



God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith

Bruce A. Ware

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Though in all things God's Word is the final authority, our Christian tradition, as inherited from centuries of careful reflection and endeavoring to be true to the teaching of Scripture, can greatly enlighten us. Nowhere is this blend of respectful listening to the wisdom of the past and faithfulness to the Bible more necessary than in our contemporary reformulations of the doctrine of God's person.

Bruce Ware believes that while tradition's emphasis on God's metaphysical perfection and His supremacy over the world is correct, we must refine our understanding of the way in which He relates to us. While retaining the deepest concerns of the historic tradition, Ware offers a more rational view of God's dealings with His children—a view that is reflected in Scripture's own testimony of Him. Ware then applies this concept of real divine exaltation and real divine-human relationship to the areas of our prayer life, confidence in God and His guidance of us.

God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith Details

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From Reader Review God's Greater Glory: The Exalted God of Scripture and the Christian Faith for online ebook

Mark A Powell says

While many things about God remain mysterious, there are certain things that we can know about God because God has chosen to reveal them to us. Ware seeks to examine the Scriptural revelation of God to His people and then work out the implications that flow from that teaching. Although some things lie beyond the realm of our understanding, Ware emphatically refuses to diminish God's sovereign kingship or devalue His authority to do as He wills.

Eric says

I received this book as a well-intentioned birthday gift. The only name recommending it on the back cover that I recognized is John Piper. I'm sure that Mr. Piper is a fun guy, that he likes pizza and Wii and a lot of the same things that I do, but he's not exactly on the same page of the hymnal as I am. The author Mr. Bruce A. Ware gets the benefit of doubt because I've never heard of him.

I proceeded with caution.

Glancing through the table of contents, I found a chapter subtitled "Veiled to the Purpose of God in Suffering." I thought that theodicy (the problem of a good, omnipotent God against the existence of evil) would be a good place to start.

He of course starts by pointing out that Job suffered for no given reason and wasn't given any clear answers as to why. And then Mr. Bruce A. Ware proceeds to give us answers why. He hits all the old points: God may not cause innocent suffering, but he may use it to bring about a greater good; suffering can be used for judgment or discipline; suffering can lead to "spiritual growth"; it can show God's power compared to human weakness; it can be a tool to learn empathy; it can be a test of our allegiances; God is more concerned with our character than our comfort, etc.

Several of these points just don't resonate with me. I really think the problem of evil and human suffering is much more terrible than can be just brushed off with platitudes like, "Everything happens for a reason," and, "Everything works out in the end for the greater good."

But I don't think I would get too far in a discussion about this with Mr. Bruce A. Ware. The problem of theodicy boils down to this: An all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God should not, would not, and could not allow evil – innocent suffering – to exist. To solve the problem, God must either not be all-good, all-knowing, or all-powerful, or else he simply must not be.

Mr. Bruce A. Ware firmly believes that God is all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful. He is compelled to solve the problem by offering up his pat answers. I'm forced to either suspend my belief in reality, logic, and common sense in order to side with Mr. Bruce A. Ware, or else suspend my belief in Mr. Bruce A. Ware in order to be true to my experiences and my sense of rationalism, common sense, and reality.

Mr. Bruce A. Ware helps to further clarify the issue in his Appendix examining Open Theism. Open Theism

might be summarized by the idea that God cannot know future events because the future does not yet exist. It was helpful for me to pair with quantum physics in order to get out of my worry that everything is predetermined and we have no free will.

Mr. Bruce A. Ware examines open theism and concludes it must be incorrect because it is not “biblical.” For example, if God can’t know the future, what would have happened if Adam had killed Eve after he predicted that Eve’s descendent would be the savior? Or what would have happened if Noah had decided not to build the ark? Of course, he doesn’t consider for one second that perhaps these stories are in the Bible to tell us about human and divine nature, not to record an actual history of events. I doubt that this argument will change any open theist minds.

Mr. Bruce A. Ware puts forth several similar arguments which only serve to support his position to himself, but would doubtfully would change any open theist minds. For example, God might have false beliefs about what will happen in the future; God might have limited wisdom; God may look back through history and realize he had not done the best thing... He goes on, but I haven’t had the stomach to go much further. All of his objections are made in seclusion from people who have serious but different beliefs from him, and none have been nearly as insurmountable as he may have hoped.

As I said earlier, I don’t think that I would get to far in a discussion with Mr. Bruce A. Ware. He holds on to his over-simple literalism too strongly to be taken seriously.

Review from my blog:

<http://mrsundquist.blogspot.com/2012/...>

Eric Durso says

Too deep to read quickly; wished I could have read it slower and taken more notes. Need to re-read

Marco says

Great analysis, though I personally see no need to combine middle knowledge and human responsibility together. However, as long as Libertarian freedom is not advocated, I can live with his conclusion.

Daniel Alvers says

This book is great. You need a hard hat if you are going to read this book. It requires work. Some guys in life you just have to say, "That guy is smarter than anybody I know." I feel this way about this book. A great book for those thinking about the difficult things surrounding God's sovereign work. I know a lot of pastors who need to read this.

Vicki says

Very helpful in understanding God's sovereignty.

Chase Tremaine says

As one of three textbooks assigned for my Systematic Theology course, God's Greater Glory was the only book we actually needed to finish it. But honestly, even if we'd only been assigned a portion of this volume, I would've surely been intrigued enough to go all the way. This relatively short volume does an incredible job of explaining how prayer and providence work in light of a meticulously sovereign God, all in a succinct, easy-to-read fashion. Bruce Ware's writing style is straightforward and engaging, while occasionally hard-hitting enough to, for example, completely deconstruct the concept of libertarian free will in less than one page. It's an impeccable work, especially for anyone wanting to compare Calvinist and Open Theist views on the topic of God's sovereignty.

Justin Daniel says

In its briefest summary, this book is about God's providence and how God relates to us. Dr. Ware has been a critical opponent of open theism, which is essentially the belief that you have so much free will, God does not know what decision you will choose next. Therefore, God does not have complete foreknowledge and time functions literally in the moment as you make a decision. This book contains some critique of this understanding and relates on how to rightly interpret the providence of God.

Before I go any further, we must flesh out some of the basic understandings of God's providence with terms that some theologians have postulated in order to come to the conclusions that Dr. Ware postulates. There are two basic ideas about free will: libertarianism and compatibilism. Libertarianism is the idea that man has complete free will over every decision he makes, in the vein of Arminian theology. Compatibilism states that you do what you are most inclined to do. As an illustration, if a gun man comes up to you on the street and tells you to give him all of your money, you would be forced to make a decision that you don't really want to make. On the contrary, if your wife came up to you on the same street and asked for some money to finish her Christmas shopping, you would want to give her the money. In this way, compatibilism is the idea that you do what you are most inclined to do: for the unregenerate sinner, this means you are most inclined to sin. For the Christian, you are most inclined by the glory of God. Mollinism is the belief that, like string theory, they are an infinite number of decisions you could make, yet God does not know which you will make. Dr. Ware then suggests that compatibilism and Mollinism could be combined to form "Compatibilist Middle Knowledge" (Mollinism is middle knowledge). This means that there are an infinite number of decisions you could make (and God knows them all) and yet you will make the decision that you are most inclined to make. This does two things: it preserves man's free will in the sense that he is making the decision, and yet it also preserves the sovereignty of God because he knows which decision you are most inclined to make. An interesting thought.

Dr. Ware moves from God's providence in human affairs to providence in nature. The argument here is complex: we want to say that God is immutable, but this is only true in what Dr. Ware calls "ontological immutability". This means that from eternity, God remains unchanged. However, it is not right for us to say that God is immutable ever since the creation of the world. For example, Christians were under God's wrath

in pre-salvation (Romans 1:18) but now we have the peace of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). Dr. Ware calls this relational or ethical mutability. Another example could be the city of Nineveh, where God said He was going to destroy them and yet, the Prophet Jonah took the message of salvation to them and He spared them. Dr. Ware states that God is omnitemporal as he enters into the affairs of humanity and yet His essential attributes are unchangeable. This may be radical to those who hold to the blanket statement, "God is immutable" but I agree with Dr. Ware that a distinction must be made. This also is a polemic against open theists, even though it may not be stated the implications, if true, hold that the open theists' views on how God changed His mind are faulty.

The last section is on how this plays out in our lives and what benefit that knowing this holds for Christians. It's all very interesting. I really enjoyed reading this book and I would recommend it for maybe some of you scholars out there.

Jacob O'connor says

Calvinist? Arminianist? Molinist? Each of these interpretive systems has something in common: They all believe in free will. Well, at least in principle. Bruce Ware's is a Calvinist. He takes up Jonathan Edwards' "compatibilist" teaching on human freedom. That is, we always act according to our strongest desire. Very intriguing is his approach of applying Molina's model to compatibilism, however I find it unnecessary. Ware doesn't do enough to defeat libertarianism.

I've read and written much on free will. It's a tough topic because what we know and what we can show are so far apart. Each of us has a sense of our freedom, but it's tricky to make sense of it. If God knows what I'm about to do, how can I not do it? Once I do it, doesn't that prove I was never free? Yet I stubbornly go on believing in libertarian freedom. Couple reasons why:

the Bible teaches it. (Duet 30:15-20, Proverbs, 1Cor 6:12, Gal 5:13, Gal 6:7-8, "whosoever will")the very concept demands it. A choice necessitates at least two opposing options. (CDO) That means if only one "option" was ever viable, I wasn't free. to deny it is self-defeating. We must exercise our freedom to deny our freedom.it comports with our experience, and its negation is unlivable. The compatibilist (or anyone else who denies free will, such as the Darwinist) will assert that our choices were illusory. He'll then live his life as if they're real, beating himself up for missed opportunities, congratulating himself for making the right move. Bruce Ware might be frustrated I wasn't persuaded by his arguments, but that frustration assumes it's in my hands.

Notes:

A defense of compatibilist freedom. We always do what we most desire. P. 20

Middle knowledge applied to compatibilist freedom. Bruce Ware doesn't think God could know how free creatures in the libertarian sense would act because they could act otherwise. Personal thought: this is overcome by understanding that God's knowledge is propositional.

Bit of a straw-man on his critique of libertarian freewill. Ware assumes Arminianists (and open theists) assert libertarian freedom as a brute fact and then interpret Scripture through that grid. I don't know of an Arminianist who would affirm that. Rather, they glean it from Scripture. Come to think of it, compatibilism

is more guilty of this. It's an invention to rescue an interpretive system. p. 59.

We always do what we most desire (p. 68). Is this so? (Rom 7:19)

Good Scriptural defense of compatibilism. Good tree, abundance of heart, etc. (p. 70) Counterpoint: White swan fallacy. If you say that there are no black swans, no amount of pointing to white swans will make that case. As soon as someone shows you a black swan, your argument is defeated.

Conundrum: if God is equally in control of good and evil, how is He praiseworthy for good but not culpable for evil (p. 87)

Augustine's privation of good argument (p. 88)

Ware challenges Molinism on the grounds that we cannot describe the mechanism by which God can know how an agent would freely choose if he can do otherwise given same set of circumstances. (p. 97) He's right. We can't, but a simple thought experiment proves that this obtains even on calvinism. One need simply ask, does God know the counter factual? Most of us would be uncomfortable responding in the negative. The answer is that God's knowledge is propositional. He knows because he knows, not through some predictive mechanism.

Compatibilism commits the Scotsman fallacy. One can always assert that we're acting in accordance with our greatest inclination. Unfalsifiable.

Occasioning vs. Causing. P. 106

Jacob Stevens says

Bruce Ware had attempted to peel the curtain back a little in the question of God's sovereignty and how that interacts with man's freedom to choose and then be held morally responsible for those choices. I think that he did a great job of starting with Scripture and working out from there. He is a top-rate theologian and wrote this book on a mostly popular level. I am still processing through some of his propositions, but as I whole I recommend it.

Derek Brown says

God's people throughout the centuries have struggled to understand the relationship between God's sovereignty and our human responsibility. Recently, some theologians have developed a theological framework most commonly referred to as "Open Theism," in order explain the apparent paradox that exists between the twin realities of God's divine rule and our human freedom. This framework was previously critiqued in an earlier book by Bruce Ware entitled, God's Lesser Glory, in which the title of the book foreshadowed Ware's conclusion of Open Theism: it is a theological framework where "God's glory is cheapened and diminished" (9). The view presented in the present volume ('God's Greater Glory'), is, according to Ware, a vision of God in which his glory is "honored and exalted" (9).

Whereas 'God's Lesser Glory' was written as a critique of Open Theism, 'God's Greater Glory' is written as a

positive affirmation of God's sovereignty as revealed in Scripture. That is not to say that Ware refrains from critically assessing the tenants of Open Theism in this present volume - in certain places this is necessary - but instead of narrowing in on the negative elements of Open Theism primarily, Ware's main thrust of God's Greater Glory is to present a glorious, satisfying, historically faithful and Biblically consistent vision of the sovereign God of the Bible.

In my judgment, what brings spiritual power and persuasiveness to this book is Ware's passion for the vision of God he presents in God's Greater Glory. One of the most edifying portions of the book (that is a difficult distinction to make, to be sure!) is the preface where he explains why he has written this book. He is not driven by the desire to win an argument or feed personal ego - the stakes are infinitely higher than that. Ware writes, "If we are to escape the cult of self and find, instead, the true meaning of life and the path of true satisfaction, if we are to give God the glory rightly and exclusively owed to him...we must behold God for who he is" (9).

Ware is far from a cool, dispassionate, detached academician. His rigorous interaction with the subject matter is coupled throughout with heart-felt adoration of the sovereign God of Scripture. The reader is given a taste of the practical implications that Ware's vision will have on personal worship on page 158: "...worship happens only when we are granted eyes to behold God's magnificence, and splendor, and glory and majesty. This is a seeing with deep and abiding longing, a seeing that savors, eliciting a savoring that satisfies." Ware is passionately and personally engaged with the issue of God's sovereignty and thus his work is both accessible and beneficial for all of God's people, scholar and layperson alike.

Another notable strength is Ware's treatment of practical issues directly impacted by a study of God's sovereignty: suffering, prayer and service. Ware's discussion of suffering is especially clear, balanced, biblically saturated, and deeply encouraging. Yet, although Ware approaches and seeks to understand the issue of suffering in light Scripture, he does not attempt to speak where God has not spoken.

Perhaps one of the most important sentences in the book is Ware's observation that our lives are often marked by befuddlement. He writes, "How much of life, our life, is like this: we simply don't know. In our experiences of suffering and affliction, we are often in the position of Job was in, where we don't even know that we don't know, and we certainly don't know what the bigger picture is that would explain and make sense of our confusion and bewilderment" (163).

At the same time, however, and as we see in the life of Job, it is through the crucible of suffering that our beliefs about God's Providence are brought to the surface of our lives. A sincere and engaged reading and embracing of what Ware writes in this section will enable us, I believe, to respond to trials with the posture of Job, saying, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed by the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Needless to say, I have profited tremendously from Ware's heart-felt and theologically rigorous treatment of the age-old questions relating to God's providence over all creation. I commend this book to you for your growth and edification, and I pray that God would enable us to live in light of these glorious truths.

Leslie Christopher says

Amazing. Read this right after reading Ware's GOD'S LESSER GLORY, which focuses on refuting open theism. This book focuses on the sovereignty of an almighty God, I found myself wanting to stand up and sing the Hallelujah Chorus in my living room!

Biblical and thorough, but not a quick and easy read. But don't let that stop you from reading it....in fact, I am thinking about reading it again!

Matthew says

Simply stellar. Fantastic critique of theological systems that downgrade God's sovereignty from the Bible's view (such as open theism), but more than that, a solid and worshipful defense of the big view of God's sovereignty and providence Scripture presents. Beautiful picture of God.

Alice Gent says

Really enjoyed this book, despite the fact I had no idea what to expect from the front cover! Previously I've always thought that free will/ human moral choice and God's sovereignty were two ideas that we had no idea how they fitted together, but both were in the Bible, so you just had to live with it. This book was so helpful in seeing what more the Bible does say on those concepts and then suggests a way we can fit them together (compatibilist middle knowledge). It was also filled with much praise to God and helps paint a picture of how incredibly huge and glorious God is. The book discusses how we like to shrink down God and fit him into a me centred box. It has given me much to think about to decide what I believe but mostly warmed my heart in thinking how mind bendingly huge God is!

Rex Blackburn says

Course requirement for Systematic Theology I at SBTS. Great treatment of God's Providence. So detailed, but so applicable. Well done, Ware.
