

A DISCUSSION ON THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

**"The omniscience of God, particularly His foreknowledge,
does not include the contingent free will choices
of human beings."**

First Affirmative

By Ken Green

The Omniscience of God

The prefix, "omni," is a word element meaning "all." "Science" is from the Latin *scientia* for knowledge. Thus the word, "omniscience," means infinite knowledge; the quality of knowing all things.

The term does not appear in the Bible either as a noun or an adjective. Yet it is universally accepted that God is "all knowing." "He counts the number of stars; He calls them all by name" (Psalm 147:4). "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt. 10:30,31). "The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth" (Psalm 33:13,14). "You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off" (Psalm 139:2).

These Scriptures affirm God's omniscience. Yet, the proposition I affirm seems to contradict this. But the contradiction is only apparent, not real. To say that God is all-knowing is to say He knows all that is knowable. The issue at hand is: are the contingent free will choices of human beings fully knowable?

An illustration can be drawn from God's omnipotence. Omnipotence is defined as: possessing all power. The Scripture states that God is the Almighty. With God all things are possible. Yet, all-power has limitations. God can do all things consistent with His nature. He cannot deny Himself. He

cannot contradict His truth. This is the reason He cannot lie. It is the reason He cannot make two plus two equal five, or square a circle, or create a stone so heavy that He cannot lift it. To say that God has all power is to say that He can do anything that can be done with power. As G.K. Chesterson once said, "Nonsense remains nonsense, even when you talk it about God!"

Particularly His Foreknowledge

It is believed by many serious Bible students that God's omniscience is at once immediate and eternal; that He knows all things immediately as they are, and that all things which happen in time sequence from the perspective of this world are known to Him as an "eternal now." Past, present, and future are known by God simultaneously and in totality. He is not involved in time sequence. There is no chronological succession in His existence or thoughts. He sees the future as easily as man sees the immediate past and present.

I question this commonly held view. It is more philosophical than Scriptural. Several theologians have expressed this understanding. Augustine wrote: "In one single unchangeable glance God contemplates every being, every truth, every possible or real object. This knowledge is an eternal intuition before which the past and the future are as real as the present, but each for that portion of time in which it really exists. God encompasses all time and therefore can know the future as infallibly as He knows the present."¹

John Calvin held a similar view: "When we attribute prescience to God, we mean that all things always were, and ever continue, under his eyes; that to his knowledge there is no past or

future, but all things are present, and indeed so present that it is not merely the idea of them that is before him (as those objects are which we retain in our memory), but that he truly sees and contemplates them as actually under his immediate inspection. This prescience extends to the whole circuit of the world, and to all creatures."²

Similarly, C.S. Lewis wrote: "But God, I believe, does not live in a Time-series at all. His life is not dribbled out moment by moment like ours: with Him it is, so to speak, still 1920 and already 1960..."

"If you picture Time as a straight line along which we have to travel, then you must picture God as the whole page on which the line is drawn. We come to the parts of the line one by one: we have to leave A behind before we get to B, and cannot reach C until we leave B behind. God, from above or outside or all around, contains the whole line, and sees it all."³

These theological statements about God's foreknowledge demand a pre-determination of the acts of all involved. If man's future responses, choices, and behavior are totally foreknowable, then is his will free, or only seemingly so?

Two basic routes have been taken by those who subscribe to this concept of absolute foreknowledge. Calvin believed that God knows absolutely all that will happen because He planned it that way. His explanation continues: "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends, we say that he has been predestined to life or to death."⁴

Calvin's contention obviously negates free will. He did not shrink from this consequence. He wrote: "...the internal affections of men are no less ruled by the hand of God than their external actions are preceded by His eternal decrees; and moreover... God performs not by the hands of men the things which He has decreed, without first working in their hearts the very will which precedes the acts they are to

perform."⁵

About Adam's sin, he said: "The decree, I admit, is dreadful; and yet it is impossible to deny that God foreknew what the end of man was to be before he made him, and foreknew, because he had so ordained by his decree... God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also at his own pleasure arranged it."⁶

Absolute foreknowledge based upon foreordination may be likened to the playwright of a stage production, or the programmer of a computer. He knows what to expect because he wrote the script; he wrote the program. He knows what will happen because he planned it that way. He exercises absolute control.

The second route is taken by non-Calvinistic theologians. This view has it that God possesses absolute knowledge of everything, that is going to happen, not because He predestined everything, but because He looks into the future and sees everything ahead of time.

Defenders of this view emphasize that knowing what is going to happen does not make one responsible for what happens. I have no quarrel with this, but believe it misses an important point: If the future is absolutely foreknowable, then it absolutely must happen as it is foreknown. He who absolutely knows the future may not be responsible, but still, it has to happen. This means that the future is just as determined as per the Calvinistic position. In either case the future is settled, invariable, and closed in every detail.

The Calvinist, Jonathan Edwards, expressed this inescapable fact: "All certain foreknowledge proves the necessity of the truth known; whether it be before, after, or at the same time... Whether prescience *makes* the event necessary or not, it alters not the case. Infallible foreknowledge may *prove* the necessity of the event foreknown, and yet not be the thing which causes the necessity."⁷

The first position likens God to the playwright, the second likens Him to a friend of the playwright who has read the script. Regardless of where God is positioned in this scenario, *the script has been written!* The performance is

forever settled.

Some try to extricate God from responsibility by suggesting that He *could* know if He wanted to. But He does not choose to know.

This changes nothing. It places God in the role, in our little parable, of one who neither wrote the script nor read it beforehand, but merely watches it being performed. "Don't tell me what happens," such a one may say. "I want to be surprised."

Still, the script has been written and settled. The outcome is fully foreknowable.

Does Not Include The Contingent Free Will Choices Of Human Beings

My contention is that where there is absolute foreknowledge of future choices and actions, those who perform said choices and actions are not truly free.

But the Scriptures teach that human beings are free agents, fully capable of making moral choices. Therefore, there can be no absolute foreknowledge of the contingent free will choices of human beings.

Most of our discussion centers around the first statement above, i.e. that where there is absolute foreknowledge of future choices and actions, freedom of choice is not possible. Here are three examples where apparently God did not foreknow the contingent free will choices of human beings.

1. The case of Abraham: After Abraham proved himself willing to slay his son in obedience to God, the angel of the Lord said, "...now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son from me" (Gen. 22:12). If the Lord already knew the choice before Abraham made it, the statement is nonsensical.

2. The case of Jonah: God commissioned Jonah to declare in Nineveh that in forty days they would be destroyed. Yet, they repented and were not destroyed. Based upon their change of heart, God repented (or relented). Now did God know they would not be destroyed? If so, the account is problematic. He told Jonah Nineveh would be destroyed, knowing that they would be spared.

3. The case of Hezekiah: Isaiah informed him, "Thus says the Lord: 'Set

your house in order, for you shall die and not live' " (Isaiah 38:1). Then Hezekiah prayed and the Lord sent the prophet back to tell him: "...I will add to your days fifteen years" (v. 5).

Some think that to question God's ability to foreknow all that shall ever happen is to question His sovereignty, omniscience, and omnipotence.

But consider this question: Is God powerful enough to create a being so free that He would not know what that creature's moral choices would be? I conclude that God is powerful enough to do just that. If that is what He did, it does not diminish His divine attributes. It enhances them. If God had desired to create the world as the Calvinist imagines, where the script is written and directed by God, He could accomplish that with no problem at all.

I submit that not only is it possible for God to create free, accountable beings, but that this model of creation and man more easily harmonizes with the Biblical teaching of God's foreknowledge, justice and man's freedom.

1. Eugene Portalie, *A Guide to the Thought of St. Augustine*, translated by Ralph J. Bastain (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960), p. 120.

2. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, iii. xxi. 5, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), Vol. 2, p. 206.

3. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1958), pp. 131, 137.

4. John Calvin, *Institutes*, p. 206.

5. John Calvin, "A Defense of the Secret Providence of God," *Calvin's Calvinism*, translated by Henry Cole (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 247.

6. John Calvin, *Institutes*, III. xxiii. 7 (Vol. 2, p. 232).

7. Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, edited by Paul Ramsey (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 266, 263.

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First Negative

By Allan Turner

Foreknowledge vs. Free Will?

In his first affirmative, my opponent repeatedly refers to "absolute foreknowledge." I assume my opponent has some reason for using this terminology, and because we will have to wait for his explanation, I think I better take the time to explain what /mean by

"foreknowledge." According to W.E. Vine, "foreknowledge" (*prognosis*) means "know[ing] before" and "is used only of Divine foreknowledge." I understand the term to be exactly equivalent to *prescience* which means "knowing beforehand." My opponent will do us all a favor by defining, as he should have done in his first affirmative, what *he* means by the terms "foreknowledge" and "absolute foreknowledge."

My opponent's whole argument is built upon the unproved assumption that God's foreknowledge would somehow negate man's free will. Quite frankly, it is this very assumption that my opponent is under obligation to prove. But notice that in his effort to prove his point my opponent cites Augustine, Calvin, and Edwards. Of course, all these men are determinists and take the position that God's foreknowledge eliminates man's free will. Did they prove conclusively that this was so? No, like my opponent, they simply assumed it. Believing their assumptions to be correct, they opted to eliminate man's free will in order to preserve God's foreknowledge. My opponent, although clearly a non-determinist, nevertheless accepts Calvin's presupposition. Of course, and this is very important, my opponent argues his case from the flip side of the theological coin. That is, he is willing to eliminate God's foreknowledge so that man's free will might be preserved. The mistake both my opponent and the determinists have made is believing that a decision must be made between God's foreknowledge and man's free will—that it must be one or the other. I am convinced that this either/or dichotomy is contrary to the truths taught in God's Word and is, in fact, demeaning to God Almighty.

Man is a free will creature. We know this is true because the Bible teaches it. But the same Bible that teaches that man has free will also teaches that God has actual foreknowledge of the contingent free will choices and actions of His creatures. For example, in Acts 2:23 (if you take a non-determinist view as my opponent and I do) foreknowledge of contingent free will choices and actions of men is described as the very foundation upon which the Father determined to offer His Son on the cross.

"Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God" (this is God's part) "you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (this is man's part). It is clear that God did not effect the redemption of man by His omnipotent will alone (this would have foreordained men to certain actions against their free will) but by His foreknowledge as well (this would permit God to determine a plan based upon the free will choices of men). Because God foreknew certain contingent free will choices of men like Judas and Pilate, He could arrange in advance ("predetermine") the death of His Son on Calvary. This means that Judas did not betray Jesus because he was chosen to do so; rather, he was chosen because he would, of his own free will, betray Jesus. This is made clear by Jesus' words in John 6:70, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" The next verse makes it plain that He spoke of Judas Iscariot. Those who take the position of my opponent usually argue that verse 70 was a general statement that any of the apostles could have fulfilled. Consequently, they say that verse 71 was simply John's interpretation of what the Lord said after the fact. Verse 64, of course, makes it absolutely clear that contingent free will acts of *specific* individuals, including Judas Iscariot, were foreknown by Jesus. These passages teach what I have agreed to defend on the subject of God's foreknowledge and man's free will; namely, the contingent free will choices of men are known by God before they occur, and this in no way impinges on their true freedom.

A False Major Premise

My opponent, just like Calvin, follows a logical order in some of his arguments; but, also, just like Calvin, he makes a very serious mistake — he begins with a false major premise. My opponent writes, "My contention is that where there is absolute foreknowledge of future choices and actions, those who perform said choices and actions are not truly free." My opponent, of course, has not proven this major premise, he has just assumed it to be true. This premise is, as I have already demonstrated, contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture (cf. Acts 2:23). It is,

therefore, false!

My Opponent's Fallacious Logic

My opponent believes that if God actually knows what is going to happen before it happens, then it *must* happen; thus the freedom and the contingency of the future is destroyed. If God foreknows every choice man will make then every choice is already determined and freedom is an illusion. But such reasoning misses the point of foreknowledge. God foreknows the contingent free will choices of men as real choices, not simply as possibilities which His own recognition, in turn, nails down as certain. The certainty of the contingent free will choices of men is not settled by God's foreknowledge; rather, God's foreknowledge is settled by the reality of the choices themselves. Of course, the fact that God sees them "ahead of time" does mean that there is no question that they are going to happen as God sees them; but, and this is extremely important, they are going to happen because of the genuine free choices of those involved. Again, God's seeing them does not *make* them happen.

My opponent believes that the mere truth of future-tense statements about future free acts implies that these acts happen *necessarily*. This argument, of course, commits a fairly common logical fallacy. In effect it says:

Necessarily, if God foreknows contingent free will choices, then the contingent free will choices will happen.

God foreknows contingent free will choices.

Therefore, the contingent free will choices will necessarily happen.

Such reasoning is universally recognized to be logically fallacious. It is like reasoning:

Necessarily, if one is a bachelor, then one is unmarried.

Jones is a bachelor.

Therefore, Jones is necessarily unmarried.

But, of course, Jones is not *necessarily* unmarried. He is just unmarried. He is perfectly free to be married; no necessity compels him to be unmarried. The *valid* form of this argument would change the conclusion to:

Therefore, Jones is unmarried.

Consequently, the same situation holds true in the case of God's foreknowledge. The *valid* form of this ar-

gument would change the conclusion to:

Therefore, the contingent free will choices of men will happen.

It is fallacious to infer, as my opponent does, that these choices must *necessarily* happen. They just will happen. For example, if God foreknows that on a certain date my opponent will mow his lawn, then my opponent believes he would not be free *not* to mow his lawn. In other words, he believes his apparent free choices to either mow or not to mow his lawn on a certain date are simply illusions. Why? Because, he says, God's foreknowledge makes, compels, or forces him to mow his lawn on a certain date; he has no choice, no "true free will," he *must* mow his lawn on a certain date.

In reality, my opponent has a free will choice to make about when he will mow his lawn, and the fact that my opponent will actually choose to mow his lawn on a certain date is the reason God foreknows it. Let me reiterate this point: My opponent will mow his lawn on a certain date *not* because God foreknows it; God foreknows it *because* my opponent will, of his own free will, mow his lawn on a certain date. The word *because*, in this case, indicates a *logical*, not a *causal*, relationship. It is true that God's foreknowledge is *chronologically* prior to my opponent's mowing his lawn; but, and this is of utmost importance, my opponent's mowing his lawn is *logically* prior to God's foreknowledge. My opponent's mowing of his lawn is the *ground*; God's foreknowledge is the *logical consequent*. My opponent is, in fact, free to do whatever he wants with reference to mowing his lawn, and God's foreknowledge logically follows my opponent's action like a shadow, even if chronologically the shadow precedes the coming of the event itself.

My Opponent's Examples Considered

1. *The case of Jonah*: My opponent thinks that if God foreknew Ninevah would repent at Jonah's preaching, then this whole account is "problematic." I suppose he thinks it problematic because, from his point of view, if God actually has foreknowledge, this account makes God appear to be a liar. Such a conclusion is not only offensive to the character of God, but is, in fact,

completely unnecessary. The scriptural principle that is to be applied to the case of Jonah is: "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy* it, if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I have thought to bring upon it" (Jeremiah 18:14). This passage conclusively demonstrates that God's words against Ninevah were *not* to be understood as being *unconditional*.

In other words, God, even if He foreknew that Ninevah would repent and that He would not have to destroy them, was not a liar. He was, instead, dealing with the people of Ninevah where they were *in time just* as He deals with us; namely, if we obey, we receive blessings, if we disobey, we receive cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 15; Joshua 8:34). The men of Ninevah, in view of Jonah's preaching, had some contingent free will choices to make. Fortunately for them they made the right choices.

2. *The case of Hezekiah*: Far from disproving God's foreknowledge of contingent free will choices, the case of Hezekiah probably lends credence to it. Many years before Hezekiah's reign, God made a promise that "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come" (Genesis 49:10). This meant, among other things, that the line of Judah's descendants on the throne would not be broken. In trying to understand this difficult passage, it ought to be noted that when Isaiah informed Hezekiah he was going to die, the king did not yet have a son to take his place. Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, came to the throne at the age of twelve, so was not born until three years *after* Hezekiah was given fifteen years to live (cf. II Kings 20:21-21:1).

If God intended to keep His promise to Judah, which none can doubt, then He did not intend that Hezekiah would die that day. Of course, I believe that without God's warning and Hezekiah's prayer, he would have died. Why? Because God said he would, that's why. But God, working providentially in Hezekiah's life, in conjunction with His working out of the scheme of redemption, intended to prevent Hezekiah's death. Consequently, God

told him he was going to die, as he would have "all things remaining the same," foreknowing all along that ultimately Hezekiah would not die until fifteen years later. Again, why? Because, God knew that Hezekiah would respond to the news of his impending death the way he did, thereby imploring Him to spare him, which would, in turn, allow Him to answer his prayer, spare him, and keep His promise to Judah. What a faith building experience! The self-existent, eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, infinite, immutable Sovereign of the universe is in active control of His creation, even today! Praise God!

3. *The case of Abraham*: Admittedly, if I had no knowledge of what the Bible teaches about God's foreknowledge and if I had no other information other than that provided in Genesis 22:12, then I would conclude from this passage that God did, in fact, learn from the experiment. But if God did not foreknow what Abraham would do, on what did He base His promise that Sarah would have a son through whom Abraham's seed would become as numberless as the sands of the sea? Remember, that son was clearly identified as the young man Abraham was about to sacrifice: "In Isaac your seed shall be called" (Genesis 21:12). Now these promises were made to Abraham before he was told by God to sacrifice Isaac. Again, if God did not already know (foreknow) whether Abraham would pass the test of faithfulness, on what did God base His promises to Abraham? God had to foreknow that Abraham would stand the test. In fact, way before Abraham was ever commanded to offer his son, God said: "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him" (Genesis 18:17-19).

The Lord's language to Abraham, when compared with other passages, must be understood as being accommodative. What I mean by *accommodative*. (See FOREKNOWLEDGE, page 14)

stitute communism as advocated by communists today?

(1) Sharing was done from religious and spiritual motives out of love and devotion for God. Communism denies religious and spiritual motives, denies the existence of God, and teaches communism instead from political and economic motives.

(2) The giving was *voluntary* — a matter of personal choice. There was no compulsion to give against the will of the giver as communism advocates. Note Acts 5:4; Cf. 2 Cor. 9:5,7; 8:12.

(3) The giving was done to meet a specific need at a specific time under specific circumstances. There is no indication that Christians in general from this point on divested themselves of all property, let alone businesses.

(4) Only Christians were involved in this giving. Communism requires all citizens of a nation to give up their property, regardless of their religious convictions.

(5) Money given was under the control of the *church*, not of the *government*. In fact, what was given to the church was money, not property. These passages say nothing that would imply that the government ended up controlling the property/

Foreknowledge

Continued from page 12:

dativo is that the Lord adapted or adjusted His language in consideration of Abraham's position as a finite creature. As we have already pointed out in the case of Jonah, God was simply dealing with Abraham where he was *in time* just as he deals with us all; namely, if we obey, we receive blessings, if we disobey, we receive cursings (cf. Deuteronomy 1:1,2,15; Joshua 8:34). God's language to Abraham should be seen as His expression of approval for what Abraham was willing to do.

Unless I am seriously mistaken, my opponent believes that God knows the present and past *perfectly*; but in Genesis 18:21, 22, the Lord said: "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will

(6) We have already cited passages showing that Christians still did own property even after Acts 2 and 4, and they were permitted to own businesses.

Clearly there is nothing in these passages, nor is there anywhere else in Scripture, that justifies the communist concept of property control.

The Bible Forbids Stealing.

Romans 13:8-10 — Stealing is expressly forbidden because it is a violation of the law of love. But the very existence of laws against stealing necessarily implies the existence of property rights! How could it be wrong to take from someone that which really he has no right to? The very fact that it is wrong to take the property of someone else, necessarily teaches that he has the right to own the property to begin with.

Every passage in the Bible that forbids stealing, therefore, constitutes a statement that affirms the right of individuals to possess property. See Ex. 20:15,17; I Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 4:28; I Pet. 4:15, 16; Lk. 12:39; etc.

Furthermore, since people do have property rights, it follows that anyone who confiscates their rightful property against their will becomes a thief. Civil government can become guilty of this

know." If he is not willing to deny God's perfect knowledge of the past and present, my opponent knows God already knew what there was to know in this case. Therefore, he knows the language recorded* here has to be accommodative.

In truth, God already knew He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. We know this because God's perfect knowledge of the present and past allowed Him to know whether these two cities had done "altogether according to the outcry" that had come up before Him. Consequently, His language to Abraham must be understood as accommodating Abraham's finite nature. Abraham needed to know (and we need to know) that God's judgment against these two cities was not just some capricious, arbitrary choice on God's part, but was, instead, the righteous judgment of a Holy God (cf. Genesis 18:23-33). If one can see that the "I will know" language in Chapter 18 is accommodative, then

just the same as individuals can.

Government does have the right to collect taxes, but this is for the purpose of doing rightful duties of government. (Rom. 13:1-7. Note verse 6: "For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing [punishment of evildoers].") When government confiscates private property, not to support the government in its service to the people, but simply because rulers believe people have no right to have property, and they want to transfer control to themselves, that is a sinful abuse of government power. It is stealing by the authority of government, just the same as it is murder when the government determines to kill innocent citizens who have done no harm to anyone.

Hence, communists not only disagree with the Bible teaching about property rights and stealing, but they actually violate that teaching for they violate the property rights of individuals and advocate that which constitutes stealing! Communists are not only the world's biggest liars and murderers, they are also the world's biggest thieves.

why cannot the "Now I know" language of Chapter 22 be seen the same way?

I look forward to my opponent's second affirmative.

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"The omniscience of God, particularly His foreknowledge,
 does not include the contingent free will choices
 of human beings."

Second Affirmative

By Ken Green

I mean the same by "foreknowledge" as defined by W.E. Vine. By "absolute foreknowledge" I mean the "knowing before" of the future in all its details. I maintain that God's foreknowledge is neither changeless nor exhaustive. When God created man morally free, He left open man's choices. I submit that the future is, therefore, open in many of its details. Since future free choices cannot exist before they are made, they are indefinite and unknowable.

The traditional view of *absolute foreknowledge* demands that the future is there to be known. Therefore, it is closed, settled, fixed, definite, and unchangeable in all its details.

That the existence of a determined future negates man's free will requires no proof. It is obvious. My quotations from Augustine, Calvin, and Edwards were given to show that these men perceived the logical dilemma of maintaining both the doctrine of God's absolute foreknowledge and man's free will.

If one can demonstrate that the Bible affirms both of these, then I will accept them whether I can harmonize them or not. I do not believe the Scriptures teach that either foreknowledge or free will is absolute.

Does Acts 2:23 demand absolute foreknowledge? I believe Adam Clarke's comment expresses the truth: "God has ordained some things as *absolutely certain*; these he knows as *absolutely certain*. He has ordained other things as *contingent*; these he knows as *contingent*. It would be absurd to say that he knows a thing as only *contingent* which

he has made *absolutely certain*. And it would be as absurd to say that he foreknows a thing to be *absolutely certain* which in his own eternal counsel he has made *contingent*. By *absolutely certain*, I mean a thing *must be*, in that *order, time, place, and form* in which divine wisdom has ordained it to be; and that it can be no *otherwise* than this infinite counsel has ordained. By *contingent*, I mean such things as the infinite wisdom of God has thought proper to poise on the *possibility of being or not being*, leaving it to the will of intelligent beings to turn the scale. Or, contingencies are such possibilities, amid the succession of events, as the wisdom of God has left to the will of intelligent beings to determine whether any such event shall take place or not. To deny this would involve the most palpable contradictions, and the most monstrous absurdities..."

The reason Jesus' death was according to the foreknowledge of God is because He foreordained it. Isaiah set forth the truth of God's foreknowledge: "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times that are not yet done, Saying 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure... Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it' (46:10,11) ... 'I have declared the former things from the beginning; they went forth from my mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass'" (48:3).

God declares "the end from the beginning" not because He sees it ahead of time, but because He is able to

do His pleasure, and bring it to pass. God does not need foreknowledge of the contingent free will choices and actions of men in order to bring His purpose to pass. He can perform His will regardless of what men decide to do or not do.

To illustrate: a master of chess would not need foreknowledge of a novice's moves in order to decisively defeat him. It makes no difference what moves the beginner made; the champion can counter and frustrate him in multiple ways. So it is with God and men. His wisdom is so far above man's that it really makes no difference what moves particular men make. God is able to accomplish His purpose, and use men in doing so.

Now, did God look into the future and foresee Judas betraying Jesus, and make His plans according to this inside information? Such a notion detracts from God's power and wisdom. Who couldn't come out on top if he knew before hand what the opposition was going to do? Actually, this scenario has Judas (and by projection, all of us) making his choice before he ever made his choice; in fact, making his choice in eternity past before he even existed!

Some people pervert John 6:70, to read: "Judas was a devil from the beginning." The traditional view of foreknowledge lends support to that idea.

Judas did not have to betray the Lord. But by the time Jesus discoursed on the Bread of Life, He knew the devil had Judas in his clutches (Jn. 6:64-70). He knew what was in man. He knew that Judas would be unwittingly used to help fulfill the foreordained purpose of the Lord's incarnation.

But Jesus did not choose Judas for that purpose. It was not His will that any of His chosen ones should perish (John 6:39; 17:12). Yet, because of Judas' own chosen path, he became the familiar friend who ate Jesus' bread and lifted up his heel against Him.

One may ask, "What about John 6:64?" "For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him." Just what *beginning* was He speaking of? Was it the beginning of time? Or the beginning of His personal ministry? Or was it the beginning of their unbelief and defection? The latter harmonizes best with the scriptural teaching of

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~ God's foreknowledge and man's free will.

~ I maintain that the premise: "Where there is absolute foreknowledge of future choices and actions, those who perform said choices and actions are not truly free," is a valid and axiomatic statement. Whatever God absolutely knows will take place has already been determined. To affirm that God knows the future in all its details is to affirm that there is a future already there to be known. If God knows the future as definitely as He knows the past, then the future is just as definite as the past.

~ Even from a human perspective we can often predict an individual's choices and actions with a great deal of accuracy. This is so because we know the predispositions of that person. Now, if our ability to so predict were absolute, there would be a question about the freedom of the person. Freedom demands not just the absence of constraint and coercion, but also the existence of genuine alternatives. Alternatives may be eliminated by physical or mental limitations, previous decisions, or habitual conduct. For example, I know that Brother Turner is not going to win a medal in the 1992 Olympics; sing in the Metropolitan Opera; or be elected to the presidency of the United States. He also knows this about me. The fact is that neither of us can achieve these goals. If, peradventure, either of us did achieve such, it would mean that the knowledge of the other was not absolute.

* ^ freedom and the contingency of the future is destroyed. If God foreknows every choice man will make then every choice is already determined and freedom is an illusion." This is an accurate statement of my view.

^ Then he responds, "But such reasoning misses the point of foreknowledge. God foreknows the contingent free will choices of men as real choices ... The certainty of the contingent free will choices of men is not settled by God's foreknowledge; rather, God's foreknowledge is settled by the reality of the choices themselves."

^ No, my brother, you miss the point of my argument. I am affirming that if God

truly foreknows the choices of men before the choices are made; yea, before the men even exist, then those choices are as settled, fixed, and invariable as the Calvinist says they are. You admit this to be the case, for you have "God's foreknowledge (being) settled by the reality of the choices" before the persons or the choices ever came into being.

Then you add, "Of course, the fact that God sees them 'ahead of time' does mean that there is no question that they are going to happen as God sees them;" (Will the reader please read that statement about three times and think about it.) "but ... they are going to happen because of the genuine free choices of those involved. Again, God's seeing them does not *make* them happen."

Then, what does make them happen? The choices themselves did not exist before they were made. The persons who made the choices did not exist in past time. But in reality, Brother Turner's view of foreknowledge demands that persons exist and make their "free will choices" before they actually came into being. Therefore, when one "makes a choice," he is not really making a choice. He is acting out the choice he made in eternity, and, therefore, what God has already known he would do. The computer has been programmed, not by God, but by all of us, before we actually came to exist. This makes for *determinism* and *fatalism*, and the question of who is responsible is quite beyond the point.

Brother Turner's syllogism which purportedly represents my logic is not valid, and there is a bit of sophistry in his use of the word, *necessarily*. I think a valid form of his illustrative syllogism would be: Necessarily, if one is a bachelor, then one is unmarried. Jones is a bachelor. Necessarily, therefore, Jones is unmarried. Either that or just drop the "necessarily" in both the major premise and the conclusion. Either way, it says the same thing.

The same is true with the other syllogism: Necessarily, if God knows contingent free will choices, then the contingent free will choices will happen. God knows contingent free will choices. Necessarily, therefore, the contingent free will choices will happen.

Brother Turner affirms that this is

what he believes. If God foreknows that I will mow my lawn on a certain day, then, necessarily, that will happen.

Now, the fact is, if God knows this, I am not free not to mow my lawn. This is true, not because God's foreknowledge "makes, compels, or forces" me; but because no genuine alternatives exist. According to my brother's reasoning, I had already made a choice to mow my lawn on that day, before I came into being; before anyone came into being. Therefore, no alternative is open to me when that day comes except the choice I had made in eternity.

1. *The case of Jonah*: Brother Turner avers that if God foreknew He would not destroy Ninevah, and yet said He would; that from my point of view, that would make God a liar. He comments: "Such a conclusion is... offensive to the character of God." He is correct, but the conclusion is derived from his reasoning, not mine.

Jeremiah 18:14 harmonizes more with my view than with his. According to his position, the nation had already made its decision from eternity to turn from its evil, and, therefore, God had known it from eternity. What force then does "if" have in the passage?

2. *The case of Hezekiah*: Again, according to the traditional view, Hezekiah made his choice and prayed before the foundation of the world. So when God told him he would die and not live, God really knew he would live and not die.

Brother Turner gives an interesting interpretation God's intent and purpose. He expressed a doxology to God who "is in active control of His creation, even today!" Such would suggest that events enter God's experience as they happen, and that He deals with them in the present. In other words, that time is real to God. I believe this. But the traditional view of foreknowledge renders it impalpable. How can God respond in time with true joy (Luke 15:7,10), or indignation (Romans 2:8), if the choices and actions of men add nothing to His experience?

3. *The case of Abraham*. Brother Turner says: "But if God did not foreknow what Abraham would do, on what did He base His promise that Sarah would have a son through whom Abraham's seed would become as numberless as the sands of the sea?"

That promise was based on what God would do; not what Abraham might do. God would perform His purpose regardless of what Abraham did. I believe Abraham erred when he and Sarah took matters into their own hands and used Hagar to produce an heir. But this did not stop God from performing His purpose. "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar..." (Romans 3:4)

I agree that the language of Genesis 22:10 may be accommodative. Brother Turner has offered an explanation of this verse that may be valid. I'm sure that God could predict with great accuracy what Abraham's choice in that circumstance would be, for He knew Abraham intimately. Still, this is far different from the view that God looked into the future and foresaw Abraham's choice even before Abraham came into existence. To suppose that is to suppose that Abraham made his choice before he came to be.

The passage in Genesis 18:21,22, is obviously accommodative. We agree that the doctrine of God's omniscience demands that He knows everything that may be known. The present and the past may be known. The question is: *may the future be known with the same certainty as the past? If so, then the future is just as definite, settled, fixed, invariable, and determined as the past. If so, then man's freedom is purely illusionary.*

I ask my brother again: Could God have made a creature so free that He would not have absolute foreknowledge of the creature's contingent free will choices? If so, would that detract from His sovereignty or divine attributes?

1. Adam Clarke, Commentary, (Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville) Vol.5, P. 702.

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Second Negative

By Allan Turner

Brother Green says the syllogism I used in my first article to represent his reasoning is "not valid." Of course it's not valid, and that was exactly my point: His reasoning *is* NOT VALID! He believes that the mere truth of future-tense statements about future acts implies that these acts happen *necessarily*. He believes that if God actually foreknows what is going to happen before it happens, then these acts have already been *determined*; thus the freedom and the contingency of the future is destroyed. I believe my opponent is wrong about this and the whole purpose of what I wrote in my first article under the subtitle, "My Opponent's Fallacious Logic," was to demonstrate HIS (not my) fallacious logic. But, that brother Green is apparently confused about this is evident when he writes: "Brother Turner affirms that this is what he believes. If God foreknows that I will mow my lawn on a certain day, then, necessarily, that will happen." This, of course, is not what I believe.

Furthermore, in commenting on my argument about his faulty reasoning, brother Green wrote:

I think a valid form...would be: Necessarily, if one is a bachelor, then one is unmarried. Jones is a bachelor. Necessarily, therefore, Jones is unmarried. Either that or just drop the "necessarily" in both the major premise and the conclusion. Either way, it says the same thing.

He is, of course, as wrong as he can be. "Necessarily" in the conclusion is what makes the syllogism "not valid," and his moving of "necessarily" to the beginning of the sentence does not make the conclusion any less invalid. Ironically, what my opponent has done, although he apparently does not know it, is to confirm that my assessment of his fallacious logic was absolutely correct. It will be interesting to see how he gets out of this rather embarrassing mess.

In addition, brother Green wrote that my use of the word "necessarily" indicated "a bit of sophistry." Surely he did not mean to imply that I am guilty of "deceptively subtle reasoning or argumentation." Such a charge, in the

absence of any proof, would be most unkind. Actually, my use of the word "necessarily" was for the purpose of demonstrating brother Green's sophism (viz., "an argument apparently correct in form but actually invalid"). Such did not indicate that I thought brother Green was being deceptive; but only that I thought he was, in fact, deceived by his own logically invalid argument.

The "He Knows He's Going To Do It, Therefore, He Knows He's Going To Do It" Syndrome

Yes, I know it sounds strange, but this is apparently what my opponent believes about the relationship between God's "determined counsel" and "foreknowledge" in Acts 2:23. According to my opponent, "The reason Jesus' death was according to the foreknowledge of God is because He foreordained it." In other words, God determined to offer His Son as a sacrifice for sin and (abracadabra) He then knew He was going to offer His Son as a sacrifice for sin. In essence, such thinking actually equates God's "counsel" and His "foreknowledge." Consequently, such a view regards "foreknowledge" as an action of the will, a determination to do something and thus knowing it in advance. I know this represents the point of view of my opponent because he says, "if God truly foreknows the choices of men before the choices are made...then those choices are as settled, fixed, and invariable as the Calvinist says they are." I maintain that such a statement is an unproved assumption. He counters by saying that it is "a valid and axiomatic statement."

The Key To This Debate

Here, I think, is the key to this debate: I must try to get my opponent to see that his statement, "Where there is absolute foreknowledge of future choices and actions, those who perform said choices and actions are not truly free," is not axiomatic (i.e. "self-evident"). This was done in my first article. Unfortunately, my opponent failed to appreciate this. Therefore, I

hope it will be helpful to take a slightly different approach while, at the same time, referring back to my first article. Please bear with me for this, I am convinced, is the crux of the matter.

In a three sentence paragraph in his second affirmative, my opponent wrote: "That...a determined future negates man's free will requires no proof. It is obvious." I completely agree with this and there is absolutely no argument between us here. But my opponent goes on to write, "My quotations from Augustine, Calvin, and Edwards were given to show that these men perceived the logical dilemma of maintaining both the doctrine of God's absolute foreknowledge and man's free will." It is on this point that my opponent and I totally disagree, and it is here, along with the Calvinists, that I believe he makes a serious mistake in his effort to deal with this admittedly difficult subject.

As I demonstrated in my first article, there is no "logical dilemma" between God's foreknowledge and man's free will. Why, then, does my opponent keep insisting that there is? Because, what he has done is to erroneously conclude that the phrase "a determined future negates man's free will" (which is axiomatic) is equivalent to "God's foreknowledge negates man's free will" (which is not axiomatic). Furthermore, as I mentioned previously, it is clear that he equates "determined future" with "God's foreknowledge." He believes they are one and the same; and if not exactly the same, then the same in effect or results. This is crucial, for this is the exact same kind of reasoning to which the Calvinists fall victim. It was Martin Luther, for example, who argued that given an omnipotent and omniscient God who foreknows our every thought, it is impossible that we should do anything other than what we, in fact, do; freedom to do otherwise is an illusion. This, as I have written, is exactly the line of reasoning my opponent uses to deny God's foreknowledge of the contingent free will choices of man.

But before we go any further, it behooves me to make sure everyone understands that I do not think my opponent is a crypto-Calvinist, neo-Calvinist, or any other kind of Calvinist; but I do believe, as I wrote in my first

article and as I have here demonstrated once again, that he has accepted as valid some of the erroneous reasoning of the Calvinists. If the Calvinists were wrong in their final conclusions, as my opponent knows they were, then why is he so sure they were right in their original assumptions? Quite to the contrary, the fallacious logic of both my opponent and the Calvinists was exposed in my first article. In my opinion, this is something with which my opponent must deal.

Acts 2:23 Once Again

As a non-Calvinist who does not equate "determined counsel" with "foreknowledge," I believe Acts 2:23 teaches that Jesus Christ was delivered up by the determined counsel of God which His foreknowledge, in turn, allowed Him to implement without stomping all over the free will of the evil men involved in the crucifixion of His Son. In other words, Judas was not a pawn, the Jews were not puppets, and Pilate, although unknowingly involved in the fulfilling of God's plan for redeeming man, was acting of his own free will. In truth, all involved in the crucifixion were responsible for their own freewill acts and were, therefore, guilty before God. It is interesting that my opponent writes, "Judas did not have to betray the Lord," as if somehow this is the opposite of what I believe, because if he is referring to Judas's volition, then I agree with him one hundred percent. He further writes: "[Jesus] knew that Judas would be unwittingly used to help fulfill the foreordained purpose of the Lord's incarnation." Again, this is exactly what I believe. The real question, then, is the old "Irangate" question of "What exactly did He know and when did He know it?"

Commenting on John 6:64, brother Green wrote:

Just what *beginning* was He speaking of? Was it the beginning of time? Or the beginning of His personal ministry? Or was it the beginning of their unbelief and defection? The latter harmonizes with the scriptural teaching of God's foreknowledge and man's free will.

Quite honestly, I do not know just when the incarnated deity knew what He knew, but I do know the "beginning" my opponent theorizes does not even harmonize with the actual passage under consideration. In the

Greek, the future participle of *paradoson auton* refers to a future definite act: Judas is the one who *shall* betray Jesus. It is futuristic, not volitive. It states what shall take place, not what one wills to do. Consequently, the passage teaches that Jesus knew that Judas would turn traitor long before Judas exercised his traitorous volition. Just how far in advance Jesus knew this makes no difference. The point is this: Jesus did not just foreknow that Judas could betray Him, He knew specifically that he *would* betray Him. This is, of course, the kind of divine ability (viz., "foreknowledge") that I have agreed to affirm in this debate and my opponent has agreed to deny. Perhaps brother Green, who believes that "God does not need foreknowledge of the contingent free will choices and actions of men in order to bring His purpose to pass," will tell us, in the absence of genuine foreknowledge, just how he thinks God accomplished His "determined counsel" in the sacrifice of His Son without encroaching upon Judas' free will?

Romans 8:29,30

In Romans 8:29 the Bible clearly teaches that those who were to be conformed to the image of His Son were predestined or foreordained based upon, in a logical sense, His foreknowledge. This predestination was, of course, not *unconditional* as the Calvinists teach. It was, instead, conditioned upon one's continued obedience to the gospel or, in other words, one's continued conformity to the image of His Son, which was, in turn, something the Father, in eternity, had foreknown. Notice how the entire process articulated in Romans 8:29 and 30 begins and ends in eternity: "Moreover whom He predestined, those He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." The Holy Spirit considered this future glorification so certain that He placed it in the past tense. Now I know my opponent can argue that this future glorification is certain because God intends to *make it happen*, that God "can perform His will regardless of what men decide to do or not to do," and in a manner of speaking he is absolutely correct; but, and this is my point, he has

not yet explained to us how God does what He has determined to do without negating the freewill of those involved.

The "Traditional View"

My opponent wrote: "The traditional view of *absolute foreknowledge* demands that the future is there to be known. Therefore, it is closed, settled, fixed, definite, and unchangeable in all its details." He then went on to comment about this view necessitating "the existence of a determined future." Let me just say briefly that, like my opponent, I do not believe the future exists. Bjit, and this is very important, unlike my opponent, I do not believe the future must exist for God to have known in the *past* or to know *now* what that nonexistent future *will be*. In other words, I am not arguing for what he calls the "traditional view." Therefore, it is my sincere belief that if this debate is to be cogent, if it is to be of any use to our brethren, and if it is not to be a total waste of time, then my opponent ought to address himself to my arguments and not the "traditional view."

A Profound Question?

In concluding his first affirmative, my opponent asked, "Is God powerful enough to create a being so free that He would not know what that creature's moral choices would be?" He asked this question again in his second affirmative. Evidently, he believes this to be a profound question because he is known to frequently ask it of others when he discusses this subject. In my opinion, this is really the wrong question. The right question for this discussion is, "Does the Bible teach that God made us so free that it is impossible for Him to know what our contingent free will choices will be?" To me, the first question seems more appropriate for theologians while the second question is better suited for Bible students. But, so as not to be accused of evading a responsibility or duty to respond to my opponent's questions, I will answer both questions in the negative.

In other words, I am saying that the Bible does not teach nor is it possible that God created His creatures so free that He could not foreknow their contingent freewill choices. The reason He has not and, in fact, cannot is based upon a certain line of reasoning which,

incidentally, my opponent correctly used in his first affirmative. In his "omnipotent illustration" at the first of that article, he said:

God can do all things consistent with His nature. He cannot deny Himself. He cannot contradict His truth. This is the reason He cannot lie. It is the reason He cannot make two plus two equal five, or square a circle, or create a stone so heavy that He cannot lift it. To say that God has all power is to say that he can do anything that can be done with power. As G.K. Chesterton once said, "Nonsense remains nonsense, even when you talk it about God."

To this line of reasoning, I simply say, "Amen." And if, as I am defending in this debate, God is, in fact, "all-knowing," if He knows all there is to know about the *now*, *then* and *not yet*, if His knowledge is infinite, if His omniscience, which includes foreknowledge, is everything I believe He says it is in His Word, then it would be just as impossible for Him to violate His "all-knowingness" by not knowing the contingent free will choices and actions of His creatures as it would be for Him to violate His omnipotence by constructing a rock so large He could not lift it.

In regard to brother Green's "master of chess" analogy, it is important to point out that one must be very careful while playing around on the slippery slopes of Higher Anthropomorphism, for God is not just a man of larger proportions as those who use these illustrations seem to imply (cf. Numbers 23:19; Romans 11:33). When one insists upon understanding God's character and abilities solely by way of analogy, he is destined to fall victim of his own dubious assumptions. Self-existence, eternalness, and infiniteness (viz., omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence) are not analagous to anything man has experienced; therefore, these qualities and abilities cannot be ultimately understood by assuming they are similar to what we possess. I am thoroughly convinced that man's imperfections and limitations must never be projected onto God. Of course, such is the case when one likens God to a human novelist who is unable to write a novel without interfering with the free will of his characters, or to a playwright or friend of a playwright who knows how the play is

going to turn out because they have either created or read the script. My objection to this line of reasoning is twofold: (1) the obvious effort to make God in the image of man, something Romans 1:23 clearly identifies as idolatry; and (2) God's foreknowledge cannot be legitimately compared with man's writing of a novel or play because God's foreknowledge, contrary to that of the novelist or playwright, need not be any more manipulative than my opponent believes His omnipotence is. Quite frankly, there is not much difference between the theologian's constructs (viz., God as "novelist" or "playwright") and the pagan's idols. And although I am sure brother Green will not like my analogy, his "master of chess" God, who is able to "decisively defeat," "counter," and "frustrate" man, reminds me of some of the so-called gods I have encountered among the heathens. The heathens' gods are always working *against* rather than *for* them. Ultimately, of course, and contrary to brother Green's "master of chess" construct, Jehovah is working *for* us, rather than *against* us. For this we can be extremely thankful.

Unfortunately, brother Green is convinced that if God knows everything that will happen, then our choices cannot be really free. This assumed difficulty has loomed so large in his thoughts that he has concluded that God does not know all the future. He believes that God does not know things that cannot (in his opinion) be known, such as the contingent free will acts of men that have not yet occurred. But such a position really means that God cannot foreknow any event in human history—except those things He does Himself—because all human activities are the result of human will. But foreknowledge is so essential to the nature of God that Isaiah makes it the decisive test in distinguishing the one true God from all the false ones. Consequently, the God of Israel, through the prophet Isaiah, challenged all pretenders thusly:

Present your case, says the Lord. Bring forth your strong reasons, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth and show us what will happen...or declare to us things to come. Show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are

(See FOREKNOWLEDGE, page 15)

Foreknowledge

continued from page 14:

gods; Yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and see it together. Indeed you are nothing, and your work is nothing; he who chooses you is an abomination. (Isaiah 41:21-24)

Like all who have come to grips with the omniscience of God, I join with them in awe and veneration by saying: 'You have hedged [enclosed] me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain it' (Psalm 139:5,6). And again, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

I eagerly await my brother's third affirmative.

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A DISCUSSION ON THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

**"The omniscience of God, particularly His foreknowledge,
does not include the contingent free will choices
of human beings."**

Third Affirmative

By Ken Green

In my third article, I will respond to Brother Turner's negative arguments and offer some observations pertinent to the proposition.

Concerning his syllogism purporting to represent my reasoning, surely one can see that if his syllogism is invalid, that does not show that my reasoning is also invalid. Perhaps his syllogism does not represent my reasoning.

He believes the logic is fallacious which says: "If God absolutely foreknows that a thing will happen, then the thing foreknown has already been determined." I ask brother Turner to tell us his understanding of that which God foreknows (which is everything, according to him).

Brother Turner, which of the following alternatives do you accept?

A. *Everything will happen as God has always known.*

B. *Everything may or may not happen as God has always known.*

C. *Other.* If *other*, please explain.

If you accept alternative A, then has everything future already been determined or not? Please understand that I am not asking who determined it, but only if it has been determined.

He disallows my statement: "If God foreknows that I will mow my lawn on a certain day, then, necessarily, that will happen." I apologize for misrepresenting him. But I understood him to say this in his first negative, paragraph 5: "Of course, the fact that God sees them ahead of time does mean that there is no question that they are going to happen as God sees them." May I

then conclude that if God foreknows you will mow your lawn on a certain day that you may not mow your lawn on that day? Brother Turner, is it possible for you not to have mowed your lawn when that day passed?

I believe brother Turner is mistaken about my corrected syllogism being invalid. I will be content to let any interested person examine that question and reach his own conclusion.

Concerning the word *sophistry*, *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* treats that word and *sophism* (of which he accused me) as synonyms. I did not intend the charge to be an unkind accusation of deliberate deceit.

I don't see the basis for the satirical sub-title, *He Knows He's Going To Do It, Therefore, He Knows He's Going to Do It Syndrome*. I think that the "abracadabra" belongs to his position at least as much as to mine. I believe that God's knowledge of the future is based upon His determination. "Known to God from eternity are all His works" (Acts 15:18).

Did God know He was going to create the world before He determined to do it? Did He look into the future and see that He was going to send His Son; then based on that foreknowledge, determine to do it? Is this what you are saying, brother Turner?

My brother quotes my statement: "*If God truly foreknows the choices of men before the choices are made... then those choices are settled, fixed, and invariable as the Calvinist says they are,*" and he declares this to be an

unproved assumption. I repeat that it is a valid and axiomatic statement. The alternative would be that if God foreknows the choices of men before the choices are made... those choices are unsettled, unsure, and variable. They may or may not happen. Is this what you believe, brother Turner? It seems that you must accept one of these alternatives. If there is another *alternative*, would you please state it?

Brother Turner accurately stated my position in the following sentence, although the attempt was inadequate. He said, "...It is clear that he (Green) equates 'determined future' with God's foreknowledge. He believes they are one and the same; and if not exactly the same, then the same in effect or results." Though not crucial for my purpose, I select the latter of those alternatives as representing my understanding.

He stated: "This is the reasoning to which the Calvinists fall victim." Martin Luther is given as an example. (Luther would likely be filled with consternation to be called a Calvinist.) And yes, I agree with Luther's argument that if God foreknows our every thought, it is impossible that we should do anything other than what we, in fact, do.

Now, in regard to John 6:64, the argument you make which is drawn from Lenski, a Lutheran commentator, does not appear to have much supporting evidence. Lenski gives as sources two grammarians, F. Blass and A. Debrunner; and the second by A.T. Robertson. I have examined Blass and Debrunner in the English translation and have found no substantiation there for Lenski's argument. Machen's Grammar, Dana and Mantey's Manual Grammar, and several other works have been consulted and none says anything about the "volitive future participle." I've raised the subject with some good students of the Greek and none have heard of a participle being volitive as opposed to futuristic. A.T. Robertson seems to stand alone in this. But even Robertson does not agree with Lenski. In his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, he makes the following comment on John 6:64: "John does not say here that Jesus knew that Judas would betray him when he chose him as one of the twelve... What he does say

is that Jesus was not taken by surprise and soon saw signs of treason in Judas."

I agree with that. I am not suggesting that Judas had already made up his mind to betray Jesus by the time of John 6:64. But Jesus knew what was in him, and He recognized the inclinations of his heart.

Brother Turner asked me to explain the statement, "In the absence of genuine foreknowledge, just how I think God accomplished His 'determined counsel' in the sacrifice of His Son without encroaching upon Judas' free will?"

First, we are not told how God does all He does; therefore, my position does not make me anymore accountable for an explanation of unrevealed details than does brother Turner's position.

But, let us observe that from a human viewpoint, we can often predict the actions of people with great accuracy based on their past decisions and chosen paths. If you left a bottle of wine where a wino could find it, certain results would be highly predictable. Now the Lord knows what is in man. Therefore, the question of how God uses men to fulfill His determination without violating their free will does not seem to be a great obstacle.

Brother Turner informs me that he does not accept the traditional view of an existent future. He rejects the concept that the future is before the eyes of God as surely and plainly as the present and past are. He says, "I do not believe the future exists. But...I do not believe the future must exist for God to have known in the past or to know now what that nonexistent future will be."

This twist is certainly a vague concept. I understand that knowledge is based on fact. If something is known, the fact must be known. We know facts after they happen. Foreknowledge, if it is certain knowledge, must also be based on facts. It is to know the facts before they happen. But if the facts do not exist, how can they be known? And how can the lack of knowledge detract from God's omniscience if nothing exists to be known?

This idea is at variance with his previous statement: "... God's foreknowledge is settled by the reality of the choices themselves...God sees them ahead of time..." (First Negative,

paragraph 5). Now we are told that the future does not exist for God to see. Which is it brother Turner?

He responded to the question: "Is God powerful enough to create a being so free that He would not know what that creature's moral choices would be?" "Evidently, he (Green) believes this to be a profound question..." He then suggests that it is the wrong question.

I think it is a profound pointed question. I thought it was a good question over 25 years ago when I read it from the pen of R.L. Whiteside, and I still think so. It became an important piece of the puzzle as I grappled with the issues involved in this discussion.

Brother Turner and I answer this question differently. He does not believe that God could create His creatures so free that He could not foreknow their contingent free will choices. To him this concept constitutes a contradiction in God's nature, specifically His "all-knowingness." But omniscience means to know all there is to know. Our brother has stated that the future does not exist, so what is there in the future to know except what God Himself may determine, or what may be concluded from His definite knowledge of the past and present? We do not conclude that one is blind if he fails to see something that is not there to be seen. Why should we think that God has deficient knowledge if He does not know that which is not there to be known? Perfect knowledge is not simply knowing everything, but knowing everything there is to know. I accept the Bible as the final arbiter of this discussion and rest the defense of this concept upon that authority.

Regarding the "master of chess" and the "human novelist" analogies, I stressed the point that all analogies fall short of complete parallelism. Analogies illustrate certain points, not all points. I am accused of an "obvious effort to make God in the image of man," and, therefore, of idolatry. That is a mighty serious charge to bring against a brother. This was not my intention in using these illustrations. One may ask, "Was Jesus guilty of such when He taught the parable of The Prodigal Son or the Unjust Judge?" We recognize that Jesus was not teaching that God is like **an earthly father or an earthly judge**

(especially an unjust one) in all senses.

The point is that God does not seek to defeat His people in all things. Rather, He defeats those who contend against Him. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (I Peter 5:5).

I believe my esteemed brother would have accomplished more had he used his space to deal with the arguments rather than to pursuing peripheral details.

Brother Turner avers that my position, "...really means that God cannot foreknow any event in human history — except those things He does Himself — because all human activities are the result of human will." I do not accept this conclusion. I stated before that neither man's free will nor God's foreknowledge is absolute. We find several examples in Scripture of God overriding the freewill of man to fulfill His purpose (for example, Numbers 25:13; Daniel 4:33; John 11:51).

God knows the future as definite where the course of future events is determined. The future is indefinite and open where it is yet to be decided. I believe God knows a great deal about the future, even where it is indefinite. Much of what happens is the result of past and present causes. Even man's limited knowledge of the past and present can sometimes possess quite accurate knowledge of the future. God, with absolute, infinite knowledge of the past and present, can surely know the indefinite future with greater clarity. I believe that the future is open but not wide open. While it is not absolutely and exhaustively foreknowable, neither is it absolutely unpredictable. Consider Deut. 31:21; "Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them."

Finally, Isaiah 41:21-24 establishes my point. Jehovah challenged the idols to "declare to us things to come. Show us things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil..." The demand to declare things to come was equated **with doing gSM m m l They mM**

demonstrate their ability by declaring the future and then bringing it to pass. As previously observed, this is how God declares the end from the beginning: "Indeed I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it" (Isaiah 46:10,11).

I am convinced that brother Turner's position, (whether or not he holds the traditional view of most non-Calvinists), is just as fatalistic as Calvinism. According to the view of Calvinists, the course of future events is definite. Everything must happen according to the Divine plan. Everyone must play the role as God has programmed it.

According to brother Turner's position, God has not programmed the course of events. He simply knows them beforehand. How He knows them, brother Turner doesn't say. Others say He witnesses them in advance. Our brother seemed to say this once and then decided the future is not there to-be witnessed. But it doesn't have to be. God knows it anyway. I maintain that the net effect on the future is precisely the same. If this position is true, then the future is already settled. The real issue in this debate is not whether God has settled the future. It is whether the future is settled or not. If God's knowledge of the future is absolute and changeless, then the object of that knowledge must also be absolute and changeless. If He knows the future perfectly and exhaustively, then the future in all its detail is there to be known.

The traditional view of foreknowledge is more closely akin to science

fiction than to anything taught in the Bible. It fits the world of Superman, or H.G. Wells' Time Machine, Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five. Brother Turner's view is even more bizarre. The future does not exist, we are told, but God sees it anyway.

I believe that time is *real* to God. The overall teaching of the Bible shows that events enter God's experience as they happen. The view that the future is invariably known to God in all its detail seems to contradict the constant sensitivity and interaction that God, according to the Scriptures, has with His creation. I wonder how God can be truly touched with the feelings of our infirmities, if they add nothing to His experience of the world. Why would He be "sorry that He made man on the earth, and ... grieved ... to His heart" if such adds nothing to His experience of the world (Gen. 6:6)? How could He truly rejoice when sinners repent if He knew they would from all eternity (Luke 15:7)? How can He be outraged when the poor are mistreated (Amos 4:1,2; Micah 3:1-4); or yearn for the return of His beloved people (Hos. 2:13,14; Jer. 31:20; Isa. 49:15,16)? Such passages do not reflect an "unmoved mover" who experiences everything in a single timeless perception, but a God Who is sensitive to human events as they occur.

I am persuaded that when God came in the flesh there was the possibility of His failure. His temptations were real. Accountability is evident. This means that He could have fallen prey to them. The future was open. I do not know the

consequences if Jesus failed, but the conviction that He could have, but overcame and won the victory, makes me love Him all the more.

Further, I submit that a closed view of the future gives credence to the skeptics' charge that God is responsible for evil. If God absolutely knew the future from eternity, then He created the universe with full knowledge of all the evil and suffering, temporal and eternal, that His creation would experience. I believe that God created man knowing the possibility of sin and evil entering his experience, but I do not believe He created man knowing that such was definite. Such a closed view poses some serious problems. God is obviously responsible for the *possibility* of evil in the creation of morally free humans. I do not believe that He is responsible for the *inevitability* of evil.

I believe that the fervent prayers of righteous men are to no avail if brother Turner's defense of this issue is true. I am not accusing him of explicitly teaching such, but it is the conclusion I must draw. If all time is forever before the eyes of God then the future is as definite as the past. One cannot change the past. How then could one's prayer really change the future? Did God know that a person would pray in eternity and arrange to answer the prayer before he ever prayed? Now brother Turner tells us the future does not exist.

I hope this material shall be of benefit to those who read it. I shall await my brother's reply.

Therefore, He Know's He's Going To Do It Syndrome." I don't think the force of such argument was lost on those who read it. The way one normally thinks of *foreknowledge* is not the way bro. Green does. He believes God decides to do something in the future and consequently He foreknows He's going to do something in the future. By now, bro. Green ought to realize that his position lends itself to such satire and not get so upset over my effort to make a point.

Foreknowledge Does Not Necessitate A Determined Future

My opponent believes that the mere truth of future-tense statements about future acts implies that these acts

Third Negative

By Allan Turner

In my first article, I presented a syllogism that represented bro. Green's position and showed it to be fallacious. In his second article, he denied it represented his reasoning but then inadvertently admitted that it did. In my second article, I wrote that it would be interesting to see how he got out of this mess. Now, at the opening of his third affirmative, my opponent writes, "Maybe his syllogism does not properly represent my reasoning." Well, either it

does or it doesn't, and I believe it has been conclusively demonstrated that the syllogism in question accurately represents bro. Green's reasoning. Not only has bro. Green not seen the fallaciousness of his argument, but he has evidently failed to recognize his own argument when put in syllogistic form. Bro. Green says he failed to understand the basis for the satire involved in the section of my second negative that began "He Knows He's Going To Do It,

happen *necessarily* (i.e., they have been *determined*) and thus the freedom and contingency of the future are destroyed. He believes that if God truly foreknows the choices of men before the choices are made, then the choices are as settled, fixed and invariable as the Calvinists say they are. This has been his premise all through this debate. I have argued that this is simply an unproved assumption that is completely at odds with the Word of God. The information recorded in I Samuel 23:7-14 ought to settle this matter once and for all. In this passage, David asks the Lord, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" The Lord replied, "They will surrender you." Acting on this information, David and his men ran away and escaped. Therefore, what God foreknows is not inevitable. In other words, *God's foreknowledge does not make an event happen*! "Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

The Future Is Not Fixed In Any Calvinistic Sense

Although it is true that the future is not fixed, settled or determined in any Calvinistic sense, it is fair to say that the future is, in fact, *unalterable*. Of course, when bro. Green reads this he will probably think, "But isn't Allan admitting he's a determinist?" No, not at all! To say that the future is unalterable is simply to admit what we mean when we talk about the future. In other words, if the past is that which *has been*, and the present is that which *is*, then the future, definitionally speaking, is that which *will be*. If an event will take place in the future, then there is no way of bringing it about that it will not take place (i.e., if it were to be prevented from taking place, then it could not be something that will take place in the future, definitionally speaking). Consequently, if one's only reason for saying an event *must* take place is that it will take place, as my opponent asserts, then there is nothing more to this determination than the triviality that says what happens at any time happens at that time, or if a statement is true it is true. Actually, one's seemingly grave observations about all these things are really just meaningless and express only what is definitionally true. Therefore, the past

(whatever it has been) and the future (whatever it will be) are unalterable, fixed, settled, and invariable, *but not in the Calvinist or Ken Green sense*. The Calvinists and my opponent use these terms to mean God has "fixed" the future and it must happen the way He has "fixed" or "determined" it. But, these terms, as I have used them in this paragraph, being only definitional truths, do not have the impact on this issue that my opponent thinks they do.

The Key Is Cause Not Change

The key to this discussion is not *change* but *cause*. While it is perfectly true that we do not have the power to *change* the future (i.e., what will be will be), we do have the ability to *cause* it. This ability—the ability to cause the future—is something we exercise freely. In other words, in connection with God's ultimate sovereignty, the contingent, free will choices of human beings determine (in a non-fatalist sense) what the future will be. It is this ability that serves as the basis for my belief that the future is really open. By open, I mean that one's actual choices and actions will determine the course of future events. As I wrote in my first article, God foreknows the contingent, free will choices of men as real choices, not simply as possibilities which His own recognition, in turn, nails down as certain. Furthermore, the certainty of the contingent freewill choices of men is not settled by God's foreknowledge; rather, God's foreknowledge is settled by the reality of the choices themselves. The fact that God sees them "ahead of time" (isn't this the meaning of *foreknowledge*?) does, of course, mean that there is no question they are going to happen as God sees them; but, and this is extremely important, they are going to happen because of the genuine free choices of those involved. Again, God seeing (foreknowing) them does not "make" them happen.

Green Does Not Believe God Can Know The Facts Ahead Of Time

In his third affirmative, bro. Green wrote, "[Foreknowledge] is to know the facts before they happen." This, of course, is an accurate definition of foreknowledge. But, and this is very important, bro. Green does not believe God can actually know the facts before they happen. He does not really believe

God has foreknowledge, at least not in the way we normally use this word. He argues that if the facts are foreknown, then the events associated with those facts must have already taken place. Consequently, he believes that if God knows what choices I will make tomorrow (i.e., in the future), then I have already made those choices before I ever made those choices, and that I actually made those choices in "eternity past" before I even existed (cf. Second Affirmative, paragraph 9). I suspect I was not the only one shaking my head at such reasoning. Ken, the ability (i.e., foreknowledge) rests in God's nature, not mine. God knows the facts of my decisions before I actually live those facts out. I did not need, as you say, to live in "eternity past" in order for God to foreknow what my future free will choices will be. Let me repeat it one more time! Bro. Green, foreknowledge is an ability that belongs to God, it is totally unlike any ability that you and I have, and *please* quit trying to limit God by your own finite limitations.

My opponent says he is amazed that I do not believe the future has to exist for God to know what that nonexistent future will be. As I have already said, according to bro. Green, "absolute foreknowledge demands that the future be there to be known" (Second Affirmative, paragraph 2). This is just another one of his unproved assumptions. Once again he has lost his footing on the slippery slopes of Higher Anthropomorphism. Yes, it is true that man cannot know the future absolutely; but to use a human analogy and then project that onto God, as my opponent does, is a serious mistake. God is not just a man of larger proportions as bro. Green's illustrations seem to imply (cf. Numbers 23:19; Romans 11:33). One who insists upon understanding God's character and abilities solely by way of analogy is destined to fall victim of his own dubious assumptions. I made this point in my second negative. This must have really stung bro. Green because he writes in his third affirmative:

I stressed the point that all analogies fall short of complete parallelism. Analogies illustrate certain points, not all points. I am accused of an "obvious effort to make God in the image of man," and, therefore, of idolatry. This is a mighty serious charge to bring against a brother.

First of all, I have re-read bro. Green's

first two articles and have not been able to find any place where he stressed the point that all analogies fall short of complete parallelism. In truth, not only did he not stress the point but he fell victim to its trap. If he is now acknowledging the limitation of all man-God analogies, then at least some progress has been made in this debate.

Second, according to Romans 1:23, idolatry is making God in man's image. Consequently, bro. Green engages in theological idolatry when he superimposes man's imperfections and limitations onto God. That this is *clearly* what he has done is proven by his own words. Now, I do not think he has done so intentionally — if I thought he had, I certainly would not have agreed to be involved with him in this study — nevertheless, in my opinion, he is still guilty. Seduced by his own metaphors, *he* fails to see the serious implications of his position. It is indeed serious for a Christian, or anyone for that matter, to be engaged in idolatry, whether intentionally or accidentally. The reckless driver who accidentally strikes and kills a pedestrian cannot exonerate himself simply because he did not mean to kill his victim. Likewise, my opponent cannot exonerate himself simply by saying he did not mean to do so. Both the aforementioned driver and bro. Green are culpable. Why? Because a reasonable man knows someone can get hurt when he drives his car recklessly, and he also knows God can be misrepresented when he plays around on Higher Anthropomorphism's slippery slopes. Frankly, a theological position concerning an attribute of God (in this case, foreknowledge) that can only be proven by an analogy that makes God in man's image *cannot be correct*. Bro. Green attempts to sidestep this whole issue by saying that my bringing it up was an effort on my part to deal with "peripheral details." I hardly believe the readers will let him get away with it though. Like me, they too will realize this point to be central to the issue under discussion.

My Opponent's Charge of Inconsistency

It is disappointing to me personally that although I have told bro. Green that I do not hold the traditional or Calvinist position, he, nevertheless, insists on debating me as if I do. Even

after making this as plain as I know how, he wrote of me thusly, "...whether or not he holds the traditional view of most non-Calvinists..." Just what does he mean by *whether or not*? Once more, let me make this as clear as I know how: I do not hold to the so-called traditional view. I do not believe the future exists and I do not believe it has to for God to foreknow it. My opponent suggests this is at variance with one of my previous statements, namely: "...God's foreknowledge is settled by the reality of the choices themselves...God sees them ahead of time..." (First Negative, paragraph 5). He says, "Now we are told that the future does not exist for God to see... Which is it brother Turner?" Please pay attention Bro. Green! My answer is that the future does not exist (i.e., it has not happened yet), but God, "who...calls those things which do not exist as though they do" (Romans 4:17), nevertheless, foreknows what that nonexistent future will be. This ability belongs solely to God and cannot be understood by human analogy alone. Although I do not understand it and I cannot explain it, I do believe it. Faith can swim even when it can no longer touch bottom.

Bro. Green calls such a position "bizarre." He says the traditional view of foreknowledge is more closely akin to science fiction than anything taught in the Bible. That's okay with me, but then he adds, "Brother Turner's view is even more bizarre... The future does not exist, we are told, but God sees it anyway." Listen, Ken, we both believe that the future does not exist, so I don't know what's so bizarre about that, and the Bible teaches that God foreknows the future (Acts 2:23), therefore, I don't see what's so bizarre about that. For sure, it is all incomprehensible—but, bizarre? I will be content to let the readers decide.

Some More Scriptures

In Deuteronomy 31:16-21, God is not just declaring what He plans to do in the future, but He is telling what humans will be doing of their own free will in the future. In Psalm 139:16, God knew all the days of David's life before they had even begun, that is, he foreknew them. In Acts 2:23, God delivered His Son as a sacrifice as a result of His

"determined counsel" and "foreknowledge." In Romans 8:29-30, the Bible clearly teaches that those who were to be conformed to the image of Christ were predestinated or foreordained based upon, in a logical sense, His foreknowledge. Isaiah 44:28-45:7 teaches that God was able to foreknow what Cyrus' parents would name him more than a century before he was even born. I Kings 13:2 tells us that God was able to foreknow king Josiah by name three centuries before his birth. In Jeremiah 1:5, God makes it clear that He knew all about the prophet even before he was born. In other words, the Bible teaches that God has genuine foreknowledge. This, of course, is what I have agreed to defend in this debate.

Jesus Could Have Failed, But God's Foreknowledge Precluded It

Like my opponent, I believe Jesus faced the real possibility of failure, that is, "being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). I believe He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Incomprehensible as it is, this was the nature of God in the flesh. But, and pay close attention, God's foreknowledge of His incarnated Son's choices *precluded* the possibility of this plan not working. The hundreds of prophecies that could only have been fulfilled in Christ stand as a memorial to the plan that *could not and would not fail*. Therefore, it is of considerable concern to me that bro. Green is willing to write, "I do not know the consequences if Jesus [would have] failed..." Of course, the consequences should be obvious to every careful Bible student. If the plan involving Jesus would have failed, then God would have been a liar. Would my brother also like to affirm that things could have turned out in such a way that God would be a liar? You see, my friends, this is very serious business. The redemption of man through Jesus Christ was not *a plan*, as my opponent suggests, it was *the plan* whereby God could redeem fallen man, yet remain just in doing so (cf. Romans 3:26). In truth, there was, and always has been, even before the beginning of time, only one plan for the redemption of fallen man, namely, Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 2:23; Ephesians

1:4; 3:11; II Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; I Peter 1:19-20).

"Known To God From Eternity Are All His Works"

My opponent writes, "I believe that God created man knowing the possibility of sin and evil entering his experience, but I do not believe He created man knowing that such was definite" (emphasis mine, AT). If God did not know man would sin before He created him and consequently work out a specific plan to deal with that sin, then in what sense can it be true that "Known to God from eternity are all His works" (Acts 15:18)? Furthermore, if God cannot know the future, contingent, freewill choices of human beings in a definite sense, as my opponent contends, then how was it that in Matthew 26:34 the Lord could tell Peter not just that he would deny Him, but that he would specifically deny Him *three times* before the cock would crow on that eventful night?

If the omniscience of God, particularly His foreknowledge, does not

include the contingent, free will choices of human beings, then how does one explain the statement "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" found in I Peter 1:2? I believe this passage teaches that something God does can be logically dependent upon His foreknowledge. Like my opponent, I reject the Calvinists' view that this passage teaches the unconditional election of individuals to salvation. If, on the other hand, one believes that this passage teaches the conditional election of individuals to salvation based upon God's foreknowledge of the individuals' future free will choices, then the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and man's free will is once again clearly established by God's Word. Even if one believes that this passage must be referring primarily to the corporate body of Christ and secondarily to individuals, as many Christians do, and not unconditionally, but only in association and identification with the church of Christ, one should still be able to recognize that

the passage is teaching that God is able to foreknow the contingent, free will choices men and women will make in connection with obeying the gospel. What does all this prove? Simply that God's foreknowledge does not eliminate man's free will. Again, this is precisely the position I am affirming in this discussion.

When rejecting the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination which annihilates human freedom, it is not necessary to form an equally wrong theory that favors the idea of freedom at the expense of foreknowledge. Such, as I have pointed out in this article, is a very serious mistake with grave consequences.

Finally, "Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite" (Psalm 147:5). If, as my opponent contends, God does not know the future absolutely, then He is not infinite in His understanding; If He is not infinite in His understanding, then, according to this scripture, He is not God. Who can believe it?

Romans

continued from page 10:

far as our relationship to sin, is "that we should no longer be slaves of sin." This is not to say that we are completely set free from the power and desire to sin. Paul takes this matter up in chapter 7 and shows that temptation ever remains a reality. But as Hendriksen well says: "There's a vast difference between committing a sin and constantly living and delighting in sin."

We are never fully released in this life from the struggle against the devil, the flesh, and the world. But so far as our legal status is concerned, in Christ we are justified. And we are redeemed. We are no longer owned by sin. We have a new owner.

"For he who has died has been freed from sin." One who has died with Christ (vs. 5,8) is delivered from sin by justification. He is free *from* sin; not free *to* sin as Paul was accused of teaching.

Suggestions To Teachers

1. Review the memory passages (1:16,17; 2:6,11; 3:9,23;4:3; 5:8,9). Add Romans 6:3,4 to the list.

2. Discuss the four questions which

were assigned for this study before studying the passage verse by verse.

3. In preparation for the next study in Romans 6:8-14, give the following study questions: a) What does the Christian know (v.9f) and how should this affect how he lives? b) What must the Christian do and not do to live a life consistent with his faith? c) What does

it mean to be under grace rather than under law? d) How would you respond to one who used Rom. 6 to maintain that a Christian simply does not sin?

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A DISCUSSION ON THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD

**"The omniscience of God, particularly His foreknowledge,
does not include the contingent free will choices
of human beings."**

Affirmative Rejoinder

By Ken Green

I will briefly reply to brother Turner's third article and summarize my arguments in this debate. My ambivalence about our brother's syllogism is based upon his transference of the adverb "necessarily" from its position in the major premise. A question of validity may certainly be raised. In my second article I moved the adverb "necessarily" back to the beginning in the conclusion. I accept as valid the statements: Necessarily, if God knows contingent free will choices, then the contingent free will choices will happen. God knows contingent free choices (says brother Turner). Necessarily, therefore, the contingent free will choices will happen, if his hypothesis is true.

He has testified abundantly to the accuracy of that conclusion. He wrote in his first article: "...God's foreknowledge is settled by the reality of the choices themselves. Of course, the fact that God sees them 'ahead of time' does mean that there is no question that they are going to happen as God sees them" (paragraph 5). In his third essay he projected that "the future is not fixed in any Calvinistic sense" (fourth paragraph). Is he saying it is fixed in some sense? It seems so for he continues: "...It is fair to say that the future is, in fact, unalterable." Then he removed all doubt by stating, "Therefore, the past... and the future... are unalterable, fixed, settled and invariable..."

While proposing this, he hastened to say that he is no determinist. You could have fooled me, Allan! Now, I under-

stand you are not a determinist in the Calvinist sense. I don't know what you mean when you say that you're not a determinist in the Ken Green sense, for my understanding is far removed from determinism. "What is to be will be" is apparently a valid axiom according to brother Turner.

I Samuel 23:7-14 establishes my point. The future is not unalterable. The Lord knew the proclivities of the men of Keilah. He knew what they would do *if* given the chance. God's foreknowledge of the contingent free will choices of those involved was not absolute.

Brother Turner, read my lips! I understand that you do not believe that God causes the future to happen. You need to understand that someone else causing it to happen before it happens does not make it any less fatal or determined.

Now, you may shake your head at my reasoning, but if God knows one's choices from eternity past, and He did not make them happen (neither of us believes He did), *then who did?* How can God know facts which do not exist? How can He see what is not there to be seen? Your response, I suppose, is, "He just does!" As I have said before, if the Bible teaches that, then I will believe it whether or not I can understand it. But, I do not believe the Bible teaches such.

Re-reading my previous articles, I am unable to find where I stressed the point on analogies. I apologize for that slip. But, I feel that brother Turner is aware that there is no call for such tiresome polemic cliches as we were

served in his alleged "progress in this debate." As Job said to his friends: "Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?" (12:3).

I am told that I'm still an idolater, but only accidentally so, not intentionally. With all of Allan's verbosity, he did not reply to my question: "Was Jesus guilty of such when He taught the parable of the Prodigal Son or the Unjust Judge?"

The traditional non-Calvinist view is that the future is there to be seen by God. That it exists in some real sense. Brother Turner says that he does not accept this traditional view. The facts of the future do not exist, but God knows them anyway. The scenes of the future do not exist before they happen, but God sees them anyway. He emphasized that he does not believe that the future exists. Yet, he refers to that non-existent future as "the ground" of God's knowledge (first negative, paragraph 8). He avers that this is incomprehensible and I definitely agree with him. He says that faith can swim even when it can no longer touch bottom. However, sometimes when one cannot see bottom, the water is not deep; it has been muddied!

Regarding Deut. 31:16-21, I quoted verse 21, in my second article to show the basis on which God foretells such events. He said: "...For I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them." The word of God gives us the reason for His knowledge in that regard.

Psalms 139:16 neither states, nor implies, that God had absolute knowledge of David's every choice and deed before he was born.

Brother Turner believes that the reason God determined to deliver up His son for our sins (Acts 2:23), was because He foreknew He would do it. I maintain that He foreknew it and spoke of it before time because He determined to do it. Such was "according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11).

The absolute and certain predestination of individuals is affirmed by our brother in his treatment of Romans 8:29,30. The major difference between Allan Turner and John Calvin is that Calvin taught that foreordination precedes foreknowledge while Brother

Turner teaches that foreknowledge precedes foreordination. Either way, when we are born we enter a time sequence which is, according to our brother's own phraseology: "Unalterable, fixed, settled, and invariable" (third negative, paragraph 4).

Concerning the cases of Cyrus and Josiah, how do you know, Allan, that God did not make determination in these cases and then bring it about? He had no problem in seeing that they were so named. He had no problem with such in the case of John the Baptist. And the fact that God determined beforetime to raise up Jeremiah as a prophet did not mean that his future was unalterable any more than Samson's who proved largely unfaithful in his role as a judge.

Brother Turner admits that "Jesus faced the real possibility of failure," yet he stated that the future is "unalterable, fixed, settled, and invariable." When was it that Jesus might have failed? Was the future unalterable and fixed at the time of His birth? Was His response to temptation settled and invariable when He began His forty-day fast in the desert? I am vituperated for saying that I do not know the consequences if He had failed. My admission is purely academic because the wonderful and glorious fact on which we agree is: He didn't fail. But, we are superciliously instructed that "every careful Bible student" knows the obvious fact. In such a case of failure God would be a liar. Please bear with this neophyte, brother.

I wonder, was God a liar when He told Jonah that in forty days Nineveh would be destroyed? Did He lie when He told Hezekiah, "Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live" (Isa. 38:1)? Did He lie when He told David the men of Keilah would surrender him (I Sam. 23:7-14)? What our brother has overlooked in all this is that God, in His sovereignty, permits other wills to operate in this world. Again, I rejoice that Jesus was faithful in all things and submitted His will totally to the Father's will (John 6:38).

What would God have done, my brother, if He had looked into this future which did not exist, according to you, and saw that Jesus would yield to temptation and commit sin? I'll overlook it if you choose not to deal with

that question!

The best answer I know to offer to the question of why God would have a plan of salvation from eternity if He did not know man would sin is: God knew what He would do if man sinned I believe that this answer is sufficient.

Regarding Peter's three denials, if the Lord knew Peter well enough to predict that he would deny Him once, He could as easily predict that he would deny Him three times if given the opportunity.

Brother Turner's view of 1 Peter 1:2, like his view of Romans 8:29,30, is as deterministic as Calvinism. The only difference is that the Calvinist puts predestination first and brother Turner puts foreknowledge first. But either way, every individual is born into a time sequence forever "unalterable, fixed, settled, and invariable" (third negative, paragraph 4). I agree with Guy N. Woods who wrote in his commentary on I Peter: "These, therefore, to whom Peter wrote were chosen people, selected by an exercise of the divine will, and in keeping with a purpose earlier formed." His comment on verse 1:20, is worthy of sober consideration: "It is impossible to distinguish between the foreknowledge of God with reference to such a plan of redemption and the will that originated it. The two are in the nature of the case inseparable. To project a plan of redemption into the period prior to the fall of man raises immediately the inevitable question of Adam's and Eve's free agency.

"If God had already devised a plan for the redemption of man from a sin which was certain to be committed, how could Adam and Eve have avoided its commission? If Christ was a lamb for expiation of sin from before creation, how could the transgression have been other than inevitable since not only it, but the consequences therefore had been provided for in the councils of eternity. Since, in such a view of the case, our first parents were but passive actors in a drama written and stereotyped before they had existence, ought they not to be commended for obedience in dutifully furthering a plan ordained for them in eternity and one they could not possibly have altered without falsifying God's foreknowledge? Should they not, we repeat, be

commended for obedience, rather than condemned for disobedience? Such must, in consequence, follow, if the popular view is accepted. The difficulties it entails are insurmountable." Brother Woods proceeds to teach that the *world or age* in that verse refers to the Mosaic age.

I have replied to every argument made by brother Turner in this debate. I now close my rejoinder. My brother, who is in the negative on this proposition, has made no reply to a basic question in my last article. Which of the following alternatives do you accept?

- a. Everything will happen as God has always known.
- b. Everything may or may not happen as God has always known.
- c. Other. If other, please explain.

If you accept *a*, then has everything already been determined or not? Please understand that I am not asking *who* determined it, but only if it has been determined.

It appears that he has answered the question when he says that the future is "unalterable, fixed, settled, and invariable..." But just so there will be no mistake, tell us, brother Turner, do you believe *a*, *b*, or *c*? And if you believe *a*, do you believe the future is not only unalterable, fixed, settled, and invariable, but also *determined*?

When you answer, tell us if you are a determinist or not. I know that you have already told us you are not, but sometimes I grow uncertain.

Brother Turner wishes to disassociate himself with what I have described as the traditional non-Calvinist viewpoint. Yet, he keeps referring to "the way one *normally* thinks of foreknowledge" (third negative, paragraph 1); and "the way we *normally* use this word." This prompts me to ask just how much difference there is between the "traditional" view and his view. What is *normal*?

He made no reply to my arguments on God's constant sensitivity and interaction with His creation, the existence of evil, and prayer. I assume that brother Turner has no rebuttal on these points that need examination. In any case, I will have no opportunity to reply, if he responds at all.

This study has been both informative and challenging. I hope that all who are interested in this subject will carefully

study all the articles once they have been published. I remain on splendid terms with my honorable brother. If I

parted company with everyone who disagreed with me on this question, the world would be a lonely place, indeed.

knows what you need, before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8). David said: "Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, Thou dost know it all" (Psalm 139:4). The Bible teaches us that the Almighty has agreed to interact with His creation *in time*. Such interaction is genuine and not pretended. God has agreed to be influenced by His creation. The Aristotelian or traditional view of God as "the Unmoved Mover," who is unrelated to the world, impassive, and unconcerned is, in my opinion, both ridiculous and un-biblical. Having said all this, I can only wonder if Ken will still insist on calling me a traditionalist.

Ken attempts to make a big deal about me not answering his questions: "Is it A, B, or C?" and "If you accept alternative A, then has everything already been determined or not?" I have answered these questions in the body of my articles. I believe God knows the future absolutely; consequently, everything that will happen is known, by God. Let me say it once more: if God is, indeed, all knowing, then there is nothing that escapes His attention—not the past, not the present, not the future, and not what could have been if things would have been different I have stated my position several times in the body of my articles and I made this perfectly clear in the last paragraph of my Third Negative. Of course, it must be understood that when Ken says "determined," what he actually means is "fixed" or "manipulated," in the Calvinistic sense. I have consistently argued against Calvinistic determinism.

Consequently, Ken misrepresented my use of the words "unalterable, fixed, settled, and invariable." My use of these words was within the context of explaining what the future is *definitionally*. My purpose was to show that they, being only definitional truths, do not have the impact on this issue that he thinks they do. Did he address my argument? He did not! What he did was wrest these words from the context in which they were used in order to make it sound like I believed the future to be "determined" (i.e., *fixed* or *manipulated*) in a Calvinistic sense. Again, my use of these terms was to show that ambiguity existed and that the meaning of these words can only be determined

Negative Rejoinder

By Allan Turner

Bro. Green asks: "How can God know facts which do not exist?" "How can He see what is not there to be seen?" He chides me by writing, 'Your response, I suppose, is, 'He just does!'" He then avows, "As I have said before, if the Bible teaches that, then I will believe it whether or not I can understand it." Well, bro. Green, I'd like for you to consider the statement of our Lord in Matthew 11:21, which says: "Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." The Lord is speaking of facts which did not occur in the *past*, are not occurring in the *present*, and cannot occur in the *future*. Nevertheless, He says He knows what would have happened if events and circumstances would have been different. How does He do it? I don't know, *He just does*. Now, Bro. Green, even if you can't understand it, will you believe it?

Ken says I did not reply to his question: "Was Jesus guilty of [idolatry] when He taught the parable of the Prodigal Son or the Unjust Judge?" No, He was not, and the reason I did not specifically answer this question was because I thought it to be rhetorical. For one who believes in Jesus as Christ, there is obviously only one correct answer. Furthermore, Jesus' parables and Ken's analogies are not even in the same ball park. In using these parables, Jesus was not teaching that God is limited like man is; but, on the other hand, this was the very purpose of Ken's analogies. His appeal to Jesus' teaching for justification for what he has done is absolutely baseless. I thought this ought to be obvious and, therefore, chose to use my allotted space in my Third Negative to deal with other questions.

Ken says I made no reply to his arguments on "God's constant sensitivity and interaction with His crea-

tion, the existence of evil, and prayer." He alleges my silence indicates I had no rebuttal. This is certainly not the case. Actually, my brother's original comments about these things were written within the framework of a "closed view of the future" (Third Affirmative, paragraph 36). I, of course, do not hold to a closed view of the future and used considerable space in my Third Negative explaining why the view I hold is an *open view*. For some reason, Ken has insisted on debating me as if I were a "traditionalist," who, according to him, thinks the future already exists, which, I have made it clear, I do not believe. This is his mistake and not mine. I am under no obligation to answer questions directed at a position different from my own.

But, so as not to leave the impression that I was trying to dodge these questions, let me say once more what I have said many times in this debate and then I will, in the limited space I have allotted me, address myself to his questions. Once again, I do not take a traditionalist approach, be it Calvinistic, Arminian, or whatever. In addition, I do not believe that God is responsible for evil—man is clearly the culprit. I believe most of God's interaction with His creation is *conditional*: His foreknowledge is conditioned on the actual occurrence of events themselves (as foreknown); the entire scheme of redemption, with all its many elements from Genesis to Revelation, is conditioned on (is a response to) man's sin; acts of judgment and wrath, including hell (I don't believe it has always existed), are likewise conditioned by sin; answers to prayers are conditioned by the prayers themselves (as foreknown). Does God know what we will ask *before we* ask for it? Isaiah tells us: "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isaiah 65:24). The Lord taught His disciples, 'Your heavenly Father

by the context in which they are used.

Furthermore, Ken wrote, "Brother Turner believes that the reason God determined to deliver up His son for our sins (Acts 2:23), was because He foreknew He would do it." I never wrote that, I don't believe it, and I have never taught it. What I said was that God's foreknowledge permitted Him to implement His plan of salvation without stomping all over the free moral agency of those involved. Instead of God accomplishing His work by omnipotence alone, as my opponent seems to suggest, I believe the Bible teaches that His attributes and abilities are clearly different but, nevertheless, work together; namely, Jesus was delivered by *both* the "determined counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23).

The Almighty had an "eternal purpose" for redeeming mankind "in" or "through" His Son, Jesus (Ephesians 3:11), which He determined to implement at a particular point in time, described in the Bible as "the fullness of the time" (Galatians 4:4). When considered in conjunction with Acts 2:23, all this seems to indicate that God, through His foreknowledge, was able to perceive a "window of opportunity" for His plan that, if seized, would make it successful. In other words, due to His determined counsel and foreknowledge, God's plan for redeeming mankind was infallible. Such was not apian for redeeming man, it was *the* plan. Bro. Green asks: "What would God have done, my brother, if He had looked into this future which did not exist, according to you, and saw that Jesus would yield to temptation and commit sin?" Of course, the only way I can answer this question is to speculate, and Ken knows this; but in light of what I have already written, I believe this may be exactly what God did. I believe He may have foreseen certain scenarios in which His Son would fail and succeed and, consequently, chose the scenario in which His Son would succeed. If, of course, He had seen no scenarios in which his Son would have succeeded, then I believe God would *not* have done what my opponent seems to imply He would have; namely, He would not have made over three hundred prophecies that could only be fulfilled if/His Son were to succeed.

The force of Isaiah 44:28-45:7 and I

Kings 13:2, concerning the names of Cyrus and Josiah, seems to be lost if God instructed these men's parents as to the names they should call their sons, as He clearly did in the case of John the Baptist (Luke 1:13). On the contrary, the overwhelming impression one gets from reading these passages is that there is much more to these circumstances than that.

Ken's explanation of the Lord's definite foreknowledge that Peter would deny Him on three specific occasions within a certain time frame is, in my opinion, a total cop-out. Frankly, I expected better.

His statement that the "only difference" between my view of I Peter 1:2 and the Calvinists' view is that "Calvinists put predestination first and brother Turner puts foreknowledge first," is like saying the only difference between sectarian baptism and Bible baptism is that the latter is for the remission of sins and the first is not. Actually, the difference between my position and Calvin's is the difference between day and night and right and wrong; it is the difference that makes Calvin's position Calvinistic and my position scriptural. His remarks concerning Romans 8:29, 30, were, in my opinion, as equally shallow. Furthermore, and particularly in view of his claim to have replied to every one of my arguments, why didn't bro. Green take the time to tell us what he thought these two passages were teaching?

The Real Issue In This Debate Has Been The Integrity Of God

This discussion has not been over a "much to do about nothing," "tempest in a teapot" issue. The truth of God's Word has been at stake. At issue has been the very integrity of the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible. My responsibility has been to show that bro. Green's position on the foreknowledge of God is at odds with the truths taught in the Bible. I trust the readers of this debate are aware that the very nature of a polemical exchange requires that I attack my opponent's arguments and "hold his feet to the fire." But, just to make sure there is no mistake about this one point, I want to make it as clear as I know how that I love my brother, appreciate his work in the Lord, and pray for his soul. Never-

theless, I believe he is wrong on this subject and needs to repent.

I am convinced that the moment one begins to tamper with any of the attributes of God, all His other attributes are immediately placed in jeopardy. To illustrate this point, bro. Green has argued that God did not have the ability (*viz.* foreknowledge) to know whether Jesus would succeed or fail in His effort to redeem man, and that God's plan could have failed. If this were true, then the obvious but unacceptable conclusion would have to be that the God who does not know the future is a God who is also *not* omnipotent. That is, He would be unable to make sure His plan would work; therefore, it could have failed. Consequently, the sending of His Son was actually *experimental*, and if this had not worked out, he would have had to implement some other plan, if man was to be redeemed. But, one cannot fail to miss the obvious: If God could not make His plan work the first time, what makes us think he could make it work the second time, or third time, or fourth time, etc.?

The obvious ramifications of such a position are frankly admitted by one who takes the same position on God's foreknowledge as bro. Green. Richard Rice, who received his Ph.D in Systematic Theology from Chicago Divinity School, penned the following shocking revelation in a book that bro. Green recommends as representing his views on this subject:

Again at the Incarnation God undertook the risk that His Son would fail in His struggle with temptation. We can only speculate as to what the consequences of that possibility would have been....In giving His Son for man's salvation, God was not merely expressing His disposition toward humanity. He was also running the risk of permanently disastrous consequences to the Godhead itself. (*God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will*, 1985, page 43)

The positions of Dr. Rice and bro. Green have a very serious and definite consequence: God, according to their line of argument, is finite or limited. Consequently, all through this debate bro. Green has actually been arguing in favor of "finite godism," a position that is currently being referred to in theological lingo as "process theology." Processianism, as it is sometimes called, was first espoused at the turn of

this century by Alfred North Whitehead, a Unitarian at Harvard University, and hypothesizes a God who is Himself trapped in a chance-driven universe. He is caught up in an on-going process (viz., "the process of becoming") and is evolving in His nature toward an unknown future. At best, the God of bro. Green and the process theologians is nothing more than some kind of superman or superhuman, who, although very powerful and knowledgeable, is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. The Bible identifies such thinking as idolatry (Romans 1:22,23). When I pointed this out, my opponent countered by saying I had made a very serious charge against him. Of course, the question in this debate is not whether I have made a "serious charge," as bro. Green alleges, but whether or not that charge is true. Although Ken Clearly chafes at the implications of his doctrine, he, nevertheless, seems quite content in defending a position that wrongly saddles God with man's limitations.

My Opponent's Unbridled Reason

Do any passages clearly state that God is *not* all knowing? Do any passages state in clear language that God is ignorant of the future? Do any passages teach that God is ignorant by nature? Are there any passages that teach that foreknowledge on God's part is impossible? Do the Scriptures teach that genuine foreknowledge on God's part will eliminate man's free will? The

answer to all these questions is, of course, a resounding "No!" Where, then, does my opponent get his ideas? Pure reason, that's where. By pure reason, I mean human reason uninformed by divine revelation; I mean a concept of God that is "the only one that is logically coherent and faithful to our fundamental experience" (Rice, *op cit*, page 32). By pure reason, I mean reason *alone*. By reason alone, I mean an idea that may seem right to man but, in the end, leads to destruction (cf. Proverbs 14:12).

My Opponent's Position Is Refuted by the Word of God

Although bro. Green is convinced that God's foreknowledge somehow negates man's free will, the Bible nowhere teaches this position. In fact, the Bible teaches just the opposite. All that is needed to prove this point is to find just one passage which plainly states that God foreknew a free act someone would do, but still held that person accountable for the act. If this can be demonstrated, then it can be concluded that all the acts of men can be foreknown without affecting human accountability in any sense.

There are, in fact, numerous passages that present God as foreknowing what people were going to do before they existed, were born, grew up, or thought about or planned out doing something. In the case of Abraham and the Exodus, God told Abraham that he could "know for certain" that his descendants would

become slaves in Egypt for four hundred years, but afterward He would liberate them and punish their oppressors (Genesis 15:13-14). Notice that although the future oppression of the Jews at the hands of the Egyptians is declared to be "certain," this did not negate the accountability of the Egyptians. This clearly refutes the argument of my opponent, which says, if God has infallible and perfect knowledge of the future, then man is not accountable for his deeds because he would not be a free moral agent. Furthermore, were not the rebellious attitudes and actions of Pharaoh foreknown and foretold by God (Exodus 3:19; 7:14; 9:30; 11:9)? Yet, Pharaoh was still held accountable before God, was he not? Therefore, without an argument to show that God's foreknowledge makes all future human acts necessary and, consequently, destroys man's free will, there is no need to resort to bro. Green's highly intuitive and assumptive theory.

The Battle Of The Gods

The most important issue of our times is the battle taking place between the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture and the gods that men have made in their own image. It is my prayer that this debate may be of some use in that struggle.

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (I Timothy 1:17).

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