

COHERENCE OF THEISM

One of the central concerns of contemporary Philosophy of Religion is the coherence of theism, or the analysis of the attributes of God. During the generation previous to our own the concept of God was often regarded as fertile ground for anti-theistic arguments. The difficulty with theism, it was said, was not merely that there are no good arguments for the existence of God, but, more fundamentally, that the notion of God is incoherent.

This anti-theistic critique has evoked a prodigious literature devoted to the philosophical analysis of the concept of God. Two controls have tended to guide this inquiry into the divine nature: Scripture and Perfect Being theology. For thinkers in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, God's self-revelation in Scripture is obviously paramount in understanding what God is like. In addition, the Anselmian conception of God as the greatest conceivable being or most perfect being has guided philosophical speculation on the raw data of Scripture, so that God's biblical attributes are to be conceived in ways that would serve to exalt God's greatness. Since the concept of God is underdetermined by the biblical data and since what constitutes a "great-making" property is to some degree debatable, philosophers working within the Judaeo-Christian tradition enjoy considerable latitude in formulating a philosophically coherent and biblically faithful doctrine of God. Theists thus found that anti-theistic critiques of certain conceptions of God could actually be quite helpful in framing a more adequate conception. Thus, far from undermining theism, the anti-theistic critiques have served mainly to reveal how rich and challenging is the concept of God, thereby refining and strengthening theistic belief.

1.0 ASEITY

[CADBURY LECTURES 1-4]

2.0 ETERNITY

That God is eternal is the clear teaching of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures (Ps. 90.2), and God's eternality also follows from divine necessity. For if God exists necessarily, it is impossible that He not exist; therefore He can never go out of or come into being. To say that God is eternal means minimally that He never came into being and will never go out of being. To exist eternally is to exist permanently.¹

There are, however, at least two ways in which something could exist permanently. One way would be to exist omnitemporally throughout infinite time. In this case God would have an immemorial and everlasting temporal duration. The other way in which a being could exist permanently would be by existing timelessly. In this case God would completely transcend time, having neither temporal location nor temporal extension. He would simply exist in an undifferentiated, timeless state.

As Christian philosophers, the initial question we must ask is: does biblical teaching on divine eternity favor either one of these views? The question turns out to be surprisingly difficult to answer. On the one hand, it is indisputable that the biblical writers typically portray God as engaged in temporal activities, including foreknowing the future and remembering the past, and when they speak directly of God's eternal existence they do so in terms of beginningless and endless temporal duration. The data are not wholly one-sided, however. There is some evidence, at least, that when God is considered in relation to creation He must be thought of as the transcendent Creator of time and the ages and therefore as existing beyond time (Gen. 1.1; Prov. 8.22-23; I Cor. 2.7; II Tim. 1.9; Tit. 1.2-3; Jude 25). So the biblical data are underdeterminative, and one

¹ For an analysis of what it means to be permanent, see Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 133; cf. Quentin Smith, "A New Typology of Temporal and Atemporal Permanence," *Noûs* 23 (1989): 307-30. According to Leftow an entity is permanent if and only if it exists and has no first or last finite period of existence, and there are no moments before or after it exists.

seems forced to conclude with James Barr that “if such a thing as a Christian doctrine of time has to be developed, the work of discussing it and developing it must belong not to biblical but to philosophical theology.”²

At issue here is God’s relationship to time: Does God exist temporally or atemporally? God exists temporally if and only if He exists in time, that is to say, if and only if His duration has phases which are related to each other as earlier and later. In that case, God, as a personal being, has experientially a past, a present, and a future. No matter what moment in time we pick, given God’s permanence, the assertion, “God exists now,” were we to make it, would be literally true.

By contrast, God exists atemporally if and only if He is not temporal. This definition makes it evident that temporality and timelessness are contradictories: an entity must exist one way or the other and cannot exist both ways at once. If, then, God exists atemporally, He has no past, present, and future. At any moment in time it would be true to assert, “God exists,” in the tenseless sense of “exists,” as when one says, “The natural numbers exist,” but not true to assert, “God exists now.”

There is considerable disagreement concerning God’s relationship to time. Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas argued that God transcends time, just as He does space, and therefore has His whole life at once (*tota simul*). Such thinkers often say that from the standpoint of eternity (*sub specie aeternitatis*) the entire series of temporal events is real to God and thus available for His causal influence at any point in history through a single timeless act. On the other hand, Aristotle may well have taken God’s eternity to be everlasting temporal duration, and Duns Scotus sharply criticized the atemporalist view of Aquinas on the grounds that time, being dynamic by nature, cannot co-exist as a whole with God. Isaac Newton, the father of modern physics, in his General Scholium to his great *Principia Mathematica*, founded his doctrine of

²James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 149.

absolute time upon God's infinite temporal duration, and in our day process philosophers and theologians like Whitehead and Hartshorne have vigorously asserted the temporalist view.

Why think that God exists timelessly? God's atemporality could be successfully deduced from His simplicity and immutability, for if God is absolutely simple, He stands in no real relations whatsoever, including temporal relations of *earlier/later than*, and if God is absolutely immutable, then He cannot change in any way, which, if He is in time, He must do, at least extrinsically, as things co-present with Him change. But these extra-biblical doctrines are highly controversial and now widely rejected, so that one needs to look for other grounds of one's doctrine of divine eternity.

In contrast to divine simplicity and immutability, divine omniscience is clearly a great-making property and enjoys considerable Scriptural warrant. An argument for divine timelessness predicated upon God's omniscience would therefore have a more secure theological foundation. Many thinkers have argued that God's knowledge of future contingents implies divine timelessness. The reasoning seems to go as follows:

1. A temporal being cannot know future contingent events.
2. God knows future contingent events.
3. Therefore, God is not a temporal being.

But if God is not a temporal being, then it follows that God is timeless.

Despite the denial of (2) on the part of a wide range of contemporary thinkers from process theologians to so-called "open" theists, a biblical doctrine of divine omniscience makes (2) undeniable for an orthodox theologian.³ The argument hinges, therefore, on the truth of (1). On behalf of (1) it is usually claimed that contingent events can be known only insofar as they are real or existent, from which it follows, given God's

³ See my *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Bookhouse, 1987.

knowledge of them, that future contingent events are real or existent. Defenders of divine timelessness such as Boethius, Anselm, and Aquinas thus typically maintained that all events in time are real to God and therefore can be known by Him via His *scientia visionis* (knowledge of vision).

How can we make sense of this claim? The most plausible move for the defender of divine timelessness to make will be to hold that the four-dimensional space-time manifold exists tenselessly and that God transcends that manifold. A good many physicists and philosophers of time and space embrace such a tenseless view of time (spacetime realism). Such a view makes sense of the traditional claim that all events in time are present to God and therefore known to Him via His *scientia visionis*.

The drawback is that there is a high price to be paid philosophically and theologically for such a tenseless theory of time.⁴ Therefore, the claim that contingent events can be known only insofar as they are real or existent comes with a considerable price tag for the orthodox theist. One is therefore inclined to be sceptical of the argument on behalf of (1).

Moreover, (1) can be directly challenged as well. In assessing the question of how God knows truths about temporal events, we may distinguish two models of divine cognition: the *perceptualist* model and the *conceptualist* model. The perceptualist model construes divine knowledge on the analogy of sense perception: God looks and sees what is there. Such a model patently underlies the classic doctrine of *scientia visionis* and is implicitly assumed when people speak of God's "foreseeing" the future. The perceptualist model of divine cognition does encounter difficulty concerning God's

⁴ See my *The Tenseless Theory of Time: A Critical Examination*, Synthese Library 294 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000).

knowledge of future contingents, for, if future events do not exist, there is nothing there to perceive.⁵

By contrast on a conceptualist model of divine knowledge, God does not acquire His knowledge of the world by anything like perception. His knowledge of the future is not based on His “looking” ahead and “seeing” what lies in the future (a terribly anthropomorphic notion in any case). Rather God’s knowledge is more like a mind’s knowledge of innate ideas. It is therefore inappropriate to speak of God’s acquiring knowledge at all. Rather as an omniscient being, God has essentially the property of knowing all truths; there are truths about future events; *ergo*, God knows all truths concerning future events. So long as we are not seduced into thinking of divine foreknowledge on the model of perception, it is no longer evident why knowledge of future contingents should be impossible.

We can go further, however. For the doctrine of middle knowledge (*scientia media*) is a version of the conceptualist model which allows us to say considerably more about the basis of God’s foreknowledge of future contingents. Divine foreknowledge is based on (i) God’s middle knowledge of what every creature would freely do under any circumstances and (ii) His knowledge of the divine decree to create certain sets of circumstances and to place certain creatures in them. Given middle knowledge and the divine decree, foreknowledge follows automatically as a result without any perception of the created world. I shall defer further discussion of this model of divine knowledge until locus 2.28. In sum, while the argument from God’s knowledge of future contingents has

⁵ Notice, however, that if we think of statements or facts as with in God’s perceptual purview, then even on a perceptualist model, God must know the future, so long as the Principle of Bivalence holds for future-tense statements. For He perceives which future-tense statements presently have the property of truth inhering in them or which future-tense facts presently exist. Thus, by means of His perception of presently existing realities He knows the truth about the future.

some force in motivating a doctrine of divine timelessness, that force is mitigated by the availability of viable alternatives and the high price exacted by a tenseless theory of time.

A different argument for divine timelessness arises from the concept of time in Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (STR). According to Einstein's theory, there is no unique, universal time and so no unique, worldwide "now." Each inertial frame has its own time and its own present moment, and there is no overarching, absolute time in which all these diverse times are integrated into one. So if God is in time, then the obvious question raised by STR is: *Whose time is He in?*

The defender of divine timelessness maintains that there is no acceptable answer to this question. We cannot plausibly pick out some inertial frame and identify its time as God's time because God is not a physical object in uniform motion, and so the choice of any such frame would be wholly arbitrary. Moreover, it is difficult to see how God, confined to the time of one inertial frame, could be causally sustaining events which are real relative to other inertial frames but are future or past relative to God's frame. Similarly, God's knowledge of what is happening now would be restricted to the temporal perspective of a single frame, leaving Him ignorant of what is actually going on in other frames. In any case, if God were to be associated with a particular inertial frame, then surely, as God's time, the time of that frame would be privileged. It would be the equivalent of the classical aether frame. So long as we maintain, with Einstein, that no frame is privileged, then we cannot identify the time of any inertial frame as God's time.

Neither can we say that God exists in the "now" associated with the time of every inertial frame, for this would obliterate the unity of God's consciousness. In order to preserve God's personal consciousness, it must not be fragmented and scattered among the inertial frames in the universe. But if God's time cannot be identified with the time of a single frame or of a plurality of frames, then God must not be in time at all, that is to say, He exists timelessly.

We can summarize this reasoning as follows:

1. STR is correct in its description of time.
2. If STR is correct in its description of time, then if God is temporal, He exists in either the time associated with a single inertial frame or the times associated with a plurality of inertial frames.
3. Therefore, if God is temporal, He exists in either the time associated with a single inertial frame or the times associated with a plurality of inertial frames.
4. God does not exist in either the time associated with a single inertial frame or the times associated with a plurality of inertial frames.
5. Therefore, God is not temporal.

What can be said in response to this argument? Although it may come as something of a shock to many, the most dubious premiss of the argument is (1). For STR's concept of time rests upon decrepit epistemological foundations. Einstein's re-definition of simultaneity in terms of clock synchronization by light signals simply assumes that the time which light takes to travel between two relatively stationary observers A and B is the same from A to B as from B to A in a round-trip journey. That assumption presupposes that A and B, while at relative rest, are not both in absolute motion, or in other words that neither absolute space nor a privileged inertial frame exists. What justification did Einstein have for so radical a presupposition? The answer, in a word, is verificationism. It is empirically impossible to distinguish uniform motion from rest relative to such a frame, and Einstein believed that if absolute space and absolute motion or rest are undetectable empirically, they therefore do not exist (and may even be said to be meaningless). Historians of science have shown that at the philosophical roots of Einstein's theory lies a verificationist epistemology, mediated to the young physicist chiefly through the influence of Ernst Mach, which comes to expression in Einstein's analysis of the concepts of time and space.⁶

⁶ See especially Gerald J. Holton, "Mach, Einstein and the Search for Reality," in *Ernst Mach: Physicist and Philosopher*, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science 6 (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1970), pp. 165-99; idem, "Where Is Reality? The Answers of

The untenability of verificationism is so universally acknowledged that it will not be necessary to rehearse the objections against it here.⁷ Verificationism provides no justification for thinking that Newton erred, for example, in holding that absolute time, grounded in God's sempiternal duration, exists independently of our physical measures of it and may or may not be accurately registered by them. With the demise of verificationism, the philosophical underpinnings of STR have collapsed. In short, there is no reason think that (1) is true.

But what about (2)? The difficulty with this premiss is that it fails to take into account the fact that STR is a *restricted* theory of relativity and therefore is correct only within prescribed limits. It is a theory which deals with uniform motion only. The analysis of non-uniform motion, such as acceleration and rotation, is provided by the General Theory of Relativity (GTR). STR cannot therefore be expected to give us the final word about the nature of time and space; indeed, within the context of GTR a new and important conception of time emerges.

GTR serves to introduce into Relativity Theory a cosmic perspective, enabling us to draft cosmological models of the universe governed by the gravitational field equations of GTR. Within the context of such cosmological models, the issue of time resurfaces dramatically. All contemporary cosmological models derive from Russian physicist Alexander Friedman's 1922 model of an expanding, material universe characterized by ideal homogeneity and isotropy. Several features of the cosmic time in Friedman models merit comment. Although GTR does not itself mandate any formula for how to slice up

Einstein," in *Science and Synthesis*, ed. UNESCO (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1971), pp. 45-69; and the essays collected together in idem, *Thematic Origins of Scientific Thought*. See also Lawrence Sklar, "Time, Reality, and Relativity," in *Reduction, Time and Reality*, ed. Richard Healey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 141.

⁷ See the excellent survey in Frederick Suppe, "The Search for Philosophical Understanding of Scientific Theories," in *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, 2d ed., ed. F. Suppe (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp. 3-118.

space-time into a temporally ordered foliation, nevertheless certain models of space-time, like the Friedman model, have a dynamical, evolving spatial geometry whose natural symmetries guide the construction of cosmic time; in order to ensure a smooth development of this geometry, it will be necessary to construct a time parameter based on a preferred slicing of space-time. Now as a parameter independent of spatial coordinates, cosmic time measures the duration of the universe as a whole in an observer-independent way; that is to say, the lapse of cosmic time is the same for all observers. Nevertheless, cosmic time is related to the local times of a special group of observers called “fundamental observers.” These are hypothetical observers, associated with the galaxies, who are at rest with respect to the expansion of space itself. As the expansion of space proceeds, each fundamental observer remains in the same place, though his spatial separation from fellow fundamental observers increases. Cosmic time relates to these observers in that their local times all coincide with cosmic time in their vicinity. Because of their mutual recession, the class of fundamental observers do not serve to define a global inertial frame, technically speaking, even though all of them are at rest. But since each fundamental observer is at rest with respect to space, the events which he calculates to be simultaneous will coincide locally with the events which are simultaneous in cosmic time.

What this implies is that, contrary to premiss (2), it does not follow from the correctness of STR that if God is in time, then He is in the time of one or more inertial frames.⁸ For if God exists in cosmic time, there is no universal inertial frame with which He can be associated, even though there exists a preferred foliation of spacetime into successive hypersurfaces. Based on a cosmological, rather than a local, perspective, cosmic time serves to restore the classical notions of universal time and absolute

⁸ One could say that God exists in the time of the inertial frame of every fundamental observer; but then there is no objection, since all their local times fuse into one cosmic time.

simultaneity which STR denied. The defender of divine temporality may accordingly hold that God exists in cosmic time.⁹

Perhaps the most persuasive argument in favor of divine timelessness is based on the incompleteness of temporal life. Brian Leftow argues that the fleeting nature of temporal life is incompatible with the life of a most perfect being such as God. A temporal being is unable to enjoy what is past or future for it, possessing only the fleeting present. The passage of time thus renders it impossible for any temporal being, even God, to possess all its life at once. By contrast a timeless God lives all His life at once because He literally has no past or future and so suffers no loss. Therefore, since God is the most perfect being, He is timeless.

We can formulate this argument as follows:

1. God is the most perfect being.
2. The most perfect being has the most perfect mode of existence.
3. Temporal existence is a less perfect mode of existence than timeless existence.
4. Therefore, God has the most perfect mode of existence.
5. Therefore, God has a timeless mode of existence.

The key premiss here is (3), which rests on very powerful intuitions about the irretrievable loss that arises through the experience of temporal passage, a loss which intuitively should not characterize the experience of a most perfect being. Some philosophers of time might try to avert the force of this consideration by adopting a tenseless view of time according to which things and events do not in fact come to be or pass away. The difference between past, present, and future is a subjective illusion of consciousness. On this view of time no temporal being ever really loses its past or has

⁹ I assume here that there is but one universe. If one adopts a multiverse hypothesis (2.112), then God will be in the global time associated with the inflating multiverse.

not yet acquired its future; it (or its temporal parts) just exists tenselessly at its various temporal locations. A temporal God would exist at all temporal locations without beginning or end and so would not lose or acquire portions of His life.

The problem with this escape route is that it fails to appreciate that the argument is based on the *experience* of temporal passage, rather than on the objective reality of temporal passage itself. Even if the future never becomes and the past is never really lost, the fact remains that for a temporal person the past is lost *to him* and the future is not accessible *to him*. For this reason, it would be futile to attempt to elude the force of this argument by postulating a temporal deity in a tenseless time.

Perhaps, however, the realization that the argument is essentially experiential in character opens the door for a temporalist alternative. When we recall that God is perfectly omniscient and so forgets nothing of the past and knows everything about the future, then time's passage is not so tragic for Him. His past experiences do not fade as ours do, and He has perfect prescience of what the future holds. So it is far from obvious that the experience of temporal passage is so melancholy an affair for an omniscient God as it is for us. Moreover, the life of a perfect person may have to be characterized by the incompleteness which would in other contexts be considered an imperfection. There is some evidence that consciousness of time's flow can actually be an enriching experience.¹⁰ Timelessness may not be the most perfect mode of existence of a perfect person. All this goes to call into question (3). Still, this last argument does have some force and so needs to be weighed against whatever arguments can be offered on behalf of divine temporality.

¹⁰ See the very interesting piece by R. W. Hepburn, "Time-Transcendence and Some Related Phenomena in the Arts," in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, 4th series, ed. H. D. Lewis, Muirhead Library of Philosophy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), pp. 152-173.

What arguments, then, might be offered for divine temporality? One argument frequently raised in the literature is that timelessness and personhood are incompatible. Some philosophers have denied that a timeless God can be a self-conscious, rational being because He could not exhibit certain forms of consciousness which we normally associate with personal beings (namely, ourselves). For example, Robert Coburn has written,

Surely it is a necessary condition of anything's being a person that it should be capable (logically) of, among other things, doing at least some of the following: remembering, anticipating, reflecting, deliberating, deciding, intending, and acting intentionally. To see that this is so one need but ask oneself whether anything which necessarily lacked all of the capacities noted would, under any conceivable circumstances, count as a person. But now an eternal being would necessarily lack all of these capacities in as much as their exercise by a being clearly requires that the being exist in time. . . . Hence, no eternal being, it would seem, could be a person.¹¹

Since God is essentially personal, He therefore cannot be timeless.

We can formulate this argument as follows (using x , y , z to represent certain properties allegedly essential to personhood):

1. Necessarily, if God is timeless, He does not have the properties x , y , z .
2. Necessarily, if God does not have the properties x , y , z , then God is not personal.
3. Necessarily, God is personal.
4. Therefore, necessarily, God is not timeless.

The defender of divine timelessness may attempt to turn back this argument either by challenging the claim that the properties in question are necessary conditions of personhood or by showing that a timeless God could possess the relevant properties after

¹¹Robert C. Coburn, "Professor Malcolm on God," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 41 (1963): 155.

all. With respect to the second strategy, even if Coburn were correct that a personal being must be capable of exhibiting the forms of consciousness he lists, it does not follow that a timeless God cannot be personal. For God could be *capable* of exhibiting such forms of consciousness but be timeless just in case He does not *in fact* exhibit any of them. In other words, the hidden assumption behind Coburn's reasoning is that God's being timeless or temporal is an essential property of God. But that assumption seems dubious. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that God is in fact temporal. Is it logically impossible that God could have been timeless instead? Since God's decision to create is free, we can conceive of a possible world in which God alone exists. If He is unchanging in such a world, then on any relational view of time God would be timeless. In such an atemporal world God would lack certain properties which we have supposed Him to have in the actual world--for example, the property of *knowing what time it is* or the property of *co-existing with temporal creatures*--and He would have other properties which He lacks in the actual world--for example, the property of *being alone* or of *knowing that He is alone*--, but none of these differences seems significant enough to deny that God could be either timeless or temporal and still be the same being. God's temporal status is thus plausibly a contingent rather than essential property. So (apart from highly controversial claims on behalf of divine simplicity or immutability) there seems to be no reason to think that God is either *essentially* temporal or *essentially* timeless.

So if timelessness is a merely contingent property of God, He could be entirely capable of remembering, anticipating, reflecting, and so on; only were He to do so, then He would not be timeless. So long as He freely refrains from such activities He is timeless, even though He has the *capacity* to engage in those activities. Thus, by Coburn's own lights God must be regarded as personal.

At a more fundamental level, it is in any case pretty widely recognized that most of the forms of consciousness mentioned by Coburn are not essential to personhood--indeed, not even the capacity for them is essential to personhood. Take remembering, for

example. Any temporal individual who lacked memory would be mentally ill or less than human. But if an individual exists timelessly, then he has no past to remember.

Similarly with regard to anticipation: since a timeless individual has no future, there just is nothing to anticipate. Nevertheless, given His omniscience, God would still know what takes place (tenselessly) at every time.

As for reflecting and deliberating, these are ruled out not so much by God's timelessness as by His omniscience. An omniscient being cannot reflect and deliberate because He already knows the conclusions to be derived. Even if God is temporal, He does not engage in reflection and deliberation. But He is surely not impersonal as a result.

What about deciding, intending, and acting intentionally? All of these forms of consciousness are exhibited by a timeless God. With respect to deciding, again omniscience alone precludes God's deciding in the sense of making up His mind after a period of indecision. Even a temporal God does not decide in that sense. But God does decide in the sense that His will intends toward one alternative rather than another and does so freely. It is up to God what He does; He could have willed otherwise. This is the strongest sense of libertarian freedom of the will. In God's case, because He is omniscient, His free decisions are either sempiternal or timeless rather than preceded by a period of ignorance and indecision.

As for intending or acting intentionally, there is no reason to think that intentions are necessarily future-directed. One can direct one's intentions at one's present state. God, as the Good, can timelessly desire and will His own infinite goodness. Such a changeless intention can be as timeless as God's knowing His own essence. Moreover, in the empty world we have envisioned, God may timelessly will and intend to refrain from creating a universe. God's willing to refrain from creation should not be confused with the mere absence of the intention to create. A stone is characterized by the absence of any intention to create but cannot be said to will to refrain from creating. In a world in

which God freely refrains from creation, His abstaining from creating is a result of a free act of the will on His part. Hence, it seems that God can timelessly intend, will, and choose what He does.

In short, the argument for divine temporality based on God's personhood cannot be deemed a success. On the contrary, a timeless God can be plausibly said to be a self-conscious, rational individual endowed with freedom of the will and therefore a person.

In our thought experiment above, we abstracted from the actual existence of the temporal world and considered God existing alone without creation and asked whether He could exist timelessly. But, of course, the temporal world does exist. The question therefore arises whether God can stand in relation to a temporal world and yet remain timeless. It is very difficult to see how He can. Imagine once more God existing changelessly alone without creation, but with a changeless determination of His will to create a temporal world with a beginning. Since God is omnipotent, His will is done, and a temporal world comes into existence. Can God remain untouched by the world's temporality? It seems not. For at the first moment of time, God stands in a new relation in which He did not stand before (indeed, there was no "before"). Even if in creating the world God undergoes no *intrinsic* change, He at least undergoes an *extrinsic* change. For at the moment of creation, God comes into the relation of *sustaining* the universe or, at the very least, of *co-existing with* the universe, relations in which He did not stand before. Since He is free to refrain from creation, God could have never stood in those relations, had He so willed. But in virtue of His creating a temporal world, God comes into a relation with that world the moment it springs into being. Thus, even if it is not the case that God is temporal prior to His creation of the world, He nonetheless undergoes an extrinsic change at the moment of creation which draws Him into time in virtue of His real relation to the world. So even if God is timeless without creation, His free decision to create a temporal world also constitutes a free decision on His part to exist temporally.

The argument can be summarized as follows:

1. God is creatively active in the temporal world.
2. If God is creatively active in the temporal world, God is really related to the temporal world.
3. If God is really related to the temporal world, God is temporal.
4. Therefore, God is temporal.

This argument, if successful, does not prove that God is essentially temporal, but that if He is a Creator of a temporal world--as He in fact is--, then He is temporal.

One way to escape this argument is to deny (2). This might not appear to be a very promising strategy, since it seems obvious that God is related to His creatures insofar as He sustains them, knows them, and loves them. Remarkably, however, it was precisely this premiss that medieval theologians like Aquinas denied. Thomas agrees with (3). On his view, relational properties involving God and creatures, like God's *being Lord*, first begin to exist at the moment at which the creatures come into being. Hence, if God stands in real relations to His creatures, He acquires those relational properties *de novo* at the moment of creation and thus undergoes change. And anything that changes, even extrinsically, must be in time. Thomas escapes the conclusion that God is therefore temporal by denying that God stands in any real relation to the world. Since God is absolutely simple, He stands in no relations to anything, for relations would introduce complexity into God's being. Aquinas holds, paradoxically, that while creatures are really related to God, God is not really related to creatures. The relation of God to creatures exists only in our minds, not in reality. On Aquinas's view, then, God undergoes no extrinsic change in creating the world. He just exists, and creation is creatures' coming into existence with a real relation to God of being caused by God.

This is certainly an extraordinary doctrine. Wholly apart from its reliance on divine simplicity, the doctrine of no real relations is very problematic. God's sustaining the world is a causal relation rooted in the active power and intrinsic properties of God as

First Cause. Thus, to say the world is really related to God by the relation *is sustained by*, but that God is not really related to the world by the relation *is sustaining* seems unintelligible. It is to say that one can have real effects without a real cause--which seems self-contradictory or incomprehensible.

Moreover, God is surely really related to His creatures in the following sense: in different possible worlds, God's will, knowledge, and love are different than they actually are. For example, if God had not chosen to create a universe at all, He would surely have a different will than that which He has (for He would not will to create the universe); He would know different truths than the ones He knows (for example, He would not know *The universe exists*); He would not love the same creatures He actually loves (since no creatures would exist). Incredibly, however, Aquinas denies this. It is the implication of his view that God is perfectly similar in every possible world: He never wills differently, He never acts differently, He never knows differently, He never loves differently. Whether the world is empty or chock-full of creatures of every sort, there is no difference in God. But then it becomes unintelligible why this universe or any universe exists rather than just nothing. The reason cannot lie in God, for He is perfectly similar in all possible worlds. Nor can the reason lie in creatures, for we are asking for some explanation of their existence. Thus, on Thomas's view there just is no reason for why this universe or any universe at all exists. Therefore, Thomas's attempt to evade the present argument by denying (2) is implausible.

Recent defenders of timeless eternity have turned their guns on (3) instead. They have tried to craft theories of divine eternity which would permit God to be really related to the temporal world and yet to exist timelessly.

For example, Eleonore Stump and the late Norman Kretzmann attempted to craft a new simultaneity relation, which they believed would allow a timeless God to relate to His creation. They propose to treat modes of existence as analogous to reference frames in STR and to construct a definition of ET-simultaneity in terms of two reference frames

(timelessness and temporality) and two observers (one in eternity and one in time). Their basic idea is as follows: Take some eternal being x and some temporal being y . These two are ET-simultaneous just in case relative to some hypothetical observer in the eternal reference frame x is eternally present and y is observed as temporally present, and relative to some hypothetical observer in any temporal reference frame y is temporally present and x is observed as eternally present.¹²

On the basis of their definition of ET-simultaneity, Stump and Kretzmann believe themselves to have solved the problem of how a timeless being can be really related to a temporal world. For relative to the eternal reference frame, any temporal entity which exists at any time is observed to be present, and relative to any moment of time God is observed to be present. The metaphysical relativity postulated by ET-simultaneity implies that all events are present to God in eternity and therefore open to His timeless causal influence. Every action of God is ET-simultaneous with its temporal effect.

Unfortunately, as many critics have pointed out, the language of observation employed in the definition is wholly obscure. In STR very specific physical content is given to the notion of observation through Einstein's operational definitions of distant simultaneity. But in the definition of ET-simultaneity, no hint is given as to what is meant, for example, by x 's being observed as eternally present relative to some moment of time. In the absence of any procedure for determining ET-simultaneity, the definition reduces to the assertion that relative to the reference frame of eternity x is eternally present and y is temporally present and that relative to some temporal reference frame y is

¹² A word of clarification: by "eternal" Stump and Kretzmann mean "timeless," and by "temporal reference frame" they mean "moment of time." It is also worth noting that this definition is not really analogous to simultaneity in STR at all. A better analogy would be to say that x and y are ET-simultaneous just in case they both exist at the same eternal present relative to the eternal reference frame and both exist at the same moment of time relative to the temporal reference frame. But then God would be temporal relative to our mode of existence, which Stump and Kretzmann do not want to say.

temporally present and x is eternally present--which is only a restatement of the problem! Worse, if y is temporally present to God, then God and y are not ET-simultaneous at all, but temporally simultaneous. Thus, God would be temporally simultaneous with every temporal event, which is to sacrifice divine timelessness.

To their credit, Stump and Kretzmann later revised their definition of ET-simultaneity so as to free it from observation language. Basically, their new account tries to define ET-simultaneity in terms of causal relations. On the new definition, x and y are ET-simultaneous just in case relative to an observer in the eternal reference frame, x is eternally present and y is temporally present, and the observer can enter into direct causal relations with both x and y ; and relative to an observer in any temporal reference frame, x is eternally present and y is at the same time as the observer, and the observer can enter into direct causal relations with both x and y .

The fundamental problem with this new account of ET-simultaneity is that it is viciously circular. For ET-simultaneity was originally invoked to explain how a timeless God could be causally active in time; but now ET-simultaneity is defined in terms of a timeless being's ability to be causally active in time. Our original problem was to explain how God could be both timeless and yet creatively active in the world. That is hardly explained by saying that a timeless God is ET-simultaneous with His effects in time and then defining ET-simultaneity in terms of the ability of a timeless being to be causally related to temporal effects. This amounts to saying that God can be causally active in time because He can be causally active in time. Since their first definition was explanatorily vacuous and their second definition viciously circular, Stump and Kretzmann must be judged to have failed in their attempt to undercut (3).

Leftow has offered a different account of divine eternity in order to refute (3). On the Stump-Kretzmann model, there is no common reference frame or mode of existence shared by timeless and temporal beings. As a result, Stump and Kretzmann were unable to explain how such beings could be causally related. The essence of Leftow's proposal

is to remedy this defect by maintaining that temporal beings do exist in eternity; they share God's mode of existence and so can be causally related to God. But, he insists, this does not imply that time or temporal existence is illusory, for temporal beings also have a temporal mode of existence.

How can it be shown that temporal beings exist in timeless eternity? Leftow's argument is based on three theses:

- I. The distance between God and every thing in space is zero.
- II. Spatial things do not change in any way unless there is a change of place (a motion involving a material thing).
- III. If something is in time, it is also in space.

On the basis of these theses Leftow argues as follows: there can be no change of place relative to God because the distance between God and everything in space is zero. But if there is no change of place relative to God, there can be no change of any sort on the part of spatial things relative to God. Moreover, since anything that is temporal is also spatial, it follows that there are no temporal, non-spatial beings. The only temporal beings there are exist in space, and none of these changes relative to God. Assuming, then, some relational view of time, it follows that all temporal beings exist timelessly relative to God. Thus, relative to God all things are timelessly present and so can be causally related to God.

The problem with this reasoning is that all three of its foundational theses seem false, some obviously so. (I), for example, rests pretty obviously on a category mistake. When we say that there is no distance between God and creatures, we do not mean that there is a distance and its measure is zero. Rather we mean that the category of distance does not even apply to the relations between a non-spatial being like God and things in space. What about (II)? This thesis is false if time is "tensed." For then spatial things can change even if there is no spatial motion by changing in their temporal properties.

For example, some spatial object can change by being one year old and then becoming two years old, even if no change of place has occurred. Even most relationalists are today willing to admit that time can go on during periods of spatial changelessness. So even if the entire universe were frozen into immobility, there would still be change relative to God, namely, change of temporal properties. Thus, if time is tensed--and Leftow allows that may be --, then his theory is nullified. Finally, consider (III). Leftow needs this thesis, lest someone say that there are non-spatial, temporal beings like angels which are changing relative to God. Such beings would (on Leftow's analysis) have a zero distance from God and yet not be changeless relative to God. Thus, they would not exist in eternity. So in order to sustain his claim that temporal beings exist in eternity, Leftow has to get rid of such beings. But we have every reason to reject this radical thesis. Even in the absence of a physical universe, God could choose to entertain a succession of thoughts or to create an angelic being which experiences a stream of consciousness, and such a series of mental events alone is sufficient for such entities' being in time. Thus, all of Leftow's key theses are at least dubious, if not clearly false. We have little choice but to conclude that he has given no good grounds for thinking that temporal beings exist in timeless eternity.

In summary, it seems that we have here a powerful argument for divine temporality. Classical attempts like Aquinas's to deny that God is really related to the world and contemporary attempts like those of Stump, Kretzmann, and Leftow to deny that God's real relation to the world involves Him in time all appear in the end to be less plausible than the premisses of the argument itself.

We have seen that God's action in the temporal world gives us good grounds for concluding God to be temporal in view of the extrinsic change He undergoes through His changing relations with the world. But the existence of a temporal world also seems to entail intrinsic change in God in view of His knowledge of what is happening in the temporal world. For since what is happening in the world is in constant flux, so also

must God's knowledge be in constant flux. Defenders of divine temporality have argued that a timeless God cannot know certain tensed facts about the world--for example, what is happening now--and therefore, since God is omniscient, He must be temporal.

We can formulate the argument as follows:

1. A temporal world exists.
2. God is omniscient.
3. If a temporal world exists, then if God is omniscient, God knows tensed facts.
4. If God is timeless, He does not know tensed facts.
5. Therefore, God is not timeless.

Again, this argument does not prove that God is essentially temporal, but, if successful, it does show that if a temporal world exists, then God is temporal.

Defenders of divine timelessness have attempted to refute this argument either by arguing that a timeless God can know tensed facts or by arguing that God may still qualify as omniscient even if He is ignorant of tensed facts.

Let us look first at the plausibility of denying (4). Can a timeless God know tensed facts? Although Jonathan Kvanvig, Edward Wierenga, and Leftow have all argued that God can know the facts expressed by tensed sentences, an analysis of their respective positions reveals that in the end they all embrace the view that the factual content expressed by tensed sentences is tenseless. Despite first appearances to the contrary, they all accept the truth of (4). Kvanvig, Wierenga, and Leftow's accounts are the most sophisticated attempts to explain how a timeless God can know the facts expressed by tensed sentences, yet they all finally deny that God knows tensed facts. Thus, (4) seems secure.

The defender of divine timelessness has no recourse, then, but to deny (3). He must deny that omniscience entails a knowledge of tensed facts. He can do this either by

revising the traditional definition of omniscience or else by maintaining that tense, while an objective feature of time, does not strictly belong to the factual content expressed by tensed sentences. Let us examine each strategy in turn.

The general problem with the strategy of revising the traditional definition of omniscience is that any adequate definition of a concept must be in line with our intuitive understanding of that concept. We are not free simply to “cook” the definition just to solve some problem under discussion. According to the traditional definition, a person is omniscient if and only if, for every fact, he knows that fact and does not believe its contradictory (2.28). On such a definition, if there are tensed facts, an omniscient person must know them. What plausible alternative definition of omniscience might the defender of divine timelessness offer?

Wierenga offers a revised account of omniscience which would not require an omniscient person to know tensed facts. Some facts, he says, are facts only from a particular perspective. They must be known to an omniscient being only if he shares that particular perspective. Thus, a person is omniscient if and only if, for every fact and every perspective, if something is a fact from a certain perspective, then that person must know that it is a fact from that perspective, and if that person shares that perspective, then he must know the fact in question. Wierenga treats moments of time as perspectives relative to which tensed facts exist. So while a temporal person existing on December 8, 1941, must (if he is omniscient) know the fact *Yesterday the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor*, a timeless person must know only that from the perspective of December 8, 1941, it is a fact that *Yesterday the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor*. On this definition God’s being omniscient does not require that He know the tensed fact, but only the tenseless fact that from a certain perspective a certain tensed fact exists.

Wierenga’s revised definition of omniscience seems to be unacceptably “cooked.” Wierenga is not denying that there are tensed facts. Rather he wants to allow that there really are tensed facts but to maintain that an omniscient being need not know them. This

claim seems quite implausible. On Wierenga's view temporal persons know an incalculable multitude of facts about the world of which a supposedly omniscient being is ignorant. Temporal persons know that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor is over; God has no idea whether it has occurred or not. Since He does not know what time it actually is, He does not know any tensed facts. This is an unacceptably limited field of knowledge to qualify as omniscience.

Leftow also entertains the idea of revising the definition of omniscience in such a way that omniscience does not entail knowledge of all truths. He argues, in effect, that there are many sorts of truths which God cannot know, so there is no harm in admitting one more class of truths (namely, tensed truths) of which God is ignorant. But, again, such a consideration should not affect the definition of "omniscience" as such. Besides, should it turn out that there are truths God cannot know, that is no reason for further eroding the extent of His knowledge by denying Him knowledge of tensed truths. In any case, does Leftow succeed in showing that there are truths which God cannot know? It seems not. His examples of things God cannot know include how it feels to be oneself a failure or a sinner. But Leftow has confused *knowing how* with *knowing that*. *Knowing how* does not take truths as its object. God can know such truths as *Being a failure feels lousy*, *Sinners feel guilty and hopeless*, and so on. God's not knowing how it feels to be Himself a failure or a sinner is not an example of truths He fails to know and so does not constitute a restriction on His omniscience. Leftow furnishes no example of any truth which might be conjoined with "knows that" such that we cannot say, "God knows that _____," where the blank is filled by the truth in question. Therefore, he has not adequately motivated denying that knowledge of tensed truths properly belongs to omniscience.

It seems, therefore, that no adequate grounds have been given for thinking that someone could be omniscient and yet not know tensed truths. The traditional definition of omniscience requires it, and we have no grounds which do not involve special pleading for revising the usual definition.

So what about the second strategy for denying (3), namely, maintaining that tense does not, strictly speaking, belong to the factual content expressed by tensed sentences, even though tense is an objective feature of the world? Tense might be analyzed as a feature of the mode in which the factual content is presented to someone expressing it, or of the way in which a person grasps the factual content, or of the context of someone's believing the factual content. Alternatively, tense could be understood in terms of a person's ascribing to himself in a present-tense way the property of being such as the factual content expressed by the sentence specifies. On such analyses, an omniscient being could be timeless because omniscience is traditionally defined in terms of factual knowledge and tense is not part of the factual content of tensed sentences. Tense is an objective feature of the world, but since it does not belong to the factual content of a sentence, a being which knew only tenseless facts could on the traditional definition count as omniscient.

Even though such analyses are plausible and attractive, I do not think that they save the day for the defender of divine timelessness. For as the greatest conceivable being, God is not merely factually omniscient, but also maximally excellent cognitively. On the theories under discussion a merely factually omniscient God would know such things as *God is omnipotent*, *God loves His creatures*, *God created the universe*, and so on. But He would not have to possess any first-person indexical beliefs like "I am omnipotent," "I love my creatures," "I created the universe," and so forth. A machine could count as omniscient under such analyses. But such a God or machine would clearly not have maximum cognitive excellence. In order to qualify as maximally excellent cognitively, God would have to entertain all and only the appropriate, true first-person beliefs about Himself. This would furnish Him with knowledge *de se* (first-person self-knowledge) in addition to mere knowledge *de re* (knowledge of a thing from a third-person perspective). In order to be maximally excellent cognitively, God would not have to possess all knowledge *de se* in the world, but only such knowledge *de se* as is

appropriate to Himself. It would be a cognitive defect, not a perfection, for God to have the belief “I am Napoleon,” though for Napoleon such a belief would be a perfection. The point is that omniscience (on these theories) is not enough for perfect being theology; God must be maximally excellent cognitively.

Now in the same way, it is a cognitive perfection to know what time it is, what is actually happening in the universe. A being whose knowledge is composed exclusively of tenseless facts is less excellent cognitively than a being who also knows what has occurred, what is occurring, and what will occur in the world. This latter person knows infinitely more than the former and is involved in no cognitive defect in so knowing. On the analogy of knowledge *de se*, we can refer to such knowledge as knowledge *de praesenti* (knowledge of the present). A being which lacks such knowledge is more ignorant and less excellent cognitively than a being which possesses it. Accordingly, if we adopt views according to which tense is extraneous to the factual content expressed by a tensed sentence, we should simply revise premiss (3) to read

3'. If a temporal world exists, then if God is maximally excellent cognitively, then God has knowledge *de praesenti*

and, with appropriate revisions, the argument goes through as before.

The attempt to deny (3) thus seems to fare no better than the effort to refute (4). If God is omniscient, then given the existence of a temporal world, He cannot be ignorant of tensed facts. It follows that God is not timeless, which is to say, He is temporal. So in addition to the argument from divine action in the world, we now have a second powerful argument based on God's changing knowledge of tensed facts for thinking that God is in time.

On the basis of our foregoing discussion, we have seen comparatively weak grounds for affirming divine timelessness but two powerful arguments in favor of divine temporality. It would seem, then, that we should conclude that God is temporal. But

such a conclusion would be premature. For there does remain a way of escape still open for defenders of divine timelessness. The argument based on God's action in the world assumed the objective reality of temporal becoming, and the argument based on God's knowledge of the temporal world assumed the objective reality of tensed facts. If one denies the objective reality of temporal becoming and tensed facts, then the arguments are undercut. For in that case, nothing to which God is related ever comes into or passes out of being, and all facts exist tenselessly, so that God undergoes neither extrinsic nor intrinsic change. He can be the immutable, omniscient Sustainer and Knower of all things and, hence, exist timelessly.

In short, the defender of divine timelessness can escape the arguments for divine temporality by embracing the tenseless theory of time. It is noteworthy, however, that almost no defender of divine timelessness has taken this route. Virtually the only proponent of timeless eternity to embrace consciously the tenseless theory of time in defending God's timelessness is Paul Helm. It seems, then, that in order to adjudicate the question of the nature of divine eternity and God's relationship to time, philosophical theologians have no choice but to grapple with a further question, one of the most profound and controverted issues of metaphysics: Is time tensed or tenseless? We cannot do that here. So let me simply register my informed opinion that a tensed theory of time commends itself to us philosophically, theologically, and scientifically, so that I am an ardent proponent of the tensed theory of time. I take it therefore that God is temporal.

But if God is temporal in virtue of His relation to and knowledge of a temporal world, what about His state without the world? Did God exist literally before creation? Has He existed for infinite time, from eternity past? Is not such a hypothesis contradicted by the *kalam* cosmological argument against the infinitude of the past?

Strictly speaking, the argument for the finitude of the past did not reach the conclusion, "Therefore, time began to exist." Rather what it proved, if successful, is that

there cannot have been an infinite past, that is to say, a past which is composed of an infinite number of equal temporal intervals. But some philosophers have argued that in the absence of any empirical measures, there is no objective fact that one interval of time is longer or shorter than another distinct interval. Prior to creation it is impossible to differentiate between a tenth of a second and ten trillion years. There is no moment, say, one hour before creation. Time literally lacks any intrinsic metric. God existing alone without the universe would thus not endure through an infinite number of, say, hours, prior to the moment of creation.

Such an understanding of God's time prior to creation seems quite attractive. Nevertheless, a close inspection of the view reveals difficulties. Even in a metrically amorphous time, there are objective factual differences of length for certain temporal intervals. For in the case of intervals which are enclosed in other intervals, the enclosed intervals are factually shorter than their encompassing intervals. But this implies that if God existed temporally prior to creation, then He has in fact endured through a beginningless series of longer and longer intervals. In fact we can even say that such a pre-creation time must be infinite. The past is infinite if and only if there is no first interval of time and time is not circular. Thus, the amorphous time prior to creation would be infinite, even though we cannot compare the lengths of non-nested intervals of it. Thus, all the difficulties of an infinite past return to haunt us.

What must be done is to dissolve the linear geometrical structure of pre-creation time. One must maintain that prior to creation there literally are no intervals of time at all. There would be no earlier and later, no enduring through successive intervals, and, hence, no waiting, no temporal becoming. This changeless state would pass away, not successively, but as a whole, at the moment of creation, when metric time begins.

But such a changeless, undifferentiated state looks suspiciously like a state of timelessness! Imagine God existing changelessly alone in a possible world in which He refrains from creation. In such a world, God is reasonably conceived to be timeless. But

God, existing alone without creation in the actual world, is no different than He would be in such a possible world, even though in the actual world He becomes temporal by creating. To claim that time would exist without the universe in virtue of the beginning of the world seems to postulate a sort of backward causation: the occurrence of the first event not only causes time to exist with the event, but also before it. But on a dynamic theory of time, such retrocausation is metaphysically impossible, for it amounts to something's being caused by nothing, since at the time of the effect the retro-cause in no sense exists. Apart from backward causation, there seems to be nothing that would produce a time prior to the moment of creation. Time would simply begin with the occurrence of the first event, the act of creation.

It seems, therefore, that it is not only coherent but also plausible that God existing changelessly alone without creation would be timeless and that He enters time at the moment of creation in virtue of His real relation to the temporal universe. The image of God existing temporally prior to creation is just that: a figment of the imagination. Given that time began to exist, the most plausible view of God's relationship to time is that He is timeless without creation and temporal subsequent to creation

3.0 OMNISCIENCE

On the standard account of omniscience, for any person S , S is omniscient if and only if S knows every true proposition and believes no false proposition:

O: S is omniscient = *df.* For all p , if p , then S knows that p and does not believe that $\sim p$.

The standard account entails that if there are true propositions expressed by future-tense sentences, then God, since He is omniscient, must know those propositions.

The chief challenge to the doctrine of divine omniscience concerns God's knowledge of future contingents. A surprising number of contemporary philosophers and theologians have denied that God possesses such knowledge.

In addition to the biblical data supporting God's foreknowledge of future contingents, we have good philosophical grounds based in perfect being theology for affirming God's knowledge of future contingents:

1. God is a perfect being.
2. Any being which is perfect is omniscient.
3. An omniscient being knows all truths.
4. There are truths about future contingents.
5. Therefore, God is omniscient. (from 1, 2)
6. Therefore, God knows all truths. (from 3, 5)
7. Therefore, God knows all truths about future contingents. (from 4, 6)

If God exists in time, then He has literal foreknowledge of the events described by such propositions. So if it is true that "Jones will mow his lawn next Saturday," then God, being omniscient, must know and have always known the proposition expressed by this sentence.

But literal foreknowledge raises two difficult questions: (1) If God has always believed this proposition and God cannot be mistaken, then is not Jones fated to mow his lawn on Saturday? (2) If Jones's action is truly free, then how can God foreknow it?

The first question raises the issue of fatalism, the view that everything that happens happens of necessity. Ancient Greek thought was infected with fatalism, and the Church Fathers felt obliged stoutly to resist it. Greek fatalism was purely logical: if it is true that some event will happen, then it will necessarily happen. For the Church Fathers fatalism took on a theological coloring: if God foreknows that some event will happen, then it will necessarily happen. Almost every major Christian philosophical theologian after Origen had something to say about this question, the vast majority defending freedom and contingency, but some like Martin Luther and Jonathan Edwards, who denied libertarian freedom, endorsing it.

Aristotle had sought to avoid fatalism by denying the validity of the Principle of Bivalence for future contingent propositions; that is to say, he held that propositions about future contingents are neither true nor false. Such a position would be compatible with divine omniscience, since no truths remain unknown by God; but such a solution was not open to the Church Fathers in light of the biblical doctrine that God has foreknowledge (Greek: *prognosis* [Acts 2.23; I Pet. 1.1-2, 19-20]) and the many biblical examples of detailed prophecies of future events (*e.g.*, Mk 14.18, 30). Some contemporary philosophers, notably the Polish logician Lukasiewicz, have followed Aristotle's lead, but few have found this course attractive in view of the logical dislocations and implausibilities attending this position.¹³

Theists who deny God's knowledge of future contingents have therefore felt obliged to re-define omniscience in such a way that God's ignorance of true future contingent propositions does not count against His being omniscient. For example, it is typically proposed that *S* is omniscient if and only if *S* knows only and all true propositions which are such that it is logically possible for them to be known. But it is not clear what more beyond truth is required for a proposition to be logically possible to know, in which case the revision is pointless. Revisionists will say that true future contingent propositions are logically impossible to know, for if one knows them, then they are not contingently true. But the revisionist's reasoning is fallacious. For any future contingent proposition *p*, even if one grants that

1. Not-possibly (God knows *p*, and *p* is contingently true)
- and
2. *p* is contingently true,

¹³For discussion, see William Lane Craig, *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom: The Coherence of Theism: Omniscience*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History 19 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), chap. 4.

it does not logically follow that

3. Not-possibly (God knows p).

It only follows that God does not in fact know p . But it is still possible for Him to know p . Thus, even on the revisionist definition of omniscience, God must know future contingent propositions, since it is logically possible for Him to know them.

But if God knows future contingent propositions, does this not imply fatalism?

The question here is why we should think that (1) is true. The basic form of the fatalistic argument on behalf of (1) is as follows:

4. Necessarily (If God knows p , then p).
5. God knows p .

Therefore,

6. Necessarily (p).

Since p is necessarily true, it does not describe a contingent event. In virtue of God's foreknowledge everything is fated to occur.

The problem with the argument is that it is just logically fallacious. What is validly implied by (4) and (5) is not (6) but

- 6'. p .

It is correct that in a valid, deductive argument the conclusion follows necessarily from the premises. That is to say, it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion to be false. But the conclusion itself need not be necessary. The fatalist illicitly transfers the necessity of the *inference* to the conclusion *itself*. What necessarily follows from (4) and (5) is just the contingent proposition (6'). But the fatalist confusedly thinks that the conclusion is itself necessarily true and so winds up with (6). In so doing, he simply commits a common logical fallacy.

Undoubtedly a major source of the fatalist's confusion is his conflating *certainty* with *necessity*. One frequently finds in the writings of contemporary theological fatalists statements which slide from affirming that something is *certainly* true to affirming that it

is *necessarily* true. This is a mistake. Certainty is a property of persons and has nothing to do with truth, as is evident from the fact that we can be absolutely certain about something and yet turn out to be wrong. By contrast, necessity is a property of propositions, indicating that a proposition cannot possibly have a different truth value. We can be wholly uncertain about propositions which are, unbeknownst to us, necessarily true (imagine some complex mathematical equation or theorem). Thus, when we say that some proposition is “certainly true,” this is but a manner of speaking indicating that we are certain that the proposition is true. People are certain; propositions are necessary.

By confusing certainty and necessity, the fatalist makes his logically fallacious argument deceptively appealing. For it is correct that from premises (4) and (5) we can be absolutely certain that the events described by p will happen. But it is muddle-headed to think that because they will certainly happen they will necessarily happen. We can be certain, given God’s foreknowledge, that the events foreknown will not fail to happen, even though it is entirely possible that they fail to happen. They could fail to occur, but God knows that they will not. Therefore, we can be sure that they will happen—and happen contingently.

Contemporary theological fatalists recognize the fallaciousness of the above form of the argument and therefore try to remedy the defect by making premise (5) also necessarily true:

4. Necessarily (If God knows p , then p).

5'. Necessarily (God knows p).

Therefore,

6. Necessarily (p).

Thus formulated, the argument is no longer logically fallacious, and so the question becomes whether (5') is true. Now at face value, (5') is obviously false. Christian theology has always maintained that God’s creation of the world is a free act, that God could have created a different world, where p is false, or even no world at all. To say that

necessarily God knows *p* implies that this is the only world God could have created and thus denies divine freedom.

But theological fatalists have a different sort of necessity in mind when they say that necessarily God knows *p*. What they are talking about is *temporal necessity*, or the necessity of the past. Often this is expressed by saying that the past is unpreventable or unchangeable. If some event is in the past, then it is now too late to do anything to affect it. It is in that sense necessary. Since God's foreknowledge of future events is now part of the past, it is now fixed and unalterable. Therefore, it is said, (5') is true.

Unfortunately, theological fatalists have never provided an adequate account of this peculiar modality. What is temporal necessity anyway, and why think that God's past beliefs are now temporally necessary? I have yet to encounter an explanation of temporal necessity, according to which God's past beliefs are temporally necessary, which does not reduce to either the *unalterability* or the *causal closedness* of the past.

But interpreting the necessity of the past as its unalterability (or unchangeability or unpreventability) is clearly inadequate, since the future, by definition, is just as unalterable as the past. By definition the future is what will occur, and the past is what has occurred. To *change* the future would be to bring it about that an event which will occur will not occur, which is self-contradictory. It is purely a matter of definition that the past and future cannot be changed, and no fatalistic conclusion follows from this truth. For we need not be able to *change* the future in order freely to *determine* the future. If our actions are freely performed, then it lies within our power to determine causally what the course of future events will be, even if we do not have the power to change the future.

The fatalist will insist that the past is necessary in the sense that we do not have a similar ability to determine causally the past. The orthodox theologian may happily concede the point: backward causation is impossible. But the causal closedness of the past does not imply fatalism. For freedom to refrain from doing as God knows one will

do does not involve backward causation. The orthodox theologian may grant that there is nothing I can now do to cause or bring about the past. In particular, I cannot cause God to have had in the past a certain belief about my future actions. Nevertheless, as the medieval theologian William Ockham saw, it may well lie within my power to freely perform some action A, and if A were to occur, then the past would have been different than it in fact is. Suppose, for example, that God has always believed that on August 23, 2010 Jones would mow his lawn. Let us suppose that up until the time arrives Jones has the ability to mow or not mow his lawn. If Jones were to decide not to mow his lawn, then God would have always held a different belief than the one He in fact holds. For if Jones were to decide not to mow his lawn, then different future contingent propositions would have been true, and God, being omniscient, would have known them. Thus, He would have had different foreknowledge than that which He in fact has. Neither the relation between Jones's action and a corresponding future contingent proposition about it nor the relation between a true future contingent proposition and God's believing it is a causal relation. Thus, the causal closedness of the past is irrelevant. If temporal necessity is merely the causal closedness of the past, then it is insufficient to support fatalism.

No fatalist has successfully explicated a conception of temporal necessity which does not amount to either the unalterability or the causal closedness of the past. Typically, fatalists just assert some sort of "Fixed Past Principle" to the effect that it is not within my power to act in such a way that, if I were to do so, the past would have been different--which begs the question. On analyses of temporal necessity which are not reducible to either the unalterability or the causal closedness of the past, God's past beliefs always turn out *not* to be temporally necessary.¹⁴ Thus, (5') is false, and the argument for theological fatalism is unsound.

¹⁴See, for example, Alfred J. Freddoso, "Accidental Necessity and Logical Determinism," *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983): 257-78. The implications of this,

If divine foreknowledge and future contingency are compatible, the question remains as to *how* could God know future contingent propositions. Process theologians typically deny divine foreknowledge because, given the contingency of the future, it is impossible for anyone, even God, to have knowledge about what will happen. We have already encountered this objection in the form of an argument for divine timelessness (2.27) and found it helpful in dealing with it to distinguish two models of divine cognition: the *perceptualist* model and the *conceptualist* model. Let us now push our analysis of the conceptualist model a notch further.

According to the Counter-Reformation theologian Luis Molina, logically prior to the divine decree to create a world, God possesses not only knowledge of everything that *could* happen (natural knowledge) but also everything that *would* happen in any appropriately specified set of circumstances (middle knowledge). God's natural knowledge is His knowledge of all necessary truths. By means of it God knows what is the full range of possible worlds. He knows, for example, that in some possible world Peter freely denies Christ three times and that in another world Peter freely affirms Christ under identical circumstances, for both are possible. God's middle knowledge is His knowledge of all contingently true counterfactual propositions, including propositions about creaturely free actions. For example, logically prior to His creative decree, God knew that *if Peter were in circumstances C, he would freely deny Christ three times*. These counterfactuals serve to delimit the range of possible worlds to worlds which are feasible for God to actualize. For example, there is a possible world in which Peter freely affirms Christ in precisely the same circumstances in which he in fact denied him; but given the counterfactual truth that if Peter were in precisely those circumstances he would freely deny Christ, then the possible world in which Peter freely affirms Christ in

though startling, are not unique to divine foreknowledge but also follow from retro-causation, time travel, precognition, and the Special Theory of Relativity.

Does God, then, have middle knowledge? Consider the following argument:

1. If there are true counterfactuals about creaturely free choices, then God knows these truths.
2. There are true counterfactuals about creaturely free choices.
3. If God knows true counterfactuals about creaturely free choices, God knows them either logically prior to the divine creative decree or only logically posterior to the divine creative decree.
4. Counterfactuals about creaturely free choices cannot be known only logically posterior to the divine creative decree.
5. Therefore, God knows true counterfactuals about creaturely free choices. (MP,1, 2)
6. Therefore, God knows true counterfactuals about creaturely free choices either logically prior to the divine creative decree or only logically posterior to the divine creative decree. (MP,3, 5)
7. Therefore, God knows true counterfactuals about creaturely free choices logically prior to the divine creative decree. (DS,4, 6)

--which is the essence of the doctrine of divine middle knowledge.

The truth of (1) is required by the standard definition of omniscience. As for (2), a little reflection reveals how pervasive and indispensable such counterfactual truths are to rational conduct and planning. We sometimes base our very lives upon them. Moreover, Scripture itself gives examples of such true counterfactuals (I Cor. 2.8).

The most common objection urged against (2) is the so-called “grounding objection.” Detractors of middle knowledge typically claim that if such counterfactuals have any truth value, they are uniformly false, since there is no ground of their truth. Grounding objectors have never clearly articulated or defended the theory of truth which the objection tacitly presupposes. It appears to assume some version of what is called “Truthmaker Theory,” according to which true propositions are made to be true by certain entities in the world. Truthmaker Theory is a controversial position, however, and

even its proponents typically reject “truthmaker maximalism,” the doctrine that all types of true propositions have truthmakers. No grounding objector has yet to answer Plantinga’s retort: “It seems to me much clearer that some counterfactuals of freedom are at least possibly true than that the truth of propositions must, in general, be grounded in this way.”¹⁵

So what can be said on behalf of the grounding objection? I have said that the grounding objection seems to assume a particular theory about the relationship of truth and reality. The theory presupposed by the grounding objection appears to be a certain construal or version of a view of truth as correspondence which has come to be known as the theory of *truth-makers*.¹⁶ During the realist revival in the early years of the twentieth century various philosophers turned their attention to the question of the ontology of truth. Logical Atomists such as Russell and Wittgenstein thought that in addition to truth-bearers, whether these be sentences, thoughts, propositions, or what have you, there must also be entities in virtue of which such sentences and/or propositions are true. Various names were employed for these entities, such as “facts” or “states of affairs.” Among contemporary philosophers they have come to be known as “truth-makers.”

A truth-maker is typically defined as *that in virtue of which a sentence and/or a proposition is true*. According to Peter Simons, “Truth-maker theory accepts the role of something which makes a proposition true, that is, whose existence suffices for the proposition to be true. But it does not automatically pronounce on the ontological

¹⁵Alvin Plantinga, “Reply to Robert Adams,” in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. James E. Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, Profiles 5 (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), pp., p. 378.

¹⁶See the seminal article by Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, and Barry Smith, “Truth-Makers,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 44 (1984): 287-321. An informative survey of the historical background of truth-maker theory may be found in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel: Scwabe, 1971), s.v. “Tatsache II,” by Peter Simons. See further John F. Fox, “Truthmaker,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1987): 188-207; Herbert Hochberg, “Truth Makers, Truth Predicates, and Truth Types,” in *Language, Truth, and Ontology*, ed. Kevin Mulligan, Philosophical Studies Series 51 (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), pp. 87-117.

category of the truth-maker."¹⁷ "Indeed," he insists, "*anything whatever* is a truth-maker."¹⁸ But historically the orthodox view has identified truth-makers with such abstract realities as facts or states of affairs--more often than not, the fact stated as a proposition's truth condition, as disclosed by the disquotation principle. Thus, what makes the statement "Al Plantinga is an avid rock-climber" true is the fact that *Al Plantinga is an avid rock-climber* or the state of affairs of *Al Plantinga's being an avid rock-climber*.

Now we immediately see the potentially misleading connotations of the term "truth-maker" for such entities. For *making* sounds like a causal relation between a truth-bearer and some concrete object, but truth-maker theorists are quite clear that the relation is by no means causal. An entity *a* **makes a proposition *p* true** if and only if that *a* exists entails that *p*.¹⁹ That truth-makers are usually conceived to be such abstract entities as facts or states of affairs underlines the point that a causal relation is not at issue here.

¹⁷Peter Simons, "How the World Can Make Propositions True: A Celebration of Logical Atomism," in *Sktonnosci Metafizyczna [Metaphysical Inclinations]* (Warsaw: Uniwersytet Warszawski, 1998), p. 119.

¹⁸Peter Simons, "Existential Propositions," in *Criss-Crossing a Philosophical Landscape*, ed. Joachim Schulte and Göran Sundholm, Grazer Philosophische Studien 42 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), p. 257.

¹⁹*Ibid.* The theist must regard this characterization as untenable, however, since (unless one denies with William Alston that God has beliefs) God's beliefs then count as truth-makers for the propositions He believes. For God's beliefs are usually taken to be entities in a sense countenanced by truth-maker theory, often being characterized as "hard" or "soft" facts about the past. But taking God's beliefs as truth-makers seems to stand things on their head, since intuitively something is not true because God believes it, but God believes it because it is true. Moreover, if God's beliefs are explanatorily prior to the truth of propositions about human actions, then creaturely freedom would seem to be eliminated, just as divine freedom would be eliminated if counterfactuals of divine freedom were true explanatorily prior to God's decree. Bigelow states the truth-maker principle more acceptably: "What Truthmaker says is: 'For each truth *A* there must be something *a* such that, *necessarily, if a exists then A is true*' " (John Bigelow, *The Reality of Numbers* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988], p. 127). Unfortunately this principle is false because it entails truth-maker maximalism (see below); but at least it captures the idea that truth-making is essentially a logical relation. Perhaps the truth-maker theorist should say that for any truth-bearer *A* which has a truth-maker *a*, *A* is true in virtue of *a* (or *a* makes *A* true) =_{def.} *a*'s existence entails that *A* has the value *true*.

That the relation between a truth-maker and a truth-bearer is not causal is especially evident if we require truth-makers for negative existential statements like "Baal does not exist." According to Kevin Mulligan, Peter Simons, and Barry Smith, "Not only Wittgenstein, but indeed almost all other philosophers who have investigated the relation of making true, have felt compelled in the face of the problems raised by negative propositions to adopt an ontology of truth makers as special, non-objectual entities having a complexity which is essentially logical."²⁰ Obviously a fact like Baal's non-existence, which is sufficient for the truth that Baal does not exist, is not a cause of anything.

A proper understanding of truth-makers, then, invalidates at once the crude construal of the grounding objection expressed in Robert Adams's statement of the problem and again in Alfred Freddoso's and Thomas Flint's respective formulations of the grounding objection:

Counterfactuals of freedom . . . are supposed to be contingent truths that are not caused to be true by God. Who or what does cause them to be true?²¹

. . . metaphysically contingent propositions . . . require *causal* grounding in order to be true. That is, they must be *caused to be true* by some agent or agents, since it is not of their nature to be true.²²

But if such conditionals are contingent, they might not have been true. Who, then, *makes* them true? Or, to phrase this question more carefully: Who or what actually *causes* the ones that are true to be true and the ones that are false to be false?

²⁰Mulligan, Simons, and Smith, "Truth-Makers," p. 315.

²¹Robert Adams, "Plantinga on the Problem of Evil," in *Alvin Plantinga*, p. 232. Cf. William Hasker's demand, "Who or what is it (if anything) that *brings it about* that these propositions are true?" (William Hasker, "A Refutation of Middle knowledge," *Noûs* 20 (1986): 547.

²²Alfred J. Freddoso, "Introduction" to *On Divine Foreknowledge* by Luis de Molina, trans. with Notes by Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 70.

. . . neither God nor his free creatures cause counterfactuals of creaturely freedom to be true The conclusion that seems forced upon us, then, is that nobody actually causes the counterfactuals in question to be true.²³

The truth-maker theorist would take it as understood that nobody actually causes counterfactuals or any other sort of proposition to be true.²⁴ The demand for a cause of a proposition's being true is inept, unless the anti-Molinist is presupposing some very special causal theory of truth-makers, in which case he owes us an articulation of that theory and a defense, not merely of its adequacy, but of its superiority to customary truth-maker theories.

It might be said that the demand for a cause of the truth of true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom is a mere rhetorical flourish on the part of the anti-Molinist. But even if we give him the benefit of the doubt in this regard, the fact remains that the anti-Molinist still seems to be presupposing that in order to be true, counterfactuals of freedom must have truth-makers that either are or imply the existence of concrete objects. Not only does he owe us some explanation and justification for restricting truth-makers in this way, but such an assumption seems quite implausible. For we can think of other types of true propositions which do not have truth-makers which are or imply the existence of concrete objects. Consider, for example, the following statements:

1. No physical objects exist.
2. Dinosaurs are extinct today.
3. All ravens are black.
4. Torturing a child is wrong.
5. Napoleon lost the Battle of Waterloo.

²³Flint, *Divine Providence*, pp. 123, 125. I should add that Freddoso and Flint are simply accurately reporting the objection as formulated by the detractors of middle knowledge.

²⁴"Making to be the case is of course not *causal*" (D. M. Armstrong, *A World of States of Affairs*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], p. 115); "The notion 'makes it true that' has nothing to do with causality" (Peter Simons, "Logical Atomism and Its Ontological Refinement: A Defense," in *Language, Truth, and Ontology*, p. 159); "A truthmaker should 'make' something true, not in a causal sense, but rather, in what is presumably a logical sense. . . . the 'making' in 'making true' is essentially logical entailment" (Bigelow, *Reality of Numbers*, p. 125).

6. The U. S. President in 2070 will be a woman.
7. If a rigid rod were placed in uniform motion through the aether, it would suffer a FitzGerald-Lorentz contraction.

Statement (1) could be true and statement (2) is true, yet they preclude truth-makers which are or imply the existence of the relevant concrete objects (such as dinosaurs). If such statements have truth-makers they would seem to be such things as the state of affairs of *there being no universe* or of *dinosaurs' no longer existing*. Some truth-maker theorists have maintained that such negative existential statements are true without having any truth-makers. For example, Mulligan, Simons, and Smith assert, "it seems more adequate to regard sentences of the given kind as true not in virtue of any truth maker of their own, but simply in virtue of the fact that the corresponding positive sentences have no truth maker."²⁵ But this assertion is self-contradictory. For a truth-maker is precisely that entity in virtue of which a sentence and/or proposition is true, and on their account a true, negative existential statement like "Baal does not exist" is true *in virtue of the fact* that the corresponding positive statement "Baal exists" lacks a truth-maker. Thus, this negative existential statement does have a truth-maker after all, namely, the fact that "*Baal exists*" *has no truth-maker*. A similar problem seems to attend D. M. Armstrong's attempt to eliminate truth-makers for negative existential statements on the basis of the second-order state of affairs of there being all the first-order states of affairs there are.²⁶ Presumably the idea is that if the state of affairs described by the corresponding positive existential statement is not included in the second-order state of affairs cataloging all the first order states of affairs, then the negative statement is true without having a truth-maker. But, we may ask, is it not then the case that the negative statement is true in virtue of the fact that the relevant positive

²⁵Mulligan, Simons, and Smith, "Truth-Makers," p. 315.

²⁶Armstrong, *World of States of Affairs*, pp. 27, 135.

state of affairs is not included in the totality of states of affairs or in virtue of existence of the state of affairs of the positive state's not being so included?

A further difficulty for such accounts is that the want of a truth-maker for an affirmative existential statement or the absence of a positive state of affairs from a second-order state of affairs does not always seem to provide truth-makers to a negative statement. Take (2), for example. The want of a truth-maker for "Dinosaurs are alive today" or the absence of the relevant state of affairs from the totality of states does not seem to make it true that dinosaurs are extinct today. The same goes for "Dinosaurs are still alive today," for the negation of that sort of statement is notoriously ambiguous. The difficulty is that (2) seems to imply the positive assertion that dinosaurs were once alive and so needs more than just the lack of a truth-maker in order to be made true. It seems to require as its truth-maker the fact that dinosaurs were once alive and now are not alive. In any case, even if negative existential statements are not made true in virtue of some fact or state of affairs, the anti-Molinist can hardly be encouraged by the prospect that we have here an exception to notion that true statements require truth-makers. If there can be true statements without any truth-makers of those statements, how do we know that counterfactual statements cannot be true without truth-makers?

Statement (3) is a universally quantified statement which as such does not apply merely to any ravens which happen to exist. As a universally quantified statement, what it says is that if *anything* is a raven, then it is black. Therefore, it cannot be true just in virtue of existing ravens' being black, much less in virtue of the black ravens there are. Statement (4) is an ethical judgement which implies neither that children exist nor that any are ever actually tortured. It is hard to see how ethical and aesthetic judgements can be made true apart from ethical and aesthetic facts being among their truth-makers.

Statements (5) and (6) are tensed statements about persons who no longer or do not yet exist (at least on a dynamic theory of time²⁷) and so cannot have such persons among their truth-makers. Truth-maker theorists have yet to grapple seriously with problems posed by tense and temporal becoming. But in a recent discussion Barry Smith offers two proposals: either we "need to introduce an explicit temporal dimension into our account of truthmaking, along the lines of: this liquid makes it true *at t* that it is odourless," or alternatively, we "might embrace a strictly presentist reading of 'x makes it true that *p*'. Some true contingent past and future tense judgments will then be such that, while their truthmakers do not exist, they did or will exist."²⁸ These brief suggestions are merely programmatic; but the first seems to contemplate tenselessly existing truth-makers of tensed sentences along the lines of a static theory of time,²⁹ while the second appears to involve tensed truth-makers of tensed sentences such as might be postulated in a dynamic theory of time.³⁰ Smith's suggestion for this latter view is to assert that past- and future-tensed statements literally have (present-tense) no truth-makers, although they either did or will. This suggestion is problematic, however, because when the truth-

²⁷ According to a dynamic or tensed theory of time (often, in nomenclature borrowed from McTaggart, called an A-Theory of time), the distinction between past, present, and future is an objective feature of reality, whereas on a static or tenseless theory of time (often called the B-Theory of time), moments of time are not objectively past, present, or future but are ordered by the unchanging relations *earlier than*, *simultaneous with*, and *later than*. Moreover, on a dynamic theory, temporal becoming is real, and things come into being and go out of existence; whereas on the static theory temporal becoming is but a subjective feature of consciousness, and all things are equally real regardless of their temporal location.

²⁸ Barry Smith, "Truthmaker Realism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1999): 274-291.

²⁹ See, for example, D. H. Mellor, *Real Time II* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 34.

³⁰ Compare the tensed truth-conditions given by Graham Priest, "Tense and Truth Conditions," *Analysis* 46 (1986): 162-166; see further D.H. Mellor, "Tense's Tenseless Truth Conditions," *Analysis* 46 (1986): 167-172; Graham Priest, "Tense, *Tense*, and TENSE," *Analysis* 47 (1987): 184-187.

maker of, say, a future-tense sentence like "Walker will be inaugurated as our forty-fifth President" becomes present, then that statement, far from being true, is false, and the corresponding present-tense statement, " Walker is being inaugurated as our forty-fifth President" is or becomes true. Thus, we should more plausibly say either that true past- and future-tense statements have no truth-makers at all, though their present-tense counterparts did or will have or that their truth-makers are the present-tense statements' having been or going to be true, or more simply the tensed facts stated as their tensed truth conditions, as disclosed by the disquotation principle. None of this is encouraging to the anti-Molinist, for again we find an important class of statements which either are true without having truth-makers or else have as their truth-makers abstractions like facts or states of affairs.

Finally, statement (7) is a true counterfactual about the aether of nineteenth century mechanics, which does not exist. One cannot say that the aether's properties serve as the truth-maker of (7), for the aether, being non-existent, has no properties. Of course, if the aether did exist, the aether would have properties, so perhaps one could say that what makes (7) true is the fact that in the most similar possible worlds in which the antecedent is realized, the indicative version of the consequent has a truth-maker--but this would be of no comfort to anti-Molinists who presuppose that truth-makers must be or imply the existence of concrete objects.

All of the above types of truths are matters of vigorous discussion among truth-maker theorists. These illustrations and the controversies they engender underscore just how naïve an understanding grounding objectors generally have of the nature of truth-makers. The idea that the truth-makers of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom must be literal people or any sort of concrete object is extraordinary.³¹

³¹ And, of course, the same holds for counterfactuals about how creatures would freely act under various circumstances which are not, technically speaking, counterfactuals of creaturely freedom because the circumstances mentioned in their antecedents are not fully specified. So as to avoid pedantry, I shall henceforth not distinguish such counterfactual truths from counterfactuals of creaturely freedom.

Moreover, acceptable truth-makers for counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are available. Alfred Freddoso suggests, for example, that counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are grounded by the fact that a relevant indicative proposition would have grounds of its truth. Thus, the truthmaker of the counterfactual *If Peter were in C, he would deny Christ three times* is the fact or state of affairs that the proposition *Peter denies Christ three times* would have a truthmaker under the relevant condition.

I myself am sceptical that counterfactuals of freedom have any truth-makers at all; but if one is disposed to seek them adequate truth-makers can be conjured up. Thus, the grounding objection fails.

Premise (3) of the argument states logically exhaustive alternatives for an omniscient deity and so must be true. Finally, (4) must be true because if counterfactuals of creaturely freedom were known only posterior to the divine decree, then it is God who determined what every creature would do in every circumstance. Augustinian-Calvinist thinkers bear witness to the truth of this premise in their affirmation of compatibilist theories of creaturely freedom. They thereby testify that God's all-determining decree precludes libertarian freedom, which is the sort of freedom with which we are here concerned. Thus, if God knows counterfactual truths about us only posterior to His decree, then there really are no counterfactuals about creaturely free choices. If there are such counterfactuals, they must be true logically prior to the divine decree.

Given the truth of the premises, the conclusion follows that prior to His creative decree God knows all true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom, which is to say that He has middle knowledge. If this conclusion is correct, then we have a conceptualist account of remarkable power for the means by which God possesses innately knowledge of future contingents.

So neither of the arguments put forward by the detractors of divine foreknowledge should lead us to deny the clear biblical teaching that God does have such knowledge.