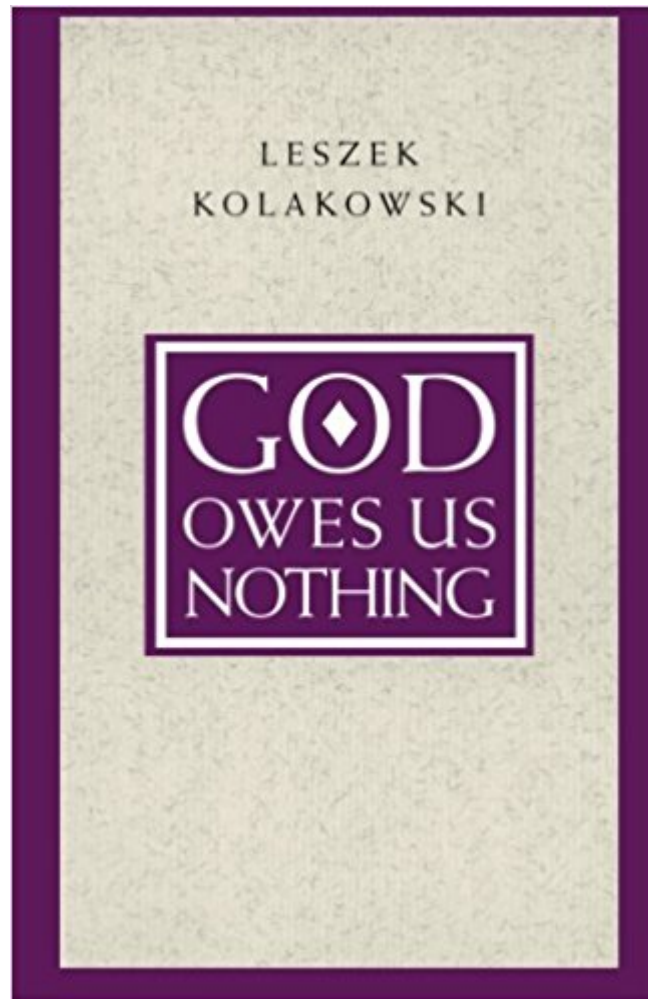


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God Owes Us Nothing: A Brief Remark On Pascal's Religion And On The Spirit Of Jansenism



Synopsis

God Owes Us Nothing reflects on the centuries-long debate in Christianity: how do we reconcile the existence of evil in the world with the goodness of an omnipotent God, and how does God's omnipotence relate to people's responsibility for their own salvation or damnation. Leszek Kolakowski approaches this paradox as both an exercise in theology and in revisionist Christian history based on philosophical analysis. Kolakowski's unorthodox interpretation of the history of modern Christianity provokes renewed discussion about the historical, intellectual, and cultural omnipotence of neo-Augustinianism. "Several books a year wrestle with that hoary conundrum, but few so dazzlingly as the Polish philosopher's latest." "Carlin Romano, Washington Post Book World" Kolakowski's fascinating book and its debatable thesis raise intriguing historical and theological questions well worth pursuing. "Stephen J. Duffy, Theological Studies" Kolakowski's elegant meditation is a masterpiece of cultural and religious criticism. "Henry Carrigan, Cleveland Plain Dealer

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Customer Reviews

The quintessential delusion that modern man suffers from is his presupposition that historical criticism must be viewed through the biased eyes of present thought, even and especially when dealing with those dark days before the so-called "Enlightenment". Historical revisionism is a gentleman's game after all, for it provides us with an agreeable assortment of rationalizations for

explaining away the atrocities of the past, all in the name of advancing civilization of course. And nowhere is this depraved sense of personal and societal grandeur more present than in modern critiques of Christianity, more specifically the predestination based view of Christianity that roots all power in the will of God and see man for the wretch that he is. Leszek Kolakowski's latter day fascination with the relationship between history and religion is something of a double-edged sword in this respect, as it brought forth a book of marginal integrity to bring the Jansenist controversy to a generation that knows little, if nothing regarding the more than thousand year struggle between Augustinian and Pelagian thought within all of Christendom, Roman Catholic and Protestant respectively, even though it presents a blatantly lopsided picture in favor of the semi-Pelagian argument. It is necessary for the sake of disclosure to note that the author of this review is a modern adherent to the Jansenist view of Catholicism, though more directly influenced by Antoine Arnauld's and Pasquier Quesnel's works, which are more widely available in languages other than Latin. As such, the perspective presented here is wholly Augustinian, and also presupposes in much the same manner as another reviewer of this book by the name of G. Stucco that Cornelius Jansenius' views are in full harmony with Augustine's original arguments.

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