

Navigating Divine Providence:

A Critical Examination of Five Views:

Provisionism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Molinism, and Open Theism

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the complex relationship between God's sovereignty and human free will by examining five major theological frameworks: Provisionism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Molinism, and Open Theism. Each view offers a unique attempt to balance divine providence with human responsibility, offering insights into how God governs creation, interacts with human choices, and ensures His purposes are fulfilled. While this paper does not exhaustively cover every aspect of these theological positions, it presents each perspective in its strongest form, offering a balanced understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. A critical analysis follows, addressing key challenges and unresolved tensions within each framework. The study aims to illuminate these debates' significance for Christian doctrine and personal faith, inviting further exploration into the mysteries of divine providence and human agency.

I. INTRODUCTION

The question of divine providence—how God governs the world and interacts with human choices—has been one of the most challenging and debated topics in Christian theology. At the heart of this discussion lies a tension: If God is sovereign and governs all events, can human beings be genuinely free? Conversely, if humans possess real freedom to choose, how can God ensure that His purposes are fulfilled without violating that freedom? These tensions are not merely academic; they touch on the deepest aspects of Christian doctrine, including salvation, responsibility, and God’s justice. How we understand divine providence shapes our view of God’s character, human responsibility, and the meaning of events in history and individual lives.¹

This paper examines five major theological frameworks that have emerged to address these questions: Provisionism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Molinism, and Open Theism. Each view offers a distinct approach to understanding the relationship between God’s sovereignty and human freedom. Although this study does not cover every nuance of these complex models, it aims to provide a well-rounded overview that highlights both their contributions and their challenges. Through this analysis, readers are invited to engage deeply with these foundational theological debates and consider the implications for their own faith and understanding of God.

¹ William Lane Craig, *The Only Wise God: The Compatibility of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 62.

II. OVERVIEW OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Divine providence refers to God’s governance of creation—how He orders and sustains the world, directs events, and interacts with human decisions. At the heart of divine providence lies the interplay between God’s sovereignty (His supreme authority and control) and human free will (the ability to make meaningful choices). The challenge of reconciling these two principles has given rise to several theological perspectives, each emphasizing different aspects of this relationship.²

A Sovereignty emphasizes God’s ability to foreordain, plan, and ensure the fulfillment of His purposes.³

B Free will emphasizes the belief that humans make genuine decisions for which they are morally responsible.⁴

The following sections explore five distinct views—Provisionism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Molinism, and Open Theism—that attempt to navigate this tension. With this foundational understanding of divine providence and the tension between God’s sovereignty and human free will in mind, we can now examine how different theological frameworks attempt to resolve this tension. We begin with Provisionism, a view that emphasizes God's universal offer of grace and human responsibility.

² Thomas P. Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 112.

³ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of God* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2002), 245.

⁴ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 156.

III. PROVISIONISM

Provisionism (also known as Traditionalism) offers a view of divine providence rooted in the belief that God provides sufficient grace and opportunities for every person to be saved.⁵ However, God does not determine who will respond to His offer of salvation—the choice rests with each individual. This framework emphasizes libertarian free will, meaning that individuals have the genuine ability to choose otherwise in any situation.⁶

Core Beliefs of Provisionism

A Sufficient Grace for All: God provides enough grace for every person to believe in the gospel. Salvation is universally accessible, and no one is excluded from the possibility of being saved.⁷

B Libertarian Free Will: Libertarian free will is the belief that individuals have genuine freedom to choose between alternatives and are not determined by external causes or predestination.⁸

i **Clarification:** Libertarian free will is the belief that individuals have genuine freedom to choose between alternatives and are not determined by external causes or predestination.

⁵ Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1993), 53.

⁶ Greg Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 45.

⁷ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 78.

⁸ Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 47.

ii **Example:** For instance, if a person is deciding whether to accept or reject a job offer, libertarian free will means they could genuinely choose either option. Their decision is not predetermined or forced by external factors, including divine intervention.

C God's Plan: God's sovereignty involves creating a world where humans are free to respond to His grace. He allows genuine human choices to determine the outcome.

D Emphasizes God's fairness: God's provision for all ensures that no one is excluded from the possibility of salvation (John 3:16).⁹

i **John 3:16:** *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

a **Explanation:** This verse underpins Provisionism's belief in God's universal offer of grace. It emphasizes that God's love and provision for salvation extend to the entire world, affirming that every individual has the opportunity to believe and be saved. This supports the idea that God's grace is sufficient for all, yet leaves room for human choice.

ii **Timothy 2:4:** "Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

a **Explanation:** Although this verse appears to suggest a universal saving will, Calvinists interpret it within the framework of God's sovereign election. They argue that God's desire for all to be saved

⁹ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 274.

refers to His general benevolence, yet His salvific will applies specifically to the elect, upholding the doctrine of limited atonement.

E Maintains human responsibility: Since humans have the power to choose or reject salvation, they are fully responsible for their response to God.¹⁰

F Affirms God’s love for the world: God’s love is extended to every individual, reflecting the universal scope of His saving will (1 Timothy 2:4).¹¹

i **Verse:** “*Who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”

a **Explanation:** This passage highlights God’s desire for the salvation of all people, reinforcing Provisionism’s emphasis on human responsibility. It suggests that God provides every person with the opportunity to be saved, but individuals must freely choose to accept or reject that grace.

Challenges of Provisionism

A Does it limit God’s sovereignty? Critics argue that Provisionism prioritizes human choice in a way that seems to reduce God’s control over the outcome of events.¹²

¹⁰ Helm, *The Providence of God*, 89.

¹¹ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 93.

¹² Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 190.

B **Uncertainty in God’s plan:** If human decisions are unpredictable, how can God guarantee the fulfillment of His purposes?¹³

While Provisionism places a strong emphasis on God’s provision of grace for all and human freedom, Arminianism offers a slightly different approach. By introducing the concept of prevenient grace, Arminianism seeks to further explain how human free will operates under God’s sovereign foreknowledge

IV. **ARMINIANISM**

Arminianism builds on the belief in libertarian free will but introduces the concept of prevenient grace—a grace given by God that restores human freedom, enabling individuals to respond to the gospel. While God foreknows human choices, He does not determine them. Arminianism presents a framework in which God’s election is conditional upon His foreknowledge of who will believe.¹⁴

Core Beliefs of Arminianism

A **Prevenient Grace:** God gives grace to all, restoring the ability to freely choose or reject salvation.¹⁵

B **Conditional Election:** God elects individuals based on His foreknowledge of their faith.¹⁶

¹³ Flint, *Divine Providence*, 139.

¹⁴ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 58.

¹⁵ Helm, *The Providence of God*, 104.

¹⁶ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 290.

C Divine Foreknowledge, Not Determinism: God knows all future decisions but does not cause or determine them.¹⁷

D Libertarian Free Will: Libertarian free will is the belief that individuals have genuine freedom to choose between alternatives and are not determined by external causes or predestination.¹⁸

i **Clarification:** Libertarian free will is the belief that individuals have genuine freedom to choose between alternatives and are not determined by external causes or predestination.

ii **Example:** For instance, if a person is deciding whether to accept or reject a job offer, libertarian free will means they could genuinely choose either option. Their decision is not predetermined or forced by external factors, including divine intervention.

Strengths of Arminianism

A Balances God's foreknowledge and human freedom: Humans are genuinely free, and God knows their choices without determining them.¹⁹

B Compassionate view of God's love: God's desire to save everyone aligns with His universal offer of salvation.²⁰

¹⁷ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 112.

¹⁸ Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 47.

¹⁹ Flint, *Divine Providence*, 152.

²⁰ Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism*, 111.

Challenges of Arminianism

A Does foreknowledge make events inevitable? If God knows future events perfectly, does that make them inevitable?²¹

B Prevenient grace and human response: Is prevenient grace sufficient to guarantee that at least some will respond in faith?²²

i **Clarification:** Prevenient grace is the grace God extends to all people, enabling them to have the freedom to choose or reject salvation. It restores the capacity for faith that has been affected by original sin.

ii **Example:** Imagine someone is locked in a room, unable to leave. Prevenient grace is like God opening the door so that the person now has the ability to walk out freely. The person still needs to make the choice to leave, but God has enabled that choice by opening the door.

In contrast to the libertarian view of free will championed by both Provisionism and Arminianism, Calvinism presents a more deterministic framework. Calvinism upholds God's absolute sovereignty, offering a compatibilist understanding of human freedom. Let us explore how Calvinism reconciles divine sovereignty with human responsibility

V. CALVINISM

Calvinism emphasizes the absolute sovereignty of God in all things, including human decisions. In this view, God's decrees determine all events, and His will is never

²¹ Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 213.

²² Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 69.

thwarted. While Calvinism acknowledges human freedom, it defines freedom in a compatibilist sense—humans freely act according to their desires, but those desires are ultimately determined by God’s sovereign will.²³

Core Beliefs of Calvinism

A Unconditional Election: God chooses some individuals for salvation based solely on His will, not on foreseen faith or merit.²⁴

B Compatibilist Free Will: Human beings act according to their desires, but those desires are foreordained by God.²⁵

i **Clarification:** Compatibilist free will is the idea that human freedom and divine determinism are compatible. In other words, people act freely when they make choices according to their desires and motivations, even if those desires are ultimately determined by God.

ii **Example:** Think of a person who desires to give to charity. They choose to donate freely, acting in line with their desires. However, in a compatibilist framework, even those desires are part of God’s predetermined plan. The person feels free, but their actions align with God’s sovereign will.

C Irresistible Grace: When God calls someone to salvation, they will inevitably respond in faith.²⁶

²³ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 310.

²⁴ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 123.

²⁵ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 132.

²⁶ Flint, *Divine Providence*, 164.

- D Limited Atonement:** Christ's atonement is effective only for the elect—those whom God has chosen to save.²⁷
- E Strengths of Calvinism**
- F Maximizes God's sovereignty:** God's plans cannot fail, and everything unfolds according to His perfect will.²⁸
- G Provides assurance of salvation:** Since salvation is God's work from beginning to end, the elect can have complete confidence that they will persevere.²⁹
- H Theological consistency:** Calvinism offers a coherent system, with God's sovereignty, election, and grace all working seamlessly together.³⁰

Challenges of Calvinism

- A The problem of evil:** If God foreordains everything, does this make Him responsible for sin and evil?³¹
- B Limited free will:** The idea that humans only have compatibilist freedom raises the question of whether their choices are truly meaningful.³²
- C God's love and justice:** The doctrine of limited atonement and unconditional election can seem to conflict with the idea of a loving and just God who desires the salvation of all people (1 Timothy 2:4).³³

²⁷ Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism*, 126.

²⁸ Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 240.

²⁹ Helm, *The Providence of God*, 140.

³⁰ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 73.

³¹ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 143.

³² Flint, *Divine Providence*, 178.

³³ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 324.

While Calvinism emphasizes God’s meticulous sovereignty and compatibilist freedom, Molinism provides an alternative solution. By introducing the concept of middle knowledge, Molinism aims to preserve genuine human free will while affirming God’s comprehensive providence. This next section delves into the intricacies of Molinism and its unique approach to divine foreknowledge

VI. MOLINISM

Molinism, rooted in the work of 16th-century theologian Luis de Molina, seeks to balance God’s sovereignty and human free will through the concept of middle knowledge. God’s middle knowledge enables Him to know not only what will happen but also what any free creature would do in any possible situation.³⁴ Using this knowledge, God actualizes a world in which human free choices align with His purposes.³⁵

Core Beliefs of Molinism

A Middle Knowledge: God knows what every free creature would do in any hypothetical situation.³⁶

i **Clarification:** Middle knowledge is a concept in Molinism that refers to God’s knowledge of all possible outcomes of free creaturely decisions in any given situation. It sits between God’s natural knowledge (knowledge of all possible realities) and His free knowledge (knowledge of the actual world He has chosen to create).

³⁴ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 147.

³⁵ Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism*, 137.

³⁶ Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 263.

ii **Example:** To illustrate, imagine God knows that if Peter were placed in a specific scenario—like being asked to deny Jesus three times—Peter would freely choose to deny Him. God uses this knowledge to plan events so that, even with human freedom intact, His purposes are achieved. Thus, God can orchestrate His divine plan without violating human free will.

B Libertarian Free Will: Libertarian free will is the belief that individuals have genuine freedom to choose between alternatives and are not determined by external causes or predestination.³⁷

i **Clarification:** Libertarian free will is the belief that individuals have genuine freedom to choose between alternatives and are not determined by external causes or predestination.

ii **Example:** For instance, if a person is deciding whether to accept or reject a job offer, libertarian free will means they could genuinely choose either option. Their decision is not predetermined or forced by external factors, including divine intervention.

C God's Plan: God selects a feasible world—one where the maximum number of people freely come to faith, without violating their free will.³⁸

Strengths of Molinism

A Preserves human freedom: Molinism maintains that people freely choose their actions, even though God knows what they will do.³⁹

³⁷ Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 47.

³⁸ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 81.

³⁹ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 153.

- B Provides a strong theodicy:** God permits evil without causing it, selecting the world that achieves the greatest good while respecting human freedom.⁴⁰
- C Clarification:** Theodicy is the attempt to justify the existence of a good and all-powerful God in the presence of evil and suffering in the world.
- i **Example:** Molinism addresses this by suggesting that God, using His middle knowledge, creates a world in which the greatest possible good is achieved, even if some evil is allowed. For example, God might permit suffering if it ultimately brings about greater moral or spiritual growth.
- D Balances sovereignty and freedom:** God's plan is accomplished without coercing human decisions.⁴¹

Challenges of Molinism

- A Soft determinism?** Some argue that God's selection of a specific world limits human freedom, as humans still act in ways God foreknew.⁴²
- B Philosophical complexity:** The concept of middle knowledge can feel overly complicated and difficult for believers to grasp.⁴³

Whereas Molinism seeks to maintain both God's sovereignty and human freedom through middle knowledge, Open Theism takes a different path. Open Theism posits that the future is genuinely open, even to God, emphasizing a relational and dynamic view of divine providence. Let us examine the core beliefs and implications of Open Theism

⁴⁰ Flint, *Divine Providence*, 186.

⁴¹ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 334.

⁴² Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 153.

⁴³ Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism*, 149.

VII. OPEN THEISM

Open Theism presents a dynamic view of divine providence, in which God knows all possibilities but does not know the future choices of free creatures with certainty.

According to Open Theism, the future is genuinely open—even for God—and unfolds as humans make free decisions. God responds to human choices in real time, adjusting His plans as needed to accomplish His purposes.⁴⁴

Core Beliefs of Open Theism

- A Future is Open:** God knows all possible outcomes but not the specific choices free creatures will make.⁴⁵
- B Libertarian Free Will:** Humans have genuine freedom, with their future actions not predetermined.⁴⁶
- C Relational View of God:** God interacts with humans in real time, responding dynamically to their decisions.⁴⁷

Strengths of Open Theism

- A Emphasizes relational theology:** God is portrayed as genuinely responsive, experiencing the world alongside His creatures.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Helm, *The Providence of God*, 162.

⁴⁵ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 94.

⁴⁶ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 166.

⁴⁷ Flint, *Divine Providence*, 193.

⁴⁸ Frame, *The Doctrine of God*, 348.

- B Strong defense of human freedom:** Open Theism maintains that humans have real libertarian freedom, with no future predetermined by God.⁴⁹
- C Addresses the problem of evil:** Since God does not know all future actions, He is not responsible for human evil.⁵⁰

Challenges of Open Theism

- A Weakens God’s sovereignty?** Critics argue that if God does not know the future with certainty, His sovereignty is limited.⁵¹
- B Can God guarantee His purposes?** If the future is open, how can God ensure that His redemptive plan will succeed?⁵²
- C Scriptural concerns:** Open Theism faces criticism for seeming to contradict passages where God appears to know the future exhaustively.⁵³

*i **Isaiah 46:10:** “Declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.’”*

*ii **Explanation:** Open Theists interpret this verse as God asserting His ability to accomplish His declared purposes rather than having exhaustive knowledge of every future free choice. They argue that while God knows and controls the ultimate outcome of history, He allows genuine human freedom within that framework.*

⁴⁹ Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 160.

⁵⁰ Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism*, 154.

⁵¹ Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, 290.

⁵² Helm, *The Providence of God*, 174.

⁵³ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 172.

Having explored the five major views on divine providence, it becomes clear that each has its strengths and weaknesses. Among these, Molinism stands out for its attempt to harmonize divine sovereignty and human free will through middle knowledge. In this final section, we present a comprehensive defense of Molinism, highlighting its philosophical and theological strengths

VIII. MOLINISM: A COMPREHENSIVE DEFENSE

Molinism offers a compelling balance between divine sovereignty and human free will. At its core is the concept of *middle knowledge*, through which God knows not only everything that will happen but also what every free creature would do in any conceivable situation. By leveraging this knowledge, God actualizes a world in which human free choices align with His divine purposes without compromising human freedom.⁵⁴

Core Principles of Molinism

- A Middle Knowledge:** God possesses knowledge of all possible worlds and the free choices that creatures would make in any situation. This allows Him to foresee and plan history while respecting genuine human autonomy.⁵⁵
- B Libertarian Free Will:** Humans have the true capacity to choose otherwise in any given circumstance, ensuring that moral responsibility remains intact.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 23.

⁵⁵ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 45.

⁵⁶ Flint, *Divine Providence*, 79.

C Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom: God actualizes a world that brings about His purposes while allowing human beings to freely make meaningful choices. This harmonizes God’s ultimate plan with the authentic free will of individuals.⁵⁷

Strengths of Molinism

A Preserves Human Freedom: Molinism asserts that individuals genuinely choose their actions. God’s middle knowledge does not coerce these decisions; rather, it allows God to work through them while preserving free will.⁵⁸

B Robust Theodicy: By selecting a world that achieves the greatest possible good, God permits evil and suffering without being the cause of it. This approach addresses the problem of evil while upholding God’s omnibenevolence and justice.⁵⁹

C The Balance of Sovereignty and Freedom: Molinism elegantly maintains God’s meticulous control over history while ensuring human decisions are free and unforced. This dual emphasis provides a coherent explanation of divine providence.⁶⁰

Philosophical and Theological Defense

A Foreknowledge vs. Determinism: Critics often argue that God’s middle knowledge implies a form of determinism. However, Molinists respond that

⁵⁷ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 129.

⁵⁸ Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 47.

⁵⁹ Flint, *Divine Providence*, 112.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2010), 57.

God's foreknowledge of choices does not make them necessary or coerced.

Knowing an event will occur does not mean causing it⁶¹.

- B Complexity and Comprehension:** Some claim that Molinism's framework is overly complex. Yet, defenders of Molinism highlight that middle knowledge provides a necessary solution to the age-old conflict between divine omniscience and human freedom, even if it requires philosophical depth.⁶²

Scriptural Support for Molinism

- A Biblical Theodicy:** Stories like Joseph's declaration in Genesis 50:20 ("*You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good*") illustrate how God can work through human decisions without causing evil directly. Joseph's brothers acted freely, but God used their choices to fulfill His purposes.⁶³

i **Explanation:** This verse illustrates Molinism's concept of God using middle knowledge to bring about His purposes through human free choices. Joseph's brothers acted freely in selling him into slavery, but God orchestrated these events to achieve a greater good, demonstrating His sovereign plan while preserving human freedom.

- B Divine Foreknowledge:** Passages like Romans 8:28 ("*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him*") reflect how God, through

⁶¹ Craig, *The Only Wise God*, 93.

⁶² Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 198.

⁶³ ESV Bible, Genesis 50:20.

His middle knowledge, ensures that even human failures contribute to His ultimate plan.⁶⁴

i **Explanation:** This verse supports Molinism’s view that God, through His middle knowledge, can ensure that even human failures and suffering contribute to His divine purposes. It emphasizes that God works within the framework of human free will to achieve the greatest possible good for those who are called according to His purpose.

Addressing Common Challenges

A Soft Determinism Accusation: Some argue that God’s selection of a world based on foreseen choices limits human freedom. Molinists respond that while God actualizes a world based on His knowledge, the decisions within that world remain genuinely free and undetermined by God.⁶⁵

B Philosophical Complexity: The concept of middle knowledge is indeed sophisticated, but Molinism’s strength lies in its philosophical rigor, providing a robust framework that addresses both classical and contemporary concerns about divine providence.⁶⁶

IX. CONCLUSION

Molinism stands as a uniquely comprehensive view of divine providence, offering a balanced approach that upholds the integrity of both God’s sovereignty and human free

⁶⁴ ESV Bible, Romans 8:28.

⁶⁵ Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account*, 143.

⁶⁶ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 211

will. By employing the concept of middle knowledge, Molinism resolves the tension between divine foreknowledge and human autonomy more effectively than other theological frameworks.

A common question arises: If God knows who will ultimately be saved, why doesn't He create only those who will say "yes" to Him and exclude those who will reject Him? The answer lies in the interconnectedness of human choices and the ripple effects they create. Imagine a scenario where the actions of a person who freely denies God become a pivotal catalyst for another person to turn to Him. Perhaps witnessing the unbelief, suffering, or even the consequences of sin in another's life stirs someone's heart, motivating them to seek God sincerely.

If God were to remove the person who rejects Him, that crucial moment of motivation for the saved individual would be lost. It's essential to understand that God uses the free choices of all people—both those who accept and those who reject Him—to work out His redemptive purposes. The motivation for someone to turn to God is never forced, but rather comes from the real experiences and influences they encounter in this intricately woven world.

Here's the kicker: If God refrains from creating the person who motivates another to seek Him, it could lead to a domino effect. The individual who would have turned to God as a result of that pivotal experience might not come into existence either. This cascading chain of events means that altering one person's existence could lead to a drastically different world, where many who would have freely chosen God are never created. In this light, God's decision to create a world that includes both the saved and the unsaved is not a matter of fairness or favoritism but rather a result of His commitment to honoring the

free will of every individual and maximizing the potential for people to freely come to salvation.

Molinism, with its emphasis on middle knowledge, offers a compelling explanation for why God creates a world that includes both believers and unbelievers. It preserves human freedom while also demonstrating God's ability to use the full tapestry of human experiences to bring about the greatest good. This view affirms that God's plan is intricately purposeful, ensuring that every soul has the opportunity to freely choose Him while respecting the profound and complex web of choices that define our reality.⁶⁷

Ultimately, the existence of individuals who reject God does not negate His love or His desire for a relationship with everyone. Rather, it highlights the complexity of a world where free will is genuine and meaningful. God's love is demonstrated in His willingness to create a world where love and salvation are possible for the maximum number of people, even if it means some will freely choose to reject Him. This approach honors both God's love and human responsibility, showing that His creation is designed with both relational depth and moral significance.

Personal Reflection

Reflecting on this truth brings both a sense of awe and humility. I've often pondered the immense love and patience God must have to create a world where He knows some will reject Him, yet He does so because of the countless others who will find eternal joy and salvation. It's a sobering reality, but it also reveals the depth of God's respect for our choices and His commitment to genuine relationship. God's love is not forced, and that makes it all the more beautiful.

⁶⁷ Keathley, *Salvation and Sovereignty: A Molinist Approach*, 85.

I also find myself deeply grateful for the people and circumstances that have led me to seek God, even if some of those experiences were painful or involved the brokenness of others. Perhaps this is why God's plan is not simplistic but profound—He weaves even the hardest moments of life into a tapestry where people can encounter His grace in ways they never imagined. If we truly value love, then we must value the freedom that makes love possible, even if it sometimes means heartbreak.

This perspective doesn't answer every mystery, nor does it take away the pain of seeing loved ones reject God. But it does give me hope and confidence that God, in His infinite wisdom, has created the best possible world where as many as possible can freely come to Him. It reminds me that our choices matter, that love is real, and that God's plan is worth trusting, even when we don't fully understand it.

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