

**GOD AND TIME:
ENTAILMENTS ON THE FREEDOM / FOREKNOWLEDGE ISSUE
FOR DETERMINISTS AND INDETERMINISTS**

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Summary

Two questions which have received considerable attention among classical writers as well as contemporary theologians and philosophers are:

- (1) Is God's eternal existence atemporal (outside of time) or temporal (within time)?¹
AND
- (2) In light of Scripture, logic, and/or philosophy, is the divine foreknowledge-human freedom dilemma best resolved by a determinist or an indeterminist position?²

As these two questions have been the subject of massive theological treatises over the centuries, this author will not attempt to offer any fresh solutions to resolving these issues. That is, this paper will not seek to specifically answer either question. Rather, we will endeavor to evaluate the positions held by leading scholars in an effort to delineate the key *interrelations* between the two questions and to determine whether, for example, one's position on the atemporal/temporal eternity question logically necessitates one's position on the freedom-foreknowledge (FFK) issue, or vice versa.

What the results of this study will show is that virtually all combinations of the atemporal eternity/temporal eternity (AE/TE) and determinist/indeterminist (D/I) positions can be supported logically, philosophically, and theologically and, in fact, there are leading contemporary scholars who hold to virtually every combination of positions. This does *not* mean, however, that the responses to the two questions are unrelated or that every view is equally congruous or cogent as the following discussion will seek to demonstrate.

¹A work representative of the atemporalist position is Paul Helm's *Eternal God - A Study of God Without Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), while some of the common arguments for the temporalist view are presented in William Hasker's *God, Time and Knowledge* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

²While there is such a plethora of literature on this question that one hesitates to single out one or two works as representative, the four views presented in *Predestination & Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom* by John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach, Clark Pinnock. Ed. David Basinger & Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986) provide the basic arguments surrounding the freedom-foreknowledge question.

Introduction

Does holding to atemporal eternity logically necessitate a determinist view, or alternatively, does an indeterminist position necessarily follow from a temporal view of God's eternity? These questions are indeed complex in nature, as they are inseparably related to other issues and presuppositions including:³ (a) how one views God's foreknowledge (either O-foreknowledge or A-foreknowledge), (b) whether God has simple foreknowledge or middle knowledge (c) the issue of whether the past is necessary, (d) the meaning of a "proposition," (e) one's view on the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' facts, (f) the issue of counterfactual power over the past, (g) one's view of time itself as described by either the A-theory or B-theory, or even newer proposed theories of relating time and eternity, (h) one's view with respect to divine providence, that is, is divine foreknowledge causal in its incorporation of God's will, (i) the particular sub-category of determinism or indeterminism being considered, and last but not least (j) one's understanding of God's other attributes including His omniscience, immutability, and omnipotence. While each of these issues cannot be addressed separately in this paper, we will attempt to identify and discuss those most germane to the major topic at hand.

In order to thoroughly evaluate all potential interrelationships between the two major theological-philosophical issues under consideration, one must consider the following scenarios:

- A. Addressing the temporal-atemporal eternity issue first:
 - 1. If I hold to atemporal eternity, does that logically necessitate that I also hold to a determinist position with respect to the freedom-foreknowledge issue? or
 - 2. If I hold to atemporal eternity does that logically entail indeterminism?
 - 3. If I hold to temporal eternity does that logically entail determinism? or
 - 4. If I hold to temporal eternity does that logically entail indeterminism?

- B. Alternatively, if one addresses the freedom-foreknowledge issue first:
 - 5. If I hold to a determinist position does that logically entail divine atemporal eternity?
or
 - 6. If I hold to a determinist position does that logically entail divine temporal eternity?
 - 7. If I hold to an indeterminist position does that logically entail divine atemporal eternity? or
 - 8. If I hold to an indeterminist position does that logically entail divine atemporal eternity?

Furthermore, for each of the above questions, one may replace the matter of one position logically requiring or entailing another with one position simply being more consistent with another. As becomes quickly apparent, an in-depth treatment of the initially posed rather straightforward question becomes extremely complex and certainly beyond the scope of this study. We will therefore limit the current study to identifying the most important

³While individual references are not cited for the following specific items, discussion of these topics appear throughout the main literature cited throughout this paper including, for example, those already noted in the previous footnotes.

interrelationships and then focus on the specific question of whether, as often proposed, divine atemporal eternity provides a viable solution to the freedom-foreknowledge dilemma.

Background Information

Before jumping head-long into delineating any potential interrelationships between the two major questions at hand, a brief review of the background information as it pertains to the *individual* questions may be informative.

Atemporal vs Temporal Eternity

The issue of divine atemporal versus temporal eternity dates back to at least the fourth century AD with Augustine and the question of God's timing in creation.⁴ Boethius, in his sixth century classic *The Consolation of Philosophy*, provided the following definition which has become somewhat of a standard (albeit, not universally accepted one): "eternity is the whole, perfect, and simultaneous possession of endless life."⁵ Paul Helm explains that this means simply that God is not in time. That is, for God, there is no past and no future. Helm notes, "It makes no sense to ask how long God has existed, or to divide up his life into periods of time. He possesses the whole of his life at once: it is not lived successively."⁶ As such, atemporalists contend that even the notion of simultaneity must be abandoned when referring to God because the very concept implies time. In other words, if God timelessly exists "he is neither earlier nor later nor simultaneous with any event of time. He exists timelessly."⁷ Therefore, the whole of eternity is "eternally simultaneous with the actual occurrence of every event in time."⁸ In other words, from the eternal viewpoint everything that has ever happened, is happening, and ever will happen *is* actually happening timelessly.

Other scholars argue that God is temporally eternal or everlasting. As such, it now makes sense to speak of God's actions, thoughts, and decrees in *temporal* terms. That is, He is in time and is temporally active in responding to his creation. In rejecting Aquinas's appeal to atemporal eternity, Anthony Kenny well-states the temporalist view: "The whole concept of a timeless eternity, the whole of which is simultaneous with every part of time, seems to be radically incoherent," adding that "on Thomas' view, my typing of this paper is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Again, on this view, the great fire of Rome is simultaneous with the whole of eternity. Therefore, while I type these very words, Niro fiddles heartlessly on."⁹ To the temporalist, this appear utter nonsense.¹⁰

⁴For a brief review of Augustine's contribution to the question of eternity as presented in his *Confession* and *City of God*, see: Allen G. Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 43-44.

⁵Anicius Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. Richard Green (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1962), 115.

⁶Paul Helm, *Eternal God - A Study of God Without Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 24.

⁷Helm, *Eternal God*, 27.

⁸Helm, *Eternal God*, 83.

The Freedom-Foreknowledge Dilemma and Determinism vs Indeterminism

The tension between divine foreknowledge and human freedom, both of which appear to be taught in Scripture, has been a central topic of debate among theologians and philosophers for centuries. Augustine states the dilemma as follows:

“I have a deep desire to know how it can be that God knows all things beforehand and that, nevertheless, we do not sin by necessity. Whoever says that anything can happen otherwise than as God has foreknown it, is attempting to destroy the divine foreknowledge with the most insensate impiety. . . . But this I say. Since God foreknew that man would sin, that which God foreknew must necessarily come to pass. How then is the will free when there is apparently this unavoidable necessity?”¹¹

John Feinberg notes that while philosophers use the labels *indeterminism* and *determinism*, there is no single definition that adequately covers either view; rather, there are varieties of each.¹² Nonetheless, there are basic tenets that can be ascribed to each of these two major positions. First, indeterminism holds to libertarian freedom (also referred to as contra-causal freedom¹³) which claims that a person’s actions are free only if they are not causally determined. That is, while there may be factors and influences which incline a person’s will in one direction or the other, the person *could always choose to do otherwise*. As noted by Feinberg, “This means that despite the direction in which the causes appear to incline the agent’s will, he or she can still choose contrary to those causes, since they do not decisively incline the

⁹Anthony Kenny, *The God of Philosophers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 38-39.

¹⁰ While, as previously stated, the objective of this paper is not to resolve the atemporal-temporal eternity issue, in a previous study (“God and Eternity: An Exegesis of Select Scripture Passages,” submitted to Dr. John Feinberg, September 1998 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for DST-928) this author concluded based on an exegetical study of key Scripture references that the Bible does not definitively support either view of divine eternity (although, I might add this has not kept scholar on both sides of the issue from using Scripture to support their cases). That is, the Bible does not appear to make a definitive statement with respect to the ontological nature of time and/or of divine eternity.

¹¹Augustine, *On Free Will*, II. 2.4 in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, trans. J. H. S. Burleigh, vol. 6 (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953).

¹²John Feinberg, “God Ordains All Things.” In *Predestination & Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom* by John Feinberg, Norman Geisler, Bruce Reichenbach, Clark Pinnock. ed. David Basinger & Randall Basinger (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 20.

¹³Feinberg, 21, notes that this term is used by Thomas B. Talbott in “Indeterminism and Chance Occurrences,” *Personalist* 60 (1979): 257.

agent in one direction or another.”¹⁴ This view is also referred to as incompatibilism¹⁵ since human freedom is held to be incompatible with causal determination.¹⁶

In contrast, determinism (in all forms) holds that “for everything that ever happens there are conditions, such that, given them, nothing else could happen.”¹⁷ Feinberg elaborates, “Another way to put the point is that for every action or event which is causally determined, there is a state of affairs just prior to its occurrence which, when combined with some causal laws, makes it *certain* [my emphasis] the event or action will occur.”¹⁸ This view holds that for every decision a person makes there are causal conditions playing upon that individual’s will so as to incline it “decisively and sufficiently” in one direction rather than another such that the agent “could not have done otherwise, given the prevailing causal influences.”¹⁹ The three forms of determinism are fatalism, hard determinism, and soft determinism (or compatibilism).²⁰

Summary of Positions Held by Leading Theologians-Philosophers

While the validity of a particular theological position should not be based solely upon which and how many leading theologians ascribe to that particular view, there is still value in considering who holds to the particular AE/TE and D/I positions, and why. A survey of the

¹⁴Feinberg, 21.

¹⁵Feinberg, 21, notes that the term *incompatibilism* is used by Antony Flew to refer to this position. See Anthony Flew, “Divine Omnipotence and Human Freedom,” *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (New York: Macmillan, 1955).

¹⁶As will be discussed in a later section, there are a variety of indeterministic positions ranging from “paradox indeterminism” to “middle knowledge.” For a review of the various indeterministic views, see: David Basinger, “Divine Control and Human Freedom: Is Middle Knowledge the Answer?” *JETS* 36/1 (1993): 55-64.

¹⁷Richard Taylor, “Determinism,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 2:359.

¹⁸Feinberg, 21.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰For a detailed discussion of these three deterministic positions, see Feinberg, 23-26. In brief, soft determinism differs from both fatalism and hard determinism in that while human actions are still causally determined, they are also free. Soft determinists hold that genuine human freedom and causal determinism are indeed compatible. What is meant by “genuine human freedom,” however, is something quite different than the indeterminist’s libertarian freedom. To a soft determinist, humans can exercise genuine freedom in their choices, but even when doing so there are still causal conditions which *decisively incline* the will to respond a certain way without indeed *constraining* it. The causal conditions are sufficiently strong to get the person to choose a certain option such that there are now some guarantees how the individual will freely respond yet the person was acting according to their wishes or desires, i.e. “without constraint.” This is also known as *consequent necessity*. Finally, it should be noted that compatibilists do *not* claim that *all* human actions are genuinely free in this sense. For example, if someone is forced at gun point to steal a car, that action is not free.

literature indicates that leading scholars can be found who hold to virtually any combination of the AE/TE and D/I positions.²¹ The following is a brief summary:

Atemporalists-Determinists: This combination of views has been predominate through much of church history. Leading theologians who have held to this combination include Jonathan Edwards, John Calvin, Martin Luther, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Augustus Strong, Millard Erickson, Louis Berkhof, Charles Hodge, Paul Helm and R. C. Sproul. This view represents the traditional Reformed position.

Atemporalist-Indeterminists: This combination appears much less frequently among scholars today with Michael Robinson and Brian Leftow among this group.²² However, within the broader Christian community, the combination of atemporalism and “paradox indeterminism” is fairly prevalent among pastors and laymen.

Temporalist-Determinists: This combination is also fairly uncommon with leading proponents of this view including John Feinberg and, possibly, Nelson Pike.

Temporalist-Indeterminists: There is no lack of theologians and philosophers in this group which includes William Craig, Clark Pinnock, William Hasker, Charles Hartshorne, A. N. Prior, Keith Ward, Richard Swinburne, Langdon Gilkey, and Peter Geach.

Atemporal Eternity as a Solution to the FFK Dilemma

Arguments Presented from Both Sides

Whether or not holding to atemporal eternity logically entails a particular view on the FFK issue, history bears witness to the interrelationship between these two questions as indicated by Boethius, Aquinas, and numerous theologians since who have appealed to atemporal eternity in an effort to reconcile what otherwise appeared to be a paradox between divine foreknowledge and human freedom.²³ According to this view, there is no conflict in the so-called FFK dilemma, in that God, being timelessly eternal, does not technically possess *foreknowledge*. He knows all the free choices of human beings—past, present, and future—*timelessly*, not in any temporal sense.

In contrast, numerous contemporary philosophers argue that if God is indeed atemporal then libertarian freedom is non-existent and determinism prevails. For example, Alvin Plantinga²⁴ asserts that divine atemporal eternity implies logical fatalism while Paul Helm²⁵

²¹In reading contemporary (as well as non-contemporary) authors, it is often difficult to ascertain whether an individual is a determinist or an indeterminist because of ambiguities, and/or contradictions in his or her view on human freedom. As a result, deciding where each theologian best fits is often quite challenging with the result that one or more of the individuals listed in this section may challenge where they have been placed. Additionally, some theologians who take a clear position of the FFK issue are less clear as to where they stand with respect to the AE/TE issue.

²²While atemporalism was utilized by Boethius and other classical writers to resolve the FFK dilemma (i.e., preserve human freedom), it is less clear that Boethius and/or Aquinas would fit the strict definition of an indeterminist.

²³For a more detailed treatment of the “Boethian Solution,” see: Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36-65.

²⁴Alvin Plantinga, “On Ockham’s Way Out,” *Faith and Philosophy* 3 (1986): 239-240.

argues that God's timeless creation "entails determinism."²⁶ David Widerker²⁷ asserts that the Helm-Plantinga objection to the eternity solution is unconvincing, in that the classical atemporal eternity solution (ES) can be restated to overcome the most common objection to it—a violation of "the principle of the fixity of the past" (or PFP).²⁸ However, Widerker adds that when considered in the context of a plausible conception of God's providential activity, the ES once again falls "prey to the objection of contravening PFP."²⁹

Linda Zagzebski,³⁰ on the other hand, argues that the Boethian solution, while not without problems, does in fact offer promise. She notes five major objections to the Boethian solution,³¹ offers logically coherent counter-arguments to each, and concludes that none of the traditional arguments shows that the Boethian view must be rejected. She, nonetheless, acknowledges several additional challenges to the Boethian solution which appear more substantial,³² including the issue of one's acts being accidentally necessary. She counters with three proposals of her own, one which she calls Thomistic Ockhamism³³ and two others which revolve around the question of free will and the ability to do otherwise.³⁴ It should be noted that none of her proposed solutions appear to entail atemporal eternity.³⁵

²⁵Paul Helm, "Timelessness and Foreknowledge," *Mind* 84 (1975): 516-527.

²⁶Paul Helm, *Eternal God*, 170. While Helm does not specifically explain his use of the word "entail" in the sense that it is used in logic, where it indicates 'requiring or necessitating that which follows,' there can be little doubt that this is the strong sense which Helm's position signifies. In the same work (pg 144) Helm concludes: "One clear consequence of the argument of the last three chapters is that the existence of an omniscient, timelessly eternal God is *logically inconsistent with the libertarian freedom* [my emphasis] in any of his creatures, freedom, that is, which requires the absence of causally sufficient conditions for the occurrence of any intentional action." Also, in his article entitled "Timelessness and Foreknowledge," *Mind* 84 (1975): 527, Helm asserts: "Hence there cannot be free will, even if God's knowledge of human action is timeless."

²⁷David Widerker, "A Problem for the Eternity Solution," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 29 (1991): 87-95.

²⁸While it will not be addressed in detail at this point, Widerker's restatement of the propositions of the traditional eternity solution appears to be merely a play on words without addressing the fundamental issues.

²⁹Widerker, "A Problem for the Eternity Solution, 93.

³⁰Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 36-65.

³¹These objections include: (a) that the timelessness move does not solve the FFK dilemma because of the accidental necessity of eternal truth propositions, (b) that timelessness requires a B-theory of time in which tenses and other temporal indexicals are eliminable, (c) that since tensed propositions cannot be reduced to tenseless ones, God is not omniscient on the timeless view, (d) that the common Thomistic metaphorical way of understanding God's eternal knowledge of all temporal events is incompatible with divine providence, and (e) that the move to timeless eternity is useless, since even though the eternality of God's knowledge solves the version of the foreknowledge dilemma based on the necessity of the past, it nevertheless generates a parallel dilemma based on the necessity of eternity. This dilemma Zagzebski calls the Timeless Knowledge Dilemma. For a more detailed discussion of these objections and Zagzebski's response, see Zagzebski, 43-65.

³²Zagzebski, 63.

³³Zagzebski, 85-97.

Still others, such as Michael Robinson, acknowledge that the *Boethian version* of atemporal eternity indeed necessitates determinism but argue that the Boethian model is an inaccurate model of divine atemporality.³⁶ With a modified model for understanding time and eternity, Robinson contends that there is no inconsistency between an atemporally eternal God and genuine libertarian freedom. It should be noted that Robinson's argument—which appeals to what is called *via media* interpretation of relativity theory with the resultant model of a four-dimensional block universe consisting of three spatial and one temporal dimension—is somewhat complex and at time appears convoluted.³⁷

Still others argue that the solution to the FFK dilemma is found in the nature of God's knowledge as simply innate essential omniscience without appeal to AE or TE (a related view is the so-called middle knowledge position which will be discussed later). In contrast, Nelson Pike argues that if God exists and is essentially omniscient, *no human action is voluntary*.³⁸

How can the doctrine of atemporal eternity be used by theologians and philosophers to argue for diametrically opposed solutions to the FFK dilemma? The answer appears to rest, at least in part, in which question the theologian-philosopher gives greatest priority to and, additionally, what his or her starting presuppositions are with respect to human freedom.

Atemporal Eternity Logically Entailing Determinism

Despite the so-called Boethian Solution cited above, several noted theologians hold that divine atemporal eternity logically entails some form of determinism. Two such scholars are Alvin Plantinga³⁹ and Paul Helm.⁴⁰ Helm follows Boethius's argument in asserting that it is not accurate to think of God's foreknowledge as of the future but rather as knowledge of a "never ending present." Helm, nevertheless, holds that it makes sense to speak of a timeless knower's foreknowledge of events where the notion of foreknowledge expresses a temporal knower's belief or recognition that certain events were known timelessly before this time. Following this reasoning, from the perspective of a temporal agent God has knowledge beforehand of future events and since this knowledge is unchangeable, the event(s) in question are necessary. "Hence there cannot be free will, even if God's knowledge of human action is timeless."⁴¹

Helm further notes the important issue of whether it is possible to do anything to make the past different. He cites the work of Plantinga who asserts that "x is accidentally necessary if

³⁴Zagzebski, 153-180.

³⁵Zagzebski nonetheless holds to timeless eternity but for reasons independent of the FFK dilemma and which arise directly from a consideration of the nature of time. See Zagzebski, 63-65.

³⁶ Michael D. Robinson, *Eternity and Freedom. A Critical Analysis of Divine Timelessness as a Solution to the Foreknowledge/Free Will Debate* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1995), 161.

³⁷Robinson, 89-111.

³⁸Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," in *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Steven M. Cahn and David Shatz, (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 67.

³⁹See Plantinga, "On Ockham's Way Out," 235-269.

⁴⁰See Helm, *Eternal God*, 95-108.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 101.

there is no basic action which I can now perform to change x”⁴² and asks “is what God believed yesterday about what I will do tomorrow accidentally necessary on this view?”⁴³ Helm asserts that it is.⁴⁴ Helm adds that since God timelessly now knows all true propositions (since he is omniscient), then it was true yesterday that God knows what I will do tomorrow, and hence what he knows I will do tomorrow is necessary.⁴⁵

Michael Robinson also considered the FFK dilemma and addressed “the argument from the necessity of the past” as follows:

- 1a) Necessarily, if God knows that I will do A, then I will do A.
- 2a) Necessarily, God knows that I will do A.
- 3a) Therefore, I will necessarily do A.

But what makes 2a necessarily true? According to Thomas and many other theologians it is *the necessity of the past*. In other words, if God knew in the past that I would one day do A, then it is presently impossible to change the fact that God knew in the past that I would one day do A. Thus, it is now necessary that God knew that I will do A. Robinson admits that this version of the argument presents a strong case for the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom. He notes, “Its form seems valid, and the principles upon which it is based seem sound.”⁴⁶ Robinson also detailed the classic rendition of this argument as put forth by Jonathan Edwards⁴⁷ and concludes, “If its premises are true, the argument seems to demonstrate that divine foreknowledge and human freedom are incompatible.”⁴⁸

Alternative Options for Indeterminists

The above suggested logical entailment between atemporal eternity and determinism has not deterred theologians from proposing alternative solutions which preserve libertarian freedom. The potential options by which an atemporalist can also hold to indeterminism include: (a)

⁴²Plantinga, 252-253.

⁴³Helm, 101.

⁴⁴In contrast, Plantinga, 258-258, answers in the affirmative since I could by how I choose to act tomorrow change God’s belief about me.

⁴⁵Helm also argues for the incompatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom based on a strict sense of God’s immutability. If God timelessly knows that I am going to mow my lawn tomorrow then I cannot be in a position not to mow my lawn tomorrow, since to do so would be to bring it about that God changed, and God cannot change if he is timeless. Since nothing can happen, now or at any time, to alter the cognitive state of an immutable God, whatever God knows he unchangeably knows.

⁴⁶Robinson, 8.

⁴⁷Robinson, 8-9 cites Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 257-258 and adds that for a contemporary restatement of Edward’s argument, see Nelson Pike’s “Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action,” *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965): 27-46.

⁴⁸Robinson, 10.

resigning oneself to paradox indeterminism, (b) the classical Ockhamist argument, (c) appeal to some form of middle knowledge, (d) appeal to divine innate/essential foreknowledge, or (e) a redefinition of time and its ontological relationship to eternity. A brief summary of these five options is provided below.

(a) *Paradox Indeterminists* hold to libertarian free will *and* to God's omniscience, foreknowledge, and omnipotence in the sense that he has control over all earthly affairs, (since, they assert, both are clearly taught in Scripture) but argue that this presents a paradox since these two views "cannot possibly be reconciled before the bar of human reason."⁴⁹ While both are true, they simply cannot be reconciled with the finite human mind. Therefore, there is no problem for a paradox indeterminist to hold to atemporal (or temporal) eternity.

(b) Briefly stated, Ockham's solution⁵⁰ to the problem of divine foreknowledge is that propositions about God's knowledge of future contingents are themselves future contingent propositions. While objects of God's knowledge are true propositions, since the necessity of the past is connected with potency for the opposite, not with truth, this means that the past determinate truth of such propositions does not fall under the necessity of the past. Ockhamism insists therefore, that though part of the past is fixed (hard facts), some past states of affairs are not fixed (soft facts), namely, God's past beliefs about the future. As noted by Robinson, "Ockhamism contends that God's beliefs about the future, although always true, are only necessary upon the future occurrence of what those beliefs hold. Future human actions, then, although known, are free (unnecessary) until they occur."⁵¹

In other words, Ockham did not reject the notion of the past as being necessary but rather distinguished a special sort of necessity that pertains to the past, which he designated as necessity *per accidens* or 'accidental necessity,' then added that not all present-tense propositions generate or correspond to accidentally necessary propositions about the past.⁵² Ockham says very little about the basis for excluding these propositions from the category of the accidentally necessary and further admits that the way in which God is able to know future contingents is problematic. However, as noted by Zagzebski,⁵³ some form of the Ockhamist solution has been defended by a number of contemporary philosophers including Anthony Kenny,⁵⁴ Alfred Freddoso,⁵⁵ and

⁴⁹David Basinger, "Divine Control and Human Freedom: Is Middle Knowledge the Answer?" *JETS* 36/1 (1993): 57.

⁵⁰Named after the noted theologian and philosopher, William of Ockham (c. 1285-1349), who as noted by William Hasker in *God, Time and Knowledge* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 12-15, devoted sustained attention and a considerable literary effort to the FFK dilemma (Hasker cites for example: William Ockham, *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, trans. Marilyn McCord and Norman Kretzmann (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969)).

⁵¹Robinson, 20.

⁵²Hasker, 12-14.

⁵³Zagzebski, 192 fn 2.

⁵⁴Anthony Kenny, *The God of Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 51-87.

⁵⁵Alfred J. Freddoso, "Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism," *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983): 257-278, and "Accidental Necessity and Power Over the Past," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 63 (1982), 54-68.

Jonathan Kvanvig.⁵⁶ For a detailed treatment of Ockham’s proposal, including its implications, also see Alvin Plantinga’s “On Ockham’s Way Out.”⁵⁷ It should be noted that while Ockham rejected timeless eternity, appeal to his solution does not appear to require a temporal view of eternity.

(c) The third solution proposed, that of middle knowledge, originated with the 16th-century Jesuit philosopher, Luis de Molina, in his theory of *scientia media*. According to several scholars, Molina is to be credited with providing “the most ingenious of all proposed solutions to the FFK dilemma.”⁵⁸ Other adherents to the middle knowledge solution include Alvin Plantinga, Alfred Freddoso, Jonathan Kvanvig, Edward Wierenga, and David Basinger. This view holds that God knows the future because he knows what every individual would freely do in every possible situation in which that individual could find herself or himself, that is, he possesses knowledge of all counter-factuals.⁵⁹ As such, he knew before he created this particular world (as well as every other possible world) what every free individual would do. Thus Molinism affirms divine foreknowledge of future events *not* through some kind of backward causation, but through a combination of the divine will and a divine awareness of counterfactuals of freedom.”⁶⁰ Molinism has a key advantage over Ockhamism in that middle knowledge answers the question of *how* God might know the future without appeal to backward causation. However, as noted by Robinson, Molinism still faces the underlying puzzle of explaining how middle knowledge, itself, is possible. William Craig,⁶¹ a leading proponent of middle knowledge solution, argues that with the introduction of middle knowledge, there is no longer a conflict between human freedom and divine foreknowledge, providence, and even total sovereignty.⁶² It should be noted

⁵⁶Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), Chap. 3.

⁵⁷Plantinga, “On Ockham’s Way Out,” 235-269.

⁵⁸Zagzebski, 125.

⁵⁹Basinger, 59-64.

⁶⁰Robinson, 21.

⁶¹William L. Craig, *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*. Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker, 1987.

⁶²In contrast, Feinberg (pgs 33-34) asserts that since middle knowledge is knowledge of *possibilities*, not *actualities*—that is, of only what *might* occur—it is irrelevant to the question of how God can know what *will* happen in the future. Part of the disagreement here is over how one defines middle knowledge. Feinberg appears to limit middle knowledge to knowledge of counter-factuals while for Craig and others it includes knowledge of all that *will* actually occur in the world since God knows in advance every situation that every individual will ever be in. Feinberg asserts that if this is what the indeterminist mean then middle knowledge becomes equivalent to divine foreknowledge of future events, which Feinberg argues is inconsistent with an indeterminist’s account of freedom. Hence, Feinberg (pg 33) argues, “appeals to middle knowledge do not resolve the indeterminist’s dilemma.” Craig, on the other hand, asserts that God’s middle knowledge includes foreknowledge of all future events and that humans exercise true libertarian freedom and that the two are not incompatible.

that while Craig himself does not favor atemporal eternity,⁶³ the middle knowledge solution appears applicable from either a temporal or atemporal perspective.

(d) Proponents of divine innate-essential omniscience (including foreknowledge) as at least one component of the solution to the FFK dilemma (often included with middle knowledge) include: Jonathan Kvanvig⁶⁴ William Lane Craig,⁶⁵ and Edward Khamara.⁶⁶ Noting that the question of the basis of divine foreknowledge is usually approached from either an empiricist or a rationalist angle, Craig argues instead for the possibility of a conceptualist model in which “God’s knowledge of future-tense statements is *simply innate* and logically foundational.”⁶⁷ This view of divine foreknowledge differs from middle knowledge in that it does not depend upon God’s knowledge of counter-factuals. In dealing with objections to divine innate knowledge, Craig rightly notes that the burden of proof lies on the objector, who must prove that divine innate foreknowledge is impossible.⁶⁸ God simply knows all future free choices of human beings. Craig also cites extraordinary examples of human precognition (or cognition of future events) and notes that precognition is simply the parapsychological analogue for the theological term *foreknowledge*.⁶⁹

(e) The final argument we will consider for a logically coherent position which holds to both indeterminism and atemporal eternity is that presented by Michael Robinson. Robinson acknowledges that the *Boethian version* of atemporal eternity does indeed necessitate determinism but argues that the Boethian model is incorrect. Robinson, an atemporalist, argues for a different definition of time⁷⁰ and its ontological relationship to eternity than that expressed by Boethius.⁷¹ Robinson cites deficiencies in both the so-called A-theories and B-theories of time and argues for a third theory based on Brian Leftow’s adaptation of the Anselmian space/time-time/eternity analogy⁷² including the application of *via media* relativity theory to the

⁶³See, for example, William Lane Craig, “God, Time, and Eternity,” *Rel. Stud.* 14 (1978): 497-503.

⁶⁴Kvanvig, 17-18, 29, 33, 77-78, 115-116.

⁶⁵Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 119-125.

⁶⁶Edward J. Khamara, “Eternity and Omniscience,” *Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1974): 204-219.

⁶⁷Craig, 122.

⁶⁸Ibid. 119.

⁶⁹Ibid., 97-104.

⁷⁰As explained by Robinson, 232, according to this model, atemporal-eternity is understood as a dimension beyond time that incorporates all times or as “a single dimensional coordinate that incorporates all times” allowing one “to affirm both that timeless-eternity is a single instant, and that timeless eternity contains the extension of all temporal coordinates.”

⁷¹Robinson begins by considering the various models of divine timelessness that have been proposed through the centuries; pages 27-62 provides an excellent summary of the three classical models—those of Boethius, Thomas Aquinas, and Anselm—while pages 113-162 presents three contemporary models—those of Stump and Kretzmann, Brian Leftow, and John Yates.

⁷²The details and numerous complexities of this view of time are beyond the scope of this paper and are given in Robinson, 128-145

time-eternity relationship.⁷³ The *via media* interpretation makes use of the Theory of Relativity with special emphasis upon the differences associated with different frames of reference such that the future is neither fully actualized nor completely open. Rather, events are actualized or not, open or closed, relative to a myriad of differing frames of reference. Therefore, while all events are occurring (or actualized) in God's frame of reference, all events need not be occurring (actualized) in any individual temporal reference frame or even in the totality of temporal reference frames.⁷⁴

Robinson, in essence, appears to be driven to this very complex view of time and eternity in order to defend his view of human freedom. It is not clear that his solution is any more attractive than the ET-simultaneity option proposed by Stump and Kretzmann.⁷⁵ While intriguing and no doubt worthy of further study, Robinson's proposal appears guilty of what Donald Carson calls "explaining the obscure with the more obscure."⁷⁶

Conclusions

This study indicates that while there are clear logical interrelationships between the divine atemporal-temporal eternity and freedom-foreknowledge issues, there are *not* irrefutable logical entailments which necessitate that atemporalists or temporalists hold to either determinist or indeterminist views. In fact, leading theologian-philosophers are identified who hold to virtually all combinations of the AE/TE and D/I positions.

The arguments presented herein show that, contrary to the claims of several scholars, the traditional atemporal view of divine eternity does not necessarily entail some form of determinism. (Nor does it by itself totally obviate the FFK dilemma as was suggested by Boethius!) We have seen that the oft-cited "apparent" logical entailment between atemporal eternity and determinism can be overcome by: paradox indeterminism, the Ockhamist argument, appeal to middle knowledge, divine innate omniscience/foreknowledge, or a redefinition of time and its ontological relationship to eternity.

Since paradoxical indeterminism appears to relinquish any hope of resolving the FFK issue, it is the least attractive option. Therefore, the viability of a consistent and coherent solution to the FFK dilemma which includes both atemporal eternity and indeterministic human freedom, rests on the validity of (a) the Ockhamist solution, (b) middle knowledge, (c) divine innate or essential foreknowledge, and/or (d) recent non-traditional proposals with respect to the nature of time. While objections to all four options have been offered by scholars holding opposing positions, none appear sufficient to logically rule out the *possibility* of any of these options. As noted by Craig,⁷⁷ Zagzebski,⁷⁸ and Kvanvig,⁷⁹ some form of middle knowledge

⁷³Robinson, 89-111, offers a detailed explanation of the *via media* interpretation of relativity theory including basic tenets, evaluation, and implications for divine timelessness.

⁷⁴Robinson, 139.

⁷⁵Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 429-458.

⁷⁶Donald A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility: Biblical Perspectives in Tension* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), 210.

appears to offer the strongest case for an indeterministic view. It should also be pointed out that for the first three of the four above noted solutions to the FFK dilemma, atemporal eternity is permitted, but not required.

Finally, it would appear that at least in the case of several of the scholars cited herein the major theological driver leading towards a temporal view of divine eternity is an apparent and perhaps misguided over-arching need to guard libertarian freedom.

⁷⁷Craig, 119-125.

⁷⁸Zagzebski, 125f.

⁷⁹Kvanvig, 167-171.

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