

# DIVINE OMNISCIENCE AND HUMAN FREEDOM: A 'MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE' PERSPECTIVE

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The traditional *prima facie* incompatibility between divine omniscience and human freedom is well known. To say that an individual is free with respect to a given action has usually meant in this context that the individual has it within his or her power at the time in question either to perform or to refrain from performing the action. Thus, if Ted Kennedy was free with respect to running for the Presidency in 1984, he had it within his power either to run or not to run at the moment he made his final decision not to become a candidate. To say that God is omniscient has generally meant that God has always known all true propositions, including propositions about future states of affairs. Thus, if God is omniscient, he knew 100 years ago that Ted Kennedy would choose not to run for the Presidency in 1984. But if this is so, then how can we say that Ted Kennedy actually had it within his power to run for the Presidency in 1984? For if Ted Kennedy actually had it within his power to bring it about that the proposition "Ted Kennedy will run for the Presidency in 1984" is true, then he had it within his power to bring it about that the proposition which God believed 100 years ago—"Ted Kennedy will not run for the Presidency in 1984"—is false. But, of course, what God (or anyone else) knows cannot be false. Accordingly, we must assume that if God knew 100 years ago that Ted Kennedy would choose not to run for the Presidency in 1984, Ted Kennedy did not actually have it within his power to choose to run and thus that his decision was not, in fact, freely made.<sup>1</sup>

The common response to this *prima facie* problem is also well known. It is correct to say that if God is omniscient, he knew 100 years ago, for example, that Ted Kennedy would choose not to run for the Presidency in 1984. And it is correct to say that if Ted Kennedy was free with respect to the Presidency, he had it within his power either to run or to refrain from running. But it in no sense follows from the fact that Ted Kennedy had it within his power either to run or to refrain from running that he had it within his power to bring it about that God held a false belief 100 years ago. An omniscient God cannot be tricked or surprised. He always holds (has always held) the appropriate belief. If Ted



Kennedy had freely chosen to run for the Presidency, God would have known this fact 100 years ago. Ted Kennedy, as a matter of fact, freely chose not to run. Accordingly, God, being omniscient, held this belief 100 years ago.<sup>2</sup>

In short, the argument runs, since what God knew 100 years ago about Kennedy's Presidential aspirations was contingent upon the choice Kennedy would freely make, the fact that God had such knowledge in no sense limits Kennedy's freedom in this matter.

Not all philosophers, of course, believe this line of reasoning to be an adequate counter to the traditional challenge. But even if we assume that it is, some philosophers will argue that a serious problem remains. To affirm the traditional response is, as we have seen, to affirm in some sense that what God knows in the past about some human actions is contingent upon what humans will freely decide to do in the future. But this seems to imply that what we freely do at present can in some important sense determine states of affairs in the past. It seems to imply, for example, that what God knew about Ted Kennedy's 1984 Presidential aspirations 100 years ago was in some sense determined by what Ted Kennedy freely decided to do this year. But the concept of such 'retrodetermination' troubles some philosophers. Dennis Ahern, for example, believes that it is implausible to assume that "somehow one [who is freely choosing to perform a given action] has control over past beliefs" and is thus "free to determine which possible world existed prior to the present moment."<sup>3</sup> Nelson Pike seems to agree. Nothing that a person can do presently, he argues, "could have...the slightest bearing on whether Yahweh held a certain belief eighty years earlier."<sup>4</sup>

In short, some philosophers maintain that it is never in any person's power at a time *t* to act in such a way that the past (relative to *t*) would have been different from what it actually was. But if we can in no sense determine what God believed in the past about our present actions and God's past beliefs can't be wrong, then it appears that we must admit that we are not free to do what we want. We will do what God believed in the past (has always believed) we will do.

Or, to state the essence of this contemporary argument more succinctly, it appears to many that human freedom is only compatible with divine omniscience if what God knows about our future actions is contingent upon what we will in fact do and that God's knowledge can only be contingent upon what we will do if we can in some sense by our actions determine beliefs held by God in the past. But, it is argued, it is impossible for us in any sense by our present actions to determine the past—e.g., to determine God's past beliefs about our actions. And, accordingly, if God is omniscient, we cannot be considered free.

This line of reasoning seems to me to be one of the most serious (and interesting) challenges to the compatibility of human freedom and divine omniscience, and thus I believe it is worthy of further consideration.

## I

However, before we turn to an analysis of this argument itself, it is essential that we specify exactly what it will mean for the purposes of our discussion to maintain that God is omniscient. Some philosophers presuppose in this context that an omniscient God possesses only what we shall call simple foreknowledge—i.e., knowledge at any given time  $t^1$  of what will in fact happen in the actual world at any given time  $t^2$ . For instance, they would only presuppose that what God knew about Ted Kennedy 100 years ago were propositions such as the following:

- (1) Ted Kennedy will freely choose to run for the Presidency in 1980.
- (2) Ted Kennedy will freely chose not to run for the Presidency in 1984.

But other philosophers believe that God possesses middle knowledge. They believe, that is, not only that God knows what *will* in fact happen in the actual world or what *could* in fact happen in all possible worlds, but also what *would* in fact happen in every possible situation, including what every possible free creature would do in every situation in which that creature could find itself.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, a God possessing middle knowledge would not have known 100 years ago only those decisions which Ted Kennedy in fact makes in the actual world or *could* possibly have made in any possible world. He would have known what Ted Kennedy *would* do in any possible situation. He would, for example, have known the truth (or falsity) of propositions such as the following:

- (3) If Ted Kennedy runs for the Presidency in 1968, he will freely choose Tip O'Neill as his running mate.
- (4) If Ted Kennedy is elected President in 1980 and is free to choose to run again in 1984, he will freely choose to run again.

The fact that Ted Kennedy neither ran for the Presidency in 1968 nor was elected President in 1980, and thus did not in fact have the opportunity to make the decisions in question, is not seen as relevant.

But is it reasonable to assume God possesses such knowledge? Could God really know what decisions Ted Kennedy would freely be making if the context in which Kennedy functions were different than it actually is? It might appear at first glance that an omniscient God could know such things. For example, it might appear that if it were the case that Kennedy had been elected President in 1980 and was free to choose to run again in 1984, then either he would choose freely to run or he would not choose freely to run. In other words, it might appear that either (4) or

- (5) If Ted Kennedy is elected President in 1980 and is free to choose to run again in 1984, he will not choose freely to run again

is true. We as humans, as Alvin Plantinga argues, “may not know what the answer

is" in such cases. But "one thing we would take for granted," he argues, "is that there is a right answer here...(W)e would reject out of hand...the suggestion that there simply is none."<sup>6</sup> And if either (4) or (5) is in fact true, then it would seem to follow that an omniscient God would know which is true.

Not all philosophers, however, are convinced. Robert Adams, for example, grants that if hypothetical conditionals such as (4) or (5) are in fact true (or false), then we cannot consistently doubt that an omniscient God has middle knowledge. But he doubts that propositions of this sort "ever were, or ever will be true."<sup>7</sup> And others for various other reasons agree. Thus, we cannot simply assume naively that middle knowledge is possible. But I do not believe that anyone has yet demonstrated to the satisfaction of the general philosophical community that God could not possess knowledge of this sort.

Moreover, it seems to me that, whether traditional theists consciously recognize it or not, most do in fact consider middle knowledge to be an important, necessary divine attribute. Consider, for example, those traditional theists who face difficult decisions and ask God for guidance. Such theists are not normally asking only for guidance based on God's knowledge of what will in fact happen or on his predictive abilities. Rather, they normally assume (in keeping with a middle knowledge perspective) that God knows what would happen, given any of the possible options, and will give guidance on this basis.

Accordingly, it seems to me that when discussing alleged tensions between divine omniscience and human freedom, it is justifiable and important that we assume (at least for the sake of argument) that God possesses middle knowledge.

## II

With this clarification in mind, we can now more clearly state the major question at hand: Does it follow from the fact that a God with middle knowledge foreknows free human actions that we as humans can in some sense presently determine or influence the past? I shall begin by making what I consider to be the strongest case possible for the claim that we can.

Let us assume that at 7:00 a.m. on January 31, 1983, a person named Bob hears on the radio about a shipwreck which occurred at 4:00 p.m. on January 30, 1983. The announcer states that about half of those on the ship were killed but that the identities of the dead have not yet been established. Bob is immediately seized with fear because his brother was on that ship, and in desperation he utters the following prayer: "God, please let my brother be among the living."

Now as an emotional outpouring, such a prayer is quite understandable. But could such a prayer be causally efficacious in the intended sense? Is it meaningful to assume that what Bob prayed at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st could in any sense have influenced or determined what actually happened at 4:00 p.m. on the 30th?

It might initially appear that the answer is no. The accident, it might be argued, occurred *before* the prayer. Accordingly, at the time of the prayer it was already an established fact that Bob's brother was dead or alive. And since even God cannot change the past—i.e., bring it about that what was the case was in fact not the case—it follows that Bob's prayer for his brother's safety could not have been causally efficacious in the sense he intended it.

In one sense this line of reasoning is surely correct. Nothing, including prayers to God, can at a time  $t^2$  bring it about that what happened at an earlier time  $t^1$  did not actually happen at  $t^1$ . But there is another way of looking at the situation. If God has middle knowledge, then he knew at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th (and at every other previous moment) that the ship would be wrecked. But he also knew at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th that when Bob heard about the crash on the 31st, he would pray for the safety of his brother. And he knew whether Bob's brother would, apart from divine intervention, live or die.

Now let us assume that if God had considered the situation at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th apart from Bob's prayer-to-be, he would have been inclined not to intervene. And let us assume that if God had not intervened, Bob's brother would have died. But let us further suppose that God is so impressed by Bob's foreseen devotion or so desires to increase Bob's faith (which God knows will occur if Bob's prayer is answered) that, solely because of Bob's prayer-to-be, he does in fact bring it about that Bob's brother survives the wreck. Could we not then in a meaningful sense claim that Bob's prayer at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st had influenced or determined the past?

Or, to state the argument somewhat differently, we are assuming that God would not have intervened to save Bob's brother's life at 4:00 p.m. on the 30th if he had not believed at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th that Bob would pray for his brother at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st. But God would not have believed this fact about Bob on the 30th if Bob had not actually decided freely to pray on the 31st. That is, God would not have believed the statement "Bob will freely pray for his brother on the 31st" to be true at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th if it were not true that Bob did freely pray for his brother at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st. Accordingly, can it not be said that Bob's action on the 31st did in a meaningful sense determine or influence the past?

To respond to this question, we must first specify more exactly the sense in which it is being claimed that Bob has determined or influenced the past. It is, of course, not being argued that Bob's prayer is a sufficient causal condition for the survival of his brother since, given the scenario in question, divine intervention is a necessary causal factor. But is it being argued that Bob's prayer is a necessary causal condition for the survival of his brother? In one sense yes. It is true, given the scenario in question, that God would not have saved Bob's brother if Bob had not prayed. In short, in relation to those factors which motivated God to utilize his interventive ability in this case, it is being argued that Bob's prayer was necessary.

But it is not being argued that Bob's prayer was in any sense a necessary condition for the interventive activity itself. That is, it is not being argued that God's ability to intervene was in any sense causally dependent upon Bob's prayer. For God could, given the scenario in question, just as easily have intervened even if Bob had not prayed.

Also, it must be emphasized, it is not being argued that Bob's prayer was involved in any type of direct 'ontological' causal relationship with the survival of his brother. That is, it is not being argued that the act of praying, or the prayer itself, in any sense directly affected any of the natural causal factors related to the accident (or Bob's brother's survival)—e.g., the structure of the ship, the location of Bob's brother, the location of hazardous materials, the location of life-saving equipment, climatic factors, Bob's brother's state of mind, etc. The type of causation being defended is better identified as epistemological. What Bob's prayer brings about *directly*, it is being argued, is that God held a certain belief (that God's mind was in a certain state) before the accident occurred—a belief or state of mind which motivated God to become 'ontologically' involved in the situation.

Certain aspects of this line of reasoning will not be challenged. I will grant for the sake of argument that if the Judeo-Christian God exists, he could intervene in the requisite sense. And I will grant that God might intervene at a time  $t^1$  solely or primarily because he believes at  $t^1$  that he will be requested to do so at time  $t^2$ .

But the alleged 'causal' relationship between Bob's prayer at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st and God's belief concerning this prayer at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th is in need of further analysis. Is it really true in any sense that Bob's act of prayer on the 31st brought it about (made it the case) that God believed on the 30th that Bob would utter this prayer?

Given the scenario in question, God decides to save Bob's brother because he knows (in the actual world) at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th that

(6) Bob will freely pray for his brother's safety at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st.

But why is this proposition true in the actual world? Is it true, as the proponent of retrodetermination claims, because of something which Bob did at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st? If we assume that God has middle knowledge, it can be shown, I believe, that this is probably not the case. If God has middle knowledge, then he knew (in the actual world) at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th that the following propositions are true:

(7) If Bob is free with respect to praying for his brother's safety at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st, he will freely pray for his brother.

(8) Bob will be free with respect to praying for his brother's safety at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st.

And, of course, since (6) follows from (7) and (8), the fact that God believed (7) and (8) to be true at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th is sufficient to explain why God believed

(6) to be true at that time. Or, to state the point differently, if God has middle knowledge, then it is certainly possible that God believed (6) to be true at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th because he believed (7) and (8) to be true at that time.

However, it can be shown that neither (7) or (8) is true in the actual world on the 30th because of anything which Bob did on the 31st. Let us first look at (8)—the contention that Bob will in fact be free to pray on the 31st. God, given our scenario and the assumption that he has middle knowledge, knew at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th (and at every moment before) that Bob would pray for his brother at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st if he were free to do so—i.e., he knew that (7) was true. But let us suppose that although he knew (7) was true, God had not wanted Bob to pray for his brother on the 31st—i.e., let us assume that God had not wanted (6) to be true in the actual world. Given the type of freedom under consideration and the fact that (7) is true in the actual world, God could not have brought it about that Bob *freely* chose not to pray on the 31st. But given (as we are assuming) that God can intervene in earthly affairs, he could have brought it about that Bob did not have the opportunity to pray freely for his brother on the 31st. He could, for example, have caused the idea of praying to never enter Bob's consciousness. Or he could have caused Bob to be distracted every time he felt the desire to pray.

Accordingly, it cannot be argued that (8) is true in the actual world because of anything Bob had done or could have done. Bob is free to pray in the actual world described in our scenario solely because of God's decision to make it so—i.e., because of God's decision to actualize a world in which it is true. This does not mean, of course, that it is God alone who determines whether (8) is true or false in all possible worlds. There are possible worlds, for example, in which Bob freely chooses not to turn on the radio at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st and, thus, is himself responsible for the fact that he will not have the opportunity to choose to pray at that time. Or there are possible worlds in which Bob freely decides to commit suicide at 6:00 a.m. on the 31st and, thereby, brings it about himself that (8) is not true. But there are actualizable worlds in which God does alone bring it about that Bob is free to pray on the 31st—e.g., a world in which Bob's decision to pray is the first 'choice' which God has allowed. And there may well be many actualizable worlds in which Bob (or Bob and God together) brings it about that (8) is true—e.g., a world in which Bob freely turns on the radio at 7:00 a.m. and is thus faced with the option of praying.

But it is God alone who determines which actualizable world will in fact be actualized. More specifically, he alone has the power to determine if any actualizable world in which (8) is true (for whatever reason) will be actualized and if so, which one. And it is in this sense that it is true that God alone is responsible for the fact that Bob is free to pray on the 31st in the *actual* world.

It might be tempting to assume that the situation is different with respect to (7)—the contention that Bob will pray on the 31st if free to do so. For the truth of (7) can

rightly be said to be based on the fact that Bob will freely choose to pray on the 31st if given the opportunity. However, it can be shown that there is in fact no necessary correlation between what Bob, himself, actually did at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st and the truth of (7).

We have been assuming that God knows at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th that Bob will freely pray for his brother at 7:00 a.m. and saves his brother for that reason. But let us again assume instead that although God knows Bob will freely pray for his brother if given the chance, God does not wish to save Bob's brother and thus, because he does not want to disappoint Bob, brings it about that Bob is not free to pray for his brother at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st. (7) is in this case still true. That is, it is still true that if Bob had been free, he would have prayed. And the fact that God knows that (7) is true is still relevant to how he acts. But in this case (6) is false. Bob will not actually pray at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st. So it can in no sense be said in this case that what Bob does in the *actual* world brings it about that (7) is true.

Or let us assume that Bob dies unexpectedly on the 29th (or even that he dies at birth). It could still be true, given the coherence of middle knowledge, that Bob would have freely prayed for his brother's safety on the 31st if he had been given the opportunity. However, again in this case, it could not be said that (7) was true because of anything Bob had done. In fact, (7) would be true (or false) even if it is only the case that Bob could have (although has not) existed.

But if Bob is not responsible for the truth of (7) or (8) in the actual world, then the argument that Bob has in fact, by his actions on the 31st, determined the past fails. For if, as our scenario assumes, God's decision to save Bob's brother on the 30th was motivated by his belief on the 30th that Bob would pray on the 31st—i.e., by his belief that (6) was true—and if it is possible that God's belief on the 30th that (7) and (8) were true is sufficient to explain his belief in (6) and if nothing which Bob did on the 31st was responsible for God's belief on the 30th that (7) and (8) were true, then we are not forced to grant that it was Bob's act of prayer on the 31st which motivated God to save Bob's brother's life on the 30th. And to say this, of course, is to say that we need not grant that God's knowledge on the 30th of what Bob would do on the 31st (even though God acted upon this knowledge on the 30th) necessarily entails any form of retrodetermination.

It might be argued, however, that this line of reasoning generates an equally serious problem. If, as I have argued, Bob is not responsible for the truth of (7) or (8) in the actual world—i.e., if Bob does not bring it about by his actions on the 31st either that it is true on the 30th that he will freely pray on the 31st if given the opportunity or that he will have this opportunity—then does it not follow that God is responsible for the truth of (7) and (8) in the actual world? And if this is so, then since in any world in which (7) and (8) are true, (6) must also be true—i.e., it must be true that Bob will freely pray—does it not follow that it is God alone who is responsible in the actual world for the fact that Bob freely prays for this brother on



the 31st? But, given our definition of freedom, God cannot bring it about that anyone chooses *freely* to perform any action. Thus, if God is in fact responsible for the fact that Bob decides to pray on the 31st, then Bob's prayer was not freely offered and we again face an incompatibility between divine activity and meaningful human freedom.

I have acknowledged that (8) is true in the actual world solely because of what God has done. But it does not follow from the fact that (7) is not true in the actual world because of anything Bob has done that God is any sense responsible for its truth. On the contrary, it can be shown, I believe, that God does not in any sense bring it about that (7) or any other hypothetical conditional of freedom is true. Consider two distinct possible worlds, *W* and *W'*, which are identical in every way (except for God's belief about the future) until 7:00 a.m., January 31, 1983, when in *W* Bob freely chooses to pray for his brother while in *W'* he freely chooses not to do so. And let us call this shared initial segment *S*. If Bob is in fact free with respect to praying this time, then while it is certainly the case that, given *S*, Bob might freely choose to pray, or, given *S*, Bob might freely choose not to pray, it is not the case that, given the actualization of *S*, Bob can both freely pray and freely refrain from praying at 7:00 a.m. That is, while it is the case that if *S* is actualized, Bob will be free to pray or not to pray, he can in fact only make one decision. Or, stated differently yet, if, given the actualization of *S*, (7) is true, then it cannot be true, given the actualization of *S*, that

(7') If Bob is free with respect to praying for his brother's safety at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st, he will freely refrain from praying.

Now let us continue to assume, in keeping with our scenario, that, given the actualization of *S*, Bob will freely choose to pray—i.e., let us continue to assume (7) is true. Then God cannot actualize *W'* or any other possible world in which (7') is true. For to do so, God would obviously have to cause Bob to choose to do what, given the actualization of *S*, he would not have freely chosen to do. That is, God would have to make it the case that Bob was not truly free with respect to praying. In other words, if (7) is true, it is true in all actualizable worlds containing *S*.

But given the type of freedom in question, in no possible world in which Bob is free with respect to praying for his brother can God determine what Bob will *freely* decide to do. Thus, it cannot be said that in *W* or any other actualizable world in which Bob is free to pray that he will freely pray because of any decision on God's part—i.e., in no actualizable world can it be said that God brought it about that (7) is true. Of course, as we have seen, God (given our present set of assumptions) has the power to bring it about that Bob is not free in the requisite sense and thus God can insure that the state of affairs described in the consequent of (7) does not occur. That is, there may well be actualizable worlds in which God brings it about that Bob doesn't pray. But in no such world can God bring it about that (7') is true—

i.e., bring it about that Bob *freely* chooses not to pray. (7) remains true in all such worlds. Given the type of freedom under discussion, the truth or falsity of all such hypothetical conditionals of freedom are outside of God's control.

But who then is responsible for the truths of (7) in the actual world? The answer is that no one is responsible. (7) is true in all actualizable worlds, given our scenario, because it accurately describes what Bob will do if certain conditions obtain. But since God (we are assuming) has no control over what individuals freely do and since hypothetical conditionals are true even if the relevant conditions never obtain, it cannot be said that either God or Bob brings it about that (7) is true. Given the assumed conherence of such hypotheticals, they simply *are* true.

Moreover, given this analysis of (7), we can now strengthen our argument against retrodetermination in Bob's case. I have to this point argued only that God *may have* believed (6) to be true in the actual world on the 30th—i.e., he may have believed Bob would freely pray on the 30th because he believed (7) and (8) to be true at that time. [And this fact alone, we have seen, is sufficient to refute the claim that divine foreknowledge of human actions necessitates some form of retrodeterminism.] But given our analysis of (7), we can now state with more certainty why God, if he has middle knowledge, affirmed (6) on the 30th. God affirmed (6) at that time, it seems most reasonable to believe, because he knew at that time that (7) was true in all actualizable worlds and he knew that he had actualized a world in which (8) was true. And accordingly, since what Bob did on the 31st in no way brought it about that either (7) or (8) is true, we can now maintain with more certainty that Bob's decision to pray on the 31st did not in fact bring it about that God believed (6) to be true on the 30th and thus was not responsible for the fact that God decided to save Bob's brother at that time.

There is, however, another potential criticism which must be discussed briefly. Some will surely argue that if Bob's act of prayer on the 31st is *not* responsible for the truth of (7) or (8), then, since (6) follows from (7) and (8), Bob's act of prayer on the 31st *cannot* be responsible for the truth of (6). But if Bob is not responsible for the truth of (6)—i.e., if Bob is not responsible for the fact that he will pray on the 31st—then it cannot be argued that Bob's act of prayer on the 31st is truly free.

Such reasoning seems to me to be based on a subtle confusion. It does follow from the fact that Bob is not responsible for the truth of (7) and (8) in the *actual* world that Bob is not responsible for the fact that the *actual* world will contain his act of prayer as one of its components. God brought this about by his decision to actualize an actualizable world in which (8) is true. But to say that Bob did not by his prayer at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st bring it about that this action will occur as a component in the actual world is not equivalent to saying that Bob did not, given the opportunity to pray at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st in the actual world, act freely. The former is a claim about Bob's control over the actualization of the *actualizable action* in question. The latter is a claim about Bob's ability to perform the action

*freely*. And it simply does not follow from the fact that Bob's prayer at 7:00 a.m. is not responsible for the fact that this act of prayer will occur in the actual world that this act, itself, when performed in actual world, is not free.<sup>8</sup>

We may conclude then, I believe, that there is no good basis for affirming retrodeterminism in Bob's case. Nor is there any reason to believe that such retrodeterminism would exist in any analogous situation. In all cases in which it is claimed that a God with middle knowledge knows at a given point in time what an individual will freely do at a later time, the response given in Bob's case would hold: God knows that the individual will in fact freely perform a certain action because he knows that the relevant hypothetical conditional of freedom is true and has decided to actualize a world in which the state of affairs described in the antecedent of this conditional will obtain.

This is not to say, of course, that other problems do not remain or that new ones are not generated. A God with middle knowledge, for example, obviously has a great deal of control over which possible free actions will in fact be actualized. He might, in fact, possess so much control that the concept of meaningful human freedom is greatly damaged. And it might still be argued by some that the traditional argument against the compatibility of divine omniscience and human freedom is successful. But it has been shown, I believe, that if God has middle knowledge, a fear of retrodetermination is not an adequate basis for questioning such compatibility.<sup>9</sup>

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## NOTES

1. See Nelson Pike, "Divine Foreknowledge, Human Freedom and Possible Worlds," *Philosophical Review* (1977), pp. 209-216.

2. See, for example, Stephen Davis, "Divine Omniscience and Human Freedom," *Religious Studies* 15 (1979), 303-316.

3. Dennis M. Ahern, "Foreknowledge: Nelson Pike and Newcomb's Problem," *Religious Studies* 15 (1979), pp. 489-490.

4. Pike, *God and Timelessness* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 58.

5. See, for example, Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 174-180.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

7. Robert Adams, "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 14 (1977), p. 110.

8. There are, it should be noted, two propositions related to (6) whose truth is at least in part dependent on Bob's activity on the 30th:

(6'') It is 7:00 a.m. on the 31st, and Bob is freely praying for his brother's safety.

(6''') Bob freely prayed for his brother's safety at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st.

Bob's decision to pray at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st is, of course, a necessary (although not a sufficient) condition for the truth of (6'') in the actual world. And Bob's decision to pray at 7:00 a.m. is also a necessary condition for the truth of (6'''). For, although (6'') is false at any time at which (6''') is true, (6''') can only be true if (6'') was in fact true at some previous time—i.e., (6''') can only be true if Bob did in fact make the choice in question at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st.

But not only is (6'') false at any time that (6) is true. (6) can only be true at any given time if (6'') has never been true at any previous point in time. Accordingly, it cannot in any sense be said that (6) was true at 3:59 p.m. on the 30th because of the truth of (6'')—i.e., because of what Bob did at 7:00 a.m. on the 31st.

9. I want to thank Bruce Reichenbach, Bernard Keating and George Mavrodes for helpful comments made on earlier drafts of this paper.