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# Book Review

**Bruce Gordon and Carl R. Trueman (Eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Calvin and Calvinism***

**(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021) ISBN 978-0-19-872881-8, hbk, £110.00, pp 720 pp**

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Although this volume is termed a handbook it will take more than one hand to hold it! It is a massive 720 pages long and is divided into 39 chapters. The chapters are all written especially for this volume and cover the growth and development of Calvinism from the Reformation in the sixteenth century to the so-called New Calvinism in the twenty-first century. The chapters are arranged in chronological order. The book is appropriately dedicated to Irena Backus (1950-2019).

Handbook is something of a misnomer – it is more a compilation of academic scholarly articles. This is the book's strength and possibly its weakness. Its weakness is that the term handbook implies something of an introductory work – introductory it certainly isn't. Those looking for an introduction to Calvinism could thus be disappointed. They may well be better served by the broader and more introductory *Oxford Handbook of Reformed Theology* edited by Michael Allen and Scott Swain (Oxford University Press, 2020). However, those familiar with Calvinism will find much of interest.

What is most satisfying about this volume is that, as well as covering old ground, it also covers new territory. The editors comment:

We have focused in particular on new directions in research and engaged our authors to explore unfamiliar and underexamined aspects of the Reformer and the diverse individuals and movements who have claimed his inheritance. (p. v)

The diverse range of topics includes: Calvinism in early Scotland, and in Germany, Knox and Calvin, Calvin and medieval thought, equity, visual culture, Calvin's Old Testament theology, eighteenth-century evangelical Calvinists, Schleiermacher, Old Princeton, Karl Barth, and the New Calvinism. These subjects serve to give a random sample overview of the various chapters.

Each chapter either addresses one topic or focuses on one specific area and closes with a list of suggested reading and a bibliography. These bibliographies alone will provide a rich resource for Calvin scholars.

There are chapters exploring the roots and development of Calvinism in Korea, China, Brazil, and Ghana. What is surprising is that Pentecostals and charismatics in these countries are appreciating Calvinism and becoming more reformed. The chapter on deliverance ministry in Ghana is an unusual addition — as the only link with Calvinism is that one of the key proponents is Presbyterian.

Even in such a monumental volume, as the scope of Calvinism is so large, there are inevitably omissions. One the editors acknowledge is the lack of a chapter on Calvinism in South Africa. Also missing is any mention of a Calvinistic philosophy — Dooyeweerd gets a mention only in the chapter on Brazilian Calvinism. Although it is gratifying to see a chapter on Kuyper by John Halsey Wood Jr. And it seems that Neo-Calvinism is alive and well in Brazil and China

Some of the chapters cover the usual suspects; others are more unusual for example, Shakespeare and Calvin. This serves to illustrate that this book is more than a summarising handbook as it also provides fresh research and insight.

Unfortunately, the price of the book will put off individual buyers, but as a reference resource, it will be invaluable to those involved in Calvin and Calvinism scholarship.