

Philosophical Reflections on Free Will

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(11/9/2000; revised 7/13/2002)

I. Introduction

One of the most fundamental philosophical distinctions between Calvinism and Arminianism is the differing views of each on the nature of human agency, or the exercise of human will. Calvinists are theistic *determinists*; that is, they believe that God causally determines the occurrence of all events, including every thought, decision, and action made throughout the lifetime of each human being. This determination is rooted in what Calvinists call the eternal decree of God, whereby “God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass” (Westminster Confession of Faith, III/i). Many Arminians, in contrast, are theistic *indeterminists*, meaning that they believe that there are at least some events, most notably in the realm of human agency or choice, that God does not causally determine but which instead are determined solely by the free agency of human beings (proponents of this position are also variously referred to as *libertarians* or *self-determinists*; see NOTE 1).

The point in question is not whether God is *able* to determine all things, for most indeterminists gladly agree that He *could* have created a world in which all events are determined according to His will. The question, rather, is whether God has in fact done so, or whether He has instead created humans with the capacity for what is commonly called *contra-causal* or *libertarian freedom*. A human agent can be said to have contra-causal or libertarian freedom with respect to a particular action if at the time the choice is made “it is within the agent’s power to perform the action and also in the agent’s power to refrain from the action” (William Hasker, “A Philosophical Perspective,” in *The Openness of God*, Pinnock (ed.), IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 1994, p. 137). This amounts to saying that an act is a genuinely free act only if the agent *could do otherwise* than he in fact does, in the sense that “no antecedent conditions and/or

causal laws determine that he will perform the action, or that he won't" (Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, Harper & Row, 1974; this citation from Eerdmans edition, Grand Rapids, MI, 1977, p. 29).

Indeterminists, then, hold that humans have the capacity to exercise contra-causal freedom, whereas determinists deny that true contra-causal freedom exists among human agents. This is not to say, however, that determinists fail to recognize any sense of human free will. Though a few theistic determinists hold to what is commonly known as *hard determinism*, which formulates God's causal role in such a way as to deny any significant sense of human freedom (see, e.g., C. Samuel Storms, who states that "human free will is a myth," in *The Grandeur of God*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984, p. 80), the vast majority of modern Calvinists instead hold to some form of *soft determinism* or, as it is also commonly called, *compatibilism*. Compatibilism holds that an action of a human agent, even though determined, is nonetheless free if it is in accordance with the agent's *desires* (i.e., determinism and free will are thus considered to be *compatible*, hence the name *compatibilism*). Moreover, theistic compatibilists generally argue that for any agent in any actual situation, God has determined sufficient conditions (whether external or internal) to be present in that situation to ensure that the agent will desire to act (and will thus choose to act) as God has prior decreed him to act. Compatibilists, then, generally hold that God *decisively conditions* the desires of human agents to freely choose as God has determined. As John Feinberg states it: "Genuinely free human action is seen as compatible with nonconstraining sufficient conditions which incline the will decisively in one way or another." (John Feinberg, "God Ordains All Things," in *Predestination & Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty & Human Freedom*, Basinger & Basinger (eds.), IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 1986, p. 24-25).

The reason that most Calvinists are compatibilists rather than hard determinists is due to looming difficulties with hard determinism, particularly in regard to the question of evil. That is, within a hard determinist framework, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to find any rational basis on which to avoid the following conclusions: (a) humans should *not* be held culpable for their sin (given that humans are, from the hard determinist viewpoint, incapable of exercising free will in the matter), and (b) God *should* be held culpable for human sin (given that His decree is the determinative cause of each act of human sin). Many theistic hard determinists, in fact, concede the logical point, and argue that man's culpability and God's innocence in the matter must instead be accepted on faith rather than reason, as among the inscrutable mysteries of the divine revelation.

Those who reject theistic hard determinism, in contrast, generally do so in the belief that it is premature to abandon rational argumentation in regard to this question, especially given that there appear to be rational alternatives to hard determinism.

In the remainder of this essay I will take a critical look at the two major alternatives to hard determinism mentioned above, namely, compatibilism and indeterminism. First, I will explore three major criticisms of compatibilism, concluding that the criticisms succeed and that compatibilism is thus untenable. In the final section I will consider four major objections that have been raised against theistic indeterminism and will argue that all four objections fail, in which case indeterminism remains a viable philosophical perspective on human free will. In considering the final objection to indeterminism, I will also include reasons for rejecting the limited-knowledge view of God espoused by some indeterminists such as Clark Pinnock, in favor of a more biblical form of indeterminism that acknowledges the foreknowledge of God.

One clarification is in order: This is intended primarily to be a philosophical, not a theological essay. Consequently, in this essay I rely chiefly on philosophical evidence and do not address to any significant extent the biblical evidence relevant to Calvinism versus Arminianism. I hope to discuss the biblical data in future essays.

II. Objections to Compatibilism

A. Major Premises of Compatibilism

The major premises of theistic compatibilism as represented by the majority of modern Calvinists can be summarized as follows (see, e.g., Feinberg, “God Ordains All Things,” in *Predestination & Free Will*, pp. 19-43; David Ciochi, “Human Freedom,” in *Christian Perspectives on Being Human: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Integration*, Moreland & Ciochi (eds.), Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1993, pp. 87-108):

- a. A choice to act is morally accountable if it is free.
- b. A choice to act is free if it is made based on what an agent desires to do.
- c. A human agent’s desires determine how he will choose to act in a given situation.
- d. God is able to decisively condition a human agent’s desires in any given

situation, such that a particular choice will be most desirable to the agent and thus acted upon by the agent (hence the choice will be free, hence morally accountable).

- e. God decrees (causally determines) all thoughts, choices, and actions of human agents, including both the means to and the ends of those actions.

Compatibilists argue that every act of an agent's will must have a causally sufficient condition beyond the will to produce the act. Conditioned desire fulfills this role within the compatibilist framework. Compatibilists generally argue that it is impossible to choose any option other than that option which one desires the most; consequently, (according to the compatibilist) one's desires (which are reflections of one's *character* in interaction with one's environment) *determine* one's choices. The compatibilist assumes that every choice must be so conditioned by one's desires/character; that is, there is no such thing as a *categorical ability* to choose one way or another (see Ciocchi, "Human Freedom," in *Christian Perspectives on Being Human*, p. 99). Instead, one's character and the facts of the situation at hand determine that one and only one choice will be most desired and hence be actualizable. Within theistic compatibilism, because God determines one's desires (by conditioning one's environment in such a way as to ensure that particular desires have prominence), then it follows that God ultimately determines one's free choices ("free" because the choices made are in accordance with one's desires).

B. Three Objections to Compatibilism

Compatibilism claims to offer within a deterministic framework a definition of human freedom that both recognizes genuine human culpability for sin and relieves God from any culpability for this same sin. It seems to me (and to many other Arminians) that on closer inspection, however, compatibilism fails to achieve these objectives, and thus is subject to the same two major criticisms as is hard determinism (i.e., it fails to establish human culpability, and fails to avoid divine culpability). I will begin by discussing these two objections in turn. I will then note a third objection to compatibilism, namely, that like its hard deterministic counterpart it fails to provide sufficient grounds for a satisfying characterization of human knowledge and rhetoric.

1. *Compatibilism fails to establish human culpability*

Consider the following observations by Bruce Reichenbach (an indeterminist) in his response to Feinberg's presentation of compatibilism:

“. . . if every event and thing is caused, then my very choices, beliefs and desires are caused. But if my choosing and desiring are caused by causes which ultimately can be traced back prior to the existence of the individual human person, I cannot will, choose, or desire other than I am caused to do. But then the freedom asserted by Feinberg is an illusion, for there is no sense to his analysis of freedom given in terms of what the person would have done or chosen to do even if the causes had not been present, for there are no events where there are no sufficient causes present.

Further, on Feinberg's theistic compatibilism, my desiring and choosing must be decreed by God, since my having a desire and choosing are events. Thus there is no instance in which I can desire anything other than that decreed by God. Should I desire other than that decreed by God, that very desire is itself decreed by God. Again freedom becomes an empty notion, for there can be no desire independent of God's decree." ("Bruce Reichenbach's Response," in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 51)

Reichenbach has put his finger on an important circularity in the claim by soft determinists that humans can be considered genuinely free so long as their actions are in accordance with their desires. Given the claim by determinists that all events and actions are decreed by God, then human desire (the very thing that compatibilists claim allows human choices to be considered free) must itself also be decreed. But if so, then *there is nothing outside of or beyond God's decree on which human freedom might be based*. Put differently, there is no such thing as what the human *really* wants to do in a given situation, considered somehow apart from *God's* desire in the matter (i.e., God's desire as to what the human agent will desire). In the compatibilist scheme, human desire is wholly derived from and wholly bound to the divine desire. God's decree encompasses everything, even the desires that underlie human choices.

This is a critical point, because it undercuts the plausibility of the compatibilist's argument that desire can be considered the basis for human freedom. When the compatibilist defines freedom in terms of *desire* (i.e., doing what one *wants* to do), this formulation initially appears plausible only because it tends to (subtly) evoke a sense of *independence* or *ownership* on the part of the human agent for his choices. That is, even

though the compatibilist insists that God decisively conditions a person's environment so as to guarantee the outcome of the person's choices, we can nonetheless envision God's action in doing so as being compatible with human freedom so long as the human agent in question has the opportunity to interact with his conditioned environment as (in some sense) an independent agent, possessing his own desires and thus owning his choices in relation to that environment. But once we recognize (as we must within the larger deterministic framework encompassing compatibilism) that those very desires of the person are equally part of the environment that God causally determines, then the line between environment and agent becomes blurred if not completely lost. The human agent no longer can be seen as owning his own choices, for the desires determining those choices are in no significant sense independent of God's decree. For this reason, human desire within the compatibilist framework forms an insufficient basis on which to establish the integrity of human freedom (and from this the legitimacy of human culpability for sin). In this important sense, then, soft determinism folds into hard determinism.

Indeterminists, in contrast, recognize that it is not enough to ground human freedom strictly in human desire, and argue that for an act to be genuinely free and provide a sufficient ground for moral culpability, it must be that the agent *could have done otherwise* than he did, in the sense that "no antecedent conditions and/or causal laws determine that he will perform the action, or that he won't" (Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, p. 29). This is the notion referred to earlier as contra-causal freedom. Some compatibilists argue that indeterminists are too fixated on this notion of contra-causal freedom as being the only sufficient definition for *genuine* freedom. Feinberg, for example, claims to identify six alternative senses of the term "could/can" which might be carried in the phrase "*could have done otherwise*," any of which might be adopted by compatibilists in order to provide sufficient content to the notion of human freedom within a compatibilist framework without having to appeal to contra-causal freedom.

It turns out, however, that none of Feinberg's alternative senses of could/can provide a sufficient ground for moral culpability, hence all fail as alternatives to the indeterminist notion of contra-causal freedom. Let us consider Feinberg's six alternative senses of could/can in turn:

a) Conditionality. "According to this interpretation, the agent could have done otherwise means she would have done otherwise *if she had so chosen*" (Feinberg, "God

Ordains All Things,” in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 27, emphasis mine). Alvin Plantinga comments that this interpretation of human freedom is “utterly implausible,” for “one might as well claim that being in jail doesn’t really limit one’s freedom on the grounds that if one were *not* in jail, he’d be free to come and go as he pleased” (*God, Freedom, and Evil*, Eerdmans edition, 1977, p. 32). Indeed, having presented this conditionality interpretation of “could have done otherwise,” Feinberg himself immediately retracts it, rightly noting that it will not help the compatibilist, as it simply raises a new objection to determinism, namely, “what if the agent could not have *chosen*?” (Feinberg, p. 27).

b) Ability. Commenting on this second sense of can/could, Feinberg notes that “someone may not choose or do a particular action, but has the *ability* to do so. . . . For example, a paraplegic cannot run a mile, even if he chooses to, but a nonparaplegic in good physical shape is *able* to choose and do the act even if conditions cause him not to” (Feinberg, p. 27, emphasis mine). Utilizing this sense of can/could, then, the compatibilist might wish to say that *apart from the fact that his sinful desires are what they are*, every sinner is *able* (i.e., has some inherent physical, mental, and/or spiritual capacity) to choose and do what is good, and is *on that basis* guilty for sins that he instead chooses to commit, despite the fact that each of the sins he commits is decisively conditioned by God to occur.

This ability sense of human freedom would seem, however, to be a curious position for most theological determinists to take, given the fact that the vast majority of these hold to a strong view of original sin and its effects, according to which the natural man’s ability to choose and do good is called seriously into question. More importantly, basing man’s culpability on his *potential ability* to do good in the sense above offers an awkward basis for the determination of guilt. Consider the following analogy: Someone secretly slips a drug into your coffee at a dinner party that has the sole effect of causing you to desire to punch in the face the first person you see. Upon the drug’s taking effect, you promptly act on your new desire and assault your nearest fellow guest at the dinner table.

Question: Once the truth of your predicament becomes known (i.e., that you were drugged to have this particular bellicose desire), how likely is it that you would be convicted on charges of assault? I suspect very slim. And yet, the compatibilist who adopts an “ability” definition of “*could have done otherwise*” finds himself in a very similar position to the one who would argue that you as the drugged man in our story

should be tried and convicted. For if God compatibilistically decrees and conditions our desires to be exactly what they are and nothing else, then he is in an analogous position to the person who slipped the drug into your drink. Keep in mind that the only effect of the drug was to alter your desires, so that you, though drugged, were nonetheless “freely” acting on your new drug-induced desire (i.e., you did exactly what you *wanted* to under the circumstances, just as a compatibilist God supposedly conditions us to do exactly what we *want* to do in every pre-decreed circumstance). Moreover, despite the fact that you were drugged, you were *in every other respect* (i.e., apart from the effect that the drug had in altering your desires) fully “able” to refrain from punching your fellow dinner guest, just as within a compatibilistic theological framework we are “able” to do good (questions of original sin aside) when the activity of our wills is considered apart from the effect of the divine decrees in conditioning our desires. It seems inconsistent, then, to charge blame in the one case (i.e., to all humans within the framework of theological soft determinism) but not in the other case (i.e., to the protagonist in our dinner party story). I conclude, then, that the ability sense of could/can suggested by Feinberg does not provide a sufficient basis for establishing human culpability for sin.

c) Opportunity. In this sense of could/can “one both has the ability and the *opportunity* to do something. For example, a young girl may have the ability to jump four feet high, and if she is outside in an open field, she has the opportunity to do so, even if she chooses not to.” (Feinberg, p. 27, emphasis mine). As Feinberg’s comments suggest, this sense of could/can adds only slightly to the previous sense based on ability. Like the ability definition, the opportunity definition fails to establish a sufficient basis for human culpability. Consider again the drugged dinner guest in the story above. In every respect apart from his conditioned desires, he had both the ability and the opportunity to refrain from punching his fellow guest. Yet it seems awkward at best to charge him with blame on this basis.

d) Rule Consistency. In this sense of could/can “there is some rule which either permits or prohibits the act a person is able and has opportunity to do. Thus, if *rules allow* parking in front of a building, a driver *can* park there, even if something causes him not to” (Feinberg, p. 28, emphasis mine). Again, this sense of could/can seems to fail the test of providing a sufficient basis for guilt. The drugged dinner guest was certainly permitted by both the law and rules of social convention not to punch his companion, and was in fact prohibited by both sets of rules from doing so. Yet given the circumstances of his being drugged we would not readily attribute guilt to him.

e) Consequence. In this sense “an agent cannot do something because of ill *consequences* that result from doing it. For example, I cannot (given the negative consequences) drive my car off a cliff, even though I obviously have both the ability and the opportunity, and no rule prohibits me from doing so” (Feinberg, p. 28, emphasis mine). Applied to the question of human sin (in which case the point concerns human *ability* to have done otherwise rather than *inability*), what Feinberg must have in mind is that when humans sin in accordance with God’s predetermined decree, they nonetheless *could* have done otherwise (and hence are culpable for their sin) in the sense that *no negative consequences would have followed if they had chosen not to sin*. Phrased this way, this definition of freedom can be seen to fare no better than Feinberg’s previous alternatives. Again, the drugged guest would have faced no negative consequences if he had refrained from punching his fellow guest, and yet by this fact we would not, under the circumstances, judge him guilty for having done so.

f) Reasonable Expectation. Now we come to what Feinberg considers the “most appropriate” sense of could/can for compatibilism. Feinberg explains:

“In this sense, to say someone can do something means it is *reasonable to expect* him to do so under the circumstances, and to say someone cannot do something means only that under the circumstances it is unreasonable to expect him to do it. Clearly, if this is the meaning of *the agent could (could not) have done otherwise*, a soft determinist such as myself can agree that the agent could (could not) have done otherwise and still maintain his notion of freedom. Since in this sense of *can* one talks about reasons for doing one thing or another, if those reasons are decisive (and in this case they seem to be), then the action in question is causally determined. But, saying it would be unreasonable for an agent to do otherwise does not mean that his choices are constrained. In fact, it is the very reasonableness of what he chooses which commends the action to him so that he chooses *according to* his desires and thus (on a soft determinist account) freely” (Feinberg, p. 28).

Feinberg here argues the wrong point. The point he arrives at seems to be that the compatibilist position is defensible because compatibilism posits that human agents act according to reasonable desires, hence their actions are genuinely free because on at least one sense of could/can, it is the *reasonableness* of a choice that commends it as a free

choice. However, this is not at all the point at hand that the compatibilist needs to argue or that Feinberg ostensibly set out to argue. Keep in mind that the indeterminist's objection to compatibilism focuses on the fact that by positing that God determines all of our desires and choices, compatibilism cannot provide a legitimate basis for saying that human agents *could have done otherwise*, hence compatibilism cannot provide an adequate basis for assigning guilt to agents so determined. What Feinberg is *supposed* to be arguing here is that there are senses of "could" (other than the basic contra-causal sense offered by indeterminists) in the phrase "*could have done otherwise*" that will allow the compatibilist to say that the human agent indeed "could" have done otherwise than sin (even though the agent was divinely determined to sin). But Feinberg has presented no such argument here. Instead, he has apparently confused his line of thought so as to arrive at the point of arguing for the reasonableness of what human agents in fact choose to do. What he needed to show was that there is some sense in which what human agents choose *not* to do (i.e., what they "could" have done but didn't) is reasonable, and hence that these human agents are culpable for not doing what they in some legitimate sense "could" have done. Applying the sense of "reasonable expectation" to the compatibilist framework, what Feinberg needed to have shown is that something along the following lines makes good sense:

Even though God has decisively and conclusively predetermined my sinful desires and sinful actions to occur as they will occur, I am nonetheless "able" to do otherwise than these actions (and are hence guilty for these actions) in the sense that under the circumstances *it is reasonable to expect* that I will do otherwise.

As far as I can tell, the preceding statement is absolute nonsense no matter how one looks at it. Consequently, I conclude that Feinberg's most promising alternative sense of could/can, like the other five alternative senses he proposes, fails to provide a sufficient basis for saying that an individual within a compatibilist framework "could have done otherwise" than he did and is thereby culpable for the sins which God determines as his portion. We are left, then, only with the obvious contra-causal sense of the term could/can espoused by indeterminists. And given this contra-causal sense, it is simply not the case within a deterministic compatibilist framework that a human agent could have done otherwise than he has done. The agent's desires and actions are wholly determined; therefore, he has no categorical ability to do other than God determines. This leaves us with no sufficient basis within a compatibilistic framework on which the

agent can be held culpable for his actions.

2. Compatibilism fails to avoid divine culpability

Turning now to the second major objection to compatibilism, indeterminists argue that compatibilism fails in its attempt to relieve God from the charge of culpability for human sin. Recall the conclusion above that within the compatibilist scheme, human desire must be seen as wholly derived from and wholly bound to divine desire. I argued above that this inexorable relation between the divine desire and human desire strips compatibilism of any legitimate basis for assigning guilt to humans for their sinful actions. This deterministic relation between divine and human desire also has important consequences for the question of God's culpability. Even if, for the sake of argument, we were to grant that compatibilism preserves the culpability of humans for their sinful choices by virtue of the fact that when humans sin they act in accordance with their desires, it would be hard to see why God is not *equally culpable* for desiring (via His eternal decree) the commission of these very sins. That is, if human desire is wholly derived from and reflective of divine desire, then why should not any guilt attached to sinful human desires be attached (in transitive fashion) to the corresponding divine desire as well? It seems arbitrary, on the one hand, to make desire the ground for establishing guilt among humans, but, on the other hand, to not apply this same standard to the divine desire manifested in the eternal decree.

Reformed theologian Robert Reymond (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1998) attempts to avoid such a conclusion by arguing that God cannot possibly be held culpable for sin "because there is no lawgiver over him to whom he is accountable" (p. 376). "What makes a person 'responsible,'" Reymond argues, "is whether there is a lawgiver over him who has declared that he will require that person to give an account to him for his thoughts, words, and actions" (p. 375). Though this is true of man in his relation to God, Reymond argues, it is not true of God himself, given that there is no one to whom He is responsible for His thoughts, words and actions.

Though Reymond may have a point here, his observation does not do away with the more basic problem faced by his deterministic system. While it is true that God cannot be said to be "responsible" to another party in the same sense that humans are responsible (for the very reason Reymond notes), this does not mean that God's actions are entirely

unconstrained. As Reymond himself clearly recognizes, God cannot act contrary to His own nature (e.g., “he cannot lie because his nature disallows it,” p. 376). God is, in a sense, responsible *to Himself*, not in the sense that He is placed under or subject to His own Law, but rather in the sense that His desires, thoughts, and actions (and hence, His Law) derive perfectly from *who He is*, His nature being the very essence and definition of goodness. When I argue as above that God, under the compatibilist’s deterministic system, would have to be considered “culpable” for desiring that humans should desire to commit sin, I am arguing that for God to desire this would be for God to desire something that is *contrary to His own nature*. This has little to do with “responsibility” in the accountability sense that Reymond uses the term. Rather, it has to do with how we will define what is a sinful desire versus what is not. In the human arena, we generally assume that it is evil for one person to desire that another person commit sin. What Reymond and other theological determinists need to present in order to defend their position are cogent reasons why this should not be the case in the divine arena as well, that is, why it would not be against God’s righteous nature for Him to desire other moral agents to sin. In the absence of such evidence we are justified, I believe, to maintain that God cannot generally so desire, for His own character will not allow it. [NOTE 2]

Notice also that it will not do to merely state that “because he [God] is sovereign, whatever he decrees and whatever he does in accordance with his eternal decree are proper and right just because he is the absolute Sovereign” (Reymond, p. 376). From this Reymond concludes that God cannot possibly be considered culpable when He decrees that humans should desire to sin, for in so doing He is simply exercising His unquestionable sovereignty. However, the question at hand is not whether what God does is right (I agree that all that God does is right, by definition, because He is God). Rather, the question at hand is *what does God do?* Though everything that God does is right, this does not entail that God does everything. There are clearly some things that God does *not* do—He does not lie, for example. Similarly, God does not desire that other moral agents should desire to sin, for such desire on God’s part would contradict His righteous nature.

Compatibilism, then, runs into serious difficulty when it makes desire the basis for establishing guilt among humans, yet arbitrarily prevents this same standard from being applied at the divine level, where God is said to decree (thus desire) that humans will desire to commit sin. One additional observation is in order: The compatibilist cannot escape from the above dilemma by saying that God only exercises a *permissive will* so as

to merely *allow* humans to sin, and that He is therefore not culpable. The implicit if not explicit point of any argument from permissive will is to say that God really *disagrees* with humans' choice to sin (i.e., God doesn't really want them to do it, and He doesn't like it, but He permits them to do it because that is what *they* really want to do). Remember, however, that on a compatibilist account, God wills to structure or decree each situation to contain just those conditioning influences on human choice that it does, and there is no reason to think (given compatibilist assumptions) that He could not have structured it otherwise. If God is able to decree those factors sufficient to decisively condition human action toward any divinely predetermined action in any situation, then presumably God could have readily decreed every human situational context to include whatever conditions would have been necessary to ensure that humans would always desire to choose the good over the evil. The fact that God did *not* do so means (on a compatibilistic understanding) that God willed (desired) humans to sin, when He *could have willed otherwise*. [NOTE 3] Within the compatibilist framework, then, God co-wills the outcome of human choice, not merely in a permissive sense, but in the sense of *agreement with the outcome*. Reichenbach comments on the awkward position in which this places the compatibilist: "On the one hand, we are told [by the compatibilist] that God's decrees stem *from his purpose and pleasure*. . .; on the other hand, we are told that God decrees things which are contrary to his desire and to the best for us. One can see no reason why God would decree anything contrary to what he desires and what is best for us" ("Bruce Reichenbach's Response," in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 52, note 2, emphasis mine). Pinnock similarly points out that for the determinist to suggest that God only "'permits' some atrocity, like the Holocaust," is to inconsistently suggest that "it originated outside God's sovereign will." ("Clark Pinnock's Response," in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 58). Pinnock chides "some less stout Calvinists" for entertaining this contradiction to their determinist system (p. 58). [NOTE 4]

It seems, then, that on both of the important points surveyed above, compatibilism fails to achieve its objectives. Though (unlike hard determinists) compatibilists explicitly claim to recognize a sense of genuine human freedom and from this derive moral accountability for human sin, on closer inspection the sense of human freedom envisioned within compatibilism rings hollow. Moreover, compatibilism is unable to escape the conclusion forced within its deterministic framework that God is equally culpable for human sin. I will now consider one final objection to compatibilism before turning to objections that have been raised against indeterminism.

3. Compatibilism fails to provide a sufficient basis for human knowledge and rhetoric

This final objection to compatibilism, like the preceding two objections, arises from the fact that compatibilism is at its core a *determinist* philosophy. Consider the following observation:

“That man is free we may be confident, as confident as we are that man is capable of knowing. For unless man is free, capable of some kind of genuine creative act, then he cannot know. He can only react, and his supposed awareness that he can react is only another reaction, and so on endlessly . . . Whether or not we are in fact free is a question only for those who wish to play games with concepts. Once we see what the question is we see that the very possibility of considering it *as a question to which true or false answers may be given* presupposes the fact of freedom.” (Samuel M. Thompson, *A Modern Philosophy of Religion*, Chicago: Regnery, 1955, pp. 178-179; quoted in Terry L. Miethe, “The Universal Power of the Atonement,” in *The Grace of God and the Will of Man*, ed. by Clark H. Pinnock, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989, Bethany House edition published 1995, pp. 84-85)

Thompson’s point is simple yet forceful. The human proclivity to evaluate, embrace, and promote various propositions or beliefs carries with it a presumption of *freedom* on the part of both oneself and one’s interlocutors. Without this presumption of freedom, the entire epistemological and rhetorical enterprise breaks down. As H. P. Owen once remarked in a related vein,

“Determinism is self-stultifying. If my mental processes are totally determined, I am totally determined either to accept or to reject determinism. But if the sole reason for my believing or not believing X is that I am causally determined to believe it, I have no ground for holding that my judgment is true or false.”
(*Christian Theism*, Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1984, p. 118)

To this I might add that if determinism is true, I also have no real ground for *attempting to convince others* that my judgment is true or false. Consider, for example, the case of two earnest philosophers, one a compatibilist and the other an indeterminist. Each believes that his own position is the correct one, and each wishes to convince the other to change his beliefs. Note, however, that if in fact compatibilistic determinism is true,

then we must conclude that this compatibilist philosopher believes compatibilism to be true not because he has been able to *creatively* engage the merits and truth value of that position and *freely* choose it (in a contra-causal sense of freedom), but instead because his thinking processes--including the way he *desires* to respond to the evidence and arguments presented to him--have been predetermined by God to be exactly what they are at that point in time (i.e., God *made* him a compatibilist). Similarly, within this same scenario the indeterminist philosopher believes indeterminism to be true not because he was truly free to reach that conclusion (in a contra-causal sense) but because God predetermined that at that point in time this philosopher would hold that particular worldview (i.e., God *made* him an indeterminist). Under such a scenario, it is hard to see why the two philosophers should bother to debate the matter at all, or why compatibilist philosophers and theologians should write books attempting to prove their position to be the correct one. Under the compatibilist scenario, at any given point in time each one of us inevitably believes only what God has preordained for us to believe for that point in time, hence the outcome of any debate on the matter is fixed.

The problem is that it is impossible for any person--philosopher or otherwise--to really live this way. As Thompson said, "Determinism is not, and never was, a working philosophy of life" (Samuel M. Thompson, *A Modern Philosophy of Religion*, Chicago: Regnery, 1955, pp. 178-179; quoted in Miethe, p. 84). When we carry out friendly debates with people of opposing persuasions, we do so in the expectation that we and they may act as true *agents* with the power to creatively engage the evidence and freely choose among options. We support our positions with arguments under the assumption (or hope) that our interlocutors will be able to recognize the objective validity of these arguments and be swayed. In short, we assume that the outcome of the debate is *not* predetermined. I suggest that this is no less true of determinist than of indeterminist participants. It seems to me that determinism cannot adequately account for this feature of human cognition; consequently, determinism--even theistic determinism--is not a livable philosophy. As J. R. Lucas said, "Determinism . . . cannot be true, because if it was, we should not take the determinists' arguments as being really arguments, but as being only conditioned reflexes" (*Freedom of the Will*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970, pp. 114-115).

Note that the theistic determinist cannot escape from the above difficulty by appealing to the fact that God is himself independent of any outside determining influences (cf., e.g., Ronald H. Nash, who takes this tack in *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in*

a World of Ideas, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992, p. 86, footnote 22). Though this fact of divine freedom may allow theistic determinism to escape one of the serious pitfalls of atheistic determinism (viz., the absence of any objective standard for evaluating truth and falsity), as far as I can see it has no direct bearing on the problems noted above for theistic determinism in regard to knowledge and rhetoric within the *human* realm. Therefore, I maintain the conclusion that compatibilist determinism--even the theistic variety being considered in this essay--is not a livable philosophy.

III. Objections to Indeterminism

A. Basic Premises of Indeterminism

I have argued above that there are several critical problems with soft-determinism, or compatibilism. Now I want to address a number of objections that have been raised to its main competitor, indeterminism. But first let me summarize some of the basic premises of indeterminism:

- a. A choice to act is morally accountable if it is free.
- b. A choice to act is free if it is an expression of an agent's categorical ability of the will to refrain or not refrain from the action (i.e., contra-causal freedom).
- c. At least some (perhaps many or most) of the choices of human agents are contra-causally free.
- d. God does not determine the contra-causally free choices of human agents.

One may notice that premise (a) above is identical to the first premise of compatibilism listed earlier. Both indeterminists and compatibilists wish to recognize that only free choices should be considered morally accountable (as over against hard determinists, who generally deny this premise). After that, however, the similarity between the positions ends. Indeterminists argue that normal human agents possess contra-causal freedom, and that God, generally speaking, does not override the exercise of this freedom through eternal decrees or other prior causal conditions (see below for discussion of exceptions to this). Taking contra-causal freedom seriously in this way leads indeterminism to important conclusions regarding the relationship between one's character and one's will. Whereas compatibilism virtually equates the agent with his character (because the agent's

character determines his desires, and his desires determine his choices), indeterminism rejects this equation. David Ciocchi nicely summarizes this point for the indeterminist:

“The agent, as a locus of free will, is something more than his own character—his character has a say, but not the final say, in a libertarian [i.e., contra-causal] free choice. What the libertarian [i.e., indeterminist] affirms with the soft determinist is that the agent’s character and circumstances will *determine the range of options from which he will make his free choice*,” but these factors do not “determine *which* option from that range he will choose. *That* choice is what free will is all about . . . , and it is finally mysterious, beyond full explanation, for full explanations presuppose the very determinism the libertarian rejects” (Ciocchi, “Human Freedom,” in *Christian Perspectives on Being Human*, pp. 93-94).

The indeterminist, then, resists the notion that one’s choices can always be determined either by one’s desires, one’s character, or by divine influence on the agent (either indirectly through decisive conditioning or in some more direct manner). The indeterminist recognizes that these sources may *influence* one’s choices, but the indeterminist argues that, in at least many cases, these sources will not *determine* (conclusively) one’s choice.

B. Four Objections to Indeterminism

With the above brief summary of indeterminism in mind, I now would like to consider various objections of a philosophical nature that have been raised by compatibilists against theological indeterminism. [NOTE 5] In each case I will argue that the objection fails. First, determinists have sometimes argued that because of indeterminists’ emphasis on contra-causal human freedom, indeterminists cannot account for clear cases of divine determination of human actions such as the inspiration of scripture, or certain answers to prayer. A second related charge against indeterminists is that they cannot adequately account for the role of one’s character in influencing (the compatibilists would say “determining”) one’s choices. A third objection is that indeterminism is deficient because it offers no causally sufficient condition for human action. A fourth and final objection is that indeterminists cannot account for divine foreknowledge or predictive prophecy. In responding to this last objection I will rebut note only the position of compatibilists, who argue that foreknowledge entails determinism, but also of radical indeterminists such as Clark Pinnock, who because they

labor under the same misconception (that foreknowledge entails determinism) therefore deny divine foreknowledge altogether.

1. Divine intervention in human affairs

First, some compatibilists argue that indeterminists cannot account for certain clear cases of divine intervention in human affairs. Feinberg, for example, concludes that “compatibilism seems necessitated by verbal plenary inspiration” of scripture (Feinberg, p. 35). He states, “The picture [presented in the Bible] is that the biblical writers did not write unless superintended and moved by the Holy Spirit. Such superintendence guaranteed that they wrote his words. If they had continued to write without him, they would have written at their own impulse and initiative, but Peter denies that such occurred (2 Pet 1:20-21). . . . Given the meaning of indeterministic freedom and all the scriptural evidence against a dictation theory of inspiration, the only way to hold to verbal plenary inspiration as set forth in 2 Peter 1:21 seems to be to hold to compatibilism” (Feinberg, p. 35).

However, it is important to note that there is nothing within an indeterminist framework as I have developed it in this essay that would prevent us from recognizing that there are special cases (e.g., divine inspiration of scripture; various answers to prayer) in which God overrides the human will and determines human choice. In these cases the means by which God determines human choice may well include decisive conditioning of human choices by way of God’s directly intervening in both the person’s external and internal (mental) environment so as to bring about the divinely desired outcome, in a way similar to that envisioned by compatibilists. The chief differences between this conception of particular decisive conditioning that I am suggesting here and the version of decisive conditioning envisioned by compatibilists are:

- a. According to my proposal, God’s action in conditioning is not derived from a general set of eternal divine decrees (hence such actions on God’s part truly are special cases, rather than the universal case as compatibilists would maintain), and
- b. according to my proposal, the decisive conditioning of human choice counts as overriding human freedom (i.e., the human agent’s choice in such cases is determined; hence, it is not an example of the exercise of contra-causal freedom).

It must be that such decisive conditioning counts as overriding human freedom, otherwise this position I am suggesting here, like the compatibilist position, would be open to the charge that God is culpable for not *always* conditioning human freedom to not sin. Because the decisive conditioning posited here overrides human freedom, we can explain why God does not consistently operate this way as a general rule, for to do so (as has often been pointed out by indeterminist philosophers) would be tantamount to eliminating human freedom entirely.

Because God employs decisive conditioning only on a selective basis, then, He can apply this method without culpability, and without employing a general determinism (with all of its attendant problems). Reichenbach comments in this regard: “God does at times restrict human freedom. For example, his rescue of Peter from prison restricted the freedom of the jailor. Similarly we restrict the freedom of others; by closing the cellar door I restrict the movement of my two year old, Rachel. But when persons must be manipulated or restricted (as, for example, when we forceably restrain one person from harming another), it must be recognized that such manipulation and interference can destroy the personhood of the individual. Thus, interference which restricts human freedom cannot be condoned without just cause or good reason. And interferences which would totally remove morally significant freedom, the freedom to make our own moral choices, is completely dehumanizing and unacceptable. Full humanization and moral growth occur when freedom is encouraged” (“God Limits His Power,” *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 109).

Indeterminism, then, allows for cases such as divine inspiration of scripture and certain answers to prayer in which God intervenes in human affairs to determine the outcome He desires. Decisive conditioning of an agent’s environment may well be one of God’s standard methods of intervention in such cases.

Before moving on to the second objection to indeterminism, more needs to be said about God’s use of environmental conditioning, for it is also possible to conceive of conditioning that is *not* decisive in nature; that is, it should be possible for God to condition a person’s environment (both internal and external) but in such a way as to stop short of conclusively determining the outcome. We might term such nondecisive conditioning as *wooing*, a concept which most Christians implicitly if not explicitly assume God regularly engages in. When God woos, He structures the situation so as to

make one choice more attractive to the human agent than it otherwise would be without God's intervention. The difference between wooing and decisive conditioning is that in wooing God conditions *only to a point*: If the human agent maintains resistance to the option toward which God has wooed them, then God at some point withdraws further intervention and leaves the human agent to bear the consequences of his free choice. In contrast, when God decisively conditions a particular outcome of human choice, His conditioning is conclusive and inexorable in nature; that is He "doesn't let up" until any and all human resistance to that choice is completely negated. Whether God simply woos or instead decisively conditions in a particular situation is decided not by the will of the human agent involved, but by God's own purpose and the nature of what He wishes to achieve.

1 Corinthians 10:13 suggests that God also engages in what we might call *reverse conditioning*; that is, God regularly intervenes to ensure that the believer in Christ will *not* face a situation in which he is decisively conditioned to sin (i.e., "tempted beyond what he is able"). Presumably this involves God "undoing" or disarming aspects of situations that would otherwise be more than a particular believer could bear and would thus (in the absence of God's intervention) decisively condition the believer to sin, given the particular believer's present emotional, mental, and spiritual maturity. We might similarly envision another variety of reverse conditioning whereby God "frees" a person from bondage to a particular area of sin by diminishing or removing the effect of a prior conditioning to sin (i.e., a sinful habit) that had previously developed in the person's character. I will return to this last idea below.

2. Character and choice

A second objection to indeterminism is that it cannot adequately account for the role of a person's character in influencing his choices. David Ciochi states this objection as follows:

"The Bible affirms a connection between what a person is and what he does (e.g., John 8:42; 1 John 2:18, 19; 3:9), and it considers this to be a necessary connection, for "a good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit" (Matt. 7:18 NASB). It also speaks of spiritual growth (e.g., in 2 Peter 3:18), a theme that implies a connection between the believer's stage of growth and his actual behavior, including his response to temptation. . . . This is the problem: if

the categorical ability view [i.e., free-will indeterminism] is correct, then from the moment he comes to faith, the believer might actually (a) invariably choose to endure temptation, thus living from the outset like a perfected saint, or (b) invariably choose to give in to temptation, thus living from the outset like an apostate. There is nothing in the libertarian account of free will to preclude these extreme possibilities.” (Ciocchi, “Human Freedom,” in *Christian Perspectives on Being Human*, pp. 98-99)

Ciocchi’s above objection to indeterminism, however, overlooks the important fact noted above (and noted elsewhere by Ciocchi himself in the same essay, p. 94) that indeterminists themselves recognize limitations on the scope of the exercise of free will. That is, indeterminists generally recognize that genuinely free choices (as indeterminists define free choices; i.e., as those choices reflecting a categorical ability to have chosen otherwise) represent only a portion of the choices made by free agents. Many choices are largely or perhaps completely conditioned by one’s character and environment. We operate to a significant extent on something like a moral “automatic pilot,” our present moral choices being largely conditioned by the character that we have developed on the basis of numerous repeated past choices.

What then is the relationship between the influence of one’s character and the exercise of contra-causal free will? This is undoubtedly a highly complex question, but I would like to offer a proposal along indeterminist/Arminian lines concerning just one aspect of the relationship between character and free will. My proposal is this: The exercise of categorical free will, in conjunction with God’s supernatural intervention in the life of the human agent, fulfills the pivotal function in the believer’s transition from a character conditioned to sin, to a character conditioned to righteousness. Let me offer a sketch of how this may occur, beginning with the state of the unbeliever.

The Bible describes unbelievers as being “slaves to sin” (Rom 6:6) who bear an inherited tendency to rebel against God in word, thought, and deed. Put in our present terms, this unregenerate state is essentially one in which a person’s moral character has been conditioned to sin. Just how this conditioned state comes about in the first place is a rather involved question, so I will only briefly comment on it here. Suffice it to say that a child does not start the process of moral development from a position of neutrality, but instead comes onto the scene already possessing a heightened awareness of the attractiveness and lure of sin, and already predisposed to accept as valid the deceptions

with which sin justifies itself (these predispositions being inherited effects of Adam's sin). As the developing child exercises his categorical free will and repeatedly succumbs to the lure of sin, this awareness of sin's attractiveness is deepened by personal experience, and the child becomes conditioned to sin. That is to say, the developing child becomes less and less able to exercise a genuine categorical ability to freely choose in the moral realm, and increasingly responds to temptation on the basis of learned, automatic responses, or habit. Repeated sin thus yields slavery to sin, for as Paul stated, "when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness" (Rom 6:16). This process of enslavement to sin involves not only the surrendering of one's volition into the keeping of sin, but also the intentional suppression of implicit truth known about God and the denial of any genuine personal loyalty to God (Rom 1:18). The outcome, as Paul states, is true personal moral guilt and consequent spiritual death.

It is while in this condition, as a slave conditioned to sin, that an unbeliever may experience the grace of God to draw him to salvation (John 6:44). There is a question at this point of whether the slavery to sin described above leaves the unbeliever *completely* devoid of any genuine categorical ability to freely choose in the moral realm, or whether some remnant ability to so choose might remain. I will, to simplify my argument, adopt here the position that may appear to pose the greater challenge for an Arminian, and assume that the mature unbeliever no longer possesses the ability to make genuinely free moral choices, his moral choices being thoroughly conditioned by his character (I am not convinced that this is the case, but it would take us too far afield to explore this topic in any depth). Even if the unbeliever's choices are completely conditioned, however, this does not necessarily shut out genuine human agency from having any significant role in the process of salvation, as the Calvinist would maintain. Rather, it simply means that God must initiate before man can respond (as John 6:44 suggests). If the Calvinist objects that man in his fallen, sin-conditioned state is *unable* to respond to God's initiation, the Arminian can reply with the following principle:

Whenever God extends grace to fallen man, He always with this grace (or as part of the grace) also grants the *ability to respond* to the grace.

In the case at hand, as God begins to reveal the truths of the gospel to an unbeliever, God likewise grants the unbeliever the ability to exercise genuine free will in response to that revelation of truth. This does not mean, however, that the unbeliever will necessarily

exercise his free will in such a way as to respond positively to the grace God extends. The unbeliever may, in fact, freely choose to continue to “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” and reject God’s offer. God’s grace is thus not irresistible. (Again, this is a topic that deserves extensive discussion and biblical exegesis, but my purpose here is to present simply a sketch of the interaction between free will and moral growth, so I leave the reader with a promissory note to discuss this topic in a future essay.)

If instead the person confronted by God’s grace freely chooses to respond in faith to the gospel of Christ, then God further extends grace in the form of regeneration to new life in Christ. One important facet of this grace extended in regeneration can be viewed as what I earlier referred to as *reverse conditioning*. Prior to regeneration the unbeliever was conditioned to sin, as described above. At regeneration, however, God intervenes in the human psyche/spirit so as to grant a measure of true freedom from this prior conditioning, such that the believer has a newfound categorical ability to choose righteousness. This freedom opens the way for spiritual growth, the development of godly character. When the believer exercises his free will and chooses righteousness, a new kind of conditioning takes place, namely, a *reconditioning of the character to righteousness*. With each choice to obey God rather than to sin, the believer’s character is increasingly conditioned to obedience, as God cooperates with the believer to work righteous desires and reflexes into the believer’s character (Phlp 2:13; Heb 13:21). Righteousness in essence becomes a habit (in a good sense of the term), a natural outflow of developed godly character. In the apostle Paul’s words, “thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became *slaves of righteousness*” (Rom 6:17-18). This slavery to righteousness refers to a character that has been conditioned over time (through repeated obedience) to habitually embrace righteousness.

The exercise of genuine free will (made possible by God’s intervention in granting freedom at the point of regeneration), thus forms the pivot in the transition from slavery to sin to slavery to righteousness. Having said this I do not mean to imply that the process of sanctification and growth occurs instantaneously or simultaneously in all areas of the believer’s character. Though God grants freedom and indeed promises not to allow believers to be tempted beyond what they are able (1 Cor 10:13), it is a sad reality that believers often fail to fully appropriate this freedom and continue to succumb to the deceptions of sin in various areas of life. Indeed, the experience of the church (and the

testimony of scripture) is that spiritual growth sometimes fails altogether and full apostasy occurs. At the other extreme, there have also historically been cases of unusually rapid and sustained growth of godly character in new believers. I therefore agree with Ciocchi that “there is nothing in the libertarian account of free will to preclude these extreme possibilities” (p. 99), but unlike Ciocchi I *do not wish* to preclude these possibilities, for they seem to me to be very much in keeping with the range of experience seen historically in the church and testified to in scripture.

But what of the scriptures Ciocchi cites to the effect that one’s character has a comprehensive and inexorable influence on one’s behavior (e.g., “a good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit,” Matt. 7:18)? It seems to me that to interpret the passages of scripture cited by Ciocchi at the level at which he does so leads to the untenable conclusion that true Christians will never sin. If a “good tree” is understood to produce “good fruit” in a categorical sense, and if one interprets “fruit” at the level of specific acts of obedience or disobedience, then it follows that the good tree (i.e., the believer) will *never* produce “bad fruit” (i.e., never sin). There is ample scriptural evidence to reject this conclusion outright (e.g., 1 Jn 2:1-2; 5:16; 1 Cor 3:1-3). Moreover, as I have argued in detail in the separate essay on “Assurance” (see the section in that essay entitled “How Much Fruit is Enough?”), a strong case can be made for interpreting the “fruit” in passages like Matthew 7:18 as being specifically those acts of obedience or disobedience which flow directly from and thus reflect one’s underlying basic loyalty, either to Christ or to sin and the flesh. Not all of one’s acts reflect in this way one’s underlying loyalty (e.g., a genuine believer with a fundamental loyalty to Christ will yet at times commit acts that run counter to that loyalty, but this does not itself necessarily negate the reality of his underlying loyalty to Christ). I refer the reader to the essay on “Assurance” for the full argument to this effect, but the point to be made here is that when considered in the larger context of scripture, the passages that Ciocchi cites do not support his assertion that one’s character *determines* (in the strong, exhaustive sense that Ciocchi assumes) all of one’s actions. Thus, I do not see any incompatibility between these passages of scripture and the indeterminist position that recognizes a significant role for contra-causal freedom of the human will.

It is a false dichotomy, then, to say that one’s character must either comprehensively determine one’s choices (the compatibilist view) or else that it is possible for one’s character to have no influence on one’s choices whatsoever (Ciocchi’s characterization of indeterminism). Instead, the truth seems to lie somewhere in the middle: Established

character conditions a significant portion, but not all, of our choices, and categorical free will (enabled by God's grace extended at regeneration) plays a pivotal role in the transition from pre-regeneration slavery to sin to post-regeneration slavery to righteousness.

3. Causal conditions of human acts

A third objection to indeterminism is that it fails to provide sufficient conditions for the human will to act. Feinberg states this objection:

“On the one hand, indeterminists claim that we do not act without reasons. On the other hand, they deny that any reasons or other causes serve as sufficient conditions for what is chosen. But if nothing is a sufficient condition to incline the will to choose one thing over another, then how do we choose at all? If the causal influences really were at a stand-off, then we would not choose. Moreover, if causal influences are not sufficient to move the will to choose, *then what is?* Some indeterminists claim that a person just chooses. Fine, but on what basis? If the answer is that he or she just chooses, surely this is no explanation at all. If the indeterminist argues that the choice is made in accord with what appears to be the best reason(s), then, in fact, the act is causally determined (reasons have functioned as causes sufficient to produce the act)” (Feinberg, p. 36).

In response to this objection, one must realize that the drive to “explain” a free choice in the sense Feinberg wishes to do is question begging, for it *assumes* that a deterministic explanation is required. As Ciocchi observed for us earlier, from the indeterminist perspective the choice between available options “is what free will is all about . . . , and it is finally mysterious, beyond full explanation, for full explanations presuppose the very determinism the libertarian rejects” (Ciocchi, p. 94). Moreover, as Norman Geisler points out, if Feinberg's assertion that every act requires a causally sufficient condition were correct, “then God would not be able to act freely either. For there is no causally sufficient condition beyond his will for his choices. But Feinberg admits God can act freely. Therefore, Feinberg's view is inconsistent. Granting that *freedom* means the same thing in each case, he must either admit that God's acts are not free or else that our free actions, like God's, are self-determined” (“Norman Geisler's Response,” in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 46).

It seems to me that the preferred alternative to the compatibilist's insistence on there being causally sufficient conditions for each act of the will is a view of free will based on human *self-determination* or *agent causation*. Though much has been written in this area, I am not familiar enough with the literature to review that work here. For a brief introduction see Geisler ("God Knows All Things," in *Predestination and Free Will*, pp. 74-78; note that while I agree with Geisler on the necessity of self-determination, I do not embrace his larger account of predestination and free will, which in my opinion is ill-formulated and self-contradictory).

4. *Divine foreknowledge and predictive prophecy*

The fourth and final major objection to indeterminism to be considered here is that indeterminists cannot account for God's foreknowledge of future events, including future free choices of human agents. As Feinberg states, "If God actually knows what will (not just what might) occur in the future, the future must be set and some sense of determinism applies. God's knowledge . . . guarantees that what God knows must occur, regardless of how it is brought about" (Feinberg, p. 32). "If indeterminism is correct, God cannot guarantee that he knows what I shall do, for I could always do otherwise than he expects me to do. If he really knows, I must do it, but that is inconsistent with contra-causal freedom" (p. 32, note 34). This is a seemingly plausible and widely held conclusion, so much so that even some indeterminists concede the point and on that basis argue that God must therefore *not* have foreknowledge of future free actions of human agents (e.g., Clark Pinnock, "God Limits His Knowledge," in *Predestination and Free Will*, pp. 143-162; William Hasker, "A Philosophical Perspective," in *The Openness of God*, IVP, Downers Grove, IL, 1994). In what follows I will first argue that divine foreknowledge and determinism are in fact fully compatible; consequently, the objection raised above is not successful. I will then highlight a serious problem with the limited-knowledge characterization of God promoted by Pinnock and similar indeterminists who have adopted his approach.

A) The compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human free will

Alvin Plantinga in several of his writings (*God, Freedom, and Evil*, pp. 66-72; "On Ockham's Way Out," in *The Analytic Theist: An Alvin Plantinga Reader*, James Sennett (ed.), Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, pp. 258-292) has in my thinking successfully

rebutted the objection that indeterminism is incompatible with divine foreknowledge of the future free actions of humans. I highly recommend that one read Plantinga's arguments in their entirety, but because Plantinga's discussion can be at times quite technical [NOTE 6], I will instead for present purposes draw on comments by Bruce Reichenbach (in his response to Feinberg's essay in *Predestination and Free Will*), in which Reichenbach develops some of the same essential insights as Plantinga does elsewhere, though more briefly and in simpler terms:

“Feinberg's . . . argument is that, given the indeterminist view of human freedom, God cannot foreknow the future. The reason for this is that the future, on the indeterminist view, is at any given time indeterminate. A person could either perform a particular action or refrain from performing it. Only if the future is set can God know it.

But this would be true only if we deny that God's knowledge is truly *foreknowledge*. To have foreknowledge is to know what will occur prior in time to its occurrence. If knowledge is defined as Feinberg suggests, namely, justified true belief, then you and I have foreknowledge. For example, I knew yesterday that I would arise this morning between 7 and 8 A.M. Yesterday I had this belief, and this belief was true (I did in fact arise at 7:15 A.M. this morning), and the belief was justified—based on a good inductive inference from my past behavior on workday mornings. Yet I was not caused to arise at this time (though I had reason to do so); I could have arisen at a later time or not arisen at all. I could have done other than I did this morning (in the indeterminist sense of *could have done other than I did*).

God's foreknowledge, of course, differs from mine, not in its being foreknowledge, but in the ground of his knowledge. My foreknowledge is based on inferences from past experience, whereas his is grounded in the event itself. As such, what God knows is what human persons actually do. But this knowledge does not determine the actions we perform. It is based on those very actions. Thus the future is, as Feinberg suggests, 'set,' but in a very trivial way: we will do what God knows we will do, which is to say, *we will do what we will do*. But that still leaves us free (in the indeterminist sense) to do or not to do” (“Bruce Reichenbach's Response,” p. 53, final emphasis mine).

The crux of Reichenbach's argument is that *our free actions determine God's foreknowledge of those actions, not vice versa*. If this particular relation between free

will and foreknowledge “sets” the future, it does so, as Reichenbach suggests, only in the trivial sense that “we will do what we will do,” an indisputable yet harmless assertion. Thus, while it is true that whatever God knows about the future will in fact occur, this fact poses no threat to the indeterminist claim that our future free actions are truly free, just as the truth of the statement “what will happen will happen” in and of itself sets up no particular causal relation.

This conclusion has ramifications on the question of predictive prophecy as well. One of Feinberg’s objections to indeterminism was that “if indeterminism is correct, there is no way God can guarantee the fulfillment of any prophecy concerning anyone’s future actions; he can do nothing which will causally determine anyone to do what is predicted” (Feinberg, p. 34). Once we recognize that God’s foreknowledge does not conflict with contra-causal human freedom, however, Feinberg’s objection evaporates. God can make accurate, certain predictions of the future free actions of humans based simply and directly on His foreknowledge of those future free actions. Period.

B) The problem with Pinnock’s limited-knowledge conception of God

The above observations on foreknowledge and free will also take much of the wind out of the sail of the contemporary movement spearheaded by indeterminists such as Clark Pinnock and William Hasker, who deny God’s foreknowledge of the future free actions of humans because they see such foreknowledge as entailing determinism. [NOTE 7] Besides being unnecessary (i.e., foreknowledge of free actions is quite compatible with indeterminism, as I have argued above following Plantinga and Reichenbach), a Pinnock-style perspective faces serious problems when faced with the biblical phenomenon of predictive prophecy.

For his part, Pinnock argues that predictive prophecy does not contradict his position, claiming that “a very high percentage of prophecy can be accounted for by one of three factors: the announcement ahead of time of what God intends to do, conditional prophecies which leave the outcome open, and predictions based on God’s knowledge of the past and the present.” (“God Limits His Knowledge,” in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 158). To evaluate Pinnock’s statement here, we must first clarify just what his position on God’s knowledge entails. Rephrasing Pinnock’s first and third observations above, we may say from within his perspective that if the future free actions of humans cannot be known, this effectively limits God’s knowledge of future human affairs to at

most:

- a. future events that God intends to accomplish by His own direct agency and that do not depend on the choices of other free agents, or
- b. future events that can be predicted based on God's knowledge of past human history and the characteristics of the current generation of humans living at the time the prophecy is made.

Limitation (a) above is simply to state that even Pinnock's God has the ability to determine the occurrence of future events which are entirely up to His own will to bring about. Consequently, Feinberg's objection that Pinnock's God could not have predicted the first advent of Christ ("John Feinberg's Response," in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 167) is misguided, for this would be an event that God could have controlled himself. Christ's conception was not dependent on any human choice, but was rather a divine intervention in Mary's body. God would not even have had to know that it would be Mary's body per se (which He could not have known anyway on Pinnock's view, since Mary was a specific individual not yet conceived at the time the Messianic prophecies were made), for God could have picked out any godly virgin girl at the right time of His own choosing and caused her to become the mother of the Christ.

Pinnock fails to see, however, how seriously observation (b) above limits God's predictive ability concerning the actions of future generations. Keep in mind that God, as Pinnock envisions Him, could not know who the "players" on the stage of human history will be before they are conceived in the womb, given that conception is an event that depends in part on human free choice (as implied in John 1:13). Pinnock's God cannot know for sure whether John and Mary, for example, will have that third child, little Junior, or whether they will decide that two is enough and have Mary's tubes tied. It would then of course be impossible for God to know whether little Junior (if any such person is ever conceived to be born at all) will one day grow up, decide to get married, and decide to have a little Junior II of his own. Whether Junior II will one day have a Junior III, and so on, would also be completely unknown to God. Thus God, in Pinnock's view, can only know the present cast of characters on the stage, and no more.

Moreover, the environment in which the free actions of such a cast of characters are made is itself largely determined by the previous free actions of other humans. Consider, for example, how the modern world has been shaped significantly by the free choices of

individuals such as Adolf Hitler, Karl Marx, or Charles Darwin. The choices of these individuals have helped to set the stage for what choices would be available to millions of other individuals who have come after them; choices in beliefs, lifestyle, available relationships, and so forth. Consequently, God's predictive powers in even a general sense in (for example) 1600 A.D., for what would happen in 2000 A.D., would have been severely hampered by the fact that He would not have been able to know beforehand that these particular men would exist during the interim.

So then, because the range of potential free actions depend largely on the particular free agents present, and because even the stage in which free agents act is largely shaped by the previous free actions of multitudinous free agents, Pinnock's God would be severely limited in being able to predict any specific free actions of humans beyond the current generation in which a prophecy/prediction is made.

With these clarifications of Pinnock's view in mind, we can now state just which kind of prophecy is particularly problematic for Pinnock's theory: *predictive prophecies of specific future events that depend for their occurrence on particular free choices of human individuals not yet conceived at the time the prediction is made.* Are then any such prophecies in the Bible? I think the answer is clearly yes. Feinberg mentions a few, for example, the details of the rejection and death of Christ. How, for example, could Pinnock's God have guaranteed that Christ would be "pierced" and "scourged," or that his grave would "be assigned with wicked men" (Is 53)? These are details which depend in large part on the free choices of Pilate, the Jewish leaders, and men such as Joseph of Arimathea, none of whom Pinnock's God (at the time the prediction was made) could have known would later exist. Moreover, the details of typical executions and burials of first century Palestine would have also been largely shrouded in mystery to the God of Isaiah's time, since such evolving customs depend on the free choices of multitudinous individuals over the centuries.

An even better set of examples of prophecies problematic for Pinnock's view can be found in Daniel. Daniel presented many prophecies of future events that were highly detailed in nature, referring to specific future agents and cataloguing their free choices and responses to various situations. Consider the first prophecy of succeeding kingdoms in the king's dream in Dan 2:36-44. How could God ensure this particular progression of kingdoms? History has often shown that the entire course of nations can be determined by the emergence of just one individual. Consequently, how could

Pinnock's God, by merely surveying the past and present political conditions at the time of Daniel, have ensured that the emerging Roman political entity in Daniel's day, for example, would not have been destroyed by the folly or weakness of some one Roman leader (or series of leaders) between the time that God made the prediction and the time at which the prediction was to be fulfilled (when Rome eventually did overtake the Greek empire)? How could God have known at Daniel's time that the Romans would indeed achieve world dominion at a later date (following the Medes/Persians and the Greeks)? The answer is that Pinnock's God could not have known, so the prophecy could not have been made with certainty.

The problem for Pinnock's view becomes even more intractable when we look at Daniel's prophecies in chapters 7-12. The specificity of the prophecies in this section is staggering (consider especially the late-fourth through second century B.C. intrigues of the Ptolemies and the Seleucids prophesied in detail in Dan 11:5-35), in which the actions of key players long yet unborn are spelled out in great detail, including many actions that I think Pinnock would have to admit are due to their free choices. How Pinnock can account for such prophecies (without denying that the actual sixth-century B.C. Daniel was the author of these prophecies) I cannot even begin to imagine. I think that Pinnock cannot account for them, and it seems to me that this forcefully points out the necessity for divine foreknowledge of the free actions of humans.

The above prophecies all dealt with predictions of the free actions of individuals not yet conceived at the time the prophecy was made. Though I believe that this class of prophecies is particularly problematic for Pinnock's view of God, I do not mean to say that these are the only kinds of prophecies that create problems for Pinnock's proposal. Some biblical prophecies, though not involving future generations of individuals, are nonetheless so highly specific that only a God possessing definite foreknowledge of the future could make them. One such example is Jesus' prediction that Peter would deny him three times before a cock crowed (Mt 26:34). This prophecy, though spanning only a matter of hours, is highly specific (that Peter would not simply deny Jesus, but would vocalize his denial exactly *three times*; not simply over an indefinite period of time, but during the course of the *same night*; and such that the third denial would be completed *prior to* a cock's crowing (as it turned out, *immediately* prior to; see Mt 26:74). Yet the fulfillment of the prophecy was dependent on Peter's free choice to deny or not deny his lord (and on the free choices of other individuals in the environment to question Peter regarding his relationship to Jesus).

For these reasons, despite Pinnock's objections to the contrary, Pinnock's view of a limited-knowledge God cannot adequately account for numerous instances of predictive prophecy in the Bible. At the same time, such predictive prophecies pose no problem for the form of indeterminism that I have espoused here, because the indeterminism for which I have argued recognizes that divine foreknowledge is fully compatible with the exercise of genuine contra-causal free will on the part of human agents.

IV. Summary

In this essay I have explored three major objections to the compatibilist (soft-determinist) conception of human free will generally accepted by Calvinists, as well as four objections to the indeterminist (libertarian) perspective adopted by some Arminians. I argued that the three objections to compatibilism are each successful (and thus compatibilism is untenable), whereas the objections to indeterminism considered here are unsuccessful (and thus indeterminism remains a viable philosophical perspective on human free will).

The first objection to compatibilism surveyed in this essay was that compatibilism fails to establish human culpability for sin. This is so because within the determinist framework, all events and actions are decreed by God, including the very human desire that the compatibilist claims is the basis of human freedom. Human desire is thus wholly bound to the divine desire, and for this reason forms an insufficient basis on which to establish the integrity of human freedom (and from this the legitimacy of human culpability for sin).

The second objection to compatibilism was that it likewise fails to relieve God from culpability for human sin. Even if, for the sake of argument, we grant that the concept of desire offers a sufficient basis for establishing the culpability of humans for their sinful choices, it is hard to see why God should not be equally culpable for desiring (via His eternal decree) the commission of these very sins. It seems arbitrary, on the one hand, to make desire the ground for establishing guilt among humans, but, on the other hand, to not apply this same standard to the divine desire manifested in the eternal decree.

The third objection to compatibilism was that it fails to provide a sufficient basis for

human knowledge and rhetoric. The human proclivity to evaluate, embrace, and promote various propositions or beliefs carries with it a presumption of *freedom* on the part of both oneself and one's interlocutors. Without this presumption of freedom, the entire epistemological and rhetorical enterprise breaks down, and one is left with no grounds for attempting to convince others that one's judgment is true or false.

The first (unsuccessful) objection to indeterminism considered in this essay was that indeterminists cannot account for certain clear cases of divine intervention in human affairs (e.g., inspiration of scripture). To this I responded that indeterminism *does* in fact allow for God to decisively condition human choices in special cases, as long as we recognize (contra compatibilists) that such decisive conditioning counts as overriding human freedom (and therefore cannot become the general rule). I also argued that not all of God's interventions intended to influence human affairs need to be decisive or conclusive; that is, God may "woo" human agents by conditioning their responses only to a point, leaving with them the categorical ability to resist His wooing. I also posited cases of "reverse conditioning" in which God intervenes to prevent decisive conditioning toward sin (1 Cor 10:13) or to break the negative influence of prior conditioning on a person's character.

The second (unsuccessful) objection to indeterminism was that it cannot adequately account for the role of a person's character in influencing his choices. In response, I noted that indeterminists recognize that many of a person's choices may be largely or completely conditioned by his character in interaction with his environment, so that character can be seen to play a prominent role in the exercise of will. Character does not, however, play an exclusive role, as not all choices are decisively conditioned by one's character and environment. In particular I proposed that the exercise of categorical free will, in conjunction with God's supernatural intervention in the life of the human agent, fulfills the pivotal function in a believer's transition from a character conditioned to sin, to a character conditioned to righteousness.

The third (unsuccessful) objection to indeterminism was that it fails to provide sufficient conditions for the human will to act. In response, I noted (along with Reichenbach) that this objection assumes rather than demonstrates that a deterministic explanation is required for the exercise of human free will, and thus begs the question. I also noted (following Geisler) that this objection founders on the fact that God Himself acts freely without there being any causally sufficient condition beyond His will for His choices.

The fourth and final (unsuccessful) objection to indeterminism considered in this essay was that God's foreknowledge of the future choices of human agents entails that those choices are already fully determined. In response, I argued (following Plantinga and Reichenbach) that divine foreknowledge and contra-causal human freedom are fully compatible, given that our free actions determine God's foreknowledge of those actions, not vice versa. The future is set only in the trivial sense that "we will do what we will do," a fact which in and of itself sets up no particular causal relation. I further argued that the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom allows God to successfully engage in predictive prophecy of events involving the future free actions of human agents. In reference to Pinnock's proposal of a limited-knowledge God, I raised a number of examples of predictive prophecies that cannot be accounted for in terms of Pinnock's proposal.

In this essay I have attempted to address several of what I consider to be the most important criticisms of compatibilism, and respond to several of the most important objections that have been raised against indeterminism. Though this has not by any means been an exhaustive treatment of the subject, it seems to me that the evidence is compelling in favor of an indeterministic understanding of human free will over a compatibilistic account. This conclusion, in turn, provides significant support for some version of an Arminian interpretation of God's interaction with human free will, rather than a Calvinistic interpretation. However, I have for the most part limited my arguments in this essay to philosophical evidences. This essay is then, in an important sense, only preliminary to a larger exegetical study that will consider the biblical evidence in favor of Arminianism versus Calvinism.

Notes

1. I am using the term *indeterminism* in the common libertarian sense employed, for example, by Feinberg ("God Ordains All Things," in *Predestination and Free Will*) as the negation of theological determinism. Note, however, that the term *indeterminism* is sometimes used to refer to the position that events are entirely uncaused (e.g., Geisler, "God Knows All Things," in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 74). This is not my sense here, for when I use the term *indeterminism* I am actually speaking of what Geisler refers to as *self-determinism*, or the position that the acts of human agents are caused by the

human agents themselves, not by God.

2. I have said that we assume it is *generally* the case that it is wrong for one human to desire another human to sin, and that likewise it is incompatible with God's nature that He would desire other moral agents to (desire to) sin. There seem to be exceptions, however, in both the human and divine realms, when a particular person's sin is the only available means to achieve a *greater good*. Imagine, for example, a situation (in the human realm) in which two kidnappers holding a hostage get into an argument with each other. Blows are exchanged, and the hostage takes the opportunity to slip away unnoticed while the kidnappers are thus distracted. When the police officers and the relatives of the now-free hostage learn how the escape took place, they are delighted that the kidnappers got into an argument and fought each other. (Indeed, clever police officers might have even tried to trigger such an argument between the kidnappers in order to bring about this very result.) And yet, we would hardly blame the officers or the relatives for desiring that the kidnappers sin against each other by getting into a fight, because the kidnappers doing so allowed the achievement of a greater good, namely, the escape of the hostage.

Similarly, this sort of argument from the greater good can explain those passages of scripture which state that in some cases God has directly determined or ensured that particular humans would carry through with sinful actions (e.g., Pharaoh's refusal to let the Israelites leave Egypt, Exodus 4:21, 7:3, 9:12, 10:1, 10:27, 11:10, 14:4, 14:17; the actions of the Jews and Romans responsible for Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, Acts 2:23; see Reymond's comments on these passages, pp. 359, 365). In these cases, we can presume that the greater good (i.e., God's glorification through Pharaoh's resistance, Ex 6:7, 9:16, 10:1-2, 11:9; the provision of an atoning sacrifice for humanity through the death of Christ) could not have been achieved except through the agency of man's sinful actions. God could therefore justifiably and without guilt act to ensure that these sinful actions took place. As I argue later in this essay, indeterminists recognize that God may override human freedom and determines human actions *in special cases*, but not in such a way that this becomes God's standard or universal way of dealing with free agents.

One might object that adopting an argument from the greater good in this way undermines the indeterminist's position, in that it opens the way for compatibilists to employ similar reasoning in order to justify God's absolute decree of all human sin (as, in fact, Reymond attempts to do, pp. 376-378). It seems to me, however, that the most

successful theodicies (i.e., proposed explanations of why God allows evil to exist) presuppose the existence of contra-causal freedom and therefore are of no help to determinism. This tends to be true even of those theodicies presented by determinist theologians. Reymond, for example, proposes that the higher (highest) good for which God allows evil is “the unabridged, unqualified *glorification of God himself* in the praises of his saints for his judgment against their enemies [i.e., the nonelect] and for his stark, contrasting display to them—who equally deserved the same judgment—of his surpassing great grace in Christ Jesus” (p. 378, emphasis in the original). Notice, however, that the basis for God’s glorification here as Reymond frames it hinges on the significance of the terms *judgment* and *grace*. The meaning of both these terms likewise depends to a significant extent on the nature of *moral guilt*, a concept whose meaning in turn depends on the nature of human *free will*. If my earlier arguments concerning free will are correct, namely, that genuine culpability for sin on the part of humans is impossible within a deterministic framework due to determinism’s hollow characterization of human free will, then the related concepts of judgment and grace lose much of their force as well within this framework, casting doubt on attempts by determinists to ground a theodicy in these concepts. Indeterminists, in contrast, recognize the existence of contra-causal freedom and thus may legitimately draw on concepts such as judgment and grace when developing theodicies that point to the glory of God as the highest good justifying the existence of evil.

3. As Reichenbach asks in his response to Feinberg: “If everyone can be persuaded to God’s perspective on any point, why does not God decree that everyone not only always do good but acknowledge him as God?” (“Bruce Reichenbach’s Response,” in *Predestination and Free Will*, p. 50). Ironically, a similar objection has sometimes been raised by determinists/Calvinists against indeterminists/Arminians:

“On grounds which the Arminian demands for him, God could have made both the world and man differently, or on these grounds, at the very least he could have made mankind with the freedom to do only good . . . On these same grounds, an omniscient, omnipotent God could have found some way to prevent mankind from sinning without inhibiting them.” (Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1998, p. 352)

From this Reymond concludes that Arminians themselves have not escaped the charge

that Arminians level against Calvinists, namely, that given their system God can be held culpable for human sin. However, Reymond and others who raise this objection against indeterminists/Arminians fail to note that indeterminists/Arminians, unlike determinists/Calvinists, have full recourse to the Free Will Defense as an adequate rebuttal to this objection (see Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, Harper & Row, 1974; Eerdmans, 1977). Determinists/Calvinists cannot legitimately make use of the Free Will Defense, because in its successful versions (such as that formulated by Plantinga) it assumes contra-causal freedom on the part of human agents.

4. Indeed, Calvin himself seems to have taken a low view of any attempts to use the notion “permission” as a means to diminish God’s responsibility for what He has decreed:

“They have recourse to the distinction between will and permission. By this they would maintain that the wicked perish because God permits it, not because he so wills. But why shall we say ‘permission’ unless it is because God so wills?” (Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.8)

5. In addition to the four objections I treat here, other philosophical objections to indeterminism have, of course, been raised. Robert Reymond, for example, raises at least six objections of a philosophical nature (*A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1998, pp. 350-355; for the most part Reymond draws these objections from Gordon Clark, *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, Presbyterian and Reformed, Philadelphia, 1961). Several of these are included among the four objections I treat here, others are essentially restatements of aspects of the traditional “problem of evil” and can be straightforwardly rebutted given a proper understanding of the Free Will Defense (see Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, Harper & Row, 1974; Eerdmans, 1977). One curious objection to indeterminism raised by Reymond (following Clark) is that no one is able to “know for sure, when he has chosen a specific course of action, that he was completely free from all . . . external or internal causation” (Reymond, p. 354). Reymond specifically names such causative factors as the weather, disease, and the influence of parental conditioning in one’s early formative years. Granted that these factors may influence one’s decision making, I fail to see, however, how this fact is relevant to the question at hand. The point made by indeterminists is not that there are no independent factors influencing one’s desires and

choices, nor that one must be conscious of all influences on one's choice before that choice can be considered free. The point that indeterminists press and that determinists must refute is simply that the characteristics of one's external and internal environment do not necessarily *determine* one's choices (i.e., "determine" in a decisive, conclusive sense).

6. In his article "On Ockham's Way Out," Plantinga responds to two of the most forceful presentations of the argument for determinism from divine foreknowledge, namely, those formulated by Jonathan Edwards (*Freedom of the Will*, 1745, section 12) and Nelson Pike ("Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," *The Philosophical Review*, 1965). Both Edwards and Pike argued that because God's foreknowledge can be framed as a past event (involving knowledge of future events), this entails that the future events in view in the act of foreknowledge must be determined as irrevocably as are past events. Plantinga shows that the critical notion for evaluating Edward's and Pike's arguments is that of *accidental necessity*. Plantinga argues at great length that only those propositions about the past that are accidentally necessary are "set" in the sense that Edwards and Pike assume. Furthermore, Plantinga shows that propositions regarding God's past knowledge of (or belief in) the future actions of humans do not exhibit accidental necessity, hence pose no threat to human freedom. Again, I refer the reader to Plantinga's article for a more detailed treatment.

7. Unfortunately, Pinnock's brand of indeterminism has gained sufficient attention that it is now sometimes erroneously referred to as "representative of Arminian thinking in general" (Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1998, p. 346) and is used as a foil for attacking Arminianism. Though there is no doubt that Pinnock's view has gained a following, most of the Arminians that I personally know would not be in agreement with various of Pinnock's key proposals (e.g., the denial of divine foreknowledge).

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