

# PROVIDENCE, ETERNITY, AND HUMAN FREEDOM: A REPLY TO STUMP AND KRETZMANN

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In this paper, I respond to Eleonore Stump's and Norman Kretzmann's defense of eternalism against an objection of mine in 'A Problem For the Eternity Solution.' There I argued that, insofar as eternalism is intended as a strategy of avoiding the conclusion of the argument against freedom from divine foreknowledge to the effect that the traditional theist is committed to the violation of the principle of the fixity of the past, it does not succeed. I discuss two attempts by Stump and Kretzmann to reject this claim and argue that they are unsatisfactory. Finally, I sketch what seems to me the most promising line of defence that an eternalist might adopt in order to deal with the problem I raise.

There is a well-known argument which purports to show that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with human freedom.<sup>1</sup> The argument proceeds from the assumption that God has foreknowledge of all facts to the conclusion that if humans are free to do otherwise than what they in fact do, then they also have power to bring about the non-obtaining of certain facts about the past, specifically, facts regarding God's foreknowledge of how a free agent acts in the future. Since this conclusion constitutes a violation of the principle of the fixity of the past (henceforth "PFP"), it is concluded that divine foreknowledge and human freedom are incompatible. One way of resisting this argument, sometimes referred to as "The Eternity Solution" is to deny the assumption that God has *foreknowledge* of facts. The eternalist claims that God exists outside time, and hence is not subject to temporal predication. Although God does not have foreknowledge, he still is omniscient. But the mode of his knowledge is atemporal.<sup>2</sup> This being the case, the eternalist contends that the only conclusion that one is justified to draw from the fact that human agents can act otherwise, is that such agents have it within their power to bring about the non-obtaining of certain *atemporal* facts regarding God's (atemporal) knowledge of how such agents act at a given point in time. And this conclusion does not violate PFP.

In an earlier article,<sup>3</sup> I presented a difficulty for the Eternity Solution. I argued that given a certain plausible assumption regarding God's providential activity in the world:



- (1) It is logically possible for God sometimes to intervene in human history in the light of his knowledge of future contingent events,

the proponent of the Eternity Solution still seems to be committed to the violation of PFP. My argument was this.

Suppose that God knows that Jack freely pulls the trigger at T5, with the intention of killing Smith. Suppose further that wanting to save Smith, God reveals this fact to Smith at T3 by causing him to hear at T3 a voice telling him about what is going to happen. As a result, Smith by taking appropriate precautions is able to save his life. Now the eternalist concedes that if Jack has it within his power at T4 to refrain from his attempt to kill Smith, he also has the power at T4 to make it the case that God does not know that he attempts to kill Smith at T5. On the other hand, we may assume that God's knowing that Jack attempts to kill Smith at T5 is a condition which, in the circumstances, is causally necessary for the occurrences of the event of Smith's hearing at T3 a voice telling him that Jack will attempt to kill him. It seems plausible to suppose that had God not known that Jack attempts to kill Smith at T5, he would not have told Smith that Jack will try to kill him, and hence, Smith would not have heard the voice he in fact heard.<sup>4</sup> But then it follows that by having the power to bring about the non-obtaining of that condition, Jack can also be said to have the power at T4 to bring about the non-obtaining of such genuine past facts as:

XT3: That Smith heard at T3 a voice telling him that Jack will attempt to kill him.

YT3: That Smith came to believe at T3 that Jack will attempt to kill him, etc.

The intuitive principle underlying the last inference is this:

If *p* is the case, and *q* is a causally necessary condition (in the circumstances) for *p*, and an agent *X* has it within his power at *T* to make it the case that (not-*q*), then *X* has it also within his power at *T* to make it the case that (not-*p*).

An assumption such as (1) seems to me to be acceptable on intuitive grounds. It seems to me plausible to assume that God has the power to warn Smith against Jack's attempt to kill him, without this having the consequence that, in case He exercises this power, Jack's attempt to kill Smith ceases to be a free action. I also claimed that (1) seems to get support from various cases of biblical prophecy.<sup>5</sup>

## I

In a recent article,<sup>6</sup> Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (henceforth referred to as 'S-K') have responded to my objection. In their reply, they are concerned with a somewhat restricted version of (1), i.e.

- (1') It is logically possible for God sometimes to intervene in human history in the light of his knowledge of a certain future contingent event, and tell a human agent about the occurrence of that event.

They seem to agree with me that the acceptance of (1') commits the eternalist to the violation of PFP. Their way out is to reject (1') by way of adopting

- (2) Necessarily, whenever God reveals to a human agent that a certain event (state of affairs) will occur in the future, the prophecy renders that event inevitable.<sup>7</sup>

Now S-K are aware of the fact that *prima facie* endorsing (2) commits them to the undesirable result that biblical prophecy threatens human freedom in the sense that

- (D) All prophesied human actions in the Scriptures turn out to be inevitable, and hence are unfree in the sense of freedom required for moral responsibility.

They propose two ways of dealing with this difficulty. The first way is to say that

- R1. Biblical prophecies involving human actions are stated in a general way, and hence do not render any *particular action* of an agent inevitable.<sup>8</sup>

As an example, they mention the following prophecy from the book of Daniel.

"And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people." (Daniel 8: 23-24)

This prophecy which is of the form:

It will be the case that some king performs some action at some time, leaves vague the identity of the king, the place and time of his action, etc., and hence fails to identify a particular action of the agent. To be sure, we do have in the Scriptures also prophecies which are less vague, prophecies of the form: An agent S will perform an act of type V, during the time-interval T. E.g.,

"Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand after the former manner when thou wast his butler." (Genesis 40:13)<sup>9</sup>

But such prophecies too, claim S-K, need not render inevitable any *particular* action of the agent. Thus, instead of restoring the chief butler to his former office in the way he actually did, Pharaoh could have refrained from performing *that* particular act, and done the restoring at a different time, or at another place, or he could have done it using different words.<sup>10</sup>

S-K's second response to (D) is to reject it by claiming that

- R2. Although a prophecy may render the prophesied act inevitable, this does not imply that it renders the act unfree.<sup>11</sup>

S-K back this contention by suggesting the following account of the notion of a free action.

(FSK) An action A is a *free action* of an agent S, just in case:

FA1. The volition on which S acts in doing A is an instance of free will on S's part.

FA2. In doing A, S is doing what he wants to do when he wants to do it.

A volition is an effective desire or want which moves the agent all the way to action.

A volition V is an instance of *free will* just in case:

FW1. V is not causally determined; and

FW2. V is S's own volition.

These two conditions are to be understood, according to S-K, in the following way: (FW1) V is not causally determined only if V is not the result of an unbroken causal sequence that (a) originates in something other than S's own beliefs and desires and that (b) makes V unavoidable for S. (FW2) V is S's own only if (a) S's intellect represents the state of affairs that becomes the object of V (under some description) as a good to be pursued by S at that time and (b) S forms V in consequence of that representation on the part of S's intellect.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, to count as a free action, according to S-K, an action need not be avoidable.<sup>13</sup> What is needed is that it stem from a volition that is an instance of a free will and satisfy FA2. Such a volition itself may, of course, be avoidable. But S-K stress that it *need not* be, i.e. its being unavoidable is, according to them, compatible with its being an instance of free will.<sup>14</sup>

## II

I turn now to the examination of these two responses to (D). Consider first R1. It amounts, as we can see, to the claim that biblical prophecy does not threaten the avoidability of the prophesied action *qua particular action* or *qua act-token*. Now how exactly does this claim provide an answer to the problem posed by (D)? If it is meant to be a refutation of (D), then it does not succeed, since it is compatible with (D). The reason for this is that R1 focuses on the avoidability of an act *qua act-token*, whereas the unavoidability intended in (D) is that of an act *under a given description*, the description of the act as specified in the prophecy.<sup>15</sup> In other words, (D) was not intended to mean that if there is a prophecy to the effect that an agent S will perform an act of type V during T, then the act-token satisfying 'S's V-ing during T' is unavoidable, but rather that it is unavoidable that S will V during T. But perhaps S-K intended R1 to be a response to (D) only from the vantage point of the avoidabilist, i.e., someone who takes avoidability to be a necessary condition for freedom and moral responsibility, thus subscribing to

(PAP) A person is morally responsible for an action he performed only if he could have avoided performing it.

That is, perhaps S-K's intention was to claim that, though they themselves reject avoidabilism, the problem I raise in connection with (D) can be answered *even* by an avoidabilist? Of course, if this line of argument is to be successful, it must be supplemented by the assumption that, contrary to what is assumed by (D), the sort of avoidability required for an agent's moral responsibility for his act is that of the act qua *act-token*. But would this assumption be acceptable to an avoidabilist? The answer is negative. When concerned with moral responsibility we are concerned with questions of moral praise and blame. Now an agent is morally blameworthy for an act he performed only insofar as that act was of a type that is morally wrong (i.e., of a type such that it is morally wrong to perform an act of that type). This means that from the point of view of the avoidabilist the issue of an agent's being morally blameworthy for his act hinges crucially on the question whether in the circumstances the agent could have refrained from acting in a morally wrong way. Clearly, then, for the avoidabilist the notion of avoidability that is pertinent to moral responsibility is not that of an action qua *act-token*, but rather that of an action *under a given description*, the description in virtue of which the act may be deemed morally right or wrong. This last point can be also brought out by the following example. Suppose that Jack was hypnotized to kill Smith on August 7, at 5:32 pm, and in fact did so. Suppose also that the time mentioned is the exact time of the action. According to the avoidabilist, Jack would not be morally blameworthy for killing Smith. Given the hypnosis, he could not have refrained from performing a morally wrong act. But note that qua *act-token* his act was avoidable. For instead of strangling Smith, as he actually did, Jack could have killed him in some other way, e.g. by stabbing him, and that would be a different act-token from the one he actually performed.

A perhaps more plausible version of S-K's first response from the point of view of the avoidabilist would be the following:

- R1'. Biblical prophecies are stated vaguely in that they do not specify the exact time of the prophesied action. Consequently, a prophecy of the form "S will perform an act-type V during the time interval", though rendering it inevitable that S will V during T, need not render inevitable S's V-ing at T', where T' is the exact time at which S V-s during T.<sup>16</sup>

On this account, a prophecy issued on August 1/92, saying that

- (3) Jack will kill Smith on August 7/92,

renders it inevitable that Jack kills Smith on August 7/92. But it need not render inevitable Jack's killing Smith *at 5:32 pm*, on that day; and Jack may still be held responsible for the latter. The problem, however, with this proposal is that it does not work for prophecies involving omissions. For consider, for example, a prophecy (issued on February 1/92) which says that

(4) Jack will *not* kill Smith on March 1/1992.

If a particular instantiation of Jack's not killing Smith on the said date were avoidable, say his not killing him at 5:32 pm, it would follow that it was within Jack's power to kill Smith on March 1. But this would be in contradiction with the alleged inevitability of (4). In other words, the assumption underlying R1', that the unavoidability of a given dated state of affairs does not entail the unavoidability of a temporally more determinate state of affairs of the same sort, does not hold for omissions. And since we do have in the Scriptures many examples of prophecies involving omissions, R1', as a general thesis regarding biblical prophecy, is false.<sup>17</sup>

Let us consider now S-K's second response to (D), R2. As noted earlier, the idea behind it is to resist (D) by maintaining that inevitability does not imply lack of freedom in the sense of freedom required for moral responsibility. This latter sort of freedom, according to S-K, is captured by (FSK) and does not require avoidability or freedom to do otherwise as a necessary condition. On this view, although an action may be rendered inevitable by a certain prophecy, it might still be an action for which the agent may be held responsible; for it may stem from a volition which is an instance of free will on the agent's part. To be sure, the problem of reconciling divine foreknowledge with human freedom, as it is usually raised, is formulated in terms of freedom in the sense of freedom to do otherwise. And, indeed, it was this notion of freedom that I was concerned with in my paper. Still, the move made by S-K in R2 is an interesting one, and it behooves us to see whether it provides the eternalist with an adequate response to my objection to the Eternity Solution.

Its ingenuity notwithstanding, R2 proves unsatisfactory. One weakness of it is that it leads to consequences that are theologically suspect. Imagine, for example, that God reveals to some prophet that when no one will be around Jack will severely harm Billy, who is an innocent child. Suppose further that Jack does so willingly for the sake of fun, and that his volition to do so is avoidable. (This last assumption is justified in view of S-K's explicit stipulation that, on (FSK), the fact that an action is inevitable does not imply that the volition on which the agent acts is inevitable.) Then, it follows, given the alleged inevitability of the prophesied action, that Jack would find himself harming Billy, even if he had resolved not to do so. This consequence seems to me problematic taking into account God's essential goodness and wisdom. To point to a related difficulty, consider God's prophecy to Moses that the King of Egypt will not let the Israelites go (Ex. 3:19). By considerations similar to those cited above, it can be shown that even if Pharaoh had made the opposite decision, he would be prevented from carrying it out, and would still have to return a negative answer to Moses. This would go against the standard view that, at least in his first encounters with Moses, Pharaoh had

a choice as to whether or not to let the Israelites go.<sup>18</sup> Or, to take a case from the Christian theological tradition, consider Jesus's well-known prophecy that Peter will deny him three times. "And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, this day, *even* this night, before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice" (Mark 14: 30). Again it can be shown that, on the account suggested by S-K, Peter would have to deny Christ even if he had resolved not to deny him.<sup>19</sup> Consequences like these seem to me to be theologically implausible. In response to this objection S-K may argue that if Peter had not willed to deny Christ, then Christ, knowing this, would not have told Peter that he would do so. (Similarly also in Pharaoh's and in Jack's case.) But this would be to attribute to Peter power over the past. For if the fact of Christ's telling Peter about the latter's denial is contingent upon whether or not Peter wills to deny Christ, then Peter, by having the power to refrain from willing to deny Christ, can be said to have the power to bring it about that Christ did not reveal to him in the past what he in fact did.<sup>20</sup>

But R2 is open to a more serious criticism. We have seen earlier that in their formulation of R2 Stump and Kretzmann employ a notion of freedom that is independent of avoidability. This move enabled them to claim, contrary to (D), that the fact that a prophecy renders the prophesied action unavoidable does not imply that it renders it unfree (in the sense of freedom pertinent to moral responsibility). But notice that once the meaning of 'free action' has been changed in this way, the Eternity Solution loses its significance as a *bona fide* solution to the freedom-divine omniscience problem. For when faced with the incompatibilist argument, it is open now for the proponent of foreknowledge to reply that all that this argument shows is that divine foreknowledge is incompatible with the agent's act being avoidable, but not with its being a free act in the sense of (FSK). Thus, there is no need to embrace the Eternity Solution in order to solve the freedom-foreknowledge problem. Indeed, the problem does not arise in the first place. The only response that I can envisage at this point, on behalf of S-K, would be to claim that a God who has foreknowledge would also foreknow the agent's volitions and this fact would render the agent's actions unfree in the sense of (FSK). I.e.

- (5) If God were to foreknow an agent's volition to perform a certain action, the action associated with that volition would not be a free action.

But such a claim is far from being self-evident. To see this, let us examine it more carefully. Let A be a given act of Jack, and let VA be the volition on which Jack acts. Also, let us assume that condition FA2 of S-K's account of free action is satisfied, i.e., that in doing A, Jack is doing what he wants to do when he wants to do it. (This assumption is certainly consistent with God's foreknowing VA.) Now if, as (5) implies, God's foreknowing VA renders his action unfree, then it must be the case that condition FA1 of their account is not satisfied, which means that VA is either causally determined, or that it is

not Jack's own volition in the sense that it is not formed as a consequence of Jack's intellect representing the object of VA as a good. In other words, the plausibility of (5) requires the truth of

- (6) If God foreknows VA, then either VA is causally determined, or VA is not Jack's own volition.

But why should one accept (6)? Why couldn't one conceive of a possible world in which although God foreknows VA, VA is not causally determined is Jack's own volition? First, God's foreknowledge of VA does not seem to contradict the fact that VA is Jack's own volition. As Stump points out elsewhere, when VA is an agent's own volition, the intellect moves the will not as an efficient cause but as a final cause.<sup>21</sup> And this fact seems to be compatible with God's foreknowledge of VA. Secondly, why assume that

- (7) God's foreknowing VA entails that VA is causally determined.

This claim is extremely controversial. It would, for example, be rejected by many theological compatibilists who believe that at least some of our volitions or actions, though foreknown by God, are not causally determined. Finally, even if (7) were true, one may wonder why a similar claim does not hold for God's *atemporal* knowledge, in which case, the appeal to a God who exists outside time would prove useless for solving the freedom-foreknowledge problem.

### III

In concluding my discussion of R1 and R2, I would like to comment briefly on a recent criticism of these responses by Edward Wierenga.<sup>22</sup> Wierenga argues against R1 that it does not work for prophecies which describe the agent's activity in considerable detail. In such cases, he claims, general inevitability implies particular inevitability. So for example, in a case where a prophecy prophesies that

- (3) Jack will kill Smith on August 7/92,

and where

- (3a) Jack's particular action of killing Smith,

occurs at 5:32 pm, on that day, Wierenga's view is that the (alleged) inevitability of the former implies the inevitability of the latter. His argument for this contention is the following: Either (3) is rendered inevitable by way of some causal or deterministic mechanism, or it is not. If it is, then that mechanism would also render inevitable Jack's actual killing of Smith at 5:32 pm. If it is not, then he cannot see how (3) can be deemed inevitable. Hence, according to him, R1 is false. Wierenga employs a similar argument also against R2. He claims that if, as shown above, the inevitability of Jack's actual killing of Smith requires the existence of some causal mechanism that



renders the killing inevitable, then that very same mechanism would also render inevitable the volition associated with the killing, in which case, the killing would not be a free action in S-K's sense (i.e., in the sense of FSK). Consequently, the claim made in R2 that an action might be inevitable, and yet be a free action is implausible.<sup>23</sup> In my view, both these arguments by Wierenga are questionable. First, assuming that there is some causal mechanism M that ensures the inevitability of Jack's actual killing of Smith at 5:32 pm, it does not follow from this that M also causes Jack's volition to kill Smith. For the action in question may be *overdetermined* by both the volition and M. Secondly, I wish to claim that a state of affairs such as (3) may be inevitable without there being at work any causal mechanism that renders Jack's actual killing of Smith at 5:32 pm inevitable. To see this we only need to conceive of a situation in which the inevitability of (3) is guaranteed by the existence of some agent B who is such, that were he to detect that Jack does not kill Smith until 10:00 pm on August 7, he would force Jack to do so immediately thereafter. In such a situation, if Jack kills Smith on his own at 5:32 pm, then despite the fact that (3) is inevitable, Jack's actual act of killing Smith need not be causally determined.<sup>24</sup>

#### IV

Can the eternalist formulate an adequate reply to my objection to the Eternity Solution? In my original article,<sup>25</sup> I made it clear that my objection was intended against a specific type of eternalist position; one that treats the principle of the fixity of the past, PFP, as a conceptual truth and views the move of conceiving of God as existing outside time as a way of avoiding the violation of PFP to which the incompatibilist argument leads. We can, however, imagine also a different version of eternalism (call it "eternalism2") that does not presuppose the truth of PFP. The proponent of this version is open-minded with regard to possible violations of PFP, provided he can account for them, i.e., provided he can explain how in the specific case the agent can be said to have power over the past, without assuming backward causation. Now the eternalist2 does have a reply to my objection which, in my view, is non-trivial and is worth considering. When faced with the conclusion of the objection to the effect that

it was within Jack's power at T4 to bring about the non-obtaining of a past fact such as XT3: That Smith heard at T3 a voice telling him that Jack will attempt to kill him,

the eternalist2 might claim that in the case of XT3 the violation of PFP is harmless. The reason for this is that XT3, unlike regular past facts such as e.g., Hitler's attack on Poland in 1939, has as one of the conditions which are causally necessary for its obtaining an atemporal fact that Jack has *power over*, i.e., God's knowing that Jack attempts to kill Smith at T5, etc. And since

Jack has it within his power to bring about the non-obtaining of that fact, he also can be said to have it within his power to bring about the non-occurrence of XT3. More generally, the strategy that may be adopted by the eternalist<sup>2</sup> when it comes to the question whether an agent can be said to have the power to bring about the non-occurrence of a past fact (event) F is to ask how that past fact came about. If its occurrence is partially due to the obtaining of an atemporal fact, there seems to be no reason why someone who has the power to bring about the non-obtaining of that atemporal fact may not be credited with the power to bring about the non-occurrence of F. These considerations lead to the following amendment of the principle of the fixity of the past from the point of view of the eternalist<sup>2</sup>:

- (PFP1) For any fact F, time T, and agent S, if F is a genuine fact about the past, relative to T, then, unless S has at T power over an atemporal causally necessary condition of F, it is not it within S's power at T to bring about the non-obtaining of F.

### *Conclusion*

S-K's proposal of how an eternalist might escape the objection I raised to the Eternity Solution appears to commit them to the theologically undesirable result of having to treat all prophesied human actions in Scripture as unavoidable, and hence as unfree. In this paper, I have examined two attempts by S-K to respond to this difficulty. Their first response turns out to be either irrelevant to it, or else involves an assumption that is unacceptable to the avoidabilist, i.e., that moral responsibility for an act requires its avoidability qua *act-token*. As for their second response, we saw that, aside from being subject to theological difficulties, it employs a notion of freedom that is irrelevant to the divine foreknowledge-freedom conflict as traditionally formulated, and one for which this problem does not arise. As a result, the Eternity Solution loses its significance as a *bona fide* solution to that problem. A defence of the Eternity Solution that renders it superfluous in this sense would be self-defeating from the eternalist viewpoint. Lastly, I outlined what seems to me to be the most promising line of defense that an eternalist might adopt to deal with the objection I raise. To be sure, this line involves weakening the principle of the fixity of the past. However, since it achieves this weakening in a non-arbitrary way, it is a position that is worth exploring.<sup>26</sup>

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### NOTES

1. For a well-known presentation of this argument, see Nelson Pike's "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965), pp. 27-46. Pike's

argument is extensively treated in John M. Fischer (ed.) *God, Freedom and Knowledge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

2. Classical proponents of this view are Boethius and Aquinas. See Boethius *Consolation of Philosophy* Book 5, sec. 4-6, and St. Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologiae* Part I, Question 10. Among its modern expounders we may find Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *The Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981), pp. 429-58, David B. Burrell, "God's Eternity," *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984), pp. 389-406, and Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

3. "A Problem for the Eternity Solution," *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 29 (1991), pp. 87-95.

4. I assume that God (qua an absolutely perfect being) is absolutely trustworthy, in the sense that it is impossible for him to lie.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

6. "Prophecy, Past Truth, and Eternity," *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991), pp. 395-424.

7. *Ibid.*, section 4. I shall understand the notion of a prophecy rendering an event (state of affairs) inevitable, as employed by S-K, simply as meaning that the fact that the prophecy says that a certain event will occur, implies that the event is inevitable.

8. *Ibid.*, section 4. S-K hold R1 only in the case of categorical biblical prophecies.

9. For other biblical examples of such prophecies, see 1 Kings 14:5, and Mark 14:30.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 401. Stump and Kretzmann use a different example from the one cited in the text. To judge from the examples they give, S-K seem to adopt a coarse-grained account of action-individuation of the sort espoused by Anscombe and Davidson.

11. *Ibid.*, section 4, see especially pp. 402-3.

12. *Ibid.*, section 3. The explication of 'volition' as an effective desire or want which moves the agent all the way to action, is due to Harry Frankfurt. See his "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971), pp. 05-20. I assume that this is also how S-K use this term. See Stump and Kretzmann *op. cit.*, footnote 14, and Stump's, "Sanctification, Hardening of the Heart, and Frankfurt's Concept of Free Will," *The Journal of Philosophy* 85 (1988), p. 396.

13. Following Harry Frankfurt, S-K reject the principle of alternate possibilities.

(PAP) A person S is morally responsible for an action he performed only if he could have avoided performing it.

(Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969), pp. 828-39.) The debate over the truth of PAP is a complicated one, and I do not intend to go into it in the present article. In what follows, I shall try to assess the plausibility of R2 independently of this issue. Just to show that the rejection of PAP is not all that innocent, let us note that the moral blame version of PAP, i.e.

(PAPB) An agent S is morally blameworthy for performing a given act A only if it was within S's power not to perform A,  
is entailed by the Kantian thesis that "ought implies can,"

(K) An agent S has a moral obligation to perform (not to perform) an act A only if S has it within his power to perform (not to perform) A,

given the following intuitive assumption:

- (MB) An agent S is morally blameworthy for performing a given act A only if S had a moral obligation not to perform A.

Hence, a theist who rejects the principle of alternate possibilities would also have to reject the Kantian thesis. This consequence would certainly be unwelcome to many theists. I discuss the relation between the Kantian principle and PAP in my "Frankfurt on 'Ought Implies Can' and Alternate Possibilities," *Analysis* 51 (1991). For a collection of articles that discuss Frankfurt's attack on PAP, see John M. Fischer, *Moral Responsibility* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), part II.

14. Thus, they say explicitly, "Conditions FW1 and FW2 also do not entail a weaker form of the principle of alternate possibilities, that an agent who acts with free will could always *will* otherwise than she wills." Stump and Kretzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 399.

15. The notion of the avoidability of an act qua *act-token* may be explicated as follows. An act A performed by an agent S at a time T was avoidable for S qua *act-token*, iff there is an essential property P of A such that it was within S's power before T to bring it about that it is not the case that A exemplifies P. On the other hand, an act A can be said to be avoidable for S *under the description* 'S's V-ing at T,' iff it satisfies that description, and S could have refrained from V-ing at T.

16. The proponent of R1' will want to hold this thesis with the exception that T' is the not the last time-moment at which S can still exemplify V during T.

17. For examples of biblical prophecies involving omissions, see Exodus 3:19 and 7:14, Isaiah 37: 33-34, etc.

18. That Pharaoh had this choice is clearly indicated by the fact that Moses is repeatedly ordered by God to warn Pharaoh that if he will not let the Israelites go, severe disasters will be brought upon Egypt. (See for example Ex. 8:1-2, 20-21, and Ex. 9:1-2, etc.) It would be pointless or at least very misleading to give Pharaoh such warnings if he lacked the power to let the Israelites go. Note that the objection cited in the text is independent of the problem of God's hardening Pharaoh's heart discussed by Stump in her interesting article 'Sanctification, Hardening of the Heart and Frankfurt's Concept of Free Will,' *The Journal of Philosophy* 85 (1988), pp. 395-420. The objection addresses the counter-intuitive consequences of the alleged inevitability of Pharaoh's refusal to let the Israelites go in the light of an earlier prophecy to this effect in Ex. 3:19. And it applies to those cases in which, according to Stump, Pharaoh's heart was hardened by Pharaoh himself, and not by God. (See Stump, *ibid.*, p. 419.)

19. S-K point out (fn. 20 of their article) that, on their account of freedom, Peter's case is one in which the agent acts with free will, but has no freedom of action, since in the actual scenario Peter does not do what he wants to do, i.e., FA1 without FA2. But this observation leaves untouched the problem I raise in the text.

20. A defender of S-K might argue at this point that all my objection shows is that Peter has only "counterfactual power over the past" (i.e., the power to do something such that, had he done it, Christ would not have uttered the prophecy that he in fact uttered) and not, as I claim, the power to *bring it about* that a certain fact about the past would not have obtained. To establish the latter claim, I would have to make use of a certain principle that William Hasker has called "power entailment principle," i.e. (p) If P entails Q, and it is

not the case that Q, then it is within S's power at time T to bring it about that P only if it is within S's power at T to bring it about that Q. Yet such a principle is deemed controversial.

Reply: The above response is not open to S-K, since they accept the said power entailment principle, as evidenced by the fact that they endorse a standard version of the argument against freedom to act otherwise from divine foreknowledge, in which such a principle (or a version thereof) is explicitly assumed (see sec. 2 and fn. 2 and 9 of their article). Hence, S-K are *committed* to the claim made in the text regarding Peter having the power to bring it about that Christ would not have uttered the prophecy that he in fact uttered. As for myself, I do not find a principle such as (p) problematic. For a defense of it, see my "Two Forms of Fatalism" in John M. Fischer (ed.) *God, Freedom and Knowledge* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 98-100, and William Hasker's *God, Time and Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 112-15. Hasker's formulation of (p) differs slightly from mine.

21. Eleonore Stump, "Sanctification, Hardening of the Heart, and Frankfurt's Concept of Free Will," *The Journal of Philosophy* 85 (1988), pp. 399-400.

22. Edward Wierenga, "Prophecy, Freedom and the Necessity of the Past," *Philosophical Perspectives* 5 (1991), pp. 425-45. See especially section 7.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 437.

24. To prevent complications introduced by the possibility of Jack's being killed before August 7, we need to assume that in the situation under consideration the possibility of Jack's killing Smith at any time until 10:00 pm on that day, is guaranteed as well.

25. Widerker, *op. cit.*, p. 88 and p. 93.

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