

CHAPTER SEVEN

DOES GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE IMPLY DIVINE DETERMINISM?

Does the Bible teach divine determinism? In effect, “yes.” It is rationally required by two fundamental biblical truths: (1) the biblical concept of God’s creatorship (as traditionally understood), and (2) the biblical concept of God’s ability to foreknow future events. In chapter 6, I demonstrated that God’s *ex nihilo* creatorship requires divine determinism. In this chapter I shall explore the implications of God’s ability to foreknow the future—specifically, whether that capability necessitates divine determinism.

Some Essential Concepts

THE CONCEPT OF DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

There are countless examples of God’s knowing in advance what will transpire and letting his people know through his prophets. Such is the essence of prophetic prediction.

PETER’S DENIALS AS A PARADIGM CASE

But, of all the many specific examples of divine foreknowledge in the Bible, I will focus on just one: Jesus’ prophetic prediction of Peter’s denying him.¹⁰⁴

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail;¹⁰⁵ and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”

104. In addition to the account I cite from the gospel of Luke, Matthew and Mark also have accounts of Jesus’ predicting Peter’s denials (Matt. 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31). Whether they record exactly the same occasion of prophetic prediction is not important for my purposes here. My arguments in this chapter will focus on just that occasion and those details recorded by Luke.

105. Relative to the issue of divine determinism, this is a significant statement in its own right.

And he said to Him, “Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and death!”

And he said, “I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.”

Luke 22:31-38

Jesus makes this prediction during the hours of darkness.¹⁰⁶ The substance of his prediction is this: “before the daylight hours have finished dawning, you—Peter—will have denied that you know me and are one of my followers on three separate occasions.” As the gospel accounts record, Peter did just what Jesus predicted. Before the next day had finished dawning, Peter had denied that he even knew Jesus on three separate occasions.¹⁰⁷

Two aspects of Jesus’ prediction are especially significant and dramatic:

1. In this prediction, Jesus is predicting a number of future freewill

According to most versions of limited determinism, Jesus would be wasting his breath to pray to God that Peter’s faith not fail him. A human being’s response of faith to God is a freewill decision that, according to limited determinism, is out of God’s hands. Whatever God might cause and control, he does not cause and control our response of faith to him. If limited determinists were right in this respect, Jesus’ prayer that God preserve Peter’s freewill choice such that he continue in faith is inexplicable. It would be a prayer to God for something over which he has no control. Under a divine determinist understanding, on the other hand, Jesus’ prayer makes perfectly good sense.

106. Specifically, it is late at night on the day before he was arrested or early in the morning (shortly after midnight) of the very day of his arrest. In reading the gospel accounts, one must remember that the Jews marked the beginning of their day at sundown. Hence, whether it was before or after midnight, by their reckoning this prediction would fall on the same day as Jesus’ arrest.

107. I realize that it is a point of controversy whether the gospel accounts offer a coherent and consistent account of Peter’s denials. I cannot take the time here to defend my belief that they do. Some Bible students have proposed harmonizations of the four gospel accounts of Peter’s denials that are, in fact, rather artificial and contrived. For example, the proposal by Johnston M. Cheyney is rather contrived and forced. See Johnston M. Cheyney, *The Life of Christ In Stereo* (Portland: Western Baptist Seminary Press, 1969), 218-220. But these less than convincing proposals do not exhaust the possibilities for how the accounts could be harmonized. In a paper available through McKenzie Study Center, 1883 University St., Eugene, OR, 97403, I propose a harmonization which I believe to be both plausible and exegetically responsible.

108. Actually, it predicts several different freewill decisions by several different people. The

decisions by another human being.¹⁰⁸

2. Jesus' prediction is sufficiently detailed that it specifies a time span within which these freewill choices are to occur. Specifically, it predicts that these freewill choices will occur before the second occasion of a cock crowing during the upcoming dawn.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, this rules out Jesus' prediction being a product of normal human intelligence. It is not explainable in terms of Jesus' astute insight into Peter's character. Undoubtedly he had such astute insight. But that alone cannot account for Jesus specifically predicting the number of occasions and timing of Peter's denials.

With these things in mind, I will use Jesus' prediction of Peter's denials as a paradigm or model case for all the prophetic predictions we find in the Bible. What the instances of prophetic prediction in the past show—to one degree or another—is that God had infallible, detailed knowledge of those predicted events while those events were yet to occur, while they were yet in the future. Even more importantly, they show that God had infallible, detailed knowledge of future freewill decisions yet to be made by human beings. This point is crucial. God's ability to foreknow freewill decisions is what creates an insoluble problem for limited determinism.

In my paradigm case, Jesus' prediction clearly reflects God's detailed, infallible knowledge: God knew that Peter would be in situations during the night where his association with Jesus would be suspected, he knew on exactly how many occasions Peter would be confronted with this suspicion, and he knew the chronology in sufficient detail to predict that it would occur prior to the second time the cock would crow the next morning.

From examples like this paradigm case, it should be clear that there can be no question with regard to *whether* God can infallibly know and predict the future. The question is *how*? What is it about God and his relationship to future events that makes divine foreknowledge possible?

EXAMINING SOME KEY CONCEPTS

Before I can answer this question, I need to define some terms and

complexity that that introduces makes Jesus' prediction all the more remarkable.

109. The specific detail that the denials would occur *before the second occasion of a cock crowing* was not a part of the prediction as Luke records it. It is a detail included in the prediction that

introduce some concepts. These will provide me with the conceptual language I need to construct my argument for divine determinism. Accordingly, the first portion of this chapter is a miscellany of observations, definitions, and concepts. Their relevance will only become evident when I employ these concepts in the argument that follows. I begin my investigation by introducing two models of divine foreknowledge—the Divine Clairvoyance Model and the Divine Disclosure Model. Next, I introduce the concepts of EVENT CLOSEDNESS and EVENT OPENNESS. Only then do I lay out my specific argument that divine determinism necessarily follows from divine foreknowledge.

TWO MODELS OF DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

How is it that God is able to know the future in advance and predict what lies ahead? And of special importance, how can God know in advance what the freewill choices of human beings will be?¹¹⁰ Since this last question is particularly problematic, our discussion will focus on it specifically. Our task, then, is to explain how God can possibly make a valid knowledge claim about a future event that is utterly dependent upon the freewill choices of human beings. There are really only two plausible explanations:¹¹¹

1. God is the one who plans the future and will cause it to happen and bring it into being. He can predict in advance what will transpire precisely because he is the one who, when the time comes, will cause it to transpire in accordance with what he has planned. In other words,

Matthew and Mark record. (*Cf.*, Matt. 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31)

110. One medieval answer to this question was that God can know the freewill choices of human beings because of his “middle knowledge.” This answer has an appeal to certain modern Christians as well. For a discussion of whether middle knowledge is a helpful concept for explaining God’s ability to foreknow the future, see appendix I.

111. This is a crucial assumption; my argument is vulnerable at this point—it depends on their being only two plausible options. If I have neglected a third serious option, then it is a distinct possibility that my argument is fallacious. However, I am confident that there is no viable third option.

112. Actually, an objection can be raised at this point: Even if we grant that God plans the future and is capable of bringing his plans to pass, that, in and of itself, does not necessarily entail divine determinism. For example, what if man makes autonomous choices that are not divinely determined, but God, who does determine man’s physical environment, is able to so skillfully control that environment such that he can manipulate a man into making exactly that choice he wants him to make. In such a case, God can predict the future because he plans and controls it;

divine determinism is true. Accordingly, God can predict the future because he is the one who will totally determine it.¹¹² This option I call the DIVINE DISCLOSURE MODEL. According to this model, prophetic prediction happens when the God who causes and determines all things discloses to his spokesman, the prophet, some specific aspect of what he, God, plans to cause to transpire in the course of cosmic history.

Note what is explicitly included as part of the definition of this model: *if a cosmic event is predicted by God, it must be the case that that event is caused (or determined) by God.* If God knows and can predict a future event precisely because he is the one planning and bringing to pass every specific detail constituting that event, then it directly follows that God does determine that event.

2. God has the ability to “see” every future event just as if it were a past event. This possibility I call the DIVINE CLAIRVOYANCE MODEL. According to this model, regardless of what cause, combination of causes, or absence of causes may give rise to a future historical event, God has the ability to “see” that future event just as surely as if it were a past event that he once witnessed and now vividly remembers. So even if a future event were uncaused and random, God could still know about its every detail, for he can “see” it or witness it in advance of its occurring in history.

The very point of this model is to find an explanation for divine foreknowledge that—unlike the Divine Disclosure Model—does not necessitate divine determinism. Hence, an implicit assumption within this model is that certain of the future events that God foreknows are, nevertheless, not caused or determined by him.

THE CONCEPT OF EVENT OPENNESS OR CLOSEDNESS

Consider Peter's denials of Jesus from Jesus' perspective at the time of his prediction—namely, as a future event. What were the prospects for

but it would not be true that human choices are divinely determined. Hence, the Divine Disclosure Model could be true without divine determinism being true. My answer to this objection is simply that this suggested alternative to divine determinism—namely, that God controls human choices through infallible manipulation rather than through divine determination—should certainly be just as (if not more) problematic to the limited determinist as divine determinism is. If it can be argued that divine determinism precludes free will, then surely it can be argued that infallible divine manipulation precludes free will even more so. In any event, divine manipulation *is*, in fact, both unbiblical and uncommonsensical; for it contradicts the commonsensical and biblical teaching that man's choices are free and that man is

Peter's denying Jesus in the future exactly as Jesus was predicting? If it was utterly impossible for Peter to do anything other than what Jesus was predicting, then the event was what I will call a CLOSED event. On the other hand, to whatever extent it was possible for Peter not to do what Jesus was predicting, to that extent it was what I will call an OPEN event. To put it another way: if an event is in some sense necessary, then it is closed; if it is in some sense not necessary, then it is open.

The Concept of Logical Openness or Closedness

Peter's denial of Jesus was a LOGICALLY OPEN event if it was logically possible¹¹³ for Peter to do other than deny Jesus—that is, to do other than was being predicted. If Peter's denying Jesus was done out of logical necessity—i.e., if it was logically impossible for him not to do it—then it was a LOGICALLY CLOSED event.¹¹⁴

If I should predict that, tomorrow, two plus two will equal four, my prediction would be the prediction of a logically closed event. It is logically impossible for two plus two to fail to equal four tomorrow. Hence, it is logically closed. Similarly, if Peter's denial of Jesus (as viewed from the standpoint of Jesus' predicting it) was logically necessary (in the same vein as the logical necessity of two plus two equaling four), then it was logically closed. But if Peter's failure to deny Jesus would have done no violence to the laws of logic, as such, then it was a logically open event.

Common sense tells us that Peter's choice to deny Jesus was, of course, a logically open event. When we understand something to be a freewill choice (as was Peter's choice), we mean, in part, that it is not being necessitated by the laws of logic. For Peter *not* to deny Jesus was just as possible,

accountable for them.

113. By 'logically possible' I simply mean that it is possible without violating the laws of logic (those laws which any system of formal logic is attempting to systematically define). It is not possible for $2+2$ to not equal 4 on logical grounds. The *definition* of two, the *definition* of addition, the *definition* of equality, and the *definition* of four all logically entail that $2+2 = 4$. It is logically impossible for it to be otherwise. It is not that $2+2=4$ just because "that's the way it is in this world"; rather, $2+2=4$ *logically MUST BE that way* in this world. I am not denying that we could have a different name for '2', '+', '=', and '4'. Certainly we could call them something else. But the concept '2' (whatever we might name it), the concept '4' (whatever we might name it), the concept '+' (whatever we might name it), and the concept '=' (whatever we might name it) must always be related to one another such that $2+2=4$.

114. For the sake of completeness we could include a separate discussion of the concept of ontological openness/closedness (or, metaphysical openness/closedness). However, for the purposes of this chapter, any definition I might give to ontological (metaphysical) openness/closedness would render it sufficiently akin to the concept of logical openness/closedness that it is not particularly helpful to distinguish them. Hence, I shall define

logically, as was denying him. Neither was logically necessary.

The Concept of Mechanical Openness or Closedness

Peter's denial of Jesus was a MECHANICALLY OPEN event if it was *mechanically* possible for Peter to do other than was predicted. But if it was *mechanically* necessary for him to deny Jesus—i.e., if it was mechanically impossible for him *not* to do it—then it was a *mechanically closed* event.

By 'mechanically possible,' I mean possible with respect to the physical and spiritual laws that govern our existence. The physical laws of nature are the most obvious example. To whatever extent it is impossible for physical laws to be violated, to that same extent physical laws make certain aspects of certain events physically (and mechanically) necessary. If there are analogous laws of a spiritual nature (and I am not assuming that there are), then, by 'mechanical necessity,' I mean necessity with respect to these natural and supernatural laws, combined.

The point, very simply, is this: Some things happen as the result of the mechanical outworking of basic laws or principles built into reality. If an event is the result of such a mechanical outworking, then it is mechanically necessary, or mechanically closed. If it is not, then it is mechanically open.

If I predict that, tomorrow, the earth will rotate on its axis, my prediction is the prediction of a mechanically closed event. It is mechanically impossible for the earth not to rotate on its axis tomorrow.¹¹⁵ Hence, it is mechanically closed. Similarly, if it had been mechanically impossible (in similar vein to the impossibility of the earth's not rotating on its axis) for Peter *not* to deny Jesus, then it would have been a mechanically closed event. However, if Peter's not denying Jesus would have done no violence to any mechanical laws of the cosmos, as such, then it was a mechanically open event.

The natural determinist would say that Peter's denials *were* a mechanically closed event. His denials were the mechanical result of physical laws operating within his brain and body to produce a mechanically determined result. Hence, the denials were mechanically necessary. As we shall see, both limited determinism and divine determinism agree—against natural

logical necessity broadly enough in this chapter to include what one might rather call ontological or metaphysical necessity.

115. I assume, in this example, the inviolability of certain physical laws. The question of the strict inviolability of physical laws is more complex than we need to get into here. For the sake of argument, I simply assume it, knowing that the truth of the matter is more complex than that. Leibniz's view of natural laws as "subsidiary general principles" is, I think, a helpful understanding of the status of natural laws. There is such a thing as mechanical inviolability, on the one hand, but it is too simplistic to see that inviolability as occurring at the level of the formu-

determinism—that Peter’s denials were mechanically open. He did not act out of mechanical necessity. He made a freewill decision. And that, by definition, precludes the decision’s being mechanically determined. For, to identify a decision as a freewill decision is—at least in part—to assert that it was physically and mechanically possible for the decision to have been other than what it was. This, I submit, is a commonsensical understanding of free will.¹¹⁶

The Concept of Theological Openness or Closedness

Finally, Peter’s denial of Jesus was a *theologically open* event if it was *theologically* possible for Peter to do otherwise than predicted. But if it was done out of *theological* necessity—that is, if it was theologically impossible for him not to deny Jesus—then it was a *theologically closed* event.

When I speak of theological possibility, I am referring to its possibility with respect to the will and purpose of God. Some things result from the divine will unfailingly accomplishing its purposes. If an event results from such divine governance, and, hence, cannot fail to come to pass without violating the inviolable will of God, then it is theologically necessary, or theologically closed. If it does not result from the inviolable outworking of God’s will, then it is theologically open.

If I predict that Jesus shall return, my prediction is the prediction of a theologically closed event. It is theologically impossible for our Lord not to return, for Jesus’ return is an unchangeable aspect of the divine resolve. Hence, it is theologically closed. Similarly, if Peter’s denials of Jesus were *theologically necessary* (in a vein similar to the necessity of the Lord’s return), then those denials would have been theologically closed events. But, if Peter’s *not* denying Jesus would have done no violence to the purposive divine governance of human events, then those denials were theologically open events. In other words, so far as the unfailing purposes of God were concerned, it would have been possible for Peter not to have denied our Lord.

The basic difference between the perspectives of limited determinism and divine determinism comes to this: divine determinism views Peter’s denials (even from Jesus’ vantage point as he is predicting them) as theologically closed events—for it holds all freewill decisions to be theologically-closed; but limited determinism would insist that his denials were theologically open events. Most forms of limited determinism, as we have seen, insist that human freewill choice is autonomous from

lated laws of physics. Miracles are possible, in part, precisely because the formulated laws of physics are not the most basic, inviolable rational principles.

divine causation.

Our two models for understanding divine foreknowledge and prophetic prediction directly reflect this same basic difference. The Divine Disclosure Model assumes that all events, including freewill decisions, are theologically closed. The Divine Clairvoyance Model insists that at least some of those events that God foreknows are theologically open—namely, events that are dependent on freewill choices.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE VARIOUS FORMS OF EVENT OPENNESS/CLOSEDNESS

Before I leave this subject, I must make something explicit: logical, mechanical, and theological openness (or closedness) are independent of one another. *It is entirely possible for an event to be closed in one of these senses while being open in the others.*

Events controlled by natural laws—for example, the law of gravity—are a case in point. It is *logically* possible for events not to be controlled by the law of gravity as we know it.¹¹⁷ At the same time, given the cosmos as it is, this would not be *mechanically* possible. Natural events are, of mechanical necessity, subject to the law of gravity. Hence, the effect of gravity in a natural event is *logically open* while being *mechanically closed*.

This Independence as Crucial to the Distinction between Divine and Natural Determinism

Acknowledging this independence of the various forms of event openness and closedness is crucial. One of the greatest obstacles to the acceptance of divine determinism is the propensity to confuse it with natural determinism. Because the divine determinist wants to maintain the *theological* closedness of all cosmic events, it is assumed that he is espousing their *mechanical* closedness as well (i.e., natural determinism). But, to the contrary, the divine determinist wants to maintain the theological closedness of *all* cosmic events while maintaining—at the same time—the mechanical openness of *some* of those events (namely, freewill events). The limited determinist is willing to acknowledge that a natural event may be *mechanically* CLOSED while being *logically* OPEN. Analogously, the divine

116. As will become clear, my ultimate objection to natural determinism is that it violates common sense.

117. That is to say, we are not being illogical when we imagine a radically different sort of cosmos where the law of gravity (in the form we know it) does not apply. By way of contrast, we

determinist asks us to acknowledge that a freewill event may be *theologically* CLOSED while being *mechanically* OPEN.

As a case in point, consider divine determinism's perspective on Peter's denials. What if Peter had mustered up his courage to acknowledge his relationship to Jesus rather than deny it? Everyone can agree that there would have been no violence done to the laws of logic had he done so. Neither would there have been any violence done to the laws of physics. But, unlike the limited determinist, the divine determinist maintains that, had Peter done so, it would have been a violation of the inviolable will and purpose of God. Therefore, whereas Peter's denials were not logically or mechanically necessary, they were (according to divine determinism) theologically necessary. Whereas Peter's denials were logically and mechanically open, they were theologically closed. Hence, it was *logically* and *mechanically* possible that Jesus' prediction fail, but it was *not theologically* possible that it fail. Theologically, his denials *had to be*. The unfailing purpose of God had ordained it, and God was committed to causing it.

Both natural and divine determinism, therefore, maintain that Peter's denials of Jesus were inevitable. But there is a very important difference between divine and natural determinism: while natural determinism suggests that Peter's denials were inevitable because they were MECHANICALLY CLOSED, divine determinism suggests that Peter's denials were inevitable because they were THEOLOGICALLY CLOSED, while being MECHANICALLY OPEN.

As will become clear, this is at the heart of the most serious problem limited determinists have with divine determinism. The limited determinist rejects the notion that an event can be theologically closed while being logically and mechanically open. He insists that such is not possible. If an event is theologically closed, then, of necessity, it must be mechanically and/or logically closed as well. God closes an event (theologically) precisely by closing it mechanically or logically. Furthermore—claims the limited determinist—since divine determinism affirms that every event in human experience is theologically closed, it cannot make any sense out of the notions of logical and mechanical openness. If an event is closed by the determinative will of God, how can it make any sense to speak of it as being mechanically (or, logically) open?

On the other side of the issue, the divine determinist claims that an event can be theologically closed while being mechanically open. Further, he insists that he can make perfectly good sense out of the notions of logical and mechanical openness even though all events are theologically closed.

According to divine determinism, when God wills an event, he chooses

among a set of alternatives, all of which are logically and mechanically possible. (In general, of course, he does not consider options that are logically and mechanically impossible.)¹¹⁸ If God has only one logically-possible alternative available to him, then, of course, his choice is already decided for him by the dictates of logic.¹¹⁹ In other words, his choice is logically determined, it is logically closed. Likewise, if God has only one mechanically-possible alternative available to him, then, of course, his choice is already decided by the mechanics of the situation.¹²⁰ The choice is mechanically determined, it is mechanically closed. In this way, says the divine determinist, a meaningful distinction can be made between events that are logically and/or mechanically closed, on the one hand, and those that are logically and/or mechanically open, on the other hand, even though they are both theologically closed. A mechanically (or, logically) closed event is an event that was mechanically (or, logically) closed to God as he contemplated his options for how to shape cosmic affairs. A mechanically (or, logically) open event was correspondingly open to God as he contemplated his options.

We can summarize our point this way: the divine determinist insists that any given freewill event is theologically closed (bound to be that way and no other because God has willed it), yet he is in no way suggesting that it is logically or mechanically closed (bound to be that way and no other because there exists no other logical or mechanical possibility open to God in directing human affairs). The contrast between this and natural determinism needs to be kept firmly in mind. Natural determinism explicitly espouses the *mechanical* closedness of freewill events.

EVENT OPENNESS OVER TIME

are being illogical when we imagine a cosmos where the law of contradiction does not apply. Where, for example, what does not exist exists.

118. I discuss in chapter 3 why God would not choose a logically impossible event. The question of whether God would ever choose a mechanically impossible event is a very complex question. See note 115 above.

119. For example, if God has already determined that X will exist, then the existence of X is a logically closed fact. God does not have the option of having X not exist. He could, in the future, have X cease to exist; but he cannot now have X exist and not exist simultaneously.

120. For example, if God has X fall from a tree, pulled by the law of gravity, then—without violating the physical structure of the cosmos which he has willed into being—God cannot choose to have X not fall toward the ground. That is, he cannot choose to have X hang suspended in mid-air. X's falling toward the ground, therefore, is the only alternative open to God—if he is

Time is one of the most mysterious aspects of reality. One of its mysteries is the transformation that occurs in the status of events by virtue of the passing of time. Consider our paradigm case:

When we consider Peter's denials as being a future event (looking at them from the same standpoint Jesus did when he was predicting them), we notice that the event of his denials is a logically open event, a mechanically open event, and perhaps (if limited determinism is true) a theologically open event. That is to say, it is logically and mechanically possible that Peter will not deny Jesus; and perhaps it is possible that Peter's denial is not necessitated by the will of God.

Time passes. We arrive at the present—the actual occasion of Peter's denying Jesus—and move on into the future. Looking back on Peter's denials as a past event, we notice that its status has changed dramatically. The event of Peter's denials (which had been open before it occurred) is now an absolutely closed event.¹²¹ That Peter did not *then* deny Jesus is not *now* LOGICALLY possible.¹²² It is not *now* MECHANICALLY possible to change the fact that Peter *then* denied his Lord.¹²³ Neither is it THEOLOGICALLY possible to change the past event.¹²⁴ The event of Peter's denials of Jesus has been transformed through the passing of time. It has changed from a largely, if not absolutely, open event to an absolutely closed event.

This, indeed, is the nature of all cosmic experience. By the judgment of common sense, the future is largely, if not completely, open. But, in the present, the events of cosmic history become closed—fixed in metaphysical concrete. Out of all the possibilities for what could have been, some events become selected in the occurrences of the present and become established as components of actual, concrete reality. The past is the real-

to preserve the integrity of the created structure of the physical cosmos. In this regard, however, see note 115 above.

121. I define 'absolutely closed' as simultaneously closed in all three of the senses I have defined above—logically, mechanically, and theologically.

122. It is now logically impossible for the past event of Peter's denying Jesus not to have occurred when it did. To say that past event X—which by virtue of the definition of a past event means that it occurred at some determinate time in the past—never occurred would be to formulate a contradiction—namely, past event X is NOT a past event.

123. It is now mechanically impossible for the past event of Peter's denying Jesus to be made to have never occurred when it did. No mechanical principles in the cosmos give one the means to transform a past event such that it can be made to have never occurred.

ity that results. The events of the past are absolutely closed and unchangeable, having become permanent, concrete reality by the magic of time.

Argument For Divine Determinism

Having introduced the two models of divine foreknowledge and examined the notions of event openness and event closedness, I can now make my case for divine determinism in the light of divine foreknowledge. I proceed by defending a series of seven propositions, each one building on the previous ones and culminating in an affirmation of divine determinism.

FIRST PROPOSITION

PROPOSITION #1: *Knowledge of an event necessitates some sort of closedness to that event.*

When we speak of having knowledge of an event, we cannot validly do so unless that event is, in some sense, closed.¹²⁵ It may be theologically closed. It may be mechanically closed. It may be logically closed. But it must be closed in at least one of these senses before it is subject to a valid knowledge claim.

To see this, we need only observe that a valid knowledge claim involves, by definition, a proposition that is true. A claim that is false is not a valid knowledge claim. But, even more importantly, a claim that cannot be established either way (that is, as either true or false) cannot be a

124. The will and purposes of God cannot *now* determine that the past event of Peter's denying Jesus never have occurred.

125. Strictly speaking, I should speak of *aspects* of events rather than *events per se*. Different events have different aspects to them and different aspects of the same event may differ in their status—that is, with respect to whether they are closed or open and in what sense they are closed or open. But to avoid being tedious, I am simply going to refer to events as if they were simple and not complex. The reader can keep in mind that what I really mean are particular, simple aspects of a given event. This short-hand does not affect the nature of my argument in any way. I use it merely for convenience.

126. Students of the history of logic may conclude that I am agreeing with Aristotelian logic against Stoic logic in this regard. In a sense this is true. However, as a divine determinist, I will ultimately maintain that there is no proposition about the future whose veracity cannot be determined in principle. In this regard, therefore, my position is more akin to that of the Stoics than

valid knowledge claim either. What I mean is this: if nothing determines, in principle, whether a claim is true or false, then it cannot constitute a valid knowledge claim.¹²⁶ It is not a matter of the human knower not being able to determine the truth-value of the claim—that is, whether it is true or false. Rather, it is a matter of its truth-value, *per se*, being indeterminate. The human knower cannot determine whether it is true or false precisely because nothing in reality has established it as either true or false. In such a case, to make a valid knowledge claim about the event is not possible. A valid knowledge claim must be one that is fixedly true, in principle.¹²⁷ When the claim itself is, in principle, neither true nor false, then such a claim cannot legitimately be called knowledge.

Consider our paradigm example. When I claim now to know that Peter denied Jesus, I make a valid knowledge claim precisely because Peter's denial of Jesus has, in truth, been established as a fact of history. In other words, Peter's denial is now a closed event. It, like all historical events, is ABSOLUTELY closed. But if I were to claim to know that you, the reader, will deny Jesus tomorrow, and if nothing in reality makes your denial a closed event¹²⁸—i.e., neither God, physics, nor logic definitively necessitate your denying Jesus tomorrow—then I am being absurd. The event itself is not closed; it is not fixed in reality as fact; it is not made inevitable by some present aspect of reality. In truth, you may or you may not deny Jesus tomorrow. Accordingly, any claim that I might make about it could turn out to be true, but it could just as easily turn out to be false. Time and the unfolding of cosmic events will tell which. In the meantime, no valid knowledge of the event is possible. For how can I claim to have knowledge of the facts when the facts could turn out either way? By definition, a VALID knowledge claim is one that asserts something that reality dictates must be true.

SECOND PROPOSITION

it is to Aristotle. But whereas the Stoics believe in *logical* determinism, I am an advocate of *divine* determinism; these are significantly different positions.

127. Again, I do not mean that it must, as a practical matter, be one that the knower can justify—though that may be true also. Rather, I mean that—whether it can be practically justified or not—it must, as a matter of principle, either correspond to an established fact of reality or not correspond to that established fact of reality.

128. Note, I am NOT hypothesizing that I do not *know* of anything that would make your denial a closed event—although that may very well be required for a valid knowledge claim as well.

PROPOSITION #2: *The Divine Disclosure Model is the only rationally acceptable model for explaining how divine foreknowledge is possible.*

As mentioned earlier, any viable explanation of divine foreknowledge must be able to account for the foreknowledge of events that are shaped by man's freewill choices. Most instances of prophetic prediction are predictions of just this type of event. In the discussion that follows, only such instances are in view. How can God have foreknowledge of events that have been shaped by the freewill choices of men?

That future freewill events are absolutely open events is built-in to the very assumptions of the Divine Clairvoyance Model (and to the limited determinist perspective that supports it). Freewill events are not closed in any sense whatsoever. They are not closed logically or mechanically, for our commonsensical understanding of free will precludes that.¹²⁹ But—according to the assumptions of limited determinism—neither are they closed theologically. That freewill choices are not necessitated by the will of God is a foundational assumption of limited determinism. Furthermore, the very point of the Divine Clairvoyance Model is to offer an explanation of divine foreknowledge that does not require the divine determination of freewill choices. Hence, under the assumptions of this model, future freewill choices are not closed events in any sense at all.

The Divine Disclosure Model, on the other hand, holds that every divinely foreknown freewill event (as is true of all events) is in some sense closed. Whereas freewill events are acknowledged to be logically and mechanically open, no events—including freewill events—are acknowledged to be theologically open. By the assumptions of this model, all events are caused by God. Some events—for example, natural occurrences—may be mechanically (and perhaps logically) closed as well. But all events are, at the very least, THEOLOGICALLY closed.

Proposition #1 states that knowledge of an event necessitates some sort of closedness to that event. In view of that, predictive knowledge of future freewill choices is impossible under the Divine Clairvoyance Model.

Rather, I am hypothesizing that there *does not exist* anything in reality that would make your denial a closed event.

129. Chapter 9 will discuss this and other ramifications of our commonsense conception of a freewill choice in more detail.

130. That is, it is not possible unless one—in order to preserve the theological openness of future freewill events—is willing to believe that future freewill events are either logically or mechanically closed—that is to say, unless one is willing to embrace either logical determinism

Under it, freewill choices are absolutely open events. According to proposition #1, no valid knowledge claim can be made of an absolutely open event. Therefore, under the Divine Clairvoyance Model, a valid prophetic knowledge claim with regard to future freewill events is not possible.¹³⁰

Under the Divine Disclosure Model, on the other hand, such a knowledge claim is possible. Under that model, every event (including future freewill choices) is a closed event. Hence, according to it, all future events (including freewill events) meet the requirement of proposition #1 for a valid knowledge claim.

As we have seen, in order for an explanation of divine foreknowledge and prophetic prediction to be rationally and biblically adequate, it needs to be able to account for valid knowledge claims about future freewill choices. The Divine Clairvoyance Model cannot do this. The Divine Disclosure Model can. If these are the only two plausible explanations,¹³¹ then—given that the Divine Clairvoyance Model is rationally unacceptable—it follows that *the Divine Disclosure Model is the only rationally acceptable explanation of divine foreknowledge and prophetic prediction.*

OBJECTION TO THIS ARGUMENT

At this point, one might object that I have dismissed the Divine Clairvoyance Model too hastily. I rejected it on the grounds that, by its own assumptions, it views future freewill events as absolutely open. But what if future freewill events are *not* open events under the Divine Clairvoyance Model? What if the situation is more complex than that?

Here is the problem: When one says that the Divine Clairvoyance Model views future freewill events as absolutely open, it does so from the standpoint of the human observer. Granted—from a human being’s point of view in the present—future freewill events are absolutely open events. But what about from God’s vantage point? From Jesus’ perspective, Peter’s denials were an open event. Was it so from God’s vantage point as well? Or could it be that God was in a different time frame altogether and was not limited by the same standpoint in time that restricted Jesus’ perspective?¹³² If so, what would the status of this future (to Jesus) freewill event be from God’s vantage point?

or natural determinism. It is ironic that limited determinism can only avoid divine determinism by embracing natural determinism or logical determinism (its “natural enemies”).

131. See note 110.

132. That is, what if God is outside time altogether or is in an entirely different time frame from the one we are in? That is, what if God can arrive at knowledge from the standpoint of another,

The present, like some sort of reality-creating machine, grinds forward into the future, turning future non-existent events into past actually-existing events. The present is a sort of metaphysical watershed. As Jesus

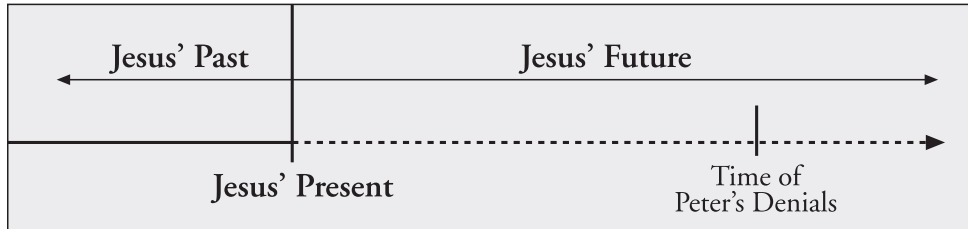


Diagram 7.1 Solid Line = Event Closedness
Broken Line = Event Openness

stands in his present and looks past-ward, he sees freewill events that exist as actual and real closed events. As he looks future-ward, he sees no freewill events having any reality or actual existence; he sees event-openness. On Jesus' time frame (the human time frame), his present time marks the transition between event openness and event closedness.¹³³ (See Diagram 7.1)

Now perhaps God, having access to an altogether different time frame, is able to adopt any point in the sequence of cosmic events as his present vantage point. That is, perhaps, God can “travel” through the sequence of cosmic history by means of another time frame and arrive at a point in that sequence of events that, though in the future to Jesus, becomes his (God’s) present. Could it be that, as God passes through the sequence of cosmic events, events that Jesus will pass through in his future, these events become closed relative to God in exactly the same way that those same events will become closed relative to Jesus as his present moves on into the future? If so, then the same cosmic event (*e.g.*, Peter’s denials) could be an open event to Jesus while being, at the same time, a closed event to God as he observes it from his distinctive standpoint relative to time. (See Diagram 7.2)

If this were so, then the argument against Divine Clairvoyance on the grounds that future freewill events are absolutely open would not hold. To God, the one who has foreknowledge of the event, these same future freewill events are absolutely closed events. They would be, as it were, past events to God. In this case, the requirement of proposition #1 is met. God—the one making the knowledge claim—is claiming to know something about what is, to him, an absolutely closed event. Therefore, in light

different time frame from ours at the same time that he has access to ours and can exist, act, and communicate within it?

of the possibility that God knows the sequence of cosmic events in Jesus' future from the standpoint of an altogether different time frame from the one Jesus is in, Divine Clairvoyance cannot be ruled out. It cannot be judged rationally unacceptable.

ANSWERING THIS OBJECTION

GOD'S TIME FRAME

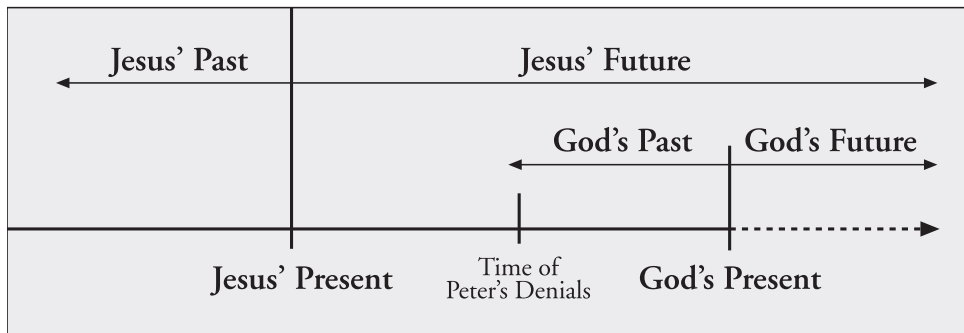


Diagram 7.2 Solid Line = Event Closedness
 Broken Line = Event Openness

Fundamentally, the answer to this objection rests in the fact that what marks the transition between event openness and event closedness is not the position of the observer in the sequence of cosmic events, it is the position of the participants in those events.

Why is it that our present time seems to be the point at which events pass out of the openness of the future into the closedness of the past? Is it because the present is the point on our time frame from which we observe cosmic events? Or is it because it is the point at which we create cosmic events—the point when cosmic events actually enter into existence? Surely, the transition from event openness to event closedness is found wherever the creators of cosmic events are acting and making

133. Speaking specifically of freewill events according to the basic assumptions of the Divine Clairvoyance Model.

134. To begin with, I think it commonsensical that freewill events are caused and created by the freewill choices of human beings. Hence, if the determinative freewill choices have not been made, then it follows that the events which they create do not yet exist. As we shall see later, this is not in conflict with divine determinism. Divine determinism does not deny the decisive role of human free will as the cause of freewill events; it simply asserts a more ultimate cause behind the direct cause of freewill choice. But apart from common sense, given the foundational assumptions of limited determinism, the conclusion that freewill events gain their facticity—their closedness—from freewill choices and not from divine observation should be particularly

choices. Our viewing cosmic events from the present is not the relevant factor in the open future becoming closed. Rather, it is the fact that we create cosmic events in the present that makes this so. The past is closed and the future is open because the present is that point in the march of time that our creation of cosmic events has reached.¹³⁴

It is fallacious, therefore, to think that some observer on an altogether different time frame could experience, as closed events, events that are open (because they are future) to us. Even if God is on another time frame and even if God could, by virtue of that different time frame, adopt a present vantage point somewhere in our future, he would nevertheless not be able to observe events in our future as closed events. For his vantage point is not what marks the transition between the openness and closedness of cosmic events. God's presence at and observation of human events is not what gives actuality (or closedness) to the events of human history; the human actors do. God's presence as an observer can-

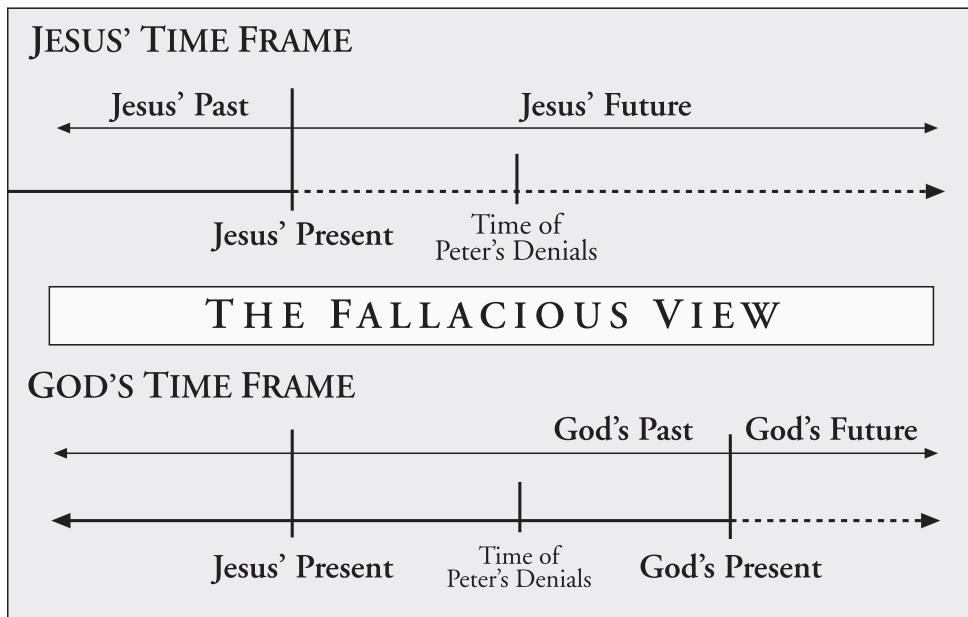


Diagram 7.3 Solid Line = Event Closedness
Broken Line = Event Openness

This fallacious view suggests that God's standpoint in the sequence of events marks the transition from event openness to event closedness. Note the solid line to the left of God's present.

appealing to the limited determinist. Limited determinism is consciously trying to avoid the suggestion that God causes freewill events in any sense whatsoever. The limited determinist favors the view that human beings autonomously cause freewill events. Hence, the view that the human actor (and not the divine observer) causes freewill events to come into being is very compatible with the limited determinist's fundamental agenda.

not bring history into being. If the human actors have not been there to create it, then history is not yet there to be observed, it has not yet occurred. So even if God could travel into our future, he would find that there was nothing there to see.¹³⁵ The future has not occurred; the sequence of actual cosmic events does not include any events beyond our present. (Compare Diagrams 7.3 and 7.4)

Our rejection of the Divine Clairvoyance Model still stands. Since the true demarcation between event closedness and event openness lies in present time on the human time frame, proposing a different time frame for God does not change the fact that, under the Divine Clairvoyance Model, God would not be able to make any valid knowledge claims about freewill events that lie in our future. Future freewill events are absolutely open events (by the assumptions of the Divine Clairvoyance Model) precisely because they do lie in *our* future. Whether they lie in God's future is irrelevant. Regardless of where God situates himself in the sequence of cosmic events to observe them, the status of those events is nonetheless determined by the situation of the human actors, not by the situation of the divine observer. If the events have not yet been created, then God

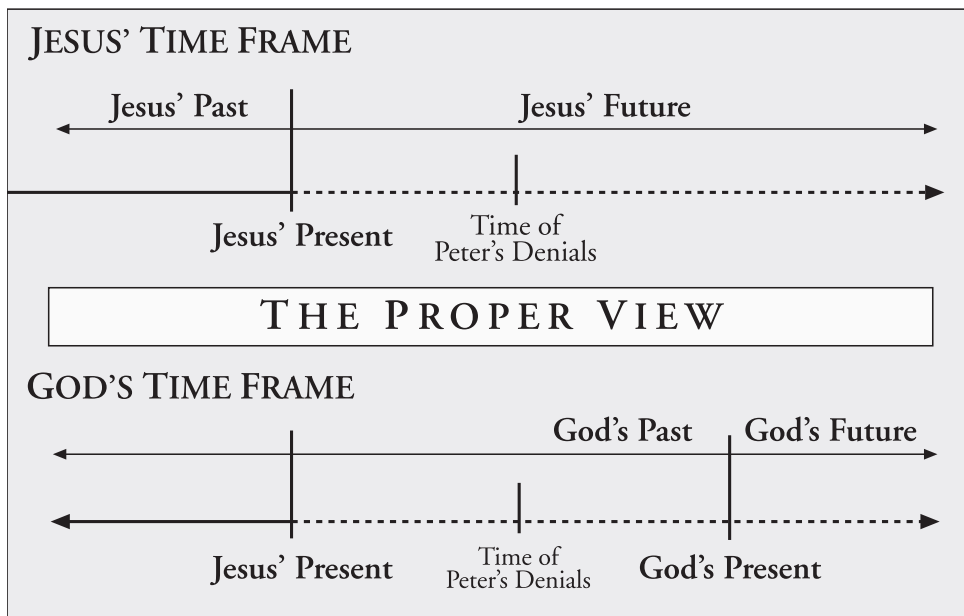


Diagram 7.4 Solid Line = Event Closedness
Broken Line = Event Openness

This proper view suggests that our location in the sequence of events marks the transition from event openness to event closedness regardless of where God's standpoint might be located in the sequence of events. Note the broken line to the left of God's present.

cannot make a valid claim to know about them on the basis of his having perceived them. *God cannot see what does not exist.* The Divine Clairvoyance Model, then, cannot account for divine foreknowledge of future freewill events. The Divine Disclosure Model, therefore, is the only rationally acceptable model for explaining how divine foreknowledge is possible.

FURTHER OBJECTION TO THIS ARGUMENT

The objector may still think that we have been too hasty. Granted, the true demarcation between event closedness and event openness lies in the present on the human time frame. Accordingly, when Jesus predicts Peter's denials, the future event of Peter denying Jesus cannot be closed—even to God. The future is, by its very nature, open. But what if all of reality exists in a multitude of different time frames. In that case, while the event of Peter denying Jesus is open in the time frame within which Jesus is making the prediction, it could be closed in an entirely different time frame. In this entirely different time frame, Peter could be actually present, denying Jesus. In this case, God's clairvoyance is plausible. Because he could transcend all the different time frames in which Peter exists, God could "view" the event within a time frame in which either (i) Peter is presently making his choice to deny Jesus, or (ii) Peter is looking back on his choice to deny Jesus as a past event. In either case, Peter's denial of Jesus would be a closed event that is determinate and available as an object of God's knowledge.

Under such a hypothesis, therefore, our rejection of divine clairvoyance would be unfounded. Our previous rejection of divine clairvoyance hinged on the fact that future events are not closed and, hence, not available as objects of divine knowledge. That is, since Peter did not exist in his future, he was not there to "close" the event of his denying Jesus through his freewill choices. But the notion being proposed here is that, as a matter of fact, Peter did exist in his future and he was there, making the freewill choice that closed the event of his denying Jesus. Granted, Peter was not there in the future of our ordinary historical time frame—the one in which he and Jesus lived. But in another time frame he was there, he did exist, and he was present—relative to that time frame—making the freewill choice that would put in historical concrete his denial of

135. Clearly, then, divine foreknowledge must be qualitatively different from viewing future events as already there. This is the advantage of the Divine Disclosure Model over the Divine Clairvoyance Model. In the Divine Disclosure Model, the claim is never made that God can view future events as already there. Rather, the Divine Disclosure Model suggests foreknowl-

the Lord. Hence, Peter's denial of Jesus can be future (open) to him in one time frame while being past (closed) to him in another time frame. Under such an assumption, divine clairvoyance would, in fact, be plausible. If God transcended all possible time frames and had access to any and every one of them, then it would be possible for him to view the event of Peter's denying Jesus within whatever time frame was necessary in order to "see" it as a closed event. But if God could view it as a closed event in this way, then it would be available to him as a valid object of knowledge. Hence, the objection raised against proposition #2 still stands. On these assumptions, divine clairvoyance would be possible.

ANSWERING THIS FURTHER OBJECTION

If a human being can and does exist within a multitude of different time frames, then I must retract my rejection of divine clairvoyance on the grounds that future events are not available to God as objects of knowledge. I must admit that, on this hypothesis, divine clairvoyance is a meaningful and plausible notion. But is the hypothesis that we exist on a multitude of different time frames plausible? Or, is it a flight of wild, nonsensical imagination?

I believe it is the latter. Individual existence on multiple time frames raises a whole host of unanswerable philosophical dilemmas. If I exist on a multitude of time frames, am I a multitude of different beings? Does any time frame have priority over the others? And if so, on what basis? If I exist on a multitude of other time frames, why is my conscious experience confined to this time frame? What does that mean? If we inquire far enough, existence in multiple time frames becomes a very problematic doctrine.

However, for the sake of argument, let us assume that it is a plausible suggestion. Even so, with respect to the concerns of the typical proponent of divine clairvoyance, it is self-defeating.

To see why, we must remember why divine clairvoyance is attractive to its typical proponent in the first place. It is attractive to its proponents because it would appear to be able to explain divine foreknowledge without resorting to divine determinism. That is, it explains how God can know the future without implying that God must determine the future.

edge of a completely different kind: foreknowledge due to a knowledge of what he, the determiner, intends or purposes to bring into being.

136. Granted, on the multiple time frame hypothesis, a future event is not closed in the time frame within which ordinary experience is confined; but it is—by the very nature of the hypoth-

And why is that appealing? For if God determines the future, then future events are necessary and inevitable. That, specifically, is the conclusion that the typical proponent of divine clairvoyance is seeking to avoid.

But that is also why explaining divine clairvoyance in terms of the hypothesis of multiple time frames is self-defeating. For if God can know a future event precisely because on some time frame somewhere that event is a CLOSED event,¹³⁶ then that event is necessary and inevitable¹³⁷—the very conclusion that the proponent of divine clairvoyance was seeking to avoid in the first place. Hence, multiple time frames may indeed offer a basis from which we can achieve a plausible explanation of divine clairvoyance, but at a cost. It requires the admission that future events are, in fact, closed, necessary, and inevitable. That may be an acceptable price for some; but it is far too high a price for the typical proponent of divine clairvoyance.

Therefore, while one could, in truth, logically explain divine clairvoyance by means of the hypothesis of multiple time frames, this hypothesis is not available to the typical proponent of divine clairvoyance, for it explains divine clairvoyance only at the unacceptable cost of requiring that future events be closed, necessary, and inevitable. It would require that he concede that the future is already determined—the very thing he was trying to avoid by adopting divine clairvoyance.

On balance, therefore, divine determinism is a much less problematic doctrine than the doctrine of real existence on multiple time frames. Divine determinism may, and indeed does, strike us as “weird.” But could anyone seriously deny the “weirdness” of real existence on a multiplicity of different time frames? It is at least equally weird. To resort to the doctrine of real existence in multiple time frames in order to avoid divine determinism is going to desperate lengths indeed.¹³⁸

THIRD PROPOSITION

PROPOSITION #3: *The Bible's own explicit explanation for how God can have infallible foreknowledge is the Divine Disclosure Model.*

esis—closed in some time frame. (This is precisely why it can work as an explanation for how God could know a future event.) But if—in some time frame—a future event is closed, then it is necessary and inevitable. An event which has already occurred in any time frame is a logically necessary event. An event which has been actualized within time (history) cannot, logically, be other than it is (was).

137. It cannot be closed in any sense without being necessary and inevitable.

I am aware of only two passages that offer any explicit explanation for how God can know the future and make it known to us. These two explanations clearly reflect the Divine Disclosure Model rather than the Divine Clairvoyance Model:

For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, *“My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure”*; calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. *Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.*

Isaiah 46: 9 - 11 (emphasis mine)

This passage clearly suggests that God’s prediction of the future is nothing more than a declaration of his own purposes. God declares to his prophet what he intends to accomplish and is thereby confident that he is declaring the future itself. His prediction of the future, therefore, is based on his confidence that he can and will accomplish in the future what he now purposes to do when it arrives.

Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken! Who can but prophesy?

Amos 3: 7-8

In this passage, too, the prophetic predictions that the Lord gives to the prophet are viewed as announcements of God’s purposes. They are not announcements of what God has seen at his latest seance. Rather, they are simple statements of the will and “secret counsel” of God.

Amos is saying here that God will not act to bring about events in accordance with his will until he has first told his prophet what he plans to do so that the prophet can warn the people. But once God has spoken through his prophet, Amos warns, you better listen. If God says he’ll do it, he’ll do it!

In both of these cases, the explanation for divine foreknowledge is

138. See appendix C for a somewhat different approach to making this point.

139. The objection could be raised at this point: “That is how you, Jack, interpret these passages. But, by your own admission in chapter 5, a person’s pre-understanding directs the way he will interpret a biblical text. You see these verses as supporting the Divine Disclosure Model because

along the following lines: God knows what he purposes to do; therefore, he knows the future—for the future will turn out to be exactly what he purposes to make it. God plans and he brings his plans about. Therefore, when God tells you what he plans to do, you can be sure that that is what will happen.¹³⁹

This is consistently the biblical explanation for God's knowledge of the future. It is, in essence, the Divine Disclosure Model. On the other hand, no biblical passage of which I am aware ever suggests that God is predicting the future on the basis of his direct perception (clairvoyance) of that future event. The biblical evidence, therefore, clearly favors the Divine Disclosure Model as the rational explanation for how God can know the future.

FOURTH PROPOSITION

PROPOSITION #4: *The Divine Disclosure model is the TRUTH with regard to how divine foreknowledge is possible.*

We can reasonably conclude that the Divine Disclosure Model is the true explanation of how God foreknows future events. This conclusion follows directly from propositions #2 and #3 on the basis of three important assumptions: (i) reason and the assumptions of common sense are a reliable guide to truth, (ii) the Bible is a reliable (indeed, infallible) guide to truth, and (iii) there exists no yet-to-be-discovered model for explaining divine foreknowledge that is just as rationally and biblically acceptable as the Divine Disclosure Model.

Logically, it would seem, only two possible models for understanding the possibility of divine foreknowledge exist. Given these two possible models, the dual authorities of reason and the Bible both commend the Divine Disclosure Model over the Divine Clairvoyance Model. If the only infallible avenues to truth that we have available to us—sound reason and revelation—both commend the Divine Disclosure Model, then to embrace it as TRUTH is reasonable.

that is the pre-understanding you bring to those texts. But I think you are wrong. I don't think these verses support the Divine Disclosure Model." I cannot deny that my pre-understanding influences my interpretation. Therefore, I will concede that, in principle, there could be other interpretations of these two texts that do not imply the Divine Disclosure Model. But I am at a loss to know what those other interpretations would look like. If a plausible alternative exists to my interpretation of either of these passages, then my argument here is incomplete. I would

FIFTH PROPOSITION

PROPOSITION #5: *If we know that an event was infallibly foreknown by God, then we know that that event was divinely determined.*

As I have already shown, the Divine Disclosure Model, by its very nature, directly implies the divine determination of events that God foreknows. Therefore, when we know that an event has been foreknown by God, we know that it was determined by him as well. God cannot foreknow an event unless he is its cause. Therefore, events he predicts are events he will cause.

This conclusion is somewhat limited in scope. We have proved only that a certain sub-set of historical events—namely, those that God predicts through his prophets—can be known to be subject to divine determination. What about all the other events? My argument must continue.

SIXTH PROPOSITION

PROPOSITION #6: *Those events that we know were infallibly foreknown by God are not different in kind from any other cosmic event.*

We know—by the preceding argument—that the denial of Jesus by Peter is among those events that were divinely determined. What was the character of that event? Was it a fundamentally unique event, or was it like any other instance of a man denying Jesus?

I contend that Peter's denial is not fundamentally different in kind from any other freewill event. Peter willed to deny Jesus just as human beings throughout time have made their free choices. The same can be said of every event that God predicted through his prophets. The freewill choices that he predicted through his prophets were of like kind to all the other freewill choices throughout human history that God did not bother to predict. The Bible gives no hint of any fundamental difference in kind.

SEVENTH PROPOSITION

PROPOSITION #7: *Therefore, by induction, it follows that every cosmic event is infallibly foreknown by God, and, hence, divinely determined.*

Because the sub-set of events that God has foretold is not fundamentally different in kind from all other human events, we are justified in concluding, by induction, that all human events are subject to divine fore-

knowledge in exactly the same way that prophetically predicted events are. If God could know in advance that Peter would deny Jesus, then—for precisely the same reasons—he can know in advance whether you or I or anyone else will deny Jesus. And if the reason God can foreknow Peter's denial is because he will ultimately cause Peter's denial, then it follows that God can foreknow whether you or I will deny Jesus because it is he who would cause it to occur. In other words, all human events can reasonably be assumed to bear the same relationship to God as those that God has predicted. If the latter are divinely determined, then the former must be as well.¹⁴⁰ Hence, to conclude that all cosmic events are divinely determined because God has dramatically predicted some of them is eminently reasonable.

CONCLUSION

Proposition #7—our concluding proposition—is, in part, an affirmation of divine determinism. In seeking to understand how divine foreknowledge is possible, we have been led to acknowledge divine determinism. Nothing else—compatible with both the Bible and sound reason—can account for the nature and extent of divine foreknowledge. Therefore, to do justice to the biblical data with regard to God's ability to foreknow and predict the future, we are forced to embrace divine determinism as the most reasonable explanation.

Foreknowledge as Evidence Against a Common Objection

COMMON OBJECTION TO DIVINE DETERMINISM

I could stop here. The case for divine determinism from the fact of divine foreknowledge has been made. But a further point is worth highlighting—namely, the biblical data regarding prophetic prediction pro-

need to show (if possible) that my interpretation of these texts is preferable to the proposed alternative. But I cannot make that case here, for I cannot even conceive of a plausible alternative.

140. This generalization would be invalid if there was any basis for believing that divinely foretold—and hence, divinely determined—events were exceptional, extraordinary events. And if there was any basis for believing that it was only their extraordinary nature that made it possible for them to be divinely foreknown. But, as I have pointed out, there simply is no basis for believing that foretold events are extraordinary events in any other respect. Accordingly, divinely foretold events provide us with explicit data with regard to the relationship between God and human events—namely, they provide us with irrefutable evidence that God determines human

vides pointed counterexamples to the most important objection that limited determinists have to divine determinism. The objection I have in mind is the alleged incompatibility of divine determinism with human free will and moral accountability. If God causes a person to make a choice, then that choice—it is alleged—is not and cannot be a freewill choice for which he is morally accountable.

Logically, then, we would expect the limited determinist to respond to the argument of this chapter with something like this: *As this line of reasoning suggests, it is true that events that were foretold by God must have been divinely determined. But since that is so, any human choices involved in the unfolding of those events cannot have been freewill choices, and they cannot have been choices for which the people who made them were morally responsible.*

INSTANCES OF DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE REFUTE THIS OBJECTION

But this is not consistent with the biblical data. If we look at the instances of prophetic prediction in the Bible, there can be no question that the biblical record views the actors in prophetically predicted events as making freewill choices and as being morally accountable for those choices. There is much evidence to this effect, and there is not the slightest hint to the contrary.

So, for example, the Bible does not exonerate Peter of his denials by virtue of the fact that God caused him to do it. Nor is he exonerated because, after all, he was just fulfilling Jesus' prediction and it simply had to be. Without any embarrassment at all, the Bible affirms two important things: (i) God can know of Peter's denials in advance precisely because he, God, is the one who determines the affairs of men, and (ii) Peter's denials are freewill decisions that speak unfavorably of his moral character—that is, they reflect cowardice, disloyalty, and lack of trust.¹⁴¹

In the biblical record, then, divine determinism and human moral responsibility are not viewed as incompatible. In instances of prophetic prediction, the Bible affirms both without any suggestion that they are in contradiction.¹⁴² The assumption held by most limited determinists that

events. And this conclusion can be assumed to hold for all human events—not just those events that God has foretold—for there is no basis for assuming that foretold events are qualitatively different from non-foretold events.

141. It is not necessary to defend this at length. It would require a rather superficial reading of the account to miss the intended contrast between Peter's claim of loyalty to the point of death

divine determinism and human responsibility are mutually incompatible is simply not an assumption that is shared by the biblical revelation.¹⁴³

Conclusion of Part Two

Is divine determinism taught by the Bible? How we understand what the Bible teaches is, in fact, dictated by the pre-understanding that we bring with us to the study of the Bible. If we approach the Bible already believing in divine determinism, we will most certainly find texts that—interpreted accordingly—justify our belief. But if we come to the Bible believing in limited determinism, we will with equal readiness find texts that—interpreted accordingly—justify that belief. Accordingly, the crucial question becomes: which pre-understanding can I justifiably bring to the biblical texts?

When we consider two important biblical doctrines, we find that both these doctrines rationally imply divine determinism. These doctrines are (i) the traditional notion of creation *ex nihilo*, and (ii) the biblical concept of God being the one who is able to know the future in advance. We find that we have no rational explanation for either of these realities unless we assume divine determinism. Therefore, it would appear that the fundamental biblical teaching about the nature of God and his relationship to the created cosmos directly implies the divine causation or determination of all things. In other words, what the Bible teaches about God implies divine determinism.¹⁴⁴

If we are to be faithful to the Bible's teaching with regard to the nature of God—we have no choice but to make divine determinism the pre-understanding that we take with us to the other relevant biblical texts. When we do so, we find a wealth of explicit references to God's role as the determiner of all things. Hence, the final answer to our question has to be “yes.” The Bible *does* teach divine determinism.

based solely on empty bravado and the actual profound cowardice which he evidenced when tested. Clearly the text intends to expose Peter at his point of culpability, not to exonerate him through a “God made him do it” defense.

142. And not ONLY in instances of prophetic prediction.

143. The assumption that most limited determinists make is not that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are incompatible; rather, it is that human responsibility is incompatible with divine determinism—as I have defined it. Many, if not most, limited determinists are willing to affirm that divine sovereignty and human accountability are mutually compatible by virtue of some sort of paradox. But to characterize divine sovereignty as I have characterized it in the doctrine of divine determinism is something they refuse to do; and they refuse to do so precisely because they believe it to be irreconcilable with free will and human accountability.