

## CHAPTER SIX

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# DOES GOD'S CREATORSHIP IMPLY DIVINE DETERMINISM?

In this chapter I shall attempt to defend the following thesis: if God has created the cosmos through an act of absolute creation *ex nihilo*, as traditionally accepted, then it necessarily follows that everything that is and everything that occurs has been determined by God. It is outside the scope of my purpose to offer a thorough defense of the traditional doctrine of creation. So the result of my arguments will be hypothetical: if the traditional view of divine creation is true, then divine determinism necessarily follows from the fact that God is the creator. But it will remain logically open to the reader to reject the traditional view of divine creation and thereby reject divine determinism. What the arguments of this chapter seek to demonstrate is that one cannot embrace the traditional doctrine of absolute creation *ex nihilo* and at the same time reject the doctrine of divine determinism. To do so would be rationally inconsistent.

## Understanding the Biblical Doctrine of Creation

### CREATION AS AN EXPLANATION OF THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

Various answers are given to the question of cosmic origins. Theism offers a distinctive answer—namely, creation by a divine creator.<sup>55</sup> The universe as we know it resulted from a creative act by a powerful, transcendent, pre-existent God.

The universe is not itself eternal—as theories of cosmic evolution typically assert—with the intrinsic potential to transform and organize itself. Neither is it the subjective creation of the individual or collective human

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55. The fact that divine creation is the Bible's teaching with regard to cosmic origins is virtually indisputable. Genesis 1:1–2:25 is the primary biblical text teaching divine creation. But there are a dozen or more explicit references to God's creation of the cosmos. See, for example, John 1:1–5, Colossians 1:15–17, Acts 14:15, Acts 17:22–31, Hebrews 11:3, and Revelation 4:11.

mind—as some strains of New Age thought might assert. Rather, it is the objective handiwork of the powerful, transcendent God.

So, as philosophies go, the bare claim that “God created the heavens and the earth” is a distinctive answer to the question of origins. But it is not, in and of itself, a very specific answer. It is altogether too imprecise to answer a number of vexing questions.

To advance my argument for divine determinism, I need to explore two such important questions: (1) the scope of God’s creative activity, and (2) the nature of the consequent, ongoing relation between God and his creation.

## THE SCOPE OF DIVINE CREATION

Most biblical theists agree that God created everything that exists. He created the rocks, the trees, the animals, the elements, the stars, and so on. But how far should this list extend? Granted, God created every THING, but what constitutes a “thing”? God created the earth, that giant mass of matter we all call home. But did he also create its gravity? Is gravity a created “thing”? God made the sub-atomic particle; it is arguably a “thing.” But what about the physical laws that rule its existence? Are they created “things” as well?

When all is said and done, there are various sorts of realities that, in one way or another, impinge upon our existence. Of all these different sorts of realities, which of them are the product of divine creation, and which of them have their origin somewhere else? Until we have answered this, we have not thoroughly understood the scope of divine creation.

## THE CATEGORIES OF REALITY

One way or another, we confront very different kinds of realities in human experience. All of them could plausibly be construed as having real existence. I propose five such realities that I believe exhaust the field of all possibly real existents:

1. *Mechanically-determined entities*—that is, impersonal entities, composed of matter and energy, that operate out of physical or mechanical necessity in accordance with the laws of physics. This category, in my judgment, would include all animals and all material objects.

2. *Free moral agents*—that is, entities (persons) who do not operate exclusively out of physical or mechanical necessity. These are creatures who are capable of operating out of what is commonly called free will. Apart from God himself, human beings and angelic beings are very possibly the only free moral agents in all of reality.
3. *Abstract, ideal realities*—that is, concepts or ideas that either describe or constitute the rational structure of the cosmos. This category would include the laws of physics, the laws of human ethics, the principles of aesthetics in art, etc. These realities dictate the very real, objective relationships that exist between the concrete, tangible creatures<sup>56</sup> in the cosmos, but they are not themselves tangible or concrete things.
4. *Events*—that is, occurrences within the real cosmos.
5. *Eternal, necessary realities*—that is, God and the various eternal aspects of the divine nature. The eternal, self-existent God himself would be included in this category. But so too would various aspects of his nature that are co-eternal with Him—for example, the principles of holiness, rationality, and personhood that make up the divine being of God.

## DIFFERENT VIEWS WITH RESPECT TO THE SCOPE OF DIVINE CREATION <sup>57</sup>

We can immediately eliminate *eternal, necessary realities* (category #5) from the list of created things. Clearly God is not created. He did not cre-

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56. By “concrete” and “tangible” here I mean to indicate creations that are not abstract. I do not necessarily mean material as opposed to immaterial or spiritual. Hence, these abstract ideas could form the objectively real relationships between angels or between an angel and the physical cosmos just as surely as they do form the objectively real relationships between material beings.

57. My purpose here is to present important logically-possible alternatives, not to survey actual, known positions. As a matter of fact, I am not aware of any serious theoretical discussion of the scope of divine creation. To my knowledge, therefore, there are no well-articulated theoretical viewpoints on the subject. The actual viewpoints that people hold on this subject tend to be revealed in their tacit, not-articulated, intuitive mental picture of creation and the inferences they make from it. At this level, it is possible that all of these alternatives are embraced somewhere by someone.

ate himself. Neither did God create any aspect of his own intrinsically necessary and eternal nature. By definition, if it is necessary and eternal, then it has not been created. So whatever the scope of divine creation, it clearly cannot include this fifth category of realities. This category of existent being should be viewed as incontrovertibly outside the scope of divine creation in the discussion that follows.

Given this disclaimer, there are two different logical possibilities with regard to the scope of divine creation: either divine creation is absolute in scope, or it is not absolute in scope. Hence, one believes either in ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION or in NON-ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION.

The former—ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION—is the view that God has created absolutely everything that exists (except Himself and other eternal, necessary realities). That is, God has created absolutely everything that exists in each of the first four categories of reality listed above. God has created or creates every physical, material entity, every free moral agent, every abstract, ideal reality, and every event that occurs throughout time. Nothing that exists is outside the scope of his creative activity.

The latter view—NON-ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION—may be non-absolute for a number of different reasons: (1) one might believe that certain categories of reality are outside the scope of divine creation, (2) one might believe that certain species of existents are outside the scope of divine creation, or (3) one might believe that certain particular, individual existents are outside the scope of divine creation.

Let us consider each of these three forms of NON-ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION respectively:

1. The first form of NON-ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION believes that certain categories of reality (the ones listed in the previous section) are outside the scope of divine creation.<sup>58</sup> So, for example, someone may be hesitant to acknowledge abstract, ideal realities (category #3) as products of God's creative activity. God created only the concrete, tangible realities; not the abstract ones. Or, more likely, one might be hesitant to acknowledge events (category #4) as products of God's creative

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58. We have already conceded that ABSOLUTE CREATION makes exception for category #5 being necessarily outside the scope of divine creation. To espouse NON-ABSOLUTE CREATION, therefore, one must place one or more of the *first four* categories of reality outside the scope of divine creation.

activity.

There are two primary reasons why one might prefer to see events as outside the scope of divine creation:

*a) One may understandably prefer to view the actors or participants in cosmic events as the true creators of those events. God does not directly cause or determine what occurs in reality. Rather, the behavior and actions of the participants directly determine the course of events. Events are created by the created participants themselves. God does not create them.*

*b) Events do not, properly speaking, have existence in the same sense that things do. Let me illustrate. Did the Battle of Gettysburg "exist" in the same sense that Abraham Lincoln "existed"? Did the occurrence of the battle have the same ontological status as the men who fought in the battle? Perhaps events do not "exist," but rather, "occur." Perhaps to speak of an event's existing is simply a sloppy way of speaking of an event's occurring. If so, then events may not have existence in the same way that people, things, and even abstract realities do. And if not, then it makes no sense to speak of their being created by God, for they do not even have existence.*

**2.** The second form of NON-ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION believes that certain species of existents are outside the scope of divine creation. Within each and every category of reality are various species of realities that are subsumed under the category. The first category includes the species micro-organisms as well as the species comets, for example. It includes the species rivers as well as the species trees. Category #2 (free moral agents) includes the species of human beings as well as the species of angels. While a person may not believe a whole category of reality is outside the scope of divine creation, he may believe that whole species of beings in that category lie outside the scope of divine creation. Some people may hesitate to believe that God created disease-causing organisms. While God created biological organisms like dogs, cats, and monkeys, he did not create germs and viruses. In the category of free moral agents (category #2), a person may believe that God created human beings, but deny that God created angels. In the category of ideal abstractions, a person may be more than willing to believe that God is the creator of goodness, but he may refuse to believe that God created evil. Some people are very reluctant to believe that God created abstract realities like pain and suffering and poverty. With respect to category #4 (events), a person may believe, generally, that God creates the events of our lives. But yet he may deny

that God is the creator of any event insofar as it is the result of freewill choices. Or, he may deny that God is the creator of any event insofar as it results in evil.

**3.** The third form of NON-ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION believes that certain particular beings or existents are outside the scope of divine creation. Even though, in general terms, it can be said that every category of being and every species within each category is created by God, this view wants to allow for individual exceptions in the case of individual, particular existents. These are examples of what a person might believe:

*a) While germs and viruses, generally, are created by God, the ebola virus is not his creation. It is so devastatingly evil that God could not have created it.*

*b) While free moral agents generally—both human and angelic—are created by God, the particular individual Satan is not created by God.*

*c) While hurricanes in general are created by God, the particular hurricane that destroyed my city was not created by God.*

## THE BIBLE'S TEACHING WITH RESPECT TO THE SCOPE OF DIVINE CREATION

### The Traditional Understanding of Divine Creation

The traditional interpretation of the Bible is that God created everything that exists from nothing. Starting with absolutely nothing, God, by his creative power, brought into existence all that exists. This doctrine has come to be called creation *ex nihilo* (*ex nihilo* being Latin for “out of nothing”).

Emphasis can be placed on any of several important possible ramifications of this traditional doctrine. All of the following are important ramifications of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*:

**1.** Nothing (other than God himself) existed before the original creation. *Everything that exists was created by God.* [This highlights the all-inclusiveness and absoluteness in the scope of God's creatorship.]

2. God, and God alone, existed before creation. He is the one and only being worthy of the designation "God." *He and he alone is an eternal, necessary, self-existent being* (that is, one who has always existed and who needs no further explanation for why he exists other than the fact that he necessarily must exist). He and he alone transcends the created order. [This highlights the uniqueness of God with respect to self-existence. And, on the other hand, it emphasizes the utter contingency of everything else but God. Nothing in the cosmos had to be what it is. Nothing in the cosmos had to *be* at all.]

3. Everything that has been created *has been created out of nothing*. The creation of the world was not merely the restructuring and reorganizing of some pre-existent stuff. Rather, it was the creation of that which did not previously exist in any sense or in any form. [This highlights the nothingness before creation.]

If we could know that the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* did, indeed, synthesize the biblical teaching with regard to creation, then there could be no question with regard to the scope of divine creation. The view we have called ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION would reflect the biblical view, for such a view is necessarily entailed by each of the three formulations of creation *ex nihilo* above.<sup>59</sup> If, before the beginning, there was absolutely nothing (but God), then nothing that exists now is uncreated. God's creative act was an act of ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION.

To be perfectly precise about the traditional view, therefore, I shall call it ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION *EX NIHILO*. Someone may be willing to grant that whatever God created he created from nothing (*ex nihilo*), but they may want to exempt certain aspects of the created order from the scope of God's creative activity. In other words, they may prefer one of the forms of NON-ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION discussed above. So to

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59. The suggestion here is that if creation *ex nihilo* is true, then it follows that absolute creation is true. The converse is not true, however. If absolute creation is true, it does not follow that absolute creation *ex nihilo* is true. In the Babylonian creation myth, the almighty Marduk may very well have fashioned absolutely everything that exists in the created cosmos out of the carcass of a slain sea-monster-god, but he was not creating the cosmos out of nothing. He was starting from the stuff present in the carcass of the sea-monster-god. Hence, Marduk—arguably—engaged in an act of Absolute Creation; but it was not an act of creation *ex nihilo*. Accordingly, from the fact of absolute creation it does not necessarily follow that creation has

be perfectly clear, the traditional interpretation of the Bible is that the Bible teaches ABSOLUTE DIVINE CREATION *EX NIHILO*.

## What Does the Bible Actually Teach with Regard to Divine Creation?

Does absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* accurately reflect the teaching of the Bible? It is the traditional interpretation of the Bible's teaching, but is that traditional interpretation accurate? Or, is the traditional doctrine of absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* a theological or philosophical view that has been imposed on the text of the Bible?

It is troubling to some that the Bible never explicitly asserts absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* in just those terms. That is, the Bible never explicitly asserts that God created *out of nothing* everything that exists. It frequently asserts that God created everything that is. But it never explicitly asserts that he created it from *nothing*. Does that mean that this doctrine has been imposed on the Bible, that the Bible does not really teach it? That is the question we must address now. To do so, I will address the two parts of the doctrine respectively: (1) Does the Bible actually teach absolute divine creation? And (2) Does the Bible actually teach divine creation *ex nihilo*?

## Does The Bible Actually Teach Absolute Divine Creation?

It is clear, I think, that absolute divine creation is the *prima facie* teaching<sup>60</sup> of the Bible—that is to say, on the face of it, it would certainly seem that the Bible espouses absolute divine creation. A number of passages are intended to stress and highlight the all-inclusive scope of God's creative act:

Paul, speaking to the residents of Lystra, says,

...and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and *all that is in them*.

Acts 14:15 (ESV, emphasis mine)

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been *ex nihilo*.

60. By *prima facie* teaching of the Bible I mean the teaching of the Bible on the face of it, at first



Speaking to the Athenians at Mars Hill, he says,

...What therefore you worship as unknown this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and *everything* in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to *all mankind* life and breath and *everything*. And he made from one man *every* nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

Acts 17: 23–26 (ESV, emphasis mine)

In Revelation, the elders praise God saying,

Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created *all things*, and *by your will they existed and were created*.

Rev 4:11 (ESV, emphasis mine)

Ecclesiastes reads,

As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God *who makes everything*.

Ecc 11:5 (ESV, emphasis mine)

John begins his gospel,

In the beginning was the logos. Now the logos was with God—indeed God was the Logos. The logos was in the beginning with God. *All things came into existence in conformity with it; indeed not one thing that has come into being came to be apart from it*. Among these things was life, and life was the light of men.

John 1: 1-4 (my translation and emphasis)

Paul writes to the Colossians,

He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. *For with a view to him all things were created: things in*

heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all things were created with a view to him and for him*. He is before all things, and in him all things have been constituted.

Colossians 1:15–17 (my translation and emphasis)

Paul and John are suggesting as strongly as they can that absolutely nothing exists that God did not create. Everything has been brought into existence in conformity to God's pre-existent *logos*, says John. Everything has been created to serve God's purposes for Jesus, Paul insists in Colossians.

These are not isolated, marginal comments within the biblical text. These are explicit assertions of what clearly appears to be a background assumption that underlies every assertion the Bible makes. On the surface, there can be little question: the Bible teaches that God is the creator of absolutely everything that is.

But a conclusion that we reach from a *prima facie* reading of the Bible is not sufficient for our purposes. One who is inclined to reject the doctrine of absolute divine creation can legitimately argue that the above passages are merely generalizing. When the biblical authors say that God created all things, they don't mean absolutely and literally all. They mean "all" as a generalization.

If I tell someone that they are late *all the time*, I do not mean that literally. I mean that they are, generally speaking, late. There are exceptions. But the rule is, they are late. The biblical authors could be speaking in the same sort of way. God created all things in heaven and on earth. But that does not mean that there are no exceptions. It means that, generally speaking, there is nothing that exists that God did not create. But there may be individual, isolated exceptions to the general rule of divine creation.

Clearly this has to be allowed as a viable interpretation, for we all tacitly understand the biblical authors to be making at least one exception. We don't for a moment think that they mean God created himself. Nor do we think for one moment that God created his own nature and attributes. There are certain eternal realities that are obviously intended to be exceptions to the all-inclusive claims of the biblical authors with respect to divine creation. But if we will readily grant that these eternal realities were intended to be exceptions to the general statement, why can't there be other obvious exceptions?

My theological or philosophical assumptions will dictate what I believe must certainly be excepted from the scope of divine creation. Some will want to exempt all evil. When it says God created all things, it certainly does not mean to say that God created evil. Others will want to exempt the freewill choices of human beings. When it says God created all things,

it certainly does not mean to say that God created the freewill choices of human beings. Others may want to exempt still other realities: pain, suffering, disease, or whatever else one's philosophical assumptions dictate.

Clearly, then, if I have philosophical reasons for wanting certain things to fall outside the scope of divine creation, then it is logically available to me to insist that "all things"—in the biblical assertions of creation—does not mean literally and absolutely all things. To say that God created all things is merely a generalization. The biblical writers fully expected their readers to understand that there are certain obvious exceptions. Accordingly, in spite of the *prima facie* evidence in support of it, the biblical data does not clearly and incontrovertibly support absolute divine creation.

One could, at this point, collect more biblical assertions as evidential support for the doctrine of absolute divine creation. One could, for example, find biblical assertions that claim divine creation for every category of reality outlined above.<sup>61</sup> But, in the end, this would not be sufficient to prove the traditional doctrine. There could always be one or more species of existents within any given category of reality that the biblical authors knew to be an exception. Or, if not species of existents, there could always be particular, individual existents that were an exception.<sup>62</sup> One would always face the possibility that the all-inclusive language of biblical assertions is only a generalization and not an absolute statement. In the end, therefore, it would be impossible to find a set of biblical assertions that is sufficiently exhaustive to prove decisively and incontrovertibly—from those assertions alone—that there are absolutely no exceptions to the scope of divine creation.

### Does The Bible Actually Teach Divine Creation **Ex Nihilo**?

It is clear, I think, that divine creation *ex nihilo* is the *prima facie* teaching of the Bible—that is to say, on the face of it, it would certainly seem that the Bible espouses creation *ex nihilo*.

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view, as it would initially appear, before further, deeper investigation.

61. See section above titled "The Categories of Reality." So, for example, Gen. 1–2, Jonah 1:9, and Isa. 42:5 assert the divine creation of existents belonging to category #1; Acts 17:22–31, Gen. 1–2 assert the creation of human beings (which belong to category #2); Psalm 33:6, Psalm 148:1–6, and (arguably) Col. 1:15–17 assert the creation of angels (which also belong to category #2); Isa. 45:7, John 1:1–5, and Genesis 1–2 (arguably) assert the creation of abstract realities (category #3); and Hebrews 1:2 and 11:3, arguably, and possibly Isa. 45:7 assert the creation of events (category #4).

62. See the section above titled "Different Views with Respect to the Scope of Divine

The primary biblical account of creation is found in Genesis 1–2. The account of creation recounted there describes God as commanding reality to come to be in a particular way and its coming to be as he commanded. God does not take some pre-existent substance and fashion it into the heavens and the earth and all that is in them. He just says “Let it be,” and it is so. It seems clear, on the face of it, that the Genesis narrative is a poetic way of describing creation *out of nothing*. The Genesis account is striking and distinctive in this regard in the context of the other ancient Near-Eastern “creation” accounts. Only in Genesis is God described as having the ability to simply will creation to be, and it is. Only the God of Genesis speaks, and it is. The other creation accounts describe a god or gods fashioning the world out of some pre-existing materials. On the surface, at least, it would seem quite apparent that part of the meaning of the Genesis creation account is that God is a being who is capable of creating all that is, starting with absolutely nothing.

But, once again, the conclusion that we reach from a *prima facie* reading of the Bible is not sufficient for our purposes. One who is inclined to reject the doctrine of divine creation *ex nihilo* can legitimately appeal to the vagueness of Genesis 1–2 and any other relevant texts. When biblical assertions are made to the effect that God created the cosmos, they were not constructed to address the issue of the exact nature of divine creation. They were constructed with entirely different issues in mind. Accordingly, they were not constructed with the sort of precision needed to answer our question. Certainly, they assume a particular view of divine creation in the background. But they are not devised in order to highlight and bring into the foreground the exact theory of divine creation that the biblical authors embrace.

*Prima facie*, it seems likely that in the background of the biblical authors’ assertions is the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. The creation account in Genesis—an account with which they were familiar and a teaching about creation to which their understanding presumably conforms—is, in my judgment, pretty compelling as a statement of creation *ex nihilo*. The burden of proof is on the reader who would deny that it is an expression of creation *ex nihilo*. It may be, therefore, that the biblical assertions, in this regard, ought to pretty much settle the question. But, be that as it may, if one is inclined to be skeptical, the biblical assertions are not sufficiently precise to offer clear, incontrovertible proof that the Bible teaches divine creation *ex nihilo*.

Given the nature of those assertions, no set of biblical assertions with regard to divine creation of the world will suffice to prove the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* to one who is inclined to reject it. In the end,

therefore, it would be impossible to find a set of biblical assertions that would prove decisively and incontrovertibly—from those assertions alone—that the divine creation of the world was absolutely and unexceptionally *ex nihilo*.

### Summary: Does The Bible Actually Teach Absolute Divine Creation **Ex Nihilo**?

We have seen that, while the *prima facie* evidence of the Bible certainly supports the traditional doctrine of absolute divine creation *ex nihilo*, the doctrine cannot be finally and incontrovertibly established on the basis of explicit biblical assertions alone.

Does this mean that we can never know with certainty what the Bible teaches with respect to the scope of divine creation? No, it does not mean that. Ultimately, I should be able to resolve the question of what the Bible teaches with respect to the scope of divine creation when I resolve the issue of divine determinism itself. The two questions are inextricably bound together. I cannot answer one without answering the other. But if I am ultimately able to answer the one, I will therein be able to answer the other.

That means, however, that I cannot produce a straightforward argument for divine determinism from divine creation. I will argue in the remainder of this chapter that the traditional view of divine creation (absolute divine creation *ex nihilo*) necessarily entails divine determinism. If we could establish the truth of absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* without first establishing divine determinism, then we could conclude that divine determinism must be true because absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* is true. But that will not be the conclusion of this chapter, for, as I suggested, we could never discover the right sort of evidence to establish that absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* is the incontrovertible teaching of the Bible independently of addressing the truth and biblicality of divine determinism. So the conclusion of this chapter will be hypothetical in nature: *if it is true that the Bible teaches absolute divine creation ex nihilo, then the Bible necessarily teaches divine determinism*. It must leave open to the reader the possibility of rejecting the doctrine of absolute creation *ex nihilo*. Having said that, it is no light and trivial matter to reject the doctrine of absolute creation *ex nihilo*, for to do so without a good basis founded on an intellectually honest and responsible reading of the Bible, would be a failure of spiritual and intellectual integrity. *Prima facie*, the Bible does teach absolute divine creation *ex nihilo*. One needs to have a compelling reason to reject it as the teaching of the Bible.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will assume the truth of the traditional doctrine of absolute divine creation *ex nihilo*. What needs now to be explored is what such a doctrine would imply with respect to God's ongoing relationship to his creation. It will be my contention that it rationally requires that God be the determiner of everything that is and of everything that occurs. Accordingly, if the traditional doctrine of absolute creation *ex nihilo* is true, then divine determinism is true.

## THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HIS CREATION

Having explored the scope of divine creation, we must now turn to a second important question: what exactly is the nature of the on-going relationship that exists between God and the created order?

We need a model for understanding what the God-reality relationship looks like. In constructing this model, we must fulfill two criteria which have emerged from our earlier discussion: (1) our model must picture God in a way that is compatible with a traditional Judaeo-Christian concept of God,<sup>63</sup> and (2) our model must present the God-universe relationship in such a way that it is compatible with the presumed biblical doctrine of absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* defined in the earlier discussion. There are only two models that can meet both of these criteria.

### THE COSMIC AUTHOR MODEL

Imagine a novelist sitting at his keyboard composing a novel. Suppose that this novelist has envisioned the entire story perfectly and exhaustively from beginning to end in one glance. Suppose further that he is capable of anticipating exactly what next to write in this novel so as to advance flawlessly toward the plot he has comprehensively envisioned in one glance. Suppose, as a consequence, that he never makes any false starts. As

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Creation." I discuss there the sorts of exceptions to absolute creation that one could propose.

63. This requirement follows from the composition of my intended audience. It is not my purpose to defend traditional Judaeo-Christian theism to the atheist, monist, or non-traditional theist. Rather, my purpose is to defend divine determinism to the already persuaded theist. Therefore, while one could devise other models of God's relationship to the universe, if they are not compatible with traditional theism, they are not relevant to the purposes of this work.

64. We are clearly imagining a super-human novelist here; no real human author would be capa-

he writes, the story unfolds perfectly—exactly as he wills it—as the spontaneous output of his imagination.<sup>64</sup>

As this author creates his story, nothing that exists or occurs in the world of his story exists or occurs apart from his will. If the author wills that it rain, it rains. If he wills that it snow, it snows. If he wills that a character deliberate over a tough moral decision, the character deliberates. If he wills that that character make an evil choice, he makes an evil choice. Every detail of everything that transpires in his story is shaped by the will of the author.

This is the first model by which one might picture God's *ex nihilo* creatorship of our world in a manner consistent with the Judaeo-Christian conception of God. Under this model, God's relationship to the cosmos we live in is analogous to an author's relationship to a novel he is writing as he creates it line-by-line in his imagination.<sup>65</sup> According to this model, then, the unfolding of the events of each day, in all their details, are the ongoing creation of the story of the cosmos in God's creative imagination. Reality is not like a novel already written, sitting on the shelf. It is a novel being written. Each day is the production of the next scene in God's creative imagination, created perfectly in accordance with the unchangeable purpose and the fixed and detailed plot that God has already determined in his mind.

## THE COSMIC INVENTOR MODEL

Imagine a human inventor, a genius, who created a whole world: "Robo-world." First, he created a huge building with thick, totally-impenetrable walls, floor, and ceiling. Then he invented computer-controlled equipment capable of counteracting any and every effect of the outside world—including the physical laws like gravity. The net result is that our inventor has made a building that—inside—is completely devoid of any physical laws. Then—with more computer-controlled equipment—he created an entirely new physical environment exactly to his specifications. As a final result, everything inside the building is totally controlled by this inventor's computers. Nothing outside the control of his computers can have any effect on the environment or events inside Robo-world.

Next this inventor invented scores of robots and programmed them all

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ble of such a feat.

65. The analogy is inadequate in one very important respect. Whereas a human author can only work on one character, one scene, and one plot line at a time, God works on limitless characters,

to move, act, communicate, and learn. He programmed each with detailed instructions concerning how to respond and how to act in any specific set of circumstances. Furthermore, he equipped each robot to make it possible to control its movements and actions directly by remote control whenever he wanted to do so. Therefore, when it is not being controlled by its own internal programming, each robot is controlled by the inventor's direct command by way of a remote control override of its internal programming.

Having invented all his equipment, he set all the robots and a variety of inert props in exactly that initial state he wanted; and with the push of a button, he started Robo-world in motion.

In a sense, Robo-world can be said to have been created *ex nihilo*. Strictly speaking, of course, our imaginary inventor had some help. God created the matter, the energy, and the laws of physics that the inventor is exploiting. But, apart from this slight head-start, our genius inventor created everything else in Robo-world, building on the foundation God had laid for him.

The relationship of Robo-world to its inventor provides an analogy for understanding our second viable model of God's relationship to his *ex nihilo* creation. Under this model, the cosmos is like a grand-scale Robo-world. God has created all kinds of different creatures who all operate in exactly the way he has "programmed" them to act. Everything that happens results from the interaction of these various creatures. Nothing exists in this grand Robo-world that he did not invent. Therefore, every moment of God's Robo-world functions in keeping with the design and programming that God built into it.

## **DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES WITHIN THE COSMIC INVENTOR MODEL**

The basic cosmic inventor model can take several different specific forms, depending upon the amount of direct involvement one believes God has in the cosmos:

**THE PARK FOUNTAIN MODEL** *{The Deistic Model}*—God, the cosmic inventor, invented the cosmos, set it in motion, and now is occupied exclusively with watching it, enjoying his handiwork. He does virtually nothing in the way of having direct control over its affairs. Reality is to God much like a park fountain is to most people. It is an interesting thing



to watch; and, indeed, that's what it's for.

**THE TOY TRAIN MODEL** *{The Deist-Interventionist Model}*— A boy who sets up an electric train does so primarily to enjoy watching it chug around the tracks. But not exclusively. At times he will do more than watch. He will intervene, changing the conditions of the track in order to see something different. He will devise train wrecks and other interesting occurrences. By analogy, under this model, God does not merely watch the cosmos. He also intervenes on occasion, to accomplish some specific purpose. In this model, God might sometimes exercise direct control over certain portions of his creation.

**THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER MODEL** *{The Semi-Automatic Providentialist Model}*—Generally speaking, an air traffic controller controls the flight patterns of the airplanes under his jurisdiction. He is constantly monitoring their flights and, as necessary, ordering minor adjustments in their flight paths. He doesn't control every aspect of an airplane's flight, of course. The pilots control most of that. But, insofar as the pilot guides his plane in response to the air traffic controller's instructions, it is the air traffic controller, through his constant intervention, who is ultimately determining the flight path of all the airplanes in his air space. This is a third model for God's relationship to the cosmos. God intervenes on more than rare occasions. Rather, like the air traffic controller, his intervention is the guiding principle that determines the general, overall course of the cosmos. A cosmos that otherwise would proceed upon its course automatically is being constantly redirected by the intervention of the creator.

**THE VIDEO GAME MODEL** *{The Total Providentialist Model}*—There are various video games in which the "characters" are totally controlled by a human manning the joy stick. These electronic characters do not make a move apart from the direction of the player. Our final model is analogous to this. God (through some sort of analog to remote-control command signals) intervenes constantly with concrete and specific directions that control our lives. Like electronic characters in a video game, our every move is directed by him.

Although these different models range widely with regard to the perceived level of direct intervention by God, they are all basically the same model. They differ only by degree. Each of these models see created real-

ity as essentially capable of an existence independent of God. And each sees reality as intrinsically susceptible to direct control by God—should he will it. The difference lies in the extent to which God is believed to assume direct control.

### **THE ALL-IMPORTANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE COSMIC AUTHOR AND INVENTOR MODELS**

There is an important fundamental difference between the Cosmic Author Model and the Cosmic Inventor Model: namely, the perspective each takes on the nature of ongoing cosmic existence. Under both models, the *original* fact and “shape” of cosmic existence is under the willful control of the creator. But under the Cosmic Author Model, the *ongoing* fact and “shape” of cosmic existence is also under the willful control of the creator. If the cosmic author chooses not to create the next line of the cosmic narrative, the cosmos would simply cease to exist, for under the Cosmic Author Model, the ongoing existence of the cosmos is utterly contingent on the will of the creator. This is not the case under the Cosmic Inventor Model. Under it, once set in motion by the creator, the cosmos has an autonomy from the creator that allows it to go chugging right along with or without him. Its creator could die and turn to dust and the cosmos would continue to exist and function. Cosmic existence is contingent upon the will of the creator in the sense that the cosmos would not be here if the creator had not willed it to be. But, under the Cosmic Inventor Model, the ongoing existence of the cosmos is *not* contingent on the will of the creator.

## **The Concept of a Controlling Nature**

The point of this chapter is to present an argument for divine determinism on the assumption of absolute divine creation *ex nihilo*. But the implications of divine creation *ex nihilo* for the nature of God’s determinative control of the cosmos are not transparent. Some aspects of the question are highly complex. Our discussion will be greatly simplified if we employ a key concept—the concept of a CONTROLLING NATURE. So, before I construct my argument for divine determinism, I digress to define and discuss this important concept.

## DEFINITION OF CONTROLLING NATURE

Every creature who acts, wills, thinks, chooses, or moves does so in accordance with a certain set of laws that determine that it will act in one way rather than another. This set of laws (whatever they may be and whatever form they may take) is the CONTROLLING NATURE of that creature. Every participant in cosmic events has a controlling nature that dictates how it will act. It makes no difference whether that participant is a human being or a stone. Though each model would involve a significantly different notion, the concept of a controlling nature is just as meaningful under the Cosmic Author Model as it is under the Cosmic Inventor Model.

To understand 'controlling nature' in the context of the Cosmic Author Model, we need to observe something about an analogous situation—the human author. When a human author writes a story, he creates various characters who will play some role in the narrative. Right from the start, he has a concept of their nature, character, personality, and the various other circumstances of their lives. These concepts may initially be somewhat vague and ill-defined, but they are there guiding the author's writing nonetheless. As the writing of the story progresses and one creative decision after another presents itself, the author makes these creative decisions with reference to his initial concept of each of the characters. He does not want any of his characters to act "out of character." So, in a very real sense, his initial conceptualization of the story's characters controls or determines to a significant extent the creative decisions that the author can make in the ongoing development of those characters.

Under the Cosmic Author Model, something similar can be said about God. God's initial conceptualization of each of his creatures controls or determines the creative decisions God can make in his ongoing creation of them. An important difference exists between God and his human counterpart. Whereas the human author's initial conception of his characters is vague and incomplete, God's initial conception of his creatures is, presumably, perfect, clear, and complete. God's initial conception of a human creature includes a grasp of literally every detail of everything that will happen to that creature. So, for example, God's initial conception of Adam includes the notions that (1) he will be the first human being, (2) he will be married to Eve, (3) he will have a specific number of sons and daughters, and (4) he will rebel against God. Indeed, it would include literally every other detail of his life. The divine author—because he has a perfect grasp of the whole plot of cosmic history and a complete understanding of all the interrelationships that exist between his "characters"—cannot fail to grasp the whole history of a creature from the moment he

first conceptualizes it. This complete and perfect conception of his creatures functions for God the same way the vague and imperfect conception of his characters does for a human author: it is the blueprint that directs the creative decisions that he will make in his ongoing creation. It follows that while the human author's conceptions of his characters provide him with only a general outline, that they direct him only partially, God's conceptions of his creatures direct him completely and perfectly. God's perfect and complete conceptions of his creatures is definitive. These original conceptions of his creatures do, in effect, determine every aspect of their existence. God's original conceptions of his creations, therefore, are their controlling natures. *Under the Cosmic Author Model, the controlling nature of a creature is the perfectly complete concept of it in the mind of God—the concept that dictates and determines its ongoing creation by God.*

Under the Cosmic Author Model, the whole of reality is determined by the controlling natures of each and every creature. And this is to say, the whole of reality is determined by God, for it is God who determines the controlling natures of every creature that exists. In other words, the whole of cosmic history is determined by God, the creator, in accordance with the controlling natures of things, which he has freely determined.<sup>66</sup>

Under the Cosmic Inventor Model, on the other hand, the controlling

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limitless scenes, and limitless plot lines simultaneously.

66. The reader who is familiar with the philosopher Leibniz will notice some distinct resemblances to Leibniz on several points. By no means do I follow Leibniz in all respects. But his implicit belief in the rationality of God, his belief in the rational interconnectedness of the universe, and his corresponding belief in divine determinism are, I believe, essentially correct. According to Leibniz, for God to create the cosmos means that he had to create it as a rationally coherent whole. Therefore, to create it at all meant that he must determine every little detail of its existence. I think Leibniz was right about that.

67. I say “could be” here, for—as we shall see—the controlling nature of a thing could still essentially be a blueprint in God's mind under the Cosmic Inventor Model just as surely as under the Cosmic Author Model. Under those versions of the Cosmic Inventor Model where God's intervention in the direction of cosmic events is high, it would be “blueprints” in the divine mind that would determine the nature of God's intervention. So, for example, if we conceive of events as the result of divinely-sent remote-control signals to which God's creatures are designed to respond, blueprints would dictate the commands God sends via remote control. In such a model, these blueprints would be the controlling natures of things. Only insofar as a version of the Cosmic Inventor Model views a creature as functioning autonomously from God must the concept of “controlling nature” take on a very different form and consist of something significantly different from a blueprint.

68. By “mechanical causation,” I do not necessarily mean *physical* causation. I mean it to include spiritual, non-material causation—if such exists. By spiritual, non-material causation I would mean causation that functions in a manner analogous to physical causation but in the absence

nature of a creature is not necessarily a divine conception or blueprint that God employs in his ongoing determination of that creature. It could be something altogether different from that.<sup>67</sup> Instead, it could be something with an autonomous existence that literally controls the creature through some sort of mechanical causation<sup>68</sup> in accordance with its divinely created design.<sup>69</sup>

Any conception of the cosmos that understands cosmic events as the direct creation of God or as the direct result of his causative influence leads clearly and directly to divine determinism. Questions arise when we conceive of a cosmos where the controlling natures of things function autonomously from God.<sup>70</sup> Does this view of the cosmos also lead to divine determinism, or does such a conception of the cosmos make room for the possibility that cosmic events are outside the scope of God's control?

This being the question, I make two assumptions for the purpose of the ensuing discussion: (1) I assume that every actor in the cosmic drama (from angel to rock) has a controlling nature as I am defining it, and (2) I assume that every creature's controlling nature controls its every action autonomously—in independence of the divine will—by a sort of mechanical causation.

As I have already suggested, the concept of a controlling nature could be employed under any conception of the cosmos. But under some conceptions of the cosmos, it is superfluous; instead of being helpful, it complicates the discussion unnecessarily. But in the context of the two assumptions listed above, the "controlling nature" is a useful concept that will help significantly simplify our discussion. Accordingly, in the following discussion, I employ the concept of a controlling nature solely within the parameters of these two assumptions.

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of physical matter and energy.

69. In mixed versions of the Cosmic Inventor Model—where sometimes God directly causes events (as through divine remote-control command signals) and sometimes he lets the creation operate autonomously—the controlling natures of things are best conceived as having autonomous existence and as causing events through a sort of mechanical causation. In such cases, it is the controlling natures of things that determine cosmic events to the extent that the cosmos is functioning autonomously; and it is the creative will of God that determines cosmic events to the extent that God intervenes.

70. That is, the controlling natures *function* autonomously even though God created, designed,

## COMMONSENSICALITY OF THE CONCEPT OF CONTROLLING NATURE

Our definition of a controlling nature assumes, of course, that such a thing exists. An obvious objection to this concept is that, in fact, no such thing does exist. But the objection is unfounded. The assumption that everything has a controlling nature is completely commonsensical.<sup>71</sup> It may not take exactly that form to which—for the sake of our discussion—we have just restricted ourselves. That is, it may not be an entity with autonomous existence that mechanically causes the actions of that being of whom it is the controlling nature. But the existence of a controlling nature, *per se*, is beyond dispute.

To assert that everything has a controlling nature is not to assert something spooky. It is merely to assert that there exist objectively real principles that govern reality and cause it to be rationally ordered.<sup>72</sup> It is to assert that something exists that causes each creature to behave in a rationally ordered way.

Or, to put it still another way, it is to affirm the possibility of true knowledge. If there were no controlling natures determining the rational orderliness of things, there would be no objective, determinative patterns in human experience.<sup>73</sup> And if there were no determinative patterns in human experience there could be no knowledge; and no one can seriously believe in the impossibility of knowledge.<sup>74</sup>

Built into the very fabric of human intelligence itself—so foundational that no one can successfully ignore it—is the three-fold assumption that (1) orderly patterns are there to be discovered in human experience, (2) these orderly patterns correspond to a rational orderliness that is really objectively out there, and, most importantly, (3) *this objective orderliness must*

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and willed into existence every controlling nature that exists.

71. In the sense of ‘commonsensical’ defined above in chapter 3.

72. Whether they be the rational will and objectives of the Divine Mind, or the rationally-designed mechanisms of autonomously functioning existents.

73. The assumption I am making here is that some form of determinism is required to account for rational order in human experience. In the absence of rational minds or principles ordering our existence, we could expect only chaos and randomness. See chapter 8 for a fuller discussion of this point.

74. By ‘a serious belief’ I mean one in which a person’s actions follow logically from the fact that one holds the belief. If a person says he believes X, but his actions are not logically compatible with X, then his belief in X is not a serious belief. No one consistently behaves as if they seriously believed that knowledge is not possible. And to the degree that anyone did, we would

*be caused by certain rational ordering principles.* (These are the controlling natures of things.) Innate human intelligence compels us to seek to identify those patterns and to understand the causes behind them. We cannot stop ourselves. So long as our intelligence is operative, we will seek the causes and explanations for the rational order of our experience.

Human beings are the most mysterious and complex participants in the cosmic drama. Yet, even of them we expect behavior that manifests a discernible orderliness. Our concepts of “personality” and “character” reflect this expectation. They describe different aspects of the orderly, predictable behavior of individual human beings. They describe different aspects of the controlling nature of a human individual. A rationally ordered law of each and every individual makes him behave exactly as he does. Personality and character are the common terms we use to describe aspects of that law.

We rely on our knowledge of other people's personality and character on a daily basis. When we get married, sign contracts, vote for candidates, hire employees, or make any of a host of other decisions, we are making judgments based on our understanding of the controlling nature of individual human beings.

Human beings are incredibly complex. Consequently, we do not expect to gain a thorough and flawless understanding of a person's controlling nature. Notions of a person's character and personality are, at best, only rough approximations of the nature of that person. The controlling nature of a stone, on the other hand, is simple and easy to understand. A stone, unhindered, will always roll down hill in slavish obedience to the law of gravity. This is a straightforward aspect of its controlling nature. But however easy or difficult knowledge of a controlling nature may be to acquire, we always assume it is there and that it can, in principle, be known, even when such knowledge is, in practice, inaccessible.

Still, a skeptic might object that our having an indomitable expectation of finding a controlling nature in things does not make it so. If this expectation is built into human intelligence, so much the worse for human intelligence. Perhaps this expectation is nothing more than a quirk—a strange and meaningless psychological need.

Perhaps. But if so, then no true knowledge of anything is possible. If all of our beliefs are actually constructed to fulfill an invalid psychological need for rational orderliness, then none of our beliefs have any significance as knowledge; they cannot be assumed to be true—that is, to correspond to

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consider his condition pathological.

75. For that matter, neither can an insane and unreasonable human being *consistently* maintain

the way things actually are. But this is totally absurd. No sane, reasonable, intelligent human being can seriously maintain total skepticism.<sup>75</sup> Total skepticism is a game played by sophists, not a serious philosophical position.

It makes more sense (particularly in the light of Judaeo-Christian theism) to understand that our persistent expectation of finding a controlling nature in things is a God-given expectation, created by God to be the very foundation of human intelligence. It is an expectation that God created in us to correspond to the fact that those natures really are there. In other words, if the Christian God is there, it makes sense to believe that the fundamental impulses that drive us as knowers correspond to the way objective reality actually is, so that true knowledge is possible. This is a basic assumption of the biblical worldview. God created the cosmos, and he created human beings to be capable of true knowledge of that cosmos. Consequently, he designed human intelligence to be adequate for the task.

So our fundamental assumption that everything has a controlling nature is not motivated by a misguided psychological need. It is foundational to human intelligence itself, the cornerstone of human knowing. If we reject this assumption, then we repudiate the very foundation of human intelligence and we reject the possibility of true knowledge of the cosmos at the same time.<sup>76</sup>

Consider what would happen if a human infant were born into this world without the assumption<sup>77</sup> that everything has a controlling nature. The baby would see a collage of colors. He might notice on one occasion that this collage of colors, shifting and dynamic as it was, included some consistent patterns that did not vary. But if he had no expectation that there was a reason for this pattern, if he had no expectation that there was some controlling nature that was giving rise to his experience, his only response could be, “Wow! How incredibly interesting! Those colors are staying together! What a remarkable random coincidence.”

But this is not how the baby responds. Instead, the baby reasons, “Those colors are staying together. The only rational explanation is that

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total skepticism.

76. A thorough defense of this statement would require a whole treatise on a biblical theory of knowledge. Obviously, it is not possible to have that discussion here. Chapters 3 and 8 indicate the direction that my construction of such a theory would take; but I cannot offer here a thorough exposition and defense of what I would hold to be a biblical epistemology.

77. Obviously this assumption is not something that the infant holds consciously and articulately. Indeed, it is not properly speaking a part of the baby’s knowledge. Rather, it is what I would call a “pre-gnostic” assumption. It is not an assumption posited in theoretical thought; rather, it is a working assumption built into the very operation of human intelligence itself. To use a computer analogy, it is part of the ROM of human intelligence.



they constitute a *thing*, an object. The fact that they are an object is what causes them to keep the same pattern. I'm not sure what the object is. I'll have to wait until I can talk and ask my mother, but I know it is something." My point is this: the very possibility of the human infant learning anything at all is based on the fact that the baby innately expects<sup>78</sup> his experience to be caused by controlling natures that he can come to know and understand.

All things considered, it simply makes no sense to reject the notion that all things have a controlling nature.<sup>79</sup> It is just too commonsensical. We cannot help ourselves. We are forced to believe it by our own instincts. To reject it is to rebel against human intelligence itself.

## BEING CLEAR ON CONTROLLING NATURES

It is crucial that I be perfectly clear what I mean by CONTROLLING NATURE. Consider the controlling nature of a stone. The controlling nature of a stone does not merely set boundaries on what a stone can be and how it can "act." Its controlling nature does more than determine that whatever the stone does must be stone-like. Rather, the controlling nature of a stone determines exactly what it will do on any given occasion. The controlling nature of a stone determines that it will fall from exactly this location at exactly this time at exactly this velocity having exactly these results. The physicist feels confident that, given enough information, he could predict the time, location, velocity, and results of the stone's falling. Why? Because he can have such a grasp of the stone's controlling nature that he can predict what its controlling nature will cause the stone to do.

## BEING CLEAR ON THE CONTROLLING NATURE OF A HUMAN BEING

In the argument that follows we will concentrate especially on the controlling nature of human beings. Accordingly, an accurate understanding of what we mean by 'controlling nature' in their case is especially important. Three points are worth noting:

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78. Again, not as a conscious expectation that he can articulate. See the note immediately above.

79. A more concise but parallel assertion to the one that everything has a controlling nature might be this: Every action a creature takes is either uncaused (i.e., random), self-caused, or caused. The notion that every creature has a controlling nature is simply the suggestion that all of every creature's actions or choices are caused. None of them is uncaused (random); and none

1. The controlling nature of a human being is not apart from the human being himself. My controlling nature is not separate and distinct from me, rather, it *is* me. My controlling nature is that in me—a part of my being, a part of the definition of who I am—that causes me to choose one thing rather than another.

2. The controlling nature of a human being is not just his human nature as we commonly understand that. My controlling nature does not merely put certain boundaries on the possible choices I can make. It does not merely dictate that my choices will be human-like. Rather, it is my own unique, personal, individual nature that specifically determines the specific, individual choices that I make as a distinct individual.

3. The controlling nature of a human being is not his individual will as that is sometimes understood. Many people conceive of the will as a decision-generating machine that makes it possible for a person to make decisions, but that does not determine the exact nature and content of those decisions. It's like a saw. A saw makes it possible for a man to cut wood. But the saw does not control the kind and location of the cut. Similarly, the human will is often conceived as a faculty that enables a man to choose, but it does not control what is going to be chosen and when. The human will, so conceived, is not one's controlling nature. The controlling nature of a distinct human individual is the causative force within him that determines specifically and exactly what that individual will choose when.

## **Creation *Ex Nihilo* as an Argument for Divine Determinism**

The essence of the argument for divine determinism from divine creation is this: there are only two viable models whereby one can understand the Judaeo-Christian God as the *ex nihilo* creator; and, no matter which model one chooses (nor which version of that model one chooses) divine determinism is rationally required. To see this, I will proceed by considering the implications of the Cosmic Inventor Model and the Cosmic Author Model separately.

## PRELIMINARY OBSERVATION ON MY PROCEDURE

I must first explain why I proceed as I do. In order to simplify matters, my discussion concentrates exclusively on the freewill choices of human beings. Obviously I am not maintaining that only freewill choices are divinely determined. My contention is that all cosmic events, of whatever nature, are divinely determined. But it is simpler to articulate my argument with respect to just the one type of event and not have to repeatedly acknowledge all the other kinds of events that can occur. There are two reasons why I feel justified in limiting my discussion to human freewill choices:

1. This work is fundamentally a defense of divine determinism vis-à-vis limited determinism. As the label suggests, limited determinism is quite willing to allow that God determines many, if not most, cosmic events. Limited determinism is *limited* determinism precisely because it insists that some kinds of events are not divinely determined even though the majority are. Different limited determinists would specify different events as being outside the scope of God's causation. But virtually all limited determinists would include freewill choices among the class of events outside God's causation. Therefore, the freewill choices of human beings are particularly controversial. If my argument can show that creation *ex nihilo* entails divine determinism with respect to freewill choices, then I have successfully refuted limited determinism in the form in which it is usually found.
2. The arguments I offer for the divine determination of freewill choices could quite easily be adapted and applied to other types of cosmic events. Even though they would need to be modified somewhat, the substance of the arguments would be the same for every kind of cosmic event. Rather than tediously repeat the arguments with respect to each different kind of possible event, I have chosen to take the most difficult case—the divine determinism of freewill events—and let it stand for all cosmic events. I am confident that the same arguments could be made for

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of them is self-caused.

80. My premise is this: If God ultimately determines human freewill choice, then he must necessarily determine every other kind of cosmic event. Most limited determinists would readily accept this premise. Incidentally, the inverse of this premise (i.e., if God does not determine

the other kinds as well. Hence, though my arguments are framed as specific arguments for the divine determination of freewill choices, nevertheless the reader could easily satisfy himself that doing so has not invalidated these arguments as proof of the divine determination of all cosmic events.<sup>80</sup>

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE COSMIC INVENTOR MODEL FOR DIVINE DETERMINISM

### TWO WAYS CREATURES CAN FUNCTION WITHIN THE COSMIC INVENTOR MODEL

That there are, within the context of the Cosmic Inventor Model, two different ways to envision creatures functioning is apparent from my earlier descriptions of the different forms it can take:

1. God's creatures could respond—in accord with their created design—out of “mechanical obedience” to God's direct commands.<sup>81</sup> Just as the inventor of Robo-world could program his robots to respond to commands he sent them by remote-control signal, likewise, under the Cosmic Inventor Model, we could have been created by God to respond, mechanically, to command signals that God might send. If so, then, theoretically, our every move could be the direct result of God's direct command, and, hence, our every move would be directly caused by God.<sup>82</sup>
  
2. God's creatures—once created and initially set in motion—could function quite independently of God. God, having equipped them with a controlling nature, could have taken his hands off and left his creatures to chug along on their own, in strict mechanical obedience to their

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human freewill choice, then he does not determine every other kind of cosmic event.) is not true.

81. Throughout the ensuing discussion, when I refer to “mechanical” obedience, “mechanical” necessity, etc., I do not necessarily mean “physical” necessity. Physical necessity—i.e., strict necessity arising from the necessity of conforming to natural, physical laws—is the paradigm for what I mean; but it does not exhaust what I mean. I want to allow for the possibility (should it exist) that there are non-material, spiritual laws that direct cosmic events in a manner exactly analogous to the way physical laws direct natural events. Therefore, by “mechanical” necessity I mean to include not only the necessity that results from *physical*, mechanical causation, but also the necessity which results from *non-physical*, mechanical causation (if such exists).

controlling natures. Just as the inventor of Robo-world could program his robots to function independently of any ongoing input from him, God could have equipped us with controlling natures that would allow us to function without any intervention from him. We would then operate out of mechanical obedience to the divinely-designed controlling nature that God placed in us initially.<sup>83</sup>

Or, we can function in some combination of these two ways. To whatever extent we function autonomously from God, we function as described in (2) above. To whatever extent we function in response to God's direct intervention, we function as described in (1) above—God's direct causation being able to override our controlling nature. Be that as it may, there remain just these two fundamentally different ways that free-will creatures might function (according to the Cosmic Inventor Model).

### THE QUESTION OF INTEREST TO US

If, in fact, the first of the above models is the way we actually function, then the divine determination of our choices is clear and indisputable. If every choice is directly caused by God, then, by definition, we have the divine determination of freewill choices. But what if (in accord with the second model) we function autonomously from God—each of our freewill choices being determined not by God, but by the controlling natures that he gave us? What would then be implied as to the divine determination of our choices? If our controlling natures function independently from any direct, ongoing causative influence that God exerts on our choices, does it or does it not follow that our choices are divinely determined?

Most limited determinists base their judgment that God is not ultimately responsible for freewill choices on the assumption that our controlling natures can function autonomously from God. On the surface, the limited determinist's confidence seems unfounded. Even if we assume the functional autonomy of our controlling natures, is it not God—according to the biblical concept of creation—who created and designed our controlling natures? And if so, do our controlling natures not function in keeping with a design that originated from him? And if so, are not all of our choices ultimately determined by the design that God himself built into our controlling natures? Consequently, God is ultimately the deter-

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82. The form of the Cosmic Inventor Model being described here is the Video Game Model or the Total Providentialist Model.

miner of all of our choices. Everything we choose has ultimately been determined by his creative will.

So while the divine determinist could argue that God, being the creator of my controlling nature, is thereby the ultimate determiner of my every choice even if my controlling nature operates autonomously, the limited determinist disagrees with this line of reasoning on the basis of one of the following two objections:

### THE FIRST OBJECTION TO THIS LINE OF REASONING

Granted, the biblical view of creation suggests that Adam<sup>84</sup> himself is created by God. But the Bible does not mean to suggest that Adam's controlling nature is created by God. God has created the fact of Adam's existence, but not the causes of his individual decisions (i.e., not his controlling nature). God causes Adam to exist; but Adam causes his own choices, not God.<sup>85</sup>

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83. The form of the Cosmic Inventor Model being described here is the Park Fountain Model or Deistic Model.

84. I shall use the name 'Adam'—in accordance with its original meaning—to mean "humankind" (as distinct from all the other types of living beings). For the sake of simplicity, I will use the term 'Adam' to represent any and every human being. I am not referring to the historical figure Adam, the first human being. I am using Adam, instead, as a variable place-holder to stand for any human being.

85. This is, in essence, the substance of Geisler's position. See Norman L. Geisler, *Philosophy of Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 401. Geisler argues that "No moral action is externally determined nor is it indeterminate. Moral actions are self-determined." There is a basic confusion in Geisler's position relative to mine. Certainly, Geisler does not mean that moral actions are self-determined in the sense that moral actions cause themselves. That, as we shall discuss later, would be absurd. Rather, Geisler means that Adam causes his own moral actions. No being external to Adam causes Adam's moral actions; and Adam's moral actions are not uncaused. But Adam's causing his own moral actions (Geisler's position) is equivalent to Adam's moral actions being caused by his own controlling nature (my position)—for, as I have already observed, Adam's controlling nature is his "self." The problem is this: Whereas Geisler and I both attribute moral actions to the same direct cause—Adam himself—Geisler stops his thinking there, assuming that the origin of moral actions is thereby solved. My argument is that attributing Adam's moral actions to Adam, though true, does not solve the problem of the ultimate origin of those moral actions. Where does the controlling nature or

## ANSWER TO THE FIRST OBJECTION

For the sake of argument, let us grant the limited determinist his assumption—namely, creation *ex nihilo* establishes that God created the fact of Adam's existence, but it does not establish that God created Adam's controlling nature. Given this assumption, where does Adam's controlling nature originate? What is the cause of its existence? I will examine all the logically possible answers to this question:

### The Logically-Possible Answers

#### Nothing Causes Adam's Controlling Nature (It Does Not Exist)

The first possible answer is that nothing causes Adam's controlling nature because it does not exist. It is simply to assert that no controlling nature exists. Pure randomness controls the actions of Adam. His actions are not determined. They are not rationally ordered and patterned. Rather, indeterminism is the true explanation of his actions.

I have already dismissed this possibility in the arguments above. Such a perspective violates common sense. We could not bring ourselves to seriously believe this, try as we might. This is not a rationally satisfactory answer to our question.

#### Adam's Controlling Nature Is Self-Existent

The second possible answer is, again, that nothing is the cause of Adam's controlling nature, but in a different sense. According to this answer, Adam has a determinate controlling nature that causes his actions, but that controlling nature itself is caused by nothing outside itself. Rather, it is self-existent. It has always existed and must always exist as it does. It just is. No explanation of its existence is possible, nor needed.

Though this answer is logically possible, it is in direct conflict with the biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* as we have defined it in this chapter. One of the primary assertions of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is that no one and no thing, except God himself, is self-existent.<sup>86</sup> This answer requires that there be a whole host of self-existent beings. Not only God, but each and every controlling nature of each and every human being is self-existent!

This viewpoint would rewrite the biblical creation account to read:

In the beginning was God and a whole host of little self-existent

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<sup>86</sup>“self” which gives rise to Adam's moral actions come from? That, essentially, is the question to

controlling natures. Now God created everything that is, and the self-existent controlling natures each picked one of these things to live in and control.

If the traditional doctrine of absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* understands the Bible rightly, then this position is biblically absurd. If we are going to take the biblical doctrine of creation seriously, this explanation for the origin of Adam's controlling nature is not satisfactory.

### Adam's Controlling Nature Is Self-Creating

The third possible answer is that Adam's controlling nature is self-creating, self-originating, self-generating, and self-causing. It is not self-existent. That is, it is not eternal and uncaused. Its existence and nature are created, but it is self-created and self-determined and not determined by anyone or anything outside of itself.

Two major objections can be raised against this alternative:

**1. It violates reason.** The very concept of a self-creating being is irrational and nonsensical. The biblical concept of God, as traditionally understood, is not that he is self-creating and self-generating, but that he is eternal and self-existent. These are very different notions. The latter is ultimately meaningful and rationally possible, the former is rationally absurd. Therefore, the irrationality of the suggestion that Adam's controlling nature is self-creating is evident. It ascribes to a finite "thing," Adam's controlling nature, a power and ability that we do not even ascribe to the eternal, uncaused, self-existent, infinite God. Indeed, we would find it just as unthinkable and nonsensical to ascribe this ability to God as to ascribe it to Adam's controlling nature. Nothing can cause its own existence. The very notion is absurd.<sup>87</sup>

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which we seek an answer—a question to which Geisler has provided no answer.

86. See the discussion of creation *ex nihilo* earlier in this chapter.

87. In the same passage cited in note 85 above, Geisler argues that theism takes the view that "moral actions" are self-caused (as opposed to indeterminate or externally caused). As mentioned in note 85, Geisler does not mean by "self-caused" what I am criticizing here. He means to say that Adam, himself, causes his own moral actions. His actions are not uncaused, nor caused by something outside of Adam. In the terms in which I am arguing, however, this does not make his actions "self-caused." Even in Geisler's view, Adam's moral actions do not cause themselves! Rather, Adam's moral actions are, in terms of Geisler's categories, externally caused—that is, they are caused by Adam's controlling nature. We can legitimately call these actions self-caused (as Geisler does) in the sense that Adam, himself, is their cause—which is to



**2. It violates the biblical account of creation.** It violates the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* as it has been explained in this chapter. One of the primary tenets of creation *ex nihilo* is that literally nothing comes into existence but that it is created by God. If the controlling nature of Adam is self-creating, then it comes into existence without being created by God. This is in direct contradiction to the traditional understanding of the biblical teaching.

But the limited determinist might object: I will grant that Adam's controlling nature is created by God, but there is "room to move" built into the very structure of Adam's controlling nature. It has the ability to fashion itself. So, the biblical doctrine is correct, nothing creates itself—so neither does Adam's controlling nature create itself. But whereas Adam's controlling nature does not create itself, it does—once created—develop, grow, change, and define itself as time goes on.

Confusing Adam's individual controlling nature with his generic human nature is what lends plausibility to this suggestion. The suggestion makes some sort of sense if we understand it to be simply that God did create Adam with a generic human nature, but that the generic human nature that God created in Adam did not, in and of itself, cause and determine Adam's individual controlling nature.<sup>88</sup>

But this suggestion would not solve anything. The question before us does not concern the origins of Adam's generic human nature. (I do acknowledge that such exists.) Rather, the question before us concerns the origins of Adam's controlling nature. Where does *that* come from? If the suggestion is that no such thing exists, because only a generic human nature exists, then we are back to the first alternative up above—a denial of the existence of a controlling nature. If we are suggesting, rather, that the individual controlling nature is able to create itself from out of the generic human nature, then we have not, in fact, advanced any beyond the nonsense of this present suggestion. To speak of an individual controlling nature creating or causing itself is absurd. Whether it is creating itself out of nothing or creating itself out of the already-existing stuff of a generic human nature makes no difference. It is still absurd. So to posit self-creation as an explanation of the origin of the specific, individual controlling

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say that Adam's controlling nature is their cause. But this is not the doctrine of self-generation that I am here rejecting as absurd.

88. And this, of course is true. Adam's generic human nature does not determine his individual controlling nature. If it did, then every human being's individual controlling nature should be identical to the controlling nature of every other individual. If the individual controlling nature

nature of Adam is biblically and rationally unacceptable.

### Adam's Controlling Nature Is Created By Some Other Self-Existent Being

The fourth possible answer is that, not the God of the Bible, but some other eternal, self-existent being (for example, God's cousin, George) created or determined Adam's controlling nature.

This is biblically unacceptable. One of the clear ramifications of the biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* is that there exists one and only one eternal, self-existent being. To propose otherwise is to run directly counter to the biblical teaching. No person who accepts biblical teaching would seriously propose this.

### Adam's Controlling Nature Is Caused By Some Other Created Being(s)

The fifth, very popular, answer is that Adam's controlling nature is caused or determined by some other aspect of the created order. So, for example, God created Adam's genes. But it is his set of genes,<sup>89</sup> not God, that determines what his controlling nature will be.

It may very well be true that physical realities determine what Adam's controlling nature will be. Indeed, at least to some extent, it is certainly true. But to say that a set of genes (or some other combination of physical realities) determines Adam's controlling nature does not exclude God as being the one who ultimately determines his controlling nature. It only creates the illusion that divine causation is excluded. Indeed, if creation *ex nihilo* is true, then if genes (or whatever) do create Adam's controlling nature, ultimately it must be God who creates his controlling nature.

Adam's controlling nature is determined by his set of genes. His set of genes is, in turn, determined by physical laws of chemistry and biology—laws that were created and designed by God and that operate out of mechanical necessity in accordance with patterns that God established—in conjunction with certain choices his parents made. His parents' free

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of Adam follows mechanically from the generic human nature alone, then there is no cause for any variation in individual controlling natures.

89. No serious thinker would actually argue that genes and genes alone determine a person's every freewill choice. I just use genes as an example. It could be any physical or spiritual realities and any combination of physical or spiritual realities that one views as the cause of our choices. If these realities cause our choices out of some sort of mechanical necessity, then it is a species of the view that I am critiquing here. In particular, *it makes no difference whether these realities are genetic material or environmental factors*. Both sides of the nature/nurture or genes/environment debate are included within the scope of "some other aspect of the created order" as I envision

choices, in turn, were determined by their controlling natures. Their controlling natures were determined by their sets of genes, that were determined by those same physical laws of chemistry and biology, in conjunction with certain choices their parents made. Their parents' free choices, in turn, were determined by their controlling natures...that were determined by those same physical laws of chemistry and biology in conjunction with certain choices the very first parents made. The first parents' free choices, in turn, were determined by their controlling natures, which were determined by their sets of genes, which were *determined by God*.<sup>90</sup>

Hence, if Adam's controlling nature is caused out of strict physical (or mechanical) necessity by any other aspect of created reality,<sup>91</sup> then—assuming creation *ex nihilo*—one is forced to recognize the ultimate determination of all things by the original inventor, God. For the same reason that the genius inventor of Robo-world is ultimately the one who determines all that transpires in that world, God, under our present assumptions, must similarly determine all things that transpire in our cosmos. In both instances, all subsequent events are the inevitable mechanical results of mechanical principles.

### Adam's Controlling Nature Is Created By God

The final alternative is that God himself creates Adam's controlling nature. God, in creating Adam, does not merely create the fact of his existence, but he creates the unique, individual, distinctive nature that defines Adam as Adam and is—one way or another—causative of the choices Adam makes.

This alternative is quite compatible with both sound reason and the

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that here. Whether that aspect of the created order is some part of the environment or the genetic inheritance, the argument holds the same either way.

90. I would have to frame the argument of this paragraph differently if I were not assuming—for the sake of argument—that genes, alone, determined freewill choices. But the net result would be the same under any similar assumption. If our freewill choices are, ultimately, the mechanical result of certain mechanical laws (whether spiritual or physical), then ultimately our freewill choices are determined by those laws and the initial state of the cosmos—both of which were determined by God. This is the essence of my point in this paragraph.

91. This would be a form of natural determinism as defined in chapter 1. The conclusion here is that natural determinism in the context of a belief in divine creation *ex nihilo* is a belief in divine determinism mediated through natural determinism; but it is ultimately divine determinism nonetheless.

92. Actually, what I mean here specifically is that this answer is quite compatible with sound reason and the Bible with respect to the biblical view of creation—as that is traditionally understood. From the standpoint of the biblical and commonsensical view of human free will, this

Bible.<sup>92</sup> No serious objection can be raised on either front—reason or the Bible—against understanding God’s creative act in this way.

### Conclusion

We have been seeking an answer to the question, “Where does Adam’s controlling nature originate?” We have discovered that there are only two plausible answers: (1) it could be created by God directly, or (2) it could be caused out of mechanical necessity by the causative powers of other aspects of the created cosmos. Since the limited determinist wants to avoid the former, the only plausible answer available to him is the latter: Adam’s controlling nature originates from and is caused, mechanically, by other created realities.<sup>93</sup> But this answer does not accomplish what the limited determinist desires—an alternative to divine determinism. For, given the traditional biblical doctrine of absolute divine creation *ex nihilo*, Adam’s controlling nature being caused out of mechanical necessity by other created realities is ultimately Adam’s controlling nature being caused by the divine creator himself. In other words, this second answer logically entails divine determinism. Hence, it is no less an espousal of divine determinism than the first one.

The divine determinist reasons that since God creates the controlling natures of all things, he ultimately determines everything that transpires. The first limited determinist objection is, in effect, to deny that God creates the controlling natures of certain things. If he does not create the controlling natures of all things, then, perhaps, we can escape the conclusion that he determines all things.

But we have seen that rejecting the proposition that God creates the controlling natures of all things leads to a disappointing result for the limited determinist. When we assume that God is not the origin of our controlling natures, we find that there remains only one rationally and biblically acceptable alternative<sup>94</sup>—namely, our controlling natures originate as the mechanically necessary result of the interaction of other created real-

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view in particular and the Cosmic Inventor Model, in general, is not compatible with sound reason and the Bible. This will become clearer as my argument progresses.

93. A real irony exists here. One of my contentions in this book is that limited determinists are right in their intuition to reject natural determinism and that their rejection of divine determinism results from their confusing divine determinism with natural determinism. In other words, limited determinism’s “natural enemy” is natural determinism; and the limited determinist intuitively recognizes this. It is ironic, therefore—as I show in this argument—that the only strategy available to the limited determinist to avoid divine determinism, given the fact of divine creation *ex nihilo*, is to embrace natural determinism. And even that fails to avoid divine determinism.

94. But, as I noted in note 92, this is not truly an acceptable alternative in the light of all that

ities. But this, as we have seen, ultimately implies divine determinism just as surely as if God were the direct creator of our controlling natures. Those other created realities that are the cause and origin of our controlling natures are ultimately created by God and function just as he has willed them to function. Our controlling natures, therefore, are ultimately determined by God. Even if they are not created directly by him, they are, as it were, created indirectly—being the necessary outworking of mechanical principles and laws that he did directly create.

This first objection, then—to deny that God creates the controlling natures of certain things—offers no rationally and biblically acceptable line of reasoning by which to avoid divine determinism. If God is the creator of all things in any manner consistent with the Cosmic Inventor Model, then divine determinism is ultimately implied.

## **THE SECOND OBJECTION TO THIS LINE OF REASONING**

The second objection that could be raised against the divine determinist's line of reasoning is this: Granted that God creates the controlling nature, nevertheless, he does not thereby determine the manner in which it will function in determining Adam's choices. Though God is the creator of Adam's controlling nature, he does not determine its functioning whereby it determines Adam's decisions. God created the fact that the controlling nature exists, but he did not create within it any laws by which its output (Adam's choices) is determined.

## **ANSWER TO THE SECOND OBJECTION**

The most important response I can make to this objection is to note that a false distinction is being made here. The distinction between the existence of a controlling nature and the design according to which it functions to determine Adam's choices is fallacious. It makes no sense to say that God created Adam's controlling nature, but he did not determine the design according to which it functions. Once we grasp adequately what is meant by the controlling nature, we see that a controlling nature can no more exist apart from the design by which it determines Adam's choices than a mathematical expression can exist apart from the mathematical terms from which it is comprised. At its very essence, Adam's controlling nature is (or, at least, necessarily includes) that design or pattern according to which Adam's choices are determined.

A controlling nature without a design by which it determines Adam's choices would be like a computer with no programming. A computer

without programming is not thereby left free to function as it freely chooses. Rather, it is paralyzed from functioning at all. Similarly, the controlling nature of Adam, if it had not been given any design by which to function, would be paralyzed. It would be unable to determine Adam's choices at all. It would not render Adam free to make uncaused and undetermined choices. It would render Adam a lifeless corpse, unable to do anything at all.

Whether God can create any particular X without creating the structure and design according to which it functions is questionable in its own right. I am not convinced that it would ever make sense to claim that God created the fact that X existed without creating the nature, design, and structure of X's existence. If such were possible, how would X be distinguishable from any Y that exists. Does not the fact that X is definable as X rather than Y necessarily entail that X has a given structure, design, and nature according to which it exists *and functions*? So I remain unconvinced that this suggestion can even make any sense. God creating X without creating the laws of its operation is perhaps outright nonsense.

But—for the sake of the argument—I will grant that it is possible, in general, for God to create X without creating the laws of its operation. But what might be possible in general cannot possibly apply to Adam's controlling nature. The existence of Adam's controlling nature *is* its design. Adam's controlling nature is nothing else but the determinative cause of his choices. To say that Adam's controlling nature was created by God is, by definition, to say that the determinative cause of Adam's actions was created by God. If God created the *fact* of the existence of Adam's controlling nature, then he created the nature of its determinative control, for its existence *is*, in its essence, the nature of its determinative control.

Therefore, if God did create (either directly or indirectly) the controlling nature of Adam—and we have seen that this follows necessarily from the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*—then it follows that God ultimately determines all of Adam's choices. Adam's choices are necessitated by his controlling nature, and his own controlling nature is caused and determined by God. Ultimately, therefore, God determines Adam's choices.

## CONCLUSION

Where has our argument brought us? If we assume the Cosmic Inventor Model, there are only four viable answers to the question of the origin of our actions—that is, answers that do justice to both reason

and the traditional understanding of the Bible's teaching about creation:

**I.** The actions of God's creatures originate with God. God directly and immediately causes his creatures to act as they do. Just as the genius inventor of Robo-world could so construct his world that its every event was subject to his direct intervention by means of remote-control signals he would send, God could have so constructed the cosmos that every move his creatures make is in direct response to his expressed will, mechanically enforced upon them. *This is the view that God controls the actions of his creatures directly through remote control.*

**II.** The actions of God's creatures originate from the autonomous operation of the controlling natures of things; and these controlling natures are directly designed by God to operate exactly as he wished. The robots in Robo-world could have been made to function just as the inventor wished even though they functioned autonomously from him. The inventor could have designed them to act out of mechanically necessary obedience to the programming that he designed for each one. Likewise, God could have designed each of his creatures to respond out of some sort of "mechanical" necessity to its own particular controlling nature that he himself designed. *This is the view that God controls the actions of his creatures directly through pre-programming.*

**III.** The actions of God's creatures originate from the autonomous operation of the controlling natures of things; and these controlling natures are directly caused out of mechanical necessity by the interaction of various other aspects of the created order that ultimately also function out of mechanical necessity in accordance with a design that they were given by God. For example, if we could assume that the genes in a human's body are ultimately the cause of every particular decision he makes, then, in effect, his controlling nature is his particular set of genes. Furthermore, these genes operate by mechanical (chemical) necessity in accordance with physical laws that God himself designed. *This is the view that God controls the actions of his creatures indirectly, mediated through other created causes he designed.*

**IV.** They originate from any combination of any or all of the above.

As we have seen, no matter which of the above options one chooses, the divine determination of all cosmic events is the necessary result. If we

want to remain faithful to the traditional doctrine of biblical creation and sound reason, we cannot conceive of God's relationship to the cosmos as that of cosmic inventor without finding that divine determinism is ultimately implied. *Hence, the Cosmic Inventor model of God as the creator ex nihilo of the cosmos rationally requires divine determinism.*

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE COSMIC AUTHOR MODEL FOR DIVINE DETERMINISM

The very nature of the Cosmic Author Model is such that divine determinism is implicit in the very description of the model. If God is the one who moment-by-moment is creating every aspect of everything that exists and every event that occurs, then clearly he determines absolutely everything as divine determinism suggests. Therefore, *the Cosmic Author Model entails divine determinism by definition.* If the Cosmic Author model is the true model of God's relationship to reality,<sup>95</sup> then it necessarily follows that divine determinism is true.

## THE ARGUMENT FOR DIVINE DETERMINISM FROM THE FACT OF DIVINE CREATION

At last, we are in a position to articulate the argument for divine determinism from the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* succinctly from beginning to end.

### OUTLINE OF THE ARGUMENT

There exist two, and only two, models whereby one can understand the relationship between God and created reality in such a way that the consequent view of God is consistent with (1) the traditional Judaeo-Christian (biblical) concept of the nature of God, and (2) the traditional understanding of the biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. These two models are (1) the Cosmic Author Model and (2) the Cosmic Inventor Model.

No matter which of the two possible models one chooses, divine deter-

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the Bible teaches and in the light of all that common sense requires.

95. I believe that the Cosmic Author Model is the true model of God's relationship to reality. However, for the purposes of this chapter, I have not assumed so. For the purposes of this chapter, I assume that either model—the Cosmic Author Model or the Cosmic Inventor



minism is rationally required by that model. If one chooses the Cosmic Author Model, divine determinism directly follows by definition. If one chooses the Cosmic Inventor Model, divine determinism still follows. For under the Cosmic Inventor model, the four plausible explanations for the origin of controlling natures—explanations that do not violate the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* nor common sense—all necessitate divine determinism.

Therefore—assuming (1) that common sense is a reliable guide to truth, (2) that the traditional Judaeo-Christian conception of the nature of God is true, and (3) that absolute divine creation *ex nihilo* is true—we cannot consistently conceive of God as the creator of the world without also conceiving him to be the determiner of all that occurs in the world. In other words, *if we want to assent to creation ex nihilo in the context of a traditional concept of God, then we are forced to embrace divine determinism.*

### IMPORTANT OBJECTION TO THE ARGUMENT

An important objection remains. The above argument, it could be said, proves that God determines all things, but it does not prove that he *purposes* all things. Limited determinists do not object to divine determinism's contention that God determines all things so much as they object to its contention that God actually purposes all things. The above argument from creation *ex nihilo* establishes the former, but not the latter. It has shown that the Cosmic Inventor Model necessarily entails divine determinism, but it has not shown that it entails divine *providence*.<sup>96</sup>

Let me illustrate this objection by returning to our analogy between God and the genius inventor of Robo-world. We have seen that, given the nature of his relationship to Robo-world, the genius inventor actually determines everything that transpires there. Everything follows necessarily (mechanically) from the initial state in which it was set in motion and from the internal programming that directs its functioning. The inventor is the direct cause of both. But it does not follow—in fact, it clearly cannot be true—that the inventor of Robo-world actually purposes everything that occurs in Robo-world. Robo-world is so incredibly complex that it simply would not be possible for the human inventor to anticipate everything that will occur as a result of his programming choices and the original state in which he put Robo-world. Indeed, it may be fair to say that the inventor can predict virtually nothing beyond the first few minutes of Robo-world's operation.

By analogy, the same could be true of God. That is to say, while his

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Model—may indeed be the right one.

status as creator *ex nihilo* logically requires that he be the ultimate cause of everything that occurs, it does not logically require that he ultimately purpose everything that occurs. Like the human inventor of Robo-world, God may perhaps be unable to predict what the implications of his original creative choices will be. In that case, while he ultimately causes everything that occurs, he does not purpose or plan everything that occurs, for, from the beginning, he did not and could not know what the results of his creative, causative choices would be.

### ANSWERING THIS OBJECTION

The problem with this objection is that it relies on a false analogy. In one crucial respect, God is not analogous to the human inventor of Robo-world. The human inventor of Robo-world is just that, *human*—with all the finitude and limitations that that implies. God is *not* human, and he does not suffer from the characteristic finitude and limitations implied by that. Only if we are prepared to jettison the traditional conception of God as omniscient, as unlimited in his ability to know, can we legitimately draw the necessary analogy between God and this human inventor.<sup>97</sup>

Under a traditional conception, God—unlike the human inventor—certainly could anticipate what the ramifications of his choices will be.<sup>98</sup> From a knowledge of its initial state and operative principles, God would know in exact detail the entirety of cosmic history. Hence, God (as traditionally conceived) could not create the cosmos without knowing—from its initial state and controlling principles—everything that would occur within it. Hence, in creating the initial state of the cosmos, God would necessarily be purposing all that would follow in cosmic history. If he did not want a particular course of cosmic history to occur, he had the option not to create it. He was not ignorant of what his creation would entail. The fact that he did create it, therefore, necessarily requires that he pur-

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96. By ‘divine providence’ here I mean to describe the *purposeful* control of all cosmic events.

97. Interestingly, Pinnock, in his defense of an extreme limited determinist position feels compelled to deny the omniscience of God in order to hold the position he wishes to hold with logical consistency. Pinnock is to be applauded for his logical consistency and intellectual integrity in this regard. See Clark Pinnock, “God Limits His Knowledge” in *Predestination & Free Will*, edited by David and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986).

98. Indeed, given sufficient knowledge and the aid of a computer with adequate size and speed, I could imagine myself being able to anticipate exactly what should follow by mechanical necessity from the initial state of the cosmos given the nature of its controlling principles. If I can conceive of my doing this, surely the omniscient God can do this.

posed it.<sup>99</sup> For an omniscient, unlimited God—who is unlike any finite, limited human being—to determine all things is to purpose all things.

One could still argue that, while God is capable of knowing the outcome of his choices in creation, he could—through an act of self-induced forgetfulness—prevent himself from knowing their outcome. While God was capable of purposing a particular cosmic history, through such self-induced forgetfulness, he could opt to create the cosmos blindly, allowing his initial creation to simply unfold however it would. In other words, God could have created the world and, at the same time, blocked himself from being cognizant of the ramifications of his initial creative choices.

What one gains by arguing this way is difficult to determine. Is it any less problematic to have God create death, evil, and destruction as the result of willful ignorance than to have him create it purposefully? I shouldn't think so. Indeed, if death, evil, and destruction were purposeful creations, there is at least a possibility that God's purpose was good and noble rather than malevolent. In that event, God would be vindicated in his creation of these evils. But if God made a willful choice to create blindly, in complete ignorance of the results—when he had it within his power to have perfect knowledge of the results—it is difficult to know how he could ever be morally vindicated in the light of what has transpired. The result of his willful ignorance includes death, evil, and destruction. If this result is not the product of noble purposefulness, then God's experiment of closing his eyes and creating a cosmos to see what would happen was an absurd and irresponsible (if not evil) choice.

Furthermore, it is not altogether true—as I stated earlier—that limited determinism's objection to divine determinism is to the notion that God purposes all things, not to the notion that God determines all things. Later in this book I will discuss the various objections to divine determinism.<sup>100</sup>

Only one of the three major objections is specifically an objection to the notion that God purposes all things. The other two are objections to the notion that all events are said to be determined by God—quite apart from whether they are purposed by him.

## Conclusion

One cannot embrace the traditional conception of God, the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*, and the reliability of sound reason and

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99. Leibniz has seen this as clearly as any other philosopher.

100. See chapters 9, 10, and 11.

common sense and, at the same time, reject divine determinism without being intellectually irresponsible. If all of my arguments have been sound, this conclusion follows.

Is my reasoning sound? Consider the various points at which one might take issue with the arguments in this chapter:

1. One may, of course, reject the reliability of reason as a guide to truth altogether. But, as we have discussed earlier, this amounts to intellectual suicide.
2. One may reject the traditional Judaeo-Christian conception of God.<sup>101</sup> This would introduce possibilities that I have not discussed. It would be easy enough to come up with a conception of reality that does not imply divine determinism if we are permitted to either reject or redefine divinity.
3. One may reject the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. But it is difficult to see how one can do this and remain faithful to the biblical revelation. However, if faithfulness to biblical revelation is not important, this is an effective way to avoid divine determinism.
4. Finally, one may reject my assumption that there are two, and only two, viable models for understanding the relationship of God to his creation. (To qualify as a viable model, it must—at a bare minimum—be compatible with a traditional conception of the nature of God and with the traditional doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.) If there exists some third model that—while meeting these criteria—portrays a plausible relationship between God and his creation, then my conclusion may not be valid. For, if this yet-to-be-discovered model should happen not to necessarily entail divine determinism, then divine determinism is *not* the only logically possible conclusion to draw from our premises. Hence, the persuasive power of my argument in this chapter rests on an important assumption: *there exists no other model whereby God's relationship to his creation can plausibly be understood that is also compatible with creation ex nihilo and a traditional conception of the nature of God.*

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101. As, for example, Clark Pinnock is prepared to do. See note 97.

102. The term 'viable' here includes the suggestion that such a model is consistent with a traditional conception of the nature of God and is consistent with the biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*.

103. One important factor in my confidence at this point is my observation that the two models that I have proposed—the Cosmic Author Model and the Cosmic Inventor Model—cover all the logical possibilities for the nature of created existence. Logically, current created existence

I would expect most readers to readily grant me the first three points above. The fourth point may seem less certain. Given all the requisite assumptions, divine determinism necessarily follows, according to the arguments of this chapter. Accordingly, for the typical reader, divine determinism can be rejected only if he rejects the fourth point above—that is, only if he has a reasonable basis for believing that there exists a different, viable<sup>102</sup> model of God's relationship to his creation that does not imply divine determinism.

Ultimately, the reader will have to satisfy himself—one way or the other. If one is willing to be hasty, it would be easy enough to simply assume that this third, yet-to-be-discovered model is still out there. But, having given it considerable thought, I am convinced no third option exists, that there is no other conceivable model that fits all the criteria.<sup>103</sup> If I am right, then one cannot reasonably conceive of a God who is truly the biblical creator *ex nihilo* who does not determine all things. The bottom line is this: *if nothing exists that has not been created by God, then it ultimately follows that nothing transpires that has not been determined by him.*

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functions in one of three ways: (1) autonomously, (2) *not* autonomously, or (3) in part autonomously and in part *not* autonomously. My two models account for all of these logical possibilities. If current created existence does *not* function autonomously, divine determinism logically follows. If current created existence *does* function autonomously, divine determinism logically follows. And if it functions autonomously in part and, in part, not, then divine determinism still logically follows. It would appear that divine determinism is logically required by all of the logical possibilities for the current state of created existence.