

5

MODELS OF DIVINE KNOWLEDGE

The notion that God knows all things is well established in the Judeo-Christian scripture. The scriptures are replete with affirmations of God's intimate knowledge of our lives and predictions of future events. That God is omniscient is perhaps the least controversial assertion about God's properties among both ancient and modern philosophers, at least those who accept God as a personal agent in some sense. Understood in its most basic form, omniscience is the belief that God knows all things that can be known. The consensus on this basic affirmation ends with this assertion; there has been a great deal of disagreement over what can be known. There are at least four distinctive notions of omniscience in historical Christian thought and each of them finds some support both in the Judeo-Christian scripture in general and the Mormon scriptures in particular. I will refer to models of divine knowledge in this discussion. A model of knowledge is an explanation of *how* God knows what he does and the scope of his knowledge. The question I want to explore here is how God knows what he knows and, more particularly, how God knows what has not yet happened.

The notion that God knows all things is relatively easy to formulate: For all x , if x then God knows that x . The problems with God's omniscience arise primarily from the assertion that God knows future events, including free choices that have not yet been made. God can know the truth of logically necessary truths because they must be true in all possible worlds. God can also know which truths are logically possible and impossible simply by grasping the nature of logic.