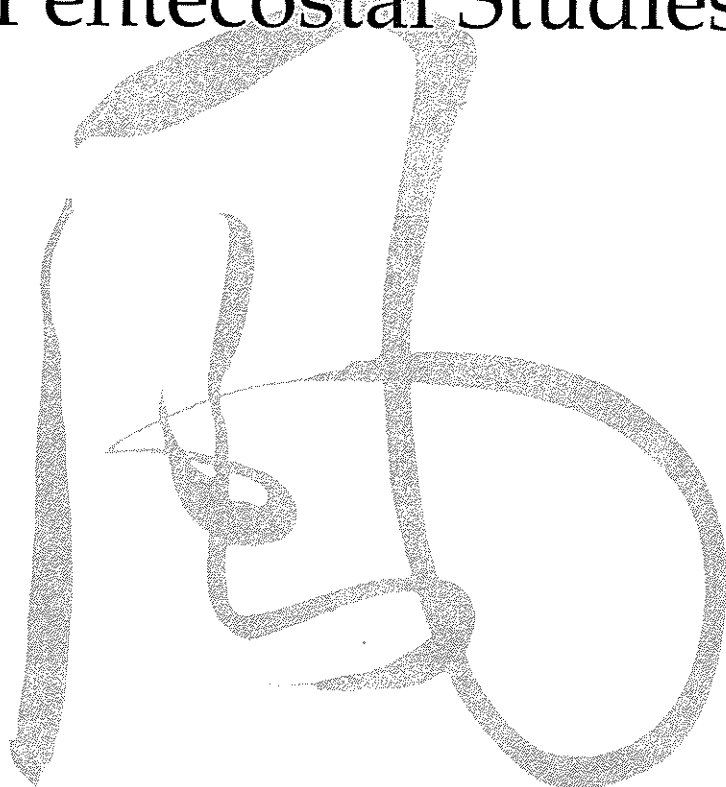


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However, I must admit that this book has brought a fresh wind to the discussion on the importance of Pentecostalism in Asian Christianity. This kind of book is needed for showing what Asian Pentecostalism really is. We have heard about Asian Pentecostalism from a more western perspective, and also most of the writings on this subject matter are very fragmented. This book is undeniably significant because it is the first comprehensive book that deals with Asian Pentecostalism written by Asian writers. Therefore, I would strongly recommend this book to seminarians, pastors and Christian workers who are interested in knowing more about the development and issues surrounding Pentecostalism in Asia.

Ekaputra Tupamahu

French L. Arrington, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2005), paper, 211 pp., ISBN: 1596840579, \$11.99.

A series of previous studies has addressed the issue of whether Christians can willfully return to the practice of sinning, from which the saving grace of Christ has delivered them, and still be saved, e.g., I. H. Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God* (1974); D. and R. Bassinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will* (1986); C. Pinnock, ed., *Case for Arminianism: The Grace of God, the Will of Man* (1989); J. Volf, *Paul and Perseverance: Staying In and Falling Away* (1990); and M. Pinson, ed., *Four Views on Eternal Security* (2002).

Against this background, *Unconditional Eternal Security: Myth or Truth?* adopts a distinctly pastoral approach with analysis of relevant texts in the OT, the synoptic Gospels, Johannine writings, Acts, and the letters of Paul, Hebrews, James, Peter and Jude.

Arrington briefly examines the historical origin of the debate but does not venture off into philosophical considerations and rationalistic speculations. The strength of this textual focus lies in a persuasive rhetorical expertise that has been honed in other equally well-written efforts, such as the co-editorship of the *Life in the Spirit New Testament Commentary* (1999) with R. Stronstad, which may serve as an accompaniment to J. W. Adams et al, eds., *Life in the Spirit Study Bible* (2000). In *Unconditional*, each relevant text is expounded with contextual clarity so that when it comes time for a summary, readers can

understand how reliable conclusions follow from commonsense argument.

In the OT, Arrington suggests that God's choosing Israel as His people offers no guarantee in itself of individual eternal security and that OT writers did not teach that God determines in advance the actions of an individual, rather obedience to God and His law are of undeniable importance. In the Synoptics, the urgency of steadfast endurance (Mark 13:13), the warning against the danger of committing an unpardonable sin (Luke 12:8-12) and the warning of offenses (Matt 18:6-14) are teachings to be taken seriously in that "A major concern of Jesus was the perseverance of believers. Apart from a life of faith, there is no guarantee that believers will persevere, but their salvation is never in doubt if they continue steadfast in the faith" (p. 56). In Johannine material, abiding is a vital aspect of faith, illustrated by the parable of branches abiding in the vine and of being cut off and cast aside for burning. The warning of 2 John 7-11 "expresses the possibility of believers going astray and losing their salvation" and "Scripture leaves no doubt that a Christian can experience a spiritual death (1 John 5:16)" (p. 77).

Arrington finds perseverance of lifestyle in Acts 2:42-43. While here grace is behind the experience of salvation and personal devotion to Christ, "The Holy Spirit compels no one to believe. God calls everyone to salvation, but He predestinates no one to eternal life" (p. 92). When it comes to Spirit-reception (Acts 5:32), the Spirit continues to be given to obedience of faith, "Therefore, God's dealing with humankind is free of arbitrariness and caprice. We must affirm that divine grace works throughout the Christian life. If at any point we accept it or reject it, the choice is ours. Nothing in the book of Acts teaches that it is impossible for a believer to reject salvation and be lost. The receiving and keeping of salvation is a matter of faith" (p. 93).

In Paul's letters, perhaps Arrington's topical headings may give a clue to his interpretation and necessary emphases. In each undisputed letter he treats systematically the topics of "God's Action in Salvation," "God's Protection of the Believer," "Temptations and Dangers of Falling Away," "Falling Away into Sin," and the "Possibility of Failure to Keep the Faith." In this discussion there is an underlying sense of solid attention to context, a respectful sense of discursive coherence combined with an appreciation of Paul's consideration of himself as being a steward of mysteries instead of a "word only" or "rational rock" interpretive style. *Unconditional's* sober pastoral exposition is made plausible due to an evident underlying expectation of authorial

connectedness,¹ instead of undue deference to a “make it fit” interpretive style.² For example, the “in you” (*ek humin*) of Phil 1:6 is a case in point; attention to contextual descriptions of addressees at 1:1, 10, 27, 29, *passim*, is implicitly understood in contrast to rationalistic extraction of Phil 1:6 to “make it fit.”

In the Pastoral Epistles we are offered able discussion on “The Doctrine of Election,” “Falling Away of Believers,” which might have been entitled “Does Paul Expect to See Demas in the Afterlife?” and “The Doctrine of Endurance.” Most germane to an examination of unconditional security is the letter to the Hebrews, where three facts are emphasized: God is actively faithful in caring for his people; the heavenly Jesus (not disconnected from the earthly Jesus) intercedes on behalf of believer-disciples; and contemplation of Christ’s life and sacrifice provide an incentive for perseverance (pp. 150-53). There are strong exhortations to persevere (Heb 3:12) and solemn warnings not to fall away (10:36), evidence that “The writer knows that faith in Jesus Christ is not merely a matter of ‘right beliefs,’ but it is also a serious matter of Christian discipleship and obedient living. To underscore this truth, he portrays Christian life as a great marathon race (12:1-3). This race is not quick and short-distanced. It demands persistence for a long distance, and it requires overcoming many obstacles along the way, and in no way is this race uncharted. Jesus is the lead runner, the pioneer of our faith. He is our supreme model for endurance and persistent trust in God.” Obstacles and dangers include the pressure to accept false teachings (by inference paleoreformed teaching with a mythological aura), the ever-present temptation to sin and, above all, growing weary.

In conclusion, Arrington, who firmly believes that disciple-believers should be confident of their eternal life, finds slogans like “Once saved always saved” to be both misleading and at odds with the outlook of biblical writers (pp. 180-90). Unconditional eternal security can dangerously downplay the need to press on with a godly life and diminish the importance of discipleship, thereby giving a false, unbiblical, and ultra-rational assurance that may be a real hindrance in

¹ As advocated in the principles advanced by Adele Berlin, “A Search for a New Biblical Hermeneutics: Preliminary Observations,” in *The Study of the Ancient Near East in the Twenty-First Century: The William Foxwell Albright Centennial Conference*, eds. J. S. Cooper and G. M. Schwartz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), pp. 195-207.

² As challenged by Ted M. Dorman, “The Case against Calvinistic Hermeneutics,” *Philosophia Christi* 19 (1996), pp. 39-55.

times of weakness (p. 188). Col 1:22, 23 serves to score the final point that at Christ's return a people holy and blameless, with faith firmly established and steadfast, will be welcomed by the heavenly Jesus into immortality.

This very readable study will assist pastors who seek the spiritual well being of their flock and are concerned on their behalf for an eternal outcome befitting a race well run. After each of the nine chapters readers are given a list of study questions to enable further discussion and promote learning. A brief bibliography, together with indices of texts and topics complement the volume.

Paul Elbert

Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies, eds., *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler*, Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series 24 (London and New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), paper, xviii + 323 pp., ISBN: 0-826-47162-5, US\$ 45.00.

Scholarly interest in Pentecostal studies is increasing. *The Spirit and Spirituality*, edited by Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies to honor a Pentecostal scholar Professor Russell P. Spittler, is a welcome contribution to the building of bibliography in Pentecostal studies. The collection of essays in this twenty-fourth volume of the Journal of Pentecostal Theology Supplement Series covers a wide range of writings on Pentecostal spirituality that deal with "biblical," "theological" and "historical" topics. The contributors come from different Christian backgrounds and they are from different parts of the world. Although not all of them are Pentecostals or Charismatics, they are friends, colleagues, and former students of Prof. Spittler. In addition to the collection of essays put together by the editors, the titles of the publications of Russell Spittler were collected and presented in this volume.

Robert E. Cooley who is a long time friend of Spittler gave a tribute to the honoree depicting his knowledge of him. Cooley also describes Spittler in terms of his scholarly pursuit and his administrative skills. For Spittler, a good leader should have "God's mission" as a vision. Moreover, for the honoree, "the sovereignty of God" must be the umbrella of Christian leadership. Lastly, the direction of his kind of leadership is led by "the centrality of the Word of God" (pp. 2-3).