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William Lane Craig

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ST. ANSELM ON DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE AND FUTURE CONTINGENCY

William L. CRAIG

RÉSUMÉ. — *Procédant à une lecture attentive du De concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis et gratiae Dei cum libero arbitrio, l'auteur veut mettre en lumière la contribution trop souvent méconnue de saint Anselme de Cantorbéry à l'étude du difficile problème de l'accord entre la prescience divine et le libre arbitre humain.*

CONTEMPORARY discussions of foreknowledge and future contingency have all but completely overlooked the contributions of Anselm of Canterbury on this score, despite that fact that his treatise, *De concordia praescientiae praedestinationis et gratiae Dei cum libero arbitrio* (1107/08) contains a very interesting and illuminating discussion of the problem of theological fatalism. That work is divided into three sections, dealing respectively with the harmony of foreknowledge, of predestination, and of grace with human freedom of the will. In the first section, which will be the focus of our interest, Anselm draws upon the analyses of both Augustine and Boethius to present a multi-faceted solution to the alleged incompatibility of God's foreknowledge and man's free choice.

Compatibility of Foreknowledge and Freedom

Admittedly, he begins, these two do seem to be incompatible: "for it is necessary that the things foreknown by God be going to occur, whereas the things done by free choice occur without any necessity."¹ Anselm's procedure therefore is to assume that

1. ANSELM, *De concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis et gratiae Dei cum libero arbitrio* 1.1 (All citations of Anselm's works are from the Hopkins and Richardson translation, *Anselm of Canterbury*, 4 vols. (New York: 1947). "... quoniam ea quae deus praescit, necesse est esse futura, et quae per liberum arbitrium fiunt, nulla necessitate proveniunt." The text used throughout is that of Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, ed. *S. Anselmi Opera omnia*, 6 vols. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Fromman Verlag, 1968).

both are the case and to try to derive therefrom an impossibility. This, he thinks, cannot be done:

Now, on the assumption that some action is going to occur without necessity, God foreknows this, since He foreknows all future events. And that which is foreknown by God is, necessarily, going to occur, as is foreknown. Therefore, it is necessary that something is going to occur without necessity. Hence, the foreknowledge from which necessity follows and the freedom of choice from which necessity is absent are here seen (for one who rightly understands it) to be not at all incompatible.²

Anselm's reasoning obviously derives from Augustine. He does not yet clearly distinguish, as he will, between precedent and subsequent necessity. The point is rather that God's foreknowledge makes it necessary that a contingent event occur. Therefore, God's foreknowledge actually secures man's freedom rather than annuls it.³

But someone will object that God foreknows that I shall sin or He foreknows that I shall not sin. So if I sin, it is necessary that I sin, and if I do not, then it is necessary that I do not. Again the Augustinian context of the problem is apparent.⁴ Anselm replies that his opponent should have said, "God foreknows that it is without necessity that I shall sin" or "God foreknows that it is without necessity that I shall not sin." It follows that whether one sins or not, he does so without necessity. Thus, the necessity which accompanies foreknowledge is not incompatible with freedom of choice, whereby many actions are performed without necessity.

But the objector may persist: if it is necessary that I sin willingly (*ex voluntate*), then, since necessity implies either coercion (*coactio*) or restraint (*prohibitio*), I am compelled by some hidden power to sin; and if I do not sin, then I am restrained from willing to sin. So if I sin, I do so by necessity, and if I do not, it is also by

2. *Ibid.* 1.1.

"Sed si aliquid est futurum sine necessitate, hoc ipsum praescit deus, qui praescit omnia futura. Quod autem praescit deus, necessitate futurum est, sicut praescitur. Necesse est igitur aliquid esse futurum sine necessitate. Nequaquam ergo recte intelligenti hic repugnare videntur praescientia quam sequitur necessitas, et libertas arbitrii a qua removetur necessitas..."

3. Anselm's solution seems misunderstood by Paul A. Streveler, "Anselm on Future Contingencies: A Critical Analysis of the Argument of the *De concordia*," *Anselm Studies* 1 (1983): 170, who mistakenly infers that "I will sin freely at *t*," means "I will sin at *t*, or I will not sin at *t*," which is tautologically true.

4. This is interesting because Anselm denied that freedom of choice is the ability to sin and not to sin. For then neither God nor the elect angels would have free choice. But we must have a concept of freedom that is univocal for God and creatures. That concept is the ability to keep uprightness of will for its own sake. Thus, Satan and Adam both sinned by their own choice, which was free; but neither sinned by means of that in virtue of which his choice was free. Moreover, after the Fall, man still has this ability, though he is a slave of sin. For although he never has the ability to possess uprightness when he does not have it, it remains true of fallen man that when he does have uprightness, he has the ability to keep it. Just as when the sun is behind a cloud we say that a man has the ability to see the sun, so when uprightness of will is absent we may say that man is able to keep uprightness of will for its own sake. For a man has the eyes to see the sun when it is present, and he has understanding and will by which he may keep uprightness when he has it. (ANSELM, *De libertate arbitrii*.) This peculiar concept of freedom, however, plays little role in Anselm's discussion of foreknowledge and human freedom. See also ANSELM, *De concordia* 3.3–5.

necessity. This objection seems obviously aimed at the Augustinian account of free will and necessity, according to which free choice and compulsion are incompatible. The objector is a sort of compatibilist who thinks that my sinning voluntarily and under hidden compulsion are not incompatible. Augustine in *De libero arbitrio* would have rejected the idea that a decision of the will could be voluntary and yet somehow compelled. Indeed, the will cannot be compelled to do anything. Anselm agrees.⁵ Both men reject the inference from “It is necessary that I sin willingly” to “I am secretly compelled to sin willingly.” Clearly, therefore, Anselm must be interpreting the necessity wrought by God’s foreknowledge of a future contingent as something other than coercion or restraint. This is in fact the case.⁶ According to Anselm, something may be necessary without compulsion’s being involved. For example, when we say, “It is necessary for God to be immortal” we do not mean something compels God to be immortal. Rather we mean nothing can cause Him not to be immortal. Anselm elsewhere explains further the distinction between a necessity which compels and a necessity which does not compel.⁷ When we say in God’s case that something is necessary, we mean that in all other things there is a necessity which prevents them from doing — and compels them not to do — anything contrary to that which is being said of God. “For example, when we say ‘It is necessary that God always speak the truth’ and ‘It is necessary that God never tell a lie,’ nothing else is meant except that in God the steadfastness for maintaining the truth is so great that it is necessary that no thing can cause Him not to speak the truth or can cause Him to tell a lie.”⁸ The point is reminiscent of Augustine’s distinction in *De civitate Dei* 5.10, except that Anselm seems to interpret the necessity of essential predication in terms of a sort of inverse causal impossibility; that is to say, when a property belongs necessarily to some substance, this is taken to mean that nothing can cause that substance to lack that property. Now applied to the problem of theological fatalism, this means that when I say “It is necessary that you will sin voluntarily,” this does not imply that something prevents the act of will to not-sin or compels the act of will to sin.⁹ God foreknows that the act of will is neither compelled nor prevented by anything. Hence, Anselm concludes, what is done voluntarily is done freely.

This account, while clearly non-compatibilist, does not, however, explain much. On the above analysis, “It is necessary that you will sin voluntarily” would seem to be equivalent to “Nothing can cause you not to sin voluntarily.” That is to say, letting p stand for “You will sin voluntarily,” $\Box p$ = nothing can bring it about that p . The problem is, this still appears to be fatalistic. For it seems obvious that something could bring it about that p ; for example, I could kill you prior to your willing to sin. In saying that if God foreknows p , then nothing can cause p to be the

5. ANSELM, *De libertate arbitrii* 5–8.

6. ANSELM, *De concordia* 1.2. For a brief discussion of Anselm’s modalities see Desmond Paul HENRY, *The Logic of Saint Anselm* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), pp. 172–9.

7. ANSELM, *Cur Deus homo* 2.17; cf. *Philosophical Fragments* 24.16–25.

8. ANSELM, *Cur Deus homo* 2.17. “Nam cum dicimus quia necesse est deum semper verum dicere, et necesse est eum numquam mentiri, non dicitur aliud nisi quia tanta est in illo constantia servandi veritatem, ut necesse sit nullam rem facere posse, ut verum non dicat aut ut mentiatur.”

9. ANSELM, *De concordia* 1.2.

case, Anselm does not, therefore, seem to have escaped fatalism. Perhaps, however, this is pressing Anselm's analogy too far. It may be only that Anselm wished to assert that the notion of necessity does not always involve compulsion and that the necessity of essential predication is an example of this. Similarly, the necessity wrought by foreknowledge involves neither compulsion nor restraint; but Anselm may not thereby mean that the same analysis in terms of inverse causal impossibility may be applied to it.

Precedent and Subsequent Necessity

Distinction Between Precedent and Subsequent Necessity

Indeed, he proceeds to provide a rather Boethian analysis of the necessity involved in God's foreknowledge in terms of precedent and subsequent necessity.¹⁰ He writes,

Indeed, (if someone properly considers the word), by the very fact that something is said to be *foreknown*, it is declared to be going to occur. For only what is going to occur is foreknown, since knowledge is only of the truth. Therefore, when I say "If God foreknows something, it is necessary that this thing be going to occur," it is as if I were to say: "If this thing will occur, of necessity it will occur." But this necessity neither compels nor prevents a thing's existence or nonexistence... For when I say "If it will occur, of necessity it will occur," here the necessity follows, rather than precedes, the presumed existence of the thing. The sense is the same if we say "What will be, of necessity will be." For this necessity signifies nothing other than that what will occur will not be able not to occur at the same time.¹¹

On this analysis the proposition "If God foreknows something, necessarily this thing will occur" is logically equivalent to the proposition "If this thing will occur, necessarily it will occur." Anselm thereby reduces the problem of theological fatalism to the original logical problem of fatalism. Equally important, he insists that the necessity here operative involves no compulsion or restraint, but ultimately reduces to logical necessity. For when we say that if an event will occur then necessarily it will occur, we do not mean that its opposite is unconditionally impossible; rather granted that it will occur, it is then impossible for its opposite to happen, since two contradictory states of affairs cannot obtain in reality at the same time. For example, it is not the same thing, he claims, for a thing to be white as for a white thing to be white. A staff is not necessarily white, since before it was white it could be non-white,

10. On the Boethian antecedents, see HENRY, *Logic of Anselm*, pp. 177-8; for a critical discussion see STREVELER, "Anselm on Future Contingencies," pp. 166-7.

11. ANSELM, *De concordia* 1.2.

"Denique si quis intellectum verbi proprie considerat: hoc ipso quod praesciri aliquid dicitur, futurum esse pronuntiatur. Non enim nisi quod futurum est praescitur, quia scientia non est nisi veritatis. Quare cum dico quia si praescit deus aliquid, necesse est illud esse futurum: idem est ac si dicam: Si erit, ex necessitate erit. Sed haec necessitas nec cogit nec prohibet aliquid esse aut non esse... Nam cum dico: si erit, ex necessitate erit: hic sequitur necessitas rei positionem, non praecedat. Idem valet, si sic pronuntietur: Quod erit, ex necessitate erit. Non enim aliud significat haec necessitas, nisi quia quod erit non poterit simul non esse."

and after it is white it is able to become non-white. But it is necessary that a white thing always be white. For it cannot happen that a white thing is at the same time not-white. Similarly, it is not necessary that a thing be temporally present; but it is necessary that a present thing be always present, since a present thing is not able at the same time to be not-present. Hence, the proposition "If the event will occur, of necessity it will occur" is logically equivalent to "What will be, of necessity will be," which in Anselm's analysis means that it is an analytic and hence necessary truth that "What will be will be." Anselm thereby implies that the future cannot be changed, for by definition the future is what will be. This is not fatalistic because the necessity of this statement is that of a tautology.¹² Necessarily, what will be will be; but this involves no precedent necessity which determines the content of what will be.

Elsewhere Anselm analyzes the notion of precedent necessity in terms of causal necessity.¹³ A true prophecy, he states, does not make the predicted event happen. The proposition "It was necessary that the event happen because the prophecy about it was true" is logically equivalent to "It was necessary that the event happen in this manner because it was going to happen in this manner." Anselm explains that this kind of necessity does not compel a thing to be; rather the being of the thing makes (*facit*) the necessity to be. There is a necessity which precedes and is the cause of a thing's being the case; but there is also a necessity which succeeds and which is made by the thing. An example of the former is the necessity which efficiently causes the heavens to revolve. An example of the latter is the necessity involved in saying "Because you are speaking, you are of necessity speaking" — here the necessity does not cause anything but is rather itself made. "For when I make this statement, I signify that nothing can cause it to be the case that while you are speaking you are not speaking; I do not signify that anything is compelling you to speak."¹⁴ Now wherever there is precedent necessity, there is subsequent necessity; but the converse does not hold. For example, we may assert, "Because the heavens are revolving, necessarily they are revolving," but we may not say, "You are speaking because it is necessary for you to speak." On Anselm's analysis, then, precedent necessity seems to be unconditional causal necessity, while subsequent necessity is conditional, logical necessity. It is, however, interesting that he seems to reintroduce his analysis of subsequent necessity in terms of inverse causation: in "Because you are speaking, necessarily you are speaking," the necessity is said to mean that nothing can cause the consequent to be false if the antecedent is true, for then the law of contradiction would be violated. This understanding does not entail the fatalism that his earlier implied formulation did. At the same time, it is evident how foreign such an analysis of necessity is to modern logical theory.¹⁵

12. On this see Léon BAUDRY, "La prescience divine chez S. Anselme," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen-Âge* 13 (1940-2): 228.

13. ANSELM, *Cur Deus homo* 2.17. — Not, as Henry states, physical necessity, since for Anselm causes may be non-physical. (HENRY, *Logic of Anselm*, p. 173.)

14. *Ibid.* "Cum enim hoc dico, significo nihil facere posse, ut dum loqueris non loquaris, non quod aliquid ti cogat ad loquendum."

15. See comments by HENRY, *Logic of Anselm*, p. 179, who nevertheless overlooks Anselm's curious analysis of subsequent necessity in terms of inverse causal impossibility. Streveler remarks, "It seems

Now subsequent necessity furnishes the key to unlock the problem of fatalism posed by Aristotle:

Subsequent necessity applies to all tenses, in the following manner: Whatever has been, necessarily has been; whatever is, necessarily is and necessarily was going to be. This is the necessity which (when Aristotle deals with singular and future propositions) seems to deny that there are real alternatives and to affirm that all things occur of necessity. Since the faith (or the prophecy) concerning Christ was true faith (or true prophecy) *because* He was going to die of His own will and not by necessity: it was necessary — in terms of the necessity which is subsequent and which does not efficiently cause anything — that His death would occur voluntarily... for because these things were going to occur, necessarily they did occur; and because they occurred, necessarily they were going to occur; and because they occurred, necessarily they occurred.¹⁶

Here Anselm explicitly breaks with Aristotle (and Boethius) in affirming that future contingent singular propositions are true or false.¹⁷ For he states not only that "Whatever is, necessarily is," but also "Whatever is, necessarily was going to be," which Aristotle could not admit. These statements are not fatalistic because the necessity follows from the fact that the thing in question will in fact be, but there is no precedent necessity which compels the thing to be. Here Anselm supplements the Augustinian analysis of "It is necessary that *x* do *y* voluntarily": the necessity here operative is now revealed to be subsequent necessity. Thus, because Christ would die voluntarily, necessarily He would die voluntarily. This changes the Augustinian solution entirely, for now the necessity is conditional. *If* Christ will die voluntarily, necessarily He will die voluntarily. But the antecedent of this hypothetical is not causally determined, indeed it cannot be, given Anselm's understanding of "voluntary." Therefore, the consequent is not unconditionally necessary either; it is necessary only if the antecedent is true, and nothing compels the antecedent to be true.¹⁸ Hence, both of the following statements are true:¹⁹

curious to me that Anselm should define subsequent necessity in terms of the lack of any power able to bring about the denial of the sentence said to be subsequently necessary. For, it seems quite superfluous to note that, in addition to not-P being self contradictory, there exists no power able to bring it about that it is true." (STREVELER, "Anselm on Future Contingencies," pp. 166-7)

16. *Ibid.*

"Ista sequens necessitas currit per omnia tempora hoc modo: Quidquid fuit, necesse est fuisse. Quidquid est, necesse est esse et necesse est futurum fuisse. Quidquid futurum est, necesse est futurum esse. Haec est illa necessitas quae, ubi tractat ARISTOTELES de propositionibus singularibus et futuris, videtur utrumlibet destruere et omnia esse ex necessitate astruere. Hac sequenti et nihil efficienti necessitate, quoniam vera fuit fides vel prophetia de Christo, quia ex voluntate non ex necessitate moriturus erat, necesse fuit ut sic esset... Ideo enim necessitate fuerunt, quia futura erant; et futura erant, quia fuerunt; et fuerunt, quia fuerunt."

17. Cf. ANSELM, *Monologion* 10; *idem*, *De veritate* 10; see also BAUDRY, "Prescience," pp. 233-6.

18. We would today say that the modal operator governs the *dictum* as a whole; but Anselm does not appear to see this. For him the consequent is necessary, but only conditionally so, in a tautologous and hence vacuous way. As Henry notes, later medievals would doubtless understand his distinction as that between *necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis*. (HENRY, *Logic of Anselm*, p. 179; so also STREVELER, "Anselm on future contingencies," pp. 165-171.)

19. ANSELM, *De concordia* 1.2.

1. Something did exist and does exist and will exist, but not out of necessity.
2. All that was, necessarily was; all that is, necessarily is; and all that will be, necessarily will be.

This is so because (1) speaks of precedent and (2) of subsequent necessity.

Contrast of the Past and the Future

Anselm provides on this basis an interesting analysis of the necessity of the past and the future:

In the same way, some event — e.g., an action — is going to occur without necessity, because before the action occurs, it can happen that it not be going to occur. On the other hand, it is necessary that a future event be future, because what is future is not able at the same time to be not future. Of the past it is similarly true (1) that some event is not necessarily past, because before it occurred, there was the possibility of its not occurring, and (2) that, necessarily, what is past is always past, since it is not able at the same time not to be past. Now a past event has a characteristic which a present event or a future event does not have. For it is never possible for a past event to become not-past, as a present event is able to become not-present and as an event which is not necessarily going to happen has the possibility of not happening in the future. Thus, when we say of what is going to happen that it is going to happen, this statement must be true, because it is never the case that what is going to happen is not going to happen. (Similarly, whenever we predicate something of itself, [the statement is true]. For when we say "Every man is a man," or "If he is a man, he is a man," or "Every white thing is white" or "If it is a white thing it is white"; these statements must be true because something cannot both be and not be the case at the same time.) Indeed, if it were not necessary that everything which is going to happen were going to happen, then something which is going to happen would not be going to happen — a contradiction. Therefore, *necessarily*, everything which is going to happen is going to happen, and if it is going to happen, it is going to happen. (For we are saying of what is going to happen that it is going to happen.) But ["necessarily" here signifies] subsequent necessity, which does not compel anything to be.²⁰

In two respects the past and the future are on a modal par: events in the past and in the future alike may be causally contingent, and neither the past nor the future can be

20. *Ibid.*

"Eodem modo res aliqua — ut quaedam actio — non necessitate futura est, quia priusquam sit, fieri potest ut non sit futura; rem vero futuram necesse est esse futuram, quoniam futurum nequit esse simul non futurum. De praeterito autem similiter verum est quia res aliqua non est necessitate praeterita, quoniam antequam esset, potuit fieri ut non esset; et quia praeteritum semper necesse est praeteritum esse; quoniam non potest simul non esse praeteritum. Sed in re praeterita est quiddam, quod non est in re praesenti vel futura. Numquam enim fieri potest, ut res quae praeterita est fiat non praeterita; sicut res quaedam quae praesens est potest fieri non praesens, et aliqua res quae non necessitate futura est potest fieri, ut non sit futura. Itaque cum dicitur futurum de futuro, necesse est esse quod dicitur, quia futurum numquam est non futurum, sicut quotiens idem dicimus de eodem. Cum enim dicimus quia omnis homo est homo; aut si est homo, homo est; aut omne album est album; et si est album, album est; necesse est esse quod dicitur, quia non potest aliquid simul esse et non esse. Quippe si non est necesse omne futurum esse futurum, quoddam futurum non est futurum, quod est impossibile. Necessitate ergo omne futurum futurum est; et si est futurum, futurum est, cum futurum dicitur de futuro; sed necessitate sequente, quae nihil esse cogit."

changed, for it is tautologically true that what has been has been and what will be will be. Nonetheless, Anselm struggles to elucidate a sense in which the past is different from the future or the present. A past event is always past, while a present event may become non-present, presumably by receding into the past.²¹ On this parallel one would expect him to say that a future event may become non-future, by becoming present. Instead, he says that a future contingent event (*res quae non necessitate futura est*) can either be or not be in the future. But in terms of precedent necessity, the parallel is true of past events, as we have seen; and in terms of subsequent necessity it is contradictory to say a future contingent event will not be future.²² I think that what Anselm is attempting to express is that the past is somehow actual in a sense in which the future is not. The events of the past *were* open to occurring or not, but are so no longer; but the possibility remains open whether any event or its opposite will occur in the future. Thus in terms of precedent necessity the future is open, while the past is not. Thus, on Anselm's analysis neither the past nor the future can be changed, for this would land one in self-contradiction. But the necessity that characterized past and future alike is merely subsequent necessity: if a thing has been, necessarily it has been; and if a thing will be, necessarily it will be. On the other hand, while the past is now causally isolated (denial of backward causation), nevertheless the future is causally open. The implication is that though the future is as unchangeable as the past, fatalism does not follow because we freely determine what it is that will be future.

Application to Fatalism

Anselm proceeds to underline the fact that though an event is going to occur, it is not always the case that it occurs by (causal) necessity.²³ For example, the proposition "Tomorrow there will be an insurrection among the people" may be true, but it is not the case that the insurrection occurs by necessity. "For before it occurs, it is *possible* that it not occur even if it *is* going to occur."²⁴ Sometimes a future event will occur by necessity; for example, that there be a sunrise tomorrow. The insurrection which is going to occur tomorrow is, necessarily, going to occur, but the sunrise which is going to occur tomorrow is going to occur by necessity.

For if the insurrection is going to occur tomorrow, then — necessarily — it is going to occur. On the other hand, the sunrise is understood to be going to occur with two necessities: (1) with a preceding necessity, which causes the event to occur (for the event will occur because it is necessary that it occur), and (2) with

21. Cf. *ibid.* 1.5: "... temporally past things are never able not to be past. But all temporally present things which pass away do become not-present." ("... temporis praeterita non valent umquam praeterita non esse, praesentia vero tempore omnia quae transeunt fiunt non praesentia.")

22. The difficulty here is also spotted by STREVELER, "Anselm on future contingencies," pp. 167-9, though his remarks on p. 168 strike me as an obscure and inaccurate interpretation of Anselm.

23. ANSELM, *De concordia* 1.3.

24. *Ibid.* "Potest enim fieri antequam sit, ut non fiat, etiam si est futura."

a subsequent necessity, which does not compel anything to occur (for because the sunrise is going to occur, it is — necessarily — going to occur).²⁵

To draw the application to the problem at hand, when we say of an event foreknown by God that it is necessary that it be going to occur, we do not mean that it will occur by necessity; rather we mean that an event which is going to occur is, necessarily, going to occur. When God foreknows future events, He foreknows that some of these things will happen contingently, for example, the free decisions of men. It is not necessary that these events take place, but if they are going to take place then God foreknows this, and, necessarily, they will take place.

SUMMARY

Thus, on Anselm's view neither God's foreknowledge nor the antecedent truth of future contingent singular propositions entails fatalism. Theological fatalism reduces to the problem of the antecedent truth of such propositions. But such propositions are true only if the events in question will occur. Whether they will occur is causally indeterminate; either the event or its opposite may possibly eventuate. One of the opposites will occur and that future-tense proposition corresponding to it is true. It is not, however, necessarily true, since its contradictory could have been true. Granted that it is true, then necessarily the event described will happen. This necessity is, however, conditional; it depends on which of the contingent events will be realized, and that is up to the free wills of the persons involved. Therefore, the antecedent truth of a future contingent singular proposition does not entail fatalism. Similarly, whatever God foreknows will, necessarily, come to pass; but it is not necessary that God foreknow that any given contingent event come to pass. For since the event is causally indeterminate, either it or its opposite may eventuate, depending on the free decision involved. Some decision will be taken, and God foreknows what it will be; therefore, necessarily, that decision will be taken. But this necessity is entirely dependent on which decision will be freely taken, and it is still possible for either decision to be taken.

God's Knowledge and Eternity

Anselm emphasizes that this solution is not dependent upon whether one ascribes to God timeless eternity or merely everlasting temporal duration.²⁶ Drawing once more upon Augustine, he warns that if God's knowledge or foreknowledge imposes necessity upon everything He knows or foreknows, then, since He knows what He wills and causes and He foreknows what He shall will and cause, He does not freely will or cause anything — rather He wills and causes everything by necessity, which, Anselm snaps, is absurd. Hence, we must say for any given future

25. *Ibid.*

"Si enim cras futura est, necessitate futura est. Ortus vero solis duabus necessitatibus futurus intelligitur, scilicet et praecedenti quae facit rem esse — ideo enim erit, quia necesse est ut sit —, et sequenti quae nihil cogit esse, quoniam idcirco necessitate futurus est, quia futurus est."

26. *Ibid.* 1.4.

contingent both that it is not compelled to occur by any necessity and that, necessarily, it will occur (because it is going to occur).

Although the notion of God's eternity does not, as we have seen, play a part in Anselm's initial foray against theological fatalism, when the relationship between foreknowledge and predestination arises, he does turn to the concept of God's timelessness in order to frame his discussion.²⁷ According to Anselm, many people were lamenting because they believed that free choice was of no avail for salvation or condemnation, but that as a result of God's foreknowledge only necessity determined one's salvation or damnation.²⁸ Anselm wants to hold to both free choice and predestination. He argues that what is immutable in God's timeless eternity is changeable in time prior to its occurrence, by a free act of the will. In Anselm's understanding God transcends both space and time, so that it may be said of Him that He exists in no place at no time.²⁹ God does not experience temporal succession and therefore has neither past nor future. "Does none of Your eternity pass by so that it no longer is, and is none of it going to become what, so to speak, it not yet is?" asks Anselm: "Then in no case *were* You yesterday or *will* You *be* tomorrow; instead, yesterday, today, and tomorrow You *are*. Or better, You simply *are* — existing beyond all time."³⁰ God has only a present. But, Anselm cautions, this is not a temporal present, but an eternal present in which the whole of time is contained.³¹ He explains that what transcends space and time is not restricted by the law of space and time, namely, that whatever is in space and time is subject to division into parts, for example, past, present, and future.³² Since God is not so temporally restricted, He is not prevented from being present as a whole to all times.

Therefore, since an inescapable necessity demands that the Supreme Being be present as a whole in every place and at every time, and since no law of space or time prohibits the Supreme Being from being present as a whole in every place at once or from being present as a whole at every time at once, the Supreme Being must be present as a whole in every different place at once and present as a whole at every different time at once. Its being present at one place or time does not prevent it from being simultaneously and similarly present at another place or time.³³

God is, strictly speaking, not, therefore, *in* every place and time, but is *with* every place and time. Therefore, God's acts of foreknowing, predestining, calling, and

27. *Ibid.* 1.5.

28. *Ibid.* 1.6.

29. ANSELM, *Monologion* 21-2; *idem* *Proslogion* 19.

30. ANSELM, *Prologion* 19. "An de aeternitate tua nihil praeterit ut iam non sit, nec aliquid futurum est quasi nondum sit? Non ergo fuisti heri aut eris cras, sed heri et hodie et cras es. Immo nec heri nec hodie nec cras es, sed simpliciter es extra omne tempus."

31. ANSELM, *De concordia* 1.5.

32. ANSELM, *Monologion* 22.

33. *Ibid.*

"Quare quoniam summam essentiam totam et inevitabilis necessitas exigit nulli loco vel tempori deesse, et nulla ratio loci aut temporis prohibet omni loco vel tempori simul totam adesse: necesse est eam simul totam omnibus et singulis locis et temporibus praesentem esse. Non enim quia huic loco vel tempori praesens est, idcirco prohibetur illi vel illi loco aut tempori simul et similiter praesens esse."

justifying men at different points in time and space take place in His timeless eternity.³⁴ For Anselm this presence of God to all times seems to be not merely epistemic, but real; that is to say, it is not just that God in His timeless eternity knows the content of the entire temporal process, but that that process as a whole — past, present, and future — is itself present to God:

... I am not saying that my action of tomorrow at no time exists; I am merely denying that it exists today, even though it always exists in eternity. And when we deny that something which is past or future in the temporal order is past or future in eternity, we do not maintain that that which is past or future does not in any way exist in eternity; instead, we are simply saying that what exists there unceasingly in its eternal-present mode does not exist there in the past or future mode... [In eternity] there is no time before it exists or after it exists; instead it exists unceasingly, because in eternity nothing exists temporally.³⁵

Although Anselm's statements concerning the flow of time appear to be inconsistent with this view, we seem to have here a remarkable anticipation of the widely held modern theory of the universe as a "block" of space-time itself subsisting timelessly as a whole. Future events do not yet exist in the sense that they do not exist at the present time; but they do exist at their own times, and all events exist timelessly in eternity, where God beholds them. While from our perspective within the temporal series, a future event is mutable because it is determined by our freely chosen actions, still from God's timeless perspective everything within the temporal series is static and immutable.³⁶ From our point of view, it appears that God foreknows and predestines men's future choices, but from His vantage point, He simply knows what the men in the temporal series are choosing and His "predestination" consists simply in leaving the will to its own power and concurring in its choice.³⁷ Therefore, just as *foreknowledge* is not properly found in God, neither is *predestination*. Thus, once again *foreknowledge* is seen not to be inconsistent with free choice.

Anselm, then, has at least two arguments against theological fatalism. First, the subsequent necessity which results from God's foreknowing the future is in no sense incompatible with contingency and free choice. Second, because God exists timelessly and is therefore present to all times, He strictly speaking does not foreknow anything, but simply knows what men freely choose.

34. ANSELM, *De concordia* 1.5.

35. *Ibid.*

"Non enim dico actionem meam crastinam nullo tempore esse, sed hodie tantum nego eam esse, quae tamen semper est in aeternitate. Et quando negamus fuisse vel futurum ibi esse aliquid, quod in tempore fuit aut erit, non asserimus id quod fuit aut erit nullo modo ibi esse; sed tantum praeterito vel futuro modo dicimus non ibi esse, quod ibi indesinenter est suo praesenti modo... non antequam sit vel postquam est, sed indesinenter, quia nihil est ibi secundum tempus."

36. This serves to resolve the inconsistency alleged by STREVELER, "Anselm on future contingencies," pp. 169-70. Since the entire time-line of the univers subsists finelessly with God and temporal becoming is mind-dependant, God may know timelessly and immutably events which on the time-line are temporal and mutable. To say that an event is mutable in the eternal present means that on the time line it is causally contingent vis à vis its proximate causes and, therefore, were these to act differently, some other event would be eternally present. Modern defenders of the B-theory of time have, I think, successfully rebutted charges of determinism or fatalism.

37. ANSELM, *De concordia* 2.3.

Relation of God's Knowledge to the Object Known

There is, however, one final aspect of Anselm's thought that would seem to be nettlesome for the theological libertarian.³⁸ This is the issue of the relation between God's knowledge and the objects of God's knowledge. Boethius expressed misgivings with the Origenist view that the objects of knowledge determine the content of what God knows. Now Anselm considers "whether His knowledge derives from things or whether things derive their existence from His knowledge."³⁹ He is confronted with the dilemma:

... if God derives His knowledge from things, it follows that they exist prior to His knowledge and hence do not derive their existence from Him; for they can only exist from Him in accordance with His knowledge. On the other hand, if all existing things derive their existence from God's knowledge, God is the Creator and the author of evil works and hence is unjust in punishing evil creatures — a view we do not accept.⁴⁰

Anselm's problem with the view that God's knowledge derives from things is that the things would thereby become ontologically independent of God. This seems exceedingly odd, for the priority of such objects to God's knowledge is not metaphysical, but epistemic. He knows them to be as they are because they in fact are as they are. But Anselm seems to think this casts doubt on God's creative activity. For things are as they are because God created them as they are. But if God created them as they are apart from His knowledge of them, then His creation was blind and unknowing, which is impossible. Since God creates in accordance with His knowledge, to say that God's knowledge derives from the object is to imply that the object was uncreated by God. At least this may have been Anselm's fear; his comments are too terse to be certain. Therefore, he thinks that in some unexplained sense, God's knowledge of objects itself *causes* those objects to exist. Now he rightly sees that this causes difficulty concerning the origin of evil; but perhaps he does not fully appreciate how fatalistic this must also appear. For now God's foreknowledge causally determines the future and the temporal series is caused by His timeless knowledge. Hence, even if Anselm's escape from the dilemma, in terms of the Augustinian view of evil as a privation and hence something not caused by God, is successful, it is still not clear that he has escaped fatalism, or more correctly, determinism. For the good acts of will are determined to be what they are because God causes them to be that way, by knowing them into existence, so to speak. This difficulty was to elicit a great deal of thought on the part of Thomas Aquinas and helped to spawn the debate between subsequent generations of Thomists and Molinists over the notion of divine "middle knowledge" (*scientia media*).

38. See the struggles of BAUDRY, "Prescience," pp. 229-31; also STREVELER, "Anselm on future contingencies," p. 170, though once we understand Anselm as a B-theorist, his difficulties concerning priority in the eternal present vanish, since this is a causal, not a temporal priority.

39. *Ibid.* 1.7. "utrum eius scientia sit a rebus, an res habeant esse ab eides scientia."

40. *Ibid.*

"Nam si deus a rebus habet scientiam, sequitur quod illae prius sint quam eius scientia, et sic a deo non sint, a quo nequeunt esse nisi per eius scientiam. Si vero quaecumque sunt a scientia dei sumunt essentiam, deus est factor et auctor malorum operum, et ideo non iuste punit malos; quod non suscipimus."