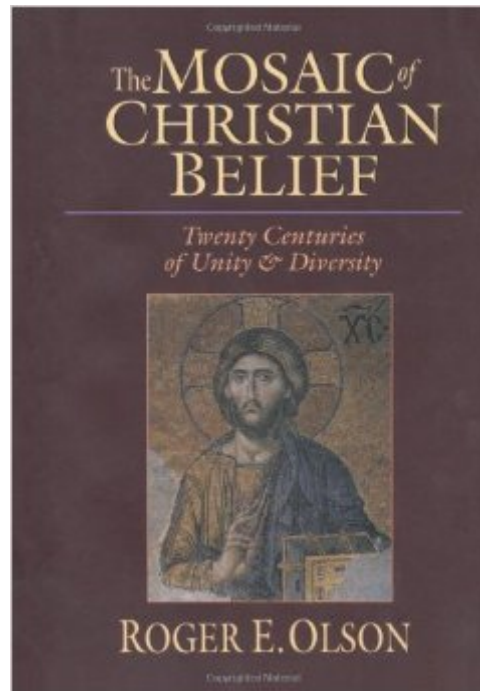


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The Mosaic Of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries Of Unity & Diversity



Synopsis

An ECPA 2003 Gold Medallion Finalist! The story of Christian theology has often been divisive and disjointed. Providing this companion volume to his earlier work *The Story of Christian Theology*, Roger E. Olson thematically traces the contours of Christian belief down through the ages, revealing a pattern of both unity and diversity. He finds a consensus of teaching that is both unitive and able to incorporate a faithful diversity when not forced into the molds of false either-or alternatives. The mosaic that emerges from Olson's work displays a mediating evangelical theology that is nonspeculative and irenic in spirit and tone. Specifically written with the nonspecialist in mind, Olson has masterfully sketched out the contours of Christian faith with simplicity while avoiding oversimplification.

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Customer Reviews

In this book by Professor Olson, Christian history and theology is examined for the many differences and similarities that have characterized different denominations and presuppositions. The aim of this book seems fairly simple: to find a common bond that all Christians everywhere can unite under and find agreement. Olson's plea is for a synthesis over analysis (that is, to examine our theology very thoroughly and rigorously but to press this examination to unity rather than division, which has most often been the case). Moving through twelve major/basic theological categories (Sources, Revelation, Scripture, God, Creation, Providence, Humanity, Jesus Christ, Salvation, Church, Life beyond Death, and the Kingdom of God), Olson presents the reader with a broad overview of what

has typically and historically been held by varying denominations and sects among Christianity. Again, Olson's goal in all of this is twofold: to present a 'handbook' of sorts for the new student(s) of historical theology and to make a case for a "both-and" theology rather than a divisive position. Although I feel that he falls short of this goal on two or three of the major theological positions, Olson does well in making this a reality that can be worked towards in the theological arena, even presenting the reader with more of a practical, "how-to"-type goal of what this "both-and" can look like. On the whole, this book is an outstanding read and a tremendous resource. Olson writes very well and often times inspiring as he shares this vision of the theological horizon. This promises to be a great treasure and addition for libraries of pastors, theologians, students, and lay-persons. Although the "both-and" isn't always going to be present, the overall vision has been set for a goal towards which our modern theology can progress.

This is a useful textbook. Olson does a good job of explaining core Christian beliefs clearly and demonstrating an irenic approach to theology, without assuming that the reader needs to agree with him about anything outside of traditional orthodoxy. He does come across as rather defensive about Arminianism, though. It's a little dry, but not overly difficult. This would be a fine choice for a general theology course, though I wouldn't choose it for either a systematic or a historical theology course (Olson's other book, is a great historical theology text and isn't dry at all: *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition & Reform*).

This is an excellent book for anyone interested in the foundations and diversity of Christian faith. The book is very clearly written (i.e. very readable, does not plod or get bogged down in minutiae) and easy to understand. Dr. Olson follows a regular pattern in each chapter to help explain different key aspects of the Christian faith. He gives Biblical and historical reasons for orthodox faith, as well as reasoning for why certain strains of thought fall beyond orthodoxy, explaining the diversity within orthodox Christian belief without forcing his own beliefs or a single set of beliefs upon the reader. I highly recommend this book - it's a keeper for anyone who is interested in theology, or needs to have a reference to help provide answers to those who might have theological questions.

Olsen takes the "either/or" arguments and presents them in a "perhaps both" format that made it easy for me to understand WHY "either/or" was important or not. Sometimes the going was tough, but always worthwhile.

There are few good chapters but too many light weight chapters and hanging theology. The book is written from an Arminian worldview. Thereâ€™s plenty of central subject matter here that the author chooses to broadly elucidate following a middling course. The book lacks a Christian theological boldness. Anyway, I assume, that might be why it was called out as one of several better texts in a grad level Systematic Theology course. Itâ€™s OK but â€¦ I prefer a weightier thesis

Having heard and read about the unbiblical views of Roger Olson, I was hesitant to pick this book up and read it. However, after finishing it I don't regret reading this fine systematic theology book at all (though I disagree seriously with Olson on some issues). The book is nicely organized and very easy to read. Also, it is not a mammoth of a book (just over 350 pages) so readers will not have to devote many months to finish it. I especially liked Olson's balanced style and exhaustiveness. Though he doesn't spend pages upon pages on a certain topic, he adequately covers the various orthodox views, the various unorthodox views, and provides a summarizing a conclusion for each chapter. One will really enjoy reading Olson's first four chapters on theological method, sources, and revelation (general and particular). This section provides a solid foundation on how we are to develop our theologies in the midst of this post-Christian era. His other chapters on God, creation, humanity, Jesus Christ, and salvation were well written. He provides a really balanced view of those topics. The only problem I have with Olson is his "limited providence" view regarding God's sovereignty and his pro-Arminian view of salvation. For a far better treatment of these issues I would recommend systematic theology books by Millard Erickson, Wayne Grudem, and Robert Reymond. I also found at times that Olson did not come down hard on heresies/heretics. There were times when Olson was unwilling to make a judgment call on a person's eternal destiny even if that person held to a very destructive heresy. Overall, I recommend this book (despite some serious errors). It is easy to read, and thus, will be a useful tool for a systematic theology course. If you're a Calvinist don't get put off by Olson's stance on divine providence and grace. There are useful things in the book for one's personal growth and study.

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