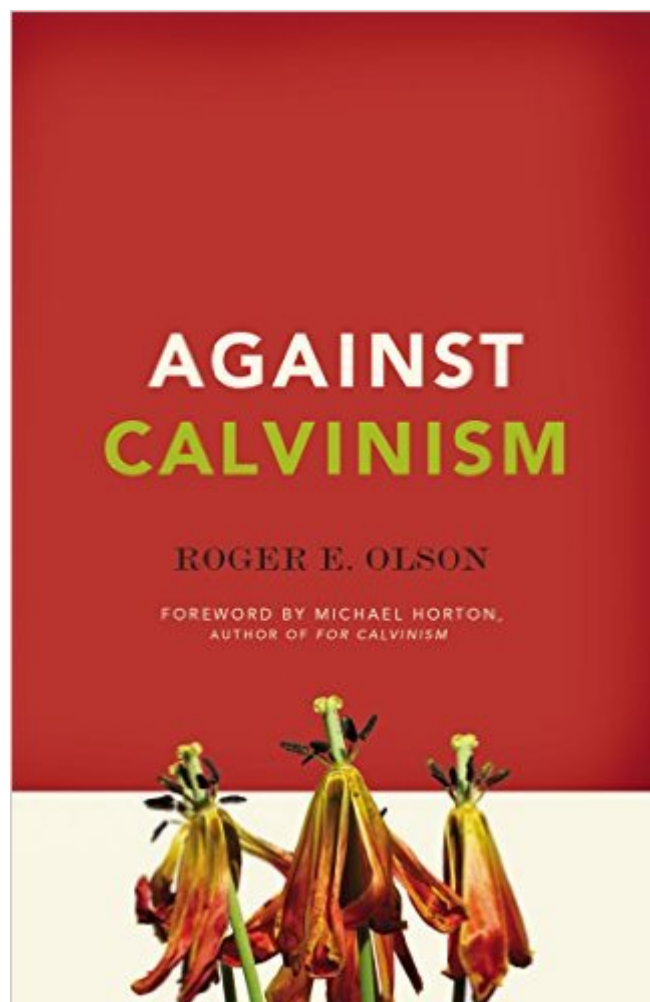


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Against Calvinism



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—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

I am a self-identified member of the Young, Restless and Reformed movement. John Piper and Mark Driscoll were significant in my theological formation. I am a student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky - a bastion of the YRR movement. You might assume that I would only review a book by Roger Olsen (an outspoken Arminian) that is against Calvinism so that I could give it a scathing review. Sadly, many other young people identified as YRR do

respond with vitriol and contempt towards anyone who is not a Calvinist. I think that's wrong. Olsen organizes his critique of Calvinism around the well-known summary acronym: TULIP. Despite its intimate association with the doctrines which bear his name, the 17th century Genevan Reformer John Calvin had nothing to do with its formation. During a controversy between Arminians and Calvinists the Arminians published their five articles of Remonstrance. The Dutch Calvinists then responded with their five responses to the articles of the Remonstrants: the Total Depravity of Man; God's Unconditional Election; Limited Atonement; Irresistible Grace; Perseverance of the Saints. By basing this book around the five points of Calvinism, Olsen is actually following a historical precedent. He is responding particularly to the "high-Calvinism" of the Young, Restless, Reformed movement which strongly emphasizes the sovereignty of God. Olsen's argument is three-fold: Calvinism is less-biblically faithful, Calvinism is in tension with the faith of the ancient church and that it is ultimately full of contradictions. I think it goes without saying that I disagree with Olsen's conclusions about Calvinism. His book does not offer anything significantly new in the debate between these two systems.

Many of the writers, theologians, and pastors I follow most are Calvinists. Though I don't agree with their views of human freedom, the nature of God's sovereignty, how election works, the intent of the atonement, the location of faith in relation to regeneration, and probably a host of other things, I've learned much about Christ from men like Matt Chandler, John Piper, Michael Horton, and many others. We don't have to agree about how salvation works to agree that the message of Christ needs to be spread deep and wide, and I can tell these men love Christ deeply. All that to say, in reviewing Roger Olson's newest book *AGAINST CALVINISM*, I can affirm the intent of most Calvinists to paint a picture of God that is genuinely loving toward humanity, but, with Roger Olson, I agree that Calvinism, when consistently applied and followed to its logical conclusions, does more harm to the reputation of God than good. Since this is merely a review of *AGAINST CALVINISM*, I won't have the space to go into all the reasons why, but I'll be more than happy to interact in the comments. Roger Olson is a Classical Arminian, and though I share more beliefs concerning soteriology with Olson than Horton, I don't agree enough with Arminianism enough to call myself an Arminian. However, one of the first things that I loved about this book was that it wasn't written as a defense of Classical Arminianism, but instead merely as a critique of the most controversial and biblically questionable points of Calvinism. Some of the high points of the book:* Olson points out that Reformed theology and Calvinism are not synonymous. In fact, it's possible to be Reformed and not hold to the five points of Calvinism. Olson describes those who are Reformed but not

Calvinist as "revisionist Reformed.

Against Calvinism is part of a two book series that try to present the arguments For Calvinism and Against Calvinism with as much grace and humility possible. Roger Olson (Against) and Michael Horton (For) introduce one another's books and it seems have reviewed and commented on each other's books before publication. I appreciate Horton's introduction to this book that affirms Olson's Christianity and good faith and the attempt to bring more light than heat to the discussion. Olson takes a specific tack in this book, not to argue against Calvinism as a whole (he affirms many parts of Calvinism) but to argue against particular interpretation of Calvinism that he call 'High Calvinism'. This is very strong view of the set of ideas that are detailed in the acronym TULIP. After an introduction about the purpose of the book and a fairly long chapter on the diversity within the Reformed church, Olson works through each of the parts of TULIP and shows why he believes that the system is not the best method of understanding God and God's work in the lives of Christian. This leads to a lot of repetition; this book could easily have been 50 to 80 pages shorter and probably would have been a better book. In Olson's defense, he is trying to show that his objections are not only possibilities, but that a number of prominent Reformed theologians/pastors of today and the past have believe things that he objects to. So there are strings of essentially the same thing being said over and over again because Olson wants to cite a variety of sources.

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