

A Partially Changing God: In Defense of Free Will and Foreknowledge

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On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unacknowledged aid on this paper.

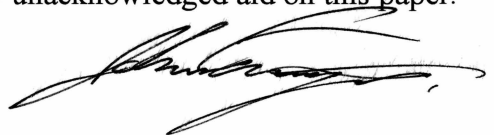


TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction

II. Classical Attempts at Solutions

A. Thomas Aquinas

B. William of Ockham

C. Luis de Molina

III. Definitions and Attributes

IV. A Different View

Part I: Beyond Augustine

A. Omniscience Guarantees Freedom

B. Non-causal Foreknowledge

C. Criticisms

Part II: A Self-limiting God

A. The Kabbalah

B. God the Risktaker (sort of)

C. My Own Point of Departure

D. Criticisms

Part III: A Partially Changing God

A. Socinianism and Hartshorne

B. My Own View

C. Criticisms

V. Conclusion

A Partially Changing God: In Defense of Free Will and Foreknowledge

INTRODUCTION:

The classical problem of reconciling God's having knowledge of all future events with the notion that human beings have free will to choose what they will do in a given circumstance continues to provide fuel for philosophical debates. The major concern rests in the idea that if God has knowledge of our future actions then it must be the case that we actually do those actions, and consequently it is not possible for us not to do those actions. Thus, unless God's knowledge is imperfect, these actions are necessary. But if our choices are necessary, then they cannot be contingent or even really free. As Alvin Plantinga explains, "if God is omniscient, then for any person and any action he performs, God knew in advance that he'd perform that action. . . [therefore] no one ever performs any free actions" (Plantinga 66). So how could we have free will if God already knows what we are bound to choose? Augustine describes the problem in this manner: If God foreknows what I will *will*, then it seems that I cannot really will it because it is necessary. Though some might argue that no real progress has been made in this area since Aquinas, others continue to refine the old theories as well as develop new ones.

In this thesis I will begin with a libertarian view of human free will, one in which we are able to be active agents in freely choosing our own actions. At the same time, I will assume that there is a God, and that He is omnipotent, omniscient, and benevolent. This God, I will assume, created the world as well as human beings and all creatures that live in it, and continues to interact with His creations. To what degree, then, can He also be omniscient without limiting our freedom? That is the question I wish to explore. Even if one does not believe in God, or

thinks He does not have knowledge of future human actions, or even believes that human beings do not have free will, this problem is at least interesting conceptually. As long as it is conceivable that there is an omniscient Divine Being, then exploration of the consequences of such a notion on human freedom is important. The goal of this paper is to allow for a God that knows not only what we will choose to do, but also how and when we will freely choose to do it.

After dismissing three classical attempts at solutions to the problem by Aquinas, Ockham, and Molina, I will offer a different approach. My ideas are based, first of all, upon Augustine's argument that knowledge does not entail necessity, but in fact guarantees freedom if what God foresees is a free choice. Secondly, I will take the view that God restrains Himself within time in order to give human beings the gift of freedom. Lastly, I will reconstruct a form of process theism that allows for God to change in time yet remain eternally omniscient. Finally, I will conclude this paper with a discussion of where the line must be drawn beyond which we admit that we simply cannot understand every aspect of God.

CLASSICAL ATTEMPTS AT SOLUTIONS:

I. Thomas Aquinas:

There are three common approaches to this problem which I would like to outline so that I can refer to them when presenting my own ideas. None of these traditional responses, I think, adequately solves the problem of human freedom and Divine foreknowledge. The first is Aquinas' view of Divine Timelessness, in which God exists outside of time. God "lives" in eternity, which overlaps all of time and enables Him to see everything at once. As Anthony Kenny puts it, "the relation between God's knowledge and any event in time is always one of

simultaneity” (Kenny 126). Thus, God sees the future as the present, but free will is possible because the event is only necessary for us when it actually occurs for us. In other words, for human beings the event is not yet necessary, although God sees it above time as certain.

William Hasker describes this view by saying, “What God knows *is* necessary, simply and absolutely necessary, *as it is known by God*; for it is known by God *as present*, and *everything* that is present is necessary” (Hasker 10). By the present being necessary, Hasker means that if it is already occurring, then there is no way it could also *not* presently occur.

Kenny offers a summary of Aquinas’ argument:

Hence, we can admit that what is known to God is a necessary truth; for as known by God it is no longer future but present. But this necessity does not destroy contingency: for the fact that an event is necessary when it happens does not mean that it was predetermined by its causes. (Kenny 126-7)

Aquinas illustrates his solution by comparing God with an onlooker from the top of a hill. A person walking down a street cannot see what people are doing down the road from him, but the man on the hilltop can at the same time see all of the people this walker will pass (assuming they continue to walk as they are). In the same way, God knows all future events, but this knowledge does not make them necessary or cause them to happen-- the events simply lie open to His knowledge (127).

The main problem with this theory is that God cannot ever act in time, because He is always outside of time. So how could we ever interact with Him at all? If God does not know anything about worldly time because He must remain outside of it, then how could He act in our world? He would have to be acting without understanding the consequences (in time) His actions would have on us, leaving some events outside the arena of His knowledge. Several

philosophers have argued that this idea of timelessness not only has no Biblical grounding, but makes any notion of God acting in the world problematic. Most people who believe in God, myself included, also believe that they can pray to Him, and that He can act within time and space to answer their prayers. Besides the act of sending Jesus as God-man, I would argue that God has interacted within the world in many other ways both Biblically and in my personal life. What use is there in asking for God's help or attributing something to Him if He can only watch and not interact? And would an omnipotent Creator really not be able to enter our temporal world and act in it if He desired? As Hasker puts it, "It is not because he is outside time-- eternal, immutable, impassive-- that we are to worship and obey God. It is because of what he can and does bring about within time that we mortals are to render him praise and obedience" (Hasker 185). Aquinas' theory simply contradicts the widely held view that God *does* act in time.

Aquinas might respond by asking, "If God's knowledge is eternal yet He can also act in time, then how is His knowledge related to His actions?" As I will argue later (Part II of "A Different View"), I think God can restrain Himself from acting on His knowledge. It is dangerous to place God within temporal constraints by saying that He knows and *then* (i.e., later) can act or not act on this knowledge. I do contend, however, that God's knowledge and His actions are distinct. How they are actually related *within Him* is something our minds cannot understand (see "Conclusion"). Aquinas might also argue that the fact that God is watching from outside of time does not necessarily mean that He cannot interject in it. If He can see all of time at once, then why could He not pinpoint a certain event when it becomes *our* present? In "pinpointing" an event, however, God would have to be placing Himself within

time. There simply is no way for God to be eternally outside of time and also act within time.

Additionally, if God is perfect and He is always outside of time, then humans are living a useless life in a nonexistent domain. If God is omnificent (Creator of everything), then how could He create something that only exists without His presence, like time? God can allow freedom *within* His presence, but I do not see how He could create temporality if it does not also exist for Him. In this illusory “time,” we would think we were free only because we were ignorant of the future. However, if God does not exist in time, then can time really exist at all? Is time merely a way we misinterpret the timelessness that God not only exists in, but is *bound* to exist in, in such a way that He cannot have actions in time? Peter Geach offers another potent argument: “To say that God sees future events as they are in themselves, in their presentness, and not *as* future, is to ascribe to God either misperception or a patently self-contradictory feat” (Geach 57). In other words, if God sees the world as unchanging, then either it changes and He is not omniscient, or it does not change and we are under a delusion. In the latter case, God cannot act in history because there really is no history. Thus, as Kenny puts it, with Aquinas’ view God does not really know contingent events *qua* future, so He really does not have “foreknowledge” as such (Kenny 127). Nothing that is eternal can be prior to anything else that is eternal, so God would not *foreknow* anything.

Indeed, referring to God’s future knowledge as present knowledge is a grossly inadequate way to try to bring a Divine attribute down to the level of a simple humanly knowable event. Thus, “St. Thomas’ solution then, is not so much a defence as a denial of God’s foreknowledge. . . it forces us to deny not only God’s foreknowledge, but also God’s omniscience” (Kenny 128). If He knows the future *as* the present, then He knows it falsely. Referring to A.N. Prior, Kenny

illustrates this last point by saying that a person subscribing to this view would have to say that God knows nothing *now*, nothing *yesterday*, and nothing *tomorrow*. Instead, His knowledge can have no temporal qualifications whatsoever. If we follow Aquinas, then we are left saying that God is not able to put his knowledge into time frames: as far as He knows, at the same time I am writing this paper Caesar is being killed by Brutus.

II. William of Ockham:

The second approach I would like to avoid is that of making awkward distinctions between types of necessity, as William of Ockham did by discussing temporal or “accidental” necessity. Ockham rejected Divine Timelessness, but “distinguished a special sort of necessity that pertains to the past, called by him necessity *per accidens*, ‘accidental necessity’” (Hasker 12-13). According to Ockham, a true proposition about the present will yield a true proposition about the past as well. For example, if it is true now that I am typing, tomorrow it will be true that I was typing. However, since this type of necessity does not apply to future events, God’s past knowledge of future events is not necessary in the same way as His past knowledge of present events. In other words, God’s foreknowledge is not accidentally necessary, because His knowledge of the future is not as “pure” as His knowledge of the present or past since it still depends on the future to make it true. Other philosophers have distinguished a contingent truth from a necessary truth, or hard facts from soft facts. Most of these new terms try to distinguish the way in which an event in the past is necessary and the way in which an event God knows about the future is necessary. Thus, by inserting some humanly-contrived distinctions, free will is “saved.”

The main problem with Ockhamist and similar approaches is that God does not really

have “foreknowledge” as it is defined by most other theories. Instead of *knowing* what we will freely choose to do, He seems only to be a really good predictor. By this theory, also, it seems that God loses any control over the future, because He is constrained in time just as much as humans. Consequently, this solution has the opposite problem of Aquinas’: rather than not being able to act in time, God is now *forced* to act in time and loses His eternity to a degree. The God of Ockhamists is not really omniscient, but instead loses all control over and knowledge about His creations. Unlike some theories (like the one I will later argue for), God does not restrain Himself from knowing, but actually cannot know the future in the same way as He knows everything else. There is also something suspect in trying to subdivide words like “the future” and “necessity” and then applying these new meanings to God. These attempts reflect efforts to bring God’s attributes down to the level of human beings, to misinterpret them instead of recognizing in what ways God is essentially different from His creations.

III. Luis de Molina

Lastly, I wish to avoid arguing for any variation of Molina’s idea of “middle knowledge.” This theory holds that God has knowledge in between knowing what can possibly occur and what we will choose to do. He also knows for each possible creature that *could* exist, what free choice that creature would make in any possible situation. Thus, God knows before He even decides to do anything not only what we will choose to do, but what anyone might ever have chosen to do. Molina defines God’s “natural knowledge” in this way: “He knew all the things to which the divine power extended either immediately or by the mediation of secondary causes, including not only the natures of individuals and the necessary states of affairs composed of them but also the contingent states of affairs” (Molina 168). Additionally, God has “free

knowledge,” by which “*after* the free act of His will, God knew *absolutely and determinately, without any condition or hypothesis*, which ones from among all the contingent states of affairs were *in fact* going to obtain and, likewise, which ones were not going to obtain” (168). The third knowledge, middle knowledge, exists because God comprehends each free will, and “He saw in His own essence what each such will would do with its innate freedom were it to be placed in this or in that or, indeed, in infinitely many orders of things-- even though it would really be able, if it so willed, to do the opposite” (168). Middle knowledge, as Alfred Freddoso describes, is God’s prevolitional knowledge of conditional future contingents (47).

I do not think I completely understand this theory, but I do not see why God would have knowledge of nonexistent possibilities, or how that would be of any benefit to Him (with respect to His foreknowledge and goodness) if He also knows what we actually will choose to do. A Molinist might ask, “But would it not be a defect of God not to know possibilities?” I would answer that I think that God’s knowledge is never merely possible (or split between the possible and actual), because what God knows will always actually happen. Molina argues that God knows what will happen as well as possibilities that will not happen, but I do not think His knowledge is any more perfect if He knows about such nonexistent possibilities than if He simply knows what is going to happen. Why would He need this other kind of knowledge? Of course, it is impossible for us to completely understand what it is like to be omniscient. Nevertheless, if God does know everything actual, He would have no need to “think” (although God probably does not “think” in the same way as fallible humans) about other possibilities. In other words, possibilities only exist for non-perfect and temporal beings like us. God would have no reason to consider what is only possible, and any argument saying that God must know

possibilities before He knows actualities is placing God within the constraints of time. Once again, it seems that a philosopher has invented some new aspect of God in an effort to make Him more intelligible to human beings.

Additionally, if God is eternal, then how can He have any knowledge *before* any other type of knowledge? Freddoso states that “God has no more control over the states of affairs He knows through His middle knowledge than He does over the states of affairs He knows through His natural knowledge” (47). Is this an omnipotent God? If God does have some sort of prevolitional knowledge, that seems to imply that He is constrained by time as we are: only *after* His middle knowledge can He know what actually happens. Is there a temporal sequence to how God obtains knowledge? What type of God is He in this “prevolitional” knowledge stage? A “young” God who is not omniscient? I do not think Molina wants to argue for that! Lastly, many philosophers question whether Molina’s theory really implies determinism, in which we are not actually free (Hasker 17). As Robert Adams says, “Molina seems to want to say that what free creatures would do under various possible conditions is not there, objectively, to be known, but that God’s mind is so perfect that He knows it anyway” (Adams 111). Once again, this theory seems to make God’s eternity impossible by inventing a way to avoid the problem at hand.

DEFINITIONS AND ATTRIBUTES:

Before I begin my argument, I want to define human free will as I will use it, assuming that we do in fact have this freedom. Once again, even those who disagree with this assumption can hopefully find some conceptual enjoyment in the arguments that follow. I embrace what is

commonly called the libertarian view of free will, and assume that it is a quality that is unique to human beings as the attribute that sets us apart from other animals and the rest of the determined world. A.A. Sappington explains the libertarian view:

Human choices are not determined by external factors; the cause of a choice is held to be the person who makes it. People must be viewed as active agents. It is true that people are not free to implement all of their choices; they are faced with external constraints that serve as barriers and with personal constraints such as lack of ability. Nevertheless, in any situation, people are always free to make choices and the choices themselves are not determined by any factor outside the individual. (Sappington 20)

We are active agents in making our own choices, which are ultimately caused only by us. I also like William of Ockham's definition: "Freedom is 'that power whereby I can do diverse things indifferently and contingently, such that I can cause, or not cause, the same effect, when all conditions other than this power are the same'" (Hasker 14).

I would now like to list the attributes which I will assume that God possesses, generally based on my own intuitions of the qualities that God *must* have. God is omnipotent, omniscient, eternal, benevolent, and the Creator of everything else that exists (omnificent). As I will discuss later, I will *not* argue that God is in all respects immutable, but will qualify His unchangeableness. The question will be how all-knowing He can be given my view of free will. Along with Antony Flew, I would say that the image of God as the Great Father is rather inappropriate, because a human father only has limited knowledge and powers over his son. With God, however, "there can be no question of ignorance or of inability to do anything about it" (Flew 167). I posit that God *can* control and know every human action, but whether He actually *does* so or not is a different question. As I will later argue, this view makes some forms

of process theology impossible, but leaves room for a certain form of process theology.

By “omnipotent” I mean that God has infinite and unlimited power to do anything at all (not only what is possible to human beings), even to know future contingent acts. By “omniscient” I mean that God *really* does know everything about the past, present, and future, and I will not try to make any awkward distinctions between different types or levels of knowing. God does not have just a limited omniscience, in which He only knows what probably will happen; He is not just a good predictor with a lot of background knowledge. Rather, He knows everything that will happen, as well as how and when it will occur. I like Nelson Pike’s summary of Boethius’ view of God’s foreknowledge: “God does not *predict* the future on the basis of his knowledge of presently existing circumstances and causal laws. . . [His foreknowledge] is the result of a ‘vision’ involving nothing in the way of an inference or calculation” (Pike 64-65). Of course, human comparisons are ultimately inappropriate. Nevertheless, I agree that God’s foreknowledge is not the result of calculations or predictions, but is more like that of a crystal-ball gazer who simply “sees” the future.

Some philosophers argue that human beings, as not omniscient, cannot even think about omniscience at all. I agree to a point, but I think that if God acts in time then we can at least understand that part of Him. With this understanding, we can also recognize that there must be other qualities of God beyond our comprehension. In other words, we can at least try to reconcile the *idea* of God being omniscient with our being free in the temporal world. The view that human beings possess libertarian free will and that God also has comprehensive knowledge of all future events is sometimes referred to as the theory of “simple foreknowledge.” As Peter Geach emphasizes, we are not omniscient and cannot completely understand this quality of God,

so the best approach is to stick to a simple idea of omniscience: “God knows that p if and only if p . This holds *whatever* proposition ‘ p ’ represents” (Geach x).

Naturally, I will assume that God is perfectly good as well, because perfection to me implies benevolence and justness. Finally, I will embrace the doctrine of Dual Transcendence, the idea that God differs from human beings not because we are finite and He is infinite, but because He is both infinite and finite at the same time. In both respects He is still the unique and perfect God. Although this stance seems to involve a contradiction, it actually pinpoints a limit for the degree to which human beings can understand God. As Charles Hartshorne describes, only this idea makes possible the fact that God is infinitely good and powerful, yet can interact with us mortals in time and space. He states:

God contrasts with creatures, not as the merely absolute contrasts with the relative, but as the absolute-and-relative in uniquely excellent ways contrasts with the creatures as neither relative nor absolute, except in senses in which they are surpassable by others. . . . God is similarly both eternal and temporal in all-surpassing ways. (Hartshorne, *Omnipotence* 44)

If God could not act in time, then all prayer or hope for divine intervention would be useless, and we would really only be worshiping an empty idea that does not exist in our world. Later, in Part III of “A Different View,” I will expand the theory of Dual Transcendence to aid in my defense of Divine foreknowledge.

Finally, I would like to define the general idea behind most of the numerous theories of process theology, one form of which I will use in my arguments in Part III. The original theory of process theology, based upon A.N. Whitehead’s philosophy, states simply that God knows all possible worlds because He is eternal, but He does not know the actual future world because it

has not happened yet. Thus, God *changes* in reaction to our free choices: God is in process. Whitehead's conclusion is that Divine foreknowledge must be limited if we are really free, and also that God does not have absolute power over the free creatures He created. Instead, He only has the power to "persuade" us to see and follow His goals, constantly changing His methods of persuasion depending on how we respond to His actions. I disagree with the idea that God does not actually have power over us or foreknowledge. In my arguments, however, I will use a form of this contemporary view of God that is based on Socinianism (a theological movement of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) as Charles Hartshorne construes it.

A DIFFERENT VIEW:

Part I: Beyond Augustine:

A. Omniscience Guarantees Freedom:

In addressing the view I would like to set forth, I will begin by saying that I have not found one author with whom I completely agree, but several from whom I wish to draw particular ideas. The starting point of my thoughts was, appropriately, St. Augustine. He begins his discussion of this problem in *On Free Choice of the Will* by addressing people who argue that if God foreknows what I will *will*, then I am not going to actually will it because it is absolutely necessary (and thus involves no choice on my part). As the argument goes, an event cannot happen otherwise than as God foreknows it (if He has perfect foreknowledge), so the event becomes necessary. A perfect example of such a stance comes from Wittgenstein as cited by Anscombe, "The freedom of the will consists in the fact that future actions cannot be known" (Anscombe 54). But Augustine turns this logical argument against itself by asking the question

in a different way. The question is usually asked wrongly, he says in a sort of *ad hominem*, because we weakly seek to find an excuse for our sins instead of taking responsibility for them. Augustine responds: "Strange foolishness! How could it be that nothing happens otherwise than as God foreknew, if He foreknows that something is going to be willed when nothing is going to be willed?" (Augustine 92). In other words, if God's foreknowledge is of a free choice, then the will that makes that choice must actually be free. God foresees human wills, and these wills are actually going to be free if God has foreknowledge of them being free (as opposed to foreknowledge of their choices being necessary and unfree).

A fairly simple idea, but the implications are enormous. First of all, if God foreknows that we will *will* something, then His foreknowledge would be false if we did not end up actually willing it. Once God foreknew that we would make a free choice, then either we will make a free choice, even though He already knows what it is, or God is not perfect (and thus not God). God has foreknowledge not only of our will but also of our own power over our will. Thus, He knows whether the will is free or not by knowing whether we have power over our will. One might argue that an unfree will, or one over which we do not have power, is not really a will, and I would agree. The point, however, is that if God sees some events as caused by free wills, then those free wills must actually exist and must actually be free. As a result, He does not just know about our future actions, but knows that we will freely choose (use our will) to do at least some of them.

This freedom God foresees is not illusory or simply a human misunderstanding, because He Himself sees our wills and the choices they make as really free. Our wills are free because we actually have power to choose what they will *will*. In fact, our free wills are themselves part

of the order of causes which God foresees. Just as He knows that a dropped ball will fall, He knows that we will freely choose to drop it. But, again, we must actually freely choose to drop the ball if God foresaw that we would freely choose to do so. I do *not* want to try to make a distinction between our freely choosing to drop the ball and our freely choosing whether to drop the ball or not (as some philosophers do), because I believe these actions are one in the same. I could choose not to drop the ball, but if I choose to drop it then I will drop it (barring any external constraint). Any attempt to separate choosing to do something and choosing whether to do something approaches another attempt to make an awkward distinction between types of freedom that I wish to avoid (see my arguments against Ockham). Pike describes Augustine's argument nicely: "The point seems to be that God knows in advance that a given person is going to *choose* to perform a certain action at some specific time in the future. . . . What God knows at T1 is that Jones *freely* does A at T2" (Pike 77).

Anselm of Canterbury embraced these Augustinian ideas as I have. He agrees that God not only foreknows what each individual human being will do in the future, but also *how* he or she will do it, whether freely or not. God knows that I will freely choose to go to class tomorrow, and also that if my roommate pushes me from behind I will fall down without choosing to do so. Turning the classical argument against itself, this means that once God has the foreknowledge, it becomes necessary that we will actually freely choose what He foreknows we will choose. Anselm's discussion is summarized by saying that the "necessity which guarantees one's freedom cannot at the same time be a necessity that deprives one of freedom" (Hopkins 294).

Along a similar line, if God is omnipotent and He says that we have free will, then we do

have free will even if He knows what we will choose. Otherwise, we are left with a God who does not have the power to create free creatures, a stance some philosophers have taken. The only reason to doubt that God might have such powers, however, is the fact that it creates a contradiction for human minds. I see no reason to limit God's powers to what we can understand, but instead I think that we should limit what we understand about God to the things about Him that are actually understandable to us. Knowing all and being all-powerful are attributes that we will never experience, but we can try to understand how our freedom in this world does not conceptually rule out the possibility of God having them. Interestingly enough, omnipotence and omniscience both work in this way not as threats to free will but as guarantees of it.

Plantinga similarly describes the confusion of those thinking that there is a problem in reconciling human freedom and Divine omniscience. He argues that "[i]t is indeed necessarily true that if God (or anyone else) knows that a proposition P is true, then P is true; but it simply doesn't follow that if God knows P, then P is *necessarily* true" (Plantinga 67). Unfortunately, Plantinga uses this idea to try to differentiate "essential omniscience" from "mere omniscience," and then knowledge of possible worlds from that of actual worlds. The problems with both of these approaches was discussed with regard to Ockham and Molina. I think Plantinga's statement, however, could be used to support Augustine's arguments. God does have knowledge of our future actions, and this knowledge is accurate. But there is, even for God, a non-causal relationship between knowledge and actuality. Simply put, the fact that God knows our future actions does not make them necessary. Rather, God can also know our future actions as free actions and thereby make them *freely* true. In other words, what God knows about future actions

can make them necessarily true or freely true, and how God knows them depends on whether they are actually free or not. I am not, I must explain, saying that there are two kinds of truth, one being less concrete than the other. On the contrary, whether God sees what will happen as being the result of a free choice or of a necessary cause, He still equally knows the event as something that will actually happen. Fortunately, God allows human beings' choices to be free and not necessary, and thus He knows our future actions as *freely* true.

B. Non-causal Foreknowledge:

Augustine offers another argument in his favor by turning the original problem upon God Himself. If one is to argue that by God's knowing we would choose something it becomes necessary, then what about God's own choices? If God foreknows how He will reward or punish us for our sins, does this mean that God's actions too are necessary (Augustine 91)? By that argument, God also loses His freedom-- a problematic conclusion. We must be careful, of course, in using the term "choice" with regard to a Divine Being who sees all. Clearly God would already know what His choice will be, but He also cannot change His choices by using this foreknowledge. If He did, then what He foresees now will be different from what He will foresee after this change in choices. It seems that we have reached another point in which we must concede that we simply cannot understand everything about God: for example, how or even whether He makes "choices" (see "Conclusion").

Someone might argue, using the same logic about God's losing His freedom, that such problems apply only to God's creations and not to an eternal God. This response, however, runs into the same problems as Aquinas' Divine Timelessness idea. As Augustine says, "By this reasoning, God is not involved in His own creation" (91). If God does not make something like

a “choice,” then one is left with the image of God as a Clockmaker who cannot act in time once He has created the world. This Augustinian argument, I think, leaves open the notion of a God who changes, though only in His temporality. Though this idea seems strange now, I will explain and argue for just such a theory in Part III of my thesis (“A Partially Changing God”).

For now, I will only explain Augustine’s argument with his example of happiness. Of course, we cannot simply will to be happy and thus be happy. This does not mean, however, that we are not willing at all. How could we say that when we are happy we are *not* willing to be happy? If I want to be unhappy, then surely I will not ever be happy. That would be absurd. Rather, God foreknows that the circumstances will be appropriate for us to be happy, and that we will *will* to be happy. Augustine states that “God’s foreknowledge, which today is certain of tomorrow’s happiness [in you], does not take from you the will to be happy when you begin to be happy” (92). Otherwise we would be paradoxically saying that we willed it not by will, but by necessity. Would such a person argue that we do not will with our will? If an event is necessary, then it is not determined solely by our will. It does not follow, however, that in such circumstances we cannot will anything (like to be happy when we must necessarily be sad). It cannot be necessary that we will (use our free will), yet that this will is also not in our power. That is the same thing as saying that when we will (with our free will) we do not actually will with it. Rather than reaching such a contradiction, I assert that if it is necessary that we freely will, then we must will the choice and will it freely. Thus, if we have will, then it must be within our power, otherwise it is not a will at all. And a will that is in our power is a free will. It is our will and our power over our will (i.e., our will is not determined beforehand) that God has foreknown. Thus, as Augustine summarizes, “the will is going to be a will because God has

foreknowledge of it" (93). Additionally, God has foreknowledge of our power over our will, so unless He is in error then we do have this power.

In this way, the possible problem of evil is avoided, because God is the cause of our free will, but not of our actual choice. Yet He knows what we will choose without forcing us to do it. As Augustine explains, it is like saying that we have knowledge of the past but did not necessarily cause it. In the same way, God has knowledge of the future (but *as* future, to avoid the Divine Timelessness problems) but did not necessarily cause it. It is not God who has determined that we will sin, but the foreknowledge He has knows that we will. Augustine says, "Then it is not because it is God's foreknowledge that what He foreknew had to happen, but only because it is foreknowledge" (94). Why should what God knows always involve responsibility? Of course, as omniscient God is the Creator of everything else that exists. However, once He made us free He necessarily restrained Himself from causing our actions in order to allow us true freedom (see Part II, "A Self-limiting God"). I see no problem, conceptually, with God knowing future events in a way more certain than simply being a good predictor. Mere prediction, I think, is not sufficient to qualify as omniscience. Augustine ends his discussion with a great summary of his position: "God foreknows all things of which He Himself is the Cause, and yet He is not the Cause of all that He foreknows" (95).

C. Criticisms:

Antony Flew offers a common criticism of this view: If God created everything, then He must be "as it were accessory before during and after the fact to every human action" (Flew 167). Flew leaves us with the image of God as the Great Hypnotist, and a world in which we just act out His commands, usually without knowing it. I do not see why this argument

necessarily follows. When my father and mother created me, that did not mean that they were accessory to every act I still do. Why does Flew think creation necessarily involves responsibility? It involves, I think, omniscience and omnipotence for God *because* He is God, not because He created us (thus my parents have no such powers). Additionally, his theory leads us to a view of God that is completely contradictory with the one I have assumed, and leaves us with free will only in a useless respect. Why make us free if God is going to control our every action anyway?

Another way of stating Flew's criticism might be to say that if God knows *as* He creates us what we will do, then He creates some evil wills knowingly. Once again, we must be careful in trying to go too far in understanding exactly what it is like to be omniscient. Nevertheless, I think that God created the wills as *free*, not as evil. If He were to use His foreknowledge only to create good wills, then He would be controlling us and not allowing us real freedom. Flew's objection thus approaches a view similar to Molina's, in which God chooses which wills to actualize based on their goodness. As already discussed, such a view does not really allow us to be free. God cannot use His foreknowledge to change which wills He creates without taking back the gift of freedom that He wants to give us.

Additionally, some philosophers complain that with Augustine's argument we are left with a sort of "free-floating foreknowledge" of the future that God just happens to be the only one to catch. I do not think that this image is all that inappropriate, however. In God's eternity, He does not relate to time at all (He is timeless). It is because of His temporality, in which He interacts with us, that He is able to have foreknowledge. Of course, His foreknowledge is nevertheless perfect and immutable (see Part III, "A Partially Changing God").

God is the uniquely perfect being, even when He is acting in time, and thus He is the only one to know these things which result from the freedom He has given us. If God is responsible, it is only in a “secondary” way because He gave us free wills. It is unlikely, however, that someone would argue that they would rather not have free will just so that there would be no evil (or moral good) in the world.

It would be contradictory for God to use His foreknowledge of the future to determine His present actions, because then the future would change. If this happened, then God’s foreknowledge would have been initially wrong. Logically, this just does not pass. Does this mean that God’s foreknowledge is useless? We cannot answer that question, because we have no experience of actually having such foreknowledge. It would be like asking, “Does it get boring to exist eternally?” How can we even imagine a response? As emphasized earlier, since I admit that we cannot understand God completely, it is easier just to stick with what can be known about God and understood by human minds. The investigation would prove fruitless if we tried to answer questions that must necessarily remain unanswerable to us. As Augustine might say, “How can we ponder a God who is infinitely more good, just, and powerful than us, and then question whether He is actually just?”

I must reiterate that these are the only parts of Augustine’s doctrine that I am using for this thesis. Augustine concludes not only that God is the cause of all actions without making them unfree, but also that the doctrine of predestination must be accepted. Neither of these ideas, nor others of Augustine, do I feel obligated to accept. It is only the beginning of his discussion, in which he understands that God’s foreknowledge is a guarantor of, rather than a threat to, free will that I would like to use.

Part II: A Self-limiting God:

A. The Kabbalah:

The second theory that makes sense to me is that of a God who limits Himself so as to allow us to be free. This seems to be the only plausible way He could have given us free wills. A good example of this view is given by the twelfth-century body of Jewish mystical writings called Kabbalah: A God that loves His creation so much that He restrains Himself so as to allow His creatures the ultimate gift of freedom. Charles Hartshorne describes God's "unsympathetic goodness," so called because He expects nothing in return and thus has a love quite different from human love. This argument, I think, follows from the foundations set up by Augustine. If God is to have any relationship with humans at all, He must practice self-limitation and act in time and space. And if God is perfectly good, then why question that He would limit Himself so as to allow us freedom? For the Kabbalists it is only because God wants to relate to the world He created that we can have any knowledge of Him at all. This idea led the Kabbalists to the conclusion that God *could* know what we would do in the future, but He wills not to in order to allow us to be free (Craig 173). I do not wish to go so far as the Kabbalists' argument that our freedom necessarily means that God cannot know what we will choose. Rather, I think that God can and does know what we are going to freely do without causing us not to be free. I do not see why, drawing from Augustine, it is impossible for Him to give us freedom and yet know what we will choose. As I have argued, we are free not despite God's foreknowledge, but *because* He foreknows us as free.

Even with my maintenance of Divine omniscience, I think that Divine omnipotence is of a different character. In my opinion, God cannot be omniscient and yet limit His omniscience,

because then He would never have really been omniscient. In other words, if at any time God has foreknowledge, then it would be ludicrous to claim that He can later “forget” what He once foreknew. Some might argue that this idea would mean limiting God’s powers, but I think that conceptually any ability to forget would necessarily mean the loss of omniscience. How could one argue that God foreknew that He would know everything but also foreknew that He would forget it? The concept of knowing and then forgetting implies that God is constrained in time as human beings are, and the problems with such a view were discussed with regard to William of Ockham. The same problems arise in the Kabbalists’ conclusion.

In contrast to omniscience, however, omnipotence is not as conclusive. There is no problem with saying that God has infinite power but does not always *use* it. Whereas once He knows something He cannot not know it again (see above), God can have the power to do something but not necessarily do it. Thus, I would like to conclude from Kabbalistic thought that God *could* make us always do whatever He wanted to, but out of love He wills not to so that we can be free. In the act of creating our wills as free, He decided that He would make them truly free only by restraining His control over us in time. In this way, God does not lose His omnipotence; He just refuses to exercise it against our free will because that would create a contradiction: He would be encroaching on the freedom He gave us. And if God is perfect, why would He ever retract something He had given? Was it a mistake? Impossible! If we accept that a perfect God gave us a free will, then we are bound to accept that He does not also take it away from us. This does not mean that God cannot intervene on earth, as Christians believe He did by sending Jesus, but His interventions will not limit our free choice. Furthermore, He foreknew that He would intervene all along. This last statement will be better understood after

the third part of my thesis, "A Partially Changing God."

B. God the Risktaker (sort of):

Of course, this view of a self-limiting God is not specific to the Kabbalah. William Alston agrees that "God has deliberately refrained from deciding what the free action of created personal agents will be; He has endowed them with the capacity to decide certain things for themselves" (Alston 43). He is taking a "risk," in William Hasker's words, by giving us freedom, but that does not mean He just lets us go out of indifference. Rather, this risk was taken so that He could give us the ultimate gift of His love: freedom. In fact, I agree with Hasker that only a belief in predestination or middle knowledge could deny that God is a Risktaker who gave us free will. The idea of taking risks means that God makes decisions that are in response to actions of our free wills. Once again, in the next part of my thesis I will argue that this does not mean that God did not also foreknow how He would react to our free choices. Hartshorne echoes Hasker's view on this issue with a simple statement: "A world without risks is not conceivable. At best it would be a totally dead world, with neither good nor evil" (Hartshorne, *Omnipotence* 12). Many people have made the argument, following on Hartshorne's statement, that it is better for there to be the possibility of freedom and goodness, yet also of evil, than for there to be neither. The idea of the Fortunate Fall even fits into this line of thought, because only after Adam's sin could we realize God's love for us.

C. My Own Point of Departure:

For all three of these authors, however, this line of thought leads to the conclusion that God really does not know what we will choose. This is the point where I would like to be more specific and qualify how "risky" God is actually being. Alston says that God does not know

what we will choose, so His responses “cannot be part of His original creative intention” (Alston 44). I would argue, however, that our being free *was* part of this original creative intention, and thus what we freely choose is not outside the realm of His omniscience. Going back to an earlier argument, however, this does not mean that He caused our free choices, but simply that He caused us to be free. There is still no contradiction with God’s knowing our free choices and those choices actually being free. Alston goes on to say that God acts “on the spot” to respond to what we do, but He also causes things to occur in this world by directly forcing us to act in certain ways. I agree with this statement, but again in part three of this thesis I will argue that He can be acting “on the spot” in response to our free actions yet always have known how He would thus respond.

Hartshorne, likewise, argues that God is like a father who lets his son go and then does not know what he will do, but can only guess fairly well. The idea of God as a bookie conflicts, in my opinion, with any notion of real omniscience. Rather, I would argue that in His love God lets us be free without losing His omniscience. With regard to the idea of God as the Risktaker, it should be noted that His actions were not too risky because He foreknew what would happen as a result of them. At the same time, however, He also foreknew that He would take the risk in giving us free will. This circular thinking could go on indefinitely. Once again, we have reached a point at which we are trying to understand part of the nature of God that must remain incomprehensible to us. It seems to our finite minds that if God foreknew everything He would do, then once He made the first decision then everything else He would ever do would be already decided because He would know it. The problem is that God is eternal, and there was no first decision, nor will there be a last one. Let me just conclude by saying that God took a risk in

giving us freedom, because we could choose to do evil and the world He created could become an evil one. By this risk, however, He gave us the ultimate gift without losing His omnipotence or omniscience.

C. Criticisms:

I feel compelled to respond to an objection offered by Antony Flew to this idea of a God who limits Himself. He argues that if God limited Himself to allow us to be free, then the world would be to some extent out of His control, and such lack of control he believes would conflict with the notion that God created everything. I disagree with this objection on two levels. First of all, the fact that He limits Himself does not mean that the world is thus out of His control in any absolute way. God *could* still step in and take control of the world at any point, He simply does not in order to maintain our freedom. If God was not allowed to limit Himself in this way, then we would have to conclude that God was not omnipotent because He did not have the power to create free creatures. Secondly, I do not understand why the doctrine of creativity requires the creator to have constant control over the creation. If I create a robot with a randomizer, I no longer control which of the programs it randomly chooses. As stated earlier, another analogy is the fact that my mother and father created me, but do not now control my every action. Of course, we must be careful in comparing God's creation of everything to our minor creations, but I just do not see how creativity fundamentally requires control as Flew seems to think.

Part III: A Partially Changing God:

A. Socinianism and Hartshorne:

The third part of my thesis was developed from Hartshorne's discussion of the Socinian form of process theism. I see no contradiction in arguing that God changes with time, although only in certain ways. This idea differs significantly from more common theories of process theism, because it is only *part* of God that changes. In this way, God's eternal and immutable side is able to remain omniscient. I submit that if we accept the idea that God is both infinite and finite, eternal and temporal (Dual Transcendence), then why can He not change and yet stay the same? Of course, we must be careful to restrict such contradictions only to the parts of God which we cannot understand. In other words, we know that God is temporal because we interact with Him, yet we can assume that He is also eternal as God. Such assumptions are dangerous, obviously, but they form the best conception of God that human beings can construct. In fact, I assert that we *must* form some sort of theory in which God does exist temporally as well as eternally, because if God does not exist in time then either human existence is worthless or we are worshipping an empty idea of eternity (see my arguments against Aquinas).

The main idea of Socinianism is that God's love and goodness remain immutable, while His actions in time change as we make free decisions. This notion leads to the conclusion that God is unchangeably good, yet He can change in ways compatible with His being perfectly good. I am not trying to imply that these virtues of God are on different levels, however, with some of them being eternal while others are only temporal. Rather, some *must* necessarily be eternal, such as His goodness and omniscience. A perfectly benevolent God could never perform evil acts, and Hartshorne even goes so far as to argue that for God to be immutably good He is *required* to change in ways compatible with this goodness (but that is beyond the scope of my thesis).

Hartshorne uses Socinianism to construct a sound argument: "A personal God is one who has social relations, really has them, and thus is constituted by relations and hence is relative-- in a sense not provided for by the traditional doctrine of a divine Substance wholly nonrelative toward the world" (Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* x). In other words, if God is to show His love by doing things like answering our prayers, then at least part of Him must be relative and able to change in time. However, as discussed above, an omniscient God cannot forget what He already knows: His knowledge is permanent. In fact, none of God's *virtues* really change, it is only His actions within time that can alter to react to our free decisions. On the eternal level God is still omniscient and omnipotent, but He restrains Himself from controlling our actions at the temporal level. Thus, as a result of this restraint, He is able to change in response to our free wills. Interestingly enough, there is support for such Divine reactions to our decisions in the Christian Bible, such as God's decision to send us the Flood of Noah's time and later His Son. It must be emphasized, however, that such reactions are not outside the range of God's foreknowledge. Just as He foreknows everything we will do, so also does He foreknow how He will react to our free choices.

On the other hand, I disagree with Hartshorne that a God who changes necessarily cannot know the actual world but only possible worlds. As he summarizes the Socinian doctrine, he says that God acquires new knowledge as new things come into existence. Thus, God is eternal not because He is immutable, but because He cannot *not* exist. Following on his argument for God's relativity, Hartshorne asserts that the concrete (relative) qualities of God necessarily include the abstract (absolute) attributes of God (ix). He argues that God includes everything and therefore is related to everything, but He can only be related to everything if He is relative

and changing. Thus, Hartshorne concludes, God is more fundamentally relative than absolute (92). Though a full discussion of this idea is beyond the scope of this paper, I will just say that I disagree with the first part of his argument. God does *not* include everything, because this would require our saying that He created parts of Himself. Rather God *created* everything as separate from Him, though still within His power, knowledge, and goodness. More fundamentally, I disagree with Hartshorne's conclusion itself because I maintain that God's immutability and relativity are, to borrow from Martin Heidegger, "equiprimordial." Why does one have to be at the basis of the other? The problem arises when Hartshorne tries to understand God by making Him more human-like in His relativity. God's changing nature, however, is only one part of Him-- a part that is still very different from being human.

B. My Own View:

Hartshorne's conclusion is that God has unique power, but as fundamentally relative does not have the power to create unfree creatures (Hartshorne, *Omnipotence* 12). Thus, he says, "The only livable doctrine of divine power is that it influences all that happens but determines nothing in its concrete particularity" (25). In other words, God could not have omnipotence and foreknowledge. Rather than redefine eternity, I would say that God is eternal and immutable in the traditional senses. At the same time, however, I think that the temporal part of Him that interacts with human beings can be (and is) in process. I do not think that God ever obtains new knowledge, because He *already* knows everything as a necessary part of His omniscience. As discussed in Part II (and the "Conclusion") of this thesis, there is a point at which finite beings simply cannot understand eternity. We may not be able to completely comprehend God's omniscience, but that does not mean we should try to invent some other way to describe Him.

As a result, I see no problem with a God who partially changes but also has foreknowledge. God can foresee the reactions He will have to our choices, but He cannot use this foreknowledge to change anything because then this initial foreknowledge would be false (see Part IB, "Non-causal Foreknowledge"). Not only would He end up with knowledge of something that was no longer going to happen, but He would also be retracting the loving gift of free will that He has given us. This argument seems circular, and it logically can end only when we decide that we simply cannot completely understand God in His eternity, but only partially in His temporality.

I also find another part of Hartshorne's discussion fascinating: that classical theology actually limits God's power if it does not allow Him to change at least partially. The reason is that God is not allowed to foster creativity in the world. If we are not really free, then we cannot express creativity. Likewise, if God cannot change in time to react to our actions, then He cannot express creativity. God is left with only one big creation: the world. He is stuck with just this initial creation and can no longer express any new creations. Surely this is not a description of our omnipotent God! This argument nicely complements the one which argues that our freedom is an expression of God's love, and that love is only really love when it is *expressed* love. If God is not able to change in His temporality after we make free decisions, then is He no longer able to express His love? Is He, again, stuck with the one expression of love-- the gift of free will-- and now can no longer show His infinite love for us? I think that the Christian idea that God forgives us for our sins relies on some notion of a God who can still express His love. As I have argued, God can only express His love if He is able to change in His temporality to react to our free choices.

I do not, I must emphasize, agree with the view of most process theologians that God is

growing and learning more as time goes on. Whitehead argues that “no actuality can leave nothing further to seek” (Hartshorne, *The Aquinas Lecture* 32). I disagree with such a comparison of God to His creations. Once again extending the incomprehensibility of God, if He is eternal and temporal, immutable yet changing, why can He not also be complete and yet in process? In my opinion, we can understand what it means for God to have foreknowledge and for us to have free will, and even how both of these can coexist. But this does not mean that we can explain *how* God has any of His powers.

C. Criticisms:

A common objection to this idea is that if God is perfect, then how can He change at all? Is He becoming more perfect? This question, I agree, poses problems for most theories of process theology. They seem to say that God is constantly surpassing Himself, setting new levels of perfection. If God is becoming more perfect, however, then by definition He was not really perfect to begin with, an idea that conflicts with my view of God. With the way I have construed Socinian process theism, however, I do not think this objection is a concern. Of course, God is already perfect so He cannot change for the better or for the worse. But why can He not change “for the same,” change and yet remain immutable? By “change for the same,” I mean that His eternal qualities do not change-- He is immutably perfect, good, omnipotent, and omniscient. The changes take place only in relation to human beings, for whom He restrains Himself to allow us the gift of freedom. In order for us to be really free, He must hold Himself back and then react in time to our choices. At the eternal level, however, He remains omniscient and omnipotent. So what actually changes in God? Only how He will react in time to human beings’ actions. God Himself does not really change, because His eternal attributes are

immutable. The problem, again, is that humans cannot understand perfection, much less how a being can exist both temporally and eternally. All we can do is describe it: God is staying perfect *by* changing in time and yet remaining eternally immutable.

Hartshorne discusses some of the other possible problems with this theory. First, it seems that if God's decisions do not exist in advance because they are reactions to our decisions, then they do not exist eternally for Him to see with foreknowledge. Once again, the problem is solved if we understand God to be *both* eternal and temporal. There is an eternity to everything He does; thus, He has known for eternity what His actions would be. Our finite minds cannot grasp how such infinite knowledge could exist, or even how God's eternity and temporality can be related to each other, but that does not mean that God does not have such qualities. In addition to His eternity, God acts in time so that He can express His love for us. In order to remain a loving and creative God, He can change in His temporality with regard to our free choices (in time).

Another possible problem for Hartshorne is that if God is reacting to our free wills, then are we adding to His greatness something that beforehand He did not or could not have? If so, then God once again does not seem to be perfect or omniscient. Hartshorne comes to just such a conclusion. Since God is fundamentally relative, human beings can actually contribute to His greatness with their free wills (Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* 58). In my view, however, He gave us freedom as a gift in an expression of love. As discussed earlier, this love is not like human love-- He expects nothing in return (see Part II, "A Self-limiting God"). God's greatness is immutable; He only acts in time so that He can express His love to us. Without creating human beings, God would have no reason to restrain Himself in time as He does. On the other

side of the coin, someone might argue that if God created everything then we are really only here to serve Him. That is nonsense. We are here as an “outlet” for His love, as a result of His desire to express His infinite goodness. These expressions, of course, have forever been part of God’s foreknowledge. Following on this answer, another person might object that it seems as if the world could not have *not* existed as an outlet for God’s love, thus God did not have the power to not create the world. Such a question is unanswerable, because it is another attempt to understand what it must be like to be God. How could we possibly comprehend what it is like to be omnipotent? Thus, we ask questions like whether God could create a boulder so heavy that He could not lift it. Such questions do not help us at all in this discussion, because we are simply trying to show the *result* of God’s powers: that He gave us freedom while maintaining His foreknowledge of our future decisions.

Peter Geach offers an objection to process theology in general, regarding the idea that God can change at all. He says, “it would be merely arbitrary to say that of two mutable beings one required a cause, the other did not” (Geach 42). Thus, Geach sees life as a great chess game, with God as the Grand Master whose plan will be executed despite our efforts. In addition to the unattractiveness of such images, I do not think that this objection is a problem for my thesis. Once again, it is only the temporal part of God that changes. The difference between us and Him, among many, is that we do not also have an infinite and immutable aspect. The same questions have been asked for thousands of years regarding how God can interact with this world at all. Surely God did not just create a world over which He can no longer have any control. With my expanded theory of Dual Transcendence, God can continue to interact with free beings and express His love for them while remaining omnipotent and omniscient.

Some philosophers might argue that it is a contradiction to say that God is both immutable and mutable. Of course, this conclusion is based on human experience, and such contradictory attributes might be totally appropriate for God. As I will argue in the conclusion, we must concede that we will never fully understand everything about God's nature. Nevertheless, Hartshorne quotes Morris Cohen in his *Preface To Logic* (pp. 74-75, New York: Henry Holt, 1944) in offering a good logical response to such criticisms: "The law of contradiction does not bar the presence of contrary determinations in the same entity, but only requires. . . a distinction of aspects. . . in which the contraries hold. . . we must be on our guard against the universal tendency to simplify situations and to analyze them in terms of only one of such contrary tendencies" (quoted in: Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity* x). As this applies to my thesis, it suggests that many criticisms try to simplify God into only having one quality which then cannot be contradicted. I would argue, in making my "distinction of aspects," that God is immutable with respect to His love and omniscience, while also mutable with respect to His relative ability to interact with human beings in time. These thinkers might also ask *how* God's eternity and His temporality can be related. As discussed with regard to Aquinas (see page four and the "Conclusion"), human beings' minds are incapable of such understanding. If we cannot know what it is like to be eternal, how are we supposed to know what it is like to be both eternal and temporal? In the conclusion I will discuss to what degree we must admit that we simply cannot understand God completely.

CONCLUSION:

In summary, I think there is a possibility of finding the common thread in these views. I

have argued for a God who knows everything that will happen, including what we will freely choose to do, but restrains Himself from forcing us to do His will so that He can give us freedom. This God must exist both in time and eternally, or we would not be able to have any contact with or knowledge of Him, and it seems noncontradictory that part of Him could change while other parts remain the same. Most philosophers try to solve the problem of Divine foreknowledge by either denying that God is temporal (e.g. Aquinas) or by denying that He is eternal (and thus cannot know the future). I think that the solution lies in seeing God as *both* temporal and eternal, so that He can have foreknowledge while also allowing us to be free. This approach, as I have argued, avoids the problems many other attempts face. God, as described by this thesis, exists eternally as omniscient, yet also exists temporally as a Being who restrains Himself in order to allow human freedom.

As I have mentioned several times throughout this thesis, at some point the line is going to have to be drawn where we concede that we cannot understand exactly how God does everything simply because He is God (partially) in eternity. I would like for this point to be farther along than simply proclaiming with Aquinas that God is Timeless, but I do not want to go so far as to think that we can completely understand what it is like to be omniscient. Ultimately, a complete understanding of God's attributes is unattainable. What we can think about, however, is how such qualities of God might affect human beings in this world. God's benevolence, for example, cannot be understood by simply removing any imperfections in what we see as a good human being-- absolute benevolence is beyond even the most benevolent person of which we can conceive. What we can consider, however, is that it would be compatible with a benevolent being to restrain Himself in order to give us the ultimate

expression of His love: Freedom. In the same way, we will never know what it is like to be omniscient, but we can argue that an all-knowing Being would not be restricted into knowing only the present and past or only what is knowable to human beings.

The best way to make this argument, I believe, is to consider God as eternally omniscient yet able to act in time with His creations. In order to have such interaction, God must exist partially in time. But if this part of Him exists in time, then it must be able to change in time to react to our free choices. Since we are now discussing the part of God that acts in time, we are better able to understand these aspects of Him. As already argued, however, how God's temporality is connected with His eternality must remain a mystery because we cannot understand the eternal part of this relationship. Attempting to completely understand the eternal aspects of God leads to problems because we start defining God in terms of *human* constraints, whether they be time or what is knowable. God's attributes are misunderstood when they are described solely in terms of human attributes: what is a contradiction to us is not necessarily one for Him. Thus, if someone were to complain that my argument is circular (we are free because God foresees us as free; God foresees us as free because we are free), I would reply that how God obtains such a feat is incomprehensible to us. The same complaint could be made about any of God's eternal attributes. What I have offered is merely a way to reconcile omniscience with human freedom if we assume that God is all-knowing.

In conclusion, I have presented what I think is a reasonable argument as to why God can have foreknowledge of human beings' *free* actions. I have tried to go as far as I can without falling into the trap of trying to force God into a mold so that He is easily understandable to temporal beings. What we can know, I think, is that we can be truly free even if God foreknows

what we will do. *How* God knows everything, or *how* an eternal Being can also interact with His temporal creations, can only be hypothesized. However, given my assumptions of omniscience, benevolence, and omnipotence, the approach taken in this thesis is at least conceptually interesting, and hopefully persuasive.

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