

**The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism**  
by Norman L Geisler, H. Wayne House with Max Herrera. Kregel Publications,  
Grand Rapids, Mich. 2001. Pb. 336 pp.

**No Other God: A Response to Open Theism** by John M. Frame.  
P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 2001. Pb.235 pp.  
Reviewed by Johan D.Tangelder.

Open theism, also called neo-theism, openness view of God, or free will theism, presents one of the most serious recent threats to Christian orthodoxy. Its advocates present their views in a winsome way and have attracted many followers. Their movement has caused divisions and confusion in churches, seminaries, publishing houses, and other Christian organizations. .

Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, and Greg Boyd, members of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), are fervent proponents of open theism, while rejecting doctrines which have never been controversial in evangelical circles. What is at stake in this controversy? It is the historic orthodox view of God. Open theists believe that God chooses to limit His sovereignty because He gave some of it to His free creatures. They claim that God does not have infallible knowledge of the future and, therefore, cannot have absolute control over every event. They argue that free will is meaningless with a God who completely foreknows, fore-determines, and controls all events of history. For example, John Frame, professor of systematic theology at the Reformed Theological Seminary, Orlando, Florida, points out that Sanders believes God can take us by surprise at times because of our free choices. Frame, as well as the authors of, *The Battle for God*, point out that open-theist ideas have a long history. For example, they demonstrate that their view of God's knowledge is clearly Socinian. The Italians Lelio Socinus (1525-62) and Fausto Socinus (1539-1604), who were regarded as heretical by both Protestants and Roman Catholics, denied not only that God had foreordained the free decisions of free agents but also that God foreknows what those decisions will be. But none of the open theists acknowledge this heresy as the root of their doctrine.

What has been the reaction of the Evangelical Theological Society? In the fall of 2001 the majority of the members resolved to reaffirm God's foreknowledge. "We believe the Bible clearly teaches that God has complete, accurate, and infallible knowledge of all events, past, present, and future, including all future decisions and actions of free moral agents." Many members of the ETS believe that open theism contradicts the society's commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture, the sole point of its original basis. As a member of the ETS, I wholeheartedly concur with its reaffirmation of God's sovereignty and foreknowledge.

Some may wonder what practical difference does it make who is right? Ideas have consequences, and theological errors may have eternal consequences. The authors point out that since the neotheist's view of God is a significant deviation from the historic orthodox view, the practical results for the church are likely to be enormous. It undermines confidence in God and in the Bible. Frame notes that in the neotheist's view God cannot guarantee the truthfulness of the written Word without overriding the free will of those human writers.

Furthermore, in open theism God Himself is unable to speak with absolute authority. "He is ignorant of many events, which makes him unsuited for the work of prophecy." Open theism also undermines the Biblical view of human sinfulness. And it also adheres to the "moral influence" view of the atonement. This view states that Jesus did not die to satisfy divine justice, but merely to provide a demonstration of divine love.

In *The Battle for God*, Norman L. Geisler, and Max Herrera, a graduate student working with Geisler, and H.Wayne House, clearly and persuasively demonstrate that open theism - by its own confession - deviates significantly from the historic orthodox view of God, and is contrary to the orthodox creeds, confessions, and councils of the Christian church. It is also contrary to the virtual unanimous teachings of the church from early to modern times, and destructive to the integrity of the inerrant Scripture. Their critique is devastating.

Unfortunately, their book is not for the average reader. It requires some basic knowledge of theology, the history of doctrines, church history, and philosophy to follow their arguments.

In his, *No Other God*, Frame also refers to the historical background of open theism's errors. However, he makes a convincing Biblical case for the historic orthodox view of God. He does not only provide a thoroughly Biblical evaluation, but also deepens our understanding of the relationship of God's sovereignty and the decision we make in our own lives. This is a book for the serious reader, who is looking for a fresh encounter with the majesty, the glory and the beauty of the sovereign covenant God of the Scripture.