

## Open Theism in Confinement: A Conversation between Open and Confined Views of God

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**Abstract :** Anakainosis-desmios is the experience of spiritual renewal during incarceration. "Anakainosis" is a Greek word for "renovation or renewal" that has taken on profound meaning in Christocentric theology where it is defined as the phenomenon of spiritual renewal or a change of heart that is achieved by God's power. "Desmios" is another Greek word found in the Bible which stands for "one who is bound or a prisoner. Anakainosis-desmios occurs when a person, while residing in an environment of surveillance and coercion, has his consciousness renewed in such a way that he generates unexpected emancipatory and hospitable attitudes. They expressed an awareness of the prison environment and a willingness to engage that environment through their transformed relationships with time, space, matter, and people. By the end of the 20th century, Open Theism, gained the attention of many American evangelicals and theologians. Open Theism was born out of the concerns people had about those scriptures which demonstrate a dynamic God who has unparalleled wisdom instead of omniscience; liberating power instead of omnipotence; and abiding faithfulness instead of immutability—all of these attributes being aspects of God's love for humanity. Scriptural exegesis is one of the primary factors that informed the creation of the open view of God and many who hold this view claim that the divine attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and immutability are not necessarily Scriptural but rather philosophical attempts to define the nature of God. Scriptures that do not support such divine attributes have been a source of distress for many. Some would say that open theists have created lenses that enable a Bible student to gain comfort from those scriptures which seem to show God demonstrating repentance, disappointment and a readiness to learn. This paper will bring Open Theism into conversation with anakainosis-desmios. For open theists the reading of Scripture is an important part of the foundation of their perspectives. Open theists focus on certain Scriptures which demonstrate God showing repentance, disappointment and a readiness to learn. This focus led to their questioning of the systematic theologies that have been created and the biblical hermeneutics that have been used historically as lenses for interpreting such Scriptures. The perspective of anakainosis-desmios is also significantly influenced by the reading of Scripture. Spiritual renewal while incarcerated can occur largely through the religious practice of Bible study. Studying Scriptures during incarceration has supported many people who are seeking to develop new renderings of reality that empower them to flourish in some way despite the hostile environment of prisons. A conversation between the two points of view on the God of the Bible will lead to an expansion of both and to a deepening of a person's experience of Scripture Study.

**Keywords :** open theism, anakainosis-desmios, religion in prison, open theology, practical theology, Bible, scripture, openness of God, incarceration, prison

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