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Cover Art as Described by Dr. Robert a. Morey

Jackson Pollock (1912–1956) is the artist who best expresses the worldview that is found in Process Theology, the Open View of God and Middle Knowledge. Pollock denied that the universe travels through time according to the predetermined plan of God. He hated the very idea that God had ordained whatsoever comes to pass. He believed that the course of the universe was based on pure chance and contingency. Nothing has to happen because the future is not fixed but open to an infinite number of possible universes. He chose to express this doctrine by producing what he claimed was chance-based art.

Pollock produced the painting on the cover with the claim that chance was the true artist. He suspended cans of paint over canvas. He punched holes in the bottom of the cans and set them swinging back and forth in such a manner that the paint dripped out in a chaotic manner. But, as Francis Schaeffer pointed out, since chance is a myth and Divine order is the foundation of the universe, it is not possible for art to be made by pure chance. As the cans swung back and forth their movements were predetermined by the laws of gravity. They did not float around the room in violation of those laws. The weight of the cans, the amount of force used to set them swinging, the direction in which they were swung, the kind of wire used, etc. all contributed to the patterns of paint on the canvas. Pollock's attempt to create chance-based art only served to illustrate that nothing happens by chance but, rather, all things unfold according to the Divine will.

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Introduction

There is a direct link between natural theology and the so-called “Open View of God.” In the last edition of the JBA, we stated that if man is the measure of all things, then he becomes the Origin of truth, justice, morals, meaning, and beauty. If this is so, then a domino effect is set in motion that does not end until God is whittled down to the image of finite man. In the end, man creates God!

That this dumbing down of God should be done by lesbian pastors in liberal churches is par for the course. But for this to be done in Evangelical colleges and seminaries is a sad commentary on the low level of theological education today.

I was amazed when a well-known “theologian” referred to the “Open View of God” as a new doctrine. He was as ignorant as his students that this erroneous idea has been alive and well in the world of the cults and the occult for thousands of years. He was shocked when I pointed out that the Jehovah’s Witnesses had picked up that heresy from the Unitarians.

In the book, *Battle of the Gods*, I trace the history of the idea that God is ignorant of the future from its origin in Greek paganism to its present popular form. It has been a darling of virtually every heretical and cultic group in Western history. It has never been part of Christianity and does not deserve to be classified as a “Christian” view as the following dialogue illustrates.

Theist: I thank you for being willing to debate the “Closed View of God.”

Processian: Excuse me, but my view is called the “Open View of God.”

Theist: But the “Open View of God” is the opposite of what you really believe. You do believe that the future is *closed* to God? Yes! Do you believe that the universe is *closed* to the sovereignty of God? Yes! That man’s will is *closed* to God’s control? Yes! You are also *closed* to Providence, predestination, election, the lost condition of the heathen and eternal conscious punishment in hell, aren’t you? Yes! So why not come clean and admit that you are slowing *closing* God out of His own universe? In the end, the universe will be a closed system with God on the outside looking in with despair and hopelessness as it spins out of control.

Processian: Well, yes God is closed to those things. But we need to emphasize the positive of what is open to God once you dump all those Calvinist doctrines. God is now open to an infinite number of possible universes. He is no longer bound in the chains of eternal decrees. Each new day is as exciting to God as it is to us. Neither of us knows what will happen during that day.

Theist: The god of processianism is indeed open to all kinds of new things that are not possible for the God of the Bible. Stephen Davis says in his book, *Logic and the Nature of God*, that “God can sin. Do you believe that?”

Processian: Since “freedom” is the power of contrary choice, then if God is really free, then he must be able to choose to sin.

Theist: Why do assume that freedom is “the power of contrary choice?” I never found that idea in the Bible.

Processian: You don't believe that freedom is the power of contrary choice? I never met anyone who denied it! This is new to me.

Theist: Your idea of freedom comes from pagan philosophy and not from Christ. Take the sin of lying. Davis says, "God can lie." But the Bible says, "God cannot lie." In other words, God does not have the power of contrary choice when it comes to lying. If God "cannot deny himself," then is God free according to your definition? No. You have a hard choice in front of you. Either you have to give up your pagan definition of freedom or you have to contradict Scripture.

Processian: You have a frozen, static god that is boring because he is incapable of being surprised by our actions or by his own actions. I prefer a dynamic god who is open to an infinite number of possible choices.

Theist: And you have a knee-jerk, finite, pagan deity who is an ignorant, bumbling, pathetic being unworthy of the name "God." Your god is only a figment of your own invention.

Processian: But I am just as much a Christian as you are!

Theist: No, by the test of Scripture and history, you are not a Christian in any sense I know of. I plead with you to turn from your idols and worship the true God. I am telling you the truth in love. You have fallen into a damnable heresy and you are in danger of eternal hell.

Now, we recognize that the above dialogue will anger "politically correct" humanists in and outside of the church. But Biblical apologetics has never been popular. So, don't sweat it! Take your lumps and go on doing God's work in the power of the Spirit. As long as you have the smile of God, you can ignore the frown of man.

Dr. Bob Morey

Does God Really Know the Future?

By Dr. Robert A. Morey

Introduction

It is amazing that one would have to defend the absolute Omniscience of God, seeing it is enshrined in every major creed of Christianity since the first century. Since the God of the Bible knows everything, this includes the future. But today the nature and extent of God's knowledge has been once again been cast into controversy.

This controversy is not some "ivory tower" issue such as counting the number of angels that can dance on the top of a pin. The Christian's confidence in the future turning out as God promised is the basis of the inspiration of Scripture, the sufficiency of the atonement, and the Christian life. The issue boils down to whether God controls the future or does the future control God? Is God a knee-jerk deity?

Three Tests of Truth

There are three clear tests of any view of the nature and extent of God's knowledge.

1. Does this view strengthen or weaken the biblical doctrine of the verbal, plenary, inerrant, infallible inspiration of the Bible?
2. Does this view strengthen or weaken the biblical doctrine of the substitutionary blood atonement of Christ on the cross for our sins?
3. Does this view strengthen or weaken the biblical doctrine that God is working all things out for His Glory and our good?

While there are many other tests that could be applied to this subject, these three are sufficient to doom any heretical or deviant view. Why? Any view of God which destroys His Word, casts doubt on Christ's atonement, and rebels against Divine Providence cannot be of God.

Dr. Carl F. Henry, in a powerful chapter entitled, "The Stunted God of Process Theology," sums up why Biblical theists are so hard on Process and Neoprocess theology.

Orthodox Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, deplore the way in which process thinkers reject the supernatural, spurn the objective reality of the Trinity, disavow the miraculous, and repudiate a Word of God mediated solely through Christ. They object to the elimination by most process theologians of Christ as the mediator through whom alone God speaks his word. Process theologians also assail the traditional instance on divine decrees and election, on *creatio ex nihilo*, on miraculous redemption and on biblical eschatology. In place of divine decree and foreordination, process thinkers stress divine persuasion; they subordinate history and eschatological finalities broadly to the endless love of God. So great is the gulf between the two systems of theology that both can hardly lay claim to the title "Christian."¹

If you think that Dr. Henry is too severe in his condemnation, Dr. Ronald Nash had this to say,

To its critics, process theology is the most dangerous heresy presently threatening the Christian Faith. Process theology does not not eliminate pagan ideas from the faith, its critics argue. Rather, Process thought is a total capitulation to paganism.² Here there is no middle ground...A being who is not essentially omnipotent or omniscient, who is not the sovereign and independent Creator, is neither worthy to receive our worship nor to bear the title "God."³

These modern theologians are echoing the warning sounded by Jonathan Edwards, the greatest intellect that America ever produced.

One would think it wholly needless to enter on such an argument with any that profess themselves Christians: but so it is; God's certain Foreknowledge of the free acts of moral agents, is denied by some that pretend to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God.⁴

Alfred North Whitehead

¹ *On Process Theology*, ed. Ronald Nash (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), pgs. 362–363.

² *ibid.*, from the Introduction.

³ *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴ *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974) vol. I:30

Alfred North Whitehead was one of the most vicious anti-Christians of the 20th century. He claimed that the God of the Bible was his view of the devil and that Christianity, with its concept of sin, was one of the worse things that ever happened to humanity. Jesus himself was not very intelligent. When asked if he read the Bible, he responded that he preferred reading Plato.⁵

He taught that God was the soul of the world and the world was God's body. The two were in an eternal bi-polar relationship. You can't have one without the other. God could not know the future because it was open to unlimited possibilities. God was evolving along with the universe and, in the end, the heavens and the earth would beget God.

Some of Whitehead's followers included Charles Hartshorne, Schubert Ogden, David Griffin, Norman Pittenger, H. P. Owen, John Cobb, Jr., Nelson Pike, L. McCabe, and Lewis Ford. They have attacked fundamental Christianity and the Bible with great vigor. No wonder Dr. Bruce Demarest concluded,

A former student of Whitehead reported that the master once commented that Christian orthodoxy could not be reconciled with his philosophy. Moreover, Brown, James, and Reeves acknowledge that process theology bears affinities with Theravada Buddhism, the thought of Heraclitus, the Unitarian Socinus, and the idealist philosophies of Hegel, Schelling, and T. deChardin. By its own admission, then, process theology represents a departure from a theology that broadly could be called biblical and historic Christian.⁶

In Neo-Evangelical Circles

In Neo-evangelical circles, one finds the heretical theories of Whitehead taught by such people as Clark Pinnock⁷, Richard Rice⁸, Gregory Boyd,⁹ Stephen Davis¹⁰, Bruce Reichenbach¹¹, Gordon Olson,¹² H. Roy Elseth¹³, George Otis, Jr.¹⁴, and many others.

Neo-processians are absolutely dogmatic that their god *cannot* know the future. But while their god does not know or ordain the future, some of them think that they and others *can* know the future!

Richard Rice is a Seventh Day Adventist and was faced with the rude reality that, while he could deny that God knew the future, and still keep his job at a SDA university, if he dared to deny that Ellen G. White knew the future, he would soon be collecting unemployment checks.

⁵ See *Battle of the Gods*, for documentation on Whitehead.

⁶ On Process Theology, *ibid.* p. 78.

⁷ *Predestination & Free Will*, ed. David Basinger & Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: IVP, 1986)

⁸ Richard Rice, *The Openness of God* (Nashville: Review & Herald Pub., 1979)

⁹ Gregory Boyd, *Trinity In Process* (New York: Peter Lang)

¹⁰ Stephen Davis, *Logic and the Nature of God*, *ibid.*

¹¹ *Predestination & Free Will*, ed. David Basinger & Randall Basinger, *ibid.*

¹² Gordon C. Olson, *The Truth Shall Set You Free* (Franklin Prak, Ill: Bible Research Fellowship, 1980)

¹³ Howard Roy Elseth, *Did God Know?* (St. Paul, Minn: Calvary United Church, 1977)

¹⁴ George Otis, Jr., "The Foreknowledge of God," unpublished paper, 1941.

Thus in the first edition of his book, he argued that while God could not know the future, Ellen G. White did!¹⁵

Clark Pinnock is quite dogmatic that the future is not fixed and thus God cannot know it. But, at the same time, he claims that there is no eternal conscious punishment awaiting unbelievers in the future. Evidently, while God cannot know the future, Pinnock *knows* it! He knows that the future is *fixed* in that there is no future hell awaiting those who die without faith in Christ! Evidently, he knows *more* than his god.¹⁶

In one debate with an “evangelical” Neo-processionist, when I asked him why God cannot know the future, he responded, “Because the future is open to an infinite number of possible universes.” I replied, “Wonderful! Then this means that you admit the possibility of a universe in which God is sovereign over all things, the heathen are lost, and eternal conscious punishment awaits all who die without faith in Christ.” “Oh no,” he responded, “such a universe is not possible.” Evidently, the future is closed to anything he doesn’t like.

Principles of Approach

As we begin our study of the nature and extent of the knowledge of God, we must emphasize that we are not referring to our knowledge of God. Instead, we are referring to God’s knowledge of Himself and the universe He created. Does God know everything or are there some things which God cannot know?

It is thus very important that anyone who is going to discuss this issue “come clean” about the presuppositions he is bringing to the discussion. The failure to reveal the hidden principles that contextualize theological issues results in much confusion and self-contradiction. For this reason, we are going to lay out the principles that will guide us in our study of the nature and extent of the knowledge of God. To make them absolutely clear, we will contrast our principles with those of humanistic-based theologies.

The following chart reveals the presuppositions that guide most discussions of God’s knowledge. If one begins with the assumption of human autonomy, i.e. that man can by reason alone determine what God can or cannot know, then he will eventually end up reducing God to what *man* can or cannot know. In effect, he ends up making a god in his own image.

On the other hand, if we begin with God’s self-disclosure in Scripture, then we can have the certitude of absolute truth. Does this mean that we will be able to explain fully to everyone’s satisfaction “how” God can know such things as the future? No. But this does not bother us in the least because faith swims when reason can no longer touch the bottom.

¹⁵ Richard Rice, *The Openness of God* (Nashville: Review and Herald, 1979). Later reprinted by Bethany House in 1985 under the title, *God’s Foreknowledge and Man’s Free Will*. The Bethany House edition dropped the section on Ellen G. White knowing the future.

¹⁶ See Pinnock’s article, “The Destruction of the Impenitent,” in the *Criswell Theological Journal*, Spring 1990, vol. 4, No. 2., pgs. 243f. I pointed out this contradiction in my book, *Battle of the Gods*, in the hope that Pinnock would respond in an intelligent manner. My remarks evidently hit home because Pinnock spent a great deal of time in his article in the *Criswell Theological Journal* attacking my character by using ad hominem slurs. I am still waiting to see if he will deal with the reality that he claims to know the future while denying that his god knows it. To obtain a copy of the book, *Battle of the Gods*, contact the C.I.A., PO Box 7447, Orange CA 92863.

If Scripture is the revelation of an Infinite Mind and man has a finite intellect, then the finite mind of man will not be capable of an infinite understanding of what is revealed. This is why Scripture tells us that many of the truths it reveals go beyond the finite capacity of the human mind. (Rom. 11:13; Eph. 3:19; Phil. 4:7; etc.)

Is our appeal to the incomprehensibility of God a “cop out” as some humanistic theologians such as Clark Pinnock has charged? No. The doctrine of the incomprehensibility of God is the clear teaching of Scripture and we have yet to see any humanistic theologian even attempt to refute the exegetical evidence for it.¹⁷

Those who reject revealed truth because it does not “make sense” to them eventually end up in some form of atheism. Indeed, the highest conceit of man is to demand “how” and “why” Scripture is true before accepting it (Rom. 9:19–20). It reveals a commitment to the humanistic principle: *Man is the measure of all things - including God.*

The Christian View

The Humanistic Views

God’s self-disclosure in Holy Scripture is the only way we can have true knowledge of the nature and extent of God’s knowledge (1 Cor. 1:18–2:16).

Autonomous human reason unaided by divine revelation can discover the nature and extent of God’s knowledge.

Thus the nature and extent of God’s knowledge is the sole domain of special revelation and must be decided by Scripture alone. (*sola scriptura*: 1 Cor. 4:6)

Thus the nature and extent of God’s knowledge is not the sole domain of special revelation.

The only method by which we can ascertain the teaching of Scripture on God’s knowledge is the historical, grammatical, exegesis of relevant texts.

Philosophic reflection and argumentation is just as valid as biblical exegesis.

We must distinguish between primary texts and secondary texts.

- **“Primary texts” are those passages that have the nature and extent of God’s knowledge directly in view.**
- **“Secondary texts” are those passages that do not have God’s knowledge in direct view but may by inference bear on the subject.**

Secondary texts must be interpreted in the light of the teaching found in the primary texts.

Secondary texts cannot negate, overthrow or contradict the teaching found in the primary texts.

There is no need to resort to such distinctions. Secondary texts are just as valid for proof texting as are primary texts.

The speculations of philosophy (Christian or pagan) that either contradict or go beyond the teaching of the primary biblical texts must be rejected as spurious. “Let God be true and every man a liar.” (Rom. 3:4)

The speculations of philosophy (Christian or pagan) may modify or reject any aspect of divine revelation that is not in conformity to the opinions of the great philosophers. Humanistic philosophy is built on the false doctrine of the autonomy of human reason.

Scripture tells us that this is why philosophy never found God (1 Cor. 1:21).

If man is truly free, then he must not be limited by or to divine revelation. Man’s autonomous reason is sufficient to discover the nature and extent of God’s knowledge.

¹⁷ For a detailed exegetical demonstration of the incomprehensibility of God see my book: *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues* (World Pub. 1996), pgs. 73–84.

The incomprehensibility of God means that we will not be able to explain fully the “whys” and “hows” of the divine revelation of the nature and extent of the knowledge of God. We can modify or reject any aspect of the nature and extent of God’s knowledge that we cannot fully explain. If we cannot explain “how” God can know something, then we can deny that he knows it.

Biblical theologians do not accept the humanistic principle of human autonomy. They are committed to the opposite proposition: *God is the measure of all things - including man.* Without Divine Revelation, we can never know God. (Isa. 8:20)

The Vocabulary of God’s Knowledge

If the authors of Scripture, under Divine inspiration, believed that God’s knowledge could not be limited by anything, but was absolute Omniscience, how would they communicate that idea to their readers? This question must be answered before we even pick up the Bible. If we do not answer it, then we do not know what to look for and what to expect to find in Scripture.

If the authors of Scripture believed that God has knowledge of Himself and the world He created, we would expect to find them using those Hebrew and Greek words which would indicate to their readers that God has an intellect that is capable of understanding, comprehension and knowledge. In other words, we would expect to find that the God revealed in Scripture is a God of knowledge, not a god of ignorance.

Old Testament Vocabulary

In the Hebrew language there are several words that are used to speak of knowledge, understanding, and comprehension.

- A. The word **דָּעַ** is the most common word for understanding and knowledge in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is used of man’s knowledge and understanding hundreds of times. It is also applied to God to indicate that He has true knowledge of Himself and the world He created for His glory. (see: [Exo. 3:7, 19–20](#); [2 Sam. 7:20](#); [1 Kings. 8:39](#); [Job 23:10](#); [Psa. 31:7; 40:9; 69:5](#); [Jer. 1:5](#); etc.)
- B. The word **בִּין** is used to describe God’s knowledge in [Job 11:11; 28:23](#); [Psa. 5:1; 33:15; 139:2](#). The wicked deny that God “takes notice” of their sin in [Psa. 94:7b](#).
Neither shall the God of Jacob *notice it*.
- C. The word **דָּעָה** is used in [1 Sam. 2:3](#) in the phrase “Yahweh is a God of knowledge.” The wicked used this word when questioning whether God knows anything.
“How doth God know? ([Psa. 73:11a](#)).
- D. The word **הִזָּה** is used in [Psa. 11:4, 7](#) and [Psa. 17:2](#) to indicate that God “sees” all things.
- E. Another word for “consider,” “Behold,” and “see” is **רָאָה**. It is applied to God’s knowledge in [Gen. 29:32; 31:42](#); [Exo. 3:7; 4:31](#); [Psa. 9:14; 10:11; 25:18, 19; 84:10; 119:153,159](#). The wicked deny in [Psa. 94:7](#) that God really sees anything.
Yet they say, The LORD *shall not see*,
- F. In [Job 34:25](#), we are told that God “takes knowledge of” (**יִפְיֵר**) the works of man.
- G. The Psalmist declared in [Psa. 147:5](#), “His understanding is infinite”
- H. The biblical authors referred to “the eyes” of God to indicate that He sees all things. Nothing escapes His omniscient sight.

For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth. ([2 Chron. 16:9](#))

For my eyes are upon all their ways; they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity concealed from my eyes. (Jer. 16:17)

The eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth. (Zech. 4:10)

The authors of the Hebrew Scriptures used every word in their vocabulary to affirm that God has knowledge. The only ones who deny or question this are the wicked.

New Testament Vocabulary

When we turn to the New Testament, the same pattern is followed. The common Greek words for knowledge, understanding, and comprehension are applied to God without hesitation.

- A. The common Greek verb for “knowing” is γινώσκω. It is applied to God in Lk. 16:15; John 10:15; I Cor. 3:20; Gal. 4:9; 2 Thess. 2:19; 1 Thess. 3:20 and 1 John 3:20.
- B. The noun γνῶσις is used for God’s knowledge in Rom. 11:33, where we are told that God’s γνῶσιν is incomprehensible.
- C. In Acts 15:18, God’s knowledge (γνώστα) is described as eternal (ἀπ’ αἰῶνος).
- D. Two different Greek words are used in the New Testament to signify God’s foreknowledge of the future. The noun πρόγνωσις (foreknowledge) is used in Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2. The verb προγινώσκω (to foreknow) is used in Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:20.
- E. In Greek, the word for intellect or mind is νοῦς. It is used of God in Rom. 11:34 and 1 Cor. 2:16.
- F. The Greek verb οἶδα means “to know” and is used of God in 2 Cor. 11:11; 2 Cor. 12:3; 2 Pet. 2:9.
- G. The noetic sense of “seeing” is expressed by the Greek word βλέπω and is used in Mat. 6:6 to refer to God’s seeing us wherever we are.
- H. The authors of the New Testament, like the authors of the Old Testament, used every word that existed in the language of their day to convey the idea that God knows Himself and the world He made. When Paul encountered a situation which exceeded his capacity to understand, he would rest in the fact that “God knows” (2 Cor. 12:3). Paul makes it clear that God knows the truth even when we do not. See also 2 Cor. 11:11 where Paul appeals to the fact that “God knows.”

The Nature of God’s Knowledge

The nature of God’s knowledge is directly addressed in both Testaments. Instead of sitting in a dark room trying to figure out what He can or cannot know by our own limited intelligence, why not turn to the light of Scripture?

Perfect in Knowledge

First, God’s knowledge is תָּמִיד “perfect” according to Job 37:16.

The wondrous works of *Him who is perfect in knowledge*.

The perfection of God’s knowledge means that it is not deficient in anything for “he who is perfect is not lacking in anything.” (James 1:4).

God’s knowledge is thus *complete* and *nothing need be added to it*. This means that God’s knowledge is *self-existent* and *independent* of anything outside of His own divine nature. He

does not need to use logic or the scientific method to discover Truth. His knowledge is one, unified, single, perfect vision of all things from the end to the beginning of the creation from all eternity. Paul tells us that God is not in need of anything because He is perfect in every respect ([Acts 17:25](#)).

He Does Not Need Your Information

Because God's knowledge is perfect, He is not in need of any information from us.

Can any one teach God knowledge, Seeing He judgeth those that are high? ([Job 21:22](#))

In order for God to judge man on the Day of Judgment, He has to have perfect knowledge of all things. This is why God is not in need of someone to give Him counsel, which is information and advice. ([Rom. 11:34](#))

Who has known the mind of the Lord?

Who has become his adviser?

It Does Not Increase or Decrease

Since His knowledge is perfect, it cannot increase or decrease. It is complete and whole. He does not have to investigate to find out anything.

He sees iniquity *without investigation*. ([Job 11:11](#))

For *He does not have to wait for the results of a judicial investigation* to regard a man.

(Translation K&D, Job II:255–256) ([Job. 34:23](#))

He will break mighty men *without inquiry* and puts others in their place. ([Job 34:24](#))

It is Infinite

Since His knowledge is perfect, it is no surprise to us to find that it is *infinite* according to [Psa. 147:5](#).

His understanding is *infinite*.

Being “infinite” means that we cannot place any limitations on His knowledge. There is no “cutting off” place where we can say that His knowledge begins or ends.

It is Eternal

Since it is infinite, God's knowledge is *eternal*. In [Acts 15:18](#) James reminded the counsel that the inclusion of the Gentiles into the church did not catch God by surprise. God had known ($\gamma\nu\omega\sigma\tau\alpha\varsigma$) everything from eternity ($\acute{\alpha}\pi' \alpha\iota\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma$). God does not have to wait until the end to see what will happen like we do. He knows “the end from the beginning” ([Isa. 46:10](#)).

It is Immutable

Being perfect, infinite and eternal, God's knowledge is *immutable* ([Mal. 3:6](#); [James 1:17](#)). Because it is immutable, God cannot make a mistake; He cannot lie; He does not change His mind.

God is not a man, that *he should lie*; neither the son of man, that *he should change His mind: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?* (Num. 23:19)

And also the Strength of Israel *will not lie nor repent*: for he *is not a man, that he should change His mind.* (1 Sam. 15:29) the hope of eternal life that God, *who cannot lie*, promised before the world began (Tit. 1:2)

In the same way, when God wanted to make the *unchangeable character of his purpose* perfectly clear to the heirs of his promise, he guaranteed it with an oath so that by these two *unchangeable* things, in which it is *impossible for God to prove false*, we who have taken refuge in him might have a strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. (Heb. 6:17–18)

Several comments should be made on the passages above. First, the authors of Scripture repeatedly emphasize that God is not a man and thus His knowledge is not limited or flawed as man's knowledge. This is stressed in other passages as well.

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.* (1 Sam. 16:7) *Do You have eyes of flesh? or do You see as man sees? Are Your days as the days of man? Are Your years as man's days, that You have to inquire after my iniquity, and search after my sin?* (Job 10:4–7)

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa. 55:8–9)

The main reason why humanists are always trying to limit the knowledge of God is to bring God down to the level of man. They have forgotten God's stern rebuke,

You thought that I was altogether such a one as yourself: But I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes. (Psa. 50:21)

Since God's knowledge is absolute and unlimited, He is incapable of lying. Notice that Heb. 6:17–18 clearly links together God's immutability and omniscience in such a way that you cannot have one without the other. Thus God's knowledge is *infallible* and cannot err in any sense.

It is Clear, Distinct, Certain and Orderly

Since God's knowledge is perfect in all aspects, it is *clear* instead of unclear, *distinct* instead of vague, *certain* instead of uncertain, and *orderly* instead of chaotic, for God is not a God of confusion but of harmony. (1 Cor. 14:33).

It is Infallible

Is God's knowledge an "iffy" thing that may or may not pan out as the future unfolds? Does the *infallibility* of God's knowledge mean that the future must *necessarily* happen as He knows

it? In order for the future *necessarily* to happen as God sees it, must it be *certain, fixed, preordained, and predetermined* from eternity? Is anything left to luck or chance?

How can we answer such deep questions? *Sola Scriptura!* Scripture alone can give us God's answers to such questions. Why? First, human reason is not adequate to come up with an answer, for the world with all its philosophic reasoning and logic never knew the true God (1 Cor. 1:21). Second, Paul warns us that speculative theology, in which you try to figure out God by your own intellect instead of going to Scripture, produces nothing but pride and conceit.

Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn, "*Do not go beyond what is Written,*" that no one of you should be puffed up for the one against the other. (1 Cor. 4:6)

If the authors of Scripture believed that the future, including the decisions and works of man, is already *fixed, certain, preordained* and *predetermined*, and, at the same time, that man is *accountable* to God for his thoughts, words and deeds, how would they convey that idea to their readers? By what vocabulary? By what exegesis?

What if we find that they held to the *certainty* and *necessity* of the future and that man was *accountable* at the same time? Just because pagan Greek philosophy taught that man is not accountable if his actions are predetermined, are we to throw the Bible in the trash and follow the philosophers instead of Scripture? No.

First, did the authors of Scripture ever describe the future, including the acts of man, as "certain," "necessary," "determined," "fixed," "foreordained," or "appointed"? Did they ever say that future "must" happened? Is the future "certain?" Or, is it up to the roll of the dice in some kind of cosmic crap game?

The Story of Joseph

That this is what Moses understood is clear from his account of Joseph in Genesis chapters 38–50. The decision of his brothers to beat him and then sell him into slavery, the slave masters taking him to Egypt instead of some other country, the false rape charge made by Potiphar's wife, his prison experience, his rise to Pharaoh's side and the decision of Jacob to move to Egypt, were all these decisions and acts of all the people involved autonomous, i.e. independent of God? Can we really describe them in terms of mere coincidence and luck? Was Joseph just unlucky when he experienced bad things and lucky when he experienced good things? Was it merely by chance that the jailer liked him? Was it really a mere coincidence that Pharaoh made him second to himself?

Instead of sitting around speculating, let us turn to the testimony of Joseph to see what he believed.

But as for you, you thought to do evil against me; *but God meant it unto good*, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save many people alive. (Gen. 50:20)

Can words be clearer? Did not Joseph believe that God planned *everything* including what his brothers did to him in order to save many people from starvation? That *everything* that happened to him happened *necessarily as part of God's plan*? Why did Potiphar like Joseph? Moses tells us,

And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD *caused* all that he did to prosper in his hand. (Gen. 39:3)

According to Moses, “Yahweh caused” everything Joseph did to prosper. Joseph believed that God was in control of the entire situation.

But did the belief that God planned the whole thing in any way lessen, negate or reduce the responsibility of all those involved? No. The brothers admitted that their decisions and actions that led to selling Joseph into slavery were wicked and evil. They knew that they were responsible for what they did. They knew that they deserved punishment.

So shall you say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray you now, *the transgression of your brothers, and their sin, for what they did unto you was evil*. And now, we beg you, forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father. And Joseph wept as they spoke unto him. (Gen. 50:17)

Joseph agreed that they had intended to do evil to him. BUT everything they did was also part of a bigger picture. Namely, the sovereign purpose and plan of God. As Joseph looked back at his life with all its ups and downs, he saw the hand of God behind it all.

Future Events Already Appointed

For the vision is yet for the *appointed time*, and it hasteth toward the end, and *shall not lie*: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will *certainly* come, it will not delay. (Hab. 2:3)

Since the captivity has been “appointed” by God, it will *certainly* come to pass in the future in exactly the way God said it would happen. If future events could turn out differently than the vision stated, then God would be guilty of telling *a lie*.

Are Future Events Fixed?

He answered them, “It is not for you to know what times or seasons *the Father has fixed* by His own authority. (Acts 1:7)

Jesus pointed out to the disciples that the future has already been “fixed” by the Father. The tense of the verb is a second aorist middle indicative and emphasizes the sovereignty of the Father over time.

For he *has fixed a day* when he is going to judge the world with justice through a man he has appointed. (Acts 17:31)

The Day of Judgment has already been fixed by the Father. It is an appointment that we all have to meet. But, is there not the possibility that something could happen that God did not foresee and that would cancel or change the Day of Judgment? No. It is “set in stone” and cannot tarry or be overthrown.

From one man he made every nation of humanity to live all over the earth, *fixing the seasons of the year and the boundaries they live in* (Acts 17:26)

If man were free in the Greek ideal of absolute human autonomy, then he would be absolutely free to choose when and where he lives. But Paul says that the time and place of your birth and your habitation is something that God determines and appoints before you were ever born.

Are Future Events Going to Happen Necessarily?

Did anyone ever do anything that was “necessary” for him to do it according to the preordained plan and purpose of God? This question is so important that only special revelation can answer it.

Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?
([Luke 24:26](#))

Was it *necessary* for Judas to betray Christ? For the Romans to deliver Him to death? For the Jewish leaders to demand His death? For the soldier to pierce His side with a spear? Did all the choices of everyone involved take place *necessarily*? Was it all mere coincidence? Was there a chance that He would not have been arrested, tried, tortured and crucified or did those things have to be done by all those involved because it was *necessary*? If they did things because they had to, i.e. it was *necessary*, were they held accountable to God for what they did? The present text and the next one answer these questions.

Brothers, *it was necessary for the Scripture to be fulfilled*, which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David about *Judas*, who was the guide to those who arrested Jesus. ([Acts 1:16](#))

Luke tells us that all the choices and decisions of man that came together to cause the death of Christ, including the decision of Judas to betray the Lord, were done *necessarily*.

Explaining and showing that *it was necessary* that the Christ *should suffer*, and *to rise again from the dead*; ([Acts 17:3](#))

Was Christ’s death at the hands of sinners a matter of bad luck; a chance happening; a mere coincidence? No. All those things happened because it was *necessary* for these things to take place. They were part of God’s eternal plan of the ages.

Are Future Events Ever Predetermined?

Do the biblical authors say that someone ever chose to do something that was *predetermined* that he should chose to do it?

For the Son of man is going away, *as it has been predetermined: but how terrible it will be for that man by whom He is betrayed!* ([Lk. 22:22](#))

When Judas chose to betray the Lord, was his choice *predetermined*? If Luke was inspired by God to write his Gospel account, then we have to accept the fact that he clearly stated that Judas’ betrayal was something that had been predetermined. But, we hasten to add, lest anyone foolishly think that this meant that Judas was not responsible for his actions, Luke adds, “woe unto that man through whom He is betrayed.” There is no indication in the text to suggest that

