

God Chance And Purpose Can God Have It Both Ways By Bartholomew David J 2008 Paperback

God, Chance, and Purpose: Can God Have It Both Ways? A Deep Dive into Bartholomew's 2008 Work

The question of divine action in a world seemingly governed by chance and randomness has long plagued theologians and philosophers. David J. Bartholomew's 2008 paperback, *God, Chance, and Purpose: Can God Have It Both Ways?*, tackles this complex issue head-on, offering a nuanced and thought-provoking exploration of the compatibility (or incompatibility) of divine providence and a universe operating under probabilistic laws. This article will delve into Bartholomew's arguments, exploring key themes such as **divine action**, **free will**, and the **problem of evil**, ultimately assessing the book's enduring relevance and contribution to the ongoing theological debate.

Bartholomew's Central Argument: Reconciling Divine Action with Chance

Bartholomew doesn't attempt to offer a simple yes or no answer to the titular question. Instead, he presents a sophisticated analysis of the interplay between chance, purpose, and divine intervention. His central argument hinges on a distinction between **direct divine action** (God directly causing specific events) and **indirect divine action** (God working through probabilistic processes). He argues that a belief in a powerful, purposeful God is not necessarily incompatible with the reality of chance events. God, according to Bartholomew, might achieve His purposes through the seemingly random workings of the universe, subtly guiding events without overriding them. This allows for both a God who is actively involved in the world and a world operating according to natural laws, including the laws of probability. This approach directly addresses the theological problem of **divine foreknowledge** and its perceived conflict with human free will.

The Role of Probability and Free Will in Bartholomew's Framework

A significant portion of *God, Chance, and Purpose* explores the intricate relationship between divine action and free will. Bartholomew expertly navigates the potential conflict between a deterministic universe and human agency. He suggests that God's influence is not a direct manipulation of human choices, but rather a subtle shaping of circumstances and opportunities. This aligns with the concept of **compatibilism**, which argues that free will and determinism can coexist. By working within the probabilistic framework of the universe, God allows for genuine human choices while still achieving His overarching purpose. This nuanced approach avoids the pitfalls of a purely deterministic or purely random model of the universe, offering a more satisfying and theologically robust alternative.

Addressing the Problem of Evil and Suffering

The **problem of evil**, a classic theological challenge, is addressed within the framework of chance and divine action. Bartholomew argues that a world governed by probabilistic laws, even with a benevolent God, will inevitably contain suffering and misfortune. Some events, however unfortunate, are simply the result of chance occurrences within a system governed by natural laws. This doesn't absolve God of responsibility entirely, but it shifts the focus from direct divine causation of evil to a more complex understanding of a world where both good and bad emerge from a probabilistic system subtly guided by God's purpose. He suggests that God's ultimate purpose might be better served by allowing this probabilistic system to unfold, even with the inherent risks of suffering. This perspective offers a more nuanced response to the problem of evil than traditional theodicies.

Style, Strengths, and Limitations of Bartholomew's Work

God, Chance, and Purpose is written in a clear and accessible style, making its complex arguments understandable to a broad audience, not just theologians. Bartholomew avoids overly technical jargon and uses illustrative examples to clarify his points. A significant strength lies in his rigorous philosophical approach combined with sensitivity to theological concerns. He demonstrates a masterful ability to navigate the intricate complexities of divine action, free will, and the problem of evil within a probabilistic framework. However, critics might argue that the book's subtle approach to divine action could be seen as minimizing God's direct involvement in the world, leaving some readers unsatisfied. Despite this potential criticism, the book offers a valuable contribution to ongoing theological debate and remains a significant resource for anyone interested in exploring the relationship between God, chance, and purpose.

Conclusion: A Lasting Contribution to Theological Discourse

David J. Bartholomew's *God, Chance, and Purpose* provides a refreshing and insightful perspective on the long-standing debate surrounding divine action and a universe subject to chance. By skillfully navigating the complexities of probability, free will, and the problem of evil, Bartholomew offers a nuanced and compelling argument for the compatibility of a purposeful God and a world governed by probabilistic laws. While not without its potential limitations, the book remains a significant and thought-provoking contribution to theological discourse, forcing readers to reconsider traditional conceptions of divine intervention and the nature of God's relationship with the world.

FAQ

Q1: Is Bartholomew arguing that God doesn't intervene in the world?

A1: No, Bartholomew argues for indirect divine action. He believes God works *through* probabilistic systems rather than directly overriding them. He doesn't deny divine intervention; instead, he proposes a different model of how that intervention might operate.

Q2: How does Bartholomew's view address the problem of evil?

A2: Bartholomew suggests that suffering and evil can arise from the inherently probabilistic nature of the universe, even with a benevolent God. This doesn't absolve God of responsibility, but it shifts the focus from direct causation to the consequences of operating within a system with inherent randomness.

Q3: What is the significance of probability in Bartholomew's argument?

A3: Probability is central to Bartholomew's argument. He argues that God can achieve His purposes by subtly influencing the probabilities of events, rather than directly controlling every single outcome. This allows for both divine purpose and human free will.

Q4: How does Bartholomew's work relate to the concept of free will?

A4: Bartholomew's model is compatible with free will. God doesn't pre-determine every human action but works within the framework of probabilistic events, allowing for genuine human choice and agency.

Q5: Who is the intended audience for *God, Chance, and Purpose*?

A5: The book is accessible to a broad audience, including those with a general interest in theology, philosophy, and the relationship between faith and science. While engaging with complex theological ideas, Bartholomew writes clearly and avoids overly technical language.

Q6: What are some potential criticisms of Bartholomew's approach?

A6: Some might argue that Bartholomew's emphasis on indirect divine action minimizes God's direct involvement in the world. Others may find his probabilistic model insufficiently explanatory for specific

instances of suffering or apparent randomness in the universe.

Q7: How does Bartholomew's book contribute to ongoing theological debates?

A7: Bartholomew's work significantly contributes to the ongoing debate on the nature of divine action and the compatibility of faith with scientific understanding. His nuanced approach challenges traditional perspectives and provides a framework for further exploration.

Q8: Where can I find a copy of *God, Chance, and Purpose*?

A8: You can likely find used copies of the 2008 paperback edition of *God, Chance, and Purpose* through online booksellers like Amazon, Abebooks, or other used book marketplaces. Checking your local library is also a good option.

Can God Have It Both Ways? Exploring Chance and Purpose in Bartholomew's Theological Exploration

Bartholomew's 2008 paperback, " Divinity's Chance and Purpose: Can God Have It Both Ways?", delves into a profound and age-old theological dilemma. It tackles the seemingly contradictory notions of divine foreknowledge and human free will . The book doesn't offer easy answers, but instead engages with the complexities of the issue, presenting various theological perspectives and challenging readers to contemplate their own faiths. This article will explore the central themes of Bartholomew's work, highlighting its key contributions to the ongoing debate on divine action.

Bartholomew masterfully navigates the delicate balance between divine sovereignty and human accountability . He doesn't avoid the difficult questions posed by the apparent conflict between a fixed future and the experience of choice . Instead, he offers a nuanced investigation of different theological models attempting to synthesize these seemingly opposing forces.

One of the book's merits lies in its clarity . While tackling complex theological concepts, Bartholomew utilizes a clear and succinct style, avoiding jargon that might bewilder the average reader. He draws upon a array of philosophical and theological traditions, including both classical and contemporary perspectives.

The book examines various methods to understanding divine action, such as open theism, Molinism, and classical theism. Each approach is meticulously examined, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses . Bartholomew doesn't support any single perspective definitively, but instead prompts the reader to critically evaluate each model in light of their own grasp of scripture and theological principles .

A vital element of Bartholomew's argument is the focus on the puzzle of God. He maintains that a complete and satisfying solution to the problem of chance and purpose may be beyond human comprehension . This doesn't imply resignation , but rather a recognition of the limitations of human reason in grappling with the divine.

The book ends by suggesting that the tension between chance and purpose is not necessarily a inconsistency , but rather a manifestation of the complexity of God's nature. He suggests that the apparent randomness of the world may in fact be part of a larger, inscrutable divine purpose.

Bartholomew's work is not simply an scholarly exercise. It has real-world implications for how we understand our own lives, our relationship with God, and our obligations to others. By probing our assumptions about divine action, the book encourages a deeper faith , one that is both intellectually demanding and spiritually satisfying .

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

- 1. What is the central argument of Bartholomew's book?** The central argument explores the compatibility of divine foreknowledge/omnipotence with human free will. It doesn't offer a definitive answer but explores various theological models attempting to reconcile these seemingly conflicting concepts.
- 2. Which theological perspectives does Bartholomew discuss?** The book covers open theism, Molinism, and classical theism, among others, analyzing their strengths and weaknesses in addressing the issue of chance and purpose in relation to God.
- 3. Is the book suitable for a non-theological audience?** Yes, Bartholomew writes in an accessible style, avoiding excessive jargon. While dealing with complex theological ideas, the book's clarity makes it

engaging for readers with varying levels of theological knowledge.

4. What are the practical implications of Bartholomew's work? The book encourages a deeper and more nuanced understanding of faith, prompting critical reflection on our beliefs about God's action in the world and our own lives. It fosters a more intellectually rigorous and spiritually enriching faith.

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