# Divine Control & Human Freedom: Part 5

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# Outline

◼ What is Molinism?

◼ Some history.

◼ Middle knowledge.

◼ Divine control in Molinism.

◼ Philosophical issues.

# Distinctives of Molinism

- Human freedom: Libertarian.
- Divine foreknowledge: based on *middle knowledge*.
- Divine control: Cooperation with human free acts in middle knowledge.

# Some History

- Luis Molina (1535–1600): Spanish Jesuit theologian.
- *Concordia*, 1589: expounded on doctrine of divine middle knowledge (*scientia media*).
- Rejection of Thomistic account of grace and free will (whose chief exponent was the Dominican Bañez).

# Natural and Free Knowledge

- **Natural knowledge**: What God knows *before* He creates anything.
  - Example: What are all the possible things He could create.
- **Free knowledge**: What God knows *after* the creative decree.
  - Example: Which things He chose to create.

# Middle Knowledge

- Is there anything "in between" natural knowledge and free knowledge?
- Molina: yes, middle knowledge.
- Knowledge of not just what is possible, but what would turn out to be the case under different circumstances of creation.
- Important component: counterfactuals of freedom.

# Counterfactuals

- Counterfactual: A conditional statement in subjunctive mood, with possibly false antecedent.
- Examples:
  - If I were a rich man,
    I would buy a Rolls-Royce.
  - If kangaroos did not have tails,
    they would fall over.

# Everyday Counterfactuals

- A counterfactual expresses the "connection" between the antecedent and the consequent.
- Counterfactuals are used in analyzing "what-if" scenarios, hypothetical situations, underlying beliefs and intentions, etc.

# Counterfactual of Freedom

- A counterfactual where the consequent describes a free act.
- Example:
  If Peter were placed in circumstance C, he would freely do A.
- Provided C is sufficiently "rich," such a counterfactual is part of God's middle knowledge.

# Example of Biblical Support

- "… If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."
  [Matt. 11:21] (Also Luke 10:13.)

# Divine Control in Molinism

- God uses middle knowledge to exercise control over His creation.
- He can make decisions at any given time *in advance* (even before creation!) without violating human freedom.
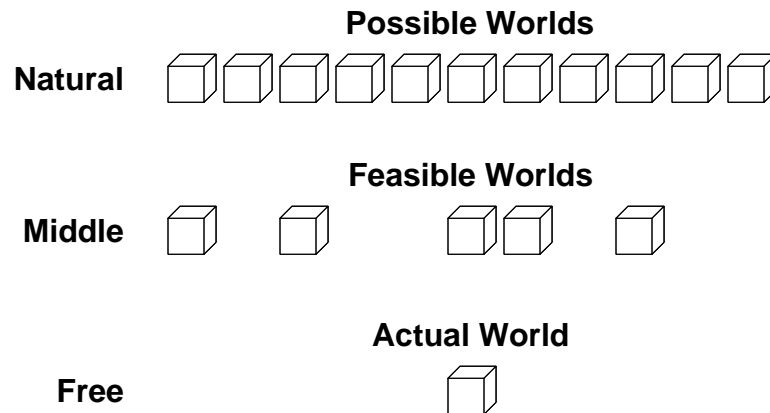- Less (?) control than Calvinism, more control than Arminianism, and much more control than open theism.

# Before Creation?

- "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." [Eph. 1:4]

# Divine Decision-Making

**Possible Worlds**

**Natural**

**Feasible Worlds**

**Middle**

**Actual World**

**Free**

# Problem of Evil

- How do Molinists deal with the problem of evil?

- Libertarian freedom constrains the "feasible worlds" he create.

- Possible hypothesis:
  in *all* feasible worlds, there is evil ("transworld depravity").
  [Plantinga 1974]

# Prayer

- Why doesn't God grant us everything we ask in prayer?
- Molinist: God can only actualize feasible worlds, and he has to pick only one. His criteria for choosing which one may conflict with our request.
- Example: Craig suggests God picks a feasible world to maximize the number of saved souls.

# Grounding Objection

- What "grounds" the truth of counterfactuals of freedom?
- Remember: these are conditionals about free creatures that haven't even been created (or will never exist!).
- Probably the most serious philosophical objection to middle knowledge.
- Common response: who says they need to be grounded?

# Summary

- Molinism: Divine middle knowledge.
- Full human freedom (libertarianism).
- Divine foreknowledge and control based on middle knowledge.
- Philosophical issues.

# Further Reading

- William Lane Craig, *What Does God Know?* Ravi Zacharias International Ministries, 2002.