

Roy, Steven C. *How Much Does God Foreknow?* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006. 312 pp. Paperback, \$22.00.

Steven C. Roy is a faculty member at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. *How Much Does God Foreknow?* follows his dissertation on the same subject and is an important contribution to the age-old debate on divine foreknowledge. It was to be expected, therefore, that the introduction to Roy's study would mention various attempts that have been made to deal with the question of divine foreknowledge and its related issues. He deals specifically with divine foreknowledge of an individual's free decision, an issue initiated by the proposition of the open theists. The open theists' proposition is that "God's omniscient knowledge rightly includes absolutely everything about the past and the present, [but] it does not include certain elements of the future. Specifically, it does not include future free decisions made by moral beings who have been endowed by their Creator with libertarian freedom, nor does it include any element of the future of which free decisions are a causal component" (18). Roy, however, intends to provide biblical evidence for exhaustive divine foreknowledge, including past, present, and future free decisions of contingent beings.

The first half of the book provides biblical evidence for exhaustive divine foreknowledge. Chapter 1 introduces the subject of discussion. The second chapter surveys the OT passages that have a bearing on the question of divine exhaustive foreknowledge. The line of discussion runs through a short survey of the variety of usages of the Hebrew word *yada*, Psalm 139, the theme of divine foreknowledge and God's unique ability to predict future actions of free agents, and messianic prophecies. Beyond this, the chapter focuses on the prediction-and-fulfillment motif of 1 and 2 Kings as examples of exhaustive divine foreknowledge, and three ways by which open theists explain predictive prophecies, underlining the insufficiency of their method. The third chapter extends the discussion by examining the NT support of exhaustive divine foreknowledge. Roy's discussion focuses on the NT language of foreknowledge, Jesus' teaching on prayer, Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection, and the redemptive plan.

The author devotes the second half of the book to the objections and contentions of open theists. In chapters 4 and 5, he analyzes scriptural passages used in support of the open theists' proposition and two major critiques of the exhaustive divine foreknowledge, respectively. Important in this analysis is the balanced treatment of the philosophical influence on both the open theists' proposition and exhaustive divine foreknowledge. Chapter 6 is a discussion on practical implications of exhaustive divine foreknowledge. The final chapter is the conclusion of the book.

Commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of a work such as this depends entirely on an individual's entry viewpoint. Readers who share Roy's exhaustive divine-foreknowledge view will appreciate his treatment of the biblical passages. They may remark that Roy's interpretation is syntactically and exegetically consistent with the central doctrines of Christianity and a better explanation for crucial issues of practical importance. In addition, they will appraise the author's critique of the open theists' proposal as sound.

On the other hand, readers who are sympathetic to open theism will respond quite differently—in the negative. Especially true is this of the author's interpretations of the biblical passages. They may argue that Roy's account is implausible and unnecessary for the view he upholds. For example, his explanation of Acts 2:23 and 4:28 does not support his claim; rather it confirms the open theists' proposition that divine foreknowledge is self-purposed knowledge. Furthermore, his interpretation of biblical anthropomorphic passages in relation to divine foreknowledge depicts and shows some

important correlation between human and divine experience, but it obscures divine-human relationship.

Beyond the issue of one's entry vantage point, the book seems to be flawed in other ways. In Roy's attempt to limit the scope of the discussion, he does not discuss the two subjects, human free will and how God foreknows. The debate on divine foreknowledge has always been the dilemma of reconciling divine foreknowledge with contingent free will. However, Roy takes an approach that allows him to contribute to the debate without fully exploring the precise nature of human freedom. Consequently, he is able to assume that all the sides of the debate can affirm divine exhaustive foreknowledge irrespective of the definition of freedom one upholds, but the approach is limited in two ways. First, it gives inequitable treatment to his opponents' open-theist proposition. Second, it does not address the issue at hand.

Relating to this weakness is the relationship between divine foreknowledge and determinism. The author asserts that it does not matter whether divine foreknowledge is the result of divine determination or vice versa; the reality is that the Scriptures support exhaustive divine foreknowledge. His remark neglects the fact that the various approaches to reconcile divine foreknowledge and contingent freedom came about because of the relationship one attributes to divine foreknowledge and determinism. Calvinism is different from Arminianism because Calvinists believe divine foreknowledge is grounded in divine determinism and Arminians assert that divine determinism results from divine foreknowledge. For one thing, Roy's opponents hold that God's predestined activities establish the content of his foreknowledge; therefore, God does not know the future free decisions of self-determined beings. As a result, to comprehensively critique biblical arguments of the open theists' proposal or even biblically prove that the Bible teaches divine exhaustive foreknowledge, there is the need to properly articulate and distinguish between divine determinism and foreknowledge.

In spite of certain deficiencies, this book remains a comprehensive biblical work and an important contribution to the plethora of works on divine foreknowledge. Often materials on divine foreknowledge are sophisticated and difficult to read, but Roy's approach is interesting and easily readable. It has extensive footnotes, bibliography, and a scriptural index, which indicates extensive research on the subject. The book is a valuable tool for pastors, teachers, and students who are embarking on a study of the doctrine of God.

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Sklar, Jay. *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions*. Hebrew Bible Monographs 2. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005. xi + 212 pp. Hardcover, \$85.00.

Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions is a revised Ph.D. dissertation, submitted to the University of Gloucestershire in Cheltenham, England (advisor Gordon Wenham), that examines the conceptual and synchronic levels with the idea of כִּפּוּר in the Priestly texts of the Hebrew Bible. Sklar is presently Assistant Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and this publication marks an important and systematic contribution to the highly relevant question of the way in which atonement worked in the conceptual world of the Hebrew Bible.

The volume is divided into four parts, focusing on כִּפּוּר in the context of sin (part 1, chaps. 1-3), כִּפּוּר in the contexts of impurity (part 2, chap. 4), the interaction and connection between sin, impurity, and כִּפּוּר (part 3, chap. 5), and the role of blood in the