

DOES GOD KNOW THE FUTURE? OPEN THEISM AND PREDICTIVE PROPHECY¹

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The historic view of God maintains a balance of complementary ideas that reveal a majesty of the God of the Bible that is very contrary to how God is viewed in various non-Christian religions of the world and that of the kingdom of the cults.² Cults, and other world religions, either see God as infinite, but not personal, or personal, but not infinite. Or others deny the doctrine of the Trinity, understanding the divine as consisting of several gods, speak of the persons of God as mere manifestations of only one person, or deny Jesus or the Holy Spirit their rightful place in the Holy Trinity.

Unfortunately in recent years, even some evangelicals have erred in regards to some of these ignoble and incorrect perspectives about God.³ We have set forth belief in an inspired, inerrant Scripture in contrast to the perspective that some of the Scripture is only human invention or that portions express less than truthful statements.⁴ Then there was a less known debate regarding the nature of the resurrected body of Jesus.⁵ Was the body in which He raised the same body in which He died, though deathless and incorruptible, or did He receive some form of spirit-body? Fortunately, most have acknowledged the truth of Scripture and the creeds that He arose in the same physical body in which He died.

A new battle faces evangelical Christians today, however, and those advocating this seemingly new heresy come from within our ranks. These scholars, who are orthodox in most other core doctrines of the Christian faith, nonetheless argue that the God of the Bible is a limited being in several of His attributes.⁶ This sets aside the proclamation of the orthodox church for nearly two thousand years,⁷ and substitutes a god who is comprehensible and acceptable to modern man, borrowing from views of theism that were rejected both by the Fathers of the church and the reformers, and embracing aspects of process theism. The new challenge to orthodoxy is called by a number of names: openness theology, open theism, relational theism, free will theism and open theism. In brief, this view advocates a god not dissimilar to what the early Church encountered when it emerged in the Mediterranean world alongside Greco-Roman paganism. This god is not the transcendental God who is timeless, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-wise, unchanging, not subject to swings of passion, and perfectly consistent in His attributes. The god of open theism is more sensitive and human friendly, able to understand us more since He is

¹ Some of the material in this paper relies on several papers and two books that the author has written on Open Theism.

² See the various Christian creeds in the appendix of Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 1168-1171.

³ See Norman L. Geisler, H. Wayne House (with Max Herrera), *The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Open Theism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001) for an in depth interaction with the heresy of Open Theism.

⁴ See Harold Lindsell (sp) *Battle for the Bible*

⁵ See Norman L. Geisler, *Battle for the Resurrection*

⁶ See Norman L. Geisler and H. Wayne House, *Battle for God*

⁷ See H. Wayne House, "The Verdict of History in the Open Theism Debate: The Church Fathers," *Conservative Theological Society Journal*,

limited as we are. What has led some Open Theists to their position seems less than a careful study of the biblical text than to the difficulty with squaring the historic view of God with life's difficulties.⁸

Now, Open Theists use terms like eternal and omniscient in referring to God,⁹ but the terms lose meaning in their descriptions of God's attributes and activities. After reading much openness literature, I am convinced that no attribute of God is safe from this new theism of the late 20th century, and that the very future of evangelicalism is at stake in where we end up in this battle.

Is this assessment of the impact alarmist or consistent with reality. Greg Boyd, a former professor at Bethel College in Minnesota, considers the matter of God's omniscience to be secondary to other areas of theology. He says,

Next to the central doctrines of the Christian faith, the issue of whether the future is exhaustively settled or partially open is relatively unimportant. It certainly is not a doctrine Christians should divide over. Still, I have to confess that the perspective I came to embrace has had a rather profound impact on my life.¹⁰

Boyd seems to believe that whether or not God exhaustively knows the future is a minor matter in theology. On the contrary, the implications of this denial are staggering. If indeed God does not know the future, for the reasons that Open Theists argue, then this deficiency permeates His entire nature. This issue is more important than almost any area of theology. Debates regarding creation and evolution, the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, and the nature of the resurrection body of Christ pale in comparison, for all major doctrines depend on what kind of God we know, worship, and serve. The character of the Word of God, the salvation from God, the Son of God, the truth of God, to mention a few, is directly related to the kind of God relating to these doctrines.

Just who is God? The apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthian Christians said that "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live."¹¹ What he has made clear in these words is that simply to use the term God or Lord, or to have objects of worship, is not to be speaking of the same divine being.

The importance of knowing and worshipping the true God, the One Who revealed Himself in Holy Scripture has become very important in our day of religious pluralism. The events that produced a national religious awareness initiated by the bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001,¹² causes the evangelical Christian to pause and think about the nature of the God we worship. On September 23, in New York City there was a religious worship service attended by thousands of Americans.¹³ Leaders of every religious faith

⁸ Boyd mentions counseling concerns whereas Sanders cannot understand how a infinite God is congruent with the death of his brother.

⁹ Greg Boyd seeks to alleviate this difficulty by saying that the issue is not of omniscience, for example, but the nature of the future, that it is not knowable in reference to free acts of creatures. Greg Boyd, *God of the Possible*, .

¹⁰ Greg Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 8.

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 8:5-6. The Holy Bible, New King James Version, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

¹² "Acts of Terror," http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/WTC_MAIN010911.html. Last visited 9.24.01.

¹³ "A Prayer for America," http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/WTC_memorial010923.htm. Last visited 9.24.01.

in America were represented on the stage and participated.¹⁴ Much was made from the time of the terrorist attack about how Islam, Christianity and Judaism share belief in the same God, and have the same spiritual father, Abraham.¹⁵ This religious pluralism may be proper for public freedoms politically and legally, but the obfuscation between biblical faith and false religions can be dangerous to promotion of truth and confusion concerning the Gospel.¹⁶

Did God even know prior to the September 11 terrorism that it would actually occur? If He knows the end from the beginning, then He did. On the other hand, if free acts of men and women cannot be known as some have declared, then He could only guess. Once He realized that the terrorist acts would occur, immediately before they struck the World Trade Center towers, could He have diverted them? Yes, but chose not to interfere for His own purposes, if He is all powerful and nothing can thwart His will. On the other hand, if God's actions are limited dependent on man's actions, then He could not. Having let the planes hit the buildings, did He then recognize that He should have done something else, and would try to do better next time? No, if he in fact possesses all wisdom, and does all things after His own counsel. On the other hand, if God is still learning, guessing, and altering His plans according to man's plans, then He may use this experience to improve on how He chooses to act in the world in the future. This was a growth experience for God. Did the pain that many Americans felt which have brought roller-coaster kind of fluctuations of emotions in the American public do the same in God? No, if God is impassible, namely, does not alter His eternal character based on events in time, though He does understand human pain and has concern for His creation. On the other hand, if God is as Open Theists have maintained, then He actually is impacted in His nature by the distress of men so that He becomes something that He was not before, and consequently a changing god. And so on we could go speaking of various attributes of God which show Him to be limited in His attributes, but making Him, some believe, more understandable, approachable and more human-friendly.

The historic view of God maintains a balance of complementary ideas that reveal a majesty of the God of the Bible which is very contrary to how God is viewed in certain so-called Christian circles today which espouse process theism, but there is no less concern among certain evangelicals who present a less than biblical god, though ignorantly so.

I. OPEN THEISM AND THE ORTHODOX VIEW OF GOD'S OMNISCIENCE

A. WHAT IS OPEN THEISM AND HOW DID IT START?

1. The Beliefs of Open Theism

Since openness theologians desire to be considered within the orthodox theistic camp, they have set forth their case in the least offensive way. Clark Pinnock sets forth five characteristics of their perspective:

1. God not only created this world ex nihilo but can (and at times does) intervene unilaterally in early affairs.

¹⁴ Prayers were offered by Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu clerics. See "Uniting in Prayer," <http://www.newsday.com/features/religion/ny-nymain232380683sep23>.
story?coll=ny%2Dreligion%Dheadlines. Last visited 9.24.01.

¹⁵ "Reflections of an American Muslim," <http://www.islam-usa.com/r24.html>. Last visited 9-24-01. See also Columban Mission, Nov. 1981: "Allah . . . is none other than the same supreme God worshiped by Jews and Christians-the Torah's 'El' of Elohim, the Lord God Jehovah of Christians." Quoted in <http://www.unn.ac.uk/societies/islamic/respond/percep1.htm>. Last visited 9.24.01.

¹⁶ This was evidenced in former President Jimmy Carter equating Mormonism with Christianity by remarks in which he chided Christians for their (in his words) "narrow definition of what is a proper Christian" and for "proselytizing" Mormons. "Are Mormons Christians," *Deseret News*, Nov. 15, 1997, quoted in <http://www.whidbey.net/~dcloud/fbns/jimmy.htm>. Last visited 9.24.01.

2. God chose to create us with incompatibilistic (libertarian) freedom
3. God so values freedom—the moral integrity of free creatures and a world in which such integrity is possible—that he does not normally override such freedom, even if he sees that it is producing undesirable results.
4. God always desires our highest good, both individually and corporately, and thus is affected by what happens in our lives.
5. God does not possess exhaustive knowledge of exactly how we will utilize our freedom, although he may very well at times be able to predict with great accuracy the choices we will freely make.¹⁷

2. The Distinctions of Open Theism from Theism and Panentheism

In order to get this view in focus, a comparison between theism, panentheism, and open theism will be helpful.¹⁸ We will begin by a contrast between traditional Christian Theism and the New Theism.

a. *Similarities Between Theism and Open Theism*

The similarities between Open Theism and traditional Theism (also called Classical Theism) are too great not to view it as a mutant form of theism. In both views, God is a personal, infinite, all-powerful Creator, who created the world from nothing. He is also able to perform miracles and defeat evil. He knows all that is possible to know and is an independent, self-existing, and necessary being.

b. *Similarities Between Open Theism and Process Theology*

Despite the many similarities between Theism and Open Theism, there are some marked differences. All of which are borrowed from Process Theology. Like the process view, and unlike traditional theism, Open Theists affirm that God is temporal, changing, complex (not simple), has potentiality, does not have infallible knowledge of future free choices, does not have absolute control of the world, and is capable of learning.

c. *Distinctive View of Human Free Will*

Another important difference between Theism and Open Theism is their concept of human free choice. Open Theists accept a libertarian view of free will that they view as incompatible with a God who completely foreknows, foredetermines, and controls all events of human history and human free choice.

By a “libertarian” or “incompatibilist” view of free will, Open Theists mean “an agent is free with respect to a given action at a given time if at that time it is with the agent's power to perform the action and also in the agent's power to refrain from the action.”¹⁹ This they distinguish from a “compatibilist” view by adding for the latter that the agent has this power **only if he chooses** to perform or not to perform the act. On a libertarian view one has both the “inner freedom” (with no overwhelming desire to the contrary) and “outer freedom” to perform the act. On the compatibilists' view, one need only have the “outer freedom” (i.e., be free from external restraints). On the libertarian view one must be free in both desire and decision, but on the compatibilists' view one need only be free to decide, not to desire, to do the action.

¹⁷ Clark Pinnock, *Open View of God*, 156.

¹⁸ For a more detailed comparison and contrast see N. L. Geisler, *Creating God in the Image of Man*, Chapter Four.

¹⁹ Pinnock, 136, 137.

3. The Hermeneutical Shift from the Hermeneutics of Historic Christianity

It is my opinion, based on reading his book, particularly the preface,²⁰ that in attempting to resolve the ongoing Calvinism/Arminian debate within Christendom, and no doubt the practical concerns encountered within his pastorate, professor Boyd has opted for a supposed third view to the controversy that, unlike the standard Calvinistic/Arminian, attacks the very nature of God. Calvinists and Arminians have looked at various biblical passages and attempted to understand how God can be sovereign while yet man can make genuine decisions.²¹ Boyd has resolved that question by accepting that God does determine some of the future, and this He can know. All that He does not determine, however, cannot be known by Him.²² He asserts this is not a matter of God's sovereignty, but an issue of the nature of the future.²³ He seeks to demonstrate, that, in fact, the Scripture teaches this view, something that I will dispute subsequently. But apart from the matter of the meaning of sovereignty and the nature of the future, I believe Boyd has one other difficulty that I need to mention before proceeding to an analysis of some of the biblical arguments that Boyd has presented in his book. I believe that Boyd has failed to understand the manner in which an infinite God MUST communicate with finite beings in order to be understood. Because of this he has in reality made the infinite God into a finite being, so that, it appears to me, the tension of the Calvinistic/Arminian controversy may be resolved in his mind.

I cannot deal with every passage that Boyd has presented in his book in this presentation but shall choose a few categories that he seems to heavily rely on. I believe it will be obvious in the next few pages that he has failed to give proper consideration to the meaning of the texts which have been held by the church from the beginning as proofs of the infinite knowledge of God—a God who knows all past, present, and future things, both actual and possible.²⁴

a. *Language About God's Interactions with Men Should be Taken Literally*

He Asserts That Language about God's Actions Should be Taken Literally
NOT Anthropomorphically

Greg Boyd sets forth his understanding of how classical theists differentiate between literal and non-literal language regarding God:

The classic view of divine foreknowledge interprets the first motif as speaking about God as *he truly is* and the second motif as speaking about God only as he *appears to be* or as *figures of speech*. In other words, whenever the Bible suggests that God knows and/or controls the future, this is taken literally. Whenever it suggests that God knows the future in terms of possibilities, however, this is not taken literally.²⁵

Boyd continues his evaluation of this approach by classical theologians by saying that this method of analysis is unneeded unless one assumes that the future is already settled: "If we don't assume that the future is entirely settled, there is an easy way to integrate the motif of future determinism with the motif of future openness."²⁶

He then proceeds to inform us that the issue of openness is not the nature of God but the nature of the future:

²⁰ Boyd, 7-9.

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See the massive work on God's attributes by Stephen Charnock, *The Existence and Attributes of God* (Ann Arbor, MI: Sovereign Grace Book Club printing, no pub., no date) 181-260.

²⁵ Boyd, 14.

²⁶ Boyd, 14-15.

Though Open Theists are often accused of denying God's omniscience because they deny the classical view of foreknowledge, this criticism is unfounded. Open Theists affirm God's omniscience as emphatically as anybody does. The issue is not about the nature that God perfectly knows. More specifically, what is the content of the reality of the future? Whatever it is, we all agree that God perfectly knows it.²⁷

Interestingly, he then says that Open Theists believe that the future "consists partly of settled realities and party of unsettled realities."²⁸ This is an unusual use of the term reality. The dictionary defines reality in this way:

1. The quality or state of being actual or true.
2. One, such as a person, an entity, or an event, that is actual.
3. The totality of all things possessing actuality, existence, or essence.
4. That which exists objectively and in fact.
5. *Philosophy.* That which has necessary existence and not contingent existence.²⁹

Something that is unsettled is only a possibility by definition whereas something that is a reality is certain or settled. This confusion of terminology is also true at different places in the book in which he accepts, apparently, an infinite being with finite capabilities and a partly omniscient deity. Boyd, and Open Theists, cannot have it both ways; there are no square circles. In reality, when all is said and done, Boyd has created a finite God different from the God that is.

b. Attempting to Put an Infinite God in a Finite Box

(1) The All Knowing God Interacts with Men in Language of Time (Is He Partly All Knowing?)

In my opinion, Boyd's struggles have taken him to see God as a finite being, rather than seeing that the infinite being in seeks to condescend to human terms and thought patterns for the purpose of communication with man in terms that he can understand. God, in eternity, knows reality as one, whereas to communicate with finite humans He must work through sequential ideas that may be understood by finite man.

Years ago I read an article by a friend of mine, J. Barton Payne, that may shed some light on my concerns of Boyd's use of standard theological terms in unusual ways. Payne, in seeking to illustrate the difficulty of speaking of limited inerrancy illustrates his point with the question of "partial omniscience."

'Mr. Jones, who teaches at my school, is omniscient.' Says Johnny. 'What, do you mean he knows everything?' 'Well, not exactly everything; but he does have an absolutely perfect knowledge of everything he's intended to teach, that is, third grade multiplication tables.'

Did somebody fudge in this dialogue? Theoretically, Johnny may be entitled to redefine the adjective *omniscient*, so that it connotes a merely partial omniscience. But since, in practice, the word normally signifies an incommunicable divine attribute of knowledge—of knowledge without deficiency of any sort—we suspect that Johnny's assertion is a bit misleading.³⁰

It seems to be that Boyd and other Open Theists are also fudging. They wish to speak of God as infinite, or as omniscient, but He is infinite in only certain portions of the future. Let us briefly ask where this takes us under such a hermeneutical procedure, in which we disallow God condescending interaction with finite humans? Not only might God not know some of the future; He might not know some of the present in which He lives.

²⁷ Boyd, 15-16.

²⁸ Boyd, 16.

²⁹ *American Heritage Dictionary.*

³⁰ J. Barton Payne, "Partial Omniscience: Observations on Limited Inerrancy," *JETS* 18 (1975) 37.

(a) Did not God check out how many in Sodom and Gomorrah were righteous before His interaction with Abraham

Abram was visited by Yahweh in Genesis 18 on the way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. In the interchange between them, Abram interceded on behalf of Sodom, where Lot lived, for God to spare the city if a number of righteous were in the city so as not to destroy the unrighteous and righteous together. The text portrays God not having adequate information at the present time—not the future—in ascertaining whether there was a sufficient number of righteous to spare the city. In this dialogue between the infinite and the finite, God betrays less than omniscience if the dialogue be taken in non-literal or non-anthropomorphical terms, regarding facts about the men of Sodom at the time Abram and God were talking. The issue was not the future event of the destruction (in which God could “change His mind”) but the present reality of whether there was, finally, even ten righteous people in the city. Taken literally, then, God has limited knowledge even of the present, using Boyd’s hermeneutic. Again, whether speaking of God’s perspective of past, present, or future, He may speak in indefinites in His communication with man; He truly comes down to man.

Gen. 18:21 I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note.”

Gen. 18:22 ¶ The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD.

Gen. 18:23 Abraham came forward and said, “Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?”

Gen. 18:24 What if there should be fifty innocent within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the innocent fifty who are in it?

Gen. 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?”

Gen. 18:26 And the LORD answered, “If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole place for their sake.”

Gen. 18:27 Abraham spoke up, saying, “Here I venture to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes:

Gen. 18:28 What if the fifty innocent should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?” And He answered, “I will not destroy if I find forty-five there.”

Gen. 18:29 But he spoke to Him again, and said, “What if forty should be found there?” And He answered, “I will not do it, for the sake of the forty.”

Gen. 18:30 And he said, “Let not my Lord be angry if I go on: What if thirty should be found there?” And He answered, “I will not do it if I find thirty there.”

Gen. 18:31 And he said, “I venture again to speak to my Lord: What if twenty should be found there?” And He answered, “I will not destroy, for the sake of the twenty.”

Gen. 18:32 And he said, “Let not my Lord be angry if I speak but this last time: What if ten should be found there?” And He answered, “I will not destroy, for the sake of the ten.”

Gen. 18:33 ¶ When the LORD had finished speaking to Abraham, He departed; and Abraham returned to his place.³¹

(b) Did not God know whom He could get to do His bidding before making the statement in Isaiah 6:2

³¹ TANAKH: A New Translation of THE HOLY SCRIPTURES According to the Traditional Hebrew Text (xxx: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985)

Another example of God seemingly expressing imperfect knowledge of the present is Isaiah 6:8: "Then I heard the voice of my Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me."³² To this question, Isaiah answered to send him. Now I would readily agree that we should understand the question as non-literal because God really knew it would be Isaiah. But I do so because I believe that God expresses imperfect knowledge in other places that may sound indefinite to us because He desires to speak in terms that solicit response from man, not to receive an answer to something He did not already know. The infinite God uses here and elsewhere language of sequential thought and indecision for the purpose of communication, not to satisfy a lacking in His knowledge.

(2) The Non-Spatial God Interacts with Men in Language of Space (Is He partly omnipresent?)

(a) God looks for Adam

Did God know where Adam was when He inquired regarding his whereabouts in the garden? Certainly He did and Boyd admits this in this book as an example of rhetoric. I am not sure if rhetoric is the proper term for it really was a question that God wanted answered by Adam. God knew where Adam and Eve were but found it necessary to enter into this temporal, indefinite dialogue to have a proper conversation between the infinite and the finite. Moreover, there is the issue of omnipresence in this passage. Implicitly the omnipresence of God is at stake if we do not understand this passage in a non-literal sense regarding God's attributes. The text implies that God was located in one space and Adam in another. Surely we should understand that He not only had cognitive knowledge of Adam and Eve but also was "beside" them as the omnipresent being. The text speaks in metaphorical or human terms to bridge this gulf between God and man.

(b) God moves from place to place

In Exodus 3:7-8 Yahweh encounters Moses on Mt. Horeb and reveals that He has been observing His people in Egypt and has empathized with them. Then He reveals that He has now come to deliver them. In so doing, though, the text indicates that He "came down" to do so. Should we interpret this spatial expression of God in the terms that Open Theists have done in reference to God's activity in time (sequence of thought and mediation of thought)

Ex. 3:7¶ And the LORD said: "I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows.

Ex. 3:8 "So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites.

We surely understand that this is but another example of explaining the infinite God in finite terms to Moses. God is not a spatial being and does not move in time and space. But for purpose of communication He uses expressions that are understandable to finite humans who do move in time and space. Such non-literal descriptions of divine activity reveal personal interaction with man.

B. MAJOR PERSPECTIVES OF OPEN THEISM

1. God Knows All Things That He has Determined but He has Only Determined Some Things

According to Boyd, God knows all things that He has planned or determined but not other matters which He has chosen not to determine or plan, namely, the free choices of human beings. In seeking to defend this viewpoint he turns to two important passages on God's sovereignty and omniscience in Isaiah 46 and 48.

³² TANAKH

Isaiah 46:10-11 reads:

Is. 46:10 Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,

Is. 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'

Is. 46:11 Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.³³

Isaiah 48:3-5 reads:

Is. 48:3 ¶ Long ago, I foretold things that happened, From My mouth they issued, and I announced them; Suddenly I acted, and they came to pass.

Is. 48:4 Because I know how stubborn you are (Your neck is like an iron sinew And your forehead bronze),

Is. 48:5 Therefore I told you long beforehand, Announced things to you ere they happened — That you might not say, "My idol caused them, My carved and molten images ordained them."

Is. 48:6 You have heard all this; look, must you not acknowledge it? As of now, I announce to you new things, Well-guarded secrets you did not know.

Is. 48:7 Only now are they created, and not of old; Before today you had not heard them; You cannot say, "I knew them already."³⁴

Let us now examine how professor Boyd interprets these traditionally favorite passages for God's omniscience and sovereignty.

a. Isaiah 46:10-11 and Isaiah 48:3-55: God knows all that He plans

Boyd declares that the passage does not reveal a God who knows the entirety of the future but one who knows that part of the future in which He has decided to control according to His purpose: "He foreknows that certain things are going to take place because he knows his own purpose and intention to bring these events about. As sovereign Lord of history, he has decided to settle this much about the future."³⁵

When Isaiah records Yahweh's words that he declares "the end from the beginning" he supposedly speaks only of the settled portion of the future: "He declares that the future is settled to the extent that he is going to determine it, but nothing in the text requires that we believe that everything that will ever come to pass will do so according to his will and thus is settled ahead of time."³⁶

b. God's Determination is not Ends apart from Means

With Judas he said if he should not choose to be betrayer and instead be a faithful follower of Jesus, then Jesus would find another one. The odds are with Jesus to find someone. This is not as true with Cyrus. He would be limited in finding a willing servant to do his bidding. But regardless, determination is not the same thing as causation. I may know something without causing it in such a way as to take away any human self-determination, and so may God. If I am standing on the side of the road and see an approaching car coming toward a person in the road and then it hits that person I have not caused that person to be hit by the car. I did, however,

³³ NKJV

³⁴ TANAKH

³⁵ Boyd, 30.

³⁶ Boyd, 30.

allow the car to hit the pedestrian if I chose not to intervene to alter the event. On the other hand, if I had the ability to push the person out of the path of the car, I would, then, be altering an event that would have happened a certain way but for my intervention. Either way, knowledge does not require direct causation.

In order to demonstrate his position, Boyd sets forth five categories of future events that God does know in the future, namely, the knowledge of His chosen people, His knowledge of individuals, His knowledge of Christ's ministry, His knowledge of the elect, and His knowledge of end times.

Though in many of these items, Boyd does see the plan of God at work, often in particulars, generally the sovereignty of God, according to Boyd, is expressed by God NOT exercising control rather than exercising it. He says,

Indeed, God is so confident in his sovereignty, we hold, he does not need to micromanage everything. He could if he wanted to, but this would demean his sovereignty. So he chooses to leave some of the future open to possibilities, allowing them to be resolved by the decisions of free agents. It takes a greater God to steer a world populated with free agents than it does to steer a world of preprogrammed automatons.³⁷

He seems to equivocate in his presentation here. God is so much in control that He is not in control. And then He is not in control but He is steering the world, at least in some sense. Moreover, if controlling all of the future would be demeaning, then why would not being in total control in some of the future not also be demeaning? I get dizzy reading Boyd's presentation of contradictory postulates here similar to when I mentioned above about a partially all-knowing and a limited infinite God.

For Boyd, in a number of things of the future God has definite intentions and so truly knows them ahead of time, but in most other things He does not.³⁸ Unless the Scripture specifically mentions things that He knows they are relegated to the side as things that He does not know with certainty.³⁹ Using this type of logic, when the Bible says that the very hairs of our head are numbered, or that God knows the birds of the air who fall to the ground, should we understand that the failure to mention the number of hairs on my arms or other animals on the ground, that He does not have perfect knowledge of these things. Surely, they are provided as representations of the infinite knowledge of God.

In my view, God determines all things and thus knows all things that he has in fact determined as well as all those other things that he did not determine. And in this determination he has chosen to be proactive to accomplish his will at times but generally to refrain from acting, preserving the free acts of men consistent with their natures, and thus accomplish His will in reference to these acts.

2. God Predicts Acts of Men Based on Knowledge of Their Character

Professor Boyd presents an interesting manner in which the God of the possible is able to predict with great accuracy the future events of certain humans without possessing certain knowledge of those acts. He says,

Our omniscient Creator knows us perfectly, far better than we even know ourselves. Hence, we can assume that he is able to predict our behavior far more extensively and accurately than we could predict it ourselves. This does not mean that everything we will ever do is predictable, for our present character

³⁷ Boyd, 31.

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doesn't determine all of our future. But it does mean that our behavior is predictable to the extent that our character is solidified and future circumstances that will affect us are in place.⁴⁰

To illustrate his view he then discusses Peter and Judas.

a. Jesus' Predictions on the Denial by Peter

Boyd says that absolute knowledge of the future was not necessary for Jesus to predict that Peter would deny the Lord three times (Matt. 26:33-35):

Contrary to the assumption of many, we do not need to believe that the future is exhaustively settled to explain this prediction. We only need to believe that God the Father knew and revealed to Jesus one very predictable aspect of Peter's character. Anyone who knew Peter's character perfectly could have predicted that under certain highly pressured circumstances (that God could easily orchestrate), he would act just the way he did.⁴¹

Boyd's view supposes then, that a person's character may inevitably lead to a particular action that may be certainly known by God. When presented with the circumstances we will choose to act in a certain way without fail. How is this not a form of determinism? If Peter genuinely has the right to self-determination, sometimes called free will, then no matter what the circumstances he can make the choice he desires. But other problems loom over Boyd's view.

God, according to Boyd, is a perfect judge of character, which I do not deny, but how can that knowledge guarantee an outcome in a particular instance. This he does not explain. His problem is more formidable. How does knowledge of character not only reveal that he would deny Christ, but that he would deny Jesus three specific times. Not one, two, or four, but exactly three? Now he may respond that God sent three different people to Peter to ensure that it was three specific times to fulfill the prophecy, but must Peter fail at each with certainty? And how could God, in open theism, ensure that someone else would not also tempt Peter and thus contradict the prophecy, or maybe be an encourager (like Jesus) and move him from this course?

But something more, not only was the prediction that Peter would deny Christ, and do it three times, but it would be before the rooster crowed. Boyd merely says before morning, but there is more than morning involved. The denials occurred immediately before a rooster crowed. How would God, in an open view, anticipate the acts of a non-moral, non-free will being in this prediction? Boyd's view is incredulous.

b. Jesus' Predictions on the Betrayal of Judas

Boyd believes that the prediction of the betrayal of Judas is in the same classification as the prediction of Peter's denial.⁴² He supports his argument in three ways. First, the questions that John 6:64 teaches that Jesus knew in eternity or even early in his ministry with Jesus that Judas would betray him:

This word (*arche*) does not imply that Jesus knew who would betray him from a time *before* the person decided in his heart to betray him As in Philippians 4:15, the word can mean 'early on.' This verse thus suggests that Jesus knew who would betray him from the moment this person resolved to betray him, or from the time Jesus chose him to be a disciple.⁴³

Boyd's argument seems to be that Jesus did not have a prior knowledge of Judas' intent to betray Jesus when He chose him as a disciple. Jesus only discovered this at the time of Judas' actual decision to do so later in the gospel accounts, or at the exact time He selected Judas as a disciple. One wonders why God's unfailing anticipation of character, as argued earlier in reference to Peter, is not used here? This would not require the absolute knowledge of the future as Boyd seeks to dismiss here. Nonetheless, the text reveals that Jesus knowledge of those who

⁴⁰ Boyd, 35.

⁴¹ Boyd, 35.

⁴² Boyd, 37.

⁴³ Boyd, 37.

believed Him and specifically who would betray Him does not speak of later time in His ministry or even necessarily to His choosing of Judas. Nothing in the sixth chapter of John would indicate this. First, the word *arche* is used in John both to eternity (John 1:1, 2; 8:4) and to the beginning of His ministry with the twelve (John 8:25; 15:27; 16:4). The text does not say which should be understood here, but there is other evidence in the context that suggests the former. Note that the verse following this pronouncement in 6:64, has the conclusionary “therefore”: “Therefore, I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My father.” The reason why Jesus had knowledge of true believers and the betrayer related to the fact of God’s election, which is eternal.

Secondly, Boyd disclaims that the statement “son of perdition” relates specifically to Judas in John 17:12:

... many assume that when Jesus referred to Judas as one who was ‘destined to be lost,’ he meant that Judas was damned from the beginning of time (John 17:12). However, the verse simply doesn’t say this. The Greek translated as ‘destined to be lost’ [by whom I don’t know] literally says ‘son of perdition,’ with no indication as to *when* Judas had become this. We can only know that by the time Jesus said this, Judas had, of his own free will, made himself into a person fit for destruction.⁴⁴

I find no need to dispute his argument here, for I would not translate the Greek here “destined to be lost” either. I also do not dispute that humans are lost because they fit themselves for destruction, as taught by Paul in Romans 9:22. My concern with his analysis is based on the third point he makes:

This leads directly to my third point. Jesus tells us that Judas fulfilled Scripture, not that Judas was the one who *had* to fulfill Scripture. We have every reason to suppose that earlier on Judas could have (and should have) chosen a different path for his life, but as a free moral agent, Judas tragically chose a path of self-destruction. If he had made himself into a different kind of person, he would not have been a candidate for fulfilling the prophecy of the Lord’s betrayal. In this case, the Lord simply would have found someone else to fill this role.⁴⁵

I have several concerns about how Boyd supports his view on Judas. First, was the free will of Judas violated if he was not able to change his decision, even until the point of the actual betrayal? Boyd does not answer this. He does say that if Judas changed his mind Christ simply “would have found someone else to fill this role.” It is NOT so simple to find one to betray Him to fulfill Scripture. Maybe no one would, if we grant the absolute freedom of human will.

Second, his comment that Jesus does not say that Judas had to fulfill Scripture, only that he did. That is true, but Peter did say this. Note his words to the 120 in the upper room: “Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled concerning Judas, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; because [answering why it must be Judas] he was numbered with us and obtained a part of this ministry. . . . Because it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it’; and ‘Let another take his office.’ (Acts 1:16-17, 19, 20) It is here that Boyd’s evaluation of the evidence directly contradicts the literal meaning of the text. Again, what is Boyd’s solution to Judas changing his mind and so not betraying Jesus? Christ would simply find someone else. As I said before in another vein, it would NOT be so simple. According to the apostle Peter’s understanding of the Old Testament, the betrayer must, to fulfill Scripture, be a member of the twelve. If Judas chose not to betray, Jesus would need to have one of the other apostles to take Judas’ place.

⁴⁴ Boyd, 37.

⁴⁵ Boyd, 38.

3. God Regrets His Past Actions

a. *His Creation of Man and the Judgment of the Flood (Genesis 6:6)*

Boyd argues that God may regret decisions that He has made. He seeks to establish this, in one instance, by God's comments regarding the creation of humanity. He says,

... one aspect of the portrait of God in Scripture that suggests the future is partly open is the fact that God sometimes regrets how things turn out, even prior decisions that *he himself made*. For example, in the light of the depravity that characterized humanity prior to the flood, the Bible says that 'The LORD was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart' (Gen. 6:6). . . . Now, if everything about world history were exhaustively settled and known by God as such before he created the world, God would have known with absolute certainty that humans would come to this wicked state, at just this time, before he created them. But how, then, could he authentically regret having made humankind? Doesn't the fact that God regretted the way things turned out—to the point of starting over—suggest that it *wasn't* a foregone conclusion at the time God created human beings that they would fall into this state of wickedness?⁴⁶

If it was not a foregone conclusion when God created man, as Boyd has said, how do we deal with the fact that Jesus was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world? How would we be chosen in Him for redemption from the foundation of the world? This all presupposes God's eternal knowledge that man would fall into sin and need redemption.

Moreover, in reference to man's sinfulness in God's omniscience, one wonders whatever happened to God's capacity for anticipation that Boyd makes much of in reference to Peter and Judas. Aside from this, though, one should first recognize that this decision occurred more than 1000 years after the creation in which He said that it was very good (Gen 1:31), God responds to the current state of man in His sin. I am not sure that He was not sorry for His original creation of man; it may be He is sorry for what man became through His own devices. As Keil and Delitzsch say,

The force of *yinnachem*, "it repented the Lord," may be gathered from the explanatory *yit'atzev*, "it grieved Him at His heart." This shows that the repentance of God does not presuppose any variability in His nature of His purposes. In this sense God never repents of anything (1 Sam. 15:29), "*quia nihil illi inopinatum vel non praevisum accidit*" (Calvin). The repentance of God is an anthropomorphic expression for the pain of the divine love at the sin of man, and signifies that "God is hurt no less by the atrocious sins of men than if they pierced His heart with mortal anguish" (Calvin).⁴⁷

b. *Biblical Balance (1Sam. 15:29; Ezekiel 18)*

The fact that God is said to repent here must be taken in non-literal terms unless we are to have a contradiction with His nature in eternity, above time and space, and His infinite character. Nahum Sarna provides an important corrective, in his commentary on Genesis 6:6, to the perspective of open theism:

This is an anthropopathism, or the ascription to God of human emotions, a frequent feature of the biblical narrative. The need for such usage arises from the inherent tension between God's transcendence and His immanence. On the one hand, He is conceived to be wholly outside of nature, omniscient and omnipotent, sovereign over time and space, and not subject to change. On the other hand, He is also immanent in the world, not withdrawn from it, a personal God who is actively involved in the lives of His creatures, approachable by them, and responsive to their needs. God's transcendence requires formulation in abstract, philosophical language that poses the danger of depriving Him of personality and relevance. God's immanence must unavoidably be expressed in concrete, imaginative terms that entail the risk of compromising His invariability. The biblical writers frequently took that risk for the sake of emphasizing God's vital presence and personality; otherwise,

⁴⁶ Boyd, 55.

⁴⁷ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *COMMENTARY ON THE OLD TESTAMENT*, 10 Volumes (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1996 [Reprinted from the English edition originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1866-91] Electronic text hypertexted and prepared by OakTree Software Specialists.

the God ideas would have lost all meaning for them. Statements like that in Numbers 23:19, 'God is not man to be capricious, / Or mortal to change His mind,' and 1 Samuel 15:29, 'He is not human that He should change His mind,' serve as a corrective to the misunderstanding that may arise from a passage such as this one. In both instances, the Hebrew uses the same verb, here rendered 'regretted.'

As we noted in the preceding quote from Sarna, the Scripture indicates that God will not "regret", "repent" or "relent" all possible translation of the verb נָחַם (Hitpael Imperfect; Num 23:19) and נָחַם (Niphil Imperfect; 1 Sam 15:29)⁴⁸: "And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent." How does the blend of the all knowing God condescending to man's world occur? Ezekiel 18 may provide some clue.

Yahweh reveals in Ezekiel that He works within the perimeters of man's decisions, whether they be good or evil and these choices effect how God chooses to work with man. None of this indicates that God is somehow lacking in knowledge:

¶ But if a man is just And does what is lawful and right;

Ezek. 18:6 If he has not eaten on the mountains, Nor lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, Nor defiled his neighbor's wife, Nor approached a woman during her impurity;

Ezek. 18:7 If he has not oppressed anyone, But has restored to the debtor his pledge; Has robbed no one by violence, But has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing;

Ezek. 18:8 If he has not exacted usury Nor taken any increase, But has withdrawn his hand from iniquity And executed true judgment between man and man;

Ezek. 18:9 If he has walked in My statutes And kept My judgments faithfully — He is just; He shall surely live!" Says the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 18:10 " ¶ If he begets a son who is a robber Or a shedder of blood, Who does any of these things

Ezek. 18:11 And does none of those duties, But has eaten on the mountains Or defiled his neighbor's wife;

Ezek. 18:12 If he has oppressed the poor and needy, Robbed by violence, Not restored the pledge, Lifted his eyes to the idols, Or committed abomination;

Ezek. 18:13 If he has exacted usury Or taken increase — Shall he then live? He shall not live! If he has done any of these abominations, He shall surely die; His blood shall be upon him.

Ezek. 18:14 " ¶ If, however, he begets a son Who sees all the sins which his father has done, And considers but does not do likewise;

Ezek. 18:15 Who has not eaten on the mountains, Nor lifted his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, Nor defiled his neighbor's wife;

Ezek. 18:16 Has not oppressed anyone, Nor withheld a pledge, Nor robbed by violence, But has given his bread to the hungry And covered the naked with clothing;

Ezek. 18:17 Who has withdrawn his hand from the poor And not received usury or increase, But has executed My judgments And walked in My statutes — He shall not die for the iniquity of his father; He shall surely live!

Ezek. 18:18 "As for his father, Because he cruelly oppressed, Robbed his brother by violence, And did what is not good among his people, Behold, he shall die for his iniquity.

48 See BDB, be sorry, console oneself, suffer grief, be sorry, repent.

Ezek. 18:19 “ ¶ Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?’ Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live.

Ezek. 18:20 “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

Ezek. 18:21 “ ¶ But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Ezek. 18:22 “None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live.

Ezek. 18:23 “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live?”

Ezek. 18:24 “ ¶ But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

Ezek. 18:25 “ ¶ Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair?”

Ezek. 18:26 “When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies.

Ezek. 18:27 “Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive.

Ezek. 18:28 “Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Ezek. 18:29 “Yet the house of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?”

Ezek. 18:30 “ ¶ Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the Lord GOD. “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin.

Ezek. 18:31 “Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?”

Ezek. 18:32 “For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord GOD. “Therefore turn and live!”

How does the God of eternity work in time? We experience his actions in time, a time in which God changes because those on whom He acts change.

Note Jeremiah 18:

¶ Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying:

Jer. 18:6 “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the LORD. “Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!”

Jer. 18:7 “The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it,

Jer. 18:8 “if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

Jer. 18:9 “And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it,

Jer. 18:10 “if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.

Jer. 18:11 “ ¶ Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.”’ ”

Jer. 18:12 And they said, “That is hopeless! So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his evil heart.”

Jer. 18:13 ¶ Therefore thus says the LORD: “Ask now among the Gentiles, Who has heard such things? The virgin of Israel has done a very horrible thing.

Jer. 18:14 Will a man leave the snow water of Lebanon, Which comes from the rock of the field? Will the cold flowing waters be forsaken for strange waters?

Jer. 18:15 “Because My people have forgotten Me, They have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways, From the ancient paths, To walk in pathways and not on a highway,

Jer. 18:16 To make their land desolate and a perpetual hissing; Everyone who passes by it will be astonished And shake his head.

Jer. 18:17 I will scatter them as with an east wind before the enemy; I will show them the back and not the face In the day of their calamity.”

4. The Partly Omnisapient God: God Makes Bad Decisions at Times

Not surprisingly, under the theology of open theism, God not only has limited knowledge but He also makes some bad or unwise decisions. We understand from the Proverbs that the purpose of wisdom is to avoid life’s mistakes (Prov.) and that in traditional Christian theology, God’s judgments are perfect (Ps.). This is not true in open theism, though Boyd has decried this label:

Now some may object that if God regretted a decision he made, he must not be perfectly wise. Wouldn’t God be admitting to making a mistake? Two considerations lead me to answer this question in negative.

First, it is better to allow Scripture to inform us regarding the nature of divine wisdom than to reinterpret an entire motif in order to square it with our preconceptions of divine wisdom. If God says he regretted a decision, and if Scripture elsewhere tells us that God is perfectly wise, then we should simply conclude that one can be perfectly wise and still regret a decision. Even if this is a mystery to us, it is better to allow the mystery to stand than to assume that we know what God’s wisdom is like and conclude on this basis that God can’t mean what he clearly says.⁴⁹

Since we are admonished to conclude what God clearly says in Scripture, why not start with the some clear teachings on God’s omniscience:

1 Samuel 15:29: “And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.”

Isaiah 44:6, 7: “I am the First and the Last;/Besides Me there is no God./And who can proclaim as I do?/Then let him declare it and set it in order for Me./Since I appointed the ancient people./And the things that are coming and shall come,’Let them show these to them.”

⁴⁹ Boyd, 56, 57.

Isaiah 46:9, 10: "Remember the former things of old,/For I am God, and there is no other;/I am God, and there is none like Me;/Declaring the end from the beginning,/And from ancient times things that are not yet done,/Saying, My counsel shall stand,/And I will do all My pleasure,"

The future is like the past to One Who is the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Only by denying the difference between the transcendence of God and the immanence of God--God in his infinite nature and his condescension to relate to His creature--are we able to come to Boyd's view.

Moreover, one wonders why here we may simply resort to "it's a mystery" while in the Calvinism/Arminian debate, which gave rise to Boyd's search for another way, this is not the solution?

5. God Changes His Mind

The last argument of Boyd we shall consider is that of God changing His mind. He gives a number of examples from Scripture⁵⁰ seeking to prove that God, in fact, makes one decision on what He shall do in the future, and then truly decides to alter that decision.

We shall look at only one example that Boyd gives special consideration to, that of the lengthening of King Hezekiah's life. The Scripture informs us that God sent the prophet Isaiah to Hezekiah, telling him to put his house in order for he would die (2 Kings 20:1). Based on this prophecy from God, Hezekiah implores God for additional time, which God then granted. Jeremiah later used the example of Hezekiah as a basis to argue that God might withhold judgment from the Israelites if they would also pray (Jer. 26:19)

Boyd comments,

Now, if we accept the classical view of foreknowledge and suppose that the Lord was certain that he would *not* let Hezekiah die, wasn't he being duplicitous when he initially told Hezekiah that he would not recover? And if we suppose that the Lord was certain all along that Hezekiah would, in fact, live fifteen years after this episode, wasn't it misleading for God to tell him that he was *adding* fifteen years to his life? Wouldn't Jeremiah also be mistaken in announcing that God *changed his mind* when he reversed his stated intentions to Hezekiah—if, in fact, God's mind never really changes?⁵¹

Professor Boyd's misunderstanding of this event, as well as the others he lists, relates to his failure to recognize, again, that God's communication to man gives genuine respect to man's decision-making and to the sequential process of human thinking, reasoning and emotions. Within the temporal and spatial revelation of God to Hezekiah He is genuinely interacting with Him. What would we expect God to do, simply set aside discussion altogether because He knows the future? Grudem rightly says,

These instances should all be understood as true expressions of God's *present* attitude or intention *with respect to the situation as it exists at that moment*. If the situation changes, then of course God's attitude or expression of intention will also change. This is just saying that *God responds differently to different situations*.⁵²

Specifically in reference to Hezekiah, Grudem continues:

God had said that he would send judgment, and that was a true declaration, provided that the situation remained the same. But then the situation changed: someone started to pray earnestly. . . . Here prayer itself was part of the new situation and was in fact what changed the situation. God responded to that changed situation by answering the prayer and withholding judgment.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ex 32:14; 33:1-3, 14; Deut 9:13-29; 1 Sam 2:27-31; 1 Kings 21:21-29; 2 Chron 12:5-8; Jer 26:2-3; Ezek 4:9-15; Amos 7:1-6; Jonah 3:10 are some of those he quotes and briefly discusses.

⁵¹ Boyd, 82.

⁵² Grudem's theology, 164. Italics his.

⁵³ Grudem, 165. Italics his.

Additional questions for open theism come to mind. How can God truthfully tell Hezekiah that he will have 15 more years if he doesn't know the future. And why here do we not have God knowing a future that he controls since the Scripture says he gives and takes life, and that is the issue in the passage? How long Hezekiah would live was less Hezekiah's decision than God's. Moreover, when Scripture says that God forgets, does this really mean that God has some form of divine Alzheimer's disease? Why should we take God changing His mind literally here and elsewhere but believe that His forgetfulness is merely metaphorical?

We could look at a number of other arguments that Boyd makes, but it is sufficient if we end with the stark statements of Scripture that God changes His mind. 1 Samuel 15:29, mentioned earlier says that God does not change His mind. Boyd chides classical theologians for their adherence to the literal nature of this statement: "Some defenders of the classical view of foreknowledge seize these two verses and insist that, unlike all the verses that describe God changing his mind, these *do not* speak figuratively or in terms of how things *appear*."⁵⁴

He is correct that we who hold to historic Christian doctrine discount the literal nature of attributes of God that place Him on a finite level with man while understand statements of attributes which describe Him in infinite terms as being literal descriptions. Certainly one's overall view of God guides our interpretation. This is not something new. We understand statements about God physicality—eyes, ears, and hands—as metaphors of God's actions and capabilities and similarly understand mental limitations of God—repenting, forgetting, changing His mind—also as metaphors. It is the difference in seeing God from below or God from above. To do otherwise is inevitably, despite protest from open theism, to create a finite God. Now if this is a more satisfying God to believe in, worship, pray to, or serve they will need to face the consequences of that kind of God.

C. RESPONSE TO OPEN THEISM'S PERSPECTIVES

1. The Unfortunate Attempt to Explain the Inscrutable God in Light of the Tragedies of Life

Humans desire to search into the inscrutable nature of God and the need to understand Him has led many into an unbalanced view of God. How can He truly answer prayer, if my prayer is already known by Him, or more, determined by Him from all eternity. How can my decision to receive Jesus as savior be genuine, if I am individually elected by Him from all eternity?

Scripture teaches us that God is beyond our comprehension and incomparable. When Paul confronted this wonderful knowledge of God, He burst forth in praise, not in doubt or in distortion to satisfy human desires.

2. In What Ways Does Open Theism Differ from Historic Orthodox Theology?

1. *This Should Not be Confused with the Intramural Debate between Calvinists and Arminians*

Calvinists, Arminians, and those who view themselves as between these views sometimes differ regarding the nature of God's foreordination, foreknowledge and human freedom. These are debates, however, that do not require the non-Calvinist to embrace the view of God, though, in fact, it is Arminian perspective that tends to lead some toward open theism. The feeling that God might be unresponsive or uncaring toward His creatures moves some toward the view of God must be less transcendent to be relational.

⁵⁴ Boyd, 79.

2. *Slight Distinctions among Evangelicals Regarding Impassibility or Eternality are Not in View*

Certain historical understanding of God's nature, such as impassibility, or simplicity, or sovereignty may be expressed differently among evangelicals, even as seen in this conference, which might give rise to believe that there is greater disagreement than really is.

3. *Comparison and Contrast*

The contrast between the traditional orthodox view of God and Open Theism is stark.

(1) God is not eternal

If God creates a temporally structured universe, then, whatever his own eternal being may be he must relate himself to his creation in a manner appropriate to its given nature, i.e. temporally (Sanders, GWR, 24).

First of all it is clear that the doctrine of divine timelessness is not taught in the Bible and does not reflect the way the biblical writers understood (Pinnock, OG, 128).

(2) God is not omniscient

"God experiences temporal passage, learns new facts when they occur and changes plans in response to what humans do.(Pinnock, OG, 113).

God is the best learner of all because he is completely open to all the input of an unfolding world. (Pinnock, OG 124).

Our omniscient Creator knows us perfectly, far better than we even know ourselves. Hence, we can assume that he is able to predict our behavior far more extensively and accurately than we could predict it ourselves. This does not mean that everything we will ever do is predictable, for our present character doesn't determine all of our future. But it does mean that our behavior is predictable to the extent that our character is solidified and future circumstances that will affect us are in place (Boyd, GP, 35).

(3) God is not impassible

God does not just imagine what it would be like to suffer, he actually suffers because of his decision to love.(Pinnock, OG 118)

God forbears with the sin of humanity, but it takes its toll on the divine life. The cost to God is great in terms of personal suffering (Sanders, GWR, 49).

As Creator, God is impassible in the sense that God is not forced to be open or vulnerable. However, if God freely decides to be passible and vulnerable in relation to us, who is to say that God cannot sovereignly do this (Sanders, GWR, 178)?

(4) God is not immutable

Fourth, while classical theologians have always considered the notion that God changes his mind as denoting a weakness on Gods part, this passage and several others (Jonah 4:2; Joel 2:12-13) consider Gods willingness to change to be one of God's attributes of greatness. When a person is in a genuine relationship with another, willingness to adjust to them is always considered a virtue. Why should this apply to people but not to God (Boyd, GP, 78)?

The difference between them [classical and open theism] is not that one views God as changeless while the other doesn't. The difference is that everything about God must be changeless for the traditional view, whereas the open view sees God as both changeless and changeable . . . We can attribute both change and changelessness to God if we apply them to different aspects of his being. They [Open Theist] apply the "changeless" statements to God's existence and character, to his love and reliability. They apply the "changing" statements to God's actions and experience (Pinnock, OG, 48).

When God began to create the universe he changed, beginning to do something that previously he had not done.. (Haskers, OG, 133).

(5) Simplicity Denied

Once again, this [divine timelessness] might be something we would have to accept, if there were compelling reasons forcing us to affirm divine timelessness. But do such reasons exist? I think not; my own conclusion on the matter is that divine timelessness is strongly dependent for its justification on neo-Platonic metaphysics, and in particular on the doctrine of divine simplicity (whose intelligibility has also been strongly challenged). Once this metaphysical taproot has been severed, the prospects for divine timelessness are not bright—nor, I think, should they be (Hasker, OG, 129).

(6) Sovereignty

Indeed, God is so confident in his sovereignty, we hold, he does not need to micromanage everything. He could if he wanted to, but this would demean his sovereignty. So he chooses to leave some of the future open to possibilities, allowing them to be resolved by the decisions of free agents. It takes a greater God to steer a world populated with free agents than it does to steer a world of preprogrammed automatons (Boyd, GP, 31).

Though this is simplistic, it might help if we think of God's power and our say-so in terms of percentages. Prior to creation, God possessed 100 percent of all power. He possessed all the say-so there was. When the Trinity decided to express their love by bringing forth a creation, they invested each creature (angelic and human) with a certain percentage of their say-so. The say-so of the triune God was at this point no longer the only one that determined how things would go (Boyd, GOP, 97).[emphasis added]

The following chart illustrates the differences

Classical Theism	Open Theism
God knows all thing past, present, future	God knows past and present, but learns future
God is impassible – nothing can hurt him or act upon Him. He acts out of his grace and mercy.	God is passible – God can be hurt and acted upon, We can make God feel pain.
God is eternal (non-temporal)	God is temporal
God is simple- not composed of parts, absolutely one and indivisible in his essence.	God is composite- Made of parts
God is immutable- God does not change as he is perfect and any change would be for the worst.	God is mutable – Change does not necessitate imperfection.
God is Sovereign – He reigns over all things, there is not an atom in the universe that He does not control either efficiently or permissively. God ALLOWS us to participate in His plan of salvation, but He does not need us.	God is Sovereign BUT He NEEDS our help or else He will be unable to carry out His plan of salvation.
Omnipotence – God can do all things that are not contradictory. He gives but does not give away power. He is infinite in power.	Omnipotence – God can do all things that are not contradictory. He gives AWAY power. He is not infinite in power.
Divine Infallibility – God cannot err in any	Divine fallibility – God can err, and the scripture

respect.	actually states that He has erred.
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D. AREAS OF CONCERN IN OPEN THEISM

Who is God? This may seem an over obvious question to ask of a Christian, but the answer is of the utmost importance. The true God is the One who has clearly revealed Himself in Scripture.⁵⁵ As we have already said, to deny this is to have a serious effect on many areas of doctrine and practice.

1. The Effect on our Worship of God

One might believe that to be a Christian is to naturally worship the true God, or that we are all speaking the same thing when we speak of God. This is not the case. Remember the Israelites were the people of God who were delivered by the true God and received His written revelation. At times, however, they distorted this revelation of God to the point that He more resembled the pagan gods around them. Christians today may do the same thing so that we might worship a god we have created rather than the One who has revealed Himself. To speak, then, of God in ignoble or distorted terms is idolatry.⁵⁶

2. The Effect on our View of Scripture

The Scripture cannot rise above its Creator. This is especially true regarding prophecy. A "limited" omniscience would produce short-sightedness prophets with little more prescience than their pagan counterparts.⁵⁷ Though God may be an excellent "guesser," innumerable possibilities exist (within the open theism) so that some prophecy, which does not have conditions, might still not come true. Even if one should argue that God determines some things, while leaving most matters undetermined, this moves the argument forward no better, for every determined act of God is still in some connection with free acts of humans, rendering the knowledge fallible.⁵⁸

3. The Effect on our Assurance of Salvation

Even our salvation is in question in Open Theist theology, since there may be some uncertainty, which may affect us, of which God is not aware or has not considered, or even the nature of eternity may not be as God has envisioned, Himself having temporal dimension. May there not be unseen hurdles which God has not predicted or anticipated? Lacking infinite wisdom He may not be as wise in this issue as we or He has imagined.⁵⁹

4. The Effect on Hermeneutics

The nature of hermeneutics is affected by this debate with open theism. The unwillingness to recognize the metaphorical expressions in reference to God that speak of His changing His mind, repenting, or regretting, leaves biblical interpretation in a hermeneutical crevice. If these metaphors are not legitimate one cannot successfully consider as metaphors other statements of God's walking in the garden of Eden, forgetting our sins, or failure to have present and past knowledge of events and persons. The difference between analogical and literal language is abandoned to the harm of interpreting the Bible regarding God in all of His attributes.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ We are not discounting the fact that God has also revealed Himself in nature (Ps 19; Rom 1) but the special revelation of God presenting a more complete picture of who God."

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⁵⁷ See Beckwith, LO, 357-362.

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5. The Effect on our Practical Life

Last of all, the very matter which has given some impetus to open theism, the practical concerns of daily life, fall short of the historic and classical view of God. As A.W. Tozer has aptly said,

A right conception of God is basic not only to systematic theology but to practical Christian living as well. It is to worship what the foundation is to the temple; where it is inadequate or out of plumb the whole structure must sooner or later collapse. I believe there is scarcely an error in doctrine or a failure in applying Christian ethics that cannot be traced finally to imperfect and ignoble thoughts about God.⁶¹

Geerhardus Vos speaks to this concern:

The divine omniscience is most important for the religious life. The very essence of religion as communion with God depends on His all-comprehensive cognizance of the life of man at every moment. Hence, it is characteristic of the irreligious to deny the omniscience of God (Psalm 10:11, 12; 94:7-9; Isaiah 29:15; Jeremiah 23:23; Ezekiel 8:12; 9:9). Especially along three lines this fundamental religious importance reveals itself:

- a. it lends support and comfort when the pious suffer from the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of men;
- b. it acts as a deterrent to those tempted by sin, especially secret sin, and becomes a judging principle to all hypocrisy and false security;
- c. it furnishes the source from which man's desire for self-knowledge can obtain satisfaction (Psalm 19:12; 51:6; 139:23, 24).⁶²

E. MAY OPEN THEISM BE WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY?

Some Open Theists seems especially sensitive to the charge of heresy. Greg Boyd, for example, denies it repeatedly in his book (Boyd, GP, 8, 9, 12).⁶³ To use the less emotive word, let us ask whether Open Theism is "unorthodox"? In response, several points are significant.

1. Open Theistic Grounds for Orthodoxy Examined

For starters, one must reject the claim that Christians should not divide over issues like this, since they are only a "peripheral" matter (Boyd, GP, 8, 9, 19, 20). The nature of God is no peripheral matter. It is fundamental to virtually every other essential Christian teaching. Furthermore, it is possible to have unorthodox views of God, as even Boyd acknowledges from his former beliefs as a Oneness Pentecostal (who deny the Trinity).⁶⁴

Furthermore, Boyd's stated criterion for orthodoxy is faulty. He contents that "No ecumenical creed of the orthodox church has ever included an articles of faith on divine foreknowledge" (Boyd, GP, 116). First of all, this misses the point, since there are other things about Boyd's view other than divine foreknowledge that can be challenged, namely his denial of God's eternity, immutability, and simplicity which the creeds do address.

Second, the creeds do not need to contain an "article" on a matter for it to be included and clear as to their view. Some doctrines are contained within articles on other things, but it is clear

⁶¹ Tozer, *Knowledge of the Holy*, 10).

⁶² Geerhardus Vos, "Omniscience" in Orr, *ISBE*, Vol. IV, 2192.

⁶³ See also Boyd, GP, 19, 20, 84, 115, 116, 172 for more references to the question of the orthodoxy of Open Theism.

⁶⁴ See Boyd's excellent refutation of this heretical view in his book, *Oneness Pentecostals and the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1992).

that the Creed embraces the teaching nonetheless. The simplicity (indivisibility) of God is a case in point. It is often included within statements on the one nature of God on the Trinity. This does not make it any less true or orthodox.

Third, this Open Theist's test for orthodoxy is too narrow, since the Creed did not contain an article on the Inspiration and infallibility of Scripture and, but it is clear that this teaching was entailed in all their pronouncements.⁶⁵

Likewise, the implication that unity at any price should be achieved falls short of the mark (Boyd, GP, 8, 9, 19). The same logic could be used with a Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, or with an evangelical who denies the infallibility (and inerrancy) of the Bible.

2. The Importance of Separating the Questions

Before proceeding to answer the million dollar question of whether Open Theism is unorthodox, it is necessary to make two distinctions. First, a person can be orthodox on other essential Christian doctrine and still be unorthodox on one. Many evangelicals, for example, accept other fundamentals of the Christian Faith and deny the inspiration (and inerrancy) of the Bible. Hence, they are orthodox in general but unorthodox in this particular doctrine.

Also, it should be noted that someone can be unorthodox on some particular doctrine (such as inerrancy) and still be saved. Salvation is dependent on believing certain soteriological doctrines, such as the death and resurrection of Christ for our sins (1 Cor 15:1-4) but not on explicitly believing all essential evangelical doctrines (e. g., the inspiration of Scripture and the Bodily Return of Christ). So while a given Open Theists may be orthodox on crucial soteriological doctrines, they may be unorthodox on others.

Finally, there is another crucial point that should be made. Since every evangelical doctrine is connected, directly or indirectly, to one's view of God, and since these traditional doctrines are based on the classical view of God, then to the degree that Open Theism's view of God is unorthodox every other doctrine based on it is infected. This is clearly manifested in the truncated version of omnipresence held by Open evangelicals. As we saw (in Chap. 2), this effects both soteriology and eschatology. For a God limited in foreknowledge is limited in what He can do in saving persons now and in securing the future for them.

3. Defining Orthodoxy on the Nature of God

a. *Implicit Unorthodoxy*

Typically, an unorthodox teaching is a denial of a fundamental doctrine of orthodox Christianity as judged by the orthodox Fathers, creeds, and confessions of the early Church. Taking this as a standard to evaluate Open Theism, two points must be made before we can arrive at a conclusion.

First, there is a difference between explicit unorthodoxy and implicit unorthodoxy. The former is a formal denial of some fundamental doctrine of the Christian Faith, and the later is a denial by implication. That is, it is a position that logically entails the denial of a fundamental teaching of the Faith.

With this definition in mind, it appears that Open Theism, as held by most evangelicals, is implicitly unorthodox on its doctrine of the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture. For if they are right, then the Bible contains unconditional predictions about the future that could be wrong. For example, the Bible predicted that the Devil is free but that his ultimate fate in Hell is predetermined (Rev. 20:10). But according to Open Theism, this prediction cannot be infallible. Hence, at least this part of the Bible is not infallible. The same logic would apply to all

⁶⁵ See Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1983 reprint), Vol. II (Hereafter CC) and Norman L. Geisler, *Decide for Yourself: How History Views the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1982), Chaps. 2-3.

unconditional predictive prophecy of which there were many about Christ (cf. Dan. 9:24f; Psa. 16:10 cf. Acts 2:30-32; Micah 5:2).⁶⁶ Even Boyd admits that God made an infallible prediction of the Cross (Boyd, GP, 46), but how is this possible on Open Theistic grounds when Jesus said He freely chose to go to the Cross (Jn. 10:18).

Open Theist's attempts to avoid this conclusion are inadequate. Clearly not all biblical predictions are conditional, and God's knowledge of the character of individuals is no guarantee they will not change (Boyd, 160, 171). And if God can know for sure in advance they will change, then He has infallible foreknowledge of free will, which is exactly what Open Theists deny. So the minimum that can be said of Open Theism is that it logically undermines a crucial tenet of orthodoxy (and possible others).

Some object to taking implicit unorthodoxy as test for orthodoxy, since there are other things (like a bad theological method) that seem to do the same. Yet many evangelicals are unwilling to label these methods as unorthodox, at least not in the sense they would other unorthodox beliefs.

However, this stance seems to be theologically myopic, since a bad theological method can be equally devastating to the Christian Faith as outright denials of major doctrines. For example, certainly the Evangelical Theological Society would not tolerate in its membership someone who claimed to believe in inerrancy, but utilized a method of interpretation that totally allegorized all literal, historical truth away, including the death and resurrection of Christ. Indeed, 75% of the ETS membership voted from its ranks a New Testament scholar who utilized a Midrash method of interpretation of Matthew that denied the historicity of only parts of that Gospel, not including the death and resurrection of Christ.⁶⁷

Along with the vast majority of ETS members, we conclude that orthodoxy can be both implicit as well as explicit, methodological as well as confessional. Indeed, the former can be as harmful to orthodoxy as the latter.

b. Explicit Unorthodoxy

This leaves one more question to answer: Does Open Theism engage in more than implicit or methodological unorthodoxy. That is, does it explicitly deny a fundamental tenet of the Christian Faith? The answer to this seems to depend on the answer to two other questions: 1) Is the nature of God a fundamental tenet of the Christian Faith? and 2) Are the early Creeds, Councils, and Confessions of Christianity a test for orthodoxy?

II. THE VERDICT OF HISTORY: HOW THE FATHERS AND THE THEOLOGIANS OF THE CHURCH HAVE VIEWED GOD'S OMNISCIENCE

Inasmuch as the early pronouncements of the Christian Church were an expression of the beliefs of the great Fathers of the Church, their views on these matters are also a test of orthodoxy. Moreover, how have the theologians of the Church understood the teachings of Scripture and their articulation by the Church in its documents.

Orthodoxy and heterodoxy have existed side by side through the history of the church these two millennia. In fact, as Harold O.J. Brown aptly demonstrated in his book on heresy, it is heresy that provided the catalyst to refine orthodoxy. It is not that orthodoxy did not precede heresy, only

⁶⁶ For an elaboration on these prophecies, see Barton Payne's *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*.

⁶⁷ In defending his view in *The Journal of The Evangelical Theological Society* (March 1983, p. 114), Gundry agreed that no one who confesses belief in inerrancy should be eliminated from ETS because of an unorthodox method, even if it were the method of total allegorization of Scripture (such as held by the founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy)!

that much is assumed by the orthodox person until an orthodox position is challenged. This, then, requires a further refinement, so as to distinguish that which is true from that which is false. There has been a "faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3) but the expression of that faith has found renewal as the doctrine has come under fire of those who would challenge its legitimacy of the true faith of the church. The focus of heresy has varied from era to era, sometimes centering on the nature of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, or the nature of man or salvation. What is heresy, versus intramural debates on lesser theological issues, is what strikes at the heart of God, Christ and salvation.

Certain points of doctrine have remained constant in the orthodox church, though repeatedly attacked by aberrant teachers. One such doctrine is the nature of God in His attributes. This historic Christian belief finds uniformity among the early fathers of the church, the theologians of the medieval and reformation period, and into the modern era, with few exceptions. In reflection on this "new theism," however, one recognizes that this perspective on God is also not new at all. In fact, the struggles of the current era were confronted long ago at the beginning period of the church and again after the Reformation, in the rationalistic period that gave us the Enlightenment by Socinians and Unitarians.

Recently certain theologians, though embracing the term evangelical, have begun to speak of God in terms that are not congruent to orthodoxy. This new heterodoxy goes under the name free-will theism, open theism, openness theology, the open view of God, and relational theism. In a recently released book, Norm Geisler and I have named it neotheism or new theism. Some within evangelicalism believe that this "new" view provides a solution to the Calvinist-Arminian debate, by making God more relational and approachable, shall I say "more human." Many of us lamented the inconsistency of one who came from our own ranks, Clark Pinnock, who seemed to have imbibed too deeply in the panentheistic cup of Process Theism, now to discover that Dr. Pinnock has a number of "drinking partners" by the names of Boyd, Sanders, and Hasker. A host of books produced in the last couple of years reveals a theological meltdown in some circles in capitulating to this more "compassionate godism." The significance of the debate becomes evident when the General Baptist Conference has become divided on this issue and it became necessary for the Evangelical Theological Society in its 2001 annual meeting to decide that "Open Theism" is not compatible with evangelical theology.

Open theists contend that their view is within the boundary of orthodox theology and that church fathers and theologians of the past shared viewpoints sympathetic with their perspectives of God. It is my contention that open theism is unorthodox in its understanding of God's attributes, that its hermeneutic is inconsistent in interpreting passages relating to God's being, that it obfuscates the terms used for God in such a manner that the historic words used for God's attributes have lost their original meaning, and that its practical impact is devastating to an exalted view of God and the Christian worship of and reliance on the Supreme Being.

This historical presentation will be given in two parts. In part one, I will set forth the basic themes found in the current neotheism and then look at the writings of the early fathers of the church up through the fourth century A.D, until the time St. Augustin, to determine to what extent these early scholars of the church expressed views in opposition to those found in "open theism." In part two (to appear in a subsequent issue of this journal), we will look at the thinking of reformation and post-reformation theologians through the 19th century, both of Calvinist and Arminian persuasion, to discover if they held in common the view of God's nature found in the earliest centuries of the church.

Fundamental to the beliefs of Open Theists is that God does not have an infallible and exhaustive knowledge of the future, particularly the free acts of humans. This is because of the view that for God to know man's free acts is for man not to be truly free, or automatons. This position stands in contrast to the testimony of the biblical text, in which God knows all things exhaustively (past, present, and future, actual and contingent). This biblical view was unanimously held by the fathers of the first centuries of the church.

The early fathers, apologists, and theologians of the church agree without dissension that God knows all things with exception, though they use the term “foreknowledge” rather than omniscience.

A. THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH ON OMNISCIENCE

Justin Martyr (c. 100-165?) affirmed that God knows from all eternity those that He has chosen unto salvation. He says that Christ would remain in heaven until “the number of those who are foreknown by Him as good and virtuous is complete, on whose account He has still delayed the consummation . . . and that God knows beforehand all persons who will be saved, even though not yet born.(Justin, FA, 28; ANF, 1.172) Moreover, all future acts of men are foreknown by God in the thinking of Justin.

An important disciple of Justin Martyr, Tatian (ca. 110-172) says that the foreknowledge of God, through prophecy, was one of the primary reasons that he turned to Christianity. He says, “I was led to put faith in these by . . . the **foreknowledge** displayed of future events. . . .”

The first theologian of the church was **Irenaeus** (ca. 120-202) of Lyons, France. Irenaeus argued that God had complete knowledge of the false doctrines with which he contended in his writings, and of those persons who will not believe: “If, therefore, in the present time also, God, knowing the number of those who will not believe, since He foreknows all things, has given them over to unbelief, and turned away His face from men of this stamp, leaving them in the darkness which they have themselves chosen for themselves. . . .” In agreement with Tatian, Irenaeus also connects the establishment of the Christian faith with God’s foreknowledge through prophecy: “in order that our faith might be firmly established; and contained a prophecy of things to come, in order that man might learn that God has **foreknowledge** of all things.”

The great western father, **Tertullian** (160-220), responding to Marcion’s dispute of God’s foreknowledge, avers “But what shall I say of His prescience, which has for its witnesses as many prophets as it inspired? After all, what title to prescience do we look for in the Author of the universe, since it was by this very attribute that He foreknew all things when He appointed them their places, and appointed them their places when He foreknew them?” Tertullian continues, “There is sin itself. If He had not foreknown this, He would not have proclaimed a caution against it under the penalty of death.” Tertullian, however, believed that this foreknowledge by God did not interfere with man’s choice of sin, even perishing through that choice. Specifically in contradiction to open theistic perspective of Judas, Tertullian believed that the betrayal of Jesus was according to the predictions of Scripture and was known beforehand by Jesus. In harmony with those fathers before him, Foreknowledge of events and words regarding Christ, **Origen** (ca. 185-254), in *Contra Celsum*, argues that God observed in His foreknowledge those who would walk worthy of Him and would have faithful service even until death.

The father **Hippolytus** (ca. 160-236) says that God is “fully acquainted with whatever is about to take place, for foreknowledge also is present to Him”, pre-echoing the arguments of St. Thomas Aquinas of the “eternal now.” There is also **Gregory Thaumaturgus** (210-260) who indicated that whatever occurs in the future, is though it had already occurred to God, because it is made certain by God.

The Neotheists search in vain to find representatives of their view among any of the orthodox Fathers of the Church. As for Neotheist’s arguments that the orthodox view of God is based in Greek thought, not in the Bible, two things are worthy of mention. First, this may be refuted by a careful examination of the biblical texts. For example, from Isaiah who proclaimed that God knows “the end from the beginning” (Isa 46:10) and the God of the Psalmist whose “understanding is infinite” (Psa 147:5). Second, the orthodox Christian view of God is not based on Greek philosophy is shown to be without foundation. Open Theists are hard-pressed to find the omniscience in the finite god of Plato, Aristotle, or any other ancient Greek philosopher as opposed to the God of Christian Theism as seen in the church fathers.

B. REFORMATION AND POST-REFORMATION VIEW OF OMNISCIENCE

The Reformers, generally, follow in the thinking of Augustine in their formulation of God's omniscience (see above). For them the knowledge of God is of all things past, present, and future.

1. Martin Luther's View on Omniscience

Martin Luther (1483-1546) interprets the all-knowing of God as coming from the determination of His will, saying that God "foreknows nothing contingently, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His own immutable, eternal and infallible will" (Luther, BW, 80). Luther's use of "contingent" does not mean that God knowledge is always *scientia neccesitia* and not *scientia libera*. Luther, rather, uses "contingently" to speak of human actions which are independent of God's determinations, like the Greek concept of fate (see Luther, BW, 80-81, and Hodge, "Foreknow; Foreknowledge, ISBE, 1128-1129). His meaning is clear from His discussion of the Latin, "Lest we be deceived over our terms, let me explain that being done contingently does not, in Latin, signify that the things done is itself contingent, but that it is done by a contingent and mutable will—such as is not to be found in God!" (Luther, BW, 81). Luther defines "contingent" to be equivalent to chance, without premediation: "that is, when our will or hand fastens on something presented to us as if by chance, without our having previously thought or planned anything about it" (Luther, BW, 81). Thus, he believed that God knows all reality regarding Himself and all things outside of Himself, because God, in fact, wills everything, rather than because the created order possesses complete independence and God only knows by observance, not by involvement. Moreover, God in deciding the future that He knows does not do so by "necessity," in the sense of compulsion, that is, against His will, which is free (Luther, BW, 81). In brief, God has complete and infallible foreknowledge of all future events, including those flowing from free choice.

2. John Calvin's View on Omniscience

John Calvin (1509-1564), speaks of the patriarch Joseph's comments to Pharaoh that his knowledge of the future was dependent on the revelation of what God Himself will do (Gen 41:1-57), not that he had some special knowledge of the future. Calvin says, "We hence infer, that God does not indolently contemplate the fortuitous issue of things, as most philosophers vainly talk; but that he determines, at his own will, what shall happen." He continues, "Wherefore, in predicting events, he does not give a response from the tables of fate, as the poets feign concerning their Apollo, whom they regard as a prophet of events which are not in his own power, but declares that whatever shall happen will be his own work" (Calvin, CG, 658) (Isa 45:7). Moreover, Calvin states, "God foreknew what the end was to be before he made him, and foreknew so ordained by His decree. Should anyone inveigh against the prescience of God, he does it rashly and unadvisedly." (Calvin, ICR, 3.23.7) Lastly, for Calvin foreknowledge does not mean conditioning by the creature, as Calvin states, "When we attribute prescience to God, we mean all things always were, and every continue under his eye; that to his knowledge there is no past or future, but all things are present, and indeed so present, that is not merely the idea of them that is merely before him (as those objects are which we retain in our memory), but that he truly sees and contemplates them as actually under his immediate inspection. This prescience extends to the whole circuit of the world, and to all creatures" (Calvin, ICR, 3.21.5).

3. James Arminius' View on Omniscience

James Arminius (1560-1609) shares a perspective of God's future knowledge which is consistent, in most part, with that of Calvin and Luther, maintaining the view of God's omniscience held by the orthodox church through the centuries. Arminius, in contrast to the Socinians, believed that God understood all things, whether this be God's knowledge of Himself,

His knowledge of His creatures' actions in the past, present, or future, necessary and contingent, good and bad. Arminius expresses God's omniscience in eloquent and precise terms: "He knows things substantial and accidental of every kind; the actions and passions, the modes and circumstances of all things; external words and deeds, internal thought, deliberations, counsels, and determinations, and the entities of reason, whether complex or simple. All these things, being jointly attributed to the understanding of God, seem to conduce to the conclusion, that God may deservedly be said to know things infinite." (Arminius, WJA, 2.4.31). This knowledge is not learned but infinitely intuitive, in eternity not time, immeasurable and immutable,— by a single and undivided act (Arminius, WJA, 2.4.32).

4. Francis Turretin's View on Omniscience

Francis Turretin (1623-1687) sets forth four aspects to God's knowledge, namely, that it is perfect, undivided, distinctly and immutably (Turretin, IET, 207). His knowledge is perfect in that He knows all things by Himself, by His essence and His knowledge is in eternity, not in time (Turretin, IET, 207). His knowledge is undivided since He knows all things intuitively and noetically, rather than by learning or reasoning (discursively and dianoetically). His knowledge is distinct in that He knows at one glance so that nothing, even the smallest thing, escapes His knowledge. Lastly, His knowledge is immutable because there is no change. He knows everything in all facets by immutable cognition (Turretin, IET, 207).

In response to Jerome's unfortunate diminution of God's foreknowledge by claiming that it is "unworthy of the divine majesty to let it down to this, that it should know how many gnats are born or die every moment, number of cinches and fleas on earth" (*Commentariorum in Abucuc* 1.1 IPL 25.1286). Turretin says that such a view is very injurious towards God (Turretin, IET, 207). He counters by mentioning that God knows the hairs on our heads and sparrows that fall (Matt 10:29-30), that all things are naked and open to Him and manifest in His sight (Heb 4:13) and that God knows the number of stars and call them by name (Psa 147:4). He concludes, "Yea, since all things (even the greatest) are the smallest before him in comparison with his infinity (as Is. 40:15 magnificently says) and, as it were, nothing, the knowledge of all things should be denied of him if the smallest are removed from his notice" (Turretin, IET, 208).

Turretin provides a lengthy discussion of contingent knowledge (Turretin, IET, 208-212) concluding that "when God conceives future contingent things as certainly future, he does not conceive of them otherwise than they are; but he knows them relatively to the decree as necessarily about to take place and determinate which, relative to their cause, he knows as indeterminate and contingently future" (Turretin, IET, 212). Turretin explains the contingency by primary and secondary causes: "God foreknows them both in himself and in his decree (as the first cause), and so they are necessary on account of the immutability of the decree and the infallibility of foreknowledge; and God foreknows them in the second causes on which they proximately and immediately depend, which are per se indefinite, and so they are contingent things" (Turretin, IET, 212).

5. Jonathan Edwards View on Omniscience

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) shares the historic and orthodox view of God's exhaustive knowledge, particularly that of foreknowledge, seeing it as one of the "evidences of...[God's] peculiar glory, greatly distinguishing him from all other beings" (Edwards, FW, 11.1.4.109). In reference to the nature of God's foreknowledge, Edwards contends that for God not to know beforehand is to deny God the ability to foretell the future. God, instead, is limited to uncertain guesses. For if God does not foreknow "the future volition's of moral agents, then neither can he certainly foreknow those events which are consequent and dependent on these volition's" (Edwards, FW, 2.11.96-97). Additionally, in reacting to the idea that God does not know the actions of His free creatures, Edwards says that God "must have little else to do but to mend broken links as well as he can, and be rectifying his disjointed frame and disordered movement

sin the best manner the case will allow" (Edwards, FW, 11.4.111). He then muses as to the tremendous and miserable disadvantages of God governing the world without being able to discover major things that may befall his world, for which knowing He could plan (Edwards, FW, 114.111).

C. VALUE OF HISTORY

It is evident that the early Creeds and Confessions of the Faith embraced Classical Theism on the crucial attributes denied by neotheism such as simplicity, eternity, immutability, and infallible foreknowledge of all events, including future freely chosen ones. What is more, the teachings of the Fathers behind these creeds and confessions is unequivocally on the side of classical theism and opposed to neotheism.

Further, it is clear that the doctrine of God is a crucial doctrine of the Christian Faith by any adequate standard for a fundamental doctrine. For it is essential to almost every other, if not every other, doctrine of the Faith.

Therefore, given these facts, Neotheism is explicitly unorthodox on its view of God. To consider it otherwise, is to create a new test for orthodoxy.

One thing is certain, whatever term one chooses to use of neotheism's view of God, the minimum that can be said is that: 1) It is contrary to the great orthodox creeds, confessions, and councils of the Christian Church, as well as the virtually unanimous teachings of the Fathers of the Church up to and through the Reformation into modern times; 2) It is internally inconsistent; 3) It reduces logically to Process Theology, and 4) It undermines the infallibility of the Scriptures. If these are not sufficient to merit the charge of unorthodoxy, then we are left to ask: what deviation on the fundamental doctrine of God would qualify as unorthodox and by what standard?

III. OPEN THEISM AND PREDICTIVE PROPHECY

If God does not know with certainty the future, then obviously this inability has implications for the issue of predictive prophecy. The reason why He is not viewed as knowing unerringly the future relates to the view that God can make mistakes, a view that we have seen above in our discussion, but secondly the Open Theism heresy has failed to consider that not every prophecy is taken to be certain even in Scripture. One must carefully determine whether the author of the biblical text, and ultimately God, intended the prophecy to be certain. After saying a few things about God and error, we will move to this second point.

A. GOD AND ERROR

Some Open Theists such as Rice, with no hesitation, aver God's susceptibility to making mistakes. He says, ". . . the concept of inerrancy is itself unbiblical. Nowhere do the writers of the Bible assert that all their statements are inerrant. Those who adhere to this idea have deduced it from their concept of divine inspiration and imposed it on the Bible."⁶⁸ Other Open Theists are far more guarded than Rice, though the implications of their argument would lead to the same conclusion. For example, Greg Boyd says that God thought people would act a certain way, and they in fact failed to do so, though he hesitates to call this a mistake:

Passages such as these need not imply that God was caught off guard, as though he didn't anticipate the *possibility* of the improbable. Nor do they imply that God was mistaken in thinking people would do one thing when it turns out they did another . . . The omniscient Lord, having a perfectly accurate assessment of all probabilities, *thought* his people would do [one thing] . . . But many of his people, being self-determining free creatures, opted for the more improbable course of action.⁶⁹

Another approach is Jack Sanders, who would reinterpret the sense of "mistake":

⁶⁸ Rice, *The Reign of God*, 33.

⁶⁹ Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 101.

The notion that God could be dismayed or wrong about anything may not sit well with some people, so perhaps some qualifications may be helpful. First, what is meant by the word mistake? . . . even if we affirm that God is sometimes "mistaken" in the sense that God believed something would happen when, in fact, it does not come about, there is a question as to how often this happens. The biblical record gives a few occasions, but we are in no position to judge just how many times this occurs with God. Even if it happens regularly, this does not imply that God is helpless in the face of the future . . .⁷⁰

Sanders continues:

Can God be mistaken about anything? If God can be mistaken about what will happen in the future, then divine predictions may be in doubt . . . Is it possible for God to have mistaken beliefs about the future? The traditional theological answer is that God cannot, but there are several biblical texts that seem to affirm that what God thought would happen did not come about . . .⁷¹

This seems to be double-talk, recognized in the 17th century by Turretin, who fought "Open Theists" in his days, "The question is not whether the sacred writers . . . could err . . . Rather the question is whether in writing they were so acted upon and inspired by the Holy Spirit . . . as to be kept free from all error . . . Our adversaries deny this; we affirm it."⁷²

B. PREDICTIVE PROPHECY

Open Theists, generally, question whether we can have any certitude in biblical prophecy because the future cannot be known. Note the statement of Sanders: "God is yet working to fulfill his promises and bring his project to fruition. The eschaton will surprise us because it is not set in concrete; it is not unfolding according to a prescribed script."⁷³

A second approach is to argue that God only works in very broad strokes. He has a general direction He would like to world to go, but He has no absolute or exhaustive plan for it.

Some claim that certain predictions entail exhaustive divine foreknowledge and prevent us from appealing to the evidence that suggests limited prescience. Biblical prophecy is a complex phenomenon, but does not entail any such thing . . . some prophecies are conditional, leaving the future open, and, presumably, God's knowledge of it.⁷⁴

Sanders comments, "The promises of God should be understood as part of the divine *project* rather than as some eternal blueprint, a project in which God has not scripted the way everything in human history will go. God has a goal, but the routes remain open."⁷⁵

A third way that Open Theists deal with the matter of God not knowing for certain the future, and thus prophetic fulfillment is to speak about the fact of differing kinds of prophecies. There is nothing inherently wrong about this approach except when there is not a careful distinction made regarding these prophecies, so says Sanders, "Predictions are very specific forecasts of what is to occur, whereas prophecies allow room for God to fulfill them in a variety of ways—ways that we cannot anticipate . . . Despite the messianic prophecies, no one anticipated the sort of messiahship that Jesus exhibited."⁷⁶

This view is wrought with difficulty because the accuracy of fulfillment of biblical prophecies that are not tied to conditions contextually, and spoken by a prophet of God, is a standard for the veracity not only of the prophet but of God Himself, as argued by Frame: "Prediction of future events is not the only aspect of prophecy . . . Nevertheless, amid the diverse elements of prophecy,

⁷⁰ Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 132-33.

⁷¹ Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 205.

⁷² Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Volume One, Second Topic, Fourth Question, Section V

⁷³ Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 125.

⁷⁴ Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 50.

⁷⁵ Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 127.

⁷⁶ Sanders, *The God Who Risks*, 126.

one crucial element is prediction of the future. Knowledge of the future is a defining mark of the true God and of his true prophets."⁷⁷

This matter was well spoken to by Carl F. H. Henry, the dean of evangelical theologians, many years ago, in his response to James Barr's attempt to tie prophecy to some mechanistic inspiration:

Barr's reticence concerning predictive prophecy seems to rise especially from two considerations. First of all, he contends, "prediction and fulfillment" carry "serious philosophical consequences"—as indeed they do. Barr declares specifically that "exact knowledge of distant future events" implies divine "determinism" and would involve "a mechanical or dictation view of inspiration" . . . Yet evangelical theology has long and repeatedly emphasized that the inspired prophets do not need to be mechanically computerized in order to relay truly what God was saying through them. And if, to avoid an objectionable determinism, we must insist that God is either ignorant, confused or silent about the future, we are postulating a god very different from the God of the Bible.⁷⁸

C. UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES

There are some important considerations when evaluating whether a prophecy is intended to be certain or not, including the nature of the prophet, the statement, the context, among other matters. Below is a brief breakdown of such considerations.

1. Importance of the Certitude of Prophetic Fulfillment

a. *The Mark of a prophet*

Deut. 18:22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

b. *The Certainty of Fulfillment*

Hab. 2:3 For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

This is illustrated in the account of the death of the king of Israel:

Prophecy	Fulfillment
<u>1Kings 22:17</u> Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'"	<u>1Kings 22:34-36</u> But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, "Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded."
<u>1Kings 22:28</u> Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"	All day long the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: "Every man to his town; everyone to his land!"

⁷⁷ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 487-88. Frame also says, "When [a true prophet's] prophecies predict future events, God's word gives him supernatural knowledge. If the event does not happen, the prophet is proved false. Deuteronomy 18 does not consider the possibility that God himself may have been in error . . . Moses presupposes that God himself is omniscient and cannot err in foretelling the future. The text banishes from the outset any consideration that God might be wrong." Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 487.

⁷⁸ Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, Volume IV, Part Three, 347-48.

2. There are certain reasons for a lack of Fulfillment.

The first is not actually a lack of fulfillment, but a lack of historical certainty of fulfillment. The following descriptions are intended to bring clarity of meaning to the use of these and similar phrases in the chart.

a. *Lack of Historical Record*

This works both ways. For example in 2 Kings 14:25 we have recorded a fulfillment of a prophecy that we have no other record of. The absence of historical records of fulfillment does not disavow the reality or potential of a prophetic fulfillment. In the same way, the absence of the record of the prophecy does not make meaningless the recorded fulfillment. (2Kings 14:25 He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher.)

b. *False Prophets*

Matt. 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

c. *Contingency*

Jer. 18:7-10 If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

Jer. 26:12,13 Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard. Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.

d. *Repentance and prayer of people.*

This is the positive side of contingency. That is, those prophecies that promise good, not bad, are sometimes reversible upon repentance or prayer.

e. *Opinion, not Revelation of an otherwise inspired man of God.*

There are examples in Scripture where a man otherwise used of God for inspired communication is recorded saying something that does not occur. This is generally accompanied by context showing that he is not speaking for God, but of his own mind.

f. *Fulfillment yet in the future.*

This is the most basic reason for unfulfilled prophecy. Two subsets are Developmental Fulfillment and Prophetic Telescoping with Fulfillment yet in the future. Developmental fulfillment addresses the reality that some of God's prophetic movement finds various stages of fulfillment at different times in history.

g. *Prophetic Telescoping*

Prophetic telescoping describes the fact that the prophetic vision often included in close juxtaposition prophecies whose fulfillment is widely separated in time.

The chart below is intended to be a thorough, but not exhaustive list of unfulfilled prophecy. In particular, prophecies that are repeated in the same book are treated in their first occurrence. Space will not permit the listing of these unfulfilled prophecies in the form given below but nonetheless illustrates how they might be viewed with texts given rather than only references as given in the chart.

Prophecy	Reason Unfulfilled
<p>Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”</p>	<p>Developmental Fulfillment</p> <p>a) In the crucifixion - John 12:31,32</p> <p>b) In the church - Romans 16:20</p> <p>c) Ultimately in the Abyss (Revelation 20:3)</p>
<p>Gen. 8:22 “As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”</p>	<p>Both Ongoing and Future Fulfillment until the very end.</p> <p><u>Rev. 20:11</u> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.</p>
<p>Gen. 12:7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.</p>	<p>Both Fulfilled in Joshua’s day...</p> <p>Josh. 21:43 So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there.</p>
<p>Gen. 13:15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.</p>	<p><u>Josh. 21:44</u> The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers:</p> <p>Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them.</p>
<p>Gen. 13:15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.</p>	<p>...And to be fulfilled in the Millennium.</p> <p><u>Acts 1:6.7</u> So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.</p>

Reason for Lack of Fulfillment

False Prophets

1Kings 22:6 (1Kings 22:37); Neh. 6:10 (See Neh. 6:12-14); Jer. 28:1-4 (See Jer. 28:12-17); Jer. 37:19; Mic. 2:6

Contingency

Lev. 26:3-12 (Unfulfilled due to the people not keeping their end of the covenant. (see Lev 26:14-33) Possibly still to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.);

Deut. 7:12-15 (See also Deut. 28:1-14) (Unfulfilled due to the people not keeping their end of the covenant. (see Deut 28:15-68) Possibly still to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.);

Deut. 26:19 (Unfulfilled due to the people not keeping their end of the covenant. (compare Deut 28) Possibly still to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.);

1Kings 2:4 (Partly Unfulfilled due to the Kings not keeping their end. Fulfilled in Christ.)

Repentance and Prayer of People

Ex. 32:9,10 (See Ex. 32:11-14); 2Kings 20:1(See 2 Kings 20:2; 20:5); Jonah 3:4 (See Is. 38:2-5)

Prophetic Telescoping

Gen. 49:10 (The first and second advent of Christ are seen here, the second yet to be fulfilled when “the obedience of the nations is his.”); Is. 9:6, 7 (As in Isaiah 9:6,7 this is a telescoped prophecy bridging both the first and second advents of Christ. The slaying of “the wicked” is taken to be the slaying of the antichrist (2 Thess 2:8)); Is. 11:1-10 (Jesus himself interprets this passage in a telescoped sense in inserting a break between the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of God’s vengeance, Luke 4:18-21); Is. 61:1, 2 (Jesus himself interprets this passage in a telescoped sense inserting a break between the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of God’s vengeance, Luke 4:18-21); Dan. 2:37-44 (The telescoping can be seen to be from one king to another, ending in “a kingdom that will never be destroyed”, the New Jerusalem, Rev. 22:5); Joel 2:28-3: (Acts 2 records partial fulfillment. But the wonders in the heavens and earth points to tribulation, the deliverance to the rapture and the restoration of the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem point to the millennial kingdom.); Mic. 2:12,13 (verse 12 predicts the end of the Babylonian captivity and verse 13 telescopes ahead to the reestablishment of the kingdom of Israel in the millennium.); Mal. 3:1-5 (Verse 1 refers to the first advent of Christ and of John the Baptist his herald. The day of his coming is, however, an end-times prophecy concerning the second advent.); Mark 13:5-13 (Both the events preceding A. D. 70 and the eschatological future.),

Presumptive Speech

1Sam. 23:17 (Jonathan was not inspired to know that he would be next in line to David. In fact, he was dead before David ascended to the throne. [See 1 Samuel 31])

Lack of Historical Record

Ex. 34:23,24 (In particular, for the lack of coveting of the land.); 1Kings 22:25; Jer. 11:23 (Compare 2 Kings 23:5 and Jeremiah 1:1. The cause of the judgment may have been pagan priestly practices.); Jer. 29:21,22; Jer. 39:16-18; Jer. 45:2,5; Ezek. 28:20-23; Amos 7:14-17

Fulfillment Yet in the Future

Ex. 23:25,26 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium is seen embedded in the prophecies concerning the initial Israelite occupation of the Promised Land); Deut. 30:1-6 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); 1Sam. 2:10 (in this case the eschatologically future second advent of Christ); 2Sam. 23:6 (at the final judgment); Ps. 2:4,5 (at Armageddon); Ps. 22:27,28 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ps. 48:8 (the New Jerusalem, see Rev. 21:10,25); Ps. 67:4 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ps. 72:1-8 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ps. 110:5, 6 (Armageddon); Is. 2:2-4 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Is. 4:2-5 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Is. 24:21-23 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium. The reference to “many days” is one of two references to a finite duration to the millennium, the other being in Daniel); Is. 32:1-5 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Jer. 23:5-8 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Jer. 25:15-26 (in this case the eschatological future of the post-millennial wrath of God, see Rev. 20:7-9); Jer. 31:35, 36 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium; cf. Rev. 20:11); Jer. 33:17, 18 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ezek. 37:25-28 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ezek. 38:2—39:22 (see Rev. 20: 7-9); Ezek. 47:6-12 (some see this as millennial prophecy, particularly in light of the reference to “the sanctuary” as the source. Interestingly, there are plans in Israel today to consider constructing a channel from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea. In any case, it is yet future); Ezek. 48:15-35 (in this case

the eschatological future); Dan. 7:8 (eschatological future pertaining to the rise of the antichrist); Dan. 7:9, 10 (eschatological future, cf. Rev. 20:4); Dan. 7:11 (eschatological future pertaining to the demise of the antichrist); Dan. 7:12 (eschatological future pertaining to the millennium); Dan. 11:40-45 (eschatological future pertaining to the rise and demise of the antichrist); Dan. 12:1 (eschatological future pertaining to the rapture and the great tribulation); Dan. 12:2, 3 (generally taken to be the first resurrection, cf. Rev. 20:6); Dan. 12:13 (generally taken to be Daniel's participation in the first resurrection); Hos. 1:10, 11 (millennial reign of Christ); Hos. 2:18-20 (millennial reign of Christ); Hos. 11:9-11 (possibly the rapture, cf. 1 Thess. 4:15-17); Amos 9:13-15 (millennial prosperity); Obad. 1:21 (millennial kingdom); Mic. 4:1-4 (millennial kingdom); Mic. 4:5 (millennial kingdom, pointing to non-universal salvation during that time); Hab. 2:14 (millennial kingdom); Hab. 2:23 (generally taken to be Zerubbabel's participation in the first resurrection); Zech. 6:12, 13 (millennial kingdom); Zech. 8:1-6 (the eschatological future of the millennium); Zech. 8:23 (millennial kingdom); Zech. 10:11 (Armageddon); Zech. 14:4-21 (return of Christ); Matt. 3:7 (return of Christ); Matt. 3:12 (return of Christ); Matt. 8:11 (millennial kingdom); Matt. 12:41 (last judgment); Matt. 13:38-43 (last judgment); Matt. 19:28 (Messianic kingdom); Matt. 22:29, 30 (first resurrection); Matt. 24:4-14 (eschatological future); Matt. 24:15-25 (in this case the eschatological future pertaining to the rise of the antichrist); Matt. 24:26-27 (return of Christ); Matt. 24:28-31 (tribulation and rapture and return of Christ); Matt. 24:35 (eschatological future, cf. Rev. 20:11); Matt. 25:31-46 (last judgment, cf. Rev. 20:10-15); Mark 4:29 (last judgment, see. Matt. 13:39); Mark 12:24-27 (first resurrection); Mark 13:14-23 (eschatological future pertaining to rise of antichrist); Mark 13:24-27 (tribulation and rapture and return of Christ); Luke 1:32, 33 (Messianic kingdom); Luke 9:26 (return of Christ); Luke 10:12-15 (last judgment); Luke 11:31, 32 (last judgment); Luke 12:35-40 (return of Christ); Luke 17:26-33 (false security prior to the return of Christ); Luke 17:34 (the tribulation); Luke 18:8 (widespread apostasy prior to the return of Christ); Luke 19:11, 12 (significant time lapse prior to the return of Christ); Luke 21:25 (terrifying natural disasters prior to the return of Christ); Luke 21:27, 28 (return of Christ); Luke 21:33 (cf. Rev. 20:11); Luke 21:34-36 (widespread apostasy prior to the return of Christ); John 5:28, 29 (general resurrection and judgment of the lost); John 12:48 (judgment of the lost); John 21:22 (return of Christ); Acts 1:6 (millennial kingdom and Israel's place in it); Acts 1:11 (return of Christ); Acts 3:21 (millennial kingdom and Israel's place in it, cf. Acts 1:6); Acts 4:1, 2 (general resurrection); Acts 10:42 (last judgment); Acts 10:42 (last judgment); Rom. 2:2-12 (last judgment); Rom. 5:2 (return of Christ); Rom. 8:21 (new heavens and new earth, see Rev. 21:1); Rom. 8:23 (resurrection of the saints); Rom. 11:12-15 (at Christ's second coming); Rom. 11:25, 26 (before second coming of Christ); Rom. 13:11, 12 (at Christ's second coming); 1 Cor. 1:7, 8 (at Christ's second coming); 1 Cor. 3:12-15 (at Christ's second coming); 1 Cor. 6:2, 3 (Messianic kingdom); 1 Cor. 6:14 (resurrection of the saints); 1 Cor. 11:26 (return of Christ); 1 Cor. 15:12-28 (return of Christ); 1 Cor. 15:49-52 (the rapture); 2 Cor. 1:14 (return of Christ); 2 Cor. 5:10 (last judgment); Gal. 5:5 (return of Christ); Eph. 1:14 (return of Christ); Eph. 1:21 (Messianic kingdom); Eph. 4:30 (return of Christ); Phil. 5:27 (return of Christ); Phil. 1:6 (return of Christ); Phil. 3:11 (first resurrection); Phil. 3:20, 21 (return of Christ); Phil. 4:5 (return of Christ); Col. 1:27, 28 (return of Christ); Col. 3:4 (return of Christ); 1 Thess. 1:10 (return of Christ)

CONCLUSION

Open Theists may have resolved the questions regarding God's predetermination and man's self-determination in their minds, and the nature of God's omniscience and biblical prophecy, but they have done so for themselves, and those under their hearing, at the expense of the being of God. They have created a precarious paradigm that is perilously close to heresy, if not heresy, but one totally unneeded to answer the problem of how divine omniscience relates to human freedom.

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

“For who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has become His counselor?
Or who has first given to Him
And it shall be repaid to him?”

“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.
Amen.”

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APPENDIX A

3. Inerrancy, Predictive Prophecy and Open-

Charts on Orthodoxy & Openness

	Orthodoxy	Open Theism
God errs?	<p>The question is not whether the sacred writers . . . could err . . . Rather the question is whether in writing they were so acted upon and inspired by the Holy Spirit . . . as to be kept free from all error . . . Our adversaries deny this; we affirm it.</p> <p>Turretin, <i>Institutes of Elenctic Theology</i>, Volume One, Second Topic, Fourth Question, Section V</p> <p>It seems at least to be made tolerably clear by such instances, that if we embark on the attempt to determine how much credit we ought to give the Bible by first attempting to settle in detail how much credit it is easy to give it, we may arrive at a harbor very different from that towards which we fancied we were bound . . . [The Old Testament critics'] starting point is the assertion of errors in the text of Scripture; errors as determined by them in the use of an exegesis which scorns all "harmonizing expedients"—that is, which refuses to allow to Scripture what every historian feels necessary to allow to his sources.</p> <p>Warfield, <i>Limited Inspiration</i>, 46.</p> <p>The Holy Scriptures are one source, and by all pre-eminence the source, of theology . . . That they are a direct revelation from God, with the seal of a divine original clearly set upon them, gives to their theology a certainty and sufficiency . . . specially divine</p> <p>Miley, <i>Systematic Theology</i>, Volume 1, 12.</p>	<p>The notion that God could be dismayed or wrong about anything may not sit well with some people, so perhaps some qualifications may be helpful. First, what is meant by the word mistake? . . . even if we affirm that God is sometimes "mistaken" in the sense that God believed something would happen when, in fact, it does not come about, there is a question as to how often this happens. The biblical record gives a few occasions, but we are in no position to judge just how many times this occurs with God. Even if it happens regularly, this does not imply that God is helpless in the face of the future . . .</p> <p>Sanders, <i>The God Who Risks</i>, 132-33.</p> <p>There are many other ways in which the Bible portrays God as facing a partly open future. Hear the frustration of the Lord, for example, as he expresses his amazement at Israel's stubbornness . . . How could the Lord <i>genuinely think</i> that Israel would do one thing if in fact he eternally foreknew that Israel would not do this? The Lord's expression of disappointment can be authentic only if the future partly consists of possibilities and probabilities, not exclusively settled certainties.</p> <p>Boyd, <i>Satan and the Problem of Evil</i>, 100-01.</p> <p>Passages such as these need not imply that God was caught off guard, as though he didn't anticipate the <i>possibility</i> of the improbable. Nor do they imply that God was mistaken in thinking people would do one thing when it turns out they did another . . . The omniscient Lord, having a perfectly accurate assessment of all probabilities, <i>thought</i> his people would do [one thing] . . . But many of his people, being self-determining free creatures, opted for the more improbable course of action.</p> <p>Boyd, <i>Satan and the Problem of Evil</i>, 101.</p> <p>. . . the concept of inerrancy is itself unbiblical. Nowhere do the writers of the Bible assert that all their statements are inerrant. Those who adhere to this idea have deduced it from their concept of divine inspiration and imposed it on the Bible.</p> <p>Rice, <i>The Reign of God</i>, 33.</p>

3. Inerrancy, Predictive Prophecy and Openness cont'd

	Orthodoxy	Open Theism
Predictive Prophecy	<p>The prophets did not fall into mistakes in those things which they wrote as inspired men . . . not even in the smallest particulars . . .</p> <p>Turretin, <i>Institutes of Elenctic Theology</i>, Volume One, Second Topic, Fourth Question, Section XXIII</p> <p>Barr's reticence concerning predictive prophecy seems to rise especially from two considerations. First of all, he contends, "prediction and fulfillment" carry "serious philosophical consequences"—as indeed they do. Barr declares specifically that "exact knowledge of distant future events" implies divine "determinism" and would involve "a mechanical or dictation view of inspiration" . . . Yet evangelical theology has long and repeatedly emphasized that the inspired prophets do not need to be mechanically computerized in order to relay truly what God was saying through them. And if, to avoid an objectionable determinism, we must insist that God is either ignorant, confused or silent about the future, we are postulating a god very different from the God of the Bible.</p> <p>Henry, <i>God, Revelation and Authority</i>, Volume IV, Part Three, 347-48.</p> <p>When [a true prophet's] prophecies predict future events, God's word gives him supernatural knowledge. If the event does not happen, the prophet is proved false. Deuteronomy 18 does not consider the possibility that God himself may have been in error . . . Moses presupposes that God himself is omniscient and cannot err in foretelling the future. The text banishes from the outset any consideration that God might be wrong.</p> <p>Frame, <i>The Doctrine of God</i>, 487.</p> <p>Prediction of future events is not the only aspect of prophecy . . . Nevertheless, amid the diverse elements of prophecy, one crucial element is prediction of the future. Knowledge of the future is a defining mark of the true God and of his true prophets.</p> <p>Frame, <i>The Doctrine of God</i>, 487-88.</p> <p>The first thing to note is that <i>true prophecy is revelation</i> . . . This means that true prophets were not simply men of political genius or wise thinkers with unusual insight into civic and world affairs. Rather, they were men who spoke as the Holy Spirit "bore them along." Second, . . . prophecy can include the <i>foretelling of future events</i> . . . Third, the divine Oracle [in Habakkuk 2:2-3] declares that the vision is <i>certain of fulfillment</i>: the prophecy "will not prove false" and "will certainly come . . ."</p> <p>Reymond, <i>A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith</i>, 29.</p>	<p>God is yet working to fulfill his promises and bring his project to fruition. The eschaton will surprise us because it is not set in concrete; it is not unfolding according to a prescribed script.</p> <p>Sanders, <i>The God Who Risks</i>, 125.</p> <p>Predictions are very specific forecasts of what is to occur, whereas prophecies allow room for God to fulfill them in a variety of ways—ways that we cannot anticipate . . . Despite the messianic prophecies, no one anticipated the sort of messiahship that Jesus exhibited.</p> <p>Sanders, <i>The God Who Risks</i>, 126.</p> <p>The promises of God should be understood as part of the divine <i>project</i> rather than as some eternal blueprint, a project in which God has not scripted the way everything in human history will go. God has a goal, but the routes remain open.</p> <p>Sanders, <i>The God Who Risks</i>, 127.</p> <p>Can God be mistaken about anything? If God can be mistaken about what will happen in the future, then divine predictions may be in doubt . . . Is it possible for God to have mistaken beliefs about the future? The traditional theological answer is that God cannot, but there are several biblical texts that seem to affirm that what God thought would happen did not come about . . .</p> <p>Sanders, <i>The God Who Risks</i>, 205.</p> <p>Some claim that certain predictions entail exhaustive divine foreknowledge and prevent us from appealing to the evidence that suggests limited prescience. Biblical prophecy is a complex phenomenon, but does not entail any such thing . . . some prophecies are conditional, leaving the future open, and, presumably, God's knowledge of it.</p> <p>Pinnock, <i>Most Moved Mover</i>, 50.</p> <p>It is very meaningful to think of the future as partly settled and partly unsettled because it tells us that not everything has been decided at this point in time. It means that the future is a realm of possibilities not just of actualities. This is true even for God . . .</p> <p>Pinnock, <i>Most Moved Mover</i>, 51.</p>

Charts on Orthodoxy & Openness

3. Inerrancy, Predictive Prophecy and Openness cont'd

Charts on Orthodoxy & Openness

	Orthodoxy	Open Theism
Inspiration	<p>Defining inspiration positively, it may be described as the influence of the Holy Spirit upon a human person, whereby he is infallibly moved and guided in all his statements while under this influence. Shedd, <i>Dogmatic Theology</i>, 88.</p> <p>... in the only passage where the word Inspiration is used in Scripture, it is ascribed not to the prophet but to Scripture itself: "Every Scripture is inspired of God" (2 Tim. iii. 16) . . . it is a common location in the New Testament by which Scripture is assigned to the Holy Spirit as its responsible author. Warfield, <i>Limited Inspiration</i>, 11.</p> <p>Inspiration is a supernatural influence. It is distinguished, on the one hand, from the providential agency of God, which is everywhere and always in operation; and on the other hand, from the gracious operations of the Spirit on the hearts of his people. . . . Inspiration belongs to the . . . class [of those effects produced by God's immediate efficiency without the intervention of secondary causes]. . . . Inspiration, therefore, is not to be confused with spiritual illumination. Hodge, <i>Systematic Theology</i>, Volume One, Chapter VI, Section 2</p> <p>The Church has never held what has been stigmatized as the mechanical theory of inspiration. The sacred writers were not machines. Their self-consciousness was not suspended; nor were their intellectual powers superceded. Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost . . . God uses his instruments according to their nature. The sacred writers impressed their peculiarities on their several productions as plainly as though they were the subjects of no extraordinary influence . . . Nevertheless, and none the less, they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and their words were his words. Hodge, <i>Systematic Theology</i>, Volume One, Chapter VI, Section 2</p> <p>In Scripture we are dealing with what the Holy Spirit tells and foretells, with divinely inspired data, with what is known by special revelation, with what the Spirit communicates in a definitive way. God is the authority who renders Scripture authoritative; inspiration is the special phenomenon that imparts this character of divine authority to the writings and logically necessitates fulfillment of written prophecies. Henry, <i>God, Revelation and Authority</i>, Volume IV, Part Three, 75.</p> <p>INSPIRATION IS A SUPERNATURAL influence upon divinely chosen prophets and apostles whereby the Spirit of God assures the truth and trustworthiness of their oral and written proclamation. Historic evangelical Christianity considers the Bible as the essential textbook because, in view of this quality, it inscribes divinely revealed truth</p>	<p>My basic position is that we have it on Christ's authority, which itself can be established on solid historical grounds, that Scripture is divinely inspired, but next to nothing as to how Scripture is divinely inspired. Hence, though I defend the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture, I am in principle completely open to the historical-critical investigation of the particular historical processes by which various segments of Scripture came about. In my view, an unequivocal affirmation of scriptural inspiration does not entail anything in the direction of the "divine dictation theory" espoused by some American fundamentalists. Boyd, <i>God at War</i>, 300 (endnote 37).</p> <p>... the biblical doctrine of "inspiration" contains two important ideas. One is the divine authority of Scripture. The prophets, the writers of the Bible, did not speak or write on their own initiative; their messages originated with God. Moreover, God guides in the transmission of these messages to ensure that what is heard and read is the reliable expression of his will.</p> <p>A second implication of inspiration is the divine-human character of Scripture. The message comes from God, but it is expressed in human terms and concepts, and the different writings clearly reflect the personalities of the authors. Rice, <i>The Reign of God</i>, 25-26.</p> <p>Although the new theology of inspiration may only be a cloud the size of a human hand, there are forces at work which favor it over the stricter view. One is the simple practical bent of the evangelical style of faith, which believes strongly in the values of faith at work in mission and action, and shies away from intellectualism and abstraction. After all, the new evangelical view which dispenses with inerrancy is less a retreat from a high position on the authority of the Bible, than a move toward greater doctrinal <i>simplicity</i>. What most evangelicals want to know is how they can trust and use the Scriptures available to them, despite difficulties that crop up through transmission, translation, or inherency. How can Scripture be a lamp to their feet and a light to their path? Such a question has little to do with the perfect errorlessness of non-existent autographs and a great deal to do with the continuing authority of a (slightly) imperfect document. If the new evangelicals are astute in their pastoral instincts, they may well be able to swing a good deal of support behind their non-inerrancy position. . . . The inerrancy debate has an abstract quality to it and is best engaged by intellectuals, and</p>

16. Unfilled Prophecies

The record of Unfulfilled prophecy finds a necessary backdrop in an understanding of both the mark of a prophet and of the certainty of prophetic fulfillment.

The Mark of a prophet

Deut. 18:22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

The Certainty of Fulfillment

Hab. 2:3 For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

This is illustrated in the account of the death of the king of Israel:

Prophecy

1Kings 22:17 Then Micaiah answered, I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.

1Kings 22:28 Micaiah declared, If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me. Then he added, Mark my words, all you people!

Fulfillment

1Kings 22:34-36 But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armor. The king told his chariot driver, Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I've been wounded.

All day long the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. As the sun was setting a cry spread through the army: Every man to his town; everyone to his land!

There are certain reasons for a lack of fulfillment. The first is not actually a lack of fulfillment, but a lack of historical certainty of fulfillment. The following descriptions are intended to bring clarity of meaning to the use of these and similar phrases in the chart.

Lack of Historical Record

This works both ways. For example in 2 Kings 14:25 we have recorded a fulfillment of a prophecy that we have no other record of. The absence of historical records of fulfillment does not disavow the reality or potential of a prophetic fulfillment. In the same way, the absence of the record of the prophecy does not make meaningless the recorded fulfillment. (2 Kings 14:25 He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher.)

False Prophets

Matt. 7:15 Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

Contingency

Jer. 18:7-10 If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted, and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

Jer. 26:12,13 Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard. Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you.

Repentance and prayer of people.

This is the positive side of contingency. That is, those prophecies that promise good, not bad, are sometimes reversible upon repentance or prayer.

16. Unfilled Prophecies continued

Opinion, not Revelation of an otherwise inspired man of God.

There are examples in Scripture where a man otherwise used of God for inspired communication is recorded saying something that does not occur. This is generally accompanied by context showing that he is not speaking for God, but of his own mind.

Fulfillment yet in the future.

This is the most basic reason for unfulfilled prophecy. Two subsets are Developmental Fulfillment and Prophetic Telescoping with Fulfillment yet in the future. Developmental fulfillment addresses the reality that some of God's prophetic movement finds various stages of fulfillment at different times in history.

Prophetic Telescoping

Prophetic telescoping describes the fact that the prophetic vision often included in close juxtaposition prophecies whose fulfillment is widely separated in time.

The chart below is intended to be a thorough, but not exhaustive list of unfulfilled prophecy. In particular, prophecies that are repeated in the same book are treated in their first occurrence. Space will not permit the listing of these unfilled prophecies in the form given below but nonetheless illustrates how they might be viewed with texts given rather than only references as given in the chart.

Prophecy	Reason Unfulfilled
<p>Gen.3:15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.</p>	<p>Developmental Fulfillment a) In the crucifixion John 12:31,32 b) In the church Romans 16:20 c) Ultimately in the Abyss (Revelation 20:3)</p>
<p>Gen.8:22 As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.</p>	<p>Both Ongoing and Future Fulfillment until the very end. <u>Rev.20:11</u> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.</p>
<p>Gen. 12:7 The LORD appeared to Abram and said, To your offspring I will give this land. So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.</p>	<p>Both Fulfilled in Joshua's day... <u>Josh.21:43</u> So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there.</p>
<p>Gen. 13:15 All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.</p>	<p><u>Josh.21:44</u> The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. ...And to be fulfilled in the Millennium. <u>Acts 1:6,7</u> So when they met together, they asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them: It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.</p>

16. Unfilled Prophecies continued

Reason for Lack of Fulfillment
<p style="text-align: center;">False Prophets</p> <p>1Kings 22:6 (1Kings 22:37); Neh. 6:10 (See Neh. 6:12-14); Jer. 28:1-4 (See Jer. 28:12-17); Jer. 37:19; Mic. 2:6</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Contingency</p> <p>Lev. 26:3-12 (Unfulfilled due to the people not keeping their end of the covenant. (see Lev 26:14-33) Possibly still to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.) Deut. 7:12-15 (See also Deut. 28:1-14) (Unfulfilled due to the people not keeping their end of the covenant. (see Deut 28:15-68) Possibly still to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.) Deut. 26:19 (Unfulfilled due to the people not keeping their end of the covenant. (compare Deut 28) Possibly still to be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom.) 1Kings 2:4 (Partly Unfulfilled due to the Kings not keeping their end. Fulfilled in Christ.)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Repentance and Prayer of People</p> <p>Ex. 32:9,10 (See Ex. 32:11-14); 2Kings 20:1 (See 2 Kings 20:2; 20:5); Jonah 3:4 (See Is. 38:2-5)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Prophetic Telescoping</p> <p>Gen. 49:10 (The first and second advent of Christ are seen here, the second yet to be fulfilled when the obedience of the nations is his.); Is. 9:6,7 (As in Isaiah 9:6,7 this is a telescoped prophecy bridging both the first and second advents of Christ. The slaying of the wicked is taken to be the slaying of the antichrist (2 Thess 2:8)); Is. 11:1-10 (Jesus himself interprets this passage in a telescoped sense inserting a break between the year of the Lord's favor and the day of God's vengeance, Luke 4:18-21); Is. 61:1,2 (Jesus himself interprets this passage in a telescoped sense inserting a break between the year of the Lord's favor and the day of God's vengeance, Luke 4:18-21); Dan. 2:37-44 (The telescoping can be seen to be from one king to another, ending in a kingdom that will never be destroyed, the New Jerusalem, Rev. 22:5); Joel 2:28-3: (Acts 2 records partial fulfillment. But the wonders in the heavens and earth points to tribulation, the deliverance to the rapture and the restoration of the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem point to the millennial kingdom.); Mic. 2:12,13 (verse 12 predicts the end of the Babylonian captivity and verse 13 telescopes ahead to the reestablishment of the kingdom of Israel in the millennium.); Mal. 3:1-5 (Verse 1 refers to the first advent of Christ and of John the Baptist his herald. The day of his coming is, however, an end times prophecy concerning the second advent.); Mark 13:5-13 (Both the events preceding A.D. 70 and the eschatological future.)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Presumptive Speech</p> <p>1Sam. 23:17 (Jonathan was not inspired to know that he would be next in line to David. In fact, he was dead before David ascended to the throne. (See 1 Samuel 31))</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Lack of Historical Record</p> <p>Ex. 34:23,24 (In particular, for the lack of coveting of the land.); 1Kings 22:25; Jer. 11:23 (Compare 2 Kings 23:5 and Jeremiah 1:1. The cause of the judgment may have been pagan priestly practices.); Jer. 29:21,22; Jer. 39:16-18; Jer. 45:2,5; Ezek. 28:20-23; Amos 7:14-17</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fulfillment Yet in the Future</p> <p>Ex. 23:25,26 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium is seen embedded in the prophecies concerning the initial Israelite occupation of the Promised Land); Deut. 30:1-6 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); 1Sam. 2:10 (in this case the eschatologically future second advent of Christ); 2Sam. 23:6 (at the final judgment); Ps. 2:4,5 (at Armageddon); Ps. 22:27,28 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ps. 48:8 (the New Jerusalem, see Rev. 21:10,25); Ps. 67:4 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ps. 72:1-8 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ps. 110:5,6 (Armageddon); Is. 22:4 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Is. 42:5 (in this case the eschatological future of the millen</p>

16. Unfilled Prophecies continued

nium); Is.24:21-23 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium. The reference to many days is one of two references to a finite duration to the millennium, the other being in Daniel); Is.32:1-5 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Jer.23:5-8 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Jer.25:15-26 (in this case the eschatological future of the post-millennial wrath of God, see Rev.20:7-9); Jer.31:35,36 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium; cf. Rev.20:11); Jer.33:17,18 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ezek.37:25-28 (in this case the eschatological future of the millennium); Ezek.38:2-39:22 (see Rev.20:7-9); Ezek.47:6-12 (some see this as millennial prophecy, particularly in light of the reference to the sanctuary as the source. Interestingly, there are plans in Israel today to consider constructing a channel from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea. In any case, it is yet future); Ezek.48:15-35 (in this case the eschatological future); Dan.7:8 (eschatological future pertaining to the rise of the antichrist); Dan.7:9,10 (eschatological future, cf. Rev.20:4); Dan.7:11 (eschatological future pertaining to the demise of the antichrist); Dan.7:12 (eschatological future pertaining to the millennium); Dan.11:40-45 (eschatological future pertaining to the rise and demise of the antichrist); Dan.12:1-2 (eschatological future pertaining to the rapture and the great tribulation); Dan.12:2,3 (generally taken to be the first resurrection, cf. Rev.20:6); Dan.12:13 (generally taken to be Daniel's participation in the first resurrection); Hos.1:10,11 (millennial reign of Christ); Hos.2:18-20 (millennial reign of Christ); Hos.11:9-11 (possibly the rapture, cf. 1 Thess.4:15-17); Amos 9:13-15 (millennial prosperity); Obad.1:21 (millennial kingdom); Mic.4:1-4 (millennial kingdom); Mic.4:5 (millennial kingdom, pointing to non-universal salvation during that time); Hab.2:14 (millennial kingdom); Hab.2:23 (generally taken to be Zerubbabel's participation in the first resurrection); Zech.6:12,13 (millennial kingdom); Zech.8:1-6 (the eschatological future of the millennium); Zech.8:23 (millennial kingdom); Zech.10:11 (Armageddon); Zech.14:4-21 (return of Christ); Matt.3:7 (return of Christ); Matt.3:12 (return of Christ); Matt.8:11 (millennial kingdom); Matt.12:41 (last judgment); Matt.13:38-43 (last judgment); Matt.19:28 (Messianic kingdom); Matt.22:29,30 (first resurrection); Matt.24:14 (eschatological future); Matt.24:15-25 (in this case the eschatological future pertaining to the rise of the antichrist); Matt.24:26-27 (return of Christ); Matt.24:28-31 (tribulation and rapture and return of Christ); Matt.24:35 (eschatological future, cf. Rev.20:11); Matt.25:31-46 (last judgment, cf. Rev.20:10-15); Mark 4:29 (last judgment, see Matt.13:39); Mark 12:24-27 (first resurrection); Mark 13:14-23 (eschatological future pertaining to rise of antichrist); Mark 13:24-27 (tribulation and rapture and return of Christ); Luke 1:32,33 (Messianic kingdom); Luke 9:26 (return of Christ); Luke 10:12-15 (last judgment); Luke 11:31,32 (last judgment); Luke 12:35-40 (return of Christ); Luke 17:26-33 (false security prior to the return of Christ); Luke 17:34 (the tribulation); Luke 18:8 (widespread apostasy prior to the return of Christ); Luke 19:11,12 (significant time lapse prior to the return of Christ); Luke 21:25 (terrifying natural disasters prior to the return of Christ); Luke 21:27,28 (return of Christ); Luke 21:33 (cf. Rev.20:11); Luke 21:34-36 (widespread apostasy prior to the return of Christ); John 5:28,29 (general resurrection and judgment of the lost); John 12:48 (judgment of the lost); John 21:22 (return of Christ); Acts 1:6 (millennial kingdom and Israel's place in it); Acts 1:11 (return of Christ); Acts 3:21 (millennial kingdom and Israel's place in it, cf. Acts 1:6); Acts 4:1,2 (general resurrection); Acts 10:42 (last judgment); Acts 10:42 (last judgment); Rom.2:2-12 (last judgment); Rom.5:2 (return of Christ); Rom.8:21 (new heavens and new earth, see Rev.21:1); Rom.8:23 (resurrection of the saints); Rom.11:12-15 (at Christ's second coming); Rom.11:25,26 (before second coming of Christ); Rom.13:11,12 (at Christ's second coming); 1 Cor.1:7,8 (at Christ's second coming); 1 Cor.3:12-15 (at Christ's second coming); 1 Cor.6:2,3 (Messianic kingdom); 1 Cor.6:14 (resurrection of the saints); 1 Cor.11:26 (return of Christ); 1 Cor.15:12-28 (return of Christ); 1 Cor.15:49-52 (the rapture); 2 Cor.1:14 (return of Christ); 2 Cor.5:10 (last judgment); Gal.5:5 (return of Christ); Eph.1:14 (return of Christ); Eph.1:21 (Messianic kingdom); Eph.4:30 (return of Christ); Phil.5:27 (return of Christ); Phil.1:6 (return of Christ); Phil.3:11 (first resurrection); Phil.3:20,21 (return of Christ); Phil.4:5 (return of Christ); Col.1:27,28 (return of Christ); Col.3:4 (return of Christ); 1 Thess.1:10 (return of Christ)