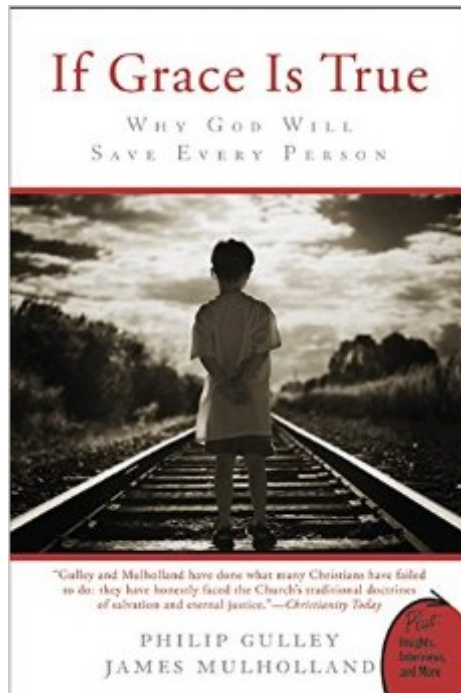


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If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person



Synopsis

“Gulley and Mulholland have extended and deepened the meaning of God’s grace in decidedly thoughtful and lovely ways.” Arkansas Democrat Gazette In this controversial bestseller, authors and Quaker ministers Philip Gulley and James Mulholland expand upon their belief in eternal salvation for all through God’s perfect grace. For seekers, for thoughtful Christians, and for the simply curious, Gulley and Mulholland offer a beautiful, timeless message of hope.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I’d like to recommend this book to all grappling with this very difficult subject. No, it is not likely to convince those firmly committed to biblical inerrancy. But it may help those who are deeply disturbed by the implications of the doctrine of hell to see that there are alternative viewpoints held by other no-less deeply committed Christians. Both authors exhibit a wonderful graciousness, courage and compassion in their writing that is truly exemplary of Christian maturity and love. One reviewer was put off that the book was substantially anecdotal and emotional. While other books key in on more biblical and philosophical argumentations for Universalism (Thomas Talbott and Eric Reitan as examples), I frankly welcome this approach to the discussion as well. In fact, perhaps a significant missing element in conservative articulations of hell as eternal torment is the lack of emotional coherency. To consign any living, feeling human to such an excessively tortuous existence is truly emotionally gut wrenching to say the least, if not down right ghastly. (And don’t

overlook the implication of the conservative position that those who are destined to fry are not only Hitler and Osama Bin Laden but the friendly next door neighbor or relative who die unsaved as well.) Perhaps our felt emotional responses have important ways to clue us about truth as well as our intellects or our fidelities to orthodox belief. But both authors are in no way guilty of shallow emotive propagandizing in articulating why they came to their Universalistic convictions. I write this review as once a believer in biblical inerrancy and one who grimly conceded the reality of hell as the destiny for the unsaved after death.

I should say first that I support the Cristocentric universalist view, that every person will be ultimately saved, through the work of Jesus. I give this book three stars, because I felt it was a mixed bag. There were parts of this book that I loved, namely the authors' ample description of a God whose love never fails, who will succeed in fulfilling his desire that none should perish, that God is never overcome with evil, but overcomes evil with good. I support that view wholeheartedly, even though the authors' exegesis was weak (they do admit that this isn't the purpose of the book). The authors give experience the highest value over Scripture and conveniently dismiss difficult passages as simply not true--which is too bad, because even though the Holy Spirit does reveal God to us through experience, there really is a solid basis of evidence in Scripture for the salvation of all, even more evidence than for eternal punishment. When you take into account that 1) OT passages of unquenchable fire always refer to the symbolic judgment of the nation of Israel (not individuals), and 2) that this judgment was always of a limited duration, and 3) that Jesus' references to hell (which were references to the same OT national judgment passages) were aimed at the most religious Jewish leaders (and also representatives of the nation of Israel) instead of individual sinners, and 4) that the term "eternal" as often used in English Bibles as "eternal punishment" is a mis-translation of the Greek (and Hebrew equivalent) of a word meaning "age-during," then many of the problematic Scriptures take on a new light. Are all the difficult Scriptures eliminated?

Philip Gulley and Jim Mulholland have written a compelling pastoral and personal commentary on the love and grace of God. They advocate for Christian universalism: the ancient idea, prevalent among many early Christians, that suffering and death, whether on this earth or in the world to come (Hell), are temporary, and that everyone who has ever lived and will ever live will eventually be saved by God. Their quality of writing, their emphasis on personal experience, their use of anecdote and story, all add up to make an easy and persuasive, or at least stirring and challenging, reading

experience. However, their book was never intended to be an argument reasoned from the Bible, heavy on technical exegesis. Coming from their theologically liberal standpoint, in which they feel little need to find any kind of harmony or even symphony between scripture's universalist and exclusivist passages, its restorationist and Hellish passages, or any other such internal tensions and inconsistencies, this failing on their part is understandable. Those biblical passages which seem to endorse universalism can be harvested; while those which seem not to, can simply be acknowledged and dismissed as human error, without an attempt at explanation for how those passages might fit into God's overall message in scripture. To be sure, I am not one myself to insist on biblical inerrancy or infallibility - I feel the evidence is against those doctrines, as well as against verbal plenary inspiration. But to not even attempt to show how scripture's exclusivist and Hellish passages fit into God's purpose doesn't sit well even with me. How well will it sit with conservative evangelicals who might otherwise be receptive to the universalist message?

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