

## Norman Geisler on Molinism

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What did Norm Geisler say about the Middle-Knowledge, Molinism, and the thought of Luis de Molina? Several people have asked about this by email. This blogpost attempts to provide an answer based on six sources of Norm's comments on Molinism:

- 1) Geisler, Norman L. "Molinism," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999) pp. 493–495.
- 2) Geisler, Norman L. *Chosen but Free: A Balanced View of Divine Election*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Bethany House, 1999) pp. 51-55
- 3) Geisler, Norman L. *Systematic Theology, Volume II: God, Creation* (Bethany House, 2003) pp. 206-207
- 4) Geisler, Norman L. *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Differences* (Baker Books, 1995), p. 450-446
- 5) Classroom lectures by Norm Geisler on God's Immutability in the course TH540 ("God and Creation") at Veritas International University, circa 2013. Class #3 - <https://vimeo.com/72793620>
- 6) Four private emails answered by Norm

Although some paragraphs have been reworded slightly in the attempt to avoid copyright infringement, and the sources have been blended together in a somewhat repetitive and less-than-seamless way, this compilation remains faithful to what Norm wrote and said. The reader is encouraged to acquire the four books cited above to read this material in its original contexts. Apologies are offered in advance for the somewhat hurried and patchwork-nature of this compilation.

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LUIS DE MOLINA (A.D. 1535–1600) was born in Cuenca, New Castile, Spain. He joined the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) and became a theologian. The theology that bears his name claims to protect the integrity of human free will better than any other system. Among other things, Molinism affirmed that predestination follows God's foreknowledge. Thus, "the efficacy of grace has its ultimate foundation, not within the substance of the Divine gift of grace itself (*ab intrinseco*), but in the Divinely foreknown fact of free human cooperation

with this gift.”<sup>1</sup> This was perceived as a species of Pelagianism and was vigorously opposed by followers of Augustinianism. If God’s predestination depended on his knowledge of human free choice, then God’s knowledge is dependent on contingent happenings and he is not truly an Independent Being. As the noted Thomist authority Garrigou-Lagrange put it, citing the Council of Orange:

If anyone maintains that God waits upon our will to cleanse us from sin, and does not rather acknowledge that even our willingness to be cleansed is brought about in us through the infusion and operation of the Holy Ghost, he resists the Holy Spirit Himself, who declares: “It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will’ (Phil. 2:13).”<sup>2</sup>

The Western Church tradition—both Roman Catholic and Protestant branches—derived much of its soteriology (the doctrine of salvation) from Augustine of Hippo. The Pelagian soteriology, which Augustine arguably defeated has, however, sprung up again and again throughout church history. The debate usually revolves around the relationship between God’s sovereignty and human responsibility; how God’s grace is mediated to sinful human beings. We will look briefly at Molinism as one position in the Pelagian spectrum and the Augustinian reaction.

Concerning justification, “Augustine has an all-embracing understanding of justification, which includes both the *event* of justification (brought about by operative grace) and the *process* of justification (brought about by cooperative grace).”<sup>3</sup> The conflict Augustine had with Pelagianism involved the question of the human will: to what extent is it free to choose good and eschew evil? He believed that “the power of sin is such that it takes hold of our will, and as long as we are under its sway we cannot move our will to be rid of it.”<sup>4</sup> The II Council of Orange (A.D. 529) affirmed the Augustinian view.

Another group of doctrines emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries that has been called “semi-Pelagianism.” It should be noted that the term itself is modern and was originally used to designate the teachings of the Luis de Molina. The earlier version of semi-Pelagianism was a position midway between Augustine and Pelagius, maintaining that, while divine grace was needed for salvation, “the first steps toward the Christian life were ordinarily taken by the human will and that Grace supervened only later.”<sup>5</sup> These doctrines

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<sup>1</sup> Material on Molina can be found in Delaney and Edward, *Dictionary of Catholic Biography*, pp. 814–15.

<sup>2</sup> Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, 1a 2ae, g. 109–14* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1952), p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, vol. 1, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> González, *Story of Christianity*, 1:214.

<sup>5</sup> Cross, *Oxford Dictionary*, p. 1258

continued to be championed, especially in France, and finally were condemned by the II Council of Orange (A.D. 529).<sup>6</sup> The findings of Orange were confirmed by Boniface II (A.D. 530–532) in A.D. 531.

Molinism is a view of the relation between God's grace and human free will, emanating from the Spanish Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina (1535–1600). Molina asserted that God has a special kind of foreknowledge of human free acts, which are the basis of God's gracious gift of salvation. Molinism was widely adopted by Jesuits and opposed by Dominicans. After examination by a special congregation in Rome (1598–1607), both views were allowed in Catholic schools.

### ***An Exposition of Molinism***

According to Molinism, God has three kinds of knowledge: natural, middle, and free.<sup>7</sup>

*Natural knowledge* is God's knowledge of all possible worlds. This knowledge is essential to God. It is concerned with the necessary and the possible.

*Free knowledge* is God's knowledge of this actual world. After a free act of his will, God knows these things absolutely, but such knowledge is not essential to God.

*Middle knowledge* or *scientia media* is the distinctive of Molinism.

In the Middle knowledge view, God cannot know future free acts in the way he knows other things. God knows some things absolutely, but future free acts are known only contingently. "God, from a most profound and inscrutable comprehension of every free will in His essence, has intuited what each, according to its innate liberty, would do if placed in this or that condition".<sup>8</sup> Unlike natural knowledge, this middle or intermediate knowledge is in some sense dependent on what free creatures choose to do. God's omniscience "waits" to see what a free creature does "before" he selects those who will be saved. Since God is eternal, the sequence is only logical, not chronological.

### *Arguments for Middle Knowledge.*

*Argument from three states of affairs.* One argument for *scientia media* is that there are three kinds of knowledge in God because there are three possible states of affairs. Between the merely possible and the necessary there is the contingent (free). Since God knows all future states, it follows that he must know them in the way in which they are (as three).

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<sup>6</sup> Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, nos. 1736–2000, pp. 75–81.

<sup>7</sup> Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 131

<sup>8</sup> Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God*, 460

Future free acts are contingent. God must know future free acts by way of an intermediate knowledge that is neither necessary nor merely possible, but is contingent on the way free creatures will choose.

*Argument from the order of knowing.* Logically, an event must occur before it can be true. It must be true before God can know it is true. God cannot know as true what is not yet true. Hence, God must wait (from a logical standpoint) the occurrence of free acts before he can know they are true.

*Argument from the nature of truth.* Truth corresponds to reality. God cannot know anything as true unless it actually has occurred. Since future free acts have not actually occurred, God's knowledge of them is dependent on their occurrence. Since their occurrence is contingent, God's knowledge of them is contingent.

*Avoiding fatalism.* A fourth argument is that middle knowledge is the only way to avoid fatalism. Theological fatalism holds that all things are predetermined necessarily, including what we call "free acts." But if we are truly free, then some things do not happen necessarily but contingently, upon free choices. But if some events are contingent, God's knowledge of them cannot be necessary. God must know what will be freely chosen to occur.

In addition, Molinists see great benefits to their view in explaining predestination, God's providence, the problems of evil, and even hell. "In the logical moment prior to creation, God had no idea how many would be saved and how many lost," according to one supporter.<sup>9</sup> With regard to predestination, "the very act of selecting a world to be created is a sort of predestination. The person in that world who God knew would respond most certainly will respond and be saved.... Of course, if they were to reject his grace, God's middle knowledge would have been different.... As for the unsaved, the only reason they are not predestined is that they freely reject God's grace".<sup>10</sup> The cost of having a certain number of elect is to have a certain number who will be lost. God so ordered things providentially that those who are lost would not have chosen Christ in any case.<sup>11</sup>

*Biblical Arguments for Molinism.* Biblical arguments for Molinism are based on passages such as 1 Samuel 23:6–13 and Matthew 11:20–24. God knew that if David were to remain in the city, Saul would come to kill him. So if God's answers through the ephod are taken to be simple foreknowledge, his knowledge was false. What was predicted did not happen. Only if the answers are taken as what would happen under certain freely chosen circumstances were they true. This would indicate that God had contingent knowledge of them. In Matthew 11, Jesus asserts that the ancient cities he mentions would have repented if they had seen

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<sup>9</sup> Craig, *Ibid.*, 145–46

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 136

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 148, 150

Jesus' miracles. But this makes sense only if God's knowledge is contingent on what they would have done.

### ***Evaluation***

Molinism assumes that God must "wait" to know things are true. But God is eternal, and an eternal perspective knows things "before" they occur in time. God knows things in eternity, not in time. All things preexist in their ultimate cause (God). So God knows things in himself from all eternity. He does not have to "wait" to know them.

Truth is correspondence to reality. But the reality to which God's knowledge corresponds is his own nature, by which he eternally and necessarily knows all things as they preexist in him. God's knowledge is not dependent on waiting for the effect to occur in time. The effect preexists most eminently in its Cause, so God knows all things that will happen most perfectly in himself "before" they happen in time.

*God's Knowledge Is Not Contingent.* God's knowledge is not dependent on the conditions of the object known. If what God knows is contingent, then he must know it contingently. But since God is a Necessary Being, he must know everything in accordance with his own nature, necessarily. Since God is eternal, all of his knowledge is intuitive, eternal, and necessary. Since his being is independent, and he must know in accord with his independent nature, it follows that God's knowledge is not dependent in any way.

*Fatalism Is Not Necessary.* Molinism is not the only alternative to fatalism. God can have *necessary* knowledge of *contingent* acts. He can know for sure what will happen freely. Just because he has certainty about an event does not mean that it does not occur freely. The same event can be necessary from the vantage point of God's knowledge and free from the standpoint of human choice. If God is omniscient, then he knows everything, including the fact that Judas would betray the Christ. If Judas had not betrayed Christ, God would have been wrong about what he knew. But that does not mean Judas was coerced. For God knew certainly that Judas would betray Christ freely. Just as prerecorded television news segments are of events that cannot be changed but were freely chosen, so God in his omniscience sees the future with the same certainty with which he sees the past.

One can hold the same solution to theological mysteries without being a Molinist. God's knowledge of the future can be necessary without any event being forced. The mysteries of predestination and providence are explained better by denying any contingency in God's knowledge of them, since fatalism does not follow from denying Molinism.

That God knows what people would have done under different conditions is not inconsistent with his knowledge being necessary. He simply knew with necessity what would have happened if people had chosen differently.

Understandably, both Thomists and Calvinists have strongly opposed Molinism as a denial of both the independence of God and of grace of God.

According to Thomism, God is Pure Actuality; he has no passive potency at all. If God had potency he would need a cause. But since he is the ultimate cause of all things, God is without potency. If Molinism is correct, then God is the passive recipient of the knowledge of free acts. God's "middle knowledge" is dependent on the events actually occurring. The great "I Am" becomes the "I Can Be." This implies a passivity that God as Pure Actuality cannot have. Hence, Molinism is contrary to the nature of God.

*God Becomes an Effect.* Another statement of the difficulty is that either God's knowledge is completely causal, determining all events, or it is determined by these events. There is no third alternative. Molinists say that God's knowledge is determined by future free acts. This sacrifices God as ultimate Cause. He is determined by events, not Determiner. This is contrary to the nature of God, for he becomes an epistemological spectator.<sup>12</sup>

*Efficacious Grace Is Denied.* Another objection is that Molinism denies God's efficacious grace in salvation. All that God wills comes to pass without our freedom being infringed upon. "He wills efficaciously that we freely consent and we do freely consent".<sup>13</sup> Only in this way can God's grace be efficacious. God is the active Author of salvation.<sup>14</sup> As Aquinas says, "If God's intention is that this man, whose heart he is moving, shall receive sanctifying grace, then that man receives grace infallibly." God's intention cannot fail, and the saved are saved infallibly.<sup>15</sup>

While agreeing on the efficacious nature of grace, Thomists part company with strong Calvinists at this point. For Thomists, free creatures retain the power to choose not to follow God when God graciously and efficaciously moves them to choose according to his predetermined will. Strong Calvinists teach that this movement by the Holy Spirit in the Heart of the person choosing is irresistible. If it is God's will, that person *will* respond because the Spirit quickens the heart. Thomists insist that, "far from forcing the act, far from destroying ... freedom, the divine motion instead actualized ... freedom. When efficacious grace touches the free will, that touch is virginal, it does no violence, it only enriches" (ibid., 110). However, this is not essential to the anti-Molinist view. God's knowledge could be determinative of a free act without his causing the free act himself. This view was held by the early Augustine and moderate Calvinists.

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<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, 107

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 401

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 398

<sup>15</sup> *certissime*, says Augustine; *ibid.*, 111

## **Arminianism: God's predetermination is based on His foreknowledge**

### **Statement of the Arminian view**

While it is debatable whether Arminius meant this, some of his Wesleyan followers are said to believe that God knows in advance (by His omniscience) just what choices everyone will make, whether to accept or to reject salvation. While Wesleyan "Arminians" believe that election is conditioned on foreseen faith,<sup>16</sup> some do not believe that God's act of election itself is conditional. Rather, they hold that God unconditionally willed that salvation would be received on the condition of faith. Consequently, on the basis of their foreknown free choice to accept Christ, God chooses (elects) to save them. Man is totally free to accept or reject God, being under no coercion from Him. On the other hand, since God is all-knowing He is in sovereign control of the whole universe. He knew exactly what everyone would choose to do, even before He created the world. In short, man is entirely free and yet God is in complete control of the universe. But the "control" is not based on coercion of the events but on the knowledge of what the free agents will do under whatever persuasive means He may use on them.

### **Problems with this Arminian/Molinistic view**

The Arminian view faces several difficulties. First, the biblical data seems to say more than that God simply knew what was going to happen. It appears that God actually determined what would happen and that He even assures its accomplishment by effectively working to bring it about. God's sovereignty means He is in control of all that happens, even the free acts of human beings. Paul was "confident of this, that he who began a good work . . . will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:6). He added, "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Phil. 2:13).

Second, if God's choice to save was based on those who choose Him, then it would not be based on divine grace but would be based on human decisions. This flies in the face of the whole biblical teaching on grace (cf. Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7; Rom. 11:6). It is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture that salvation springs from the will of man. John said believers are "children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband's will, but

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<sup>16</sup> see Richard Watson *Theological Institutes* [N.Y.: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1836], 2.350

born of God" (John 1:13). Paul adds that salvation does not "depend on man's desire [will] or effort, but on God's mercy" (Rom. 9:16).

Third, in opposition to this Molinistic view of middle knowledge, which suggests that God's foreknowledge is dependent on our free choices, the classical view of God (held by both Calvinists and traditional Arminians) affirms that God is an eternal and entirely independent Being. He is not dependent on anything in the created universe for what He "is." And being a simple (indivisible) Being, whatever He "has" He is. That is, His attributes are identical to His essence or nature. So if God has knowledge, then He is knowledge.

This means that while the objects of His knowledge are distinct from His nature, God's knowledge of them is identical to His eternal and independent nature. Thus, God's knowledge is independent of anything outside Himself. But if it is totally independent, then God's knowledge cannot be dependent on our free choices.

Finally, the whole idea of there being a chronological or even logical sequence in God's thoughts is highly problematic for evangelical theology. It runs contrary to the traditional doctrine of God's simplicity (absolute indivisibility) held by Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, and bequeathed to modern evangelicals through the Reformers. God's attention does not pass from thought to thought, for His knowledge embraces everything in a single spiritual co-intuition. For if God is simple, then His thoughts are not sequential but simultaneous. He does not know things inferentially but intuitively. On the contrary, if

God is not simple, then He could think in temporal succession. And, as some have shown, if God is temporal, then He is also spatial. Indeed, such a God would even be material (which is contrary to Scripture, e.g., John 4:24). And if God is limited to the space/time world, then He could think no faster than the speed of light. Thus, He would not even be able to know the whole universe at a given moment, to say Molinism is the view springing from Molina who posited that God has "middle knowledge" of future free events. This knowledge is said to be dependent on the human free choices that would later be made.

Aquinas gives the reason that God's knowledge cannot be dependent on anything in the created world, including our free choices. His argument goes like this: Everything in creation is an effect that flows from the First Cause. What exists in the effect first pre-existed in the First Cause. But in God, who is a totally independent Being, nothing is dependent. Therefore, God's knowledge of all free acts is totally independent knowledge.<sup>17</sup>

It also suggests that God has an infallible knowledge of the future. Furthermore, if God is limited, then He is subject to disorder and to entropy (that is, He is running out of useable energy). Thus, God will ultimately be exhausted by running out of energy.

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<sup>17</sup> see Summa Theologica, 1a.14



## **Moderate Calvinism: God's predetermination is in accord with His foreknowledge**

There is a third alternative. It postulates that God's election is neither based on His foreknowledge of man's free choices nor exercised independent of it. As the Scriptures declare, we are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" (1 Peter 1:2 NKJV). That is to say, there is no chronological or logical priority of election and foreknowledge. As John Walvoord insightfully commented on 1 Peter 1:2, it "teaches not the logical order of election in relation to foreknowledge but the fact that they are coextensive." In other words, all aspects of the eternal purpose of God are equally timeless. ... God is a simple Being . . . Those attributes are one with His indivisible essence. Hence, both foreknowledge and predetermination are one in God. Whatever God knows, He determines. And whatever He determines, He knows.

More properly, we should speak of God as knowingly determining and determinately knowing from all eternity everything that happens, including all free acts. For if God is an eternal and simple Being, then His thoughts must be eternally coordinate and unified.

According to the moderate Calvinist's view, whatever God forechooses cannot be based on what He foreknows. Nor can what He foreknows be based on what He forechose. Both must be simultaneous, eternal, and coordinate acts of God. Thus, our moral actions are truly free, and God determined that they would be such. God is totally sovereign in the sense of actually determining what occurs, and yet man is completely free and responsible for what he chooses.

### **Evaluation of the moderate Calvinist's view**

In spite of the fact that moderate Calvinists have repeatedly stated their view and distinguished it from the Arminian position, and in spite of the fact that extreme Calvinists have acknowledged this confessed difference, nonetheless, some choose to ignore it. Citing with approval his mentor, John Gerstner, Sproul affirms: "In Norman Geisler, the implicit Arminianism of Dispensationalism<sup>18</sup> has become explicit. Geisler writes, 'God would save all men if He could. . . .' God will save as many as God can 'without violating their free choice. . .

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<sup>18</sup> This is an irrelevant "red herring" (diversion of the issue). He should have said "Moderate Calvinism," not "Dispensationalism."

No Arminian has ever been more specific in his denial of Calvinistic [read: "extreme Calvinistic" doctrine than this self-designated dispensational Calvinist."<sup>19</sup> This statement concerning the ". . . implicit Arminianism of Dispensationalism" reveals an obvious lack of knowledge of dispensational thought. It ignores the primary source materials found in L. Sperry Chafer, John Walvoord, C. C. Ryrie, and other key dispensationalists. Their easily verifiable statements on the issue of God's sovereign grace and their cogent rejection of classical Arminian and Wesleyan thought are available for any researcher. A careful look at these sources would have avoided such an unwarranted proclamation.

If affirming that God will not violate the free choice of any human being in order to save that person is an "Arminian" view, then every major church father from the beginning, including Justin, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Clement, Tertullian, Origen, Methodius, Cyril, Gregory, Jerome, Chrysostom, the early Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas (whom Sproul greatly admires) were Arminians!

Further, if Sproul's radical reformation view is correct, then even most Lutherans who follow Melancthon, not Luther's *Bondage of the Will* on this point are Armenians! What is more, then all moderate Calvinists, including W. G. T. Shedd, Lewis Sperry Chafer, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, Fred Howe, and many others are Arminians, despite the fact that all of these people call themselves Calvinists (or "moderate" Calvinists) and believe in the same four points of Calvinism that Calvin believed.

God's predestination and human free choice are a mystery, but not a contradiction. They go beyond reason, but not against reason. That is, they are not incongruous, but neither can we see exactly how they are complementary. We apprehend each as true, but we do not comprehend how both are true.

Of the three basic ways predetermination and free will may be related, two have serious problems. According to the classical theistic view of God held by all Calvinists and traditional Arminians, God is omniscient, eternal, independent, and indivisible in His being or essence. But such a Being cannot be dependent on anything for His knowledge. Hence, the Wesleyan-Arminian's (and Molinist's) view that God's predetermination of human acts is dependent on His knowledge of our free choices is not feasible. Likewise, the extreme view of God predetermining things independent of (or without regard to) His foreknowledge is not plausible. For God's foreknowledge and His foredetermination cannot be separated.

God is one simple (indivisible) Being. In Him knowledge and foredetermination are identical. Hence, He had to predetermine in accordance with His foreknowledge. And He

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<sup>19</sup> Sproul, *Willing to Believe*, 203.

must have foreknown in accordance with His predetermination. St. Augustine summed it up well when he urged that ". . . we may not so defend grace as to seem to take away free will, or, on the other hand, so assert free will as to be judged ungrateful to the grace of God, in our arrogant impiety."

There is no contradiction in God knowingly predetermining and predeterminately knowing from all eternity precisely what we would do with our free acts. For God determined that moral creatures would do things freely. He did not determine that they would be forced to perform free acts. What is forced is not free, and what is free is not forced. We are chosen by God, and we are also free.

Change is passing from potentiality to actuality. There must be a pure actuality that actualizes that which is act-potency mixtures. The early creeds and early fathers and medieval fathers all believed in the immutability of God. What changed? Panentheism, organicism, neoclassical theism, process theology. A.N. Whitehead, Hartshorne, Cobb, etc. More recently, evangelicals like John Sanders and Clark Pinnock have adopted open theism – no simplicity, no eternality, no possibility. They only accept half of the classical attributes. Pinnock even said we need to reconsider the Mormon view of God.

If God changes, he can't be perfect. But imperfect implies a perfect.

Aquinas anticipated the objections. There is a real relationship between the changing world and the unchanging God. The man moved to the other side of the pillar. Yes, relationships change. We change in relation to him, not him to us. We should be reconciled to Him, not him to us. Creator has no dependent relationship with his creation – the problem with middle knowledge (Molinism) is that it is dependent knowledge where God predestines based on his foreknowledge. But an independent being has no part that is dependent. If God is totally independent, with knowledge identical to his being (he is knowledge) then all of his knowledge is independent. And Molinism is wrong. If there is dependent knowledge, you end up with a bipolar god. Positing middle-knowledge is a giant step towards process theology.

How can God know a changing world? God knows what we know but not in the way we know it. God knows them eternally, simultaneously, and nonsuccessively. We know differently.

God's knowledge is like a man on top of a mountain while ours is like a man in cave. Three cars on train tracks--past, present, and future. The man in the cave can only see the present car. The tunnel vision of time. A minute later he sees the future car. But the man on the top sees all three at the same time. Eternal is above time. No tunnel vision of time. 30 days on a calendar represents all time. We can see 1-14. He can see 1-30. Even that illustration is incorrect. He sees the cause. He knows the future not by looking out there to see it but to see the internal vision of his own knowledge, seeing all possible worlds, all possible effects

in himself in their causes from all eternity. All God wills from all eternity everything that will come to pass, every free act, every everything. All decisions made in eternity. Simultaneously in time but successively here. Doctor wills that you take all 6 pills in 6 days at one point in time.

IF there is a temporal world, there must be an eternal God. The cause of a temporal world cannot be temporal. God is in the eternal now.

We live in a changing world in such flux that we long for something permanent. Consider an illustration from Kierkegaard: Imagine a sailor on a boat looking at wave after wave. Monotony of the sea. Change after change. So he fixes his eye on the morning star, something that is not moving. Then he can overcome the monotony of that which is moving. . . . The monotony of life. Everything under the sun is boring and monotonous. Water falls evaporates falls evaporates. We live in the world of flux and futility. The unchanging is necessary metaphysically and spiritually to deal with the world in which we live.

Obj 9: God is love is closest to divine reality per Pinnock. Essentially love is God. God's love necessitates the possibility of change. God's love is dynamic and interactive give and take. God created man in his image and man returned the compliment. Who said we can take horizontal level and make it what is on the horizontal level? Why did he create us is a legitimate question. What would you rather have—dependable love that is always there or unsure love. We want an interactive God that we can pet and he purrs. But their god is a reactive god. Election based on foreknowledge. Molinism.

God can know and foreknow (doesn't really fore-know anything) so he knows what your freely going to do. Omniscient means can't be wrong. He knows for sure what you're freely going to do. No contradiction. All classical theists from Augustine to Aquinas to reformation (appendix of Chosen but Free) with the exception of the late Augustine held that view.

When Bill Craig wrote on Molinism, he never quoted Reginald Garrigou-Legrance who refuted it. He didn't seem to even know about it. The debate between Thomism and Molinism was the Roman Catholic precursor to the debate between Calvinism and Arminianism. Thomists were the Calvinists, so to speak, and Molinists were the Arminians of their day. Ultimately the Pope said they're both orthodox and stop fighting. Reginald Garrigou-Legrance was greatest one of the great Thomists and he argued that God is simple, immutable, and that what God knows is what he is. God doesn't "have knowledge" like we do. God is what he has. If he knows it, he knows it independently. No dependent knowledge. God doesn't depend on something to happen or not to know it. He sees what could be and what would be. God doesn't react. "Before you call, I will answer," means that He knows what you're going to pray before you pray it. God knew he was going down to 10 when he was negotiating with Abraham.

God didn't change. Ninevah repented. God wasn't finite. If you're really omniscient how can you change your mind. Greg Boyd said God didn't know where Adam and Eve were hiding. That's a very finite god. The only alternative to finite-godism is a classical view of God who doesn't change.

Someone asked Norm:

Something that confuses me is that on page 51 of your book *Chosen but Free*, your heading is "Arminianism: God's predetermination is based on His foreknowledge". Then, on page 52, you say, "...in opposition to this Molinistic view of middle knowledge, which suggests that God's foreknowledge is dependent on our free choices, the classical view of God (held by both Calvinists and traditional Arminians) affirms that God is an eternal and entirely independent Being." So...do Arminians believe Molinism, like the heading suggests, or do they believe God is independent, as you suggest in that quote?

Norm's response was:

Arminians believe in dependent knowledge of God (as does Molinism), but they accept all the classical attributes of God—including infallible foreknowledge of free action. Norm

Someone else asked Norm:

In the Evaluation section of your article on Molinism [in *The Baker Encyclopedia of Apologetics*] you claim that God must "wait" to know if things are true. Yet, at the beginning of the article you rightfully acknowledge that middle knowledge is part of a logical sequence, not a chronological sequence. It seems your understanding of Middle knowledge is mixed. Free, Middle, and Free knowledge all come before anything is actually created, therefore none of them are chronological.

Norm's response was:

"Wait" is used logically, not chronologically. Norm

Norm also once told me:

[William Lane] Craig claims to hold middle knowledge (MK), but he does not really hold it. Middle knowledge of Molina is dependent knowledge (in which God is dependent on his knowledge of the future for his action). But God is an independent Being and one in which His knowledge is identical to His being (since He is a simple being). Hence, if God had middle knowledge, He would be a dependent Being (which

He is not). Garrigou-LaGrange answered Molina by this same argument, but Craig does not acknowledge (or answer) him in his book defending middle knowledge.

Second, MK is not necessary to answer this problem of free will (in the human authors of Scripture) and absolute determination of Scripture by God. Craig fails to use a distinction made by Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, namely, that one and the same event (say, the inspiration of Scripture) can be both determined *from the standpoint of God's foreknowledge* and causality and free *from the standpoint of the human author's free choice*. Basinger (also a former student) fails to observe this distinction too. This is a common error of Open Theism.

Part of Open Theism's and Craig's problem is viewing God as temporal (in time). If God is not temporal but knows all past, present, and future, in one eternal Now (in His own Being), then he is not fore-seeing or fore-determining anything. He simply knows it in His eternal now along with the cause of everything else that will ever exist. Once one gets the attributes of God straight, then the answer to these problems falls in place.

**Subject:** Jerry from Appomattox – December 2017

Hello Dr. Geisler. I hope this email is finding you and your wife well and ready for Christmas. While listening to a podcast involving inerrancy of the Bible and freewill, your reply to the Basinger brothers was mentioned. Bill Craig said that your reply in the Evangelical Quarterly (1985) was basically an affirmation of God using middle knowledge when using the authors and their occasions to write the Scriptures.

I know that you are not a fan of middle knowledge when it comes to God and creation. You told me that middle knowledge was dependent knowledge. Is there a way that God used middle knowledge when the Scriptures was being written, but not use it when there was *creatio ex nihilo*? Did Craig misunderstand you, or has your view changed on how God could have an inerrant book written by free creatures?

Norm replied:

James:

God cannot use Middle (dependent) knowledge at any time because it is contrary to his nature, and He cannot act contrary to His nature. His knowledge is identical to His being, and His Being is not dependent on anything. He is an Independent Being. God does not have knowledge (of Being); He is knowledge pure and simple just as He is Being.

Norm

## Objection Based Upon the Alleged Impossibility of Divine Actions

Sanders argues that an omniscient God cannot intervene in what He infallibly foresees:

- (1) What is infallibly foreseen is determined.
- (2) God foresees what will actually occur.
- (3) But if it will actually occur, then He cannot intervene to change it.
- (4) Therefore, God cannot intervene in a world He foreknows will occur.

Sanders claims,

The problem arises because of the fact that what God provisions is what will *actually* occur. Divine foreknowledge, by definition, is always correct. If what will actually happen is—for example, the Holocaust—then God knows it is going to happen and cannot prevent it from happening, since his foreknowledge is never mistaken. (*GWR*, 201)

“Furthermore,” Sanders writes,

If what God has foreseen is the *entire* human history *at once*, then the difficulty is to somehow allow for God’s intervention into that history. This raises a serious problem. Does simple foreknowledge imply that God provisions his own decisions and actions? That is to say, if God has infallible “foreknowledge” of his own actions, then the problem is to explain how the foreknowledge can be the *basis* for the actions when it already *includes* the actions, (*ibid.*)

He explains,

It is impossible that God should use a foreknowledge derived from the actual occurrence of future events to determine his own prior actions in the providential governance of the world. Such a deity would then know what he is going to do before deciding what to do. [Such a God would] ... be unable to plan, anticipate, or decide; he would simply know. This seems to call the divine freedom into question, making God a prisoner of his own omniprescience, lacking perfect freedom, (*ibid.*)

## Response to Objection Ten

This objection poses a problem for molinists (see Craig, *OWG*, 127–52), but not for thomists (see Volume 1, chapter 8). Luis de Molina (1535–1600) insisted that God’s decisions are based on what He foreknows will actually occur, should He choose to create that kind of world—this is *dependent* knowledge. However, classical theists hold:

- (1) God does not really have *foreknowledge*; He simply *knows* in one eternal Now.

(2) God's knowledge is not based on anything outside Himself. God's knowledge of all things is based on knowing Himself and all other things as they preexist in Himself as their Primary Cause.

The basic argument in favor of the classical theist's view goes like this:

(1) God is an independent Being.

(2) God's knowledge is identical to His Being (since He is simple).

(3) Hence, God's knowledge is independent.

If this is so, then the belief that God has dependent knowledge (as in molinism) is false. All His knowledge must be part of His independent Being; that is, He must know everything in and through Himself and not through anything that is contingent.

### ***Sources***

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<http://normangeisler.com/neotheism-orthodox-or-unorthodox-a-theological-response-to-greg-boyd/>

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