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The Sovereignty of God and Divine Omnipotence

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Abstract

The means by which God conducts his sovereign rein over creation has varied amongst theologians and philosophers of religion for centuries. I will argue that omnipotence is a modal function and is a bilateral means in conjunction with omniscience by which God sovereignly controls creation. Without having these two attributes (as well as goodness, love, etc.) functioning together then there are deleterious theological consequences for the actualization of states of affairs. I will assess three contending, historical definitions for omnipotence: logical possibility (Occamism), feasibility (Molinism),

¹ See www.ed.ac.uk and <http://sententias.org>. Andrews has written "*Scientia and Radical Contingency in Thomas Aquinas*," *Philosophia* 42 no. 3 (September 2014): 1-12 and "*Epistemological Realism and Onto-Relations*," *Eleutheria* 3 no. 1 (2014): 35-47. And he has won the Alvin Plantinga Award for Best Thesis and Research (May 2013).

and actualism (a type of fatalism). It is my position that omnipotence should be understood as being able to actualize that, which is feasible. Feasibility necessarily entails the function of omniscience. Thus, a robust model of divine sovereignty has both modal and categorical aspects and omnipotence is inseparable from omniscience when it comes to the divine governance of creation.

I. The Problem Stated

Greg Boyd has made comments in passing arguing that if everything God does is *good*, and if God controls *everything*, then it would be *bad* had one less child been gassed in Auschwitz. I believe open theists deserve a seat at the table of discussion and despite my view that I think they're wrong, their arguments are stronger than many give them credit for. Let's look at this.

1. If everything God does is Good [and]
2. If God controls everything [by weak and strong actualization]
3. Then, it would be bad had one less child been gassed in Auschwitz.
4. It would have been good had one less child been gassed in Auschwitz.
5. Therefore, either not everything God does is good or God does not control everything.
6. God is good and everything he does is good.
7. Therefore, God does not control everything.

It seems like Boyd has posed an interesting dilemma (at least for the Molinist who affirms that God's means of providence is not exclusively causal, but that he controls all things). To avoid a dilemma one must either deny a horn or add another premise. I would add the premise that God has good reasons for his control (control will encompass permission and causality, or, weak and strong actualization). Control and goodness aren't mutually exclusive and the dilemma isn't as clear-cut as the open theist wants it to be [granted they only have to make one case against it to make their point]). A problem with Boyd's position is that only immediate consequences seem to have the perspectival role. The temporally distant consequences seem to be ignored, which are many. (*e.g.* Permitting that one child to live may cause *more* children to be gassed). With such a counterfactual it may be the case that the allowance of such an undesirable event actually bring about a greater event in the course of

history. We are not in a spatiotemporally privileged position to make such an assessment, but if God possesses such knowledge then it may be the case that permitting such an action is the choice which enables the most good to come about. Had that *bad* not occurred then the greater *good* could not have come about any other way given the previous counterfactuals of human freedom. This isn't to say that God is dependent on the *bad* to bring about *good*; it's to say that God uses *bad* to bring about *good* [and perhaps even a greater good]. Whether or not God has such knowledge and power is the more fundamental grounds for such a discussion.

There's also a distinction between the suffering aspect [of being gassed] and the death aspect because if God merely permits someone to die either by weak or strong actualization that's God's prerogative. God is not morally obligated to extend anyone's life, the issue is suffering. If the bad is death and not suffering then I'd merely need an argument for why God is morally obligated to extend one's life; thus, I'll assume we agree the bad is suffering. In the end, it doesn't seem to be the case that Boyd's dilemma is a true dilemma. As long as God has a morally sufficient reason to allow the bad to occur, then God's control is still good. The means by which God governs the created order primarily involves two aspects of God: power and knowledge.

For further consideration, I need to make a distinction between determinism and fatalism. It's easy to confuse these two concepts so I wanted to give a brief differentiation. I've noticed the confusion on the blog here, and I've had two students attempt to construct an argument for determinism when they were actually arguing for fatalism. Determinism entails that an event is necessarily constrained to actualization by causal relations. Fatalism entails that an event is necessarily constrained to actualization, but it is not by causal relations. This becomes an issue with simple foreknowledge (i.e. If God foreknows any state of affairs then those state of affairs happen necessarily. So, if God foreknows I will be sitting down at t_1 do I have the freedom to stand up at t_1 ?).

Determinism

With S the state of affairs, so then:

$$S_1 \rightarrow S_2 \rightarrow S_3 \rightarrow S_4$$

Let this represent a causal relationship between each state of affairs. So if I were to ask the question, “If God foreknows that I will be sitting down at S_4 do I have the freedom to stand up at S_4 ?” The answer is no. I don’t have the freedom to stand up because in each I was determined to sit down by the prior causes and God foreknows what will happen because the causes logically precede God’s foreknowledge (in the case of natural knowledge) or are concurrent within God’s foreknowledge (though this would deny all possible worlds except for one, the actual world).

Fatalism

$$S_1' \rightarrow S_2' \rightarrow S_3' \rightarrow S_4'$$

In the above states of affairs, there doesn’t need to be any direct causal relationship (so let’s use prime to differentiate). Now let’s ask the above question concerning God’s foreknowledge and the necessary actualization of any state of affairs.

God foreknows S_4' will happen: Because S_4' will happen (by virtue of God knowing that it will happen), $S_1' \rightarrow S_2' \rightarrow S_3'$ must necessarily happen to bring about S_4' . Remember, any prior states of affairs happen necessarily as well by virtue of God’s simple foreknowledge. This is different from determinism because the states of affairs are not [necessarily] causally determined or related to each other.

Determinism and fatalism both have their problems. I find determinism to be problematic because of the problem of evil and human freedom. Fatalism confuses the logical moments of God’s knowledge. So the question I’ve been asking is simply just a bad question. I’m taking God’s free knowledge and putting that logically prior to God’s natural knowledge or middle knowledge (depending on what I’m objecting to). So if I’m going to ask if I *can* (natural knowledge) do anything other than what God foreknows (free knowledge), then I’m making the third moment precede the first moment. It’s simply incoherent and inconsistent.²

² This will be explicated in more detail in the omniscience excurses.

II. Defining Omnipotence

The task of discovering a rational, working definition of omnipotence requires a thorough inquiry in the semantic construct used to convey the meaning by which one means an agency x is omnipotent. I will offer three historical and popular contending options. Consider the Occamist position:

P. For any agent x , x is omnipotent =_{def.} For every action a , if a is possible then x can actualize a .

William of Occam has historically advocated this definition. I will argue that not only does this have coherence problems but it also has deleterious consequences for God.

Suppose we look at Stephen Law's "evil God" objection. Thomas Aquinas argued that everyone always does what they believe is right. This has obvious knee-jerk reactions but let's seriously consider this. No one does something because they know it's wrong. They may know something is wrong and still do it but they have an overriding belief that they are doing the wrong for the right reason. For instance, I know it's wrong to speed 30mph over the speed limit but my violation of this rule is for a greater good or it's the right thing to do since I'm taking a gunshot victim to the hospital. Or, I willingly plagiarize or cheat on a test because I believe it's the right thing to do in order for me to get a good grade. The Third Reich and Hitler believed that the massive murdering of the Jews and homosexuals was the right thing to do. The principle stands with whether the action is actually right or wrong but the motivation for any action is always believed to be right. In the human sense, it's an epistemic problem and not grounded in moral ontology.

Suppose this applies to God. If God acts in any way then he would have to always act in an evil way (assuming he can never act in a good way since he would have to be the ontic grounding of all evil). We would have to assume that the evil God believes it to be the right thing to act in an evil way. Consider the converse, that the evil God believes it is wrong to act in an evil way. The latter seems to be incoherent for why would the evil God act in a way he knew was wrong? The former seems to be right in the sense that the evil God considers it to be good or right to act in an evil way. But how is this not equally incoherent since it seems to be an actualization of a

contradiction? If the evil God believes acting in evil ways is the right thing for him to do then this evil God has a radical ontology—Occamism at best. But if this evil God is an Occamist God then what's to say this same being cannot ground good in himself? The problem is that any type of actualization of a contradiction and Occamism is incoherent. Likewise, in simpler terms, God *could* make $4 + 4 = 17$ and that would be completely “coherent” under this model because God can do whatever he wants. If God wants $4 + 4$ to equal 17 then he gets it. But this utterly obliterates all intelligibility about God, the universe, and ourselves. Anything we could claim to know about God *could* and *will* always somehow be falsified.³

P'. For any agent x , x is omnipotent = *def.* For every action a , if a is feasible then x can actualize a .

Possibility refers to any set of propositions or states of affairs in which no contradiction obtains. It's possible for a Euclidian shape have three angles—a triangle. Feasibility is, in a manner of speaking, a second degree of possibility. Feasibility refers to what *would* happen given an antecedent state of affairs. Is it possible to have a cylindrical shaped star? Sure—if the physics were different. However, given the initial conditions and physics of *this* universe stars cannot be cylindrical. Due to the coagulation of stardust and gravity pulling these objects together physics will make such objects into spheres. Thus it would be infeasible for a star, in this universe, to be cylindrical.

Not too long ago I was reflecting on my recent wedding and I realized something I found hard to deal with. Five years ago my brother was in Iraq, and his pregnant wife died (for reasons and causes still unknown to us). I was talking about the wedding with my mother and we both made the same observation. We thought that there *should* have been a five-year old girl running around at my wedding. I *should* have had a five-year old niece dolled up in a cute dress and playing with the other children. What was difficult for me, upon further reflection, was that God thought and willed that there

³ This statement is, perhaps, the only true statement that could be true about God—that we could have no real knowledge of ourselves or of God or of the universe because it's always possible that God could be deceiving us (since it's possible for God to deceive). This, obviously, has problems with Anselmian theology.

should not be a five-year old girl running around at my wedding. I was at a clash with God's will. I thought that things *should* have been different. Apparently, God disagreed and willed the course of history to be different. As a Molinist, I found this very discomfoting at first. Let me explain the details.

The Molinist concept of providence understands God as controlling *everything* that happens throughout the course of history. Everything that happens is a result of God's will. God both strongly and weakly actualizes everything. Strong actualization is where God directly causes or acts in the world, which directly produces the effect. God weakly actualizes S if and only if there is an S* such that God strongly actualizes [direct causation] S* and $S^* \rightarrow S$, where \rightarrow is "counterfactual implication" (Let S be a state of affairs). Or, in other words, weak actualization is the means of actualization where God uses free agents to bring about his will (an indirect means). So, if all that comes to pass in the course of history is the result of God's will, how should I deal with this (or how should anyone deal with these types of situations)?

Let's consider a non-Molinist perspective. If God causes all things (no weak actualizations) then there are tremendous problems with the problem of evil. I've discussed this issue in previous posts so I'm not going to elaborate too much here. Suppose the Molinist concept of providence is true and that God has every detailed moment and aspect of your life planned. What about those who don't have a "good life"? What about the unemployed, starving, diseased, and homeless? Is it God's will for them to be like this? Surely, God's providential means is not that of the Molinist's concept right? This may sound harsh but I do believe it is the will of God for the starving to starve, the diseased to be diseased and the homeless to be homeless. Let me qualify this. There are different orders to God's will. It is *not* God's will, antecedently, for the starving to starve, the diseased to be diseased, and the homeless to be homeless. It is, however, God's will, consequently, because of the decisions made by free agents, the good that will come of it, the factor it plays into the grand scheme of things (or the counterfactual role it plays in the feasible world God chose to actualize). Now consider that this is not true, that God doesn't will every detail in history. Does God directly cause all these things to come to pass? If that's the case then

God antecedently wills the starving to starve and the diseased to be diseased. The Molinist denies that, it is consequently (because of factor X, Y, and/or Z) that God wills circumstances like those mentioned.

Perhaps it is the case that God cannot prevent such circumstances? If that's the case then why should we trust God? God has made so many promises to us in Scripture, what guarantee can I have that he will fulfill these promises if he cannot prevent other circumstances? Another hidden premise I would have to reject in this discomforting aspect or rejection of the Molinist paradigm is that God wants us to be happy, healthy, and for us to have "good lives". It's primarily and antecedently God's will for us to know him and to love him. Our measure of a "good life" is nowhere near God's primary will for our lives. We need to void our ideology that God just wants us to be happy and healthy all the time with a good job, spouse, and nice dinners at night. God may provide what is necessary for us to live but he desires us to know him and to seek first his Kingdom (see Matthew 6).

My knee-jerk reaction upon this reflection was to feel a sense of discomfort. When I really analyzed and thought through everything I found this to be quite comforting and the best model of divine providence. I do understand that it may be a hard pill to swallow at times. When I say that it is God's will for me to struggle with my own disease, to be hospitalized over and over, to be in pain for extended periods of time, for me to say that this is the will of God is certainly difficult. However, I'm not going to deny that it is because I trust God will make good of it and that he wants me to know him, love him, and seek his Kingdom above all else. This certainly wasn't meant to be exhaustive, just my initial thoughts and meanderings... To God be the glory in all things.

This problem is very closely related to the problem of evil. Now, my first reaction was very discomforting knowing that everything that happens occurs because God willed it to happen. My discomfort soon turned to comfort. When I thought about this the more I realized my finitude. God knew that taking my niece and sister-in-law home was the *best* course of action for him to take. I'm in no spatiotemporal position to evaluate the effects their death produce. I know that they have had tremendous influences and effects in my life since their

passing, and I trust much more will come. I don't have to be able to explain *why* God chose the course of history that he chose, I just have to demonstrate that *how* he does it is the most coherent, biblical, and sound model. Who am I to judge God in his providential course of action? I do not have the cognitive scope or holy intentions that he has.

P". For any agent x , x is omnipotent = *def.* For every action a , if a is actual then x can only actualize a .

The primary problem with P" is that it creates a fatalistic world. There are no other possible worlds. This creates a modal collapse in which God is constrained—seemingly to his own necessity.

Thomas Aquinas argues that nothing can be eternal except God. Things are necessary, according as it is necessary for God to will them, since the necessity of the effect depends on the necessity of the cause. It is not necessary that God should will anything except himself. It is not therefore necessary for God to will that the world should always exist; but the world exists forasmuch as God wills it to exist, since the being of the world depends on the will of God, as its cause.⁴

It appears that Thomas denies such modal distinctions between possible worlds, feasible worlds, and the actual world. There are things in creation, which simply and absolutely must be. Those things simply and absolutely must be, in which there is no possibility of their not being. Created existents have no potentiality of not being.⁵ Thus, the only possibility is the actual world.

For the sake of illustration I will grant modal distinctions. Given simplicity God is perfectly similar in every possible world we can conceive. He never wills differently, he never acts differently, he never knows differently, and he never loves differently.⁶ If God is not distinct from his essence, then God cannot know or do anything different from what he knows and does. He can have no contingent knowledge or action, for everything about him is essential to him.⁷

⁴ *Summa Theologica* 1.46.1.

⁵ *Summa Contra Gentiles* 2.30.

⁶ William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 89.

⁷ All existents find their being in God. Thomas appeals to Romans 11.36, "Of him, and by him, and in him are all things." It must be said that every being in any way existing is from God. Whatever is [Footnote continued on next page ...]

Thomas makes this point quite clear. Thomas states that the knowledge of God *is* the cause of all things. Just as the knowledge of the artist is to things made by his art. The artist does not know his art by way of the work having logical priority. The artist's knowledge of the art has logical priority over the art. It is manifest that God causes things by his intellect, since his being is his act of understanding; and hence his knowledge must be the cause of all things. Hence, the knowledge of God as the cause of things is called the "knowledge of approbation."⁸ Thus, simplicity enters into a collapse of modal distinctions and everything becomes necessary. If God knows that *p* is logically equivalent to "*p* is true," the necessity of the former entails the necessity of the latter. Therefore, the doctrine of divine simplicity entails extreme fatalism, which states that everything that happens does so with logical necessity.⁹

To be fair and charitable to the Thomist [or advocates of such a definition] there are ways out.¹⁰ A Thomistic model of modal realism may potentially solve the problem of modal collapse.¹¹ A Thomistic model of modal realism may potentially solve the problem of modal collapse. This approach to modal realism will assume an Anselmian notion of God. There will be no counterpossible states of affairs that obtain. In other words, impossible worlds are purely semantic devices and have not potentiality of being possible. For instance, a counterpossible state of affairs would be a world in which God does not exist and creation exists. Since God is a logically and metaphysically necessary being such a state of affairs are impossible.

found in anything by participation, must be caused in it by that to which it belongs essentially. Thus, all of existing reality is essential to God since it is a part of his will and action. (Creation is a logical consequent, which is why I am arguing that God is logically prior to, or antecedent to, creation.) *ST* 1.44.1.

⁸ *ST* 1.14.8.

⁹ William Lane Craig and Paul Copan, *Creation Out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 178-79.

¹⁰ Or the advocates may simply argue that I am misunderstanding Thomas but I've defended my position on this elsewhere (W. David Beck and Max L. E. Andrews, "God and the Multiverse," Evangelical Philosophical Society, Milwaukee, WI, November 14, 2012. Also, W. David Beck and Max L. E. Andrews, "God and the Multiverse," *Philosophia Christi* Summer 2014. Forthcoming.)

¹¹ Medieval modalities may certainly be a source of confusion when considering the doctrine of simplicity. Thomas formulates the claims of simplicity using terms whose English translations are commonly used in contemporary metaphysics. However, there is a distinction between the medieval modality and the contemporary use of modality—these modal terms may not have the same meaning. Stump, 93.

Just like a computer virus, God’s existence propagates through every possible world if we assume an Anselmian notion. Mark Heller depicts modal realism in the sense that

[The] actual world is a concrete object of which you and I are literal parts, and [the belief] that other worlds are also concrete objects some of which literally include other people as parts. Merely possible worlds and merely possible people really exist despite their lack of actuality.¹²

David Lewis adds that modal realism is a plurality of worlds

[Which] hold that our world is but one among many. There are countless other worlds, other very inclusive things. Our world consists of us and all our surroundings, however remote in time and space; just as it is one big thing having lesser things as parts, so likewise do other worlds have lesser other-worldly things as parts... [They] do not overlap; they have no parts in common, with the exception, perhaps, of immanent universals exercising their characteristic privilege of repeated occurrence. The worlds are many and varied... There are so many worlds, in fact, that absolutely *every* way that a world could possibly be is a way that some world *is*.¹³

As possibility amounts to existential quantification over the worlds, with restricting modifiers inside the quantifiers, so necessity amounts to universal quantification. Possibility and actuality become simple indexical terms where possibility may refer to another world and actuality refers to something that is *this-world*.¹⁴

¹² Mark Heller, “The Immorality of Modal Realism, Or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Let the Children Drown,” *Philosophical Studies* 114: 1. In Heller’s paper he discusses a dialogue between Robert Adams and David Lewis concerning certain ethical theories for modal realism. The primary theory that concerns Heller’s focus is an extreme utilitarianism. I do not think any utilitarian ethical theory works in modal realism when the consequences may be vaster in a plurality of worlds (say, given a level three multiverse) rather than a single world. Additionally, the same problem of moral agents being cognitively limited and being spatiotemporally confined limits the knowledge required to assess such moral actions. Modal realism does nothing to solve this problem; rather, it is a catalyst for greater problems. If modal realism is true, every antecedent action propagates a potentially infinite set of consequences that must be considered for the greater good. It is highly improbable that any moral agent (so defined with the limitations known to this world) could possess such knowledge, if not impossible, which is required for a utilitarian theory of ethics.

¹³ David Lewis, “Modal Realism at Work” in *Metaphysics* ed. 8. Eds. Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 500.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 506-509.

If every state of affairs somehow finds its way into God's will it becomes essential to him. If God's essence is infinite then every state of affairs that God could will is actualized. Modal realism also absolves the problem of extreme fatalism. All modal distinctions would still be illusory but there would be no logical progression from what is possible to what is actual since both are identical. Given different systems or worlds, God knows *literally* everything that is true and possibly true. This removes the arbitrary distinctions between what God knows removing the extreme fatalistic notion that what God knows happens necessarily (*in sensu divisio*) because of his knowledge and not because the states of affairs have logical priority.

However, this model of modal realism that could potentially solve this seemingly fatalistic understanding of omnipotence is not to be explicated further here. This is a present and future project of mine—to develop a theistic model of modal realism that could [potentially] solve. However, as the problem currently stands this definition of omnipotence turns God into an inept actualizer who can only act in accordance to what happens. A problem should appear right away. It's backwards. It seems that God can only do what has already been done. Without working out the logical priorities of God's thought and actions, or potential pluralities, P'' should be rejected.

III. An Excurses on Divine Knowledge

As advocated by St. Anselm, God is a maximally perfect being. If ignorance is an imperfection, all things being equal [according to Ockham's razor], then it is greater to be knowledgeable. To prevent initial detractions from the classical definition of omniscience, omniscience should be understood as knowing all truths.

O. For any agent x, x is omniscient= def. For every statement s, if s is true, then x knows that s and does not believe that not-s.¹⁵

If there are truths about future contingents, God, as an omniscient being must know these truths. Since there are truths about the future, that is to say, since statements about future contingents are either true

¹⁵ All references to omniscient definitions (O) are taken from Craig's definitions in *Time and Eternity*, 253-254.

or false, and they are not all false, God must therefore know all truths about the future, which is to say He knows future-tense facts; He knows what will happen.¹⁶ One may try to avoid this reasoning by contending that future-tense statements are neither true nor false, so that there are no facts about the future. Since the future does not exist, it is claimed that the respective future-tense statements cannot be true or false, simply without truth.¹⁷ To make this assertion is a misunderstanding behind the statement's truth claim. For a future tense-statement to be true it is not required that what it describes exist, but that it will exist. In order for a future-tense statement to be true, all that is required is that when the moment described arrives, the present-tense version of the statement will be true at that moment.¹⁸ Nicholas Rescher gives an illustration for this assertion:

1) "It will rain tomorrow" (asserted April 12)

a truth status different from that of

2) "It did rain yesterday" (asserted on April 14)

because both make (from temporally distinct perspectives) precisely the same claim about the facts, viz., rain on April 13.¹⁹

It is simple common sense, if "it is raining today" is now true, how could, "it will rain tomorrow" not have been true yesterday?²⁰

William Hasker, an opponent of the classical definition of omniscience, redefines (O) so that God is omniscient, but denies His knowledge of future contingents:²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., 250.

¹⁷ This objection only corresponds with an A-theory of time. The B-theorist cannot make this objection because the temporal becoming of the statement or event *E* is true at any point prior to *E* at *t*1 (the actual occurrence of *E*). On a B-theory of time, tenseless statements are always true or false. The theories of time will be expounded at a later point.

¹⁸ Ibid., 251-252.

¹⁹ Nicholas Rescher, *Many-Valued Logic* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1969), 2-3.

²⁰ Craig, *Time and Eternity*, 252. Craig goes on to assert that if future-tense statements are not true, then neither are past-tense statements true. If future-tense statements cannot be true because the realities they describe do not yet exist, then by the same token past-tense statements cannot be true because the realities they describe no longer exist.

²¹ For the following definition see William Hasker, "A Philosophical Perspective," in Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 136.

O'. God is omniscient= def. God knows all statements which are such that God's knowing them is logically possible.

This simply follows that anything that is logically contingent is true. This obviously is flawed and may carry deleterious consequences that result in absurdities. For example, I, as a person, am not necessary, I am contingent. It is not necessary for me to exist. My non-existence is quite possible. The universe will still function without me. If (O') is true then God knows and believes in my non-existence. However, in reality, in the actual world, I do exist. How can God know and believe that I do exist and do not exist at the same moment? Since contradictions are the only impossibility, God would thus know and believe a contradiction to be true, which is simply absurd.

One who wants to redefine omniscience may want to try:

O". God is omniscient= def. God knows only and all true statements which are such that it is logically possible for God to know them.

(O") construes omniscience and does not really solve anything; it only creates a cognitively limited being. Omniscience, unlike omnipotence, is not modal. Omnipotence is the capability of actualizing any logically possible world. But omniscience is not merely the capability of knowing only and all truths; it is knowing only and all truths. Nor does omniscience mean knowing only and all knowable truths, but knowing only and all truths, period.²²

In conclusion to, omniscience should be understood as (O). There are theologically deleterious consequences to (~O), namely a lack of divine perfection. If God cannot be maximally perfect than He is not God. A perfect ontology, all things being equal, requires the perfection of knowledge. Assertions like (O') and (O") either leads to logical absurdities or is modal and does no justice to a categorical notion.

²² Craig, *Time and Eternity*, 254-255. Craig goes on to say that a sufficient condition for a proposition to be knowable is that the proposition be true. If anything more is needed then there must be an example of such a proposition to be logically impossible to know. A proposition like nothing exists comes to mind. If this were true, then it could not possibly be known to be true. This proposition is necessarily false because God's non-existence is impossible. God could conceivably be ignorant of infinite realms of truth, yet, still be omniscient and the only reason one would prefer (O") to (O) would be to create a cognitively limited being.

Middle knowledge is the second logical moment of God's omniscience. There are three logical moments, the first being natural knowledge. With natural knowledge God knows everything that could logically happen. The third moment is God's free knowledge; God knows all true propositions of the actual world. Middle knowledge lies logically in between these, which affirms that God knows all true counterfactual propositions, or possess hypothetical knowledge of future contingents. The following is an attempt to provide reasonable grounds for affirming divine middle knowledge. There are two primary control doctrines that must be true in order for God to possess such knowledge, these being human libertarian freedom and divine foreknowledge. The truth behind middle knowledge will be supported by theological and philosophical arguments and will be shown to be necessary for a robust understanding of human freedom and divine providence.

IV. Developing a Robust Model

In this section I will argue that a serious, biblical, and robust model for divine sovereignty *necessarily* requires a balance of divine omniscience by the means of which God sovereignly controls every state of affairs. Sovereignty is primarily bilateral in means: omnipotence serves in a modal capacity and omniscience functions categorically. There are, of course, other essential properties of God that are involved such as divine goodness, justice, et al. but for the purposes of this paper I will focus on these means by which God sovereignly controls creation. Likewise, I will emphasize that if omniscience is removed from sovereignty and omnipotence is the only means by which God providentially orders creation then there are deleterious theological consequences.

A possible objection to a Molinist or feasible-omnipotence model is that it seems to impinge on the doctrine of divine perfection by making God dependent. Greg Boyd constructs a similar argument from the grounding objection claiming that contingent truths are not self-explanatory but must simply exist, from all eternity, as an ungrounded, metaphysical surd.²³ This objection is merely the result

²³ Greg Boyd, *Four Views on Divine Providence* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI: 2011) eds. Stanley N. Gundry and Dennis W. Jowers, 131.

of misunderstanding the means by which God knows what he does. God's knowledge is wholly intuitive and relies on no existent entity and is completely compatible with divine aseity. According to Luis de Molina,

[God] does not get his knowledge from things, but knows all things in himself and *from* himself; therefore, the existence of things, whether in time or eternity, contributes nothing to God's knowing with certainty what is going to be or not to be... For prior to any existence on the part of the objects, God has within himself the means whereby he knows all things fully and perfectly; and this is why the existence of created things contributes no perfection to the cognition he has of them and does not cause any change in that cognition... [And] God does not need the existence of those things in his eternity in order to know them with certainty.²⁴

Similar objections made by James R. White²⁵ have been made criticizing this model by example of a card deal. William Lane Craig has argued that God “has to deal with the cards he's been dealt” when it comes to sovereignty. I understand how easy it is to manipulate and misunderstand Craig's statement but Craig is simply placing a domain quantifier on the range of feasible outcomes. Instead of the domain of God's knowledge being within the scope of all logically possible propositions, middle knowledge narrows the domain to feasibility. To say that God can force someone to freely do an action is just as metaphysically absurd as God creating a four-angled triangle on a Euclidean plane.

The grounding objection relies heavily upon truth-maker ontology—that is, any proposition p , p is true if and only if something [exists or] makes p true. That is, contrary to a correspondence theory of ontology, that which is truth requires something to ground that propositions truth. Consider the proposition *that there are no Hobbits*. According to truth-maker there are no Hobbits because there is some existent that makes it true. But what could that be? What's the actually existent falsifier to the existence of Hobbits? Suppose that

²⁴ Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 4.49.12, 11.

²⁵ When contacting White for a bibliography of these objections outside of public statements he simply responded, “Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus... Matthew, Mark, Luke, John...” Unfortunately, such methodologically irresponsible approach, and lack of genuine scholarship, has gained traction particularly within the Reformed [Calvinist] tradition. Thus, I'll be offering a response to it based on public statements he's made—nothing published.

there's a world identical to this world except that in this other world *there are no Hobbits* is a false proposition. In this other world, there are Hobbits. So, what's the difference between these two worlds? One simple way of looking at it is to say that the difference between the two worlds is that there are Hobbits in one but not in the other.

However, according to truth-maker, there's more to the story. What makes this world different than the Hobbit-world isn't simply that our world lacks Hobbits; rather, it is that this world *also* includes some existent that makes it true that there aren't any Hobbits. Even though we thought there was only one difference between this world and the Hobbit-world (that one difference being the existence of Hobbits) it turns out that we were wrong. There are at least two things that are different: the existence of Hobbits *and* the existence of some thing that makes it true in this world that *there are no Hobbits*.²⁶

Thus, under such objections, such as the grounding objection, true counterfactuals are logically incoherent. So, what does it mean when Craig says "God has to deal with the cards he's been dealt"? It means that there are true counterfactuals. The metaphorical cards are these true counterfactuals. Does this limit God or require a "card dealer"? No, and to think so is a complete misunderstanding of feasibility as potency and feasibility as middle knowledge. It's not even necessary that middle knowledge require libertarian freedom (though I believe soft-libertarian freedom to be true), it just requires there to be true-counterfactual propositions expressed in the subjunctive mood.

Consider a world in which no agents exist, just a void universe filled with stars, planets, and other non-living entities. God still has middle knowledge and a power to do what is feasible given his decision to create the world that he chose to create. In such a world God may still strongly or weakly actualize anything he desires. Volcanic eruptions *would* still occur in iron core planets with tectonic activity. God could introduce, via strong actualization, states of affairs that would not permit such an eruption to occur. Middle knowledge and feasibility *does not depend* on the existence of free agents or any

²⁶ A special thanks to Roger Turner (University of Tennessee) and J.T. Turner (University of Edinburgh) for helping me with truth-maker illustrations.

agents at all. For further reading on the grounding objection I highly recommend Trenton Merricks' paper "Truth and Molinism".²⁷

V. The Radical Contingency of Creation

An often neglected aspect of omnipotence and sovereignty is God's conservation and sustenance of a radically contingent creation; that is, every existent that is not God requires a metaphysically necessary cause to sustain its existence.

In recent years Lydia Jaeger has written extensively on themes relating current physics to a tenable Christian metaphysics. The culmination of much of this effort has been her recent *What the Heavens Declare: Science in the Light of Creation* (2012). Part of her overall argument here is that a Christian theism cannot allow for necessitarian science because of God's free will, and that this concurs with current views of physics. Thomas, however, will not work here, she argues, since his metaphysics *is* necessitarian and fails to allow for alternate possibilities for God and hence denies his freedom, as opposed to Duns Scotus. Now this is also a repeatedly held objection to Thomistic metaphysics from atheists as well as theists. There are two components to Jaeger's critique. First, there is the complaint that he gives matter "the power to oppose the ordering action of the Creator"²⁸ and here pays the price of following Aristotle's view of the eternity of matter. She quotes Thomas' epistemic principle that "all matter impedes intelligibility."²⁹ Second, is the matter that Thomistic creationism excludes contingency. Here, especially, Thomas runs afoul of contemporary scientific dogma. But, she argues, he also is not in line with orthodox creationism.

Now Thomas's approach to science, philosophy, and theology is certainly highly nuanced. *Science* refers to the physical disciplines—knowledge that begins with sensory generation. In the *Summas* he uses *scientia* to mean confirmed knowledge based on a structured method of human reasoning. Philosophy is referred to as a science but in the sense of a total body of knowledge derived from and

²⁷ Trenton Merricks, "Truth and Molinism", <https://pages.shanti.virginia.edu/merricks/files/2010/05/Truth-and-Molinism.pdf> (Accessed 19 April 2014).

²⁸ *What the Heavens Declare* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 66.

²⁹ *STI*, 12.4.

synthesizing empirical data according to distinct methodologies, following Augustine. Theology, too, is a science—a human science—according to Thomas, whose data is the content of Scripture. The authority of revelation is based on the one who gives it; but the giver of both natural and special revelation is the same and he cannot contradict himself. The relationship between science, philosophy, and theology are co-dependent relationships and so it would be illicit to trump one over the other *a priori*.

Following Augustine’s methodological approach to science, Thomas allows for a metaphysical import. Theological belief imports something that is considered to be internally authoritative (as in within that system of belief—though I don’t believe it will ever conflict). The applicability of some of the beliefs may be universal but using religious belief as a grid for interpreting what is and what is not science is to ignore the categorical differences. For instance, using Scripture to interpret science or empirical data is circular in its reasoning. Scripture would already have the conclusion and then uses the reasoning process to conclude with that Scripture may be advocating. In order to know a miracle has happened one must know that sea water is less dense than the human body, or that water doesn’t normally undergo chemical reactions to become fermented wine, or that dead bodies don’t normally undergo a natural biological resuscitation or resurrection.

There is a distinct difference between theology and science, but there is a necessary overlap. How one interprets scientific data is always dependent on axiomatic truths previously accepted, which is philosophical and theological. Thus, there is a grid which the scientific data must pass through to construct a meaningful interpretation, natural law, and scientific theory. It is not the case that science will ever be able to explain axiological and normative truths though they are arrived at by observing the data—higher level abstractions. It may discover *how* we come to know them but it cannot explain the *why* question—a philosophical, or even more ultimate, a theological endeavor. The physical sciences do not seem to be capable of explaining *a priori* truths. For example, as Thomas deals with creation, we should be hesitant to base all metaphysical truth isolated from scientific truths. Philosophy and theology have been wrong in this area as well—they are both human sciences—so

we must not trump our philosophy or theology over science in every instance. It is not wholly inappropriate to extract philosophical or theological truths or axioms from science, but it must be done so tentatively and congruently.

It's not wholly inappropriate to extract philosophical or theological truths or axioms from science but must be done so tentatively and congruently. Purely philosophical axioms must be in harmony yet independent from scientific discovery. Following Kant and Hume to Hegel, Gödel, and the logical positivists the idea of reality, describing reality philosophically and mathematically, radically changed. This invigorated the rationalist-empiricist debate, which because of the overthrow of Newtonian theory the philosophy and science continued to change as a result of problems they faced.

Now Jaeger's description of current physics is certainly correct. In the eighteenth century David Hume held that the relation of cause and effect obtains only when one or more laws subsume the related events—that is, cover them as cases or instances of the operation of the law.³⁰ This method and criticism of causality deprived science of any valid foundation in necessary connections obtaining between actual events and of leaving it with nothing more reliable than habits of mind rooted in association. Hume's mode of inquiry was one in which questions yield results that are not entirely new, giving rise to knowledge that can only be derived by an inferential process from what was already known. Humean regularities and constant connections cannot be reduced to scientific explanations. If scientific explanation is causal explanation, and causation is law-governed sequence, then it follows that scientific explanations require laws. However, a problem with this (e.g. the ideal gas law: $PV=nRT$) is that instead of making things clearer, it threatens to involve the analysis of scientific explanation in a thicket of "metaphysical" issues that several philosophers and positivists sought to avoid.³¹ Scientific explanation requires a causal explanation, which requires a law-governed explanation.

Natural law describes but do not explain natural phenomena. Newton's law of universal gravitation described, but did not explain,

³⁰ Alex Rosenberg. *Philosophy of Science* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 42.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

what caused gravitational attraction. Newton claimed that he invented no hypotheses but deduced them from observations produced by rationalistic positivism, which engulfed contemporary European science. Even though Newton's law does not *explain* the data it is still scientific but offers no scientific explanation. Many scientific theories do not offer an explanation *by natural law*. Instead, they postulate past regularities to explain presently observed phenomena, which also, in turn, allow for predictive capabilities. Scientific laws are principles that *reflect*. A law would only be completely accurate if all things are known all things being equal. Scientific laws are to identify the exceptionless regularities that can hold up to counterfactual scrutiny.

The claim that science can give all explanations requires evidence. An explanation of a particular event requires laws and initial conditions. An explanation of a particular fact requires initial conditions. An explanation of a particular state of affairs, such as why the sky is blue, serves to illustrate the parameters needed for an explanation. An explanation of a general law does not necessarily contain boundary conditions (i.e. the idea gas law). There are problems with covering laws. They are not always going to satisfy the requirements for logical positivism, they cannot get logical necessity, and they may be able to get physical necessity. Physical necessity is a weaker for of explanation compared to logical necessity.

Lydia Jaeger revives the theological debate concerning the role explanation for nomic behavior. *Contra* Spinoza and Descartes³² According to the Regularity Theory the fundamental regularities are brute facts; they neither have nor require an explanation but are not nomic necessities. Regularity theorists attempt to formulate laws and theories in a language where the connectives are all truth functional. These regularities factor in this distinction because they are descriptive of how laws behave. A scientific explanation requires laws to be a part of and play a role in the explanation. Since we cannot know whether our scientific laws are natural laws, that is, whether they are true, we cannot ever know for sure that any explanation satisfies the condition that the *explanans* be true.³³ The

³² Jaeger, 7-13, 50-51.

³³ Rosenberg, 47.

focus on regularity is a sufficient condition for having a robust scientific explanation, which accounts for the behavior of the natural laws used in the explanation.

The necessitarian states that there are metaphysical connections of necessity in the world that ground and explain the most fundamental regularities. Necessitarian theorists usually use the word *must* to express this connection.³⁴ Thus, necessitarian maintains *must*-statements are not adequately captured by *is*-statements (must ≠ is, or certain facts are unaccounted for).³⁵ Nomic necessity claims that it is difficult for mere regularity to account for certain counterfactual claims because what happens in the actual world do not themselves imply anything about what would have happened had things been different.³⁶ If it is now true that Q occurs if P causally precedes Q then the necessitarian can adequately account for counterfactual claims. Given the present antecedent condition of P at t_n and P implies Q at t_n and it was true that P implied Q at t_{n-1} then using P as an antecedent for R at hypothetical t_{n-1} , then R is true if P was a sufficient condition R at t_{n-1} . Thus, there is certainty in the truth of counterfactual claims. However, counterfactuals allow for conflict between truth functional interpretation and ordinary language. For instance, any counterfactual claim with the necessary condition having a false truth-value and the sufficient condition obtaining a truth-value that is true then the counterfactual claim will be invalid.

There may be reasons for rejecting the necessitarian claims by underdetermination without appealing to theological insights. Neither nonlocal quantum correlations nor (in light of nonlocalizability) the nature of the fundamental constituents of material reality can be explained or understood if the explanatory constraints of naturalism, or necessitarianism, are preserved. These quantum phenomena require an explanation. The failure of material identity/individuality in the quantum realm not only undermines the ontology of naturalism,³⁷ it also renders necessitarian theories of natural law

³⁴ Robin Collins, "God and the Laws of Nature," *Philo* Vol. 12 No. 2 (2009): 2-3. (Preprint).

³⁵ Bernard Berofsky, "The Regularity Theory," *Nous* 2 no. 4 (1968): 316.

³⁶ Collins, 4.

³⁷ Historically, logical positivism dropped the philosophical contributions and had gotten closer to nomic necessity. This had entailments for property dispositions. When appealing to properties it is referring to realism, something that happens to the entities but particularly the properties. For the anti-
[Footnote continued on next page ...]

untenable. This leads to the conclusion that the empirical regularities of quantum theory are mere regularities unsupported by any natural nomological structure.³⁸ This is where Jaeger makes good on rejecting necessitarianism³⁹—laws are the way they are due to God’s acting upon nature in such a consistent manner and depend on him to do so.

Jaeger claims that,

“[C]reation as the voluntary act of an omnipotent Intelligency *can* provide the basis for the empirical method that governed the new scientific approach from the seventeenth century onwards. The idea of creation combines rational work and free act, so that the contingency is no longer a matter of imperfection; it expresses the freedom of the Almighty Creator.”⁴⁰

But this isn’t contrary to Thomas. Jaeger argues that God creates out of necessity, lacking the freedom of will. Surely, if that the case then necessitarianism would follow for it could have been no other way and the laws of nature’s essence are metaphysically and intrinsically grounded in the nature of God. That’s not to say that Thomas doesn’t allow for the laws of nature to reflect his goodness in some capacity or another but they are still dependent on his action and will to continue in existence.

But our point is that this is not contrary to Thomas at all. Jaeger⁴¹ argues that Thomas’ God creates out of necessity, lacking the freedom of will, and hence there are no possible states-of-affairs that are not instantiated. Surely, if that is the case then necessitarianism would follow, for the universe could have been no other way, and the laws of

realist dispositions are most fundamental aspects of reality. One cannot get more reductive than dispositions and necessity. Unless a necessitarian is prepared to say that the relation of necessity is actually observed in the instances of some law or describing certain properties, the inference to a necessary law creates the problem of inductive reasoning. Likewise, unless the appropriate necessary connections are postulated the fixed premises for deductive reasoning are not as firm as the logical positivist would like them to be. Then, logical positivists have sought to avoid nomic necessity due to the metaphysical problems imported with such explanations and causation. Thus, instrumentalism enters the scene. Since it seems nearly impossible to get to nomic necessity the positives adopted the instrumentalist or anti-realist position and considered that the next best option. If one has an adequate explanation that approximates the world then you have the conditions that bring an event about. The logical positivist breaks explanations down by conditions because they do not necessarily know what causality is metaphysically.

³⁸ Bruce Gordon, “A Quantum-Theoretic Argument against Naturalism,” in *The Nature of Nature*. Eds. Bruce Gordon and William Dembksi (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2011), 181.

³⁹ Jaeger, 50.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 10.

nature's essence are metaphysically and intrinsically grounded in the nature of God. But Thomas clearly does not hold this view. Speaking of God's knowledge, he says

As [ideas](#), according to [Plato](#), are principles of the [knowledge](#) of things and of their generation, an [idea](#) has this twofold office, as it [exists](#) in the [mind](#) of [God](#). So far as the [idea](#) is the principle of the making of things, it may be called an "exemplar," and belongs to practical [knowledge](#). But so far as it is a principle of [knowledge](#), it is properly called a "type," and may belong to speculative [knowledge](#) also. As an exemplar, therefore, it has respect to everything made by [God](#) in any period of time; whereas as a principle of [knowledge](#) it has respect to all things [known](#) by [God](#), even though they never come to be in [time](#); and to all things that He [knows](#) according to their proper type, in so far as they are [known](#) by Him in a speculative manner.⁴²

This and other places make it clear that Thomas' God knows all possible states-of-affairs, that some are not instantiated, and that, at least much of what is, is contingent. That's not to say that Thomas does not allow for the laws of nature to reflect God's goodness in some capacity or another but they are still dependent on his action and will to continue in existence as they are. Thomas argues that there is an assimilation or likeness to God found in creatures and creation. Some likeness is found between an effect and its cause. It is in the nature of any agent to do something like itself but the will is not necessitated by the nature.

For effects that fall short of their causes do not agree with them in name and ratio, and yet there must needs be some likeness between them, because it is of the nature of action that a like agent should produce a like action, since everything acts according as it is in act. Wherefore the form of the effect is found in its transcendent cause somewhat, but in another way and another ratio, for which reason that cause is called *equivocal*... And thus it is said to be somewhat like all those things on which it efficaciously produces its effects... Thus also God bestows all perfections on things, and in consequence He is both like and unlike all.⁴³

Nomic necessity plays an important role in factoring in the efficacy of efficient causation in natural explanations. Sometimes the demand for efficient causation as an explanation will show that what happened

⁴² ST I, 15.3.

⁴³ SCG I,29

had to happen in a very strong sense, that its occurrence was necessary, and not just physically necessary, in light of what the laws of nature just happen to be, but necessary as a matter of rational intelligibility or logic. Does this yield necessitarianism thereby eliminating the laws as being contingently true? *Ceteris paribus* laws treat non-strict regularities as nevertheless laws. It is a commonly accepted view that proprietary laws of the special sciences take this form. If we deny that there are such *ceteris paribus* laws in the special sciences, we must either deny that their explanations are scientific or find another source for their explanatory powers. Perhaps we are stuck and an impasse and with the former being a nonstarter and, pertaining to the latter could conscious decisions or motivations serve as the notion of efficient causation? If needed, that may be a dreadful concession for the special sciences but it doesn't help the physical sciences. Contemporary sciences are hard-pressed to remove efficient causation—especially when it serves as a *best explanation*.

Jaeger's discussion concerning her idea of *telos* within the contingent created order consists of criticisms against less-than biblical monotheistic ideas of God; that is, the demiurge and her understanding that Thomas' idea matter standing in opposition to God.⁴⁴ She continues to argue that such problems inhibit science since such states of affairs are not rational—products of a less-than omnipotent intelligence.

As Jerry Coyne put it, "If we're to defend evolutionary biology, we must defend it as a science: a *nonteleological* theory in which the panoply of life results from the action of natural selection and genetic drift action on random mutations."⁴⁵ Contemporary science is built on this teleological rejection. By treating the physical world exclusively as a realm of law (necessitarian or *ceteris paribus*), modern science extrudes purpose from physical nature. The fulfillment of purpose is the fulfillment of function.⁴⁶ To conceive

⁴⁴ Jaeger, 66.

⁴⁵ Jerry Coyne, "Truckling to the Faithful: A Spoonful of Jesus makes Darwin Go Down," posted on his blog *Why Evolution is True* on April 22, 2009, <http://whyevolutionistrue.wordpress.com/2009/04/22/truckling-to-the-faithful-a-spoonful-of-jesus-helps-darwin-go-down/> (accessed March 7, 2012).

⁴⁶ Discovering the function of something is purely discovery it's causal role in the macrocosm. Thus, causal role is equivalent to function and function is equivalent to teleology while teleology is [Footnote continued on next page ...]

nature as a realm of law is to conceive it as a self-sustaining causally closed system with no need for efficient and teleological causation.⁴⁷

Any type of efficient causality is typically associated with being an unscientific explanation—explanations nonetheless but unscientific. It is often believed that if biology, chemistry, physics, etc. rested explanations in final causation then it would be a science stopper. One of Jaeger’s errs concerning Thomas is her misconception of Thomas’ understanding of matter and God. Jaeger marginalizes Thomas’ appeal to dispositions and form by claiming that one “cannot arrive at the universal reign of God’s law over nature if one allows for an element that remains radically foreign to God: matter understood as pure potentiality.”⁴⁸ Aristotle and Thomas make distinctions in prime matter and matter. Prime matter is pure potentiality whereas matter individuates and form individualizes.

This distinction becomes increasingly clear when understanding God as pure actuality. The doctrine that God is absolutely simple derives from the metaphysical considerations that God is a being whose existence is self-explanatory, absolutely perfect, and pure actuality. Prior to Thomas, the doctrine has its most influential formulations in Augustine and Anselm. However, contra Jaeger, there is no such condition or mode of matter which is *prime* matter—the conflation of these two, or the lack of demarcation, moves the fulcrum of the contingency debate much further into Thomas’ arena in the sense that he does permit a radical contingency of creation and, in opposition to Jaeger, he does allow for God’s freedom that expresses itself in choosing to create what he desires. In conclusion, when it comes to the nature of sustaining a radical contingency of creation, Thomism is a viable option for a Christian theism.

underdetermined in definition because of the absence of efficient and final causation. Scientific explanation has traditionally been met with dissatisfaction by those who demand that such explanation show the purpose of natural processes and not just shows how they came to be. According to Rosenberg, teleological explanations are legitimate in the social sciences the natural sciences are bereft efficient and final causation. The why question is reduced to the how question and are equivocal in explanation. Rosenberg, 112-14.

⁴⁷ Michael Williams, “Must Naturalists be Realists?” in *The Nature of Nature*. Eds. Bruce Gordon and William Dembski (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2011), 251.

⁴⁸ See Jaeger, 65-69 for her discussion of *ceteris paribus* laws and contingencies and 28-32 for her discussion concerning the problem of matter being foreign and opposed to God: “Their [matter and God] relationship is that of ‘opposite differences...: one is pure act, the other is pure potency, and they agree in nothing...’” (citing Thomas, *Quia Materia id Quod est, in Potentia est*, I, XVII, 7).

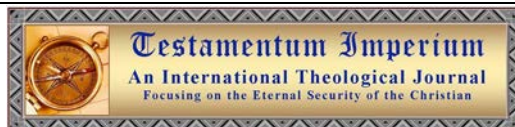
Conclusion

It is in my personal opinion that Molinism offers the best explanation of the data to be explained. Thomism, though very different, accomplishes much of the same tasks in different ways. My personal attraction to Thomism would be its solution to modal collapse—modal realism, Thomistic Modal Realism.

There is one last issue to address. The question is whether God ultimately determines everything that happens in the actual world and if so, is God thus responsible for everything including reprobation, evil, making libertarian freedom illusory, etc.?

This question is incredibly vague and it depends on how one defines responsibility in the question. I'll just get to the real question as to whether God is ultimately responsible for evil knowing what will happen? No, I don't think so. As previously discussed, the difference between fatalism and determinism is that fatalism suggests that events happen necessarily but are not causally bound whereas determinism is causally restricted. The events in this world happen logically prior to God's creative decree. So, what will happen since God's decision to create has already been factored into every state of affairs based on human free decisions for how they would respond to the circumstances they find themselves in.

God's responsibility for creation is a governing responsibility. Consider creation as an open system within a closed system. God could have created a world in which everyone never sinned, but that world may not have been feasible. God is responsible in causally sustaining sense as well, but that's different from an actualizing sense. God weakly and strongly actualizes every state of affairs. Both human agents and God are responsible for what happens in the world. I don't find this to steal any glory from God or compromise his ontology. We are responsible for our actions and our actions are, in a manner of speaking, built in to the world in which God decreed to actualize.



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