
 APPENDIX I

 WHAT ABOUT
 MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE?

The following essay was originally published in 1995 under the title “Does Middle Knowledge Solve the Problem of Divine Sovereignty?” It was included in Volume Two of *The Grace of God, the Bondage of the Will*, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, published by Baker Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 1995. Substantially the same essay is reprinted here with permission from Baker Book House Company.

In his paper, “Middle Knowledge: A Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement?” William L. Craig suggests that the views of the medieval Spanish Jesuit, Luis Molina (1535 - 1600), amount to a reconciliation of the views of Calvinists and Arminians.²¹⁰ Accordingly, he recommends that we give fresh consideration to Molina’s views, especially to his notion of divine middle knowledge. Craig is confident that if modern participants in the Calvinist-Arminian debate were to adopt Molina’s notion of divine middle knowledge, we would see a closing of the gap that now divides them.

My purpose in this essay is to offer a personal reaction to this particular call for reconciliation. Craig maintains that Molina has shown us how divine sovereignty and the absolute autonomy of the human will are compatible concepts. Accordingly, if I, a Calvinist with respect to my views on divine sovereignty, would adopt Molina’s views on the matter, I could concede to my Arminian brother the reality of absolute human autonomy without compromising my commitment to divine sovereignty. And by doing so, I would greatly reduce the gap that divides us. Here then is the question I wish to address in this essay: Can I, a Calvinistic divine determinist,²¹¹ embrace Molina’s conception of middle knowledge and thereby see my way clear to affirm the absolute autonomy of the human will?

My discussion, in four major sections, will explain Molina’s theory of divine foreknowledge and middle knowledge in the context of the problem he was attempting to solve; assess whether Molina’s theory of divine foreknowledge and his conception of middle knowledge are philosophi-

210. Published in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man: A Case for Arminianism*, ed. Clark H. Pinnock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 141-164.

211. By “divine determinist” I mean to denote one who believes that absolutely every aspect of everything that occurs in the whole of reality is ultimately caused and determined by God.

cally and biblically viable concepts and whether they reconcile divine sovereignty and human autonomy in the way that Craig and Molina claim that they do; address an underlying assumption in Craig's and Molina's appeal—namely, that Calvinism cannot give an adequate account of human freedom; and summarize the reasons why I am unmoved by Craig's appeal to embrace Molina's distinctive solution to the divine sovereignty/human freedom question.

Molina's Theory of Divine Middle Knowledge

To understand Molina's concept of divine foreknowledge and the concept of middle knowledge that accompanies it, we need to understand it as the solution to a problem he thought it solved.

MOLINA'S PROBLEM

In Molina's day, as today, the prevailing philosophical assumptions forced one to choose between two opposing theological positions, Calvinism and Arminianism. But, as Molina saw it, both positions are deficient when judged strictly from the standpoint of biblical teaching. Each holds some things that are right and some things that are wrong. The truth revealed in biblical teaching upholds some aspects of each of these opposing systems. It repudiates aspects of each as well.

To be specific, Molina believed that these four doctrinal positions capture the Scripture's teaching with respect to the points at issue:

1. The freewill choices of a human being are such that they always could have been other than they were. If person P freely does X at time T under the set of circumstances C, it is always true that P could have done not-X at exactly the same time and under exactly the same set of circumstances. Nothing necessitated that P do X at time T. Other than the resolution of P's own will at the time of his choice, nothing made it necessary that P do X at that time. Hence, there was no predetermination of P's choice of X by any cause. The human will is autonomous and functions independently of every other reality, including the will of God. I will refer to this first doctrine as a belief in the *absolute autonomy of the human will*, or as a belief in *absolute human autonomy*.

2. At the same time, God knows infallibly every detail of every event that will occur in the history of the cosmos. He knows all this before anything has transpired in time. I will refer to this second doctrine as a belief in the *de fide*²¹² doctrine of divine foreknowledge (where *de fide* means, literally, “of the faith”).

3. God is the ultimate and final cause of every detail of every event which will occur in the history of the cosmos. I will refer to this third doctrine as a belief in the *de fide doctrine of divine providence*.

4. God’s choice ultimately determines who will be saved and who will not be saved. I will refer to this fourth doctrine as a belief in the *de fide doctrine of divine election*.

We can summarize his views by saying that Molina believes in *the absolute autonomy of the human will* at the same time that he believes in the *de fide* doctrines of *divine sovereignty*. (By the *de fide doctrines of divine sovereignty* I mean to denote the *de fide* doctrines of divine foreknowledge, divine providence, and divine election. Throughout this essay, when I refer to the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty I mean to denote strictly the preceding definitions.)

Calvinism, by way of contrast to Molina, willingly embraces the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty but rejects the absolute autonomy of the human will. Conversely, Arminianism embraces the absolute autonomy of the human will but rejects the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty.

The problem, as Molina saw it, was that both Arminians and Calvinists were stuck in their respective systems. Their philosophical and theological commitments forced them to embrace the doctrines that are entailed by their respective systems rather than the doctrines advanced by biblical teaching. Molina attempted to find a way for both Arminians and Calvinists to break out of their respective systems.

212. In Molina, *Concordia* 4.52.10 we read, “And this last point is surely demanded by the freedom of the created will, a freedom that is no less *de fide* than are that same foreknowledge and predestination, as was shown at length in Disputation 23.” Translation is from Luis Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge* (Part 4 of the *Concordia*), trans. with an introduction and notes by Alfredo J. Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988). All subsequent citations from Molina are taken from this translation by Freddoso. In a footnote Freddoso writes, “A doctrine that is *de fide* (literally, of the faith) is one explicitly affirmed by the Church in a solemn manner (for example, in a creed or conciliar decree).” Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 169 n. 14. Molina’s commitment to the doctrines of foreknowledge, providence, and election was based on his conviction that these doctrines were the established doctrines of the Church. My use of the title *de fide* to describe these doctrines is intended to reflect Molina’s conviction that these were officially established church doctrines. See also Molina, *Concordia* 4.53.21.

THE KEY TO SOLVING THE PROBLEM

Why do Calvinists feel compelled to reject the absolute autonomy of the human will? Because they understand the absolute autonomy of the human will to be incompatible with the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty. If the human will is autonomous, then it would be impossible even for an all-knowing God to have the foreknowledge that *de fide* theology says he has, to exercise the providential control it says he has, and to choose the saved in the way it says he does. In view of their commitment to the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty, Calvinists are forced to reject the absolute autonomy of the human will.

And why do Arminians feel compelled to reject the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty? Like Calvinists, Arminians believe that the absolute autonomy of the human will and the *de fide* views of divine sovereignty are incompatible. If the human will is autonomous, then God cannot have the foreknowledge, providential control, and power to elect that the *de fide* doctrines say he has. So, in view of their commitment to the absolute autonomy of the human will, Arminians are forced to reject the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty.

Calvinists and Arminians agree fundamentally on an important point: the autonomy of the human will can in no way be reconciled to the *de fide* views on divine sovereignty. Where they disagree is at which pole of the contradiction the truth lies. So the two positions are at an impasse; there is no third way so long as the terms of the discussion remain here. If divine sovereignty and human freedom are incompatible, then there are only two choices: either Calvinism (which accepts divine sovereignty at the expense of human autonomy) or Arminianism (which accepts human autonomy at the expense of divine sovereignty).

Clearly, the assumed incompatibility of divine sovereignty and human autonomy channels Calvinists and Arminians into their respective systems. If Molina is to accomplish his agenda—if he is successfully to clear the way for both divine sovereignty and human autonomy to be embraced simultaneously—he must refute the prevailing dogma that divine sovereignty and human autonomy are incompatible. In other words, he must achieve their philosophical reconciliation.

MOLINA'S CONCEPT OF MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE

Middle knowledge is the key to Molina's reconciliation of divine sovereignty and human autonomy. To understand the concept of middle knowledge, let us engage in a bit of science fiction.

Imagine a genius human inventor named Egbert who created a whole world. (Call it Robo-world.) First, he created a huge building with thick, totally-impenetrable walls, floor, and ceiling. Then he invented a computer and other equipment capable of counteracting every effect of the outside world within this building. Gravity, magnetism—all were canceled. As a consequence, the inside of the building was completely devoid of any physical laws; all had been nullified. More computers and machines were then invented to create an entirely new physical environment exactly to the specifications of Egbert. Inside the building, everything, down to the very least physical law, was totally controlled by Egbert's computers.

Next Egbert invented scores of robots and programmed them all to move, act, communicate, and learn. He programmed each so that it had extremely detailed instructions as to how to respond and act in any specific set of circumstances. Furthermore, he equipped each robot so that he could control its movements and actions by remote control. Therefore, each robot would be controlled either by its own internal programming or directly by the inventor when he might override the robot's programming.

Finally, Egbert set all the robots and a variety of inert props in exactly that initial state he wanted. And with the push of a button, he started Robo-world in motion.

Before programming his various computers, Egbert had carefully mapped out all of the various possibilities for what Robo-world could look like. He mapped out in exact detail every world that he could possibly achieve. Once he had defined the physical laws that would obtain, the programming that he would give to each of his robots and ruling computers, and the initial state of Robo-world, he was able to predict, moment by moment, exactly what would occur throughout the entire history of each of the possible Robo-worlds.

After he had predicted the exact history of every possible Robo-world, Egbert then selected the possible Robo-world that he decided he wanted to bring into being. He programmed all the computers and set up the initial state necessary to bring exactly that possible world about; then he pushed the button and set it in motion. The result was precisely the Robo-world that he had wanted to bring into being.

Our genius, Egbert, already knows, before he pushes the button, exactly what will transpire at every moment of this Robo-world that he is about to bring into being. He had already mapped out its entire history before he ever decided to create it. So, with respect to the actual Robo-world, Egbert has *absolute foreknowledge*. Furthermore, he has providential-like control over this actual Robo-world, for everything that transpires in it has ultimately been brought about by his design, his act, and his choice.

As Molina understands it, God's creation of the actual world we live in is very much like Egbert's creation of Robo-world. Before he created anything, God had mapped out every detail of every event of every possible world. He considered each possible world (given his utterly detailed and exhaustive knowledge of each one) and chose the one he wanted to bring into existence. He then created the world that he had decided he wanted to bring into existence.

But there is a significant difference between Robo-world and our world. Robo-world is peopled by nothing but robots. Every creature in Robo-world has its every move totally determined by the programming and the engineering of Egbert. But our world is different. Alongside the biological and physical "machines" in our world are free moral agents, human beings. Human choices and actions are not determined by programmed instructions that God wrote for each human will. On the contrary, human choices are "free." They are autonomous, independent of any determining reality.

It is easy to see how Egbert could have mapped out every moment of every possible Robo-world; every move that is made in that world is determined by him and his choices. Given his exhaustive knowledge of the laws and principles that would obtain in any possible Robo-world, he could understandably predict exactly what would happen. Similarly, it is easy to see how God could predict the entire history of any possible world that he might create—if we ignore free-will creatures. Apart from them, everything else would be governed by physical laws and principles of which God had a complete and infallible understanding.

But what happens when you bring free-will creatures into the picture? According to Molina, nothing changes. God, unlike Egbert, is capable of knowing what choices a particular free-will creature will make in a specific set of circumstances. God is as capable of predicting the choice of one of his free-will creatures as Egbert is of predicting the choice of one of his robots. That God could have such knowledge is a mysterious and marvelous feat, of course. But God is more than a genius; he is God. And God can do such a thing. *This special and marvelous knowledge of what a particular free-will creature will do in a specific set of circumstances is what Molina calls middle knowledge.*²¹³

Because of God's middle knowledge, God is capable of doing with respect to the actual cosmos what Egbert could do with respect to Robo-

213. For the purposes of this essay, I will not discuss why it is called middle knowledge. For a helpful discussion of that question, see William Lane Craig, "Middle Knowledge: A Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement?" in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man*, 141-164, esp. 144-151. See also Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 23 and 47.

world. Before creating anything, he could map out the entire history of each and every possible world ahead of time and then, on the basis of an exhaustive knowledge of every detail of the history of each possible world, choose which possible world he wanted to bring into being.²¹⁴ Because of his ability to have middle knowledge, the free choices of the free-will creatures he would create in any possible world presented no obstacles to his mapping out the history of that world. He knew what each particular creature would choose in each and every situation. Hence, he could predict exactly the outcome of every event in every possible world.

As Molina understands it, this is how our world is situated with respect to God. The world that now exists is a world that God created, having freely chosen to do so. Of all the possible worlds he could have created, this is the one he wanted to bring into existence. And when he made his choice, he did so with an exhaustive knowledge of every detail of every event that would transpire within it throughout the full extent of its history.

THE RECONCILIATION OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY AND HUMAN AUTONOMY

It should be clear that Molina's understanding of God's foreknowledge is compatible with the *de fide* doctrine of divine foreknowledge. Under Molina's view, God foreknows every aspect of every event that will occur in our world.

Furthermore, under Molina's views, everything that occurs in our world is ultimately the result of God's free choice to create just this world in particular. Hence, he is the ultimate cause of every aspect of every event in our world. This includes his being the ultimate cause of everything that occurs due to the choices of free-will creatures. In creating the possible world that he did, he was causing to come into existence every freewill decision that every free-will creature in that world would ever make. So Molina's God exercises a divine providence that is just as extensive as that which he exercises in the *de fide* view of divine providence.

214. Strictly speaking, Molina believes that the priority of God's foreknowledge of every possible world, his choice of a possible world to create, and his decision to do so constitute not a temporal priority, but a logical one. He sees all three of these events as temporally simultaneous. I have, for the sake of simplifying my discussion, chosen not to introduce this subtle complication into my exposition of Molina's views; it does not in any way affect my understanding or critique of them. See Craig, "Middle Knowledge: A Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement," 145, for a discussion of this issue.

Finally, no less than in the *de fide* doctrine of election, Molina's God elects those particular individuals who will be saved. That set of particular individuals who will come to salvation in this world is ultimately determined by the free choice of God. God created this particular world in which exactly this set of people, and not some other set, will (as a result of their own autonomous choice) choose to believe and to be saved. By his choice to create this particular world, God is the one who determines who will be saved and who will not.

But what is especially interesting to Molina is this: although his conception of divine foreknowledge (which is based on divine middle knowledge of the choices of free-will creatures) upholds the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty, it also upholds a belief in the absolute autonomy of the human will. The free-will creatures who people this world are truly free. God does not cause them to choose what they choose. Nothing makes them choose what they choose. Their choice is nothing more than the resolution of their own will. Under Molina's view, therefore, we can acknowledge divine foreknowledge, divine providence, and divine election without in any way redefining or compromising our concept of human freedom.

So Molina thinks that, by means of middle knowledge, he has discovered a way to preserve a full-bodied commitment to the reality of human autonomy while accepting the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty. In other words, he has found a way to embrace the truth lying at the core of Calvinism without rejecting the truth lying at the core of Arminianism, and vice versa.

The Viability of Middle Knowledge

Molina's views, as we have seen, depend upon his concept of middle knowledge. They therefore assume that middle knowledge is a viable and coherent concept. But is it?

THE SURFACE PROBLEM WITH MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE

On the face of it, middle knowledge presents a problem: is it possible for God to know that X is true when nothing determines or necessitates that X be true? It is difficult to see how.

Take Peter as an example. Jesus predicted that Peter would deny him

three times during the night of his arrest, before the dawning of the next day. How did Jesus—or, more importantly, God—know this about Peter? If Molina is right, God had middle knowledge of Peter's denials. He knew Peter so thoroughly that, knowing all the circumstances Peter would find himself in, he knew exactly how Peter would respond in each of those circumstances.

But how could he know that? If Peter's will is what Molina says it is—utterly autonomous—then nothing at the time of Jesus' prediction necessitates that Peter deny Jesus. In fact, Molina's view requires that Peter could have done otherwise. If Peter had chosen to do so, he could have been courageously loyal to Jesus instead of denying him. He acted the coward because he chose to, not because he had to. But if nothing whatsoever necessitated the choices that he made, up to the time that he made them, how could God have known what those choices would be? Peter's choices were not determined ahead of time. So, if they had not yet been decided, how could God know the outcome of those decisions? No one, not even God, can know the outcome of an autonomous decision that has not yet been made, can he? To assert the possibility of such knowledge is problematic.

MOLINA'S RESPONSE TO THIS PROBLEM

In spite of this surface problem, Molina nonetheless thinks that middle knowledge is possible. Craig explains Molina's defense:

Now it might be asked how it is that by knowing his own essence alone God is able to have middle knowledge concerning what free creatures would do in any situation. Molina and his compatriot and fellow Jesuit, Francisco Suarez, differed in their responses to this question. Molina's answer is alluded to in the words of the initial citation above: "because of the depth of his knowledge." According to Molina, God not only knows in his own essence all possible creatures, but his intellect infinitely surpasses the capabilities of finite wills so that he understands them so thoroughly that he knows not only what they could choose under any set of circumstances, but what they would choose. In another place Molina speaks of "his immense and altogether unlimited knowledge, by which he comprehends in the deepest and most eminent way whatever falls under his omnipotence, to penetrate created free choice in such a way as to discern and intuit with certainty which part it is going to turn itself to by its own innate freedom." Because his intellect is infinite, whereas a free creature is

finite, God's insight into the will of a free creature is of such a surpassing quality that God knows exactly what the free creature would do were God to place him in a certain set of circumstances.²¹⁵

MOLINA'S DUAL ACCOUNT OF MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE

Molina's explanation of the possibility of middle knowledge seems to incorporate two significantly different accounts of middle knowledge. On the one hand, his official account of middle knowledge is to describe it as a direct, noninferential, intuitive knowledge that God has. God knows immediately (and noninferentially) that person P will do X at time T. On the other hand, there are intimations of a very different account.²¹⁶ He subtly implies that middle knowledge is God's ability to infer infallibly that person P will do X at time T on the basis of his infinitely thorough knowledge of the will of P.²¹⁷ This implicit, covert account of middle knowledge plays an important role in Molina's presentation of his doctrine. It helps to make an otherwise problematic account of divine middle knowledge seem less problematic.

215. *Ibid.*, 150. See also Molina, *Concordia* 4.52.11.

216. This is a central claim of this essay; it is crucial to my argument. It is potentially controversial. Some defenders of Molina would, most likely, want to dispute the existence of this different, second account of middle knowledge. Ideally, of course, my essay should go on to present a thorough defense of the existence of this second account. I do cite, in the following pages of text and footnotes, what I think is the most important evidence that a second account influences Molina's thought and the formation of his doctrine. But to finally demonstrate this claim would require a much more detailed and technical discussion than I can present here. I am confident that such a defense could be made.

217. To my knowledge, Molina never makes clear exactly what he understands the will of a person to be. Neither is it made clear, therefore, of what the knowledge of a person's will would consist. Molina's vagueness on the nature of the will leads to considerable confusion as to exactly what God's knowledge of an individual's will is. Precisely because of this confusion, Molina can operate according to two very different accounts of middle knowledge at the same time without being adequately aware of the logical tension that results.

218. Molina appeals to the magnificence of God's knowledge in a variety of ways. Among them, he appeals to God's "most profound and inscrutable comprehension" (Molina, *Concordia* 4.52.9), to his "absolutely profound and absolutely preeminent comprehension" (*ibid.*, 4.52.11), to his being able to comprehend free-will creatures with "infinite excess" (*ibid.*, 4.52.12), to "the infinite and wholly unlimited perfection and acumen of His intellect" (*ibid.*, 4.52.29), to "the acumen and absolute perfection of His intellect" (*ibid.*, 4.52.33), and to the "perspicacity and depth of the knower over and beyond the things known" (*ibid.*, 4.52.35).

THE OFFICIAL ACCOUNT: NONINFERENCEAL KNOWLEDGE

In his official account of middle knowledge, Molina appeals to the magnificence of God and his abilities.²¹⁸ The possibility of middle knowledge finds its explanation in the fact that God's knowledge is deep, immense, and unlimited. If God's knowledge of a particular finite will is infinitely thorough, how could it help but include a complete knowledge of everything that that particular person will choose in any and every situation? This account assumes that God's knowledge of what a particular person will do is a kind of immediate, intuitive knowledge. God does not infer or deduce what P will do from other things that he knows about P. Rather, he knows what P will do directly, immediately, and noninferentially.

This account of middle knowledge does not answer the question as to how middle knowledge is possible. It tells us instead why an answer will not be forthcoming. In effect, Molina's response is this: "How is God able to have middle knowledge of what person P will do, when P has not yet decided himself what he will do? Because he's God; that's how!" This is an appeal to divine "mystery." It is as if Molina were to say: "I shouldn't dismiss the concept of middle knowledge just because I can't make any sense of it. God 'works in mysterious ways,' 'his ways are not our ways,'"

An appeal to divine "mystery" is a common but suspicious move. At times the mysteries we embrace are incomprehensible to us not because they are mysteries, but rather because they are nonsense. Nonsense masquerading in the respectable dress of mystery is still nonsense. So, before we settle for an appeal to divine mystery, we can reasonably ask for assurance that Molina's concept of middle knowledge is a coherent concept. Perhaps it is incomprehensible because it is an incoherent notion, not because, for lack of being God, we are incapable of imagining such a lofty feat. Consequently, if Molina wants us to embrace his views, he must offer a more compelling answer than "he's God; he can do it." The problematic question remains: If the human will is absolutely autonomous, how can we reasonably assert that God is able to foreknow what persons with autonomous freedom will choose?

In my judgment Molina, throughout all his discussions of this subject, implicitly suggests an answer to this latter question by means of an unofficial account of middle knowledge. At the same time that he officially disallows it, he subtly and covertly relies on a fundamentally different account of middle knowledge to render his doctrine plausible.

THE COVERT ACCOUNT: INFERENTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Molina's official account of divine middle knowledge is marked by some curious features. To focus on the most important one: it is interesting that Molina predominantly presents divine middle knowledge as a deep and profound knowledge of the faculty of choice and only rarely as a knowledge of the choice itself, that is, the outcome of a particular event of choosing.

Finally, the third type is *middle* knowledge, by which, in virtue of the most profound and inscrutable comprehension of each *faculty* [emphasis added] of free choice, He saw in His own essence what each such *faculty* [emphasis added] would do with its innate freedom were it to be placed in this or in that or, indeed, in infinitely many orders of things—even though it would really be able, if it so willed, to do the opposite, as is clear from what was said in Disputations 49 and 50.²¹⁹

But God knows the determination of a created faculty of choice before it exists because of the infinite and unlimited perfection of His intellect and because of the preeminent comprehension by which He comprehends *that faculty* [emphasis added] in His essence in a way far deeper than that in which it exists in itself; and thus ...He knows which part it will in its freedom turn itself toward.²²⁰

Molina's characteristic description of middle knowledge is curious; and it is significantly problematic in the light of what he officially claims middle knowledge to be. If middle knowledge is what Molina's official account says it is, the most apt description of it would be an intuitive, non-inferential knowledge of the actual choice itself, that is, of the outcome of a particular event of choosing. Why, then, does Molina explain it in terms of a profound knowledge of the faculty that will make the choice? By Molina's own official account, it would seem that the nature of a person's faculty of choice does not determine, cause, or otherwise necessitate the choice he will make. How, then, is a knowledge of Peter's faculty of choice even relevant to the issue of what Peter will choose? If his faculty of choice does not determine or necessitate what choices Peter will make,

219. *Ibid.*, 4.52.9.

220. *Ibid.*, 4.53.1.14. See also *ibid.*, 4.52.10, 4.52.11, 4.52.33, and 4.53.2.31. These citations reflect how Molina most frequently portrays divine middle knowledge.

a thorough and deep knowledge of his faculty of choice will not provide God with any knowledge of what choices he will actually make. (Nothing is gained by stressing that God's knowledge of Peter's faculty of choice is infinitely deep.) Yet this is Molina's official account: God knows what choices Peter will make in a particular situation precisely because, due to the "infinite and wholly unlimited perfection and acumen of His intellect," God has "the most profound and inscrutable comprehension" of Peter's "faculty of free choice."²²¹

Molina's characteristic explanation of middle knowledge is at odds with his own official account of it because Molina has unwittingly imported a different account of middle knowledge into his own conception of it. According to this second, covert account, middle knowledge is possible because it is based on an inference from God's infinitely thorough knowledge of the particular will itself. God could know that Peter would deny Jesus because he thoroughly understood Peter's will. Peter has not yet made any decision. He has not yet even confronted the choice in question. But that is no obstacle to God's being able to know what Peter will do. God's in-depth knowledge of Peter himself, the one who will be making the decision, allows him to infer what Peter will decide from the thorough knowledge he has of who Peter is.²²²

This inferential account of middle knowledge has a distinct advantage over Molina's official account: it is comprehensible and rationally plausible. It does not simply appeal to the mystery of God and dogmatically assert that middle knowledge is possible because of the unfathomable immensity of God.

Even we mere human beings are capable of certain forms of middle knowledge of the inferential sort. My wife knows that, were she to offer me a piece of pie tonight, I will accept it. My wife knows that I will drink a cup of coffee when I arise in the morning. She knows that, out of a sense of duty, I will go teach my class tonight whether I feel like it or not. These are all forms of middle knowledge. My wife knows what I will choose, of my own free will, in specific situations in the future. And she is not guessing. She knows what I will do. This is exactly the sort of mid-

221. *Ibid.*, 4.52.9 and 4.52.29.

222. See *ibid.*, 4.52.10, 4.52.11, 4.52.12, 4.52.13, and 4.52.30. These passages all strongly suggest an account of middle knowledge that relies heavily on the notion that a person's choice results from the operations of his own will and that, as a consequence, to have a profound knowledge of the person himself and of his will shall necessarily give one a knowledge of what choices he will make. The citations in note 220 reflect this same conception of middle knowledge.

dle knowledge that Molina wants to ascribe to God.

But the middle knowledge we possess is significantly limited. My wife does not and cannot foreknow what future circumstances I will confront. Consequently, no matter how well she knows me, she cannot predict with unfailing accuracy all that I will eventually do. Even more importantly, even if she has a thorough grasp of the situation and knows me as well as any human being can know another, she still could be wrong. I could surprise her. I could, for some inexplicable reason, refuse the pie or the coffee. I could decide to be utterly irresponsible and not show up for class. However unlikely, I may act out of character in a way that my wife could never predict.

Here is where Molina's insistence that God's knowledge is deep and infinitely thorough is important. Whereas my wife could be surprised and find me choosing what she never would have predicted, God cannot and will not be similarly surprised. My wife's knowledge of me is finite; God's is infinite. My wife is surprised because there will always be subtle aspects of who I am and how I think that she does not understand. But not God; his understanding is infinitely thorough. No aspect of my will and being is beyond his understanding. God, therefore, can have utterly certain and totally infallible middle knowledge; his grasp of who I am is perfect.

It seems undeniable that this is Molina's real, working conception of middle knowledge, and it is utterly incompatible with his official account.

THE LOGICAL TENSION IN MOLINA'S ACCOUNT OF MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE

As we have seen, there are two important aspects to Molina's project. He wants to affirm the absolute autonomy of human choice. (For Molina, true autonomy would mean that human choice is not caused, not determined, and not necessitated by anything whatsoever.) Molina also wants to affirm that divine middle knowledge is a rationally coherent doctrine.

In order to achieve the former goal, Molina must affirm that nothing whatsoever determines in advance of a person's choice what that choice will be. He must affirm that no external causes necessitate the choices a person will make. But if he is committed to espousing this sort of human autonomy, then he cannot explain middle knowledge as a sort of divine inference. For, on the assumption that nothing whatsoever determines or necessitates Peter's choices, how could God infer what Peter will do? There is nothing to serve as the basis for such an inference. Peter's choice is not caused by anything; it is not determined or necessitated by anything. Hence, there is absolutely no basis from which God could infer the choice

that Peter will make. Consequently, the only account of divine middle knowledge which is logically available to Molina is one wherein God has direct, immediate, intuitive knowledge of a yet unformed and undetermined choice that Peter shall make. Logically, therefore, if Molina is to successfully espouse true human autonomy, he has no choice but to conceive of middle knowledge as an intuitive, noninferential knowledge of voluntary choices. Officially, this is the account he wants to give,²²³ for it succeeds at reconciling human autonomy with divine middle knowledge. But, as I have been suggesting, it is not that simple; the other aspect of Molina's project is not satisfied by this official account of middle knowledge.

Molina's official account of middle knowledge does nothing to demonstrate the rational coherence of the doctrine (unless one is satisfied with a dogmatic declaration of the possibility of divine middle knowledge backed by an appeal to mystery). To understand middle knowledge as rationally compelling, therefore, Molina is constantly drawn to a radically different conception of middle knowledge—to a conception of middle knowledge as a sort of inferential knowledge.

The concept of middle knowledge is rendered plausible when it is viewed as an inference based on God's thorough knowledge of the forces at work within each person—the forces that determine and necessitate his choices. We have a kind of middle knowledge of one another's future choices. If divine middle knowledge is to be comprehensible to us, it will be by analogy to the sort of middle knowledge we possess. So, if divine middle knowledge is understood to be inferential in nature, it becomes analogous to our own and is thereby made comprehensible to us. Accordingly, over and over Molina is seduced into describing middle knowledge in a way that suggests just such an account. Middle knowledge as a form of divine inference is the implicit, covert account of middle knowledge which underlies everything that Molina argues.

But, as we have just seen, an account of middle knowledge as a form of inference is utterly incompatible with Molina's official account. It presupposes that God could have prior knowledge of some reality that will somehow cause, determine, or necessitate the voluntary choice that an

223. See *ibid.*, 4.53.1.10-14. Molina appears to consider and explicitly reject something much like what I am calling his covert account of middle knowledge. Although he officially rejects it, he covertly relies upon it.

224. An important question can be raised about this. Is Molina's position that nothing whatsoever causes, determines, or necessitates the voluntary choices of a human being? Or, is Molina's position that nothing other than the person's will itself causes, determines, or necessitates the

individual will make in the future. If God is going to infer what Peter will choose, he must infer Peter's future choice on the basis of something he knows about Peter now. In other words, if something about Peter now necessitates that Peter will deny Jesus at a particular time in the future, then if God knows that relevant thing about Peter, he can know (infer) that Peter will deny Jesus. But if, as Molina maintains in his official account, nothing whatsoever necessitates or determines any of Peter's free choices,²²⁴ then there exists nothing from which God could infer Peter's choices. So, if human choice is absolutely undetermined and uncaused in the way that Molina officially maintains, then Molina's covert account of middle knowledge is logically incompatible with that official account. There can be no divine inference from God's knowledge of a person's faculty of choice to the choices he will make if, officially, the choices a person makes are in no way necessitated by that person's faculty of choice. Nonetheless, Molina's writings are fraught with this tension. He officially espouses middle knowledge according to one conception of it (as direct, intuitive knowledge), but he attempts to render it plausible with language informed by a very different conception of it (as inferential knowledge). The two conceptions are incompatible. Middle knowledge must be viewed either as a sort of mysterious noninferential knowledge, or as a sort of inferential knowledge; but logically we cannot have it both ways. Yet this is exactly what Molina attempts to do.

We can summarize the tension in Molina's account this way: what is required for Molina to succeed at making middle knowledge comprehensible (and therefore plausible and beyond suspicion) is in fatal tension with what is required for Molina to succeed at coherently maintaining the absolute autonomy of the human will. To reconcile divine sovereignty and human autonomy, Molina offers an official account of middle knowledge wherein human autonomy is assumed at the outset. But to convince us that this official account of middle knowledge involves a viable and plausible concept, he resorts to descriptions of middle knowledge wherein the predetermination of human choice is logically assumed—thereby nullify-

voluntary choices of a human being? It seems that Molina is not clear on this point. When he is intent on pressing his official account in order to maintain human autonomy, he seems to emphasize explicitly the notion that nothing causes or necessitates human choice. But when he slips into reasoning in accordance with his covert account (in order to render the notion of divine middle knowledge as plausible as possible), he clearly seems to think that a person's actions arise from and are determined by the will of that individual. His double-mindedness on this issue seems to be an exact reflection of his double-mindedness on the nature of middle knowledge; for the two issues are intimately related to one another. Furthermore, as I suggested (n. 217), all of Molina's confusion is exacerbated by the vagueness of his concept of the human will.

ing and denying human autonomy. Hence, he takes back with one hand what he has given us with the other.

CAN MOLINA'S COVERT ACCOUNT RECONCILE MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE WITH HUMAN AUTONOMY?

But perhaps the equivocation we have discussed is sloppiness on the part of Molina. His equivocation on the nature of middle knowledge aside, is Molina not right? Do we not have in middle knowledge the key to reconciling divine sovereignty and human autonomy? If we were to hold Molina to an inferential account of middle knowledge (the account that is more rationally compelling), would he not be able to thereby reconcile human autonomy and divine foreknowledge?

Under my view as a divine determinist, it is clear how God's infinitely thorough knowledge of Peter's will could explain how God can foreknow what Peter will choose. God, the creator of Peter's will, determines the character and workings of that will. The character of Peter's will shall in turn determine what choices he will make. Therefore, if God understands the character and workings of Peter's will with infinite thoroughness—which is to understand his own design and purpose in the creation of Peter's will—then he will certainly be able to predict what Peter will choose. But all this assumes that there is a chain of causes leading up to the choices that Peter makes and that God, the creator, is the ultimate author and determiner of that chain of causes and the choices which ultimately result. But what if we assume human autonomy instead? Can inferential middle knowledge still adequately account for divine foreknowledge?

According to his (covert) inferential account of middle knowledge, Molina attempts to offer the same explanation of divine foreknowledge as does the divine determinist: namely, Peter's choices are determined by the nature and workings of Peter's will. Consequently, if God has an infinite knowledge of that will (its nature and its mode of working) he will be able to predict its output—Peter's choices. One's choices are the necessary reflection of who one is. So, if God knows Peter perfectly, then from whom he is he should be able to infer what he will choose.

But how can this account be available to Molina? Molina's whole project is to affirm divine sovereignty without compromising human auto-

225. Some scholars would object that Peter's choices being necessitated by the nature of Peter's will is not tantamount to their being necessitated by God. They would agree that Peter's will is designed and created by God. They would argue, however, that God is responsible for and determines the existence of Peter's will but is not responsible for and does not cause the dynam-

my. If he acknowledges that Peter's choices are necessitated by the nature of Peter's will, that is tantamount to acknowledging that Peter's choices are necessitated by God; for God is the creator and designer of Peter's will.²²⁵ Molina cannot consistently offer such an answer. In order to be consistent, Molina must insist that whom God has created Peter to be does not dictate what Peter will choose in any given situation. Otherwise, Peter's choices are not truly autonomous; they have been determined by the character of his will which was, in turn, designed and determined by God. For Molina, then, Peter's choices cannot be necessitated by the God-given nature of Peter's will.

Consequently, Molina must affirm one of two things: either who Peter is does not ultimately dictate what he will choose, or who God created and determined Peter to be is not the whole of who Peter is, that is, who Peter is at any given time is in part determined by the free, autonomous choices Peter has already made over the course of his life (choices that were not determined by whom God created him to be). In other words, who Peter is, is in significant measure, self-determined.

If Molina affirms the latter—that is, who Peter is, is ultimately determined by Peter, not by God—then how can he appeal to God's infinitely thorough knowledge of Peter's will to explain how middle knowledge is possible? He replaces one question with another—namely, how it is possible for God to have an infinitely thorough knowledge of Peter's will? If at any given time, who Peter is has not yet been fully decided, then how is it reasonable to think that at any given time God can know Peter with infinite thoroughness? Who Peter is depends on the outcome of his next autonomous choice.

If Molina affirms the former proposition—that is, who Peter is does not determine what he will choose—then knowing who Peter is, is of no help toward knowing what he will choose. In that case, an infinite knowledge of Peter's will cannot explain God's middle knowledge. From God's

ic workings of Peter's will. In other words, God creates Peter's will without in any way determining how it will function and what it will choose. He creates it to be free from everything, even from his own determinative control. It is outside the scope of this essay to explore this issue at length. But such a claim is fraught with philosophical confusion. How can God bring X into existence without thereby defining the nature of X, which will be determinative of how it will function and behave? If God has not defined its controlling nature, in what sense is it X that God has brought into existence (rather than not-X)? Suffice it to say that my argument assumes that there is an inextricable link between God's creating something and God's determining the nature of its being and functioning in reality. Hence, to create Peter's will is to create the nature, essence, and mode of working of Peter's will. If not—if God does not determine its nature, essence, and mode of working—then in what sense is it distinctively Peter's will that God has created, and how do we explain the origin of its nature, essence, and mode of work-

infinitely thorough knowledge of Peter's will, no conclusion can be drawn as to what Peter will choose, for the nature of Peter's will does not determine his choices.

Hence, to be consistent with the position that humans are autonomous beings, inference from God's infinite knowledge of Peter's will cannot satisfactorily explain the possibility of divine middle knowledge. His infinite knowledge of Peter's will is either irrelevant with respect to middle knowledge or it is as mysterious and problematic as middle knowledge itself (and hence has no explanatory value). In his covert, inferential account, therefore, Molina has produced no explanation of divine middle knowledge that is consistent with his assumption of human autonomy. (His explanation works only to the extent that human choices are assumed to be ultimately predetermined by God.) We are left with our original problem unanswered and unresolved: if the human will is absolutely autonomous, then how can we reasonably assert that God can know (infer) what it will choose in a given set of circumstances?

Middle knowledge based on inference (Molina's covert account of middle knowledge) gains its plausibility only under the assumption that human choice is not autonomous but is ultimately predetermined by the will of God. If our choices are not the result of a causal chain of which God could have knowledge, then God cannot infer what choices we will make from the nature of their causes. The sort of human autonomy upon which Molina insists precludes the sort of antecedent causation of our choices from which our choices could be inferred. Since human autonomy, as Molina conceives it, does not allow for human choice to have any antecedent causes, it would be impossible for God to infer a human choice from its antecedent causes. Hence, on the assumption of human autonomy, Molina is unable to make the possibility of inferential middle knowledge plausible.

SUMMARY: AN ASSESSMENT OF MOLINA'S DOCTRINE

Molina's exposition of middle knowledge involves a subtle confusion of two incompatible accounts of middle knowledge. He shifts which account of middle knowledge he wants us to consider, depending upon the question at issue.

When the question at issue is whether human autonomy and divine sovereignty are compatible, Molina would have us focus on his official account of middle knowledge: middle knowledge as God's mysterious ability to know directly and immediately what a particular person, acting

in absolute autonomy, will do in a particular situation in the future. This official account of middle knowledge, if it can be shown to be a coherent and intelligible concept, successfully reconciles divine sovereignty and human freedom. It assumes the reality of human autonomy and by means of middle knowledge accounts for the attributes of divine sovereignty without compromising that autonomy. Insofar as we are satisfied to leave it at that, Molina has given us a believable account of how divine sovereignty and absolute human autonomy are compatible.

But if we are not satisfied to leave it in the realm of mystery, if we ask how divine middle knowledge is possible—given that it is supposedly a knowledge of choices which are as yet undecided by those who will make them—then Molina would have us shift our focus to his covert account of middle knowledge: God’s ability to infallibly infer from the character of a person’s own will what that person shall choose in a particular situation in the future. By means of this account, Molina does succeed in making middle knowledge comprehensible and plausible. Even we who are finite creatures have this sort of middle knowledge of one another. We infer what another person will do from the knowledge we have gained of his character. If we can have middle knowledge of this sort, certainly God can have it even more so, for he knows us with an infinite thoroughness.

So middle knowledge makes sense if it is a sort of inferential knowledge. But, in conceding this to Molina, we fail to keep his original project in view: to reconcile divine sovereignty and absolute human autonomy. Hence we fail to notice that, under Molina’s plausible, covert account, human autonomy is not reconciled with divine sovereignty; rather, human autonomy is denied. As we saw, middle knowledge based on inference gains its plausibility only under the assumption that human choice is not autonomous but is ultimately predetermined by the will of God.

The force of Molina’s defense of middle knowledge depends upon our failure to notice how very different his covert account of middle knowledge is from his official account and, more importantly, upon our failure to notice the contradictory ramifications of these two different accounts. If we do notice, then we realize that he has failed in his attempt to give us a compelling account of middle knowledge that does not compromise human autonomy. It is easy not to notice, for Molina’s discussions involve a sort of philosophical sleight-of-hand wherein he gives us different, conflicting accounts of middle knowledge depending upon the philosophical needs of the moment. But once we have noticed, Molina’s doctrine loses its appeal.

In the end, we cannot accept Molina’s exposition as it stands. It depends on an equivocation in his account of what middle knowledge is.

And we cannot accept Molina's unofficial, covert, inferential account of middle knowledge, for it does not successfully reconcile divine foreknowledge with absolute human autonomy. We are left, then, with Molina's official account. His doctrine, therefore, reduces to nothing more than a dogmatic assertion that divine middle knowledge is a reality and that its possibility is a divine mystery. I am not motivated to embrace Molina's views, given that this is what they amount to. I am not much attracted to what is no more than a dogmatic assertion that divine foreknowledge is possible even though human choices are absolutely autonomous.

Only on the assumption of divine determinism is the divine foreknowledge of freewill choices a rationally plausible doctrine. (This is one of the primary reasons that I embrace divine determinism.) Implicitly, therefore, Molina is urging me to abandon my rationally satisfying understanding of divine foreknowledge (based on the assumption of divine determinism) and join him in a dogmatic commitment to an incomprehensible mystery. Why should I do that? What assurance has Molina given me that middle knowledge under his conception of it—that is, middle knowledge of *autonomous* human choices—is a coherent concept? Until I am persuaded that the simultaneous affirmation of both divine middle knowledge and the absolute autonomy of human choice is not a blatant contradiction, Molina's attempt to bring Calvinism and Arminianism together is unpersuasive.

Human Freedom: Can Calvinism Do It Justice?

In the article to which I am responding, Craig invites us to join together in embracing Molina's views. If Molina's views are as unpersuasive as I have suggested, why would Craig venture to make such an appeal? Obviously, Craig considers Molina's views to be more compelling than I do. What accounts for the difference in our assessment?

Craig makes an unwarranted assumption, one that leads him to see Molina's arguments as more compelling than they really are. Craig assumes, with Molina, that Calvinistic divine determinism cannot do justice to the reality of human freedom. If doing justice to the reality of human freedom is genuinely a shortcoming of divine determinism, and if Molina's views have successfully preserved the truth of genuine human freedom where divine determinism has failed, and if he has done so without discarding or compromising the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty,

then surely his views would be attractive to even the most obdurate Calvinist. To gain such a rich philosophical payoff, even a hard-headed divine determinist might be willing to tolerate an appeal to the realm of divine mystery and accept as dogma the possibility of middle knowledge. Surely, whatever risk of incoherence it entails is a small price to pay for the benefit of simultaneously embracing a *de fide* notion of divine sovereignty and an uncompromised notion of human freedom.

THE UNDERLYING REASONING BEHIND CRAIG'S APPEAL

We can formalize the underlying reasoning behind Craig's appeal:

Given the following three convictions, it is utterly reasonable to embrace Molina's doctrines :

1. absolute human autonomy is a vital biblical notion which is required to provide a foundation for human freedom and responsibility;
2. the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty are thoroughly biblical notions; and
3. Molina's views of middle knowledge and divine foreknowledge are the only way to reconcile beliefs in divine sovereignty and human autonomy.

Craig would maintain, I think, that the risk that middle knowledge may not be a coherent concept is not a sufficient deterrent to embracing Molina's views in the light of 1–3.²²⁶ I think Craig is right about this. If I were committed to 1–3, I too would find it reasonable to follow Molina.

But this is exactly why Craig's appeal is not compelling to someone like me. The Calvinistic divine determinist does not share Craig's commitment to 1–3. Most notably, the divine determinist does not accept 1; correspondingly, he does not accept 3. Even though he does not affirm the

ing?

226. Craig and I undoubtedly assess the risks of middle knowledge being an incoherent notion quite differently. Craig, it would seem, is quite satisfied that middle knowledge is a coherent notion and sees little or no risk that he is embracing nonsense. I am quite certain that it is an utterly incoherent notion and am virtually certain that, were I to embrace it, I would be embracing nonsense. Craig fails to understand why the Calvinist will not embrace Molina's doctrines in part because he fails to see how certain the divine determinist is that divine middle knowledge

absolute autonomy of the human will, he feels no inadequacy in his concepts of human freedom and responsibility; and he feels no lack of compatibility between human freedom and divine sovereignty—at least, not to the degree that Craig thinks he should.

To conclude my discussion, therefore, I shall explore this important issue: does the divine determinist's concept of human freedom fail to do justice to the reality of human freedom (as Craig and Molina assume)? If so, then Craig can reasonably argue that he should welcome Molina's solution. But if not, it makes no sense for the divine determinist to trade in his theory of divine determinism, whatever problems its critics may think it has, for the theories of Molina; for, to the divine determinist, these theories are more clearly problematic than his own.

THE ALLEGED INADEQUACY IN THE CALVINIST'S VIEW OF HUMAN FREEDOM

What inadequacy does Craig see in the divine determinist's concept of human freedom? Why does Craig think that nothing short of the absolute autonomy of the human will can adequately capture the true nature of human freedom?

For a human choice to be truly free, Craig thinks, it must be possible for that choice to have been other than it was. The divine determinist, by the very nature of his position, must say that at any given time no one can ever choose or act contrary to what God has willed. Clearly, then, the divine determinist does not believe that a human is free to do differently from what he did; he is constrained by the governing will of God. If the divine determinist espouses human freedom, it must be freedom in a qualified and limited sense (specifically, in the weaker sense known as the "lib-

makes no sense.

227. Craig alludes to these two specialized terms: "the liberty of spontaneity" and "the liberty of indifference." I first encountered these terms in the philosophy of David Hume. One exercises the liberty of spontaneity when what he does is done in accordance with his own will and desires. One exercises the liberty of indifference when what he does is such that he could have done otherwise. Hence, a person passing time in a room reading and enjoying himself and fully wanting to be there because of the pleasantness of his surroundings is exercising the freedom or liberty of spontaneity. He is exercising the liberty of spontaneity even if, unbeknownst to him, the room is locked from the outside and he would be unable to leave the room even if he wanted to. His being in this same room would involve the liberty of indifference only if the room is unlocked and he is free to leave it whenever he should so choose. In the Reformers' view of sovereignty, argues Craig, a person does not exercise the liberty of indifference because he cannot do other than God wills. He does however exercise the liberty of spontaneity insofar as what he chooses, determined though it is by God, is nonetheless a result of his own voluntary

erty of spontaneity”). The divine determinist, so long as he sees one’s actions constrained by the will of God, cannot espouse human freedom in an unqualified sense (specifically, not in the strong sense known as the “liberty of indifference”).²²⁷

The essence of Craig’s sentiments can be seen in the following:

Here it must be admitted that Molina’s perception of their [the Reformers’] teaching was clear-sighted: the principal Reformers did deny to man significant freedom, at least in his dealings with God. Luther and Calvin were prepared to grant to man only spontaneity of choice and voluntariness of will, not the ability to choose otherwise in the circumstances in which an agent finds himself.²²⁸

And again,

His [Calvin’s] view of freedom is in the end the same as Luther’s: the liberty of spontaneity. God’s complete sovereignty excludes any genuine possibility of man’s choosing in any circumstances other than as he does choose.

Thus, according to the Protestant Reformers, in virtue of God’s prescience [foreknowledge] and providence, everything that occurs in the world does so necessarily. Human choice is voluntary and spontaneous, but the will is not free to choose other than as it does. Now to Molina, such a doctrine was quite simply heretical. He could not see how mere spontaneity of choice sufficed to make a human being a responsible moral agent nor how the Reformers’ view would not lead to making God the cause of man’s sinful acts and, hence, the author of evil. He was therefore deeply exercised to formulate a strong doctrine of divine prescience [foreknowledge], providence, and predestination that would be wholly compatible with genuine human freedom, and he believed that in *scientia media* [middle knowledge] he had found the key.²²⁹

But there is something entirely disingenuous about Molina’s charge against Calvin and Luther that, under their view of human freedom, “the

choice and is fully in accord with his own wants and desires.

228. Craig, “Middle Knowledge,” 142.

229. *Ibid.*, 144.

230. It is true that Molina’s official account would allow him in good faith to contend that his

will is not free to choose other than as it does.” For the same thing is clearly true under Molina’s covert account of middle knowledge—the account upon which he ultimately relies to bring credibility to his doctrinal position (as we saw).²³⁰

Molina argued that middle knowledge is possible because, given the depth and infinite thoroughness of God’s knowledge of a particular will, he knows what that will shall choose in any particular set of circumstances. That makes it possible for God to have an accurate and detailed picture of every possible world. But does this not entail (if his doctrine is to be coherent) that the particular choice one makes in situation S was made necessary by the will of the human person who made it? If not, then God, his knowledge of the person’s will notwithstanding, cannot foreknow what that choice will be. According to Molina, if he is to be consistent, Peter’s own will *necessitated* that he deny Jesus when he did. That being so, what complaint does Molina have against Calvin and Luther? Calvin and Luther assert that the human will is free, but then acknowledge a constraint on it—the outcome of its choices are necessitated by the will of God. Molina asserts that the human will is free, but then he too must logically acknowledge a constraint on it—the outcome of its choices are necessitated by its own nature or character.

It is clearly not just, then, to condemn Luther’s and Calvin’s views of human freedom as inadequate on the grounds that, under their views, the human “will is not free to choose other than as it does.” The same charge could be leveled against Molina.²³¹ If not being able to choose otherwise makes the Reformers’ view of human freedom inadequate, then it renders Molina’s view inadequate as well. Conversely, if Molina’s view of human freedom is adequate even while acknowledging the reality of a necessitating constraint, then the Reformers’ view is no less adequate. My point is this: whereas Craig, Molina, and other nondeterminists seem to argue that any sort of constraint on the human will whatsoever is completely incompatible with genuine human freedom, yet they too must acknowledge some kind of constraint on the human will. It is disingenuous, therefore, to argue that the Reformers’ view of human freedom is inadequate

position, unlike that of Luther and Calvin, gives an account of freedom wherein a person is free to do other than he does. But Molina’s official account, as we have seen, is nothing more than a dogmatic assertion that God, in the mystery of his greatness, can have foreknowledge of an autonomous choice that could be other than it will be. But the problem with this official account, as we have seen, is that there is no basis upon which to accept such a notion of divine foreknowledge as a coherent and plausible doctrine.

231. With reference to his unofficial view, not his official one. In his official view, he clearly and

because it posits a constraint on that freedom. If they are going to reject the Reformers' views while maintaining their own, they must produce a more compelling reason why their view portrays the realities of human freedom more accurately than does the Reformers'.

Undoubtedly, Molina would want to say that the constraint imposed by a particular will's own inherent nature and character is a radically different sort of constraint than that imposed externally, as it were, by God. It is reasonable to see the latter (God's external constraint) as inconsistent with human freedom while the former (the internal constraint of the character of one's own will) is not.

I offer two responses to this objection.

FIRST RESPONSE

On Molina's view, how does he propose to have Peter's actions necessitated by the intrinsic nature of Peter's own will without having them ultimately necessitated (and imposed on him externally) by the divine will? God is ultimately the author and designer of Peter's will. It functions in accordance with an intrinsic nature that God himself determined; hence, ultimately, Peter's actions have been directly determined by the God who created him.

We confront once again the philosophical schizophrenia of Molina's view. On the one hand, Molina wants to insist that Peter and Peter alone (through the spontaneous resolution of his own will), apart from any divine determination, determines his choice to deny Jesus. But, on the other hand, in order to explain how God can foreknow what Peter is going to do, he must implicitly suggest that something other than the spontaneous resolution of Peter's will determines that Peter will deny Jesus. A definitive and knowable something determines how the spontaneous resolution of Peter's will shall come out. Namely, it is the intrinsic nature or character of Peter's will. But once Molina has allowed for that, one of two things must follow:

- the very problematic suggestion that Peter's will is not created by God (i.e., it is either uncreated or self-creating),
- or
- it is ultimately created and designed by God.

From the standpoint of a serious biblical philosophy, the first case (Peter's will is not created by God) is altogether unacceptable. In the latter

case (if Peter's will is created by God), then Molina must acknowledge that Peter's choice to deny Jesus was ultimately determined by God. This is the very thing he has set out to deny.

SECOND RESPONSE

I will concede that Molina's hypothetical objection is indeed understandable. It is plausible for one to think that the external constraints imposed by the divine will are inconsistent with human freedom while the internal constraints imposed by the inherent nature of one's own will are not. But while I concede that this is plausible and understandable, whether it is ultimately "reasonable" is the crux of the debate between the divine determinist and the human autonomist.

To the divine determinist, the constraints imposed on our voluntary choices by the will of the transcendent creator God are ultimately of no more consequence than those imposed by the inherent natures of our own wills. Both are universal and necessary principles that, because of their universality and necessity, fail to have any import for questions of freedom, responsibility, and the character and nature of evil.

God is, to the divine determinist, the transcendent author of all that is. He is the one "in whom we live, and move, and have our being."²³² He is the one who wills all that exists into existence. Apart from him, nothing that exists could exist. Nothing—good or bad, evil or righteous, voluntary or involuntary, coerced or uncoerced, free or not—could exist were its existence not willed by the divine author of all things. That being so, then the fact that God has willed something to occur cannot in any way be relevant or meaningful to the important distinctions we make between what is freely chosen and what is not, or between what is evil and what is good, or between what involves my culpability and what does not. It is not as if God wills what is not free and does not will what is free. That cannot be right, for God wills everything whatsoever. It is not as if God wills what is good and not what is evil; for, again, God wills everything whatsoever. In other words, to say that God has willed X (no matter what X is) is, for the purposes of defining human freedom, utterly trivial and philosophically useless.

Meaningful differences between them must define the difference between choices that are free and those that are not. It will be some important difference between a voluntary and involuntary action that will

explicitly asserts that the human will is capable of choosing other than it does.

232. Acts 17:28. In this passage, Paul quotes with approval the words of Epimenides,

be philosophically useful and will distinguish the voluntary action as free. Being “willed by God,” therefore, is philosophically useless with respect to defining human freedom, for it does not describe a difference between different kinds of human action. “Being determined by God” can neither make an action free nor preclude it from being free, for all actions, voluntary and involuntary, are determined by God.

What if, in a fit of absurdity, I were to suggest that the difference between voluntary and involuntary actions lay in part in the fact that voluntary actions do not really exist while involuntary actions do. Under such a suggestion, any adequate notion of true freedom would hold that voluntary actions are those that do not truly exist! (Remember, I’m being absurd.) Could I then reasonably charge the Reformers’ with having an inadequate notion of true freedom—by analogy to Molina’s charge—in that the Reformers’ concept of voluntary actions requires that such actions actually do exist? This, of course, would be ridiculous. How can something that must of necessity be universally true of all human actions in order for them to be human actions at all (namely, existence) be something that distinguishes between two kinds of human action? That makes no sense.

From the Reformers’ point of view, Molina’s charge against them is equally absurd. The Reformers, following the biblical authors, view the divine determinism of real human actions as a universal and necessary feature of any human action whatsoever. It cannot therefore serve to distinguish between two different kinds of action, voluntary and involuntary. How could it? Whatever it means for an action to be free, it cannot mean that it is free from the determinative will of God any more than it can mean that it is free from existence in the real world. Nothing can be free from what must necessarily and universally be true of every thing that is in order for it to even be a thing.

So the fact that my actions and choices are ultimately determined by the will of him who is the author of everything cannot reasonably be understood to nullify human freedom any more than the fact that my actions are ultimately determined by the intrinsic nature or character of my own will nullifies human freedom. My choices are determined by the intrinsic nature of my own will, for everything whatsoever is determined by the intrinsic character of what it is. That goes without saying. Likewise, my choices are determined by the divine will, for everything whatsoever is determined by the divine will. That too goes without saying. Therefore, to charge that divine determinism does not allow for truly free human actions because it will not assert that they are free from the determining

will of God is a hollow condemnation. It has about as much substance as charging that the Reformers' view of freedom is not compatible with genuine freedom because it does not allow for human actions to be truly free from existence. Or, because it does not allow for human actions to be truly free from the will of the person performing them. These latter two criticisms would not likely have caused the Reformers to lose any sleep. And neither, I submit, would the former.

Whereas all actions whatsoever are consistent with the nature of that which produces them, and whereas all whatsoever are consistent with the will of the divine being who brings all things to pass, nevertheless, some we know to be free, voluntary actions while others are not. The crucial question is this: what, then, is the difference? If the difference cannot lie in whether it has been determined by God, where then? What is the divine determinist's concept of a free choice?

Divine determinism holds that a free human choice is a choice that has in no way been determined by any other created reality. A free choice is one that has not been necessitated by any other thing, event, or cause that exists in and as a part of the created cosmos. Under this definition, being determined or caused by the transcendent Creator does not disqualify a choice as free. Only being determined or caused by some other *created* reality will do so. This is a completely adequate representation of genuine human freedom. Indeed, it is adequate in a way in which Molina's view is not!

Molina (at least in his covert account) replaces the determining will of God with the determining nature of a person's own will. In doing so, Molina has made human choice dependent upon another part of created reality. I choose what I do because something about the nature of me makes me do what I do. What exactly makes me do what I do? "The nature of my will," says Molina. But what is that? My genes? Then we have genetic determinism. The impact of my environment? Then we have a Skinnerian determinism. What is it about me (my will) that causes me to choose what I do? No matter what Molina answers, we appear to have some sort of natural determinism—some aspect of created nature is the necessitating cause of human choice and action. But is this not the sort of inadequate view of human freedom that Molina and Craig insist we must avoid? How can we be responsible for our actions if all our actions are necessitated by something in the created order?

The only way to avoid natural determinism and still have some sort of reasonable theory of human action is to embrace divine determinism.

a Cretan poet.

233. Not everyone would concur with this, but I am committed to a concept of human freedom that precludes natural necessity. If our actions are necessitated by brain states, brain chemistry,

God can only foreknow what has been predetermined. What has been predetermined has either been predetermined by God (divine determinism) or has been predetermined by some other aspect of the cosmos (natural determinism). If it is the latter, then all of our intuitions tell us that our actions are not truly free.²³³ My choices have been caused by something outside of me and my control. But if it is the former, then (unless we draw a faulty analogy to the case of natural determinism) our intuitions tell us no such thing. No intuition tells me that a divinely determined action cannot be a free action.²³⁴ As we noted, what else is an action supposed to be—free or not—if not divinely determined?

CONCLUSION: CALVINISM'S INADEQUATE VIEW OF HUMAN FREEDOM IS AN ILLUSION

From the divine determinist's perspective, he has no problem with the compatibility of divine sovereignty and human freedom. Contrary to Craig's expectations, he is not itching for a solution to this problem. Hence, he is not eager to accept Molina's solution, heedless of the philosophical problems it entails. Craig is confident that divine determinism is fraught with philosophical problems of its own—namely, that it cannot adequately account for human freedom. But this is a problem the divine

genes, or even more vaguely, the impact of our environment on us, then I have to agree with B. F. Skinner: the freedom and dignity of our actions is but an illusion. Since it is utterly unbiblical to view the freedom of our actions as illusory, I am forced by my own assumptions to reject natural determinism. If one could successfully argue for a naturally determined action being a truly free action for which the agent is fully responsible, however, then I would have no further reason to dismiss natural determinism as a possibility. The possibility that even natural determinism may not preclude human freedom and responsibility does not affect the argument of this essay, however. Surely one can have no problem with divine determinism coexisting with human freedom if he is willing to concede that natural determinism can coexist with human freedom.

234. Many people would try to maintain that it is intuitively obvious that a divinely determined action is thereby not a free action. It is outside the scope of this essay to defend my contention—specifically, that it is not intuitively obvious that a divinely determined action is not free. I have tried to argue elsewhere, in a series of lectures delivered at McKenzie Study Center in Eugene, Oregon, in 1987, that we have no such rational intuitions. Two things combine to leave us with the impression that divinely determined actions cannot be truly free: a cultural assumption that we rarely if ever examine; and an unexamined argument by analogy to a naturally determined action. The latter involves something like this fallacious argument to support it: Naturally determined actions are not free actions. It follows therefore that no determined action is a free action. Divinely determined actions are determined actions. Therefore, divinely determined actions are not free actions.

235. This is where pre-Socratic philosophy made a decisive break with ancient polytheism. The pre-Socratic Greek philosophers answered, instead, that the invisible forces in the invisible realm were fundamentally more like water, fire, earth, and air (i.e., they were forces that mechanically obeyed the laws of their nature) than they were like people who acted out of a will that was fundamentally free.

determinist does not feel or acknowledge. Human freedom is no real difficulty to his theory. It looks like a problem only to one who has created an artificial, arbitrary, and unrealistic criterion by which to judge true freedom—namely, that a truly free act will not be determined by anything whatsoever, including God. The divine determinist sees no reason to accept such an arbitrary and naive criterion. An act can be a truly free act only if it has not been determined by him who determines all that is? That would be absurd! It is not the Calvinist who holds the inadequate view of human freedom! It is the Arminian whose view is inadequate.

Summary

Molina's attempt to reconcile the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty with a belief in the absolute autonomy of the human will has an initial appeal, an initial plausibility. On closer scrutiny, we find that it contains a fatal tension that undermines it. The fatal tension—indeed, contradiction—lies between two conflicting conceptions of divine middle knowledge to which Molina alternately appeals. When we fail to notice the shift from one conception of middle knowledge to the other, Molina's reconciliation seems plausible. Its plausibility disappears when, recognizing the equivocation in his concept of middle knowledge, we see that his two different accounts of middle knowledge lead to contradictory results. If Molina's official conception of middle knowledge is right, then absolute human autonomy is salvaged. But if Molina's covert conception of middle knowledge is right, then absolute human autonomy is refuted. And yet, as we saw, the only way for him to render the notion of divine middle knowledge intelligible is by conceiving of it along the lines of his covert account—that is, by conceiving of it in a way that refutes absolute human autonomy.

Like a master illusionist, Molina prompts me to keep my eyes fixed on his first, official conception of divine middle knowledge when he wants to convince me that his views do fully and uncompromisingly embrace absolute human autonomy. Then he prompts me to keep my eyes fixed on his second, covert conception of divine middle knowledge when he wants to convince me that divine middle knowledge is a viable concept. What he never prompts me to do is to notice that the second, covert account of divine middle knowledge entails the denial of the concept of absolute human autonomy that is assumed and advanced by the first.

Molina's views fail to persuade a divine determinist like me. If I ignore Molina's covert conception of middle knowledge and consider only his official account, then, although it is true that I could embrace the *de fide* doctrines of divine sovereignty at the same time that I affirm absolute human autonomy, Molina asks me to affirm a doctrine that is philosophically problematic to me (namely, direct and intuitive middle knowledge in the context of absolute human autonomy). At the same time, he asks me to reject the doctrine of divine determinism, which is not philosophically problematic to me. If I ignore his official account of middle knowledge and consider his covert account, then Molina asks me to leave one theory of divine determinism for a different theory of divine determinism. The one he wants me to leave is a countertheory to natural determinism and as such is biblically and philosophically viable. The one he wants me to embrace is biblically and philosophically problematic, for it entails a form of natural determinism. Molina's views do not solve any problems; they simply create new and greater ones.