

## GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN PREDESTINATION

On the basis that God says: “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isa. 55:9), Christians must be very careful in their attempts to understand what is the content of God’s foreknowledge i.e. His knowledge of the future, and therefore, must be primarily led by the Scriptures in such understanding.

### DETAILS OF TERMS

In addition to the biblical terms of “foreknowledge” and “predestine” as needing to be defined and clarified, the commentators on this subject often apply the figure of speech called anthropomorphisms. This also needs to be explained.

#### ANTHROPOMORPHISMS

Anthropomorphisms are figures of speech used in the Bible **to describe God in human terms**. It is God’s metaphorical language about Himself **to accommodate our limited capacity to understand** things about Him. This is because the absolute reality about Him is simply beyond us. It is a graphic way to show us His actions in relation to mankind. So when, for example, God speaks of His arm he is simply describing His all-powerfulness or omnipotence.

#### PREDESTINED and FOREKNOWLEDGE

According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words:

- **Predestined (foreordained)** (Gk. *proorizō*) has special reference to **that which** the subjects of God’s foreknowledge are predestined i.e. events, situations, or purposes. Never does predestination refer to eternal **salvation** of individuals.
- **To foreknow** (Gk. *proginōskō*) and **foreknowledge** (Gk. *prognōsis*) have special reference to **particular persons** foreknown by God.

NOTE: In this study we take the word “foreknow” as being with absolute certainty, although humans can foreknow what someone is likely to decide to do because of knowing their character.

#### EXAMPLES OF GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

- ❖ “God has not rejected His people [*Israel*] whom he **foreknew**” (*Rom. 11:2*).
- ❖ “For He [*Messiah*] was **foreknown**” (*1 Pet. 1:20*).
- ❖ “Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and **foreknowledge** of God” (*Acts 2:23*).
- ❖ “...for those [*Christians*] whom he **foreknew**” (*Rom. 8:29*).
- ❖ “To those who are elect ... according to the **foreknowledge** of God” (*1 Pet. 1:1, 2*).

#### EXAMPLES OF GOD'S PREDESTINATION OF EVENTS, SITUATIONS, OR PURPOSES

- ❖ “...to do whatever your hand and your plan had **predestined to take place**” (*Acts 4:28*).
- ❖ “For those whom he foreknew he also **predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those whom he **predestined** he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (*Rom. 8:29, 30*).
- ❖ “...he **predestined** us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” (*Eph. 1:5*).

- ❖ “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined** according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will” (*Eph. 1:11*).

## THE MAIN UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE NATURE AND CONTENT OF GOD’S FOREKNOWLEDGE

1. Calvinist View
  2. Arminian View — Simple-Foreknowledge
  3. Molinist View — God’s Middle-Knowledge
  4. Openness View of Creation (also called Open-Theism)
- In all four views God knows all of reality (But the content of reality is different in View #4).
  - In Views #1, #2, and #3 all future decisions are definitely exhaustively settled.
  - In View #1 the content of all reality is settled because God has **predestined everything** so that He controls everything that will happen.
  - In View #2 God only **knows** all of what will happen. He does not make it happen.
  - In View #3 God chooses the best possible world before He creates it, and so only **knows** all of the future, but does not make it happen.
  - In View #4 the future is **partly settled** because God has predestined those events which He will make happen (or there are present causes which render a future event to be certain to happen) and **partly open** because God has not predestined other events – they are the infinite number of *possibilities* that God knows and so are also part of the content of reality.

### 1. THE CALVINIST VIEW

This view is based on a Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic view of God’s nature as static. A substantially large section of orthodox Christianity follows this Platonic approach that was developed in the fourth century by *Augustine of Hippo* the founder of Roman Catholicism who gained his view of the static God from the Neo-Platonists. It was later systematized and further developed by *John Calvin* in the 1500s. This view states that God has an **exhaustively definite foreknowledge** because He has:

- ★ Knowledge of everything past, present, and future because He **has predestined everything** that will happen and there is no sequence of time for God. This all therefore means that God’s knowledge never grows.
- ★ Immutability—He does not change in any respect.

For all of the passages of Scripture which show that God does change His mind, the Calvinist view describes them as being **anthropomorphic** rather than literal. This view **denies genuine human free will**. A discussion of the Calvinist approach to all of Scripture is given in STUDY 12.

### 2. THE ARMINIAN VIEW — SIMPLE-FOREKNOWLEDGE

In his attempting to teach Calvinism the Dutch theologian *Jacobus Arminius* (1560—1609) realized that many aspects of Calvinism were problematic. So he taught that:

1. God’s gracious favour to people may be resisted. ✓
2. God predetermined to save all who believe in Jesus. ✓
3. Election (being chosen) was conditional. ✓
4. Perseverance of Christians depended on obedience. ✓
5. Christ’s death was sufficient for all but was efficient only for believers. ✓

6. There was no predestination of the non-elect to sin and to suffer eternal damnation because this would make God the author of sin. ✓
7. Predestination was not rooted in God's decrees, but only in His foresight. ????

NOTE: As will be seen later the concept of # 7 is problematic.

So the Arminian Simple-Foreknowledge View teaches that from eternity God simply has an **exhaustively definite foreknowledge** but has **not predestined it** and could, at the beginning, do nothing to change what will occur. So here there are no open-ended possibilities – because God knows everything that will occur in all of the future. As with Calvinism all of the passages of Scripture which show that God does change His mind are taken in this view as being **anthropomorphic** rather than literal. Nevertheless this view claims to confirm genuine human free will.

### 3. THE MOLINIST VIEW — GOD'S MIDDLE-KNOWLEDGE

This view is a development of Arminian theories on predestination. This considerable development was undertaken by *Luis de Molina* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In this view God knew, prior to His creative decree, what would have come to pass if he had chosen to create any other world. This knowledge is His middle-knowledge. In distinction to the Simple-Foreknowledge View, this view shows that God does know what humans would do in other circumstances because of **counterfactuals**. There are two types of counterfactuals: **“would” counterfactuals** and **“might” counterfactuals**. The Molinist view does *not* apply **“might” counterfactuals** to the subject of God's foreknowledge.

#### *“WOULD” COUNTERFACTUALS*

These are defined as: Hypothetical statements in the subjunctive mood: e.g., “*if you were honest you would confess.*” In other words they are conditional statements in the subjunctive mood i.e. if (a certain condition) then (a certain consequence). The consequences are contrary to fact so that God knows what would happen if an individual did a certain thing that it turns out that they don't do e.g. in 1 Samuel 23:6-10 David enquires of God, through the ephod, as to whether or not Saul will attack the city of Keilah to catch David. It is affirmed that Saul will attack and that the men of the city will hand David over to Saul to be killed. However, this answer only holds true if David remains in the City. With this information to hand David makes the wise choice to leave the City. So these statements made by God do not come true because they were conditional. Examples are in Matthew 11:21-24 and 1 Corinthians 2:8.

#### *THREE LOGICAL MOMENTS OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE*

In the Molinist view God's knowledge of the future is presented in three logical moments as He decides which world or reality to create. These ‘moments’ of knowledge are not chronological; rather they are to be understood as ‘logical’ i.e. one moment does not follow after another moment in time, rather one moment is logically after the other moments. So these moments are:

1. **God's Natural Knowledge.** This includes an infinite number of realities that God could create. Any one of these realities may be made in completely different ways and out of very different materials well beyond our imaginings. This encompasses God's knowledge of all necessary and all possible facts. In this ‘moment’ God knows every possible combination of causes and effects and all possible combinations of events and human choices. Whether or not God chooses to interact with these various worlds, He still grants free will to all entities in such worlds. However, not all of these realities will accomplish His purposes. So He then analyses all the realities that are feasible if He is to accomplish His purpose. This is called:



your taxes or not only because it is *possible* for you to cheat on your taxes *or not*. But if the fact that you *will* cheat is written in *God's Book of Known Facts*, and God can't possibly be wrong, then it is not possible for you *not* to cheat on your taxes. Hence you cannot be free to choose between the possibilities of cheating or not cheating. In other words, you can't be free p.121-22.

Please see STUDY 10 HUMANS HAVE GENUINE FREE WILL.

#### 4. THE OPENNESS VIEW OF CREATION

This is the rarer view of which little is known concerning its ancient history other than its being held by a fifth century Christian theologian named Calcidius. However, the medieval Jewish theologians (e.g. Ibn Ezra, 12<sup>th</sup> century and Gersonides, 14<sup>th</sup> century), the Unitarian, Socinus (16<sup>th</sup> century), and a number of 18<sup>th</sup> century Methodist theologians, including Adam Clarke all held this view. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement-Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ generally followed this understanding as well as many Methodists, some evangelicals, and a few Catholics. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this expanded to include many evangelicals, many Pentecostals as well as some significant theologians e.g. Jurgen Moltman, Paul Fides, Michael Welker and the philosophical theologian, Keith Ward. Today the main theologian who are promoters of this view are: Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, and Gregory Boyd.

##### BRIEF EXPLANATION

This view of the future, and therefore God's foreknowledge of reality, is composed:

- Partly of **settled events** because God has predestined those events which He will make happen or that there are present causes which render a future event to be certain to happen, and —
- Partly of **open events** because God has not predestined them or that there are no present causes which render a future event to be certain — they are the infinite range of possibilities. This is because God cannot foreknow the decisions that free agents will make because they do not yet exist. However, God knows them as the infinite range of possibilities. So they are part of the reality of God's foreknowledge. This can be illustrated, although insufficiently, by the series of short stories produced where the reader is invited to choose from a range of different endings according to his or her choice i.e. it is open-ended. We may expand the explanation to say that God's sovereignty operates according to both a **purposive aspect** and a **permissive aspect of His will**. This makes the future partly closed and partly open.

##### THE **PURPOSIVE** ASPECT IS FOREKNOWN AND PREDESTINED

- ❖ "...him who works all things according to the counsel of his will..." (*Eph. 1:11*).
- ❖ "...we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (*Rom. 8:28*).

God's sovereign purposive will lead to Messiah and finally the Kingdom of God for the blessing of all the nations. It involves God's foreknowing and predestining a body of people who are "in Christ." Such predestination is therefore christocentric and does not require that particular *individuals* have been predestined for salvation as Christians, but that they should remain in the predestined body of Christ. This can be illustrated by imagining a train, its route and various scheduled stops and with a final destination. Such a train may represent *the body of Christ* which God foreknows and has predestined to enter the kingdom—the final destination. The passengers represent the individuals who hear the call to board the train (by hearing the Gospel). Some choose not to board it [ "*many are called but few are chosen*" (*Matt. 22:14*)]. Some board it (by believing) but then choose, with the use of their

free will, to get off at a stop earlier than the final destination. These, therefore, in using their free will poorly, fail to inherit the kingdom at the final destination. However, others choose to stay on the train, i.e. remain “in Christ” right to the final destination to inherit the Kingdom. So God’s superlative assessment of mankind in general allows him to foreknow that some individuals will fail to respond to the call. He also foreknows that others will respond to his call but fail to stay to the final destination. Additionally, He foreknows that others, who have ‘boarded,’ will remain ‘on the train’ to the final destination. Yet God does not know which **particular** individuals any of these will be until they ‘respond or not to the call to board the train.’ This is all of immense encouragement to those who, by faithfulness, remain “in Christ.” It gives them a full assurance of their inheriting the Kingdom despite their personal failings.

#### ***THE PERMISSIVE ASPECT IS NOT FOREKNOWN OR PREDESTINED***

This permissive aspect to God’s will encompasses all that is not God’s purposive will so that humans may exercise their free will within the physical parameters of life. Furthermore, it is God’s sovereign will to let events run their course. Therefore, personal circumstances and world events, including natural disasters are not controlled by Him. There is a very large group of statements in the Scriptures about events which are evidently open-ended and in which God is shown to: Confront the unexpected, have no foreknowledge of certain things, experience regret, express frustration, speak in conditional terms, test individuals to learn something about their character, change His mind after He has decreed a particular event.

The Calvinist, Arminian and Molinist views appeal to anthropomorphisms to explain all of the above biblical statements about God’s foreknowledge.

#### **WHY IT IS NOT ALL ANTHROPOMORPHIC**

Please note the definition of anthropomorphisms at the beginning of this study.

The use of anthropomorphisms in Scripture concerning God only logically fits if they are **limited to His physical attributes** which we cannot comprehend, rather than to statements about **His ethical or spiritual qualities** which should be taken as literal for the following reasons:

**RELEVANCE.** There is **nothing** in all the open-ended passages referring to God’s future knowledge **that suggests that these passages are anthropomorphic.**

**CONSISTENCY.** If we take a face-value reading and therefore take as literal the statements concerning **what God predestines and is therefore settled**, it would be consistent to do the same with those statements **showing an open-ended, undetermined future i.e., a future of possibilities.**

**REFLECTING REALTY.** As with all figures of speech, anthropomorphisms must reflect a reality at some level. e.g. “God’s right hand” as meaning his power. But to say that the Scriptures describing God’s changing of His mind is only anthropomorphic would **reflect no reality at all.** Otherwise, we may as well say that the description of *God as love* doesn’t really mean that at all.

**TRUTH ABOUT GOD’S CHARACTER.** To say that such passages are anthropomorphic simply **undermines the integrity of Scripture** e.g. to say that God changed His mind when, in fact, He didn’t is completely misleading. In fact, it would not be communicating anything truthful about Him.

So God is not representing His character to us **only as He seems to be** to us so that, for example, it only seems as though he changes His mind. He represents His character, His ethical or spiritual qualities as He actually is.

So the relevant passages referring to God in these contexts of undetermined features are not an accommodation to our finite human thinking, i.e., **anthropomorphic** descriptions in this regard, and it

is clearly inappropriate to apply this figure of speech to the relevant statements about God's foreknowledge?

#### FURTHER DETAILS OF THE OPENNESS VIEW

God decided to create humans as being capable of experiencing His love and freely responding to it with love toward Him and therefore He has granted us genuine free will, which is necessary for a truly personal relationship of love to develop.

As **sovereign**, God has decided to make **some of his actions** contingent upon human requests and actions so that He works with responsive humans in His plans.

God can genuinely be influenced by what humans do and respond accordingly so that there is genuine interaction – it is a dynamic relationship.

Because the Scriptures show that God changes in some respects this implies that **God is temporal**. At least since creation He works with us **in time**, rather than being timelessly eternal. This is the dynamic theory of time rather than the stasis or tenseless theory of time (Please see the book *Four Views – God and Time* edited by Gregory E. Ganssle).

In wisdom, God has chosen to exercise general rather than overly detailed preparation for future events. This means that humans are not put into a straight-jacket and that God can be creative and resourceful in working with humans i.e., flexible in His strategies.

God's nature doesn't change, but He may adjust His plans, so that He is endlessly resourceful in working towards the fulfillment of his ultimate purpose. This means that His plan is not a detailed script or blueprint, but a broad purpose that allows for a variety of options regarding precisely how these purposes will be fulfilled.

As the **omniscient** God He knows all that there is to know about the universe – He knows the past and present with exhaustive definite knowledge. However, concerning the future He knows it as partly definite (closed) and partly indefinite (open). This is termed dynamic omniscience. Indeed, God could have known every event of the future had He decided to create a fully determined universe. However, biblically speaking He decided to create beings with genuine free will which implies that He chose to create a universe in which not all of the future is knowable, even for Himself, although He knows all possibilities.

In the partly open or indefinite aspect of the future God is not caught off-guard. He has *foresight* and anticipates what we will or might do because he already knows all possibilities.

#### THE OPENNESS VIEW GIVES THE BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE

There are several factors which indicate that the Openness View explains the biblical data best and therefore is most likely to be the correct one:

##### *THE OBVIOUS PURPOSIVE AND PERMISSIVE ASPECTS TO GOD'S WILL*

The Scriptural record provides a clear picture of God's will such that He has a **purposive aspect to His will** whereby God has already determined things that will absolutely take place, and a **permissive aspect to His will** whereby the future for individuals is generally left unsettled. This means that although the content of God's foreknowledge includes all possibilities His actual definite foreknowledge is not exhaustive. This is because future free decisions or choices from those

possibilities simply do not yet exist. This shows that God knows all of what is actual reality. More will be said about and purposive and permissive aspects of God's when we examine the relevant Bible passages.

#### *LESS PHILOSOPHY INVOLVED*

The Calvinist View requires a great amount of philosophy to explain itself. This is because it is often explaining away clear straight forward scriptural evidence. Calvinism argues over such things as *supralapsarianism* (that God predestined particular individuals to salvation before the Fall of man as well as of others to suffer eternal damnation) and *infralapsarianism* (that God's made such decisions after the Fall of man as a consequence of it) i.e. these concern the sequence of God's *supposed* eternal decrees. In contrast the Openness View uses the Scriptures at face value in harmony with common-sense and logic and so does not need to refer to philosophical approaches.

#### *A CONSISTENT APPROACH TO THE BIBLICAL LANGUAGE*

The Openness View exhibits a consistency not evident in the other views so that: a literal approach is taken to the group of statements in the Scriptures about events which are closed off i.e. that God has predestined these particular things to take place so that they are settled, **and a literal approach is taken to the group of statements in the Scriptures about events which are open**. These concern God as confronting the unexpected, experiencing regret, expressing frustration, speaking in conditional terms, testing individuals to learn something about their character, or changing His mind after He has decreed something, all of which are quite literal statements rather than as anthropomorphic. This is in complete contrast to the Calvinist or Arminian or Molinist views which make an inconsistent application to the various statements in reference to God's foreknowledge, namely of literalness to some of the statements, but **anthropomorphism** to other statements when there is no logical reason to do so.

#### *GOD IS NOT A LIMITED OR A HARSH GOD – HE IS A GOD OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES*

The Calvinist View promotes a God who harshly predestines the majority of mankind to either eternal destruction or eternal torment. He is also shown to be **not secure** enough to allow others to have free will. Yet, the Arminian and Molinist views promote a God who is **not able to change whatever evil things** will happen and so appears weak. However, the Scriptures give us a quite different and positive picture of God's character if we accept the Openness view of His foreknowledge. This view of how God's foreknowledge works demonstrates God's supreme intelligence, because it requires that He use **His infinite problem-solving intelligence** in analysing all of the combinations of all of the possibilities that there are, and clearly He has always known what all the possibilities are! This requires much greater intelligence than a God who simply foreknows or predestines the entire future.

The Openness View also presents God's **ability to respond to changing circumstances** by using His infinite intelligence to accomplish His purposes as His creation moves through time, rather than having everything foreknown and settled prior to creation. This also takes a greater amount of intelligence than would be the case in the Calvinist and Arminian views.

#### *OPEN THEISM IS THE ONLY VIEW WHICH ACTUALLY ALLOWS FOR GENUINE HUMAN FREE WILL*

As shown earlier almost all promoters of the Calvinist view deny that humans actually have genuine free will; and although the Arminian and Molinist views both claim to confirm genuine human free will, this cannot actually be the case for the reasons given above. In contrast to these views the Openness View unassailably presents God as granting genuine human free will.

Nevertheless, there are factors which the Openness View holds in common with the other views such as the predestination of the settled events common to Calvinism and the counterfactual knowledge of the Molinist View. Firstly we shall examine those aspects of God's foreknowledge concerning that which is settled.

## THOSE EVENTS WHICH ARE PREDESTINED AND THEREFORE SETTLED

### GOD'S PREDESTINED SOVEREIGN PURPOSE

God's predestined sovereign eternal purpose is for a paradise earth in which perfect humans who perfectly love Him will exist.

- ❖ "I am God...**declaring the end from the beginning** and from ancient times things not yet done. Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose**'" (*Isa. 46:9-11*).
- ❖ "**The former things I declared of old**; they went out from my mouth, and I announced them; then suddenly I did them, and they came to pass" (*Isa. 48:3*).
- ❖ "...to do whatever your hand and your plan (*purpose* NASB) had **predestined** (*foreordained*) to take place" (*Acts 4:28*).
- ❖ "...hidden wisdom of God, which God **decreed before** ("*predestined*" NASB) the ages for our glory" (*1 Cor. 2:7*).

Along with God's over-all purpose there are features toward the accomplishment of His purpose which, at particular times He predetermines to happen and therefore foreknows will happen. These include:

1. Events to occur to particular cities and nations.
2. Situations or events to occur to particular individuals.
3. That there would be a Messiah.
4. That there would be an unspecified person who would betray the Messiah.
5. That there would be a body of people who would become united to the Messiah.

#### 1. EVENTS THAT WERE FOREKNOWN AND PREDESTINED TO OCCUR TO PARTICULAR CITIES AND NATIONS

The following are just a few examples of the many nations that God foreknew and predestined at particular times (but not from eternity) to experience certain situations:

- The 400 year captivity of the Israelites in Egypt and their later release (*Gen. 15:13-15*).
- The release of the nation of Judah after their 70 year captivity in Babylon (*Jer. 29:10-11*).
- The future destruction of the city of Tyre (*Ezek. 26:7-21*).

#### 2. EVENTS THAT WERE FOREKNOWN AND PREDESTINED TO OCCUR TO PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS

The roles which Samson, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist were to play were predestined before their *birth but not from eternity*. **Samson** was simply foreordained to be a Nazirite (*Judges 13:3-5*), **Jeremiah** was foreordained to be a prophet to the nations (*Jer.1:5*), and **John the Baptist** was foreordained to prepare the people for the advent of Messiah. What was said in Romans 9 concerning **Esau and Jacob** was with reference to the nations that descended from them (*Mal.1:2, 3*) and based on Esau's and Jacob's genetic make-ups that God could examine from the time of their conception. Regarding **Cyrus the Persian** (*Isa. 44:26-28; 45:1-4*) it was not a case of someone being personally foreknown by God nearly two centuries before his actions, but rather that God would use a conqueror by that name who would, by means of his conquest of the Babylonian Empire, cause the release of the Jews thereby allowing them to rebuild Jerusalem. **The Pharaoh** of Moses' time was not foreknown by

God before his birth but only from the time that Moses confronted Pharaoh at which time God foreknew that Pharaoh would harden his heart against the release of the Israelites. (Please see STUDY 13 on Romans 9 concerning God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart). However, for all of the above individuals there was no pre-ordained detailed script for their entire lives or for their final destinies.

### 3. MESSIAH WAS FOREKNOWN AND PREDESTINED

- ❖ “[Messiah] was foreknown **before the foundation of the world**” (1 Pet. 1:20).
- ❖ “...investigating the time and circumstances that the Spirit of Christ within them indicated when it testified **in advance** to the **sufferings** destined for Christ and the **glories** to follow them”  
(1 Pet. 1:11 NAB).

*Messiah was predestined in the sense that the details of his sufferings, crucifixion, resurrection, exaltation and future return were foreknown by God and so were predestined by Him.*

### 4. THE PREDESTINATION OF SOMEONE WHO WOULD BETRAY THE MESSIAH

The prophecies did not specify which close companion of Jesus would betray him (Ps. 41:9; 55:12-14; Ps. 109:2-19). So Judas was not personally predestined to betray Jesus. In fact, Jesus had made a prayerful and excellent selection, with God's guidance, of his 12 apostles, including Judas Iscariot. It was Judas himself who allowed his heart to turn away from his lord so that in time it became evident to Jesus that it was Judas who would betray him.

NOTE: When John 6:64 says: “For Jesus knew from **the beginning**...who it was who would betray him” the phrase “**the beginning**” does not mean the beginning of creation or the beginning of his ministry but rather from *the beginning of Judas' turning away from a course of loyalty to Jesus.*

### 5. THE PREDESTINATION OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

- ❖ “For those whom he foreknew he also **predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom. 8:29).
- ❖ “...he **predestined us for adoption as sons** through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will ... In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been **predestined according to the purpose** of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph. 1:5, 11).

*This arrangement is part and parcel of all that is messianic and for the purpose of bringing in the Kingdom to create paradise. Again we can be absolutely certain that these things will occur.*

## THOSE EVENTS WHICH ARE OPEN AND THEREFORE NOT SETTLED

These are the large group of statements in which God is shown to:

1. Confront the unexpected.
2. Have no foreknowledge of certain things.
3. Experience regret.
4. Express frustration.
5. Speak in conditional terms.
6. Test individuals to learn something about their character.
7. Change His mind after He has decreed something.

## 1. GOD CONFRONTS THE UNEXPECTED

Concerning Yahweh's vineyard—Israel:

- ❖ “He [*Yahweh*] **expected** it to yield fine grapes; wild grapes were all it yielded ... what more could I have done for my vineyard that I have not done? **Why** when I expected it to yield fine grapes, has it yielded wild ones ... He **expected** fair judgement, **but found** injustice...” (*Isa. 5:2, 4, 7*).

God's own expectation proves to be wrong:

- ❖ “Have you seen what disloyal Israel has done? How she made her way up every high hill and to every green tree, and played the whore there? **I thought**, ‘After doing all this **she will come back** to me’. *But she did not come back*” (*Jer. 3:6, 7*).
- ❖ “**I thought**: You will call me Father and will never cease to follow me. **But** ... you have betrayed me” (*Jer. 3:19, 20*).

Could God genuinely say that he “he thought” or “expected” this outcome but instead got that different outcome, if he had eternally **foreknown** or **predestined the outcome that He got**? Rather this would have been one of the many possibilities that He would have anticipated.

Similarly, if God eternally foreknows that His work with Israel is bound to be a waste of time, why do Scriptures repeatedly inform us that God's own spirit is “grieved” (*Eph. 4:30*) by those who resist His attempts to build the relationship with them? So the very genuineness of God's attempts with them and the fact of God's grief must be dependent upon the uncertainty of the outcome.

## 2. THINGS OF WHICH GOD HAD NO FOREKNOWLEDGE

*God finds out Adam's choices of animal names:*

- ❖ “So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man **to see what he would call them**. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name” (*Gen. 2:19*).

*If God already knew Adam's choices, then His motive in bringing the animals to Adam would be called into question.*

*God is heartbroken because of Israel's willingness:*

- ❖ “...to burn their sons and daughters: a thing I never ordered, that had **never entered my thoughts**” (*Jer. 7:31*).

*Wicked humans are told by Jesus:*

- ❖ “Depart from me, accursed ones, into the fire **prepared for the devil** and his angels” (*Matt. 25:4*).

*If humans were not originally meant to go into the fire then God could not have foreknown it.*

*Furthermore, the early Christians did not think that all prophecy was unalterable:*

- ❖ “Agabus ... said, ‘This is what the Holy Spirit says: “In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.” When we heard this we...began begging him not to go to Jerusalem” (*Acts 21:10-12*).

*The brothers clearly did not believe that this was unalterable otherwise why would they try to dissuade Paul from going. Contrary to Agabus' prophesy the Jews never bound Paul and handed him over to the Romans. Instead he was rescued by the Romans from the Jews.*

*God finds out those who are worthy of life in the age to come*

- ❖ “The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never **blot** his name **out of the book** of life...” (*Rev. 3:5*).

*Why would God even bother to record the names of those he has always known would “conquer” or would fail “to conquer”?*

NOTE: Revelation 13:8, 17:8 describe names being recorded in God’s book of life “**from** the foundation of the world.” However, no passage states that the names were recorded **at** or “**before** the foundation of the world” Yet one would expect this if the future was exhaustively settled.

So if we take the Scriptures at face value we have to conclude that God does not always foreknow everything.

### 3. GOD EXPERIENCES REGRET

After God has discovered just how wicked the whole human race could be He shows regret for having made mankind and then proceeds to destroy all of the wicked in the great flood, the Bible states that:

❖ “The LORD was sorry that he made man on the earth, and it grieved him...” (*Gen. 6:5–6*).

If everything was exhaustively settled and foreknown by God before he created the world, then He had to have known that mankind would become so wicked at that exact time before He even created them and with absolute certainty. If that were the case it would be impossible for Him to sincerely regret his decision to create them? By contrast, if we accept that God’s regret was plainly real then it is evident that, until that time, God did not know with certainty that humanity would cause such grief to Him.

### 4. GOD EXPRESSES FRUSTRATION

Regarding Israel God asks in frustration:

❖ “How much longer will these people treat me with contempt? How much longer will they refuse to trust me?” (*Num. 14:11*).

If God had definitely foreknown or predestined Israel’s treatment of Him how could it possibly turn out differently and so causing Him frustration with them.

❖ “And I [**God**] sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the breach before me for the land, that I should not destroy it, **but I found none**” (*Ezek. 22:30*).

Can a person genuinely look for something that they have known or ordained from eternity is not there? But rather there was the possibility that there was someone to do this.

### 5. GOD SPEAKS IN CONDITIONAL TERMS

❖ “If at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom, that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, <sup>8</sup>and **if that nation**, concerning which I have spoken, **turns from** its evil, **I will relent** of the disaster that I intended to do to it. <sup>9</sup> And if at any time I declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, <sup>10</sup>and **if it does evil** in my sight, not listening to my voice, then **I will relent** of the good that I had intended to do to it” (*Jer. 18:7-10*).

This demonstrates the wise flexibility of God, which cannot be the case in the Classical views.

### 6. GOD TESTS INDIVIDUALS TO LEARN SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR CHARACTER

After Abraham had shown himself to be *willing to offer Isaac as a sacrifice* in obedience to God Abraham was told:

- ❖ “...for **now I know** that you fear God” (*Gen. 22:12*). *This was no fake test.*
- ❖ “Yahweh your God is testing you [*Israel*] **to know if you love** Yahweh your God with all your heart and all your soul” (*Deut. 13:4*).
- ❖ “God left him [*Hezekiah*] alone only to test him, **that He might know** all that was in his heart”  
(*2 Chron. 32:31*).

*Moses informs Israel that Yahweh had kept them in the desert for forty years:*

- ❖ “in order to humble you, testing you **to know** what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments” (*Deut. 8:2*).

In the traditional Platonic model of a static God who has exhaustively settled the entire future, that God would have obviously eternally known the character the Israelites would develop during their time in the desert and so there would be no point in testing anyone. Surely, if God had eternally foreknown the character of these Israelites why would He have bothered with them for forty years? Why bother with a project that one knows for certain will fail? Furthermore, Psalm 95:10–11 and Hebrews 3:7–10 show God’s great disappointment in the outcome of that testing. This is difficult to reconcile with the view that God was certain of the outcome before He had even created the world. (Please see appendix for further examples).

*God finds out the character of the Israelites*

- a. After commanding the Israelites to gather only enough bread for one day God gives the reason as:
  - ❖ “...that I may test them, **whether they will** walk in my law or not” (*Ex. 16:4*).
- b. Note that in Judges 2:20–3:5 *the Lord did not provide any assistance in Israel’s battles*:
  - ❖ “...in order to test Israel by them, **whether they will** take care to walk in the way of the LORD as their fathers did, or not” (vs. 22). [*The pagan opponents of Israel*] “were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the LORD”  
(*Judges 3:1*).

God’s testing of people to find out how they will demonstrate their true character only makes sense if God doesn’t already know what the nature of their character is.

*God finds out if Israel will tolerate false prophets*

Moses tells the Israelites that God allowed false prophets to sometimes be correct because:

- ❖ “...the LORD your God is testing you, **to know whether** you love the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul” (*Deut. 13:3*).

Wouldn’t God be just wasting time in testing people if He already fully knows their deep convictions?

## 7. ACCORDING TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES GOD HAS CHANGED HIS MIND AFTER HE HAS DECREED AN EVENT

- ❖ *MOSES pleads*: “...change your mind about doing harm to your people...So the LORD **changed His mind** about the harm He said He would do to His people” (*Ex. 32:12, 14*).
  - ❖ “...and the fire of Yahweh broke out among them; it devoured one end of the camp. The people appealed to Moses who **interceded** with Yahweh and the fire died down” (*Num. 11:1, 2 NJB*).
- What would be the point of prayer if God’s actions were unalterably foreordained?*
- ❖ “And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy it, the LORD saw, and **he relented** from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, ‘It is enough; now stay your hand’” (*1 Chron. 21:15*).

Here God clearly changed his mind. If He had foreknown that He wasn't going to destroy Jerusalem, He couldn't have genuinely intended to destroy it and so the passage becomes nonsensical. Furthermore, how could God have genuinely **relented** from a previous plan if it wasn't really the original plan in His mind? For Christians today, if one doesn't take the above account as literal, one would have to ask: What is the use of intercessory prayer if God's actions have already been determined from eternity?

- ❖ “**HEZEKIAH** fell ill and was at the point of death. And Isaiah...said to him, Yahweh says this, ‘Put your affairs in order, for **you are going to die**’” (2 Kings 20:1).
- ❖ God now changes His mind for Hezekiah: “I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I shall cure you: In three days time you will go up to the temple of Yahweh. I shall **add 15 years to your life**” (2 Kings 20:5, 6).
- ❖ “When God saw their deeds, that **they turned from their wicked way**, then God **relented** concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do it” (Jonah 3:10).

After Israel sinned because of **KORAH**, Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron:

- ❖ “Separate yourselves from among this congregation, that I may **consume them** in a moment” (Num. 16:21).

After Moses and Aaron begged Yahweh to judge only the fully guilty ones He modified His judgment and gave the people a choice. So if all of the future is exhaustively settled in God's mind then His stated intention to “consume” the whole congregation could not have been sincere because He always foreknew he wouldn't do it.

Because of **KING SAUL's rebellion**, Samuel tells him,

- ❖ “For then the **LORD would have** established your kingdom over Israel forever. **But now** your kingdom shall not continue” (1 Sam. 13:13, 14).

God's plan was to establish Saul's descendants as permanent heirs to Israel's throne. However, He changed his mind because of Saul's monumental failures. This could not be so if the traditional explanation of divine foreknowledge is correct.

Yahweh gets Jeremiah to write his prophecy on a scroll, telling him that,

- ❖ “**It may be** that the house of Judah will hear all the disaster that I intend to do to them, so that every one **may turn from** his evil way, and **that I may forgive** their iniquity and their sin” (Jer. 36:3).

Jeremiah then tells his scribe to read the scroll to the people, saying to him:

- ❖ “**It may be** that their plea for mercy will come before the LORD, and that every one **may turn from** his evil way.” (vs. 7).

However, the people didn't listen to the warning (vss. 24, 25) and so Yahweh judged them (vss. 30, 31). The fact that Yahweh motivated Jeremiah by telling him that the people might repent must mean that it was possible that they would repent? This implies that the future is made, in part, of possibilities. Yet if the future is eternally settled and God knows it as such, how can He honestly tell Jeremiah that something **might happen** when He knows that **it will not happen**? In fact, there are about 39 instances in the Scriptures where God explicitly changes His mind and over 200 times where it is implied that he changes His mind, yet the traditional Platonic model of a static God who has exhaustively settled the future means that one must interpret in a very artificial way the passages which depict Him as changing his mind. It is evidently more honest to accept that God really can change his mind about certain matters. Without this dynamic view one's prayers would be of no effect.

## MISCELLANEOUS TEXT SHOWING THE FUTURE TO BE PARTLY OPEN

- ❖ “The Lord is not slow to fulfil his promise as some count slowness, but is **patient towards you, not wishing** that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. <sup>11</sup> Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, **what sort of people ought you to be** in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and **hastening the coming of the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!”  
(2 Pet. 3:9, 11b-12a).

If absolutely all is foreknown or predestined by God from eternity why would He need to be patient so that certain ones would not perish? Also why, in the predestined “things to be dissolved,” would it matter “what sort of people ought you to be” if they to were individually foreknown or predestined from eternity. Furthermore, if the rendering is correct, it appears that Christians can make a contribution to the timing of “the coming of the day of God” by “hastening” it. This is not possible if the time for that day was absolutely foreknown or predestined by God from eternity.

## GOD DOES NOT CHANGE HIS MIND CONCERNING HIS PURPOSIVE WILL

- ❖ “God is not a man, that he should **lie**, nor a son of man, that he should **change his mind**”  
(Num. 23:19). *i.e., God is not fickle or unreliable.*
- ❖ “He who is the Glory of Israel does **not lie** or change his mind; for he is not a man that he **should change his mind**” (1 Sam. 15:29).

Although God is omniscient, it is not in the pagan Greek philosophical sense of having exhaustively definite foreknowledge of the future.

## GOD’S KNOWLEDGE OF COUNTERFACTUAL PROPOSITIONS

*POSSIBILITIES AND FEASIBILITIES*

Evidently God knows the full range of possibilities for any situation, but He also narrows this to a range of feasible situations and finally to the most likely one. He has a perfect knowledge of all future variables. Because God is infinitely intelligent, he is perfectly prepared for whatever possible event gets actualized *as if* it were the only possible event that could be actualized. So while God perfectly anticipates all possible outcomes, when the improbable occurs, it is by definition not what an omniscient God would expect to occur; yet He is perfectly prepared for it. If, for example, the Hebrew midwives had obeyed Pharaoh’s order rather than God’s and killed all the baby boys, then God would have responded accordingly to produce a different scenario.

In daily life for Humans there is a balance between the predictable and the unpredictable as revealed in chaos theory. For instance, physicists can predict the behaviour of a group of quantum particles, but have difficulty assessing the course of individual particles. God however, often uses his ability to foreknow the course of groups, nations or even all mankind, but mostly refrains from foreknowing the course of individuals.

So, as with the Molinist View the Open View of Creation accepts that “**would**” **counterfactuals** are indeed a part of how God’s foreknowledge works. However, those who understand this View also realize that those who hold to the Molinist Middle-Knowledge View have failed to take into account the further factor of “**might**” **counterfactuals**:

### *'MIGHT' COUNTERFACTUAL KNOWLEDGE*

This is defined as: A counterfactual proposition detailing what an agent might do in a particular situation: e.g., “If you offer me a job at Oxford I might take it.” So the Scriptures show that God sometimes thinks in terms of what might or might not come to pass (e.g. Jer. 26:3;). The logical antithesis of ‘agent X would do y in situation z’ is the statement that ‘agent X might not do y in situation z.’ God would know this fact so that between God’s pre-creational knowledge of all logical possibilities and God’s pre-creational knowledge of what will come to pass is God’s “middle knowledge” of what free agents **might or might not do** in certain situations as well as what free agents **would do** in other situations. For example God says:

❖ “They [*the elders of Israel*] **will listen** to your words” (*Ex. 3:18*).

Yet Moses is clearly unaware of God having exhaustively definite knowledge of this matter, so he asks:

❖ “But suppose they **will not** believe me or **listen** to my words” and *God replies* “...but **should they not** be convinced by either of these two signs and refuse to listen to what you say...” (*Ex. 4:1, 9*).

Evidently God thinks that they might or they might not be convinced. He simply does not know. Similarly Jeremiah 26:3 says: “It **may be** they will listen...” Additionally, the uncertainty aspect is evident when the Israelites left Egypt:

❖ “God did not lead them on the road through the Philistines country, though that was shorter. For God said, ‘**If** they face war, they **might change their minds** and return to Egypt” (*Ex. 13:17 NIV*).

Clearly God considered the possibility, but not the certainty, that the Israelites would change their minds if they faced war. Similarly, later Israelites faced exile and Ezekiel was to symbolize it for them so that:

❖ “**Perhaps** they will understand, though they are a rebellious house” (*Ezek. 12:3*).

*Again there is uncertainty for God i.e. the Israelites might or might not understand.*

*Lastly we must consider Jesus’ plea:*

❖ “My Father, **if it be possible, let** this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (*Luke 26:39*).

This was a course that was fixed in the mind of God and yet it shows that in Jesus’ mind there was at least the theoretical possibility that there could be another way—“**if it be possible...**” So if it is true that ‘agent X might or might not do y in situation z.’ then it is false that ‘agent X would do y in situation

z’ and vice versa. Furthermore, from all eternity God knows that if **agent X** freely follows a certain possible life trajectory, he/she will become the kind of person who **would do x in situation z**.

It is only in Open-Theism that Might-Counterfactuals are brought into play in understanding God’s foreknowledge.

### WHAT THE CONTROVERSY MEANS WITH REFERENCE TO GOD’S CHARACTER

Although the focus of the controversy is really on the nature of the future there is much in it that concerns the character of God. Now the Calvinist, the Arminian and the Molinist Views are called the Classical views of God’s foreknowledge and all have been developed with Greek philosophy as their background. The controversy within recent decades raised by the bringing of the Openness of Creation View into the public domain concerns the very picture of God’s character, because the Classical views leave many people unable to relate to a God who is portrayed as being without emotion and perhaps even indifferent to the needs of people. The Openness of creation View has attempted to show that this

view of God is not the biblical one, but rather He is described as a God who expresses emotions, including sorrow, justified anger, and as one regretting certain actions.

However, those of the Classical views of God often accuse those of the Openness of Creation View of failing to emphasize God's transcendence i.e. His separation from His creation. Indeed, there rather obviously is an absolute difference between God and man - there is a great distance between God and man. However, this does not mean that He does not have the qualities that the Bible describes in quite literal terms, and which we will see in the following Scriptures, and neither does it mean that we cannot get close to Him. In fact we have "a better hope..., through which **we draw near to God**. (Heb. 7:19). This is available to all mankind if:

- ❖ "...they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way towards him and find him. Yet he is actually **not far from each one of us**" (Acts 17:27).

This is called God's **immanence** – **His nearness to us** so that He is not aloof. Therefore, the Biblical descriptions are not meant to be tangled in anthropomorphisms but in a way that we can truly understand His character and identify with Him. So although the Scriptures do use some figurative language about God's character they do so in a way that is easily understood, meaningful and not contradictory. For example He is portrayed as a loving Father who welcomes His returning wayward son (Luke 15:11-32).

However, none of this detracts from our understanding that God is transcendent and is sovereign over His creation – these are not diminished in the minds of those who understand Openness of Creation View, but His sovereignty is balanced by and part of His sacrificial-love and many other qualities based on that love, so that we see God as he truly is according to the biblical descriptions. – as the God who is both transcendent and immanent.

## CONCLUSION

In being largely based on philosophy the Platonic view, as it has been applied to the True God by Christian Orthodoxy, does not stand up under scrutiny of the Scriptures. Both the Arminian Simple-Foreknowledge view and the Molinist Middle-Foreknowledge view, while purporting to allow for human free will, in fact lock out such genuine free will before the creation so that the claims of those who promote these views of confirming genuine human free will are in fact bogus. Furthermore, along with the Calvinist View, these views both turn the plainly literal statements concerning the open future into anthropomorphisms and thus communicate nothing truthful about God and so undermine the integrity of Scripture.

Therefore, the above study shows that the future is at least **partly open and unsettled** in God's mind, but with other aspects of the future being unalterably fixed and certain of fulfilment. In other words, the future is settled to whatever extent the Creator decides to settle it. The Openness View shows that God is omniscient because He knows all of reality. However, the Openness View of Creation is **the only view that**:

- Actually allows for genuine human free will.
- Demonstrates that the future decisions of free agents are not yet part of reality.
- Takes the relevant biblical statements concerning God's foreknowledge as literal as they obviously should be taken, rather than anthropomorphically.
- Demonstrates that God is dynamic and acquires new knowledge.

- Shows that God is the God of infinite possibilities and therefore of supreme intelligence. This requires much greater intelligence than a God who simply foreknows or predestines the entire detailed future.
- Presents God’s ability to respond to changing circumstances by using His supreme intelligence to accomplish His purposes as His creation moves through time, rather than having everything foreknown and settled prior to creation.

Furthermore, far more so than the Classical views the Openness View of Creation:

- Exalts God’s wisdom and sovereignty
- Emphasizes God’s genuine relationality
- Harmonizes with our experience in life.
- Harmonizes with contemporary science
- Helps with understanding the problem of evil in some respects
- Motivates Kingdom work
- Solves some otherwise paradoxical situations

## APPENDIX 1 ISSUES FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

All quotations are from the ESV

*PROVERBS 16:1* says:

- ❖ “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.”

**Q. Doesn’t this mean that everything we say comes from God?**

REPLY: If this was the case then it would mean that every evil, vulgar and blasphemous thing anyone has ever said has been willed by God. Yet the Scriptures often warn against such speech. Furthermore, the first clause contrasts with the second clause in showing that this is not God’s controlling of our thoughts and therefore not of our speech. Simply this verse may mean that: the uncertainty of human planning is contrasted with the stability of God’s answer. As the Adam Clarke Commentary states:

- Man proposes his wishes; but God answers as he thinks proper. The former is the free offspring of the heart of man; the latter, the free volition of God. Man may *think* as he pleases, and *ask* as he lists; but God will *give*, or *not give*, as he thinks proper.

.....

*PROVERBS 16:4* says:

- ❖ “The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.”

**Q. Doesn’t this mean that God controls everybody, even the wicked?**

REPLY: Simply this means that God makes sure that justice is ultimately accomplished. Although the wicked may prosper now, they shall eventually run the day of trouble.

.....

*PROVERBS 16:9* says:

- ❖ “The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.”

**Q. Doesn’t this mean that God determines what we will do no matter how we plan?**

REPLY: In the determinist view this would mean that God directed the steps of Hitler, Stalin and all other wicked men. In fact this text does not say that God directs our every step. The rest of the Scriptures show that Humans are morally responsible creatures with genuine free will to direct their

steps. So a more likely meaning would be: that for all of man's plans and their uncertainty, God has an overall plan that man must inevitably be bound if he wants success with his own plans.

.....  
*PROVERBS 19:21* says:

❖ "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand."

**Q. Doesn't what God want, always come to pass?**

REPLY: Again there is a contrast between what humans do and what God does. This verse doesn't teach that God determines everything; but that irrespective of human planning God's overall purpose will succeed. If a man's plan is to please God then God's will is being done. If a man's plan is to be "a fighter against God" then God's will is to be done when He eventually punishes that person.

.....  
*PROVERBS 16:33* says:

❖ "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."

**Q. As with the definiteness of the result in the casting of lots, doesn't this mean that everything turns out to be precisely as God intended?**

REPLY: The proverbs, as a form of literature, do not function as universal truths, but as directives, generalizations, and probabilities. So the proverbs are really expressions of practical wisdom which are good for the whole of society to apply.

Certainly God is capable of determining the outcome of such casting of lots and, in fact, He did this often in the history of Israel. However, if we view this text in a universal and literalistic way it might mean that: God controls or ordains all of the results of every throw of the dice and of all other games of "chance" in the whole world throughout history. In this case all the unethical people get rich.

A more balanced approach would be to see this as meaning that: God controls those castings of lots which happen in a particular context related to God's ancient people when such was not used for gambling but for apportioning of property. Again as Adam Clarke states:

- How far it may be proper *now* to put difficult matters to the lot, after earnest prayer and supplication, I cannot say. *Formerly*, it was both lawful and efficient; for after it was solemnly cast, the decision was taken as coming immediately from the Lord. It is still practiced, and its use is allowed even by writers on civil law. But those who need most to have recourse to the lot are those who have not *piety* to *pray* nor *faith* to trust to God for a positive decision. The lot should never be resorted to in indifferent matters; they should be those of the greatest importance, in which it appears impossible for human prudence or foresight to determine. In such cases the lot is *an appeal to God*, and he disposes of it according to his goodness, mercy, and truth. The result, therefore, cannot be *fortuitous*.

*By Raymond C. Faircloth*  
www.biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk

SUGGESTED READING

*God of the Possible* by Gregory Boyd  
*Divine Foreknowledge – Four Views* edited by Beilby and Eddy.

SUGGESTED VIEWING ON THE INTERNET

In the Google box just enter: *Greg Boyd on Youtube - on Open Theism*. Only the first 6 ½ videos need be watched. On the remaining videos the questions from the audience are not clearly heard.

## APPENDIX 2.

### QUESTIONS RAISED AND ANSWERED ON THE OPEN-THEISM WEBSITE

[www.opentheism.info/pages/questions/](http://www.opentheism.info/pages/questions/)

#### **Q 1. What about verbal plenary inspiration? Wouldn't that thwart man's free will?**

Just finished Sanders' "The God Who Risks" and appreciate his relying on Scripture to make his arguments. However, I wonder how God could have ensured that the writers of Scripture wrote exactly what he wanted. Doesn't open-theism threaten a belief in plenary, verbal inspiration and inerrancy?

*Howard Donahoe*

REPLY:

This is not such a difficult problem. If the writers of Scripture were willing to be led by God (and one would assume that they were), then God could direct their thoughts without violating their wills, since following God's direction was what they wanted to do.

*William Hasker, Huntington College*

REPLY to Hasker:

Here is a response to Hasker's response on inerrancy and Open Theism. Bill Hasker's response is accurate, but I'm not sure it completely answers the question posed by Howard Donahoe. If the question is whether the existence of a plenary and verbally inspired and inerrant Scripture is compatible with Open Theism, then the answer is clearly yes because as Hasker points we can assume that the "writers of Scripture were willing to be led by God." However, if the question is whether God can "ensure" (unilaterally guarantee) that Scripture is plenary and verbally inspired and inerrant, the answer is not as clear. Whether the biblical writers would actually be willing to be led by God is not something that God could guarantee, assuming libertarian freedom. In short, the Scripture can turn out to be fully inspired and inerrant within Open Theism. However, it is not clear that an Open Theist can say God "ensured" (unilaterally guaranteed) that this is the case.

*Randy Basinger*

REPLY to Basinger:

Dr. Basinger, I see the point of your response and thought to mention one item. Your position assumes that God did not, or would not, use scriptural authors other than the ones we have. I would suggest that God may well have had the option to be picky about who wrote the canon.

If, for instance, the apostle Paul turned out to be a poor listener, and did not allow himself to be easily lead by the Holy Spirit, perhaps we would be reading about the apostle Fred, a guy who was more "in touch" with what the Lord was doing. There is scriptural precedence for this in the form of King Saul. Chosen as the patriarch of "the line," Saul proved inadequate to the task and a replacement was chosen (the much lauded David.) I would argue that, had Saul done better, we would read of Jesus Christ, of the line of Saul.

Again, the point is that God is not against alternate plans. The scriptural writers we have may simply be the ones who passed muster. There may have been others that were called, and failed.

*Joseph S. Holt*

REPLY to Holt:

I agree with much of what you say. You are right to point out that the open God has a lot of resources at God's disposal for achieving his ends. As you point out, God could have used different authors "those more open to God's leading" to produce Scripture. I don't think, however, that my position rules this out. In short, granting your insight, my original point still seems to stand: As long as God is using authors "any human authors" who are free in a libertarian sense, then God cannot ensure (unilaterally guarantee) that the results will be exactly what God wants (though the results may very well turn out to be exactly what God wants). I'm not sure my point "assuming it is sound" has any negative implications for Open Theism. It would be interesting to know whether Howard Donahoe "who posed the original question" finds this point to be in any way a "threat" to verbal inspiration or inerrancy.

*Randy Basinger*

REPLY to all:

Regarding the question and answers about the compatibility of Open Theism with a doctrine of inerrant inspiration, let me add the following. First, I agree with the possibilities offered by William, Joe, and Randall, and further, that these plausible scenarios do not exclude other possible means by which God accomplished the composition of a trustworthy Bible. So, I would like to add what I believe to be another significant possibility which may aid our articulation of a more comprehensive response, and close a door to a misconception which I have heard, of late, (wrongly) generally attributed to us (we have enough misconceptions being articulated by our opponents).

I am as confident as can be that Open Theism, particularly libertarian freedom, is fully compatible with inerrant inspiration, because human liberty, in my understanding of revelation, is neither absolute nor completely autonomous. John Sanders made something of this in GWR's discussion of creation within divinely established boundaries. A sister is free to jump up and down until muscular exhaustion, but the divinely-established boundaries of physics make it clear that she cannot exit the earth's atmosphere by a good flex of her quadriceps--her freedom is real and libertarian, but within God ordained contextual limits. I believe this physical analogy has a spiritual counterpart as well. This same sister is free to jump in and out of good works until Pelagius himself is awed--and, I might add, free to believe anything she wants about their efficacy. However, divinely-established boundaries of soteriology make it clear that she cannot enter heaven by the flex of her good works--again, her freedom is real and libertarian, but within God-ordained contextual limits. I know my analogies are limited; I remain open to refinement. However, perhaps they will accomplish something.

Furthermore, I see biblical evidence that God remains sovereignly free to intervene as he determines necessary, and on occasion, can and does violate human liberty to accomplish his ends. E.g., He made Adam and Eve leave the Garden and he prevented Baalam from cursing Israel, and it seems these humans had no choice in these particular matters. He has seen fit to sentence some guilty people to an irreversible hard heartedness, strong delusions, depraved minds, degrading passions, in which the gift of contra-causal freedom is completely or partially removed. The resurrected Jesus also prevented his disciples from recognizing him until he was ready to reveal himself--a recognition they seem likely to have freely made had not God altered their abilities to perceive in some way.

Therefore, I see biblical doctrines of inspiration remaining secure in Open Theism, for (1) God may have established particular boundaries to preserve the trustworthiness of scripture; (2) he may have occasionally violated, or been willing to violate, the human liberty of his chosen scribes in order to keep their work from misrepresenting divine intentions; or (3) some combination of 1 & 2 here, and those contributed by William, Joe, and Randall. *Kevin James Gilbert, South Fork Church of Christ, Elizabethtown, KY.*

.....

## **Q 2. How is God sovereign if he is not in total control?**

First off I'd like to say that I'm a freshmen at Bethel College. I have held the 'Open View' for as long as I can remember. Not because I have seen all the Biblical justifications for it, but because I feel that the Open View is much more consistent with who God is. I have always struggled with this question though, throughout the Prophets there is a strong emphasis on God's Sovereignty. I have read what Dr. Boyd has said about this issue, but I don't totally understand his position. How is God sovereign if He is not in total control? I believe that He is, I just don't know how to defend that position. Any info. that you could give would be greatly appreciated!

*Aaron*

REPLY:

One point in response to this excellent question: Someone might argue that (a) God's sovereignty is his freedom, power, and authority to do anything which is logically possible and which is consistent with God's perfect goodness, and (b) that there is a great good for which God's granting us libertarian free choice is a logically necessary condition (namely, a deeper kind of relation to God), and, hence, God's controlling all events is not consistent with God's perfect goodness and, for this reason, not within the

scope of his sovereignty. But suppose someone is not satisfied with that conception of sovereignty and insists that God's freedom, power, and authority is limited only by logical necessity. Given this second conception of divine sovereignty, any insistence by a theologian or philosopher that God must control all events is a tacit denial of God's sovereignty. To say God is sovereign on this view entails that he has absolute control over his policy decisions. But to require that God control all events is to remove his control over his basic policy decisions. I.e., it is logically impossible that God, of necessity, control all events and that he be sovereign (on this second conception). Necessarily, if, of necessity, God controls all events, then God is not free to adopt as a policy decision to allow libertarian free choices. But if God is free to determine his basic policy decision about whether or not to control all events, then he may freely choose to do so. But if his choice in this matter is to be free--which it must be if God is to be sovereign in this second sense--then we cannot infer his control of all events from his omnipotence, omniscience, his being a maximally perfect being, or from any other divine attribute. Presumably we could only know what his free decision is in this matter by revelation. If we approach scripture with an open mind as to how God, at this highest level of policy decision, has exercised his sovereignty, then I think scripture witnesses to God's having sovereignly granted libertarian freedom to us. So on either a more restricted view of divine sovereignty (restricted both by logical necessity and by God's perfect goodness) or a less restricted view (restricted only by logical necessity), an argument can be mounted that divine sovereignty is compatible with the view that God does not control all events. *Larry Lacy*

---

REPLY to Lacy:

One follow up question, Do you feel that we place too much a responsibility on logic and our own understanding of God with this view? How can we apply our logic and reason to God? It seems to me that God is beyond our human understanding, and logic. I agree with your view, but how can I Biblically support your position? What sort of examples can I give to people? Thanks for your time!

*Aaron*

---

REPLY to Aaron:

This is a good and pretty basic question. I think at least one fundamental law is inescapable--the principle of noncontradiction, the view that for any proposition P it is impossible for both P and not-P to be true. It looks as though acknowledgement of this principle is essential to an affirmation. What would it be to say "God exists and God does not exist at one and the same time, when the words used twice mean exactly the same in both uses? How would that be different from affirming the existence of God and then taking it back? Also if one denies this principle of noncontradiction then it would seem to be in order to affirm, "God is not subject to the laws of logic and God is subject to the laws of logic." If we grant that the law of noncontradiction true even when our affirmations are about God, what reason could we have for denying this for other logical principles? One final point. All we need say is that our affirmations about God are subject to the laws of logic. *Larry Lacy*

§