

Open Theism as a Distinctive Worldview: Evidence and Consequences

Introduction

The purpose of this brief investigation of the theological movement popularly referred to as *open theism* is two-fold. First, there will be an attempt to lay a sufficient foundation for the claim that open theism (OT) may be classified as a separate and distinct worldview from classical Christian theism (CCT) and is not, therefore, *simply* a sub-set of Christian orthodoxy as many would assume.¹ Secondly, this paper will seek to establish the point that while OT rests upon highly suspect hermeneutical, theological, and philosophical assumptions; it fails as a worldview on the practical grounds of *livability*.² That is, OT presents intolerable and insurmountable difficulties for those attempting to live practically under its precepts and presuppositions.

While it is not the purpose of this paper to address the question of whether or not advocates of OT may be properly called “Christians,” one may confidently affirm that no believer in Christ possesses perfect theology at every point on the doctrinal spectrum. Theology proper does not save anyone. Only the grace of God embraced through faith in Christ’s active and passive obedience is sufficient to reconcile fallen men to their Creator. To the degree that a person looks to the crucified, risen, and exalted Christ in faith, he or she is saved and is a part of the family of God regardless of their degree of theological precision.³ However, this fact should not mask the magnitude and seriousness of the issues raised by proponents of OT. As will be argued here, OT presents not only a serious challenge to traditional Christian theism that must not go unanswered, but represents an antithetical worldview that should not be confused with the worldview of the orthodox Christian. The stakes are high indeed.⁴

Defining Open Theism: Essential Affirmations

Perhaps the best place to begin to develop an accurate definition of OT is within the writings of its major proponents. Gregory A. Boyd, arguably the most winsome and popular theologian of the movement, defines his position as the belief that the future is “*partly* determined and known by God, but also *partly* open and known by God as such” [italics his].⁵ In his popular book, *God of the Possible*, Boyd provides this simple illustration of the OT system:

An overly simple but clear analogy of the open view of providence might be the children’s “Choose Your Own Adventure” stories. In these stories, an author writes a number of possible plot lines and allows readers to create their own story by choosing between alternatives. The author provides a structure to the story as a whole and to each possible plotline within the overall structure. But within these predefined parameters, there is room for readers to create their own stories by choosing between the options that the author has given.⁶

Richard Rice, in contrasting CCT with the open view of God, stresses that OT maintains the belief that “God’s will is not the ultimate explanation for everything that happens; human decisions and actions make an important contribution too. Thus history is the combined result of what God and his creatures decide to do.” As Rice himself emphasizes, OT has serious implications for the concept of divine omniscience as it relates to God’s knowledge of future events:

Another consequence of [OT] concerns God’s knowledge. As an aspect of his experience, God’s knowledge of the world is also dynamic rather than static. Instead of perceiving the entire course of human existence in one timeless moment, *God comes to know* events as they take place. *He learns something* from what transpires. We call this position the “open view of God” because it regards God as receptive to *new experiences* and as flexible in the way he works toward his objectives in the world [italics added].⁷

Clark Pinnock also affirms that OT is committed to the notion (biblically justified in his estimation) that God has provided His creatures with significant and real freedom to

make choices and to act in ways that either please Him or cause Him pain. God, according to Pinnock, is “happy to accept the future as open, not closed, and a relationship with the world that is dynamic, not static.”⁸ This means, according to OT, that God has not infallibly and irreversibly established every event that is to occur in the future. An entire world of possibilities remains “open” in view of the choices and decisions free creatures will make. OT postulates that God, though all-powerful and all-knowing, can truly know with certainty only that which is *logically possible to know*. The future decisions and consequent actions of free moral agents cannot be known, even by God, since they do not exist until the instant of their engagement.⁹ Therefore, OT posits that God’s knowledge of future events is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive, yet is in no way *limited* in view of the laws of logic that He has sovereignly established.

As is readily apparent, OT represents a serious departure from the traditional view of God.¹⁰ In fact, Pinnock has boldly called for a long overdue reconstruction of theism that will free it from false and unwarranted baggage left over from what he believes is “the Greek model of immutability.”¹¹

As Creator of the world God is sovereign in the fundamental sense. He has chosen to bring into existence a world with significantly free agents. In keeping with this decision, God rules over the world in a way that sustains and does not negate its character and structures. Since freedom has been created, reality is open, not closed. God’s relationship to the world is dynamic, not static. Although this will require us to *rethink aspects of conventional or classical theism*, it will help us relate sovereignty and freedom more coherently in theory and more satisfactorily in practice [italics added].¹²

OT, then, presents a picture of God as learning, changing, responding, and interacting with His creatures from the perspective of both a self-imposed as well as logical limitation of His knowledge of the future.¹³ Yet, openness theologians are quick to remind their critics that God, being all-wise, is able to *predict* the future actions of free

moral agents with particular accuracy. For example, in the case of Peter's denial of Jesus, which Christ announced beforehand at the last supper (Matt. 26:33-34), Boyd explains that we should not conclude that the actions of Peter were known ahead of time by Christ or fixed to any degree in God's eternal will. Rather, we only need to believe that God "knew and revealed to Jesus one very predictable aspect of Peter's character. Anyone who knew Peter's character perfectly could have predicted that under certain highly pressured circumstances (that God could easily orchestrate) he would act just the way he did."¹⁴ The very same thing may be said of Satan's future actions that are also announced in the Bible (2 Thess. 2:2-4 for example). Here we have on display the simple fact that "God knows the character of Satan well enough to *predict* some of his strategies at the end of the age when he releases his fury one final time" [italics added].¹⁵

From this brief overview of some of the more salient assertions of OT, it becomes obvious that there are major implications for the doctrine of God in general and for the doctrines of omniscience, sovereignty, and immutability in particular. Clearly, CCT and OT stand in diametrical opposition to one another. The two may not be reconciled or in any way conjoined without seriously damaging the integrity or coherence of either system. This fact provides *prima facie* warrant for considering CCT and OT as distinct worldviews in their own right.

Open Theism as a Unique Worldview: Examining the Evidence

A worldview has to do with the way a person views reality. It is a "set of presuppositions,"¹⁶ or a "conceptual scheme,"¹⁷ by which one interprets, evaluates, and makes sense of his experience. Worldviews address the essential elements of human life including God, ultimate reality, human existence, death, epistemology, the future, and

ethics.¹⁸ As some have suggested, worldviews (WV) function as *lenses* through which one sees the world around him. All data from sense experience is filtered through the WV and pressed into its grid to form a coherent picture of reality.

The question at hand becomes, then, can OT be rightly called a WV in distinction from the Christian WV? That is, does OT provide its own unique conceptual scheme through which reality is interpreted? Does it attempt to answer the basic and essential questions of human existence in a manner that sets it apart from the traditional Christian WV? There appears to be considerable evidence that these questions may be confidently answered in the affirmative.

On the surface it seems that the best way to approach this question is to first develop a succinct, yet accurate picture of CCT and the Christian WV so that the presuppositions and claims of OT may be properly evaluated. As a matter of primary importance in this investigation it must be acknowledged that CCT has consistently affirmed the *exhaustive omniscience* of God, meaning that God knows all things in all times, places, and spheres. God knows the future with the same degree of certainty and infallibility with which He knows the past.¹⁹ This view of divine omniscience has been the view of “all Christian theological traditions” including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Reformed.²⁰ This is not to deny that various factions within these traditions at certain times have debated the nature of God’s attributes, including the implications of His omniscience and the degree of His sovereign control over the decisions and actions of men. However, throughout the history of Christianity a consistent adherence to the comprehensive nature of God’s knowledge of the world and universe has prevailed. Robert B. Strimple agrees:

. . . . although Christian theologians have held differing views of the relationship between God's foreknowledge and His foreordination, and between God's foreordination and human responsibility, the entire broad historical stream of orthodox Christian faith has affirmed the comprehensive character of God's foreknowledge.²¹

In like manner, the doctrine of God's immutability has enjoyed universal acceptance in the Christian church at large. That is, Christians throughout the centuries have, claiming full Biblical warrant, believed, proclaimed, and rested their faith in the changelessness and eternity of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. Ronald Nash provides a particularly beneficial summary of CCT and the Christian WV:

The Christian worldview is theistic in the sense that it believes in the existence of one supremely powerful and personal God. Theism differs from polytheism in its affirmation that there is only one God (Duet. 6:4). It parts company with the various forms of pantheism by insisting that God is personal and must not be confused with the world that is his creation. Theism must also be distinguished from panentheism, the position that regards the world as an eternal being that God needs in much the same way a human soul needs a body. Theists also reject pantheistic attempts to *limit God's power and knowledge*, which have effect of making the God of panentheism a finite being [italics added].²²

On the other hand, however, OT presents a radically discordant view of the divine nature that clearly distinguishes it from CCT. In the same way that the doctrinal affirmations of CCT regarding God provide the basic and essential building blocks of the Christian WV, the central tenants of OT serve as the conceptual framework for a distinct and unique theological paradigm. Norman Geisler and H. Wayne House argue that the doctrine of God is

crucial to Christian faith by any standard. Who God is in His being figures into the essentials of anything related to faith and life. Given these facts it would seem undeniable by either side, that *neotheism is a fundamentally different view of God from that of historical orthodox Christianity*. To consider it to be within the realm of Christian orthodoxy would mean a new test of, and definition for, orthodoxy [italics added].²³

To determine whether or not OT functions as a distinct WV requires that the essential questions WVs are designed to answer be applied to its beliefs about God, man, and the world. The following is a brief summary of these fundamental questions.²⁴

What is Ultimate Reality?

OT affirms with CCT that God is the ultimate reality in the universe. He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of all that He has made. Clark Pinnock, for example, agrees that the “triune God is the Creator of the world out of nothing” and that “everything depends on God for its existence.”²⁵ OT theologians also readily agree that God is all-powerful and all-wise as displayed on the pages of Holy Scripture.²⁶ Yet, when it comes to other affirmations of the divine nature, specifically with regard to God’s atemporality, or timelessness, and omniscience, there is little agreement with CCT.

Pinnock argues that CCT’s version of divine eternity and timelessness is beset with a number of fatal problems that can only be solved by adopting a drastically new definition of these terms. While OT concurs that God is forever eternal, He is not viewed as timeless in the sense that He exists *outside* of time as in the orthodox configuration. Pinnock asserts that God, in fact, does experience “temporal passage” so that He “confronts a future that is open.”²⁷ He explains:

I affirm that God is with us in time, *experiencing the succession of events with us*. Past, present, and future are real to God.

The God of the Bible is not timeless If he were timeless, God would be unable to work salvation in history, would be cut off from the world, have no real relationship with people and would be completely static [*italics added*].²⁸

The rationale for such a view of divine temporality, and the resulting deconstruction of the God of CCT, is closely related to the central desire to preserve the *absolute freedom* of future human choices and actions (and even those of spiritual beings), which for OT

cannot be foreknown by God since this would guarantee their certainty.²⁹ If the future is to God as is the past and present, which CCT has historically advanced, then God knows the choices and actions that will take place in the future with infallible certainty. This is an intolerable conclusion for open theists. John Frame, a critic of OT, articulates this concern quite clearly:

The strongest motive for this consensus, in my opinion, is the desire of [OT] thinkers to make room for libertarian freedom. If God is timelessly eternal, it is difficult to argue that he is ignorant of what to us is future, for he sees all times equally from his eternal vantage point. And if God knows exhaustively what to us is future, then he knows the free acts of human beings before they take place. And if he knows these actions in advance, it is hard to argue that they are free in a libertarian sense.³⁰

To summarize, the ultimate reality for CCT is the God who is *above and outside of* time and, therefore, is unchanging and immutable.³¹ To the contrary, the ultimate reality for OT is the God who, being *in* time, experiences change, learns new things, and grows in His understanding of the world and the creatures He has created.

What is a Human Being?

Once again, there is superficial agreement between OT and CCT regarding the nature of man as creature. Both systems readily affirm that he has been supernaturally created in the image and likeness of God and is, therefore, endowed with dignity and worth as the pinnacle of the divine handiwork. Furthermore, man lives in a dependent relationship with his Creator who providentially oversees, governs, and cares for those made in the divine likeness. Each human is also morally responsible to Him for obedience and conformity to His will and purposes as expressed in the Scriptures.

The comprehensive and irreconcilable differences in the two systems surface, however, when definitions and explanations of man's moral and volitional freedom are

brought to the forefront for examination. OT represents an extreme libertarian or *incompatibilistic* position regarding the will and choices of free moral agents. This particular understanding of human freedom far removes OT from other depictions of free moral agency such as that set forth in classical Arminian theology which has historically emphasized incompatibility. However, both the Arminian and Calvinistic systems fully affirm the *exhaustive* extent of God's foreknowledge of future events, including the future choices of humans. Carl F. H. Henry states the case quite plainly:

Biblical theism affirms . . . that everything that can be predicated of man, whether his existence and continuance, or his responsible decisions and deeds and final destiny, finds its necessary presupposition in a divine reality beyond himself. The God of the Bible is the source and not the adversary of responsible human choice and agency.³²

In stark contrast to the orthodox conception of human moral freedom, OT postulates that the term “freedom” only has significant meaning in a *contra-causal* sense. That is, humans may be considered to have freely acted if and only if there is no exterior cause that precipitates the action or decision. Gregory Boyd, for example, argues that human agents “are genuinely free only if the agents themselves are the *ultimate explanations* of their own free activity” [*italics his*].³³ He continues:

While factors outside the agent are *influential* in every decision an agent makes, such factors are never *coercive* when the decision is in fact free. Thus, appealing to factors external to the agent can never *exhaustively* explain the free choice of the agent. In light of all influences and circumstances, agents ultimately *determine themselves* [*italics his*].³⁴

As argued above, the foreknowledge God has of future events, as presented in CCT, is thoroughly unacceptable to OT proponents because such advance cognition would guarantee their occurrence and, therefore, serve as an outside “cause” of future choices. According to David Basinger, freedom of choice in the OT system means that the

creature (either human or angelic) has the liberty to make decisions over which God “cannot exercise total control.”³⁵ Richard Rice agrees, concluding that genuine freedom demands that humans “must not only be able to do what they choose, they must also be able to choose otherwise.”³⁶ Consequently, God possesses no absolute or infallible knowledge of what decisions or actions the creature will engage in until they occur in time, though He may anticipate or predict them as He “sees” the course of events unfolding. Therefore, these decisions and actions are purely without external causation and do not function as components of a divinely predetermined or foreknown plan.³⁷

In the openness WV, humans are created and endowed with *absolute freedom* from divine control in any sense. The God of OT, whose primary attribute is love, manifests this love to the creatures He has made by endowing them with such volitional powers that the course of human history rests squarely in their hands.³⁸ As divine Lover, God so respects this measure of creaturely freedom that He, as it were, sits on the sidelines of life cheering men on in their pursuit of the ultimate good. God is contented, therefore, to risk the rejection of His desires and His will for the sake of the preservation of human self-determinism.³⁹

What is the Meaning of Human History?

CCT affirms that God’s eternal purposes for the world are being perfectly accomplished in time and space. History, then, is ever moving forward toward a divinely predetermined end. This point of termination, the final and explicit victory of Jesus Christ and the subjugation of all things under His sovereign lordship, is the ultimate goal and purpose of human history. Thus, the events taking place on the stage of human

history—inclusive of all actions, choices, and determinations—are neither arbitrary nor meaningless in the divine economy.

On the other hand, however, OT neither advances nor accepts such futuristic certainty. The events of human history are not eternally predetermined since they are not logically knowable even to God and, therefore, cannot compose the elements of an eternal blueprint. History, then, represents the free, undetermined, open, and unknowable forward motion of human events to which both God and men must *respond*. The final goal, though hoped for and anticipated in the Scriptural record, possesses no measure of logical certainty. Quite simply, human history might possibly go anywhere.⁴⁰ This assertion is most thoroughly articulated by Gregory Boyd in his presentation of the “Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy.” This approach, which he explicitly refers to as a “worldview” distinct from the more traditional “blueprint worldview,” maintains that Satan and God are locked in a desperate spiritual battle for the souls of men, the outcome of which hinges on the decisions of free agents. He explains his position:

This motif expresses what I call the “warfare worldview” of the Bible. I argue that the narrative of the Bible and all events in world history are best understood against the backdrop of this worldview. The world is literally caught up in a spiritual war between God and Satan. The main difference between the warfare worldview and the blueprint worldview is that the former does not assume that there is a specific divine reason for what Satan and other evil agents do. To the contrary, God fights these opponents because *their* purposes are working *against his* purposes. The reason they do what they do is found in them, not God [*italics his*].⁴¹

Despite the confidence that OT proponents have regarding the ultimate victory of God’s proposes for the world, there is no logical foundation for this optimistic orientation regarding the past or future. So far, throughout the course of human history, the warfare between God and Satan has resulted in countless tragedies, millions consigned to hell for

their unbelief, and unspeakable acts of evil that appear gratuitous and random at best. Those skeptical of OT might be reasonably inclined to question the claim that human history is meaningful when even God Himself does not know its course. While a thorough refutation of OT is not the purpose of this study, the point to be addressed here is that OT and CCT are totally opposed at this critical juncture—so much so that they can hardly be called variant interpretations within the same system.⁴² Each represents a vastly unique viewpoint regarding the fundamental question of the meaning of human existence and the course and significance of cosmic history. In CCT, God knows the future precisely because He has predetermined it, announced it beforehand in the Scriptures, and moved in time to bring about the specific means to His ordained ends. For example, both the Belgic (1563) and Westminster (1647) confessions of faith articulate the certainty of a *future day* in which God will bring to a glorious consummation His eternal plans:

Finally, we believe, according to the word of God, when *the time appointed by the Lord* (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect is complete, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as He ascended, with great glory and majesty, to declare Himself Judge of the quick and the dead, burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it [Italics added]⁴³

God hath *appointed a day*, wherein He will judge the world, in all righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given of the Father. In which day, not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ [Italics added]⁴⁴

On the contrary, the OT position cannot make such affirmations concerning the future. While proponents of the OTWV may claim that God *desires* vindication and has made *general plans* regarding such a Day of Judgment and consummation, it may not be claimed that this day is *certain to occur* at a specified time and in a specified way. If God cannot know the future actions of free agents, He cannot know exactly how or when the

events of the future will unfold and, therefore, cannot be certain that there will be any degree of synchronicity with His wishes. The believer in OT is left with no apparent logical basis to presume anything about the meaning or direction of history, either at the macro-level of world history or at the micro-level of personal history. It also seems apparent that OT renders biblical prophecy irrelevant if not utterly meaningless in view of the uncertainty with which even God faces the future. Clearly, then, an *open* view of history is pervasively antithetical to the view of history set forth in CCT.

The Practical Consequences of the Openness Worldview: The Test of Livability

Ideas have consequences. This is an irrefutable maxim that must be critically applied to the claims of OT. Given that OT represents a distinct WV from CCT it must be evaluated in terms of what might be called *worldview tests* (WVT) that aid in the task of adjudicating between competing philosophical systems that continually vie for allegiance in the public square. Several components of such a test have been suggested, including the test of *reason*, the test of *experience*, and the test of *practice*.⁴⁵ Of particular interest in this present study is the third of these, the test of practice or livability. This involves an evaluation of the WV in terms of how well its advocates are able to put its truth-claims into practice in the real world—that is, outside of the classroom and on the street. The critical question this test raises is can the WV be consistently lived out in everyday human experience?⁴⁶ Another way of posing this same question is to ask if, in order to function practically, the WV has to “borrow capital” from other WVs.⁴⁷ For example, the atheist who presupposes that the material world is all that truly exists must unwittingly depend upon a theistic WV in order to account for such non-material entities as transcendent moral standards, the mind, the conscience, the laws of logic, mathematics,

or the law of non-contradiction. The atheistic WV fails the test of livability since no atheist consistently lives as if the physical/material world is all there is. Atheists, for instance, are morally offended when human rights are violated, when government officials prove to be corrupt, or when neighborhood gangs terrorize a city. However, given the presuppositions of their WV, such moral offense is thoroughly devoid of any rational foundation. In short, the atheistic WV fails the test of livability.

In like manner, the openness WV proves to be rationally vacuous and, in fact, reduces to absurdity, when the test of livability is applied. This may be demonstrated by appealing to four areas of special concern, each related to the practical, everyday life of the professing Christian.⁴⁸

Prayer

There is no doubt that those espousing OT engage in prayer, even fervent, faithful praying as is commanded in Scripture. For this, they are to be commended in their sincere effort to commune with God and to obey the numerous biblical exhortations to such praying. Yet, how is prayer in the openness WV, especially that touching the future actions and decisions of men, logically justified? A simple illustration from Scripture will display the difficulty faced in the openness camp. In the New Testament book of Philemon, for example, the apostle Paul requests that his Christian brother prepare a “lodging” for him, and that Philemon would pray that God would make it possible for him to be released from prison in order that he might visit with him in the future—“that through your prayers I shall be given to you” (1:22). When this request is considered in light of the assertions of OT it becomes quite problematic indeed. First, Paul is clearly desirous that God will directly intervene in the affairs of free moral agents in order to

secure his release from prison. However, for this to occur, God must determine to overrule, or at least manipulate, the *future* decisions and actions of free creatures. Yet, this is impossible in the OTWV since that which is future is not logically knowable even to God. One might reply, however, that the openness position provides room for God to anticipate what free creatures might do and make small incursions into freely determined human events in response to the prayerful desires of His children. Yet one must bear in mind that God, though all-wise and powerful, is unable in the OT scheme to anticipate these actions with *absolute certainty*. God Himself must *observe* the movement of His free creatures in order to *gain knowledge* of their intent and, consequently, *predict* their future direction. In the example from Philemon, an answer to this specific prayer would also necessitate God's intervention, either directly or indirectly, in literally millions of individual thoughts, choices, and actions in order to move the Roman officials toward the free and un-coerced granting of Paul's release from prison, in addition to the infallible anticipation of such choices and actions. Yet, this is precisely the kind of exhaustive scenario that OT desires to avoid at all costs. For God to "work it out" for Paul to be released would certainly involve the violation of self-determining freedom and the display of exhaustive foreknowledge of future events. Applying the presuppositions of OT to this case, Paul's prayer is reduced to nothing more than the God-ward expression of a fervent hope that he might be freed in a timely manner in order to visit his friend.

On a more personal and practical level, it seems that the believer in OT must radically reconstruct both his goals and purposes in prayer. While the CCT position allows for the believer to pray for God's eternal will to be accomplished, for His divine direction regarding the future, and for His direct intervention in personal and world affairs, those

embracing OT are unable *logically* to request similar blessings.⁴⁹ God has no “eternal will” to accomplish, no knowledge of what the future will be, and cannot (or will not) overrule the choices and determinations of men. Yet, proponents of OT still pray for such things as divine guidance, provision, and protection regarding the future, for God’s direct work in the hearts of the unredeemed, and for healing and other manifestations of divine sovereignty and control over evil and natural forces. In CCT prayer is the *means* to the accomplishment of God’s eternal will. Prayers are, in fact, effectual and meaningful precisely because they function in concert with His sovereign purposes.⁵⁰ Conversely in OT, prayer theoretically functions as “part of our moral say-so in influencing the flow of history and thus is a crucial variable that God considers in determining his *response* to situations” [*italics added*].⁵¹ Boyd further explains that God *needs* the prayers of believers:

Prayer is part of the general covenant of freedom that the Lord grants us, and he genuinely binds himself to it. . . . Hence, we may understand that, by his own choice, God genuinely needs us to pray for certain things if they are to be accomplished, just as we may understand that God needs us to cooperate with him on a physical level for certain things to be accomplished.⁵²

That which separates this understanding of prayer from that espoused in CCT is captured in the language of *divine need* as employed by Boyd and other neotheists. In many respects God is helpless to move significantly in world affairs until human agents grant Him permission to act. Yet again, the question confronting the openness camp is how can prayers to a blind, semi-sovereign, and contingent God possibly have any real meaning given the conclusions of OT?⁵³ Surely, no open theist prays in a manner consistent with his theological beliefs when a child is sick and dying, when decisions touching personal futures must be made, and when nations are at war. Even the most

committed believer in OT prays *as if* God knows the future, is fully in control of world affairs, and governs the cosmos according to His eternal purposes. While the OTWV boldly claims that prayer is more meaningful in its scheme, the reality betrays a basic failure to account for the necessity or purpose in engaging a deity so limited in both power and knowledge.

Assurance and Hope

Those embracing the openness WV also place their trust in Christ for eternal redemption. They affirm salvation by grace through faith in the crucified and risen Christ, and anxiously anticipate the resurrection of all believers on the last day. Yet again, how is such assurance of final salvation logically possible given the beliefs of OT? That is, does the openness WV provide a rational basis for such assurance? The answer to this question must be a resounding “no” in light of the essential beliefs about God embraced in OT. Several areas related to the theme of assurance and hope will illustrate this well.

First, given the theological commitments under girding OT, the precise timing and nature of the final Day of Judgment and the glorious consummation of this age—expectations clearly articulated in the Scriptures—must be seriously questioned. Despite the fact that the Bible speaks forcefully and unambiguously regarding the Second Advent of Christ, the advocate of OT does not have the luxury of resting his hope on the *certainty* of this day and its attendant events. In other words, the doctrine of the final consummation, which has sustained the church through centuries of suffering and tribulation, can be nothing more than wishful thinking in the OTWV. The reasons for this are obvious. The future of humanity is both open and unknown. Consequently, that

which is contained in the promises and prophecies of the Second Advent may not be regarded as a divinely ordained and infallible plan. Frankly, things might not work out according to God's desires since human and spiritual forces are granted immunity from divine control. The free agents God has created might well move history in a direction unknown and unanticipated by God, therefore, rendering the promises of Scripture regarding the Second Advent and final resurrection irrelevant at best.⁵⁴ Upon what, then, does the believer in OT base his hope for the future? More plainly, how is it possible for hope to exist at all in this scenario?⁵⁵ The one accepting the tenants of OT serves a God who has no knowledge of what the future holds. God Himself, like the finite human beings He created, must wait to "see" how things on earth develop and then make appropriate adjustments as warranted. Yet, this hardly provides any rational foundation for believing that things will ultimately progress as God has desired. It remains within the realm of theoretical possibility that Christ's coming might *never* occur given the fact of persistent human and spiritual opposition.

A second and closely related point concerns the final victory of Christ so pervasively depicted in the Scriptural record. While God clearly *desires* that Christ will triumph over all of His enemies on the last day, there is no logical certainty that this will be the case. As stated above, God cannot know *when* this day will occur or *how* it will turn out in the end.⁵⁶ His plans, which are subject to frustration, alteration, and outright rejection, may not be accomplished in the way He has intended. Since God cannot know what Satan and his demonic army will do in the future there can be no guarantee regarding the final triumph of Christ. Even more frightening is the realization that, given the un-knowability of future free-will actions, God cannot know with certainty what *He Himself* will do in

response to Satan's actions. He may *predict* ultimate victory, and He may call upon believers to trust in His power, justice, and goodness, but He *cannot promise* His children that the forces of righteousness will triumph in the way He has desired. Again, one is left with the question of how there can be any personal assurance and hope in the hearts of believers who embrace the OTWV. How can the future be confidently faced if both God and men enter it equally unaware of the path it might take?⁵⁷

A third concern is related to the security of personal salvation, or what might be termed the perseverance of the Christian. While the security of the believer remains the subject of some degree of debate within the evangelical community, it is profoundly problematic in OT.⁵⁸ John Frame states the case well:

Because of the emphasis on libertarian freedom in open theism, it is impossible to imagine how believers could be assured of their salvation. Since God has no control of our freedom, he has no right to promise that believers will persevere. And if he did make such a promise, he would be powerless to keep it.⁵⁹

It seems clear enough that OT can offer the believer no legitimate hope of final perseverance given the fact that God has assigned such value to human freedom in the libertarian sense. As is the case with classical Arminianism, those who exercise their free will to affect salvation may likewise choose to reject God's love and remove themselves from the fold of grace. Yet, in the case of OT, there is a more insidious possibility. Consider, for example, the status of the believer *after death*. If OT is correct in its assertions regarding the ultimate value of free will, would it not seem that even after the resurrection and consummation there would still exist the *possibility* of rebellion against God? OT leaves open the chance that redeemed and glorified saints may yet fall away into sin against God. If God has indeed committed Himself to the eternal preservation of libertarian freedom, such a risk must necessarily exist even in heaven. Once again, it

appears quite obvious that no one may be assured of the absolute certainty of any future blessing or provision even if *promised* by God. To the degree that open theists speak of personal hope, assurance, certainty, and security; they are operating outside the philosophical boundaries of OT.

Suffering and Evil

A final area of concern touches what is arguably the most perplexing and mysterious of all in human existence—the universal experience of evil and suffering. Given that God has committed Himself to the admittedly risky experiment of human autonomy, how can there be meaning, comfort, and more significantly, a transcendent purpose to human suffering and pain in the OT system? As observed above, OT postulates that God is the loving responder who has assumed significant risk in creating a universe where men are free to shape the course of world events. In such an open universe, there exists the distinct possibility of the occurrence of accidental or random events which are *unplanned* if not *unanticipated* by God. For example, in addressing the connection between prayer and physical suffering, Boyd explains that some individuals who contract dreadful diseases like tuberculosis are “largely victims of chance.”⁶⁰ He later argues for a nebulous middle position that denies, on the one hand, that God controls all things, and on the other, refutes the notion that chance controls all things. He concludes that the preferred view understands that God “sovereignly *influences* the whole process, working to bring about as much good and to *prevent as much evil as possible*” [italics added].⁶¹ In this scheme, however, there is no legitimate denial of the possibility of truly gratuitous evils that might befall an individual. In a most candid observation, Boyd admits this very by-product of his system:

It is true that according to the open view things can happen in our lives that God didn't plan or even know with certainty (though he always foreknew they were possible). This means that in the open view things can happen to us that have *no overarching divine purpose*. In this view, "trusting in God" provides *no assurance* that everything that happens to us will reflect his divine purposes, for there are other agents who also have power to affect us, just as we have power to affect others [italics added].⁶²

OT, as Boyd freely admits, simply fails to supply the Christian with any reason to believe that suffering, sickness, tragedy, and other evils serve a divine purpose. Consequently, there is no basis for assurance or hope in the midst of such adversity. To properly cope with the presence of evil, the believer must, as a matter of necessity, *assume* that God has intended, or at least permitted, its existence for some good. That is, that God is fully in control of all things and has determined to use evil in the accomplishment of His eternal purposes. To strike the heart of the matter, the key components of OT that relate to the presence of evil cannot be consistently put into practice without some degree of theoretical accommodation, or radical alteration, of its essential truth-claims. When those who embrace OT speak of life's adversities and tragedies as if there were some divine intention supporting and governing their occurrence, they have betrayed their own system and have "borrowed capital" from CCT. At best OT provides the believer with the knowledge that God is very often appalled and surprised, just as humans are, by the presence and magnitude of human suffering and by acts of evil committed by free creatures.⁶³ Yet, this level of "comfort" falls far short of supplying a sufficient rationale for endurance, faithfulness, and hope amidst such tragic and painful experiences. While CCT appeals to God's certain, although mysterious and often unseen, sovereignty over all things that occur in human experience, OT posits a limited, yet, resourceful God who "always has a plan B and a plan C" at the ready.⁶⁴

Conclusion: A Worldview You Can Live Without

Doctrinal affirmations do not exist in a vacuum. To the contrary, they necessarily precipitate other theological declarations much like a string of dominoes on the living room table. When one is moved there is an inevitable effect upon other dominoes in close proximity. It is also equally true that theology and practice are intrinsically linked. What one believes has a direct bearing upon the way one lives. Such is the case with the claims of OT.

As a worldview, drastically distinct from that articulated in CCT, OT presents many difficulties not only on the theological and philosophical front, but also in terms of living consistently with its doctrinal distinctives. Far from opening up a new frontier of possibilities for more meaningful and fulfilling lives, OT abandons the believer on the shores of absurdity, or leaves him adrift in a vast sea of hopelessness and despair. Aside from the slippery methods of interpretation OT employs in its handling of the texts of Scripture, it calls for a thoroughly rationalistic approach to theology and Christian doctrine. Its unspoken maxim is, "That which cannot be fully explained must be abandoned." In this WV, all mysteries are evaporated; God and His attributes are easily understood; theology is engaged in from the ground up with man and his infinitely prized autonomy at the center of the universe. Though undoubtedly attractive with its convenient domestication of the divine, OT is a WV going nowhere as it spins in the dust of earlier and more creative heresies. Those embracing its teachings cling to a WV that is diametrically opposed to that presented in Christian orthodoxy. It is, in the final analysis, a WV that one can live without simply because, upon closer examination, one cannot truly live with it.

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¹ My main contention in this study will be that open theism represents such a violent departure from what has been articulated in classical Christian theism that it warrants serious consideration as a worldview in its own right. The limitations and scope of this paper will not allow a thorough examination and refutation of each significant theological affirmation of OT. Rather, I will focus on providing evidence to support the location of OT within the same theological/philosophical category as Deism, Pantheism, Panentheism and other theistic worldviews that are considerably distinct from the Christian worldview. I do find a helpful, though indirect, measure of justification for this approach in Norman L. Geisler [*Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999)] who implicitly identifies OT with what he terms "Finite Godism" (246-47). In another article addressing "Neotheism," Geisler rightly recognizes that OT theologians have "adopted some of the tenets of pantheism or process theology" (526). More recently, Geisler and H. Wayne House [*The Battle for God: Responding to the Challenge of Neotheism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001)] have more explicitly identified OT as a heterodox view of God's nature and being and, therefore, as a distinct brand of theism. Geisler and House, in fact, boldly state that whatever label is ascribed to OT, "it challenges central assumptions of classical theism and attacks the view of God that holds together important doctrines of the *Christian worldview*" [italics added] (13).

² There are currently two noteworthy treatments of OT from a hermeneutical, theological, and philosophical perspective. See John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2001) and Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2000). The aim of this paper, however, is to focus upon one aspect of OT—how the openness position fares in terms practical livability.

³ Even Norman Geisler, an articulate and vehement critic of OT, concedes that a person's salvation "does not hinge on explicit acceptance of all evangelical doctrines A neotheist may be orthodox on crucial soteriological doctrines, while remaining unorthodox on others" (*Battle for God*, 290).

⁴ One of the more popular books espousing OT is *The Openness of God* with contributions by Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994). Interestingly, the book's sub-title, *A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, provides a major clue as to the authors' understanding of their own position in relation to CCT.

⁵ Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 11. Boyd insists that, though God does not know the future free actions of men, this in no way limits his omniscience since, in his view, there is "nothing definite there for God to know!" (*Ibid.*, 16).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷ Richard Rice, "Biblical Support for a New Perspective," in *The Openness of God*, eds. Clark Pinnock and others (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 16.

⁸ Clark Pinnock, "Systematic Theology" in *The Openness of God*, 104.

⁹ Clark Pinnock, ["God Limits His Knowledge," in *Predestination and Free Will*, eds. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), 157] explains that God's possession of the attribute of omniscience means that God can know "everything which can be known, just as God is omnipotent in the sense that he can do everything that can be done. But free actions are not entities which can be known ahead of time. They literally do not yet exist to be known. God can *surmise* what you will do next Friday, but *cannot know it for certain* because you have not done it yet" [*italics added*].

¹⁰ Arguably, the two most influential and OT theologians are Pinnock and Boyd. Both have consistently stressed that OT presents a different model of theism than CCT. Strangely, though, Boyd's contention seems to be that the differences fundamentally address divine foreknowledge and not necessarily the wider theological issues associated with Christian theism. In this paper, however, I will attempt to demonstrate that OT presents a radically diverse portrait of God that bears little resemblance to that depicted in CCT. This fact is seen more clearly in the writings of Pinnock who seems to be more militant in his presentations.

¹¹ Clark Pinnock, "God Limits His Knowledge," in *Predestination and Free Will*, eds. David Basinger and Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986), 155. For a convincing refutation of this assertion see John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001) 25-40, and Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. V, *God Who Stands and Stays: Part One* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999), 286-294.

¹² *Ibid.*, 144. Elsewhere, Pinnock boldly announces, "I stand against classical theism which has tried to argue that God can control and foresee all things in a world where humans are free" (*Ibid.*, 151). The view of CCT, that "God is unchangeable in essence and character," must be rejected and replaced with the understanding that "[God] is changeable in his knowledge and actions" (*Ibid.*, 155). Pinnock also clearly distinguishes his view from what he calls "traditional theology" which has been culpably "biased in the direction of transcendence as the result of undue philosophical influences. Greek thinking located the ultimate and the perfect in the realm of the immutable and absolutely transcendent. This led early theologians (given that the biblical God is also transcendent) to experiment with equating the God of revelation with the Greek ideal of deity" ("*Systematic Theology*," 106). It is clear from these comments that Pinnock (enthusiastically!) envisions his view as radically opposed to traditional theism. This being so, OT theologians must deal with the vast multiplicity of consequence that naturally flow from such theological re-visioning. Given diametrically opposing starting places, OT and CCT will arrive at different practical locations. Thus, we may legitimately refer to OT and CCT as separate WVs entirely.

¹³ As the reader will recognize, this seems to have much in common with Socinianism and Process Theology. John M. Frame argues this case in *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2001) 25-40.

¹⁴ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 35.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁶ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 16.

¹⁷ Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews In Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 16.

¹⁸ This list represents a synthesis of the worldview elements articulated by James Sire and Ronald Nash, respectively. Sire also includes ethics as an essential component of any worldview. For my purposes here, this element will be subsumed under other headings.

¹⁹ Two prominent examples of this will make the case. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647) makes the following statement about God's knowledge: "In His sight all things are open and manifest, His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, so as nothing to Him is contingent, or uncertain" (Article II.2). As a more contemporary example the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* (Southern Baptist) makes the following claim: "God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures" (Article II).

²⁰ John M. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2001), 191. For a more thorough defense of this very point see Geisler and House, "Is Neotheism Orthodox?" in *The Battle for God*, 289-303.

²¹ Robert B. Strimple, "What Does God Know?," in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, ed. John H. Armstrong, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), 139.

²² Nash, *Worldviews*, 34.

²³ Geisler and House, *Battle for God*, 303.

²⁴ The following WV questions are among those suggested by James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (17-19), and prove to be quite effective in the task of worldview adjudication.

²⁵ Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 109.

²⁶ OT theologians have a very peculiar view of omnipotence, however. While affirming that God is the most superior power in the universe, OT proponents redefine omnipotence as the ability to "deal with any situation that arises" (Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 114). He has the power to make an adjustment from plan 'A' to plan 'B' when the actions of the free creature He has created necessitate an alteration in His course of action (Ibid., 113). Gregory Boyd advances a similar view: "[W]e are led to embrace the conclusion that God is so wise, resourceful, and sovereign over history that he doesn't need or want to have everything in the future settled ahead of time. He is so confident in his power and wisdom that he is willing to grant an appropriate degree of freedom to humans (and angels) to determine their own futures" (*God of the Possible*, 68).

²⁷ Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," 120.

²⁸ Ibid., 121.

²⁹ This facet of OT will be treated below in greater detail.

³⁰ Frame, *No Other God*, 146.

³¹ Carl F. H. Henry [*God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. V, *God Who Stands and Stays: Part One*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999), 276] explains that God's omniscience "involves both *simultaneous knowledge* of all that is past, present and future, and an awareness of the *succession of events* in the created temporal order. There is nothing contradictory in saying that God knows all things simultaneously, and that within this comprehensive knowledge he distinguishes between what is forever true and factual and what is temporally contingent" [italics added].

³² Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. V, *God Who Stays and Stands: Part One* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999), 280.

³³ Gregory A. Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 19.

³⁴ Ibid., 56.

³⁵ David Basinger, "Practical Implications" in *The Openness of God*, 156.

³⁶ Richard Rice, "Divine Foreknowledge and Free-Will Theism" in Clark H. Pinnock, *The Grace of God and the Will of Man* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989), 125. Carl Henry (*God, Revelation and Authority*, vol. V, 282) answers this objection in claiming that when humans "voluntarily choose to do what God foreknows to be certain, then the conditions of voluntary human agency are fulfilled. Human actions are not causally determined by God's prior beliefs, even if God foreknows them and if in view of this foreknowledge they are certain: we do not choose because God has determined our choices."

³⁷ Boyd (*Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 15) makes the rather interesting claim that "Scripture does not teach that God controls all the behavior of free agents, whether humans or angels." However, this seems to ignore the many straightforward pronouncements of God's absolute and comprehensive sovereignty found throughout the biblical record. When these are addressed by proponents of OT, they are typically answered

by the claim that such statements are not to be taken literally since other passages speak of God as if He had limitations both in omniscience and sovereignty. See Boyd's *God of the Possible* (113-156) and *Satan and the Problem of Evil* (394-416).

³⁸ Boyd (Ibid., 16) has concluded that the manifestation of love is the ultimate goal in the divine mind. "God created the world for the purpose of displaying his triune love and inviting others to share in it . . . it was not logically possible for God to have this objective without risking the possibility of war breaking out in his creation."

³⁹ Boyd argues (*God of the Possible*, 45) that God can predetermine some events, the crucifixion for example, without predetermining who will be involved in them. He concedes that Scripture "portrays the crucifixion as a predestined event" yet denies that the "individuals who participated in this event were predestined to do so or foreknown as doing so." While it was "certain that Jesus would be crucified" it was not "certain from eternity that Pilot, Herod, or Caiaphas would play the roles they played in the crucifixion. They participated in Christ's death of their own free wills." Yet, such a view appears highly illogical at best. How can *some* events be predestined to occur? How is it possible for the crucifixion to be a certain future occurrence if the human instruments required for this event are absolutely free in the libertarian sense? Boyd would be on much firmer philosophical ground if he simply denied the predestination of all events.

⁴⁰ Strangely, however, open theists are quite positive regarding the future and God's ability to accomplish His broader intentions. Boyd (Ibid., 15) flatly claims that God's "general will for world history cannot fail." This seems to be a rather odd, if not completely illogical, assertion given the presuppositions of the OTWV.

⁴¹ Ibid., 15.

⁴² Contra Boyd (*God of the Possible*, 8) who views these issues much differently: "Next to the central doctrines of the Christian faith, the issue of whether the future is exhaustively settled or partially open is *relatively unimportant*. It is certainly not a doctrine Christians should ever divide over" [italics added].

⁴³ *The Belgic Confession*, Article 37.

⁴⁴ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, XXXIII.1.

⁴⁵ See Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict*, 54-72. What Nash terms the "test of practice," I will refer to as "livability." Also see his *Faith and Reason: Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 21-66.

⁴⁶ Nash (*Faith and Reason*, 58) articulates the same concerns: "World-views should be tested not only in the philosophy classroom, but also in the laboratory of life. It is one thing for a world-view to pass certain theoretical tests; it is another for that world-view also to pass an important practical test, namely, can the people who profess that world-view in theory also practice what they believe in their daily lives? Can a person *consistently* live the system he professes? Or do we find that he is forced to live according to beliefs borrowed from a competing system. Such a discovery, I suggest, should produce more than embarrassment" [italics his].

⁴⁷ This is an insight initially articulated by the late Cornelius Van Til [see *The Defense of the Faith* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1955)] and more fully developed later by two of his students [see Greg L. Bahnsen, *Van Til's Apologetic* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1998) and John M. Frame, *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of His Thought* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 1995)].

⁴⁸ Since OT claims to be a legitimate *Christian alternative* to CCT it will be evaluated from the perspective of a Christian believer's life. These four areas are often addressed in the literature of OT. For example, both Boyd and Hasker are concerned to show that the spiritual disciplines such as prayer and worship are even more meaningful in OT as opposed to CCT. Boyd (*Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 228-29) asserts that the "effectiveness and urgency of petitionary prayer as it is commanded and illustrated throughout Scripture only makes sense if we are asking God to do something *he would not otherwise do* and if God at least sometimes *does this* If petitionary prayer is not idle, it must truly affect what God does. The classical philosophical model of providence has difficulty affirming this" [italics his].

⁴⁹ Bruce A. Ware [*God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 174] agrees by observing that if, when we pray for others, we believe that "God *can* work decisively in that person's heart so that God can *guarantee* that the person will choose what God wants, then this view of prayer calls into question the reality of *libertarian freedom* so cherished in open theism" [italics his].

⁵⁰ Believers within CCT will differ somewhat on their respective views of prayer and God's sovereignty. Those influenced by Reformed theology will stress that prayer changes nothing regarding God's eternal

decree (His secret or decretive will), yet functions as the essential means to its accomplishment. Arminian theology typically lays less stress on this aspect of prayer, focusing more upon God's active and personal involvement in the choices, issues, and difficulties the believer faces. Neither system, however, denies the sovereignty and exhaustive foreknowledge of God.

⁵¹ Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 230.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 232.

⁵³ In the openness position God may be said to "blind" in the sense that He is unable to see future events before they occur.

⁵⁴ For example, suppose that God has *planned* to bring Christ back to earth victoriously in the year 2025. This divine plan, however, was crafted in the mind of God apart from any knowledge of what future human decisions would be. God could not possibly have known what conditions would exist on earth in the year 2025 when He made such plans for the return of Christ. In fact, God may have already adjusted His scheme hundreds of times throughout human history, and has yet to discover an appropriate set of earthly conditions in which to effect His intentions. If God is not certain of how things will turn out in the end, how could believers have any assurance of certainty of the future?

⁵⁵ Boyd (*Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 129) attempts to circumvent this difficulty by asserting that God's wisdom and sovereignty are displayed in His ability to *prepare* for any eventuality in any possible world. For example, he claims, "from all eternity God was preparing for *just this* possibility, as though it were the only possibility that could ever possibly occur. Even when possibilities occur that are objectively improbable—and to this extent surprise or disappoint God—it is not at all the case that he is caught off guard. He is perfectly prepared for the improbable as he is for the probable" [*italics his*]. Yet, this seems to beg the question regarding the nature of assurance in OT. The point is, God does not possess absolute certainty regarding *any* future possibility. He may be prepared for anything to occur, but this hardly compensates for the lack of knowledge regarding what *will* occur. God will be surprised and, perhaps, disappointed by future events. This does not provide a sufficient basis for assurance, especially in light of the Bible's own definition of faith (see Hebrews 11:1).

⁵⁶ Boyd himself (*Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 109) all but admits this very fact. Regarding Jesus' claim that the Father alone knows the hour of the Second Advent, he states, "we can easily take this as an idiomatic way of affirming that the decision about this matter is the Father's. He alone will know when the time is right. I may tell my daughter that I know the time when she'll be ready to drive a car, but I am not thereby claiming that I have a preset date in mind."

⁵⁷ The logical inconsistency of OT is easily observed in Boyd's defense of the trinitarian warfare theodicy. On one hand he argues for the openness of the future while on the other affirms that the promises of the New Testament should be embraced as a foundation for the believer's hope: ". . . the trinitarian warfare worldview offers people in the midst of suffering the central hope of the New Testament, namely, that in the end it will all be worth it. This horrific war will come to an end and Christ will be victorious over Satan. Justice will be administered, and the ecstasy that the bride of Christ will experience will heal all wounds, dry all tears, vanquish all fear and more than compensate for all the nightmares of suffering" (*Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 371). In making this bold claim Boyd sounds like one who believes in the certainty of future events. Yet, how can such certainty be possible in an open universe where spiritual and human agents are acting freely without divine control? To make such a claim, Boyd must presuppose that God both knows the future and will, in fact, bring it about as promised in the New Testament.

⁵⁸ Consider, for example, the differences between the Lutheran and Reformed positions on the possibility of apostasy.

⁵⁹ Frame, *No Other God*, 208.

⁶⁰ Boyd, *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 237.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 153.

⁶³ Note Boyd's example of "Suzanne" in *God of the Possible*, 103-106, where he states this in surprisingly unambiguous terms.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.