Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

Volume 18 | Issue 2

Article 6

4-1-2001

Transworld Damnation and Craig's Contentious Suggestion

Raymond J. VanArragon

Follow this and additional works at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy>

Recommended Citation

VanArragon, Raymond J. (2001) "Transworld Damnation and Craig's Contentious Suggestion," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 18 : Iss. 2 , Article 6.

DOI: 10.5840/faithphil20011826

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol18/iss2/6>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers by an authorized editor of ePLACE: preserving, learning, and creative exchange.

TRANSWORLD DAMNATION AND CRAIG'S CONTENTIOUS SUGGESTION

Raymond J. VanArragon

In this paper I discuss William Lane Craig's response to problems faced by Molinists who hold that an eternal hell exists and that most people who fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives end up there. Craig suggests that it is plausible to suppose that most people who fail to accept Christ suffer from *transworld damnation*, and that the fact that they do ensures that it is fair that they end up in hell regardless of whether they hear the Gospel message. I argue that whether this suggestion—which I call 'Craig's contentious suggestion'—is true depends on how transworld damnation is understood. I present four interpretations of transworld damnation, and argue that on three of the interpretations Craig's suggestion is clearly unacceptable, but that it may be acceptable on the fourth.

The following is a commonly held Christian belief:

- (1) A non-empty hell exists, and is the place where all people not saved by Christ's redemptive work spend eternity apart from God.

Some troubling questions and problems might arise for the person who accepts (1). Why does God permit a place like hell to exist? Why doesn't God save all people he created, or eventually reconcile all of them to himself? It seems that God would *want* to do so, and would (or at least *should*) be able to; so why doesn't he?

More problems attend the conjunction of (1) with

- (2) All or most people who fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives (including those who never hear the Gospel) end up in hell.

In particular, the parenthetical clause in (2) raises questions. How can it be fair that all or most of those who never even hear the Gospel (the 'uninformed') are damned, and spend eternity in hell?¹ It seems that they don't really get the *opportunity* to avoid hell and attain salvation. This fact may by itself make their plight seem unfair, but the unfairness is certainly compounded by the fact that many people who at least appear to be no more

deserving *are* granted that opportunity, and take it. In sum, it is clear that Christians who accept (1) and (2) face some difficult intellectual problems as a result of doing so.

Now the Christian *Molinist* who accepts (1) and (2) is by no means exempt from the problems they generate. Here's why: the Molinist believes that there are true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom—that is, there are truths about what each person would freely do were she placed in any set of circumstances in which she could freely act. For example, there are truths about what each person would freely do if she were placed in Europe during the Second World War and given the choice about whether to risk her life by hiding Jews from the Nazis. The Molinist also believes that, prior to creating the world, God knew which counterfactuals were true. God knew, for example, who would freely hide Jews and who would not, and in exactly what circumstances those people would make those choices. Finally, the Molinist believes that God used that knowledge in deciding which possible world to actualize. That is, God used his knowledge of what creatures would freely do in any situation in which they could exercise freedom to create a world in which his purposes would be fulfilled.²

Given these beliefs, then, the Molinist who accepts (1) and (2) must hold that God knew before creating this world that his doing so would result in many of his creatures spending an eternity in hell. Moreover, she must hold that God knew exactly which people would fail to accept Christ, and that many of those who would fail to accept Christ (and end up in hell) would be uninformed. But then, first, why did God actualize *this* possible world? Why didn't God instead actualize a world in which there is no hell, and everyone is saved? Second, regarding those people who do not accept Christ, why didn't God place them in situations in which he knew they would freely accept Christ? And particularly with regard to the uninformed, why didn't God at least create a world in which they are placed in situations where the Gospel is presented to them in a clear and persuasive fashion? Why didn't God give them a chance? It seems that these are questions to which a Molinist who accepts (1) and (2) should hope to find adequate answers.

Now William Lane Craig is such a Molinist.³ He believes that an eternal hell exists, and that nearly everyone who fails to accept Christ during her earthly life ends up there—*nearly* everyone because some of those to whom the Gospel is never preached may yet be saved on account of their responding appropriately to “general revelation and the light that they do have” (186). However, “on the basis of Scripture we must say that such ‘anonymous Christians’ are *relatively rare*” (186, my emphasis).⁴ Craig also recognizes the problems that those beliefs seem to present, and he makes use of the notion of *transworld damnation*—which is, roughly, the condition afflicting any person who would freely reject the salvation offered through Christ in any situation in which she were free to accept it—to give possible solutions to those problems. By doing so, he aims to show that the conjunction of (1) and (2) is compatible with the Molinist view of divine providence.

Craig suggests the following possible solution to the problems generated by (1). He claims that it is possible that every feasible world (that is,

every world which God is able to actualize, given which counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are true)⁵ that contains a significant number of saved persons also contains a significant number of persons who suffer from transworld damnation. It is also possible that, taken as a whole, a world that contains a significant number of saved persons is better than a world containing only a few. Hence, Craig suggests, it is possible that in order to create a really good world, God had to create a significant number of persons afflicted with transworld damnation—persons who are damned because God is unable to procure their free acceptance of salvation, and would be unable to do so no matter what feasible world he actualized.

The pressing problem attending (2) is the problem of the uninformed—it seems unfair for a person who does not accept Christ to be damned if she never heard the Gospel message.⁶ In response to this problem, Craig suggests that it is possible that God has arranged things so that those who are uninformed and damned suffer from transworld damnation, and hence wouldn't have accepted Christ even if the Gospel had been proclaimed to them. If that is so, then none of them can rightly complain, "This is so unfair. If things in my life that were beyond my control had gone differently, I would have freely accepted Christ," because, in fact, they *wouldn't* have done so (186).⁷ So the fact that uninformed people suffer from transworld damnation ensures that it is fair that they are damned even though they did not have the opportunity to accept Christ during their earthly lives.

Thus the notion of transworld damnation can be used to give a response to questions that arise for the Molinist who accepts (1) and (2), a response that is at least *possibly* true (and hence the Molinist view of divine providence is shown to be compatible with the conjunction of (1) and (2)). But Craig goes further: he suggests that his response is not merely possible; it is also *plausible* (186). He suggests that it is *plausible* to suppose that God has created a world containing hell (and individuals who suffer from transworld damnation) because no worlds that lacked it were sufficiently good; and moreover, it is *plausible* to suppose that it is fair that most of those who fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives end up in hell regardless of whether they heard the Gospel, because they suffer from transworld damnation. The second part of Craig's suggestion—the part which I will call *Craig's contentious suggestion*—will be the focus of this paper.⁸ We can characterize it as follows:

Craig's Contentious Suggestion: It is plausible to suppose that (a) most of those who do not accept Christ during their earthly lives suffer from transworld damnation, and (b) the fact that a person suffers from transworld damnation ensures that it is fair that she ends up in hell, even if she never hears the Gospel message.

But is Craig's contentious suggestion correct? I think that to answer this question we must examine more carefully what transworld damnation *is*.

In this paper, then, I want to investigate the notion of transworld damnation in the context of Craig's contentious suggestion. I will argue that whether it is reasonable to accept Craig's suggestion depends on how

the notion of transworld damnation is understood. I will suggest four interpretations of transworld damnation. The first two can be derived from Craig's own account of it; I will argue that on each of these, Craig's suggestion is unacceptable, because it is not at all plausible to suppose that most of those who in fact do not accept Christ suffer from transworld damnation. The second two interpretations are weakened versions of the first two, but while perhaps neither faces the problem that the first two do, one of them is such that it is not plausible to suppose that the fact that a person suffers from it ensures that it is fair that she ends up in hell even if she never hears the Gospel. I will argue that the other weakened interpretation shows the most promise; I will conclude by discussing the prospects for defending Craig's contentious suggestion using that interpretation of transworld damnation.

I

What is transworld damnation? I think that Craig's account of it is somewhat ambiguous. There are two ways to understand him. I will consider both ways, and give textual support for each; then I will discuss whether it is plausible to suppose that most people who fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives suffer from either version of it.

The first interpretation of transworld damnation is this:

TDF The property of being such that in every *feasible world* in which one exists, one does not freely accept Christ.

Craig supports this interpretation when he says that the property of transworld damnation is "possessed by any person who freely does not respond to God's grace and so is lost in every world *feasible for God* in which that person exists" (184, emphasis mine). And William Hasker, in his response to Craig's essay, also assumes this interpretation to be the right one.⁹

The second interpretation is this:

TDS The property of being such that, for every *situation* in which one's essence might be instantiated and one left free with respect to accepting Christ, one would in fact freely not accept Christ in that situation.

This interpretation requires some explanation. A *situation*, as I am using the term, specifies a complete set of circumstances in which a person might be placed and left free with respect to performing some action. Take a situation *J* which is such that if a person, Joe, were placed in it, he would be free with respect to accepting Christ. Since he would be *free* in *J*, nothing about *J* entails that in it Joe would make one choice instead of another. In other words, there are possible worlds in which Joe freely accepts Christ in *J*, and possible worlds in which he freely does not do so. Now return to the **TDS** interpretation of transworld damnation. If Joe suffers from **TDS**, then he would in fact freely *not* accept Christ in *J*, or in *any other situation* in

which he would be free with respect to doing so. Then for any such situation, God cannot actualize a world in which Joe freely accepts Christ in that situation—which means that God can't actualize any world in which Joe freely accepts Christ.¹⁰

While **TDS** and **TDF** may initially appear to be logically equivalent, we should be clear that they are not. If Joe suffers from **TDS**, then he fails to freely accept Christ in all feasible worlds in which he exists, just as he does if he suffers from **TDF**. So suffering from **TDS** implies suffering from **TDF**. But the reverse is not the case. If Joe suffers from **TDF**, it may be that he would *accept* Christ in some situation in which he would be free to do so. After all, suppose for some situation *J* that if Joe were placed in it he would freely accept Christ. Then if God could actualize a possible world in which *J* obtains, he could also actualize a world in which Joe freely accepts Christ in *J*. But suppose God *couldn't* actualize any possible world in which *J* obtains, because actualizing such a world would require the free cooperation of other people, cooperation that those people in fact would not give. In that case, Joe could suffer from **TDF** (since the worlds in which he freely accepts Christ in *J* are infeasible), even though he doesn't suffer from **TDS** (there *is* a situation, namely *J*, such that he would freely accept Christ in it). So suffering from **TDF** does not imply suffering from **TDS**.

In support of the **TDS** interpretation, we see that in preparing to introduce the concept of transworld damnation, Craig says that the theist could hold that the proposition "God knows for any individual *S* under what circumstances *S* would freely receive Christ" is false because it is possible that "[f]or some individual *S*, there are *no circumstances* under which *S* would freely receive Christ" (181, emphasis mine). For reasons we have just seen, this latter proposition is true only if *S* suffers from transworld damnation on the **TDS** construal. If *S* suffers from **TDS**, then it is not the case that God knows under what circumstances (that is, in what situations) *S* would freely receive Christ, because there *are* no such circumstances. On the other hand, if *S* suffers from **TDF** but not **TDS**, then there *are* circumstances under which *S* would freely receive Christ, and God knows what they are (even though he cannot actualize any worlds that contain them).

Before we evaluate Craig's contentious suggestion using these two interpretations of transworld damnation, we should note two things about them. First, I think we need to add another clause to the above definitions in order to ensure that those who suffer from transworld damnation are such that God is simply unable to procure their free acceptance of salvation. After all, the definitions imply that God is unable to procure their free acceptance of Christ; but we have seen that Craig thinks there is another way to accept salvation—one might respond appropriately to general revelation. In other words, given our definitions of transworld damnation, it *could* be that God is unable to get a transworldly-damned person to freely accept Christ during her earthly life, but is nonetheless able to attain her free acceptance of salvation by getting her to freely respond appropriately to general revelation. So we should suppose that each definition contains an additional clause with the implication that God would be unable to procure from a person who suffers from it an appropriate free response to general revelation. (In order to keep the definitions neat, however, I will

not rewrite them to take this into account.)

Second, the **TDF** interpretation of transworld damnation is the weaker of the two. As we have seen, suffering from **TDS** implies suffering from **TDF**, but the reverse is not the case. Here is another way to see the same point. Suffering from **TDS** implies being such that one would freely reject Christ in any possible situation in which one would be free to accept him. On the other hand, suffering from **TDF** only implies being such that one would freely reject Christ in those situations which one actually encounters in the feasible worlds in which one exists. So the situations in which a **TDF**-sufferer would freely reject Christ are a *subset* of the **TDS** situations—and perhaps a rather small subset.¹¹ Since the **TDF** version of Craig's contentious suggestion is the weaker of the two, in what follows I will focus my attention on it. We will see that if it is implausible to suppose that most of those who don't accept Christ during their earthly lives suffer from **TDF**, it will be at least as implausible to suppose that they suffer from **TDS**, and hence that Craig's suggestion should be rejected on either interpretation.

On the **TDF** interpretation, Craig's suggestion implies that nearly every person who does not accept Christ during her earthly life is such that she does not freely accept Christ in any feasible world in which she exists. To put it another way, for any situation which she encounters in some feasible world and in which she is left free with respect to accepting Christ, in that feasible world she freely does not accept Christ in that situation. In order to show that this suggestion is unacceptable, I will argue first that a situation can strongly incline a person to accept Christ without compromising her ability to do so freely, and second that in the set of feasible worlds, for any person there will likely be many persuasive situations in which that person is free to accept the offer of salvation during her earthly life, either by accepting Christ or by responding appropriately to general revelation.¹²

First, in what situations is a person free to accept Christ? It seems clear that if being in a certain situation *entails* that one will accept Christ, then one would not be free with respect to accepting Christ if placed in that situation. Such a situation, we might say, would be *maximally persuasive* with respect to accepting Christ. Perhaps an example of a maximally persuasive situation is one in which the angel Gabriel appears to a person, discusses with that person his sins, shows him the plight of the damned, and explains to him that turning his life around and accepting Christ is the only way for him to avoid such a fate. Perhaps it is plausible to suppose that in a situation like that the subject will accept Christ, but will not do so freely, since the situation has inclined him so strongly to accept Christ as to override his freedom.¹³

So there may be situations or circumstances which entail that the person experiencing them will accept Christ, thus eliminating that person's ability to accept Christ freely. But of course there are also *less* persuasive situations than the Gabriel scenario, situations which might incline a person to accept Christ *without* eliminating the person's freedom. While a person may lack the ability to *freely* accept Christ in the Gabriel situation, that doesn't mean he lacks the same ability, say, at a Billy Graham rally, when half of his formerly agnostic friends have gone up to the front and half

remain seated. So we may suppose that there is a wide range of situations which incline a person (more or less strongly) to accept Christ; perhaps freedom is eliminated at the high-inclination end, but it is present somewhere on the way down.

The question is, how far must we go down the 'inclination scale' before freedom is present? I want to suggest that a situation can incline a person very strongly to accept Christ without impinging on her ability to do so freely. And I think that many Christian libertarians (including Molinists) would tend to agree with this suggestion. After all, such Christians often agree that God would prefer that those who receive Christ do so freely; and many people in fact accept Christ in situations which strongly incline them to do so. For example, many people accept Christ as a result of being raised as members of caring Christian families, or as a result of the evangelical efforts of committed Christians for whom they have much love and respect. These situations would strongly incline a person to accept Christ. If such situations eliminate freedom with respect to receiving Christ, then it seems to follow that a good many people who have accepted Christ have not done so freely. Given our initial premise—that God would prefer that those who receive Christ do so freely—this result is unpleasant. I suggest then that it is plausible to think that in those situations people *are* free with respect to accepting Christ. Such situations are very persuasive—those who are placed in them are the recipients of much grace—but in them a person's freedom is not overridden.

On then to the second step. How many situations wherein he is free with respect to accepting Christ is a person likely to encounter in all of the feasible worlds? I believe that it is plausible to suppose that any person is likely to encounter *many* such situations, and indeed many very *persuasive* situations. My first argument for this conclusion is this: consider persons *A* and *B*. In the actual world, *A* is not exposed to the Gospel, while *B* is raised in a caring Christian family. Doesn't it seem plausible to suppose that God could actualize a world in which *A* and *B* swap places, so that in that world *A* is placed in a very persuasive situation with respect to accepting Christ? I think it does. In general, I think that for any persuasive situation in which person *B* finds herself by virtue of having the parents she has (parents who choose to raise their children in a Christian way), in some feasible world person *A* experiences a situation just like it. But then since many people find themselves in very persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ in the actual world by virtue of having the parents they have, it follows that any person faces many such situations in the feasible worlds in which she exists.

Now this argument may not sway those who believe that one's parents are essential to one. For if one's parents are essential to one, then God may not be able to 'move people around' in the way just described. So let me try again. I take it as given that there are an enormous number of feasible worlds. Consider, then, person *A* who is not informed about Christ in the actual world: isn't it plausible to suppose that there are many feasible worlds in which gifted missionaries decide to preach to him? That there are many worlds in which either missionaries who have decided to preach in the actual world change their routes and preach to *A*, or different people

(even people who do not exist in the actual world) decide to preach to *A*, or *A* lives in a different village in the path of a missionary? Isn't it plausible to suppose that in some feasible worlds, the spread of the Christian religion takes a different path, and *A* is in fact caught up in the middle of it? If so, then in the feasible worlds in which *A* exists, he encounters many situations in which he is free with respect to accepting Christ, and no doubt many of those situations will be very persuasive.

But suppose that this conclusion is mistaken, and it *is* plausible to think that there are many unfortunate people who encounter hardly any persuasive situations in the feasible worlds in which they exist. Even so, it is surely the case that those people are likely (in worlds God is able to actualize) to encounter many persuasive situations with respect to responding appropriately to general revelation.¹⁴ After all, it seems that if in world *W* God sees that none of God's creatures are doing their part in presenting the Gospel to *A*, God would try hard to attain *A*'s free acceptance of salvation another way—through general revelation.¹⁵ Thus even if *A* is not placed in too many persuasive situations (with respect to accepting Christ) as a result of the free actions of others, it's plausible to suppose that *A* is still placed in many very persuasive situations (with respect to responding appropriately to general revelation) as a result of God's own actions.

I conclude then that a situation can strongly incline a person to accept Christ without compromising her freedom, and that it is plausible to suppose that every person encounters many very persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ (or with respect to responding appropriately to general revelation)¹⁶ in the feasible worlds in which she exists. It seems clear to me, given these conclusions, that it is *prima facie* plausible to think that **TDF** is a rare property—it is *prima facie* plausible to think that of the people God created, relatively few suffer from it. After all, it would be unlikely that a person would reject Christ in *one* very persuasive situation, and it would be much more unlikely that a person would do so in every one of the many such situations he faces in worlds God could actualize.

Of course, if Craig's contentious suggestion is correct, then what is *prima facie* plausible may not be plausible upon further investigation. After all, billions of people fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives, and if Craig's suggestion is correct, then it is plausible to suppose that most of them suffer from **TDF**. If most of them do, then it turns out that **TDF** is not a rare property at all—indeed, “the vast majority of persons” God created suffer from it (176)! However, I think that common sense considerations about typical uninformed people in this world can help to confirm the plausibility of the claim that **TDF** really is a rare property, and hence help to show that the **TDF** interpretation of Craig's suggestion should be rejected.

Consider a typical person not informed about Christ in this world—a Native American, perhaps, before Europeans arrived. An important point to consider is that she probably *is* ‘religious’; she probably follows the religion of her community. Suppose that she is religious: is it plausible to suppose that she would not freely accept Christ or respond appropriately to general revelation in any feasible world?¹⁷ Perhaps we might reasonably consider her a candidate for **TDF** transworld damnation if she demonstrated no religious tendencies at all—showed no inclination to worship and

give herself over to a 'higher power,' and behaved in a most self-centered manner at every turn. But given that she *is* religious (however misguided), I think we can't plausibly suppose that she suffers from it. Moreover, it seems utterly implausible to suppose that most of her peers, together with most other 'religious' people never informed about Christ, suffer from it. These considerations reinforce our initial inclination to think that **TDF** is a rare property—rare among the uninformed, and hence rare among those who fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives¹⁸—and thus that it seems not at all plausible to suppose that most of those who fail to accept Christ suffer from **TDF**. I conclude, then, that on the **TDF** interpretation, Craig's contentious suggestion should be rejected.¹⁹

It is easy to see that if Craig's suggestion should be rejected on the **TDF** interpretation, it should be rejected even more emphatically when it is understood in terms of **TDS** transworld damnation. After all, suffering from **TDS** entails that one would reject Christ in at least as many persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ as suffering from **TDF** does—and probably many more. Thus **TDS** is probably a much rarer property than **TDF**, and it is *prima facie* even less plausible to suppose that most of the billions of people who do not accept Christ suffer from it. Moreover, common sense considerations about typical uninformed people will reinforce our initial intuitions on the matter: it seems hopelessly implausible to suppose that most of the uninformed and hence most of those who don't in fact accept Christ would reject him in all possible situations in which they would be free to accept him. So if we employ the **TDS** interpretation of transworld damnation, Craig's contentious suggestion should again be rejected.

II

As they stand, then, the **TDF** and **TDS** interpretations are too strong to make it plausible to suppose that most people who do not accept Christ in this world suffer from one or the other. But perhaps we can weaken those interpretations by making some rough distinctions: we can distinguish situations based on how strongly they incline one to accept Christ. As we have seen, it is clear that some situations can incline a person more strongly to accept Christ than others. Some situations may be *maximally persuasive* with respect to accepting Christ, but situations which deserve that designation may eliminate the freedom of the agent experiencing them. Other situations strongly incline a person to accept Christ, but can plausibly be supposed not to eliminate freedom. We have said that being raised in a caring Christian family may constitute such a situation. Perhaps we can call situations like these *highly persuasive* situations with respect to accepting Christ. Similarly, we can call situations which have only a mid-range inclining power *moderately persuasive* situations with respect to accepting Christ. These may include situations like that in which one is told about Christ by a preacher of ordinary skill, or in which one attends a Billy Graham rally where half of one's friends accept Christ while the other half do not. We may suppose that such situations are persuasive enough that at least some people would accept Christ as a result of being in them, but some people would not. We may classify still other situations based on

their having less and less persuasive power; but for our purposes the three types of situations we have labeled are sufficient.

Using these distinctions, we can weaken **TDF** and **TDS** respectively, as follows:

TDF₂ The property of being such that, in every feasible world in which one exists and is placed only in *moderately* (or less) *persuasive* situations with respect to accepting Christ, one freely does not accept Christ.

TDS₂ The property of being such that, for every *moderately* (or less) *persuasive* situation in which one's essence might be instantiated and one left free with respect to accepting Christ, one would in fact freely not accept Christ in that situation.²⁰

Note that in the original definitions of transworld damnation I attributed to Craig, a person who has the property would not freely accept Christ in *any* feasible worlds or possible situations; a person who suffers merely from **TDF₂** or **TDS₂** would be such that she would accept Christ in some *highly* persuasive and feasible situations. So while a person who suffered from one of the more extreme versions of transworld damnation would be such that God would be unable to get her to freely accept Christ, God *would* be able to get a person who suffered merely from **TDF₂** or **TDS₂** to accept Christ by actualizing a world in which she is placed in the right highly persuasive situation with respect to doing so.^{21,22} This feature of our moderate versions of transworld damnation demands attention, and I will return to it in Section IV. In the next section, I will pay most attention to the **TDF₂** interpretation of Craig's contentious suggestion, and argue that even if it is plausible to suppose that most of those who fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives in fact suffer from **TDF₂**, the fact that an uninformed person suffers from it does not ensure that it is fair that she is damned, because it could be that she suffers from it *because* she is uninformed—because potential missionaries chose not to preach to her. So use of this version may render the first part of Craig's contentious suggestion acceptable, but not the second. I will conclude in the final section with some brief remarks about **TDS₂**—which I consider the more promising interpretation—and discuss the prospects for defending Craig's contentious suggestion using that version of transworld damnation.

III

I will evaluate Craig's contentious suggestion on the **TDF₂** interpretation of transworld damnation in the context of a discussion of missions, and in particular a discussion of counterfactuals involving the free choices of potential missionaries. Craig puts much emphasis on their importance for keeping people out of hell; as he says, "it is our duty to proclaim the gospel to the whole world, trusting that God has so providentially ordered things that through us the good news will be brought to persons who God knew would respond if they heard it" (186). On his view, if a competent mis-

sionary—call him Peter—chooses to preach to the inhabitants of some remote village *V*, then it will probably be the case that some members of *V* will accept Christ, and Peter's work will not be in vain. However, if Peter (with all other competent potential missionaries) chooses *not* to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of *V*, then all of the members of *V* will suffer from transworld damnation and be damned.²³ So on Craig's view, Peter's choice is an important one.

Now William Hasker claims²⁴ that Craig's view has a fatal consequence: it implies that there are probably some inhabitants of *V* such that Peter is responsible for whether they suffer from transworld damnation. In what follows I will briefly explain Hasker's objection and why, if correct, it renders Craig's contentious suggestion unacceptable. Then I will outline Craig's response to the objection in order to help clarify his considered position about the counterfactual implications of Peter's choice.

Hasker argues that, on Craig's view, prior to Peter's making his choice the following proposition is probably true:

- (3) There exists some person such that (a) Peter will freely choose whether or not to preach the Gospel to this person, and (b) if Peter were to preach the Gospel to her, it would be the case that, if Peter were to preach to her, she would freely accept salvation, whereas (c) if Peter were not to preach to her, she would suffer from transworld damnation and it would not be the case that, if Peter were to preach to her, she would freely accept salvation.²⁵

That is, Hasker thinks that on Craig's view, before Peter decides whether to go to the mission field, it is probably the case that some of the inhabitants of *V* are such that whether they suffer from transworld damnation depends on what he will choose.²⁶ If Peter will decide to preach, then those inhabitants will accept Christ and hence will not suffer from transworld damnation. But if Peter will decide not to preach, then they—together with all of their fellow villagers—will suffer from it. So whether these inhabitants suffer from transworld damnation depends on whether Peter will preach the Gospel to them.

Now if Hasker is right about this, then Craig's contentious suggestion (on any interpretation of transworld damnation) should be rejected immediately. After all, Craig's suggestion purports to explain why it is fair that the uninformed are damned—it is fair because they suffer from transworld damnation. But if it turns out that they (or some of them) suffer from transworld damnation *because* they are uninformed (i.e. because potential missionaries chose not to preach to them), then the explanation is clearly inadequate. Indeed, in that case, the explanation is, in a certain hard-to-define way, circular; in effect, the explanation (or at least part of the explanation) for why it's fair that the uninformed are damned is that they are uninformed. In short, we cannot say that the fact that a person suffers from transworld damnation ensures that it is fair that she ends up in hell even though she never heard the Gospel, if she suffers from it *because* she never heard the Gospel. And Hasker is claiming that on Craig's account there probably *are* people in that predicament—people who suffer from

transworld damnation as a result of the fact that potential missionaries like Peter freely chose not to preach the Gospel to them. If Hasker's objection is correct, then Craig's suggestion is unacceptable.

But Craig has a quick response to Hasker's objection.²⁷ We can understand it this way: consider village *V* in two worlds, one in which Peter decides to preach, and one in which he decides not to. Hasker seems to think that Craig is committed to saying that *V* has the same inhabitants in both worlds—and that whether some of them suffer from transworld damnation probably depends on whether Peter decides to preach. But in fact Craig isn't committed to this, because on his view there will be *different people* in the village in those different worlds. On his view, if Peter (with every other competent potential missionary) were to freely choose not to go to *V*, then God, *foreknowing* that Peter would make that choice, instead of having populated *V* with some people who would accept Christ if Peter preached to them, would have populated *V* only with people who in fact *do* suffer from transworld damnation, and "would not in any case respond to the gospel even if they heard it."²⁸ So while the decision Peter will make may have an effect on what people will have come to exist in *V*, it will not be the case that whether a person suffers from transworld damnation depends on whether Peter preaches the Gospel to her; hence Hasker's objection fails.

We should recall at this point that Hasker is working with a **TDF** interpretation of transworld damnation. I have already dismissed the version of Craig's contentious suggestion which makes use of this interpretation by arguing that it is utterly implausible to suppose that most people who do not accept Christ during their earthly lives suffer from **TDF**. But it is clear, I think, that a **TDF** interpretation of transworld damnation does not face the problem that Hasker claims it does.²⁹ In what follows, however, I will show that given the more plausible **TDF**₂ interpretation, a similar problem arises—and Craig's response to Hasker will not solve it.

To do this, I want to explain more clearly the counterfactuals Craig seems to appeal to in his response to Hasker. According to Craig, the following counterfactuals regarding Peter's options are true:

- (4) If Peter were to freely choose *not* to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of village *V*, then it would be the case that every member of *V* suffers from transworld damnation.
- (5) If Peter were to freely choose to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of village *V*, then it would be the case that a subset *B* of the population of *V* would freely accept Christ and be saved.³⁰

Craig thinks that (4) is true because God wouldn't allow members of *V* to be damned who would have accepted Christ had the Gospel been preached to them. Counterfactual (5) is true because given God's providential governance of the world, Peter's mission work would not be in vain—some people would not suffer from transworld damnation and would be converted. That is, if Peter were to choose to preach in *V*, then the population of *V* would include a subset *B* composed of members each

of whom does not suffer from transworld damnation; but if Peter were to choose not to do so, then *B* would be replaced by a set *C*,³¹ all of whose members suffer from transworld damnation.

Let's apply Craig's response to the case of Sally who, we will suppose, is an inhabitant of *V* in the worlds where Peter chooses not to preach. In those worlds she is a member of the subset *C*. So it must be that Sally suffers from transworld damnation; if she did *not* suffer from it, then had Peter chosen not to preach the Gospel in *V*, she would not have been there.³² Given what we know so far, the following counterfactuals seem to be true with respect to Sally:

- (6) If Peter were to freely choose not to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of *V*, then Sally would have come to exist in *V*.
- (7) If Peter were to freely choose to preach the Gospel to the inhabitants of *V*, then Sally would not have come to exist in *V*.
- (8) If Peter were to preach the Gospel to Sally in *V*, then Sally would freely reject Christ.

Counterfactual (6) is true because Sally is a member of *C* in worlds where Peter does not preach; (7) is true because in those worlds in which Peter preaches in *V*, *C* is replaced by *B*—all of whose members are free from transworld damnation, and come to accept Christ as a result of Peter's preaching. And finally, according to Craig's response, (8) is true because Sally suffers from transworld damnation and wouldn't accept Christ even if the Gospel was presented to her.

Now I want to argue that, given that Sally suffers only from **TDF₂** transworld damnation, it's possible that (8) is false, and as a result that (7) is false as well. Recall that since Sally suffers from **TDF₂**, in all feasible worlds in which she is placed in at most moderately persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ she does not accept him. It's possible nonetheless that the situation in which Peter preaches to her in *V* is a moderately persuasive one such that if she were placed in it she *would* freely accept Christ. For it could be that Peter would in fact freely choose *not* to preach the Gospel in *V*, and would choose not to do so in *every feasible world* in which he exists. If so, then it could be that Sally *would* freely accept Christ in the situation in question (and hence *does* accept Christ in those worlds in which Peter brings the Gospel to her), but that all of those worlds in which she is placed in that situation are infeasible! So it's possible that Sally suffers from transworld damnation (of the **TDF₂** variety), and (8) is false. But if (8) is false, then (7) probably is as well, since if God were to know that

- (9) If Peter were to preach the Gospel to Sally in *V*, then Sally would freely accept Christ,

then God would have every reason to leave her in *V* if Peter were to decide to preach there.

So it's possible that (7) and (8) are false. We can see that this result bodes badly for Craig's contentious suggestion on the **TDF₂** interpretation.

Let's suppose that in the actual world they *are* false. Suppose that Peter (as is his wont) decides not to go preach in *V*. Then, as (6) tells us, **TDF₂**-sufferer Sally has come to exist there, and since she doesn't accept Christ (or respond appropriately to general revelation) she is damned. However, since (7) and (8) are false, had Peter decided to preach *she would not have suffered from TDF₂*, she would have freely accepted Christ, and she would have been saved. Hence she suffers from **TDF₂** because Peter chose not to preach to her.

According to our current interpretation of Craig's contentious suggestion, Sally's fate (eternal damnation) is fair even though she never heard the Gospel message, because she suffers from **TDF₂**. But as we saw in our discussion of Hasker's objection, the fact that uninformed Sally suffers from **TDF₂** cannot ensure that her fate is fair if she suffers from it *because* she is uninformed—that is, because potential missionaries freely chose not to preach to her. And that is precisely what has happened: uninformed Sally suffers from **TDF₂** because Peter chose not to preach to her. All of the worlds in which he does preach to her (and she accepts Christ) are infeasible because of the choices that Peter has made (and would make). I conclude that this case establishes that on the **TDF₂** interpretation of transworld damnation, Craig's contentious suggestion is unacceptable. It cannot be that the fact that an uninformed person suffers from **TDF₂** ensures that it is fair that she is damned, since she (like Sally) could suffer from **TDF₂** because potential missionaries (like Peter) chose not to inform her.³³

There is one more interpretation of transworld damnation; in the final section I will explain why, as I see it, the **TDS₂** interpretation yields the most acceptable version of Craig's contentious suggestion.

IV

So far, I have considered three interpretations of transworld damnation, and argued that none of them can be used to render acceptable Craig's contentious suggestion—that it is plausible to suppose that because most of those who fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives suffer from transworld damnation, it is fair that they end up in hell regardless of whether they hear the Gospel. I have argued that on the **TDF** and **TDS** interpretations, it is not at all plausible to suppose that most of those who don't accept Christ suffer from it. I have also argued that on the **TDF₂** interpretation, it is not plausible to suppose that if a person suffers from it, it is fair that she is damned even if she never heard the Gospel. For her never hearing the Gospel could be the *cause* of her suffering from it—she could suffer from **TDF₂** because potential missionaries freely chose not to preach to her. I want now to consider briefly the final interpretation of transworld damnation. I believe this will best serve Craig's purposes (and perhaps the purposes of any Molinist who accepts (1) and (2), and wishes to use the notion of transworld damnation to help solve the problems (2) generates).

The final interpretation, **TDS₂**, states that a person who suffers from transworld damnation is such that he would not accept Christ in any moderately (or less) persuasive situation in which he would be free to do so. This interpretation, I suggest, does not suffer from the problems that the

other versions have faced. It seems not utterly implausible to suppose that most of those who don't accept Christ during their earthly lives suffer from it; so perhaps on this interpretation the first part of Craig's contentious suggestion is acceptable. Moreover, the fact that a person has TDS_2 in no way depends on the free actions of others, including potential missionaries. So an uninformed TDS_2 -sufferer will not suffer from TDS_2 as a result of his being uninformed.

But even if the TDS_2 version of Craig's contentious suggestion does not face the debilitating difficulty that the TDF_2 version does, it doesn't follow that it yields a plausible explanation of why it is fair that people who never hear the Gospel are damned. Keep in mind that uninformed people who suffer from TDS_2 (and not from TDF or TDS) *could* be saved—it is within God's power to save them. How can it be fair then that they aren't? In other words, how does the fact that an uninformed person suffers from TDS_2 ensure that it is fair that he is damned when, if he were to be placed in certain highly persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ or responding appropriately to general revelation, then he would freely accept Christ or respond appropriately and be saved? What follows is one way that someone might answer this question and thereby defend the second part of Craig's suggestion on the TDS_2 interpretation.

Consider an analogy. Take a man in prison serving a long sentence as a result of a life of crime, and suppose that he did not really know that there were (morally acceptable) alternatives to the life that he chose for himself. Can he legitimately claim that his prison sentence is unfair, because (unlike many people) he was ignorant of those alternatives? Well, he could do so perhaps, if, had an alternative been so much as *mentioned* to him, he would have chosen it. But suppose we know that that's not the case; for him to have chosen one of the alternative ways of living, that alternative would have had to have been presented to him with a high degree of persuasive force. That is, suppose he would have had to have been placed in a highly persuasive situation with respect to choosing the alternative in order for him to do so. It seems plausible, we might suggest, that he cannot legitimately consider it unfair that he was not placed in *that* persuasive a situation. There's only so much he can ask for! Hence, it seems that he can't legitimately suppose that his ignorance of alternatives renders his prison sentence unfair. Similarly, we might suppose that a person who never hears the Gospel and suffers from TDS_2 cannot legitimately consider it unfair that he was not placed in a highly persuasive situation with respect to accepting Christ, and hence cannot legitimately complain that, because he was uninformed, his fate is unfair. Thus we might conclude that the fact that an uninformed person suffers from TDS_2 *does* ensure that it is fair that he is damned, that the complaint of unfairness has been answered, and that the TDS_2 interpretation of Craig's contentious suggestion is acceptable.

But there is more work to be done—since we may again run into the 'unfairness' problem a little way down the road. For return to the point just mentioned: the fact that a person has TDS_2 does not entail that God is unable to procure his free acceptance of salvation, because there may be highly persuasive situations in which such a person would freely accept

Christ or respond appropriately to general revelation. This suggests the possibility that many of those who have accepted Christ in fact *do* suffer from **TDS₂**, but are saved because God ensures that they *are* placed in such situations.

Some may think that this is a virtue of the **TDS₂** interpretation: it seems plausible to think that many of us who have accepted Christ are really no better than those who don't, and that God has bestowed on us a great deal of (needed) grace to get us to freely accept him. But some may think that this feature of the **TDS₂** interpretation again opens the door to the complaint of unfairness on behalf of **TDS₂** sufferers who are not saved. For if it is true that some of those who accept Christ suffer from **TDS₂**, it follows that some who need a great deal of grace actually receive it, while others who need it (for example, those who suffer from **TDS₂** but do not encounter any highly persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ in the actual world) do not.

It may be that not everyone who is inclined to accept Craig's contentious suggestion will be bothered by this consequence (after all, we don't expect God to be an egalitarian with respect to the grace he doles out); but those who are may be able to avoid it. To do so, they may claim that in fact *none* of those who are saved suffer from **TDS₂**, and that God places people in highly persuasive situations in which they will freely accept Christ only if he knows that they would also accept Christ in at least one merely moderately persuasive situation in which they would be free to do so. If this is so, then God treats all those who suffer from **TDS₂** similarly, and the potential unfairness is eliminated.

So we have seen that Molinists who are inclined to accept the **TDS₂** interpretation of Craig's contentious suggestion have some problems to address. We have also seen some possible responses to these problems (or at least hints at such responses). Perhaps this version of Craig's contentious suggestion is acceptable then: perhaps it *is* plausible to suppose that most of those who do not accept Christ during their earthly lives suffer from **TDS₂**, and that the fact that a person suffers from **TDS₂** ensures that it is fair that she ends up in hell, whether she hears the Gospel message or not. If so, then since (as I have argued) the other interpretations of Craig's suggestion are unacceptable, any Molinist who wants to accept Craig's suggestion should accept this interpretation of it.³⁴

Of course, not every Molinist will want to accept the **TDS₂** interpretation, even if it is the most promising of the interpretations we have canvassed. Craig thinks that if we take Scripture seriously we should accept (2) (the claim that most people who fail to accept Christ during their earthly lives end up in hell), and his contentious suggestion is an attempt to handle some of the problems that (2) appears to generate. But no doubt some Molinists will be inclined, as I am, to doubt that serious adherence to Scripture commits them to as strong a claim as (2), and to wonder whether even the most promising version of Craig's suggestion can handle the problems that (2) generates.³⁵

NOTES

1. This question applies also to those who hear the Gospel only in a distorted way—perhaps from an abusive parent. In general, the problems that arise with respect to the uninformed apply also to the ill-informed, though throughout this paper I will refer explicitly only to the uninformed.

2. Thus Molinism represents an attempt to reconcile a libertarian view of creaturely freedom with a strong view of divine providence. The Molinist claims that God has real and comprehensive control over what happens—that God is never caught by surprise by the actions of his creatures—but also that human beings are not mere cogs in a machine God has created. The free actions of God's creatures play an important role in how the world turns out, and creatures are responsible for their actions, even though God knows logically prior to creating the world exactly what actions those creatures will choose to perform. For an in-depth explanation and defense of Molinism, see Thomas Flint's *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998).

3. He addresses these issues in "‘No Other Name’: A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation through Christ," *Faith and Philosophy*, 6 (1989), pp. 172–88. Page references in the text will be to this essay.

4. Craig states his view even more strongly when he says, "The testimony of Scripture is that the mass of humanity do not even respond to the light that they do have," and "If we take Scripture seriously, we must admit that the vast majority of persons in the world are condemned and will be forever lost" (176).

5. To elaborate: a feasible world is a possible world that God is able to actualize. According to the Molinist, there are some possible worlds that God is *not* able to actualize. To see how this might be the case, consider the following. Suppose that God knows that it is true that if you were placed in circumstances C, you would freely perform action A (pet your basset hound, say). Now surely it is *possible* for you to freely refrain from performing A in C—in some possible world you are placed in C and do not perform A. But given that the counterfactual $C \rightarrow A$ is true (and its truth is not up to God), it follows that the possible world in which you are in C but do not freely perform A (and instead freely *refrain* from petting your basset hound) is not one that God is able to actualize. So that world is merely possible, while the world in which you are placed in C and freely perform A is feasible, since (so far forth) God is able to actualize it.

6. On Craig's view, damnation is not by *its very nature* unfair. Indeed, Craig believes (as do many Christians) that all of us deserve damnation: "Given the universality of sin, all persons stand morally guilty and condemned before God" (172). Fortunately, God has provided a means of salvation to rescue some of us from the fate that we deserve. It may seem unfair, however, that while some people get the opportunity to accept Christ and attain salvation, many others do not; Craig intends to use the notion of transworld damnation to ward off *that* charge of unfairness.

7. And Craig also has an answer to the complaint that it isn't fair for God to create hell-bound individuals in the first place: their existence helps to make the world a sufficiently good one—one in which a sufficient number of people are saved—and it is only proper for God to create a sufficiently good world.

8. I do not mean to imply that what I am calling Craig's contentious suggestion is the only contentious part of his position.

9. See his "Middle Knowledge and the Damnation of the Heathen: A Response to William Craig," *Faith and Philosophy*, 8 (1991), pp. 380–89, especially p. 381, where he says that "transworld damnation is the property of being such that in every feasible world in which one exists one 'freely does not

respond to God's grace and so is lost.'" (Hasker's response to Craig will be discussed in Section III.)

10. One might be tempted to think that **TDS** implies that those who suffer from it freely reject Christ in *every possible world* in which they have the opportunity to do so. But **TDS** has no such implication. **TDS**-sufferer Joe is such that for any situation *J* in which he would be free with respect to accepting Christ, if he were placed in *J* he would freely reject Christ. Counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are *contingent*, however; in *some* possible worlds Joe is such that he would freely *accept* Christ in *J*. Given Joe's condition, the worlds in which he freely accepts Christ in *J* are infeasible. But they are not impossible.

11. That is, perhaps most situations in which one would be free with respect to accepting Christ don't obtain in any feasible worlds.

12. Keep in mind that I will not be arguing that it is plausible that every person encounters many persuasive situations in *each* feasible world in which she exists, since it seems clear that many people don't encounter *any* such situations in the actual world. Instead, I will be arguing that it is plausible to suppose that for any person, the sum of all of the persuasive situations she faces in all of the feasible worlds in which she exists (i.e., three situations in *W*, four in *W**, one in *W***, none in *W****, and so on), is very large.

13. But perhaps this situation would not eliminate the agent's freedom. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16: 19-31) certainly suggests that one could encounter situations like this and fail to accept Christ as a result. (As Abraham says of the rich man's brothers (verse 31), "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.") So perhaps it's plausible to suppose that to accept Christ is inherently a free act. I will not assume that this is the case in what follows; but note that if it is, then, since maximally persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ entail that the agent's freedom is eliminated, it follows that there are no maximally persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ. Then the Gabriel situation just described in the text is not maximally persuasive, and any person who suffers from **TDF** is such that if she encounters a Gabriel situation in some feasible world, she does not freely accept Christ in that world.

14. Indeed, Craig's view appears to be that in *every* feasible world in which one exists and is not exposed to the Gospel, one is free to respond appropriately to general revelation. ("In each world in which they exist God loves and wills the salvation of persons who in the actual world have only general revelation [and no doubt of all other persons as well], and He graciously and preveniently solicits their response by His Holy Spirit" (185).) My contention is that those unfortunate people who face few situations in which they are free to accept Christ in the feasible worlds in which they exist are such that in many of those worlds the situations in which they are free to respond to general revelation are very persuasive ones.

15. Or by passing on the Gospel message to *A* directly, without depending on his free creatures. To grant this possibility would make my case much easier of course: if it is plausible to think that in many worlds God gives the Gospel message directly to people who wouldn't hear it otherwise, then it is surely plausible to think that *every* person faces many persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ in the worlds God is able to actualize. For the sake of this discussion, however, I will go on assuming that God relies on the free actions of his creatures in order to bring about persuasive situations with respect to accepting Christ, even though God at least sometimes doesn't rely on his creatures in order to bring about persuasive situations with respect to responding appropriately to general revelation.

16. For simplicity, in what follows I will usually leave this qualification unstated.

17. Indeed, it may not even be plausible to suppose that she has not responded appropriately to general revelation in the *actual* world.

18. I'm assuming here that what I have said about the uninformed applies also to the ill-informed (see note 1), and that the uninformed and ill-informed make up a significant majority of those who don't accept Christ during their earthly lives. So if **TDF** is a rare property with respect to the uninformed and ill-informed, it is also a rare (though perhaps not *as* rare) property with respect to all those who don't accept Christ.

19. In note 33 I explain a further problem that the **TDF** version faces.

20. For both definitions, a clause about general revelation should be added, but to avoid undue complication I will not do that. We can just stipulate that a person who suffers from either of the weakened versions of transworld damnation will also not respond appropriately to general revelation in any moderately persuasive situation in which he is free to do so.

21. Similarly, while God would be unable to procure an appropriate free response to general revelation from one who suffered from **TDF** or **TDS**, God would be able to do so from one who suffered merely from **TDF**₂ or **TDS**₂.

22. It might be suggested that since God *is* able to prompt those who suffer merely from **TDF**₂ or **TDS**₂ to freely accept Christ (whereas God is not able to do so for those who suffer from **TDF** or **TDS**), we shouldn't refer to **TDF**₂ or **TDS**₂ as versions of transworld damnation. But since there are some rather serious limits on God's ability to prompt sufferers of **TDF**₂ or **TDS**₂ to freely accept Christ, I will continue to refer to them as weakened interpretations of transworld damnation.

23. Of course, it could be that not all of the members of *V* will suffer from transworld damnation, since there may be some non-afflicted members who will respond appropriately to general revelation. For simplicity, I will not mention this qualification in what follows.

24. The relevant essay is cited in note 9 above.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

26. It *could* be that all of them will suffer from transworld damnation regardless of whether Peter will preach to them. In that case, Peter's work (if he decides to preach in *V*) will bear no fruit. But since it is unlikely that Peter's work will bear no fruit, it's probably the case that (3) is true, and that some inhabitants of *V* are such that whether they suffer from transworld damnation depends on what Peter will choose. For simplicity, I will not mention this qualification in what follows.

27. See his "Should Peter Go to the Mission Field?" *Faith and Philosophy*, 10 (1993), pp. 261-65.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

29. Or at least not in the way that Hasker claims it does—see note 33 for discussion of a similar problem that the **TDF** interpretation faces.

30. Note that the qualifications mentioned in endnotes 23 and 26 apply to (4) and (5) as well.

31. One may wonder whether there might not *be* any such set as *C*. After all, take the possible world in which Peter preaches in *V* and a subset *B* of the population is saved. Couldn't God simply *refrain* from replacing the members of *B* in the world in which Peter doesn't preach in *V*? In that case, the population of *V* would consist of the union of the two sets *V-B* and *B* in those worlds in which Peter preaches, but consist merely of *V-B* in those worlds in which he doesn't. Of course, it seems possible for God to do this; but Craig seems to suggest that this is not the way things would go. Speaking of the world in which the counterfactual where *Paul*—a retired preacher who *has* spent his life doing missionary work—chooses not to do so is *actual*, Craig says this:

... [P]erhaps God, knowing via His middle knowledge that [Paul] would not go to the tribes in question would not have placed there the people which He in fact has [namely, people who accepted Christ when Paul preached to them], but would have created other people instead whom He knew would not in any case respond to the gospel even if they heard it. ("Should Peter Go to the Mission Field?" p. 262)

The suggestion here seems to be that the people (call them members of *C*) who would have been created if Paul hadn't preached would have replaced the members of *B* (they would have been created *instead* of the members of *B*). (Perhaps Craig's underlying idea here is that in those two possible worlds (the actual one in which Paul preaches to the tribe and the merely possible one in which he doesn't), the same people inhabit the tribe through the generations up to the generation affected by Paul's choice. The generation prior to the one directly affected also reproduces in the same way in both worlds, but in the actual world some of the offspring are instantiations of essences not afflicted with transworld damnation (members of *B*), while in the merely possible world the corresponding offspring are instantiations of essences which do suffer from it (and are members of *C*).

32. We are assuming the appropriate qualifications to the effect that Sally does not respond appropriately to general revelation.

33. It is important to notice that while **TDF₂** suffers from this problem in a serious way (that is, it leaves open the possibility that an uninformed person suffers from transworld damnation because potential missionaries choose not to inform her), the stronger **TDF** might suffer from it too. To see this, we can adjust our 'uninformed Sally' example. Suppose that Sally suffers from **TDF**, so she fails to freely accept Christ in every feasible world in which she exists. It is still *possible* that in the infeasible world in which Peter preaches to Sally in *V*, she freely *accepts* Christ. Of course, it is not too probable that she would, given that she suffers from **TDF** (and freely rejects Christ (or fails to respond appropriately to general revelation) in numerous highly persuasive situations with respect to accepting him—situations which likely are far more persuasive than is the one in which Peter preaches to her); but it is certainly possible that she would accept Christ in that world, and hence it is possible that uninformed Sally suffers from **TDF** transworld damnation because of Peter's choice not to inform her. So the **TDF** interpretation of Craig's contentious suggestion should be rejected on two counts: it is extremely implausible to suppose that most of those who don't accept Christ during their earthly lives suffer from **TDF**, and it is possible that an uninformed person suffers from it because potential missionaries choose not to inform her.

34. As I understand him, Craig himself would not accept this version of his contentious suggestion, for the following reason: if many of the damned suffer from **TDS₂** (and not from the stronger **TDF** or **TDS**), then, as we have seen, they are such that God *could* attain their free acceptance of salvation. Craig would not be happy with this consequence, for he believes that God saves everyone whom God is able to save: "Since God loves all persons and desires the salvation of all, He supplies *sufficient* grace for salvation to every individual" (186, emphasis mine). But if my argument to this point has been sound, this is a consequence of the only tenable interpretation of Craig's suggestion.

35. I am very grateful to Tom Crisp, Alicia Finch, David VanderLaan, the editor and two referees for *Faith and Philosophy*, and especially Tom Flint for helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper.