preaching the Word of God, Evangelism, and Missions, (4) Irresistible Grace Creates Questions About the Character of God, Particularly Regarding the Problem of Evil, (5) Irresistible Grace Does Not Have an Adequate Account of Human Freedom, (6) Irresistible Grace Has an Inadequate View of Time and Eternity, (7) Irresistible Grace Does Not Maximize God's Sovereignty and Glory. "A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace," 131–161.

⁴ Bruce A. Ware, *God's Greater Glory* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004); John Feinberg, *No One Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 501–798; D. A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994); Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994); John Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002), 21–159.

⁵ Lemke, "A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace," 119.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ This distinction is recognized by Richard Land in his article in the same volume on "Congruent Election." *Whosoever Will*, 45–59.

¹² John Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 317–334.

¹³ Welty rightly observes, "The repetition of the near demonstrative pronoun *toutous*, 'these,' indicates that the same group of people is the object of each divine activity in the series, so that whoever is the recipient of one blessing is thereby the recipient of the rest as well." Greg Welty, "Election and Calling," 236. Strangely enough Lemke never interacts with Welty's article. Obviously, he could not interact with every article written on this subject even in the last decade, but one that came from the "Building Bridges Conference" and, therefore, so immediately connected to the "John 3:16 Conference" would seem to be relevant to his purposes of engagement.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Likewise Peter states, "Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fail" (2 Peter 1:10). Peter must be referring to the effectual call for why would he exhort these Christians to make sure that they heard the external gospel call? It is obvious that they have! Instead, Peter is using "calling" here to refer to the effectual call (notice the connection with "election"), so that his readers are urged to examine themselves to make sure they truly are a follower of Christ. The "calling" is ascertained by an examination of the increasingly evident presence of the graces and fruitfulness mentioned in verses 5–8, for this is the sure effect of such a calling as Peter points to in verses 3 and 4. Such a powerful operation of the Spirit in producing these spiritual, moral, and virtuous proper-

ties so unnatural to our innate sinful predispositions is a clear evidence, Peter claims, of effectual calling in time, and [*kai*] thus of an eternal disposition of love toward us in election.

¹⁵ Lemke, “A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace,” 122–27.

¹⁶ Something must be said concerning Lemke’s form of argumentation and proof-texting. Lemke simply lists for pages numerous passages with little commentary at all and then concludes that his case is proven (see pages 122–127, 136–139). Proof-texting in this manner gives systematic theology a bad name. It demonstrates a failure to actually handle the passage within its proper context. In Lemke’s case, such a failure is evident as he cites many passages out of context and consequently comes to an erroneous theological conclusion. While there is a place to simply list a number of passages that support one’s case, Lemke does it excessively and in the end never actually interacts with the text of Scripture. The result is not careful exegesis but eisegesis.

¹⁷ John Piper, “Are There Two Wills in God?” in *Still Sovereign*, 107–131; D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 45–64.

¹⁸ Editor’s note: The book review by Tom Nettles in this issue of the *Founders Journal* (pages 34–44) takes a somewhat different approach in seeing how these two ideas are related to each other..

¹⁹ Lemke, “A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace,” 136–140. Keathley also cites these three types of passages in support of faith preceding regeneration. Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty*, 101–36.

²⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner and Ardel B. Caneday, *The Race Set Before Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 65 (cf. 66–67).

²¹ Commenting on John 3:15 Leon Morris defines John’s use of eternal life as follows, “The word rendered ‘eternal’ (always used in this Gospel of life) basically means ‘pertaining to an age’. The Jews divided time into the present age and the age to come, but the adjective referred to life in the coming age, not the present one. ‘Eternal life’ thus means ‘the life proper to the age to come’. It is an eschatological conception (cf. 6:40, 54).” Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 227.

²² James M. Hamilton, Jr., *God’s Indwelling Presence* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2006), 1–126.

²³ Some have sought to argue that the “right to become children of God” in verse 12 is regeneration and therefore it is man’s faith (belief in His name) that causes this reality. However, the “right to become children of God” is the language of adoption not regeneration. The sinner is adopted into God’s covenant family due to faith in God’s Son. D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 126.

²⁴ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 96; Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology*, 708.

²⁵ Bruce A. Ware, “Divine Election to Salvation,” in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2006), 20.

²⁶ Palmer, *Holy Spirit*, 82–83. Also see Murray, “Regeneration,” in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 167–201; Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 123; Schreiner, *New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 463; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 124–125; J. I. Packer, “Regeneration,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 925.

²⁷ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 463. Also see Palmer, *Holy Spirit*, 82–83. Many other biblical analogies also demonstrate the sovereignty of the Spirit including: circumcising the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 31:31–34); writing the law on the heart (Jeremiah 31:31–34); removing the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26; cf. Jeremiah 24:7); breathing new life into dead dry bones (Ezekiel 37); shining light out of darkness and the very act of creating itself (2 Corinthians 4:6 and 5:17); creating man anew (2 Corinthians 5:17); the resurrection of a spiritually dead corpse (Romans 6:4; Ephesians 2:1; 1 Peter 1:3); washing and renewing (Titus 3:4–7); etc. For a similar list see Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 75.

²⁸ Emphasis added. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, 119. Likewise, Berkhof states, “The only adequate view is that of the Church of all ages, that *the Holy Spirit* is the efficient cause of regeneration. This means that *the Holy Spirit* works directly on the heart of man and changes its spiritual condition. There is no co-operation of the sinner in this work whatsoever. It is *the work of the Holy Spirit* directly and exclusively, Ezek. 11:19; John 1:13; Acts 16:14; Rom. 9:16; Phil. 2:13. Regeneration, then, is to be conceived monergistically. God alone works, and the sinner has no part in it whatsoever.” Emphasis added. Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2003), 473.

²⁹ As John Murray states, “We are wholly dependent upon the agency of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the sole agent or author. Man is the subject of an action of which the Holy Spirit is the sole author. Not by synergism or co-operation do we enter into the kingdom of God.” Murray, “Regeneration,” 183–83.

³⁰ Ware, “Effectual Calling and Grace,” 219. Also see Welty, “Election and Calling,” 238–39; Peterson and Williams, *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 186.

³¹ Peterson and Williams, *Why I Am Not An Arminian*, 188–89; Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 100.

³² John R. de Witt, “The Arminian Conflict,” in *Puritan Papers*, vol. 5, ed. J. I. Packer (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2000), 23. Likewise see J. I. Packer, “Arminianism,” in *Puritan Papers*, 5:39.

³³ Lemke, “A Biblical and Theological Critique of Irresistible Grace,” 123.

³⁴ John Owen, *A Display of Arminianism*, vol. 10 of *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2000), 14.