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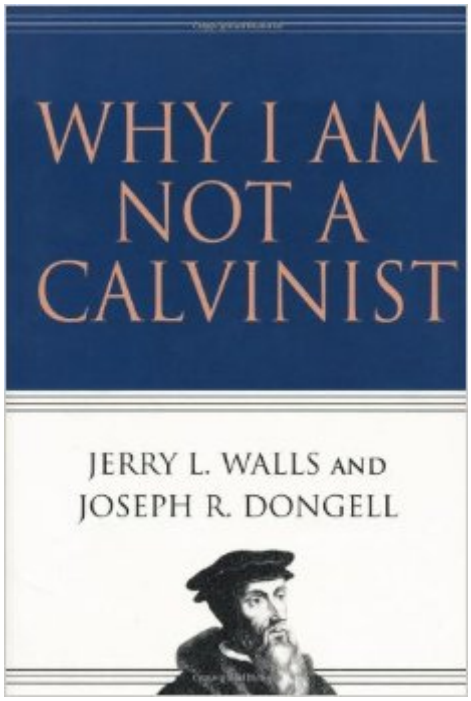
Why I Am Not A Calvinist



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Synopsis

What’s wrong with Calvinism? Since the Reformation, Calvinism has dominated much of evangelical thought. It has been so well established that many Christians simply assume it to be the truest expression of Christian doctrine. But Calvinism has some serious biblical and theological weaknesses that unsettle laypeople, pastors and scholars alike. God is sovereign. All evangelical Christians--whether Arminians or Calvinists--have no doubt about this fundamental truth. But how does God express his sovereignty? Is God a master puppeteer, pulling our strings? Or has he graciously given his children freedom to respond to his love? In this eminently readable book, Jerry L. Walls and Joseph R. Dongell explore the flaws of Calvinist theology. Why I Am Not a Calvinist is a must-read for all who struggle with the limitations of this dominant perspective within evangelical theology.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Along with Peterson and Williams (_Why I am Not an Arminian_), Walls and Dongell write with an irenic style as they engage perhaps the most controversial theological issue to face the Christian Church: Arminianism versus Calvinism. And they are to be commended for their equanimity. Of course, the controversy extends beyond the walls of the Church. Free will and determinism are volatile subjects within many different disciplines across academia, even in Geography! In this set of books published by InterVarsity Press, however, the discussion is delimited to Christian Theology.Walls and Dongell do a good job of representing the beliefs of their opposition: That of

Calvinism. They quote Calvinist sources frequently and not only that, the references are of the mainstream variety (e.g. Drs. R.C. Sproul Sr., D.A. Carson, Paul Helm, John Feinberg, etc.), which tends toward the minimization of straw-man argumentation and caricature. Their use of _The Westminster Confession of Faith_ and John Calvin's _Institutes of the Christian Religion_ is even-handed as well.By their own admission, Walls' and Dongell's thesis is as follows: "In a nutshell, our case against Calvinism is that it doesn't do justice to the character of God revealed in Scripture." (2004, p. 220) On the final page of their book, they say, "Our reasons [for not being Calvinists] are not merely biographical or personal, but rather they are theological, philosophical and most of all biblical." (2004, p. 221)This second statement creates a problem for me, particularly where Walls and Dongell mention biblical reasons as the greatest impediment to their acceptance of Calvinism. The reason being that their book is minimally exegetical.

Many reviewers here make excellent points.As an Arminian, I read this book hoping to find a solid evangelical stance of Arminianism that made a strong defense of Biblical Arminianism. As pointed out below.. This book has two major problems--1. The chapters on philosophy truly did help clarify the various highly confusing Calvinist positions, and possible alternatives, however, the case must be won in the Bible not by philosophy, and this book is more philosophy than Bible.2. Though it is unclear if they hold this view, they show sympathy for the Openness position. This unbiblical view of God is dangerous to the Arminian worldview, dangerous to the church, etc. This could present a problem if you wanted to give this book to an astute Calvinist because it would tend to confirm their suspicions. These leanings show when they present three possible views of God's knowledge, they have critique for Both Calvinism and Molinism (which is probably most Arminian viewpoint as held by people like William Lane Craig), but only defend Openness. It's sad that two scholars from the flagship Arminian seminary (Asbury) show this sympathy.On the other hand, this book does an excellent job at clarifying the philisophical issues, and the one long chapter focusing on the Bible text is actually quite good, and has the best treatment of Romans 8:29-30 that I've read. If the rest of the book had followed these lines, and had made at least one strong statement against Openness, it would have been a 5 star book.In retrospect, while I was disappointed when I bought this book for the two reasons listed above, I'm very glad that this was published.

I agree with the last guy. I was highly impressed with this book! It examines the logic and philosophy of Calvinism. I think Calvinism needs to be engaged on a philosophical level as well as a Biblical one. The reason for saying this is my experiences with Calvinists are that they are highly

philosophical (the ones that really understand their position), and appeal to philosophical arguments in addition to their Biblical arguments. Many have asserted that Augustine was heavily influenced by philosophy. This is why (I think anyway) Calvinists take the universal atonement texts and turn them into limited atonement texts to maintain philosophical consistency even though there exegesis of these verses is obvious to no one but themselves. If you find yourself debating philosophical issues instead of Biblical exegesis then this book is for you. I disagree with a previous reviewer suggesting that this would not be a good book to give Calvinists. The authors bring into the discussion some of the material from leading Calvinist scholars like Screiner/Ware (The Grace of God...), Paul Helm, D.A. Carson, Packer, R.C. Sproul etc. This was really insightful taking a close look at the logical consistency of their positions. This book was not a bashing Calvinism book. Very level headed.It is certainly true that the books main focus was not biblical exegesis, devoting one chapter to this. But their exegesis of Romans 9 was hard to beat, and although I wished there was more detail on their discussion of John 6 they did make some good points.As far as open theism goes the authors did not say what their views were on this topic. They simple looked at the different foreknowledge perspectives and looked at what are some of the problems raised by each view.

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