

Open Theism Debate

Defending a settled future is Dr. Larry Bray, President of The North American Reformed Seminary. Lawrence Bray was born in Columbus, OH. He was raised in an atheist family and was not saved until he was about 21 years old. Dr. Bray now lives in Pennsylvania with his family: Priscilla (wife), Brian (son), and Zoe (daughter). He is an Elder with the Reformed Presbyterian Church (PCA) as well as the president of The North American Reformed Seminary (TNARS). In 2008 he received his first doctorate (D.Min.) through TNARS (prior to becoming their president), in 2009 he earned a Doctor of Divinity (meritus causa) from Miami International Seminary, and in 2011 he earned a Doctor of Theology from Maranatha Theological Seminary (Pakistan).

Defending an open future is Bob Enyart, Pastor of Denver Bible Church. Bob Enyart became a Christian in 1973 and then began a life of Bible study and ministry. In 1999, Pastor Bob Hill and the elder board of Derby Bible Church ordained Bob Enyart into the ministry, and Denver Bible Church was planted in 2000. In 1991 Bob began hosting the live radio talk show "Bob Enyart Live," which still airs every weekday. Bob has been a prolific writer, and has authored numerous audio and video teaching, various writings and books on current moral issues such as abortion and homosexuality, and promoting an Open Theist and Dispensational view of the Scriptures.

Note:

Rounds that end with an "a" are written by Bob Enyart (e.g. Round 1a).

Rounds that end with a "b" are written by Larry Bray (e.g. Round 1b).

Round #1a

Statement of Open Theism: Open Theism is the biblical belief that God is a Person, so He must therefore have a will, which includes freedom in His ability to think (His thoughts) and to decide (His will).

Question 1: Do you believe Dr. Bray that God was free to think and decide before the foundation of the world?

Q2: Do you think that God will eternally be free to think and decide?

Larry, if the answer to Q2 is YES, then the future is open. If the answer is NO, then utter immutability is false.

Open Theism asserts that God is eternally free, including being eternally, inexhaustibly creative.

Q3: Do you believe that God can create a new design, that is, one not decreed before the foundation of the world?

The above is based on the Bible's extensive teachings that God is living and personal, creative and free, and has a will, and that these attributes of His are unchanging.

Dr. Bray, since Calvinists, Arminians, and the Bible all frequently speak of God planning, fellowshiping, and decreeing things BEFORE the foundation of the world:

Q4: Will you give us Open Theists the same latitude as you take and as spoken in the Bible, to talk about God doing things before the foundation of the world? (I ask this because of relentless objections from Calvinists when we use the same phrases.)

Calvinists and Arminians readily admit that by their doctrine, man has no ability to change the future, because they claim it is exhaustively foreknown. They don't readily admit however, what their doctrine mandates, that God has lost His ability to have a new thought, write a new song, or design a new flower.

But how did theologians get to that place? Surely none of that is in the Bible. My debate with Dr. D. James Kennedy's professor of New Testament, Dr. Samuel Lamerson, documents [tiny.cc/u3j1u] that the teachings of Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvinism, show an ultimate commitment to the pagan Greek philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, as their chief hermeneutic. This includes the Greek's belief in fate and utter immutability. Not only were men stuck in fate, but so was Zeus; a fate which ancient philosophers like Plotinus sometimes called: "Providence." In getting rid of not only man's freedom, but God's freedom, they follow the Greeks in exalting philosophical immutability over the biblical attributes God being living, personal, relational, good, and loving. They limited Jehovah to being stuck in fate, just like Zeus.

On Sovereignty: God was God through eternity past, and so His ETERNAL attributes are not dependent upon the existence of man or of the cosmos. So Open Theists should not base their doctrine on man's freedom but on God's freedom. So too, Calvinists err by claiming that Sovereignty is God's chief eternal attribute. Sovereignty speaks of God's relationship to the creation. For that would mean that just as Dr. Bray is dependent upon God for his existence, so too God has been eternally dependent upon Dr. Bray for God's own existence. That is, if Calvinism were true, God could not be God apart from His being eternally sovereign over you, Dr. Bray. Calvinism makes man's future as dependent upon God as it makes God's eternal past dependent upon man for His eternal divinity.

Q5: Do you agree that sovereignty is not an eternal attribute of God because it would define the eternal God in terms of a cosmos that recently came into existence?

Hermeneutics: Larry, in our previous debate on Calvinism [tiny.cc/njz1w] I started the opening post with passages that many consider the heavy proof texts for exhaustive predestination. You and I look at the same verses, yet interpret them differently, based on our hermeneutics. The following shows how I interpret Scripture:

Seven Top Hermeneutics Prioritized

1. God: His existence, eternity, and entity (i.e., His godhead, Rom. 1:20)
2. His Story: the plot/storyline of the Bible (doctrines fit the story)
3. His Nature: His story shows that He is living, personal, relational, good, and loving (includes the two

hermeneutics below, JONAH & NOAH)

4. Christological: Christ-centered

5. Context prioritized: God's Nature; then His Story; then the covenant; the book; chapter; paragraph; sentence

6. Literalness: Scripture is literal but contains figures of speech

7. Historical/Grammatical: method emphasizes original languages and historical setting

8-16. Search KGOV.com for hermeneutics

For example: Hermeneutic 7. H/G: Arminians and Calvinists both use the historical/grammatical method and by it come to their opposite conclusions. But that method shines best when teaching those with a low view of Scripture, who claim that the Bible means whatever anyone wants it to mean, that God put actual meaning into the text through the words He used in the context of actual history.

2. STORY: God gave the Bible as a book of stories because unlike grammatical nuances the plot of a story survives translation into a thousand languages. So we interpret each verse to be consistent with the Bible's overall plot. When God repeatedly repents and UNDOES things THAT HE DID, that cannot be a figure of speech because these are ACTIONS, which form parts of a story. A storyline can survive even poor grammar and translation (e.g., see a foreign language film with no subtitles). That's why I wrote a book called The Plot [tiny.cc/lxwyp].

3. NATURE: God's nature is revealed through the Bible's story. The Flood shows how much He hates sin, and the cross how much He loves us. Noah saw God repent as did Jonah who was like an early Calvinist who God rebuked because he cared more that a prophecy would not fail than he did about those in the valley of decision. The Bible story includes God giving the Mosaic Law and creating man in His likeness and writing His law on our hearts in our conscience. From this we learn that God's goodness takes precedence over power. For righteousness is "the foundation of His throne" Ps 89:14. And love trumps omniscience, for without love "all knowledge" is "nothing" 1 Cor 13:2. And those around God's throne do not cry out "power, power, power," or "control, control, control," but as personhood leader Dr. Patrick Johnston points out, they cry "Holy, holy, holy," Rev. 4:8.

JONAH: Jehovah's Obvious Nativity Attributes Hermeneutic

The Bible's story shows in the Nativity that God the Son became a Man. Thus the chief attributes of God were all there in the Christ Child. He was living, personal, relational, good, and loving. Any mom can tell you of the blessings of her baby being living, personal, relational, and loving. And Mary learned further that her Son was absolute goodness, not sinning even as He grew. But neither the Babe nor the man Jesus exhibited any of the OMNIs and IMs. Immutability was disproved even in the Father for as the Lord grew, He "increased... in favor with God" and no rule of grammar says otherwise. Jesus, who is God, later disavowed omniscience. For "of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" Mk 13:32. So omniscience, a quantitative attribute (how much) cannot be an essential attribute of God, because then, Jesus would not have been God.

NOAH: Necessarily Obvious Attributes Hermeneutic

This resolves CONFLICTING interpretations by selecting the understanding that gives precedence to the biblical attributes of God as being living, personal, relational, good, and loving, over a CONTRARY interpretation derived from commitment to the philosophical attributes of omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, impassibility, and immutability. The Bible says that Jesus is the "exact representation" of God and the Gospels do not present Him as possessing any of the OMNIs or IMs but that He is living, personal, relational, good, and loving.

Q6: Do you agree that we must interpret Scripture in the context of the Bible's plot and God's nature?

Round #1b

I want to thank you all for having me in this debate. I pray that God would be brought much glory through our interaction.

I think that we do a disservice to God when we ask questions of how God "was" and of how God "will be" as this puts God in submission to time, which He is not. It is better to ask how God "is." And what God "is" is also what He "was" and what He "will be" because God does not change (Num 23:19)

So with that in mind I will answer your question with: God IS free to think and decide.

You said: Open Theism asserts that God is eternally free...

My reply: Balance of God's attributes is so very important here. Yes, God is free...but He is also omniscient. And we should take note that His freedom is not complete in the sense that He is not free to sin. His freedom, much like ours, is rooted in His nature rather than being part of His nature.

One of the errors of Open Theism is that it puts more priority on God's freedom than it does on the very nature of God....in fact, it takes part of His nature (omniscience) and sacrifices it at the altar of free choice.

You said: Q3: Do you believe that God can create a new design...

My reply: You are confusing what is changeable with what is unchangeable. God's creative process does see change, but God Himself does not. Scripture itself teaches us this regarding God's creative work (Gen 2:2)

God's creative work and His preserving work happen within time, but God's nature is above time. So when you look to God's work in time in a way that limits God's nature you are confusing the changeable with the unchangeable. God's omniscience, as being part of His very nature, is unchangeable and outside of time. God's creative work in time, not being part of His very nature, does change as it happens within time.

You say: Calvinists...don't readily admit...what their doctrine mandates, that God has lost His ability to have a new thought...

My reply: I think this is part of the heart of the matter. Open Theists are concerned that God is not limited, and that in itself is a motivation that I respect. The problem is that in trying so hard to have a God who is limitless in actions you, in fact, limit the very nature of God. So I pray that you see that many of those who come against Open Theism have the same concern, that God is not limited, it's just that our concern is leveled at God's nature while yours is leveled at His work.

You say: Calvinists err by claiming that Sovereignty is God's chief eternal attribute. Sovereignty speaks of God's relationship to the creation. For that would mean that just as Dr. Bray is dependent upon God for his existence, so too God has been eternally dependent upon Dr. Bray for God's own existence.

My reply: Calvinists don't make God's sovereignty His "chief eternal attribute." Since the rest of your thought is predicated on this statement, it makes the remainder of what you say here null and void.

Let me just say that God's sovereignty is not part of His nature, but rather the outworking of part of His nature upon creation. God's nature consists, in part, of His omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. Sovereignty is the outworking of God's nature upon creation.

You said: When God repeatedly repents and UNDOES things THAT HE DID, that cannot be a figure of speech because these are ACTIONS, which form parts of a story

My reply: That's only if you refuse to allow for certain linguistic tools that God uses to get us to know Him more intimately. Scripture shows us God in many ways and we must be careful to interpret the text within a framework that understands how God is revealing Himself.

For instance, when the Bible speaks of God having hands and arms (Deut 4:34) we need to understand this is anthropomorphism to get a proper concept of what God is trying to reveal about Himself. If we think He's trying to show us that He has body parts we miss the point...if we understand that He is revealing to us His power and control we understand the point.

In the same way when we read about God repenting or changing His mind we understand that to be an picture of how God's work in time is manifested to us. We don't see God's eternal decree, nor do we live our lives based on God's hidden will...rather we trust in God's revealed will found in Scripture and interact with events in time. I wish that I could interact with a specific Bible passage but you didn't present one.

This goes back to the issue I brought up earlier...you are confusing God's eternal nature with His working in time and space.

You said: ...we learn that God's goodness takes precedence over power... and love trumps omniscience

My reply: Much of what you say here is not really something to interact with, but I will say that God's goodness is not set against His power. As a matter of fact God's goodness would mean little if He didn't have the power to work His goodness.

Setting love against omniscience is also problematic. God's characteristics are not to be set against each other...God is one, and He is not so compartmentalized as to be able to have a bigger piece of one attribute than another. And to pull in 1 Cor 13:2 as if it somehow is an address to God's love and

knowledge is ludicrous. It's a rebuke to those in the Corinthian church, and is not meant to teach about God's nature as such.

You said: ...the chief attributes of God were all there in the Christ Child...neither the Babe nor the man Jesus exhibited any of the OMNIs and IMs. Immutability was disproved even in the Father for as the Lord grew, He "increased... in favor with God" and no rule of grammar says otherwise.

My reply: Jesus is both God and man, therefore it is not strange to find as a person He wouldn't manifest all of the 'omnis.' The God-nature in Jesus has all of the 'omnis' but the man-nature in Him does not. Your argument here fails simply because it fails to recognize the two natures within Christ and therefore presumes that God has qualities that are actually part of Christ's human nature.

You said: Q6: Do you agree that we must interpret Scripture in the context of the Bible's plot and God's nature?

My reply: I agree with the Historical-Grammatical approach of interpretation. We would be hard-pressed to interpret the Bible according to God's nature since it is in the Bible that we learn the more intimate details of His nature. But I do believe that the Scripture can't contradict itself and therefore we must interpret Scripture by Scripture.

Round 2a

I wanted to fill this post with verses about time in heaven and God being in time,
- or with my list of open theist verses [<http://tiny.cc/tx37b>]
- or with verses showing God changing tremendously [<http://tiny.cc/i1nh6>].
But you were so responsive Larry that instead I'm going to comment on your answers and repeat the few questions you skipped.

For Q3 you answered questions I didn't ask like "Does God change" and did He create in six days? So I hope you will answer now because what I asked was:

BEQ3: Can God create a new design, that is, a design not decreed before the foundation of the world?

Surely God can write a new song. Can you answer directly, if it's what you believe: "NO, God expended His creativity and cannot create a new design." Or as an Open Theist would: "YES of course God can create a new design. He's eternally, inexhaustibly creative."

I agree with what you wrote Dr. Bray, that "God's sovereignty is not part of His nature."

So I imagine you can answer Q5, even though you objected to a comment that preceded it, because this question can stand alone. You already agreed that sovereignty is not the "CHIEF eternal attribute" of God. For as you said, "sovereignty is... the outworking of part of His nature UPON CREATION." So now:

BEQ5: Do you agree that sovereignty is NOT AN ETERNAL ATTRIBUTE of God? (for it would define the eternal God in terms of a creation that recently came into existence)

Sovereignty is the primary popular defense that Calvinists give. Yet even though translated by Calvinists

(like Dr. Coppes who I once sparred with) the New King James only says "sovereignty" once and that's not about God but Saul.

Regarding Q4, we can infer you'd answer NO. For you objected even to me writing that: "God was free." Apparently Open Theists can't even use the word "was" about God. Is it only Calvinists, as in your seminary's statement of faith (God DID ordain, past tense), who can speak of God doing things in the past before the creation? Should you stop writing, "God HAS predestined" as you do, and just say God predestines? So we can't say WAS and you can't say HAS. Is that fair? Can you see how peculiar it is to debate a Calvinist? This might undermine the very core of Calvinism, but I guess to be consistent you should ask Calvinists to never say FOREknowledge, FOREordain, or PREdestine. They wouldn't want to put God in time.

1 Peter 1:20: Jesus love for us "WAS FOREknown before the foundation of the world." That's OK, no?

LB: we do a disservice to God when we ask questions of how God "was" and how God "will be" as this puts God in submission to time, which He is not. It is better to ask how God "is."

He's fine. Thanks for asking. :)

Larry, the Bible doesn't go by your rule but speaks of "Him who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:4).

So instead of objecting when we use the same words that Calvinists and the Bible use, will you now answer:

BEQ4: Will you give us Open Theists the same latitude as you take and as appears in the Bible to talk about God doing things before the creation?

Foreknowledge means to know beforehand, so:

BEQ7: Does your view of time mean that before the foundation of the world God could not have foreknowledge?

The Bible says He can. But to be consistent you'd have to answer "He cannot, for this puts God in time."

Larry it would be so helpful if you would answer directly, so I ask you again:

BEQ1: WAS God free to think and decide before the foundation of the world?

BEQ2: IS God forever free to think and decide?

And then a simple question that should not be worrisome:

BEQ8: Did God have the ability to not create?

BE: God is eternally free

LB: Yes, God is free... His freedom is not complete... He is not free to sin.

A stump is not free to sin. God is. Jesus is praiseworthy because HE WOULD NOT submit to temptation, not that HE COULD NOT. God is not good by a happenstance but by His fierce commitment to righteousness. The Son does not love the Father because He has no choice, but willingly, submitting to Him: "not My will, but Yours, be done" (Mat. 26:39).

LB: Open Theism... puts more priority on God's freedom than it does on the very nature of God. God is personal, which means that He has a will, which is the ability to decide, which must therefore be free.

LB: [OT] takes part of His nature (omniscience) and sacrifices it at the altar of [His] free choice.

AMEN! Yes, let's slay that dragon. "All knowledge" is "nothing" compared to "love." (Of course at least some knowledge is necessary to love, for you must know who you love and what love is: the commitment to the good of someone.)

BE: Calvinist doctrine mandates that God has lost His ability to have a new thought.

LB: I think this is part of the heart of the matter.

Yes.

LB: Open Theists are concerned that God is not limited.

Boy how easily the tables turn. Yes we defend God not being limited in the ways that Calvinism limits Him. But of course when He created beings like "powers, principalities and authorities" He thereby delegated authority. And moral beings may reject His love. Thus "they... limited the Holy One of Israel" (Ps. 78:41).

BE: When God repeatedly repents and UNDOES things THAT HE DID, that cannot be a figure of speech because these are ACTIONS, which form parts of a story.

LB: That's only if you refuse to allow for certain linguistic tools that God uses

What? Larry, an ACTION is not a linguistic tool. By definition actions CANNOT be figures of speech. Calvinists nullify hundreds of verses by saying that they are anthro this and anthro that, with trite and skin-deep pretense quoting verses about God's arm (which anthropomorphism means that God can reach us) and God's eyes (meaning He can see what is happening). But Calvinists are the world's leading experts in what the Bible doesn't mean. God says He repents and shows that He UNDOES what He previously DID (e.g., removing Saul as King, 1 Sam. 10:24; 13:13; 15:23-27, 35; 16:1; 2 Sam. 7:8, 15). A verse is not a figure of speech just because it contradicts your doctrine. If God-repented-that-He-made-Saul-King were a figure of speech as Calvinists claim, then they should be able to tell us what it means. For that is the purpose of figures. But to prop up their philosophical OMNIs and IMs, they claim that God "grieving" does not mean that He grieves; and our sin being a "burden" on God doesn't mean that; and God being "weary of repenting" does not mean that either.

Because Calvinists say that God being grieved by sin doesn't really mean that, they feel free to claim the vulgar Calvinist doctrine that God Himself decreed every filthy deed in the rape of a child, as you wrote,

"even of these kinds of terrible atrocities." And this for His pleasure as Calvin claimed. So at the expense of one of God's primary eternal attributes, His goodness, Calvinists prioritize a bunch of mathematical philosophical claims about HOW LITTLE change God can endure and HOW MUCH knowledge and power He has. But 30 times the Bible says that He is the "Living God." Don't reduce Him to such mathematical equations.

LB: God's goodness would mean little if He didn't have the power to work His goodness.

Goodness is the foundation of power (Ps. 89:14). Jesus gave evil men power over Him at the cross. Their power meant nothing. His goodness meant everything, far from little, for His innocent suffering could pay for the sins of the guilty.

LB: [God can't] have a bigger piece of one attribute than another.

Larry, your assertion is arbitrary, and so you could just as easily assert the opposite. God says that goodness is the foundation of His authority. God is exalted in humility. Strength is made perfect in weakness. Yet theologians describe the ultimate control freak who only shows partiality. Whereas God "shows no partiality," which refutes the very doctrine of election, which partiality God says is "sin" (Deut. 10:17; Jam. 2:9; Mal. 2:9; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11).

This debate will turn on the hermeneutics.

Round 2b

I would like to point out that we have certain rules in this debate. One of the rules is that we are limited in how much we can say in our posts. Bob Enyart has violated this rule by linking to outside text thereby expanding his post beyond the permitted limits. In fact, it brings his character count closer to 86,000 than the allowed 8,000.

Because of this blatant disregard for our rules of engagement, this will most likely be my last post in this debate.

You said: BEQ3: Can God create a new design, that is, a design not decreed before the foundation of the world?

My reply: God can create new things but because He is omniscient He does not think of new things. Since His decree is as exhaustive as His omniscience, there is no need for Him to change His decree. Therefore, NO - God doesn't create new designs that are outside of His decree any more than He makes a rock that He can't move.

You said: Surely God can write a new song. Can you answer directly, if it's what you believe: "NO, God expended His creativity and cannot create a new design." Or as an Open Theist would: "YES of course God can create a new design. He's eternally, inexhaustibly creative."

My reply: This again shows your lack of understanding the nuance between God's work and God's nature. God is able to create a new song in His work in time, but the new song would not have been eternally beyond Him but rather part of His eternal decree outside of time.

You said: BEQ5: Do you agree that sovereignty is NOT AN ETERNAL ATTRIBUTE of God?

My reply: Yes, I agree, rather it's an outworking of His eternal attributes upon creation.

You said: . Is it only Calvinists, as in your seminary's statement of faith (God DID ordain, past tense), who can speak of God doing things in the past before the creation? Should you stop writing, "God HAS predestined" as you do, and just say God predestines?

My reply: The context of the statements on our website is not the same as the context of our debate. Using past and future references for God is perfectly fine in certain contexts, but not in a context that would seek to limit God to time which is what you were doing in this debate.

You said: BEQ7: Does your view of time mean that before the foundation of the world God could not have foreknowledge?

The Bible says He can. But to be consistent you'd have to answer "He cannot, for this puts God in time."

My reply: Having foreknowledge does not put God under time, rather it shows God to be above time.

You said: BE: When God repeatedly repents and UNDOES things THAT HE DID, that cannot be a figure of speech because these are ACTIONS, which form parts of a story.

My reply: And God's arm and hand being used against Egypt is also an action, and yet God doesn't have arms and hands.

I will take these last few moments to simply point to Scripture:

Psa 139:4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

God is certainly immutable according to Scripture:

Mal 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not.

Jas 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Not only is He immutable in His essence, but also in His counsel:

Heb 6:17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

Round 3a

So far:

Q1: WAS God free to decide before creation?

Dr. Bray hasn't answered this (recall the WAS/IS thing) and not answering had NOTHING TO DO WITH

the Historical/Grammatical method. He didn't answer YES or NO because Calvinism is based on pagan utter immutability. Like a dozen major biblical truths, the Incarnation BREAKS immutability. How? God the Son was not always flesh; He changed in becoming flesh. So utter immutability is false. Greek thought gave rise to Zeus who was also stuck in an eternally settled future along with man. For a Calvinist to admit that God really could decide whether or not to create or not is fearful because if God really had that option, then the future was not always foreknown.

Q2: Will God be eternally free to think and decide?

Larry comes close to answering but he changes the question because he intuitively fears where they're headed. For Q3 Dr. Bray wrote, "[God] does not think of new things." LARRY! Then, has He ever? So Calvinism puts God in the same box that it puts people in. Even God can't have a new thought; can't do a new thing; but forever can think only what He's already thought. So Jesus cannot "INCREASE IN FAVOR WITH THE FATHER," not because of any grammar or historical matter (that's a deflection), but because of utter immutability. A Calvinist resists saying out loud his actual belief that God CANNOT think a new thought, preferring "God DOES NOT think new thoughts. But then could He ever? Either God was eternally static with NEVER a new thought (and stuck in fate like Zeus), or He made Himself static (which would crash the whole immutability thing). It's easy to document that Augustine got his utter immutability gibberish from pagan philosophers. But God isn't an inanimate object, like Elijah decried, or an impassible stone idol. Of course, if God decided to design one more flower for the New Earth, that would prove Open Theism and break Arminianism and Calvinism, for exhaustive foreknowledge would then be false. Think carefully and you'll see that by immutability and exhaustive foreknowledge God Himself WAS NEVER ABLE to DECIDE to create, or how to paint a butterfly, or anything, because it was all always settled. To Calvinists, God is where Zeus was.

Q3: CAN God create a new design?

Again you changed CAN to DOES. Why? You said, "NO – God doesn't create new designs." Calvinists often hesitate to say what they believe: like that God is the author of sin, and here, that HE CANNOT create a new design. (And if immutable, then HE NEVER COULD.) So Larry says, GOD DOES NOT. But the grammar doesn't help here either, and he has no proof text for this claim. The true answer is YES. The Bible says He is the Living God and a Person, so He has a will, which must be free, and so He's inexhaustibly creative. With no grammatical justification God's eternal freedom is sold out for the utter immutability that Augustine got from the pagan Greeks. And as he admitted in his "Confessions," when Scripture contradicted his worldly education he re-interpreted the Bible based on Greek philosophy. And presto: Fate.

LB: God is able to create a new song... but the new song would... have been... part of His eternal decree

Calvinists won't distinguish between design and implementation. Design is a mental act, building a physical act. Open Theists know that before creation God could have designed a flower to plant on the New Earth. So yes Larry, God could do something He formerly decreed, or sing a song He previously wrote. Agreed. But that's NOT what we're talking about. We don't ask about singing or planting, but writing and designing. It seems you fear answering this, so I'll say what Calvinism requires: NO, of course God can't write a new song; they're all written already.

Q4: Can Open Theists speak like the Bible does and you do, talking about God doing things before creation?

Larry's answer, which he put more verbosely, is: NO.

LB: "Using past and future references for God is perfectly fine [for us], but not [for you].

Double standard. WAS God free to decide to create or not, is a perfectly valid question. So still unanswered: Did God have the ability to not create? One who predicts the date of the rapture won't sell you his house for \$1,000. I know; I've tried. He wants you to agree with him, but struggles with it himself. Calvinists are like that. They know where questions of God's freedom lead. To have an eternally settled future, Larry may believe, NO, God was never free to decide not to create. But he obfuscates, like the predictor of the End Times who won't put his money where his mouth is, and take his claim to its conclusion.

Q5: sovereignty is NOT AN ETERNAL ATTRIBUTE of God

LB: Yes.

Agreement. Thank you for a direct answer. Now, because some will not be saved, the Bible seems to say two contrary things. God desires ALL to be saved, and God decrees ALL things. If one means ALL without exception, the other must mean SOME (as is common in language). Calvinism's true hermeneutic is this: Because of God's sovereignty, we interpret "DECREES ALL" as literal without exception, and "DESIRES ALL to be saved" as figurative with exceptions. But – little secret – sovereignty isn't an eternal attribute of God. And neither are the OMNIs and IMs. But He's Living, Personal, Relational, Good and Loving. The Calvinists' GRAMMATICAL hermeneutic can't show which ALL is without exception. So based on immutability and sovereignty, they say that God decreed every bit of filth and evil (or else immutability fails). However, we should interpret those verses by God's attributes, that is, by N.O.A.H. For God's goodness takes precedence over His power (Ps. 89:14).

The meaning of both verses must be constrained by context (by the story of the Bible AND the nature of God, not based on MATHEMATICS but on being relational and good). God's biblical attributes are affirmed by a thousand passages, whereas the few immutability verses teach that He is unchanging in faithfulness to punish evil and reward faith. Yet Calvinists subordinate God's biblical attributes to the mathematical, philosophical OMNIs and IMs. That's how Calvinists end up attributing child rape to the mind of God. (They make a meager attempt to justify Him with the absurd notion of secondary agents, that is, the rapist whose strings are pulled is also responsible; but when that rape was "foreordained," there was no man around to say how many minutes the rape would last. Calvin has undoubtedly repented in tears before God in heaven, for the "I" in TULIP is also Irresistible Filth.) Like Calvin, Larry claims that God is the designer and orchestrator of all things evil. Open Theism frees Christians from the superstition camouflaged in catechisms and creeds.

LB: Having foreknowledge does not put God under time...

Larry, because Calvinism is false, it can be strongly internally contradictory. And it is. If God isn't in time, then nothing can be planned before, known before, shared before, because if time didn't come into existence until creation, then God could not do anything BEFORE, not FOREordain, FOREknow, or PREdestine.

BE: When God... UNDOES things THAT HE DID, that cannot be a figure of speech because these are ACTIONS...

LB: God's arm and hand... used against Egypt is also an action

Of course God can ACT and the Bible describes that action using literal and figurative text. That's how language works. We're saying that WHEN GOD DOES ACT, the ACTION cannot be a figure of speech. True?

There are 5 passages that indicate that GOD DOES NOT CHANGE (at least in some respect, like being faithful).

500 hundred passages show HIM CHANGING (at least in some ways: the Son humbling Himself and becoming flesh; the Father pouring wrath on the Son; the Son becoming sin for us; the Holy Spirit justifying the Son).

Larry, if neither history nor grammar negate even one of the CHANGE verses, it seems that you would reject it anyway, and subordinate all 500 verses to philosophical utter immutability.

Round 3b

The reason I answered many of your questions in the way that I did rather than in the way you asked them is simply because they were fallacious questions.

You said: Like a dozen major biblical truths, the Incarnation BREAKS immutability. How? God the Son was not always flesh; He changed in becoming flesh. So utter immutability is false

My reply: You have a tenacious misunderstanding of the difference between God working in time and the eternal God whose essence is outside of time. Further you seem to continually misrepresent Jesus Christ as being only God rather than the truth, which is that He is both God and man. Pointing to human characteristics of Jesus and attributing them to God is improper. I would no more say that God changes than I would say that He hungers...though Christ does both.

You said: Dr. Bray wrote, "[God] does not think of new things." LARRY! Then, has He ever? So Calvinism puts God in the same box that it puts people in. Even God can't have a new thought; can't do a new thing; but forever can think only what He's already thought.

My reply: No, God has never had a new thought because God has always had complete and perfect thought. To suggest that I am limiting God because I attribute to Him unlimited knowledge is ridiculous. People do think new things, so I don't see why you are saying I put God in the same box as people...I've never said that people have complete knowledge.

Besides going over questions that have already been addressed, you've also misquoted me...

You posted: LB: "Using past and future references for God is perfectly fine [for us], but not [for you]."

My reply: This totally takes what I was saying out of context...which is interesting because my point was how important context is. I said that in some contexts it's appropriate to speak of God in reference to time, but not in other contexts. The hypocrisy that you accuse me of is quite simply you bearing false witness against me.

You said: WAS God free to decide to create or not, is a perfectly valid question.

My reply: it's not a valid question because it presupposes that God's freedom is tied to His ability to not create, which it isn't. It's like asking if God is free to sin...ridiculous. God's freedom is rooted in His nature. Because God's nature is holy He doesn't have an option to sin, but He's still free. Because God's nature is creative He doesn't have an option to not create, but He's still free.

Your whole discussion on the word "all" seems a bit silly to me and very pedantic. Let me just say that, as with the rest of Scripture, interpreting words according to their context is what the Calvinist does.

You said: There are 5 passages that indicate that GOD DOES NOT CHANGE...500 hundred passages show HIM CHANGING

My reply: And I have given you a perfectly good interpretation that the passages showing God changing are anthropomorphic. This is important because I don't slight the 5 (as you claim) passages for the 500, but rather believe all of the passages in the Bible together. You have yet to show an interpretation of the verses that show God's immutability that fits your interpretation of the passages that show God changing. I, however, have shown how both types of passages are interpreted without contradiction according to my view.

I have spent much time answering your positions and questions; I think it's only fair for me to ask you some questions in return:

Q1: Does God predestine us so that we "might" be saved or so that we "will" be saved?

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Rom 8:29-30)

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (Eph 1:4-5)

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (Eph 1:11)

Q2: Is God's counsel mutable or immutable?

Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, (Heb 6:17)

And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. (Act 5:38-39)

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (Act 2:23)

Q3: Did God wrestle with the question of whether or not to create? In other words, was there a diverse set of options that God chose from when He decided to create?

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (Gen 1:1)

Q4: If God knows more today than He knew yesterday, is He a more perfect God today than He was yesterday?

Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge? (Job 37:16)

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. (1Jn 3:20)

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (Isa 46:9-10)

Q5: Is God free to be omniscient?

Q6: Does God have the capacity to be omniscient?

Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite. (Psa 147:5)

Round 4a

Larry, thanks for a strong and responsive post! I'll use this foundation from Genesis to answer your questions in the next post. For this is the biblical foundation of Open Theism and it conflicts with Plato's ideas that you've been defending.

Genesis 1: God "moved upon the face of the waters." The Bible opens asserting the opposite of the pagan idea that He is utterly "immovable" as said by Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus, followed then by Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. The REMAINING STORY of the Bible shows that our love and prayers can move God, denied by Augustine not because all those passages are figures of speech but because Plato said God is immovable. God here declares that He created matter and space, light, and life. Gen. 1; Mk. 10:6; But not time.

Genesis 2: As a father enamored with his son, "the Lord God. brought [every creature] to Adam TO SEE what he would call them. And WHATEVER ADAM CALLED EACH. that was its name." There's no historical-grammatical reason to make all of this a figure of speech that means the EXACT OPPOSITE of the text. But by Plato, Calvinism says Adam had no true creativity; uttered only names decreed for him; and God ALREADY KNEW what he would call them. Some reason beyond grammar and history must explain why Calvinists make so much of Genesis to mean its opposite. And starting there they go on to claim that a thousand more verses mean their opposites. But God shows Himself eager to see the man made in His likeness using the genuine creativity that, if the future were settled, would be a ruse. Similarly, God really created: thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, and authorities, Col. 1:16; etc. not hoarding but delegating some power (including creativity), so that God retains NOT ALL BUT MUCH power.

Genesis 3; Isa. 14; Ezek. 28: Evil comes from the Fall of Man and Lucifer. Following pagan philosophy, Calvinists claim evil originates in God's mind (propped up with a few misused "proof texts"). Plato's creation account and Myth of Er about the cosmos contradict the Bible's account that Calvinists interpret by their "classical Christian education," i.e., by Greek philosophy, like Augustine. After more than 1,000 years the church finally dropped its commitment but to JUST ONE THIRD of the pagan Greek cosmology that Plato described, though Calvin fought to keep all of what Plato described:

- 1) a solar system with the earth in the center
- 2) revolving around *NECESSITY*, the goddess of inevitability and compulsion, the mother of the Fates (like Larry, to appease immutability)
- 3) with ALL in motion by the FATES (providence, foreordination, from "ordained" orbits to the horoscope).

By Plato's humanist philosophy and pagan Greek immutability, as in Larry's admission that God didn't "have an option to not create," the CREATION HAD TO BE HOW IT WAS: Necessity. Though Zeus was the father of the Fates, still, he himself was bound in fate. As Larry shows, if Calvinists think it necessary to prolong their belief in immutability, they're willing to deny God even the freedom to decide whether and how to create. E.g., Larry was eternally necessary for God to exist. Augustine believed Plato about Creation and then followed him on the origin of evil. In his book "Confessions" Augustine repeated that God is "unalterable and in no way changeable." Then, by pagan philosophy he and Larry reject the BIBLE'S STORY (it's all figures) that evil originated with the Fall of Man and Angels. But like the Calvinist who doesn't say out loud his deepest belief about sin, and when ignoring the Bible led him to wrestle over the origin of evil, Augustine wrote: "I saw that no explanation would do which would force me to believe the immutable God mutable." So Augustine would subordinate all doctrines including God's holiness to defend utter immutability. Presto: God originates all filth.

Genesis 5 & 6: "The Lord repented [of what He DID] that He had made man on the earth, and He was GRIEVED TO HIS HEART." Yet with NO Bible evidence, but following Plato, Calvin wrote that God is, "incapable of every feeling." Then God said [He UNDOID], "I will destroy man whom I have created from the earth. for I repent (Nacham) that I have made them." An ACTION cannot be a figure, as THIS REPENT ACTION is not. Noah's name (Noach) comes from the Hebrew for REPENT (Nacham Gen 5). The Bible says often that God repents, but not LIKE A MAN [from sin]. ABSOLUTELY NO GRAMMATICAL RULE can make God's reversing His own actions into figures. And every HISTORICAL METHOD shows the patriarchs believed that God repents. Yet Calvinism subordinates the LIVING (changing) God to Plato-style immutability.

Christophanies:

Genesis 11: God "CAME DOWN TO SEE. the tower" of Babel. Typically it's the Son who appears to man, and in the Old Testament He would *prefigure* the Incarnation. Larry, God the Son's "eternal essence" changed in that He's forever now the MAN Jesus Christ. His "human characteristics" didn't BECOME flesh, but the SON humbled, lowered, and emptied Himself of His QUANTITATIVE attributes of MUCH power and knowledge, but NOT of His biblical QUALITATIVE attributes of being Living, Personal, Relational, Good, and Loving. So when coming down He prefigured the Incarnation, temporarily divesting Himself of much power and knowledge.

Genesis 18: God "appeared to Abraham. 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great. I will go down now and SEE WHETHER they have done [such evil]. and if not, I will know.'" Prefiguring the Incarnation, God the Son briefly divested Himself: of knowledge (so He would go see for Himself) and of power (so "the LORD rained brimstone. on Sodom. from the LORD out of the heavens" (from the Father).

So too "the Lord God walking in the Garden" calling to Adam "Where are you?" prefigured the Incarnation. OT celebrates what Calvinist immutability resists, that for 33 years on Earth the Son really did divest Himself of power and knowledge, and yet remained divine. This is only possible because God's essential attributes are not quantitative but qualitative. So e.g., He didn't need omniscience to be God but He needed to retain the biblical attributes such as being Relational and Good.

Genesis 22: God called to Abraham: "FROM HEAVEN. 'Do not lay your hand on the lad. FOR NOW I KNOW that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son. from Me.'" NOW I know. No history or rule of grammar makes that figurative. Many Calvinists and Arminians don't even realize that their hermeneutic is not the historical/grammatical method but their commitment to Plato-style omniscience and immutability. NOW I know. God cannot DO that which is undoable (like duplicate Himself) nor GO where it is un-go-able (like to Krypton), nor KNOW that which is unknowable (like how many hairs are on the boogeyman's head). The future doesn't exist. Time travel is as irrational as square circles. None of the Bible's 343 miracle events shows God going back in time (as is a sci-fi obsession). God is not in an eternal now; Jesus is not still or forever suffering on the cross; and despite Dr. James Dobson's claims to us, we will not be in heaven while God sees us still on earth in our sin.

As the most influential theologian to Christians (excluding Plato), Augustine gloried in his commitment to pagan Greek philosophy. Encyc. Brit: "Augustine represents the most influential adaptation of the ancient Platonic tradition with Christian ideas." Plato wouldn't let God say, "NOW I know." So Augustine had to nullify many Scriptures, which problems "vanished away" for him when he "found that whatever truth I had read in the Platonists was said here. [in the Bible; especially] You who are always the same [utterly immutable]." And "in the Platonists, God and his Word are everywhere implied." At least Augustine "confessed" that he interpreted Scripture by Plato's philosophy. Calvinists today admit Augustine's influence, but deny that Platonic immutability is their true hermeneutic.

Round 4b

You spend quite a bit of effort trying to show me as following the philosophy of Plato and others, so I will just mention here for the reader that I have not quoted Plato, Calvin, or any other...I have only quoted Scripture as the basis for my beliefs.

Bob said: The Bible opens asserting the opposite of the pagan idea that He is utterly "immovable"

My reply: I will clarify this again, even though it has been done in previous posts already. God, in His essence, in His being, is immutable and above time. God does work and move in time. You continue to misrepresent this so I felt it important to touch on it here.

I am not much concerned with defending myself, you can think of me what you like...so with those couple of things out of the way I will move on to defend the God of the Bible.

God's decree is not set against man's free choices as you suppose with your example of Adam, rather God decrees both the ends and the means. Therefore God's decree was that Adam would make real choices as to the names of the animals. Far from conflicting with free choice, God's decree actually secures it.

Bob said: God shows Himself eager to see the man made in His likeness using the genuine creativity that, if the future were settled, would be a ruse

My reply: You have yet to show biblically that a settled future makes genuine creativity a ruse.

In regards to Col 1:16, God does delegate power, but that does not mean that He becomes powerless in those areas. God still retains power over those areas that He has delegated.

In regards to the freeness of God in creation...God freely created because He was compelled by nothing outside of Himself.

Bob said: None of the Bible's 343 miracle events shows God going back in time

My reply: 2Ki 20:11 So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the LORD, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz.

Rather than addressing my direct question to you, you went on somewhat of a tangent against Plato. Therefore, the remainder of my post I will simply repost the questions that you haven't addressed and add a few new ones.

Q1: Does God predestine us so that we "might" be saved or so that we "will" be saved? (Rom 8:29-30; Eph 1:4-5; Eph 1:11)

Q2B: How do you reconcile the following Scripture with your view that God's counsel is mutable?

Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, (Heb 6:17)

And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. (Act 5:38-39)

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: (Act 2:23)

A point about Q3: Since there is no biblical evidence that God chose between diverse options as to whether to create or not, the idea that He had such options is extra-biblical at best and unbiblical at worst.

We are not told that in the beginning "God chose between a few options" but rather that in the beginning "God created."

Q4: If God knows more today than He knew yesterday, is He a more perfect God today than He was yesterday? (Job 37:16; 1 Jn 3:20; Isa 46:9-10)

Q5: Is God free to be omniscient?

Q6: Does God have the capacity to be omniscient?

Q7: When Christ predicts that in the future Peter would deny Him, does that limit God's freedom or Peter's freedom? (Lk 22:34)

Q8: Based on the same passage, Was Christ's prediction only a possibility? And if so, if Peter did not deny Christ would Christ have then become a liar?

Q9: Since you don't believe the passages about God repenting are anthropomorphisms, but you do seem to believe the passages about God's arms and hands are...how do you judge when a passage is anthropomorphic?

Q10: Do you believe that Scripture reveals the very essence of God or do you believe it reveals God by analogy?

Q11: Do you believe that God created all things for a purpose? If so, can His purpose be thwarted?

Q12: If God begins a good work in someone is it possible for it to be frustrated?

Php 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Since your next post is also your last, I would really appreciate direct answers to these questions...with biblical support, of course.

Round 5a

Thank you James & Larry!

Q1: Does God predestine us so that we "might" be saved or so that we "will" be saved?

NEITHER. As with all such passages, Rom. 8:29-30; Eph. 1:4-5; etc., God predestines groups, that is, He predestines and knows that those who trust Him will be glorified. This is identical Larry to our last debate in which you didn't admit "that the purpose of God according to election" in Romans 9:11 had to do with calling two NATIONS rather than saving two individuals. For God HIMSELF interpreted HIS OWN statement quoted in Rom. 9:12: "it was said to [Rebecca of those in her womb], 'The older shall serve the younger.'" And He interpreted this: "the Lord said: 'TWO NATIONS are in your womb, TWO PEOPLES shall be separated from your body. And THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER.'" If a Calvinist won't admit what God explicitly says, that His election there was of two NATIONS (Israel and non-Israelites), there's little chance they will give a fair hearing to an Open Theist pointing out that other election passages speak of God's plan for PEOPLES and not His damning or saving of individuals by "partiality," which He hates.

Q2: Is God's counsel mutable or immutable? How do you reconcile the following Scripture (Heb. 6:17-18] Acts 5:38-39; 2:23) with your view that God's counsel is mutable?

Heb. 6: Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie.

It's impossible for God to lie to HIS OWN and REMAIN HOLY (Titus 1:2, Greek adjective, He is the un-lying God). However God approves of those who lie to evil men to save innocent life (Ex. 1:8-9; 15-21; Josh. 2:1-7; 1 Sam. 19:10-18) just as God Himself will deceive the wicked (Josh 8:2; etc). With IMMUTABILITY of counsel and OMNIPOTENCE, such prefixes are like the Greek words for ALL: they mean all WITHOUT exception or all WITH exception. The NKJV says ALL 5,676 times frequently meaning most, much, many, some, or few. As even in Heb. 6:16 "an oath for confirmation is. an end of ALL dispute." ALL there means MUCH. Search Scripture for ALL to learn. As with DESIRES ALL and DECREES ALL, it's not history or grammar but one's deeper hermeneutics that determine the interpretation as with or without exception. Calvinists don't acknowledge their chief hermeneutic. But this debate turns on true hermeneutics, prioritized, meaning that everyone should interpret Larry's proof texts for TULIP based on God's Nature (i.e., His biblical attributes) and on the Story of the Bible. So because of God's fierce commitment to righteousness His heirs can trust His counsel, not because He CAN'T lie but because He WON'T lie to His own, for He CANNOT and REMAIN HOLY.

Acts 2 & 5: If Adam fell, God had planned for redemption by the cross and had the ability to fulfill His plan. Many Calvinists debate as though apart from foreknowledge God could do nothing (circularly assuming the doctrine they claim to prove) even though mere creatures use our delegated power to accomplish much. (And if God delegates powers Larry, then He has less.)

Q3: Did God wrestle with the question of whether or not to create?

YES. How so? "Being in agony, He prayed more earnestly" Lk 22:44. For by God's love, if man sinned then "the precious blood of Christ" would be shed as "indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1). For the Father would have to pour out His wrath on the one He loved before creation (Jn 17:24). Jesus' suffering in Gethsemane was not an afterthought or a figure of speech, and unless you deny Him forethought, that was His struggle. So at creation the Son knew it could come to this: "'Father if it is Your will TAKE THIS CUP AWAY from Me; nevertheless not My will but Yours be done.'" Then an angel appeared. STRENGTHENING Him" (Lk 22:42-43; shows again that God the Son didn't divest Himself of LOVE but of deity-optional POWER.)

Q4: If God knows more today than He knew yesterday, is He a more perfect God today...? Job 37:16; 1 Jn 3:20; Is 46:9-10

YES. Dr. Bray do you realize that you are again arguing Plato's philosophy? For by his darkened mind he gave the classic argument for immutability that God can't change AT ALL because God must be perfect. So any change could only be "for the worse [thus.] it is impossible that God should ever be willing to change." But he forgot about acorns. And Eden's sky and perfect newborn babies. The Christ child was perfect, and changed enormously. Plato gives a thousand reasons for his claims, but not a word of defense for this one, yet Calvinists use his humanist argument to counteract the many claims of Scripture. For Jesus became "perfect through suffering" (Heb 2:10) for how else could He become the suffering servant (Isa. 53)? And because He was tempted, he is better able to help when we are tempted (Heb 2:18; 4:15). By Plato, Augustine couldn't tolerate this, but the Lord is the Living God, and He can handle it. (And see Ezek. 28:15.)

Q5 & Q6: Is God free to and have the capacity to be omniscient?

NO, not by your meaning of denying Him new thoughts. God knows all that is knowable that He wants to know. The future is not knowable other than for His own plans and what can be known as constrained by reality. The Son was not omniscient, not all-powerful, and neither He nor His Father were immutable (for He grew in His Father's favor).

Q7: When Christ predicts that in the future Peter would deny Him, does that limit God's freedom or Peter's freedom?

NO. Even Judas could have repented and Jesus wouldn't have been angry. And no Old Testament prophecy would have failed. If Peter had prayed and not denied Christ, Jesus wouldn't have been angry at him for spoiling a perfectly good prophecy. Though I have prophecy and omniscience but have not love, I am nothing. Dr. Bray, your question mimics Jonah's criticism of God's love. If Peter didn't deny Christ, Calvinists would just say that it was a conditional prophecy, or blame it on the human Jesus. Inconsistency is a trademark of error.

Q8 about Peter: see answer at Q7.

Q9: [you don't believe God repenting is anthropomorphic, but you do believe verses about God's arms are; how do you differentiate?]

An ACTION cannot be a figure of speech.

Q10: Do you believe that Scripture reveals the very essence of God or do you believe it reveals God by analogy?

Both. God's not an eagle. And I rejected what Dr. Lamerson of Knox Seminary said in our O.T. debate that "all, or almost all, of the language used by the Bible to refer to God is metaphor." For most biblical references to God are literal, for the Bible explicitly says that God is:

Living, Eternal, Creator, Mighty, Witness, Good, Exalted, Great, Loving, Jehovah, Gracious, Spirit, King, Righteous, True, Powerful, Wise, Blameless, Lord, Known, Just, Awesome, Merciful, Judge, Holy, and Savior!

Q11: Did God create all things for a purpose? Can His purpose be thwarted?

A) YES. B) NOT His purpose to save believers and punish rebels, but other purposes, YES. The "lawyers rejected the WILL of God for themselves," Luke 7:30 using the strongest Greek word for WILL. "They limited the Holy One of Israel" Ps. 78:41 Etc.

Q12: If God begins a good work in someone is it possible for it to be frustrated?

We probably have both frustrated God often. But NO, our salvation is not in doubt. Guilt and condemnation come from the law which is the strength of sin which we've been delivered from when God nailed it to the cross for us. So as that ministry of death passed away, we are now "sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption."

Larry, the OMNIs and IMs are quantitative, philosophical exaggerations. God's primary biblical attributes are that He is Living, Personal, Relational, Good and Loving. So take the Settled View proof texts and interpret them by the Bible's story and God's holiness and love, and a whole new future opens up.

Round 5b

Bob, thank you for taking the time to answer my questions, I truly appreciate it.

To see in Scripture that God's counsel is "immutable" and come to the conclusion that it's mutable because of a word study on "ALL" is playing much too loose with the text. It's much more honest to do a word study on the actual word in question – "ἀμεταθετον" – which simply means: never changing, unalterable.

God could not have wrestled with the choice of whether or not to create at Gethsemane because it was long after He already made the decision to create. The fact that God knew it would happen (which Open Theism denies) does not at all imply that He wrestled with making the choice.

I just love how you accuse me of arguing Platonic philosophy when I reference Scripture from Job 37:16; 1 Jn 3:20; Is 46:9-10.

You said: The future is not knowable other than for His own plans and what can be known as constrained by reality

My reply: This gets into the area of God and time. You and I may take this up separately in a couple of weeks. I just wanted to point out that I recognize this is one of those areas we have not fully discussed in this present debate. God willing, we will be able to discuss this particular relation of God to time at a later date.

You said: Even Judas could have repented

My reply: That would have made Christ a liar since at the Last Supper He clearly said that Judas would betray Him.

You've brought Jonah up a few times, so I'll address it here as I think it is a good point of discussion. At the Last Supper we have Christ telling us that Judas would (not might) betray Him. With Jonah, it was he who said Nineveh would perish in 40 days, not God.

You said: If Peter didn't deny Christ, Calvinists would just say that it was a conditional prophecy, or blame it on the human Jesus. Inconsistency is a trademark of error.

My reply: Since your accusation is patently false, so is the charge of inconsistency.

Regarding anthropomorphism you said: An ACTION cannot be a figure of speech.

My reply: You have nothing to base this on except your bare assertion.

I am glad that you admit your belief that some of God's purposes can be thwarted, though the Scripture you reference speaks of human actions rather than God's purpose.

I'm glad to hear you say: "our salvation is not in doubt" as I was unaware of where you, or other open theists, stood on that question.

You said: the OMNIs and IMs are quantitative, philosophical exaggerations. God's primary biblical attributes are that He is Living, Personal, Relational, Good and Loving

My reply: It seems as though you are denying OMNI and IM outright, but then claiming it for those attributes you prefer to see in God. I'm not sure if you believe God is immutably living, personal, etc....but it seems that's what you're saying.

I'll finish up with Scripture as I would rather end with God's words than my own:

O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. (Jer 18:6)

A man's heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps. (Pro 16:9)

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. (Pro 21:1)

And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? (Exo 4:11)

But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. (Gen 50:20)

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan 4:35)

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (Isa 46:10)

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: (Heb 6:17)

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Rom 8:28)

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. (Psa 90:2)

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. (1Jn 3:20)

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (Eph 1:11)