



Saving Calvinism: Expanding the Reformed Tradition

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Oliver D. Crisp is professor of systematic theology in the School of Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He is the author of eleven books including *Jonathan Edwards Among the Theologians* and *The Word Enfleshed: Exploring the Person and Work of Christ*. He has also edited another eleven volumes, including *Analytic Theology*, coedited with Michael C. Rea. He is a founding editor of the *Journal of Analytic Theology*, and co-organizes the annual Los Angeles Theology Conference with Fred Sanders.

A User-Friendly Calvinism

“Oliver Crisp wants to save Calvinism – from some of its most impassioned proponents,” writes Thomas H. McCall of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School on Oliver Crisp’s new book *Saving Calvinism*. “In this well-informed, wide-ranging, and very readable book, a leading Reformed theologian addresses the burgeoning ‘Young, Restless, and Reformed’ movement. While applauding what he recognizes as laudable in this resurgence of ‘Calvinism,’ he also offers some timely cautions. Arguing that the so-called five points are neither necessary nor sufficient, he invites contemporary Calvinists to avail themselves of the full breadth of their tradition and the depths of its considerable riches.”

In the following brief interview, Oliver Crisp unpacks why he wrote this book and what he hopes readers, both Calvinist and not, can learn from his scholarship.

Why does Calvinism need saving?

Oliver Crisp: Often Calvinism is regarded in popular culture as a narrow-minded, bigoted theological tradition. In fact, it is an expansive and fruitful strand of Christianity. This book follows on from my previous work by attempting to make that case in a more user-friendly format that may appeal to a wider audience.

What do you hope readers understand from your book?

Crisp: Calvinism is a broader, deeper, richer theological tradition than you previously thought. I attempt to address this by focusing on a clutch of issues pertaining to the nature of salvation in Calvinism. So there are chapters on the nature of Calvinism, on God’s eternal purpose, on free will and salvation, on universalism, on the nature of the atonement, and on the extent of the atonement. A number of these issues are controversial (e.g. election, the nature and scope of atonement). This work shows that Calvinism has more “room,” as it were, for different views on these matters than is commonly thought.

What are some general takeaways you hope *Saving Calvinism* leaves readers and scholars with?

Crisp:

- It argues that Calvinism is a broad, deep, and rich tradition in which a number of different positions are tolerated within certain confessional bounds.
- It shows that much popular reporting of Calvinism today is far too narrow in its understanding of Calvinism.
- It offers an account of Calvinism in terms of its views on the nature of salvation, the central and defining issue for the application of the Christian message to believers.

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