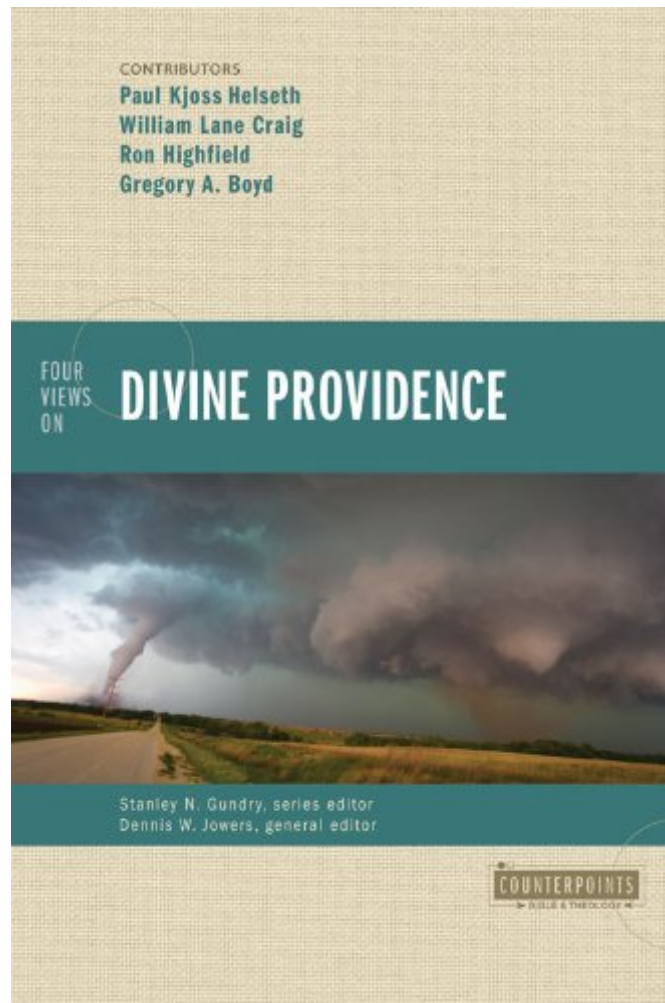


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Four Views On Divine Providence (Counterpoints: Bible And Theology)



Synopsis

Questions about divine providence have preoccupied Christians for generations: Are people elected to salvation? For whom did Jesus die? This book introduces readers to four prevailing views on divine providence, with particular attention to the question of who Jesus died to save (the extent of the atonement) and if or how God determines who will be saved (predestination). But this book does not merely answer readers' questions. *Four Views on Divine Providence* helps readers think theologically about all the issues involved in exploring this doctrine. The point-counterpoint format reveals the assumptions and considerations that drive equally learned and sincere theologians to sharp disagreement. It unearths the genuinely decisive issues beneath an often superficial debate. Volume contributors are Paul Helseth (God causes every creaturely event that occurs); William Lane Craig (through his "middle knowledge," God controls the course of worldly affairs without predetermining any creature's free decisions); Ron Highfield (God controls creatures by liberating their decision-making); and Gregory Boyd (human decisions can be free only if God neither determines nor knows what they will be). Introductory and closing essays by Dennis Jowers give relevant background and guide readers toward their own informed beliefs about divine providence.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Four Views on Divine Providence is the latest in the Counter Point Series edited by Stanley N. Gundry. The book is structured in such a way that allows for a variety of authors to characterize their particular vision of the topic at hand. This volume focuses attention on the issue of God's providence and seeks to provide answers to these questions: Does God ever ordain evil acts? Does God always get what he wants? How can anyone reconcile human beings' moral responsibility with God's sovereignty over their acts? How does God influence the affairs of this world at all? Four theologians from different church traditions were invited to present their findings based on their reading of scripture and christian tradition. Paul Kjoss Helseth represents the Reformed tradition and argues that all events owe both their occurrence and mode of that occurrence to God, who causes every creaturely act in such a way as to determine completely its nature and outcome. William Lane Craig, arguing on behalf of contemporary Molinists, maintains that God knows what creatures will do by virtue of his middle knowledge and that he controls the course of worldly affairs by means of this awareness without predetermining any of his creatures' free decisions. Ronald Highfield, writing from the Restorationist tradition, articulates what he considers to be a biblical perspective on the subject, which differs in content and emphases from the others. Finally, Gregory Boyd advocates for open theism, where humans decisions, in most circumstances, can be free only if God neither determines nor even knows what they will be until they are actualized.

For centuries theologians and philosophers have studied, formulated, and debated how God can be completely sovereign over the totality of events and creatures of his creation, yet human beings maintain a degree of freedom required for them to be morally responsible for their actions. Is God's sovereignty defined as a meticulous causal determination of all things in creation, or does God's sovereignty rule over a creation where humans have a degree of limited and derived freedom where they are the genuine cause of their own actions? If God's control is meticulous, what is the logical conclusion to the problem of evil? Are human beings really responsible for actions they did not ultimately cause? These are the questions people have wrestled with and a new book published by Zondervan brings together four Christian thinkers with four views of how God's providence actually works in the world-FOUR VIEWS ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE. The book features Paul Kjoss Helseth with the view "God causes all things," William Lane Craig with the view "God directs all things," Ron

Highland with the view "God controls by liberating," and Gregory A. Boyd with the view "God limits his control." Helseth's view is clearly Calvinist as he describes God as "omnicausal," predetermining everything in his creation exactly as he wants it. The problem with this view is that it logically leads to God as the author of evil and human beings are held responsible for something God planned. Craig presents the Molinist position, which states that God exercises his meticulous sovereignty primarily his omniscience, specifically God plans the world factoring in the actions of free creatures utilizing what Molinists call "middle knowledge."

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