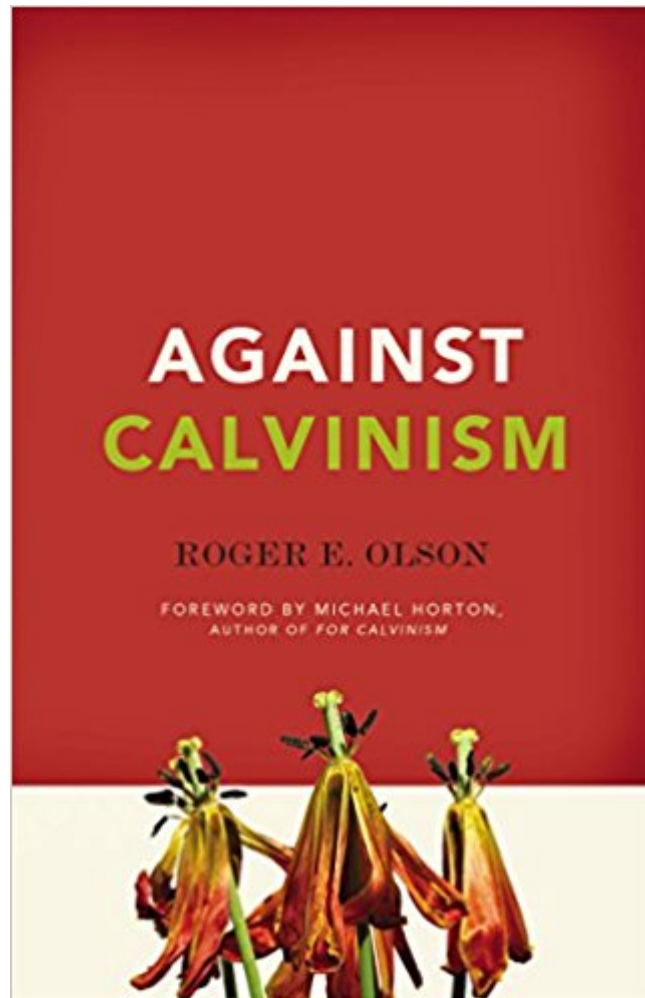




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Against Calvinism



Synopsis

Calvinist theology has been debated and promoted for centuries. But is it a theology that should last? Roger Olson suggests that Calvinism, also commonly known as Reformed theology, holds an unwarranted place in our list of accepted theologies. In *Against Calvinism*, readers will find scholarly arguments explaining why Calvinist theology is incorrect and how it affects God's reputation. Olson draws on a variety of sources, including Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience, to support his critique of Calvinism and the more historically rich, biblically faithful alternative theologies he proposes. Addressing what many evangelical Christians are concerned about today's so-called "new Calvinism," a movement embraced by a generation labeled as "young, restless, Reformed," *Against Calvinism* is the only book of its kind to offer objections from a non-Calvinist perspective to the current wave of Calvinism among Christian youth. As a companion to Michael Horton's *For Calvinism*, readers will be able to compare contrasting perspectives and form their own opinions on the merits and weaknesses of Calvinism.

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Customer Reviews

Roger E. Olson (PhD, Rice University) is professor of theology at George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University. He is the author of many books, including *Questions to All Your Answers: The Journey from Folk Religion to Examined Faith*; *Reformed and Always Reforming: The Postconservative Approach to Evangelical Theology*; and *How to Be Evangelical without Being Conservative*.

Roger Olsen attempts to show the illogic and misinterpretations of Scripture that is in Calvinism. His hope is that he can show that the very heart of high Calvinism, a concern for God's glory, it fails. He examines the doctrines of Calvinistic sovereignty as well as the T, U, L, I of the famed TULIP acronym. Olsen does a fine job of interacting with Calvinists through out the history of the theology. From John Calvin to John Piper, Olsen paints a picture of Calvinism using firsthand sources. Thus his critiques are leveled not a straw men but at the real ideas. At the same time Olsen shows how one can be "Reformed" and join in the critique of a high Calvinism that believes in "divine determinism." The most difficult task in such a book is the tone. Olsen manages to keep an irenic spirit about himself as he passionately argues against an orthodoxy he holds to be dangerous. He leaves personal attacks out of the book and manages to convey his distaste for Calvinism with as much possible respect. My only complaint with the book is that he does not do enough to present an alternative view. To help undo the interpretations of Scripture presented by Calvinism an alternative interpretation needs to be present. For example, Ephesians 2:8-10 or Romans 9 or (for me) the narrative interpretation of Pharaoh hardening his own heart as God said he would but nowhere in Exodus does God say Pharaoh will harden his heart (compare Ex. 4:21 to 7:13). More needed to be done with the text of Scripture. This is an excellent critique of high Calvinism and divine determinism. Roger Olsen point out the glaring holes in Calvinism that just cannot be reconciled. He is respectful to those he disagrees with. If you want to read a book that just critiques Calvinism but doesn't try to build a case for Arminianism, this is a great place to start.

Roger Olson does a wonderful job laying out the Calvinist doctrine. As a Calvinist he did represent Calvinism with a fair over view and mixture of his own theological background. What I found troubling was there were far too many quotes from pastors in the Calvinists faith. Olson could have place more emphasis on scripture in debating Tulip. After finishing the book, I am still a struggling Calvinist, but if the intention of Olson was to convince Christians of the error of Calvinism, scripture was needed more than quotes. If Olson intent was to merely show what Calvinism is and why he disagrees, he accomplished his objective. Dr. Olson I respect you and enjoyed this book even as a Calvinist. Thou I hate that word.

Olson's book is incredibly well-written and brings a lot to the table. He is obviously a great intellect, and I learned much from his work. His arguments seem to center around the problem of evil, and the implication that Calvinism makes God the author of evil. Even though I consider myself a

Calvinist, I still enjoyed the book and thought it was well worth the read. If you are a fellow Calvinist, do not be intimidated by this book. The worst thing we can do is avoid those who think differently than us! As an encouragement, after reading this, I am a much, much stronger (and hopefully more intelligent) Calvinist. Read it!

Roger Olson has done something that is very difficult. He wrote a fair and penetrating critique of Calvinism that does not paint Calvinists as enemies. Step by step he explains, fairly accurately with a few exceptions, what Calvinists believe and then using logic, emotion, and scriptural analysis attempts to disprove them. His logical and emotional arguments should give my fellow Calvinists some serious questions to ponder. This is the most powerful part of the book. However, in the end his scriptural critique is the same stuff you can find in any other polemic against Calvinism, and like most of the others, it falls short. I have a lot to think about and I am thankful to this brother in Christ who is brave and loving enough to air his concerns for God's good reputation and the truth.

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