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# God, Heavenly Freedom, and Evil: A Further Response To Pawl and Timpe

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**Abstract:** Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe have offered a reply to my criticism of their libertarian solution to the so-called “Problem of Heavenly Freedom”—the problem of reconciling the impeccability of the redeemed in heaven and a libertarian view of freedom. In this paper, I present a response to the most important points of their rebuttal. I argue that they have undermined neither my defense of the compatibilist solution to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom nor my criticisms of their libertarian solution.

Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe have attempted to solve the so-called “Problem of Heavenly Freedom.”<sup>1</sup> Specifically, they have sought to explain how it is possible to maintain both (i) that the redeemed in heaven have libertarian free will, and (ii) that the redeemed in heaven are incapable of sinning. The basic idea of their solution is that the redeemed in heaven, though having perfectly sanctified characters that preclude them from choosing to do evil, nonetheless can perform morally relevant actions in that they can make choices between multiple good options. For example, they may choose between praying for loved ones on earth or singing in the heavenly choir.

Prior to making their case, however, they reject a compatibilist solution to the problem, which maintains that the redeemed in heaven (and prior to heaven) do not have libertarian freedom. Pawl and Timpe see compatibilism as inadequate primarily because the compatibilist cannot employ the free will defense (FWD) against the logical problem of evil thus making the problem of evil more acute.

I criticized Pawl and Timpe’s account on two fronts.<sup>2</sup> *First*, I argued that their rejection of the compatibilist solution to the Problem of Heavenly

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe, “Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven,” *Faith and Philosophy* 26:4 (October 2009): 398-419.

<sup>2</sup> Steven B. Cowan, “Compatibilism and the Sinlessness of the Redeemed in Heaven,” *Faith and Philosophy* 28:4 (October 2011): 416-431.

Freedom was too hasty. This for two reasons: (1) A compatibilist *can* employ the FWD so long as one recognizes that it is a *defense* and not a theodicy; and (2) Compatibilism doesn't really make the problem of evil any more acute than libertarianism.

*Second*, I offered two objections to their preferred solution to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom. The first objection is aimed at their view (following James Sennett<sup>3</sup>) that the freedom-limiting characters had by the redeemed in heaven are justified in virtue of the fact that their characters in *this* life (prior to heaven) were *not* such that they precluded the ability to sin. My objection to this view is that *God*, like the redeemed in heaven, is incapable of doing evil but the coherence of his current impeccability does not require that he once had the ability to sin. I argued that the asymmetry between God's impeccability and the redeemed in heaven's impeccability on this score is unwarranted and it begs the question against compatibilism. My second objection to their solution challenges their claim that supererogatory actions may provide the redeemed in heaven morally relevant choices. Pawl and Timpe suggest that the redeemed in heaven will strongly desire (if possible) to be closer to God, "clinging ever more tenaciously to him."<sup>4</sup> Given this desire, the redeemed in heaven could freely choose supererogatory actions that achieve their goal.

I argued, however, that Pawl and Timpe are faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, insofar as pursuing intimacy with God is seen as obligatory, the so-called "supererogatory" actions in view are not supererogatory after all. On the other hand, granting that pursuing intimacy with God is not obligatory, and that the actions in view are supererogatory, the actions will not be libertarianly free actions because, "given his morally perfect character. . . , [no redeemed person in heaven] could conceivably refrain from doing them."<sup>5</sup>

Pawl and Timpe have offered a reply to my criticisms.<sup>6</sup> In what follows, I will present a response to what I take to be the most important points of their rebuttal. I do not believe that they have undermined either my defense of the compatibilist solution to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom or my criticisms of their libertarian solution.

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<sup>3</sup> See James Sennett, "Is There Freedom in Heaven?" *Faith and Philosophy* 16 (1999): 69-82.

<sup>4</sup> Pawl and Timpe, "Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven," 418.

<sup>5</sup> Cowan, "Compatibilism and the Sinlessness of the Redeemed in Heaven," 431.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Pawl and Kevin Timpe, "Heavenly Freedom: A Reply to Cowan," *Faith and Philosophy* 30:2 (April 2013): 188-197.

## Compatibilism and the Free Will Defense

In response to my contention that a compatibilist can utilize the FWD, Pawl and Timpe write,

The individual who solves the Problem of Heavenly Freedom by means of Compatibilism asserts the truth of compatibilism. In general, if one solves a problem by means of providing a solution, then one has to posit the truth of the solution. . . . And so the compatibilist solution requires the positing of compatibilism. It is because of this positing of the truth of compatibilism that we consider the feasibility of employing the FWD given the assumption of the truth of compatibilism. One might ask here: does Cowan think that the FWD works on the assumption of compatibilism?<sup>7</sup>

Pawl and Timpe go on to note correctly that I give a negative answer to their question. The FWD requires libertarian freedom in order to work. Let me also state at this point that I agree with the statements they make in the above quote. Indeed, in solving the Problem of Heavenly Freedom by means of compatibilism, I certainly assert the truth of compatibilism.

And yet, I still maintain that a compatibilist can utilize the FWD. Our disagreement arises, I suspect, because Pawl and Timpe and I are talking past each other. Earlier in their response, they state, “[Cowan] claims that the compatibilist, *qua compatibilist*, can use the Free Will Defense.”<sup>8</sup> This is what leads them to write later that “so long as one is positing compatibilism as a solution [to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom], one is supposing its truth. And so long as one supposes its truth, one fails a necessary condition Cowan provides for employing the FWD.”<sup>9</sup> But I never claimed that I or any other compatibilist, *qua compatibilist*, could employ the FWD. All I claimed, and all I intended to claim, was that a compatibilist could use the FWD. I thought, wrongly it turns out, that this was clear from my repeated emphasis on the compatibilist’s employment of the FWD as a *defense* and *not* a theodicy.

Though I believe that compatibilism is true, I do not think that my justification for that belief provides me with anything close to absolute certainty. I hold to compatibilism with the tentativeness with which most philosophers hold their favored but controversial positions. And though I believe that compatibilism comports best with what I take to be the correct reading of

<sup>7</sup> Pawl and Timpe, “Heavenly Freedom,” 190.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid (emphasis mine).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 191.

Scripture on such topics as divine providence and salvation by grace alone, I certainly do not believe that compatibilism rises to the level of a Christian dogma. So, I can entertain the possibility that I am mistaken about compatibilism and that the libertarian *might* be right. Thus, in my previous response, I wrote,

Still, a compatibilist could either (i) say that the FWD is successful insofar as one lays aside the question of whether libertarianism or compatibilism is the better account of free will, or (ii) say that, *for all we know*, libertarianism is true, and thus the FWD shows that [God and moral evil] are compossible *for all we know*.<sup>10</sup>

I think what all this shows is that Pawl and Timpe and I are presupposing different rhetorical contexts. If the compatibilist is trying, *qua compatibilist*, to solve the logical problem of evil, then he cannot employ the FWD. Likewise, if the compatibilist provides a compatibilist solution to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom, then Pawl and Timpe are right that he cannot, in the same rhetorical context (say as part of a systematic treatment of problems in the philosophy of religion), employ the FWD—except perhaps as a purely hypothetical defense as suggested above.

But there are other rhetorical contexts. Suppose, for example, that I am engaged in an apologetic discussion with an atheist. Let's call her Betty. And, as is common, let's suppose that the obstacle that holds Betty back from faith in Christ is the logical problem of evil. Further, let us suppose that she is a convinced libertarian. The compatibilist could, *qua compatibilist*, try to convince her to reject libertarianism, and then offer her a compatibilist-friendly greater good defense. Or, recognizing that compatibilism is not an item of essential Christian orthodoxy, he could take the stance of the *mere Christian* and present the FWD, telling her that *if* libertarianism is true, then the FWD should pave the way for her to embrace Christ. The latter option seems like a perfectly appropriate apologetic strategy for a compatibilist, though he might hold out hope that Betty would also embrace compatibilism down the road. If Pawl and Timpe demur, then here is my question to them: If Betty were a staunch compatibilist who thought that libertarianism is highly implausible, would you insist, *qua libertarians*, on presenting her the FWD only and require that she convert to that view of free will which is its necessary condition, or else be damned? Or would you offer her a compatibilist-friendly solution?

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<sup>10</sup> Cowan, "Compatibilism and the Sinlessness of the Redeemed in Heaven," 419 (emphasis in original).

## The Free Will Defense and the Greater Good Defense

In my earlier response to Pawl and Timpe, I distinguished two versions of the FWD. According to the *strong version*, FWD<sub>s</sub>, libertarian free will is such a great good that its existence in the actual world, all by itself, justifies God's permitting all the evils that occur. According to the *weak version*, FWD<sub>w</sub>, libertarian free will is merely a necessary condition for other goods that justify God's permitting all the evils that occur. I argued that FWD<sub>s</sub> is unacceptable because it is clearly false that the existence of free will by itself justifies all the evils that occur. I am gratified to know that Pawl and Timpe, in their counter-response, concede that FWD<sub>s</sub> is unacceptable, and I acknowledge that they are correct to point out that I misread them on this score.

Regarding the FWD<sub>w</sub>, it was my contention that it is simply a species of the more generic, and perfectly adequate, Greater Good Defense (GGD), and that it thus had little, if any, advantage over the GGD. All that Pawl and Timpe say in response to my argument is the following:

In response, the FWD is so special because free will is by far the most common greater good alluded to for the GGD. It isn't that there are multiple standard greater goods, all with equal esteem, such that taking away the FWD leaves a bevy of other worthy candidates for a greater good. Rather, removing the FWD, as we believe proponents of the compatibilist solution do, takes away the clear front-runner. This, we believe, makes the problem of evil more acute. And so far as we can tell, nothing in Cowan's reply changes this fact.<sup>11</sup>

In what sense is free will the “clear front-runner” among putative goods that justify God's permission of evil? Pawl and Timpe have conceded that FWD<sub>s</sub> is unacceptable. That is to say, they agree with me that free will by itself does not and cannot justify all the evils that occur in the actual world. So, the *only* role that libertarian free will can play in solving the problem of evil is that stipulated in the FWD<sub>w</sub>—as a necessary condition (i.e., an instrumental good) for the production of *other* goods that are what justifies God's permission of evil. So, I do not see why this role makes free will the “front-runner” among goods. It is, at most, an instrumental good that *some* philosophers believe must exist in order to have the goods that really matter in justifying the existence of evil.

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<sup>11</sup> Pawl and Timpe, “Heavenly Freedom,” 192.

Perhaps what Pawl and Timpe mean is that compatibilism, because it “takes away” this instrumental good, makes the further evil-justifying goods impossible. This amounts to an insistence on the truth of what I called (5<sub>w</sub>)—the key premise in the argument for FWD<sub>w</sub>: *Free will is a necessary condition of certain moral goods that justify the existence of the moral evil that will occur if it exists.* Now, as I claimed in my original response, even if it turns out that 5<sub>w</sub> is true, it is hard to see how this makes FWD<sub>w</sub> “so much more preferable to, or superior to, other versions of the GGD (versions perhaps friendly to compatibilism) so as to warrant a rejection of a compatibilist solution to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom.”<sup>12</sup> The GGD that I outlined in my original response is neutral on the question of libertarian freedom. It appeals (or can appeal) to the very same evil-justifying goods that FWD<sub>w</sub> does and can be employed both by those who accept and those who reject 5<sub>w</sub>. Why, then, would FWD<sub>w</sub> be preferable to GGD? Indeed, it seems clear to me that employing FWD<sub>w</sub> is *nothing more than* employing GGD with the added stipulation that 5<sub>w</sub> is true. And that stipulation will be unnecessary in many rhetorical contexts, and controversial in others.

## Compatibilism Vs. Libertarianism on the Problem of Evil

Far more important, I thought, than arguing that a compatibilist can use the FWD or that the FWD is a version of the GGD, was my contention that compatibilism, despite Pawl’s and Timpe’s contrary claim, does not make the problem of evil more acute than libertarianism does. The reason, so I argued, is that there is no moral difference between the view that God compatibilistically causes humans to do evil acts to bring about greater goods and the libertarian view that God knowingly permits humans to do evil acts to bring about greater goods.

In what is the most surprising aspect of their reply to my paper, they do not contest my conclusion here. All they write in response is this:

Even if this is true, and even if Cowan has shown one aspect in which libertarianism and compatibilism are equally acute, this doesn’t show that compatibilism doesn’t make the problem more acute for the reason we give: that those who solve the Problem of Heavenly Freedom by positing the truth of compatibilism are unable to employ the FWD.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cowan, “Compatibilism and the Sinlessness of the Redeemed in Heaven,” 422.

<sup>13</sup> Pawl and Timpe, “Heavenly Freedom,” 192.

In response, I have three things to say. *First*, I would have thought that what really makes the problem of evil more acute for the compatibilist (according to libertarians) *just is* the idea that the compatibilist makes God “the author of sin.” And I should mention that my argument to which Pawl and Timpe are responding here was primarily aimed at an argument that Timpe had made elsewhere, an argument in which he *does* accuse compatibilism of exacerbating the problem of evil by making God the author of sin.<sup>14</sup>

*Second*, I think my original response anticipated their reply. Comparing what Pawl and Timpe say here to what they say about compatibilism in their original paper, what I take them to be claiming is this: The compatibilist has to admit that on his view God could actualize a world in which (compatibilistically) free creatures always do what is right and never do evil. Thus, the compatibilist, *qua compatibilist*, cannot employ the FWD. He has to find some other way to explain why the existence of evil does not contradict God’s goodness. The libertarian, though, does not have this liability. On his view, God cannot necessarily actualize a world containing free creatures who never do evil. It is in this difference between what possible worlds God can and cannot actualize, given their respective views on free will, that compatibilism has a more acute problem of evil than the libertarian. In my response, I granted these very claims. I wrote,

I readily grant that God cannot create a world containing creatures with libertarian freedom and guarantee that there be no evil. And it is this point which allows the defender of the FWD to make his crucial distinction between possible and feasible worlds.<sup>15</sup>

But, I went on to write,

But I deny that the compatibilist cannot make a similar distinction in response to the problem of evil. For while it is true that God can make creatures with compatibilist freedom and at the same time guarantee that they never do evil, it is *not* possible for God to make creatures with compatibilist freedom, *desire to bring about greater goods that require moral evil as a precondition*, and at the same time guarantee that they never do evil . . . So, a distinction is available to the compatibilist (let’s call it the distinction between *possible* worlds and *goal-fulfilling* worlds) that is analogous to the

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<sup>14</sup> See Kevin Timpe, “Why Christians Might Be Libertarians: A Response to Lynne Rudder Baker,” *Philosophia Christi* 6:2 (2004): 279-288.

<sup>15</sup> Cowan, “Compatibilism and the Sinlessness of the Redeemed in Heaven,” 424.



distinction between possible worlds and feasible worlds utilized by the libertarian. And this distinction between possible worlds and goal-fulfilling worlds, though a weaker one, can do the same work vis-à-vis the problem of evil that the possible worlds/feasible worlds distinction does for the libertarian. So, it is hard to see how compatibilism makes the logical problem of evil more acute on that score.<sup>16</sup>

I took (and still take) this to be a more than adequate response to Pawl's and Timpe's challenge regarding the "acuteness" of the compatibilist's problem of evil. If they disagree, they need to say so and say why.

*Third*, I wish to take back something I granted in my original response. At the risk of undermining my earlier claim that a compatibilist can utilize the FWD, I am now convinced that the crucial assumption of the FWD is false. That is, I believe it is *not* the case that God cannot create a world containing creatures with libertarian freedom and guarantee that there be no evil. Put positively, God *can* create a world containing creatures with libertarian freedom and guarantee that there be no evil. Recently, Greg Welty and I have argued that this is so.<sup>17</sup> I won't rehearse all of the details of our argument, but the basic idea is that God could have created libertarianly free creatures who are "hardwired" (or who have perfectly formed characters) such that they never desire to do evil (and thus never do evil), but they are free to choose among multiple good actions. If we are right about this, then the FWD, in any form, is a dead letter.

## **The Alleged Asymmetry between God's Freedom and Ours**

All parties to this debate agree that the redeemed in heaven lack the ability to sin. Pawl's and Timpe's preferred solution to the Problem of Heavenly Freedom involves, first, the claim that this limitation on human freedom in heaven finds its justification, in part, in virtue of the fact that the redeemed in heaven once (prior to heaven) had the ability to sin and participated in the formation of their perfected characters. This "two-stage" view of human freedom assumes (as Pawl and Timpe admit) that there is an asymmetry between God's freedom and human freedom. God has a perfect moral character such that he is (and always

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 424-25.

<sup>17</sup> Steven B. Cowan and Greg A. Welty, "Pharaoh's Magicians Redivivus: A Response to Jerry Walls on Christian Compatibilism," *Philosophia Christi* 17:1 (2015): 151-173. See also the later exchange between Jerry L. Walls, "Pharaoh's Magicians Foiled Again: Reply to Cowan and Welty," *Philosophia Christi* 17:2 (2015): 411-26; and Greg A. Welty and Steven B. Cowan, "Won't Get Foiled Again: A Rejoinder to Jerry Walls," *Philosophia Christi* 17:2 (2015): 427-42.

has been) incapable of doing evil. Yet, there is nothing untoward or implausible in the claim that God is free even though, unlike the redeemed in heaven, his impeccable character was not acquired through a process that at some earlier stage allowed for the possibility of his doing evil. In my response, I claimed that the insistence on this asymmetry is question-begging against compatibilism.

In their response to my criticism, Pawl and Timpe deflect the charge of question-begging by pointing out that, in the context in which this asymmetry is assumed, they had already laid compatibilism aside and were “proceed[ing] under the assumption of the truth of incompatibilism.”<sup>18</sup> Fair enough. But their defense of the asymmetry leaves much to be desired. In their reply, they point out rightly that “God has his moral character essentially and...an agent’s moral character puts constraints on what choices he is capable of freely choosing.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, they point out that God’s immutability, atemporality, and simplicity make it impossible that his character change over time. This is all well and good. I agree completely. But why should the creature’s freedom be different? Why does it *necessitate* a stage in which there is an ability to sin? They write, “With respect to creaturely agents, if we are to have such a character that sinful options are no longer possible for us to choose, then we must have the time to develop such a character.”<sup>20</sup> But this is mere assertion. They say, “Insofar as creatures are mutable, temporal, and metaphysically complex, we should expect our free will to be different than divine freedom in important ways.”<sup>21</sup> Perhaps. But why must it be different *in the specific way* they insist it must be? I contend that the asymmetry Pawl and Timpe claim between God’s freedom and ours is still unmotivated.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Pawl and Timpe, “Heavenly Freedom,” 194.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. In fairness, maybe they intend the emphasis to fall on the phrase “no longer possible.” That is, maybe what they are claiming here is that *if* we once have the ability to sin, *then* that ability cannot simply be eradicated instantaneously. Our characters require time to develop toward the moral perfection we will know in heaven. If this is their point, I can grant it, but claim that they have missed *my* point. My point was that I see no reason why humans can’t be free and responsible moral agents even if there never is a time in which they are capable of sinning.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Timpe alleges to have provided a more detailed defense of the asymmetry between God’s freedom and ours in his recent monograph, *Free Will in Philosophical Theology* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014). There he expands on why a human being, in order to be morally responsible for his moral character, “must have the time to develop such a character.” He writes, “Moral freedom [i.e., the freedom to choose between good and evil alternatives] for creaturely agents is a necessary condition for creatures to freely form a moral character” (p. 108). Why is that? Quoting Thomas Talbott, Timpe answers, “According to libertarians, moral

But this asymmetry may be less than unmotivated. For the orthodox Christian who embraces the impeccability of Christ, it may be downright undesirable. During his earthly sojourn, Jesus was incapable of sinning. He did not, and could not, have experienced a time in his life in which he could choose evil. Yet, on Pawl's and Timpe's view, Jesus could not be a morally responsible agent because he would not have experienced the "two-stage" type of freedom they say is required for an impeccable human being to be moral responsible for his actions. But surely Jesus was a morally responsible agent. So, if Jesus, the paradigm man, the "Second Adam," did not have to have this "two-stage" kind of freedom, then neither do we.

### The Irrelevance of Libertarian Freedom in Heaven

The heart of Pawl and Timpe's solution to the Problem of Heavenly freedom is their claim that the redeemed in heaven, despite being incapable of sinning, could nevertheless have libertarian freedom. They could have such freedom because they very well might be able to choose between multiple good options. Of course, this point might not be very satisfying if the multiple good options were trivial such as choosing between singing in the heavenly choir or playing

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virtues cannot be imposed upon one person by another and cannot be instilled, produced, or brought about by a sufficient cause external to the agent" (Ibid.). In response, I must say that this just seems again to be mere assertion. In my original response, I asked, "Are we to imagine that, if God had decided to *not* allow moral evil to enter his creation and had created Adam and Eve in the Garden with perfectly holy characters (like his own) so that they could not sin but had the kind of freedom that Pawl and Timpe envision for the redeemed in heaven, they would not be morally responsible for their choices? How could they not be morally responsible for their choices? It appears completely mystifying (to me anyway) to think that they would not be morally responsible" (Cowan, "Compatibilism and the Sinlessness of the Redeemed in Heaven," 429). Despite Timpe's assertion to the contrary, it *still* seems mystifying to me that they would not be morally responsible. They may not be morally responsible for their *characters*, but I see no reason to think that they would not be responsible for the actions they perform based on reasons they deemed sufficient—that is, as long as we agree that *God* can act responsibly despite his lack of moral freedom. But won't Timpe insist that God, unlike the hypothetically perfect Adam and Eve, doesn't have his character "instilled, produced, or brought about by a sufficient cause external to [Him]"? Fine, but why is that morally relevant? I pointed out in a footnote in my original response that "one may question whether or not the fact that God's character doesn't originate from an external source is a strong enough point to make a relevant moral difference. It would still be the case that God's character is 'given' to him involuntarily—i.e., he has no choice about what his character is" (Ibid., 429 n.25). So, if God has the requisite freedom for responsible action, then why would a perfectly holy Adam and Eve not have such freedom even though they, like God, have no choice about what their characters are? Timpe has said nothing to answer this question.

the harp. So, Pawl and Timpe go to some lengths to argue that there could be *morally relevant* choices in heaven. They define such choices as follows: “a choice is morally relevant iff the person is free to choose among at least two options, and at least two of the options, say, A and B, are such that either A is better than B or B is better than A.”<sup>23</sup> The better options would be, according to Pawl and Timpe, supererogatory. They go on to add that morally relevant (supererogatory) actions “carry moral weight,” which means that they make the person that does them a better person.

Pawl and Timpe address several objections to their solution. One of them has to do with whether or not the choices of the redeemed in heaven can truly have moral weight as they claim. Since the redeemed in heaven have perfect moral characters, how can they become better by doing these supererogatory actions? How can one become “better” than “perfect”? It was Pawl’s and Timpe’s answer to this objection that I targeted in my response. They dealt with the objection by claiming that there is more than one way of being morally perfect. One way is to possess the virtues which, in Aristotelian terms, is to occupy the means between the vices. Once one is precisely on the mean, one cannot get any *more* on the mean. However, Pawl and Timpe suggest that it is plausible to think that a person on the mean of virtue can grow to “cling more tightly to the mean.” They go on to say that “if we think about clinging to the good rather than clinging to the mean, we can say that through the everlasting years that the blessed spend with God, they are neverendingly coming closer to Him, who is Goodness itself, ever clinging more tenaciously to Him.”<sup>24</sup> In response, I presented Pawl and Timpe with a dilemma. I wrote,

I think we can take it for granted that *every one* of the redeemed in heaven will strongly desire to be ever closer to God and cling ever more tenaciously to him as Pawl and Timpe suggest. . . . Indeed, assuming that such a pursuit of the knowledge of God honors and glorifies God, we might even consider this pursuit obligatory (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31). In either case—whether out of a sense of obligation or an overriding desire for beatitude, or both—it would follow that none of the redeemed in heaven could refrain from “neverendingly coming closer to Him” by performing the supererogatory actions that Pawl and Timpe describe. If this pursuit is obligatory (as I suggest it might be), then the so-called “supererogatory” actions turn out not really to be supererogatory after all. But, even if they are not obligatory and are truly supererogatory, they cannot be

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<sup>23</sup> Pawl and Timpe, “Incompatibilism, Sin, and Free Will in Heaven,” 416.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

libertarianly free actions. For no redeemed person in heaven, given his morally perfect character (in Pawl's and Timpe's *first* sense), could conceivably refrain from doing them.<sup>25</sup>

Pawl and Timpe respond to my argument here by claiming that all I have done is attack the consequent of a conditional—the conditional that begins with “if we think about clinging to the good rather than clinging to the mean.” But this does not show that the conditional itself is false and, in any case, they need not insist on the antecedent. That is, they do not have to claim that “clinging to the mean” means clinging to the good, Goodness, or God. Such a suggestion is a “non-load-bearing assertion.” Therefore, they write, “we can deny that the redeemed actually do become closer to God in heaven, which is sufficient to meet Cowan's second objection.”<sup>26</sup>

I take Pawl and Timpe to be claiming that they can dispense with the idea that “clinging to the mean” has anything to do with becoming closer to God (as suggested in the controversial conditional), but continue to maintain the core of the answer to the objection they originally addressed, that the redeemed can become better by increasing the tenacity with which they cling to the mean. However, I think that all this does is push my argument to a different level. Now I ask: if it's possible for the redeemed to become better by clinging more tenaciously to the mean by performing supererogatory actions (whether or not this brings them closer to God), wouldn't they see this as either obligatory or eminently choice-worthy? How could a heavenly redeemed person not want to be “better” in whatever sense their heavenly state allows, especially if doing what's better and being a better person pleases God as surely they must. Put another way, if a redeemed person sees that doing A is better than doing B, and his doing A would be more pleasing or honoring to God than doing B, then the redeemed person must see doing A as either obligatory or eminently choice-worthy. My dilemma therefore stands. And the Problem of Heavenly Freedom remains a problem for Pawl and Timpe.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cowan, “Compatibilism and the Sinlessness of the Redeemed in Heaven,” 430-31.

<sup>26</sup> Pawl and Timpe, “Heavenly Freedom,” 197.

<sup>27</sup> I want to thank James Sennett, William Lane Craig, Paul Copan, and Matthew Flannagan for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this paper.