



The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence

By Thomas Jay Oord

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Rarely does a new theological position emerge to account well for life in the world, including not only goodness and beauty but also tragedy and randomness. Drawing from Scripture, science, philosophy and various theological traditions, Thomas Jay Oord offers a novel theology of providence?essential kenosis?that emphasizes God's inherently noncoercive love in relation to creation. *The Uncontrolling Love of God* provides a clear and powerful answer to the problem of evil, the problem of chance, and how God acts providentially in the world.

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Editorial Review

Review

A video introduction to the book: youtube.com/watch?v=Sp3GVIqhYQk

"A work of a mature thinker, this book secures Oord's legacy as *the* theologian of *love*. It is a comprehensive theological response to the age-old question of how genuine evil exists even assuming the omnipotent and omnibenevolent God of Christian faith, and is all the more compelling given its biblical, philosophical and scientifically informed tapestry?no mean feat! The faithful across all Christian traditions will be encouraged to live a life of love even as skeptics will be invited to think again and again." (Amos Yong, professor of theology and mission, Fuller Theological Seminary)

"Can I believe in the providence of God without making God responsible for evil? Open and relational theology answers yes, combining biblical and philosophical resources. Here Thomas Oord, the leading open and relational theologian, makes a powerful case for miracles and the providential care of the self-emptying God. His remarkably clear book offers readers a compelling theodicy and a welcome gift to personal faith." (Philip Clayton, author, *The Predicament of Belief*)

"A much-discussed option on the contemporary theological scene is so-called open theology. Working within the framework of open theology, and with some truly horrendous examples of evil constantly in mind, Thomas Oord develops a fresh and original doctrine of providence, the central thesis of which is that it belongs to God's nature to offer to creatures non-controlling, other-empowering love. Anyone who subsequently writes about providence will have to engage Oord's cogently argued and lucidly presented account." (Nicholas Wolterstorff, Noah Porter Professor Emeritus of Philosophical Theology, Yale University, senior research fellow, Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, University of Virginia)

"Can we reconcile a biblical understanding of divine love and creativity with the universe of human experience and scientific understanding? Not a new question, of course, but one that requires fresh faith and intellectual subtlety. Tom Oord's new book offers both. And it is written with a clarity and passion that should appeal to a wide range readers." (John F. Haught, distinguished research professor, Georgetown University, author of *Resting on the Future*)

"This is a scholarly and readable book arguing that God is essentially a God of self-giving love, and that this provides a way of seeing how evil can exist in a world created by God. It is an important theological work, and continues Oord's project of constructing a fully Christian 'open and relational' theology." (Keith Ward, FBA, Regius Professor Emeritus of Divinity, University of Oxford)

"Written in his characteristically winsome style, Oord's account of *The Uncontrolling Love of God* is a highly accessible yet richly sophisticated affirmation of God's providential engagement with creation that takes seriously the insistence on randomness and novelty in recent science. Oord sprinkles throughout pastorally wise advice on how Christians might think about and engage the undeniable evil and ugliness in life by probing the implications of our fundamental commitment to the self-emptying love of God as manifest in Jesus Christ. Highly recommended!" (Randy L. Maddox, Duke Divinity School)

"Thomas Oord's *The Uncontrolling Love of God* is an ambitious book offering a new account of divine sovereignty, divine interaction with creation, a new response to the problem of evil, and other issues needed for a plausible model of God. This account is presented in accessible prose, suitable for any college educated reader." (Eric J. Silverman, *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 67, No. 266, January 1, 2017)

"Oord's work is a constructive attempt to provide answers to very complex questions in a way that seeks to satisfy human experience, findings from contemporary science, and doctrines of the Christian faith." (Jacob R. Lett, *Philosophy, Theology and the Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 1)

"The book is beautifully and clearly written." (Jonathan Clatworthy, *Modern Believing*, 57, 4)

"Although it is worthy on its own terms, *The Uncontrolling Love of God* is perhaps best digested in dialogue with other voices. . . . Oord fills a critical gap in the literature of open and relational theology, and he offers a clear, biblically sound, cruciform answer to the problem of evil and God's providence, while avoiding the pitfalls of divine culpability that previous models of providence fall into." (Benjamin L. Corey, *The Christian Century*, July 20, 2016)

"*Uncontrolling* is unquestionably Oord's most comprehensive theological contribution to date. In it he coheres many of his thoughts into a single volume and presents a rational, systematic defense of his doctrine of essential kenosis. As Oord has done for some time, at great personal cost, he upholds God's self-giving, others-empowering love as God's divine attribute; it is love that defines God's providence and ultimately, God's power. Without a doubt, Oord's solution to the problem of evil and the suffering of individuals in the case studies he presents, is more appealing than classical alternatives. Oord has done original theological and philosophical heavy-lifting that Pentecostal and Charismatic scholars should engage, appreciate, and appropriate as highly compatible with the theological distinctives of our own movements." (Joshua D. Reichard, *Pneuma*, Vol. 38, 2016)

"Tom's purpose here is to offer an explanation for divine agency in the midst of randomness in a way that respects freedom and embraces relationality. . . . It is, I will say, another fine book from a most thoughtful and thought-provoking theologian." (Robert Cornwall, *Ponderings on a Faith Journey*, October 1, 2015)

From the Author

This video introduces *The Uncontrolling Love of God*:

[youtube.com/watch?v=Sp3GVIqhYQk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sp3GVIqhYQk)

About the Author

Thomas Jay Oord (PhD, Claremont Graduate University) is professor of theology and philosophy at Northwest Nazarene University in Nampa, Idaho. He serves as adviser or on the councils of several scholarly groups, including the Open and Relational Theologies group (AAR), Biologos, Institute for Research on Unlimited Love, Research Theological Fellowship, Wesleyan Theological Society and the Wesleyan Philosophical Society. Oord has written or edited more than twenty books, including *Defining Love: A Philosophical, Scientific, and Theological Engagement*, *The Nature of Love: A Theology* and *Theologies of Creation: Creatio Ex Nihilo and Its New Rivals*. He is known for his contributions to research on love, open and relational theologies, postmodernism, issues in religion and science, and Wesleyan, holiness and evangelical theologies. Oord serves as an ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene and in various consulting and administrative roles for academic institutions, scholarly projects and research teams. He and his wife Cheryl have three daughters.

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