

XVII — DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

The historic Christian Church has universally held to God's omniscience. By definition the phrase "God's omniscience" includes the belief that God has exhaustive knowledge of all things actual and possible in the past, present, and future. Therefore, he foreknows all future events and possibilities (Matt 11:20-24).

However, some in the Christian community have challenged this view of God's foreknowledge. The position, recently dubbed the Openness-of-God view, typically affirms that God is omniscient, but it redefines omniscience. This view of omniscience excludes God's knowledge of future free choices and actions by human beings. This idea maintains that God may know all possibilities, but he does not know the actual future that human beings will choose.

The near unanimity of the historic Church against the Openness view of foreknowledge and omniscience has been due primarily to the seemingly clear passages of Scripture on the topic. For example, the prophet Isaiah distinguishes false gods from the true God by the latter's ability to foretell accurately the future. Foreknowledge is the very criterion the prophet uses to demonstrate who is truly God (Isa 41:21-24, 44:6-8; cf. Deut 18:22). Furthermore, the Bible is filled with predictive prophecies, many of them having to do with Israel, the Messiah, and the Church. Since many of these prophecies include the future free actions of human beings, they could not be merely predetermined events that God knew would happen only because he would himself cause them to happen (Dan 11:1-4). Rather, God fully knows the future, both events that he predetermines thus causing them to happen, and future free human events that he foresees but does not cause to happen (Rom 8:29-30).

The Church has maintained throughout the centuries that such foreknowledge is both biblical and powerful evidence for the God of Christianity. The Missionary Church remains consistent with the teachings of the historic Church: God exhaustively foreknows the future, including future free human events (Ps 139).

— Adopted by the 2005 General Conference