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DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE AND THE MORMON CONCEPT OF FREE AGENCY

In the previous chapter I presented an argument showing that divine foreknowledge and free will are incompatible. That is, Argument B purports to show that a person cannot be significantly free if God exists and has infallible foreknowledge, and God cannot have foreknowledge if persons are genuinely free.

In this chapter I assess the arguments of those who reject the argument for incompatibility by rejecting the notion of free will upon which the argument is premised (contained in premise B₈). Mormons have usually referred to the notion of free will at issue as “free agency,” the term used in the Book of Mormon (2 Nephi 2) to indicate the ability to choose either good or evil, both of which are genuinely open to the agent in the moment of free decision with respect to morally significant choices.

Before the seventies, the debate over free will usually divided into two camps: Those who adopted a view compatible with causal determinism and those who adopted a view of free will incompatible with causal determinism. Both camps agreed that the *ability to do otherwise* is essential to free will. However, those who adopted compatibilism of free action and causal determinism usually adopted a conditional analysis of ability to do otherwise. I could do otherwise *if I so desired*. Given causal determinism, however, I cannot actually do otherwise unless causal circumstances that obtain in the moment of free decision were different than they actually are.