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## D. Basinger & R. Basinger, eds., PREDESTINATION AND FREE WILL: FOUR VIEWS OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY

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independent of any conceptual schema. And that is to abandon conceptual relativism.

After all his careful effort in defining conceptual relativism, Runzo is led into these difficulties by his concern first, to offer a defense of the “objectivity” of a theistic conceptual schema and, second, to provide some assurance to the theist that talk about God correctly refers to a reality (“God in Himself”) that “lies behind” the theistic schema (p. 252). The latter concern leads him to wonder about the adequacy of the “phenomenal God” of our conceptual schemas to the noumenal God, and this question brings with it the collapse of his relativism. The need to raise this kind of question points to something important in theism, *viz.*, its insistence that what is real and what is true are not in fact variables that can take different values, but rather are fixed in their values by God. It seems to follow from the basic claim that God is creator that there is in fact a “way things are”: *viz.*, the way they are for God. Theism, then, both radically relativizes all human conceptual schemas (by insisting upon their partiality) and resists a thorough-going relativism (by insisting that truth is one for God). It may be that theism is (or is part of) a conceptual schema and that there are alternative conceptual schemas in which the concept of God does not occur or in which important propositions about God have different truth values. But in a conceptual schema that makes it possible to speak of God as creator, it would appear that there will be intra-schematic reasons to deny relativism. If this is correct, then the problem about God and relativism is not principally that of whether one can sustain an “absolute faith” in the face of the plurality of truth.

There is much in this book on which I have not commented. Runzo’s discussion of the conceptual formation of religious experience and his account of the nature of faith deserve careful attention in their own right. The argument of this book is rich in detail and bold in conception, and helps to draw a crucial set of issues into sharper focus.

*Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom*, by David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1986. 180 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by DEWEY J. HOITENGA, JR., Grand Valley State University.

The problem of divine sovereignty and human free will has to be one of the most intractable problems of Christian theology. Although this thesis is not their thesis, David and Randall Basinger have given us a book which confirms it nevertheless. The four views they present reduce to two: John Feinberg and Norman Geisler defend the view which the editors call “specific sovereignty,”

*viz.*, “that human freedom poses no limitations on God’s sovereignty” (p. 10). Bruce Reichenbach and Clark Pinnock defend the view called “general sovereignty,” *viz.*, “that human freedom does place limitations on God’s control over earthly affairs” (p. 13). Each of these authors also responds briefly to the essays of the other three.

In his essay, “God Ordains All Things,” John Feinberg defends a version of “specific sovereignty” which he calls “theological determinism.” Feinberg observes that Scripture, although it teaches both divine sovereignty and human responsibility, offers no account of their relationship, so that “one must turn to the philosophical discussion for an explanation of the ways in which human freedom can be understood” (p. 20, n. 1). Having done that, Feinberg argues clearly and forcefully for the “compatibilist” view, on which human freedom must be defined simply as acting without restraint and in accordance with one’s desires. Still, his rejection of the stronger indeterminist (or “contra-causal”) concept of freedom seems to owe more to the incompatibility of that concept with the specific sovereignty he wants to defend than to an independent analysis of human freedom and responsibility.

In the second essay, “God Knows All Things,” Norman Geisler defends a version of specific sovereignty which is as deterministic as Feinberg’s view. Recognizing the threat, however, which determinism poses for human responsibility, Geisler opts for the “self-determinist” conception of human action which has been developed recently by C. A. Campbell, Roderick Chisholm, and Richard Taylor—although he says nothing of its philosophic pedigree. He argues (correctly, I think) that this account of freedom meets objections which can be raised against the indeterminist view. He then goes on to say that his combination of theological determinism and human self-determinism yields a mystery, “something that is not *contrary* to human reason but which goes *beyond* reason” (p. 78). His efforts to show this, *viz.*, that his combination is not actually contradictory, are unconvincing, however, and are further confused by an obscure theory of divine omniscience.

In the third essay, “God Limits His Power,” Bruce Reichenbach defends a frankly indeterminist notion of freedom: Our free actions are of course without restraint and in accord with our reasons and desires, but they are not determined by these reasons and desires since “we could have done other than we did” (p. 103). Reichenbach observes that Scripture, like life, “is filled with instances of posed choices” (God to Adam and Eve, Joshua to the Israelites, etc.), choices which seem to imply the possibility of alternate responses and a notion of freedom which requires a limitation on God’s omnipotence (p. 105). Reichenbach combines this limitation on God’s omnipotence with a compelling analysis of sovereignty in which he suggests that, for God, just as for human rulers, it “does not mean that everything that occurs accords with the will of the sovereign or

that the sovereign can bring about anything he or she wants” (p. 105). Instead, “the more freedom the sovereign grants his subjects, the less he can control their behavior without withdrawing the very freedom he granted” (*ibid.*). Affirming such a limitation on God’s power would seem, however, to threaten the assurance of faith that God can accomplish his purposes, including that of saving human beings—as Feinberg points out in his response: “Given such [indeterministic] freedom, it must always be possible for someone to overturn God’s plans by choosing to do otherwise than God wants” (p. 125).

In the fourth and final essay, “God Limits His Knowledge,” Clark Pinnock defends the same indeterminist view of freedom as Reichenbach, only in looser language. He argues that divine omniscience must be limited as well as divine omnipotence, and wants to challenge the “conventional or classical theism” of Augustine, Aquinas, and the Reformers with an “open universe” and a “dynamic theism” in some respects like that of process theology (pp. 144, 147). Pinnock faces only briefly the question, “How can God bring his will to pass in a world where finite agents are free to resist him?” He answers: “He can do it because of his ability to anticipate the obstructions the creatures can throw in his way and respond to each new challenge in an effective manner” (p. 146). The answer suggests, however, that God achieves his purpose by outsmarting us; but this defeats the whole point of Pinnock’s “strong definition of freedom” and the “risky decision” God made to create human beings with it (p. 148).

Pinnock writes: “It mystifies me why conservative thinkers are so reluctant to abandon the classical framework at this point but rather continue to struggle with it” (p. 154). The explanation for such reluctance, of course, is the deep conviction of faith that divine sovereignty must mean more control over world events and human destiny than the indeterminists can possibly allow. By limiting God’s control, as they must, indeterminists remove the “tension” between divine sovereignty and human freedom, but at the cost of a God who clearly can accomplish his purposes. Of course, determinists, on the other hand, by refusing to limit God’s knowledge and power, remove the tension at the cost of a human freedom which readily accounts for responsibility. Thus the two main solutions, considered side by side, only underscore the intractability of the original problem which they are designed to solve. It is no wonder, perhaps, that some thinkers like Geisler believe the relationship between God and human beings is incomprehensible and prefer to embrace a mystery.

I question the editors’ division of positions into “specific” and “general sovereignty.” The classic doctrine of Reformed Calvinism expressed in the *Canons of Dort* (1618-19) attributes the fall of human beings to free will but denies that their conversion is attributable to it (III-IV). Indeed, the focus of the Arminian controversy was not on the fall (Arminians and Calvinists agreed on attributing it to free will) but on conversion (where they disagreed on the role

of free will in the act of believing). That controversy would seem to open the possibility of a different approach to the problem of free will for conversion from that required for explaining the fall. By avoiding the Calvinist-Arminian way of posing the question, the Basingers leave this prospect unexplored. By avoiding the Augustinian-Pelagian formulation of the issue, they leave other long-standing discussions aside. By avoiding the categories of determinism and indeterminism, they lose some focus on the debate as it is carried on by philosophers. Since they do not explain why they avoid these more familiar ways of formulating the issue, nor what the advantage is of using their categories of specific and general sovereignty, it is not evident what that advantage is.

As part of their assignment, the four authors were to develop the practical implications of their positions by responding to two "case studies." This part of the book, though interesting and promising, is unsuccessful. For one thing, the questions posed for each case are not pointed enough to draw out contrasting implications. Second, the authors themselves do not consistently follow the guideline of the questions which are posed. As a result, neither the large areas of agreement between them nor their disagreements reveal any clear pattern that might be attributed to their different viewpoints on divine sovereignty. Consequently it is difficult to conclude what important differences for the Christian moral life might stem from their theoretical differences over the nature of divine sovereignty and human free will.

The book nevertheless does attest to the enhancement of ideas and argument that results when theologians read philosophy and philosophers read theology. It concludes with a useful list of recent books on the topic by both theologians and philosophers. There is no index.

*The Life of Religion*, edited by **Stanley M. Harrison** and **Richard C. Taylor**. University Press of America, 1986. Pp. xxxi + 90.

Reviewed by AXEL D. STEUER, Occidental College.

This brief book of five essays, plus a long introductory essay by one of its editors, is the product of a 1984 symposium at Marquette University on the role of belief and human rationality in the life of religion. The five contributors, certainly recognized scholars in their respective fields, address such questions as the rationality of religious belief (Alston), religious belief and inner emotions (Tallon), the expression of religious belief in activity (Schmitz), the communal character of religious belief (Tinder), and the relationship between religious belief and various cultural forms (Gilkey).

While the editors may well be correct in claiming that the contributors share