Editorial preface

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In the first essay, William Hasker (a noted spokesman for open theism) argues that neither Eleonore Stump nor Katherin Rogers has succeeded in showing that divine eternity is compatible with libertarian free will. In fairness to Stump and Rogers, Hasker sets out a clear representation of their respective views (timeless knowledge and four-dimensional time) in defense of God's timeless eternity. In the end, he disagrees with Stump and Rogers. And yet he concedes that some will continue to uphold the idea of God's timeless eternity. For Hasker, however, saving eternity will come at a high price. Hasker ends with this question: "How many will be willing to pay that price".

Taylor W. Cyr continues this discussion of divine timelessness. His term for this is divine a-temporalism. Again, the issue is this: if God is outside of time, what do we have to say about whether God's omniscience entails foreknowledge. If it does, this seems to be incompatible with libertarian freedom. Cyr begins with a discussion of Nelson Pike's argument for this incompatibility. Although Pike's argument has been contested by many, including Plantinga and Zagzebski, Cyr argues that a-temporalism can be defended by joining forces with sempiternalist compatibilists in appealing to the dependence of God's knowledge of our actions on our actually performing those actions. God's knowledge is had because of (i.e., it depends on) what actually happens in the temporal realm. Cyr asks: "Does my knowledge somehow make Jones's mowing inevitable in a way that precluded his freedom to do otherwise? Of course not. Jones is mowing, and I know this because Jones is mowing. Similarly, God's a-temporal knowledge of events that are future (relative to our present) depends on the occurrence of those events at those future times—times with which God is ET-simultaneous and thus can observe them from the a-temporal realm without rendering those events inevitable."

In this this continued discussion of whether God possesses foreknowledge or not, Elijah Hess considers a new argument for the incompatibility of freedom and foreknowledge that is not based on the claim that choices are necessarily contingent. This new argument is proposed by Michael Tooley. Instead of arguing that God's prescience would somehow undermine the contingency of choice, Tooley claims

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that in order for divine foreknowledge of future contingent events to be possible, such events would have to causally give rise to beliefs, or belief-like states, in the mind of God at earlier times. However, backward causation is not possible on most dynamic theories of time. Consequently, divine foreknowledge is not possible. Against Tolley's argument, Hess claims that on an eternalist theory of time anyway, God's foreknowledge neither requires backward causation nor the uncanny ability to make contradictions true. On an eternalist theory of time anyway, a being who knows all and only truths may be said to foreknow an event because the event itself non-causally makes a certain proposition about what happens at the relevant date true.

In the final essay in this volume, we switch gears, but we do not go far from the issues raised above. Following William James' emphasis on practice rather than theory, we keep our minds upon to the concrete experiences that give rise to philosophical puzzles. This is what one of James' most famous students, W. E. B. Du Bois, sought to tell us: philosophy of religion ought not to forget the variety of religious experiences, including what may seem like the most primitive. Walter Stepanenko considers the possibility that negro slave songs of sorrow may shed light on theological puzzles of the sort that we have just been discussing. These songs express the soul's longings and, as he argues, these groanings of the spirit are not philosophically irrelevant. As we might put it, they start from grassroots experiences, not from theoretical abstraction. They express the human soul's longing for something new and seem to run against visions of an eternal God for whom nothing is new. They ask philosophically important questions that arise out of our concrete life in historical contingency. They express sorrow at how things are, but also a hope for something new, something better. And they do not doubt God will make all things new just as they do not doubt that everything that will be for us already is for God. These are mysteries that have always been, and perhaps always will be, with us.

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