

**A THOMISTIC ACCOUNT OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE
AND HUMAN FREEDOM**

A Thesis

by

JOUNG BIN LIM

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2005

Major Subject: Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

A Thomistic Account of Divine Providence and Human Freedom. (December 2005)

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This thesis presents a Thomistic account of divine providence and human freedom. I defend and develop the traditional view by adopting some contemporary interpretations of it. I argue that the Thomist solution provides an idea that divine providence is compatible with *libertarian* freedom.

In the first chapter I provide the definition of divine providence, which is God's continuing action in preserving his creation. In another word, not only does God create the universe and conserve it in existence at every moment, but he also guides it according to his purpose.

In the second chapter, I critically examine three solutions to the problem of providence and human freedom. They are compatibilism, open theism, and Molinism. I argue that the solutions are unsatisfactory in that they too easily give up some of the important doctrines concerning God and humans.

In Chapter III, I develop a Thomistic account of divine providence and human freedom. The Thomistic theory, I argue, well preserves traditional doctrines concerning both God and humans without damaging either providence or libertarian freedom for humans. In particular, I briefly examine some characteristics of God, which are timelessness and his activity as the First Cause. Based on these features of God's nature,

I show how human beings enjoy entire freedom in the libertarian sense although God has complete sovereignty over human free choices in the world.

If the present view is correct, what makes it less attractive is that the theory seems to make God the author of sin. So I finally deal with the problem of moral responsibility and the problem of evil and sin, showing that humans, not God, are the author of sin. I contend that God wills that humans sin but he has a certain purpose for doing so within his providence. But that never destroys human freedom, so humans are responsible for their decisions and actions. Within the Thomistic explanation we can have a logically coherent view of compatibility of divine providence with libertarian freedom of humans. In the last chapter, I summarize my argument and deal with some implications of it.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to traditional Christian doctrine, God created the world in the beginning (Genesis 1:1). He directly brought it into existence from nothing. Creatures exist separately from God. But that does not mean that the created world can continue to exist without God's activity. The traditional belief states that no creature can continue to exist in existence unless God supports its existence. Since only God is the creator of everything, it is reasonable to think that the universe continues in existence by its depending upon him. Thomas Aquinas claims that God preserves a thing in a per se and direct way:

insofar, namely, as the thing preserved is so dependent that without the preserver it could not exist. This is the way that all creatures need God to keep them in existence. For the *esse* of all creaturely beings so depends upon God that they could not continue to exist even for a moment, but would fall away into nothingness unless they were sustained in existence by his power.¹

Not only does God support the existence of his creation, but he also actively controls what will happen. He has a certain plan for the universe, especially human beings created in his image, and he fulfills his goal according to the plan. As John Calvin puts it, God does not idly observe from heaven what takes place on earth, but he governs all events as “keeper of the keys.”²

This thesis follows the style and format outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th edition.

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, trans. T.C. O'Brien (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975), I, Q. 104, A. 1. Hereafter, it will be referred to as ST, and I will use the standard abbreviations for the questions and article numbers.

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 202.

The notions of preservation and control are components of the notion of divine providence traditionally upheld by Christians. Divine providence includes God's continuing action in preserving His creation. Furthermore, it includes the idea that God carries out his intended purposes for his creatures.³ That is, not only does God create the universe and conserve it in existence at every moment, but he also guides it according to his purpose.⁴

In the Bible, there are many texts that assert God's sustenance and guidance. As for sustenance, Jesus is described as the one who is "before all things and in Him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17). In Hebrews 1:3, Paul says that the Son sustains all things by His powerful word.⁵ These texts clearly claim that the creation would cease to exist without God's continued willing it to persist. That is, the creation does not have any inherent power of existence. Rather God's willing is directly responsible for the existence of the universe at each moment.⁶

As for the other aspect of divine providence, some scriptural texts claim that God guides and directs the entire course of events to fulfill his purpose. God cares for his creation according to his good plan. The Bible tells us that God governs human history and the destiny of the individual persons (1 Samuel 2:6-7). His plan includes the

³ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 412.

⁴ Jonathan Kvanvig and Hugh J. McCann, "Divine Conservation and the Persistence of the World," in *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 14-15.

⁵ See also Psalms 104.

⁶ The doctrine of God's sustenance clearly denies the deistic idea that God has simply made the world and established its patterns of action so that the universe can continue to exist by its own inherent principle without God's engagement in it. See Erickson, 416-17. The doctrine also rejects Jonathan Edwards' theory of continuous creation, according to which the creation begins to exist anew at every each moment of its duration by God's will. That God sustains the universe does not mean that God makes all things fall back into non-being and come into being again. God "does not engage in one type of action to produce a thing and another type to sustain it." In Kvanvig and McCann, 15.

accidental occurrences of life (Proverb 16:33). Paul asserts that God “works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will” (Ephesians 1:11). In this picture, it is logical to say that even the sinful actions of humans are also part of God’s providential plan (Acts 2:23). But God finally works for the good of those who are his children (Romans 8:28). According to these texts, not only does God preserve the universe at every moment, but he also fulfills his plan by using every event in the world. Furthermore, God is believed to be perfectly good and omnipotent. Based on these assumptions it is impossible that God has an imperfect plan for his creation. His providential plan is always good for his creatures. His plan also cannot be impeded by anything he has created.

The two aspects of divine providence obviously claim that the existence of the universe and every event in it is the consequence of God’s will. God’s creative activity makes the universe exist at every moment, and makes events occur. Furthermore, since God has the goal for the world, his providential will insures that events achieve that goal. To that end, God is directly responsible for the occurrence of every single event in time.⁷ By admitting these two aspects of divine providence, we can explain God’s sovereignty over the creation. The existence of the universe depends upon the creator’s will and each event in the world is what God wants for his purpose.

If we believe that God’s providence involves every event, there is every reason to believe that he is fully involved in the course of human history. In the Bible, God is described as the one who decides the destiny of every nation (Daniel 4:24-25). Paul

⁷ Hugh J. McCann and Jonathan Kvanvig, “The Occasionalist Proselytizer: A Modified Catechism,” in *Philosophical Perspectives* 5, ed. James Tomberin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 590.

asserts that God makes every nation of men and he determined the times set for them (Acts 17:26). Moreover, certain events God made are of special significance. For example, God selected Israel among many others to fulfill his goal for salvation in human history. He manifested his plan through the many events that occurred in the nation. God also sent his Son into the world at a specific time and made him die on the cross so humans could be saved. If Jesus had been killed like the other young infants by Herod when he was born, there would have been no salvation for humans and today's world would be totally different. On the scriptural account, then God's providence has directed human history in a certain way that his goal could be achieved, and it is hard to imagine what the world would be like today without God's active involvement in human history.

The doctrine that God directs human history allows an explication about how the biblical prophecy is possible. Since every course of events in the world is in God's hand, he has infallible knowledge of what will happen. So what he asserts prior to the time a certain event occurs will necessarily be correct. For example, God showed Daniel which nations would rise and fall and the prophecy was fulfilled (Daniel 7-9). God also showed many prophets what would happen in Israel and other countries, such as captivity in and release from Babylon (Jeremiah) and the rise of Persia (Habakkuk). Isaiah could prophesy Jesus' birth and life hundreds of years before (Isaiah 53). Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that was prophesied in the Old Testament (Micha 5:2). Jesus knew from the first who were the ones who did not believe, and that Judas was the one who would betray him (John 6:64). It is not likely that such prophetic success could

occur unless God has infallible knowledge about future events. God, unlike human beings, does not use probable beliefs to make a prediction. A good guess is still a guess, so it could be false. It is hard to believe that all biblical prophecy would have been fulfilled if it were based only on a highly probable belief. For it need not have been fulfilled, due to the nature of probability. If God had just probable beliefs about future, what God asserted might have been false. Definitely, that is not supported by the traditional view. Rather, according to tradition, every future event in human history is in full control of God in his providence, so he certainly knows exactly what will happen.

God is also sovereign in the circumstances of the lives of individual persons. The Bible asserts that God can cause death and create life. He can send poverty and wealth and humbles and exalts (1 Samuel 2:6-7). More seriously, God decides the eternal destiny of humans. It has traditionally been upheld that God's action alone is necessary and sufficient for salvation. The view is based on many verses in the Bible, such as Romans 5: 8-9 and Ephesians 1:4-5. According to the tradition, humans cannot seek God since human will is totally depraved, so that it does not have any ability to find a way to salvation. Humans cannot do anything for their salvation until they have God's mercy on them. As Augustine argues, God brings it about that we begin to believe. God, not humans, initiates salvation by endowing them with irresistible grace. Since God's action cannot be resisted by anything, the offer of salvation cannot be rejected at all.⁸ Salvation never depends upon fallen human will or the power of man, but only God's

⁸ Augustine says, "He (God) has predestined His chosen ones in such a manner that He Himself has even made ready the volitions of those whom He has already endowed with free choice." In Vernon J. Bourke, *The Essential Augustine* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1991), 177.

grace and mercy. According to Augustine and many others, it is obvious that humans can turn to God with their will, but the will is caused by God to make this turn. Without God's providential plan for each person, no one comes to have faith.

So much for the notion of providence and its importance in Christian doctrines and philosophy. God has sovereignty all over the universe and has his own providential plan for human beings. However, although God is in control of every event, including human will and action, and indeed nothing can happen without his will, that does not mean that human beings do not have real freedom of the will; a person is free to decide and act although his freedom is dependent upon God's activity. In the Bible, humans are never described as puppets controlled by a master, that is, God. Rather, they were created by God's image and hence they, like God, enjoy freedom of will and action. Although there is no explicit explanation about how divine providence is harmonious with human freedom in the Bible, Christians have granted that both doctrines are compatible with each other. So the Westminster Confession of Faith claims that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass. Yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin nor is violence to the will of the creatures."⁹

⁹ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 3rd edition, ed. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 320. Modern philosophers also believed God's sovereignty in a very similar way. For example, Descartes says, "It is also certain that everything was preordained by God...But now that we have come to know God, we perceive in him a power so immeasurable that we regard it as impious to suppose that we could ever do anything which was not already preordained by God." In his *Principles of Philosophy*, part I, 40. In *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, ed. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 206. But Descartes was not a fatalist. He believed that humans were free although God has sovereignty over everything. He thought that there was a way in which God's sovereignty was compatible with human freedom, but he admitted that we might not be able to fully understand the relationship. See the same page, article 41.

However, there has been a profound disagreement about how the relation between God's divine providence and human freedom should be understood. The main complaint is that if God preordains every event for his purpose before it occurs, and God has foreknowledge over the event, then it seems that humans do not enjoy libertarian freedom of the will. Suppose that God preordained me to have a donut for my breakfast today, and so knew I would have a donut today. No one can have power over the past, so I have no control over what God knew before today. Since God's knowledge cannot be possibly mistaken, it entails that the event of my having a donut will occur today. In that case I seem not to have control over my action. My having a donut today is a necessary consequence of a fact over which I cannot have control. The notion of divine providence, therefore, seems to rule out human freedom. The argument against the traditional view of divine providence and human freedom can be summarized as follows:

- (1) God has sovereignty over every event that occurs in the created world; every event is preordained by God.
- (2) A human being, X, is free to perform act A at T_1 only if his action is not causally determined by any external condition other than his will.
- (3) By (1), X's will to A at T_1 is preordained by God before T_1 .
- (4) By (2), X is not free to will to A at T_1 .¹⁰

As the argument shows, the traditional view seems to face a dilemma: on the one hand, if we focus on God's providence, we should admit that human freedom is destroyed. On the other hand, if we assert that a human being is entirely free to will and act, it comes to be hard to preserve the traditional view of God regarding providence.

¹⁰ The argument based on God's providence is reminiscent of a similar argument on omniscience. See Nelson Pike, "Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action," *The Philosophical Review* 74 (January 1965): 33-34. As well known, Alvin Plantinga critically examined the argument in his *God, Freedom, and Evil* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 65-73.

To solve the problem, theologians and philosophers have considered various solutions. Strong fatalists think that only God is the ultimate agent as creator, so humans are not free. Compatibilists think that God's providence is compatible with human freedom, but that the freedom is not of the libertarian variety. Some argue that since human beings are entirely free to decide and act without God's intervention, we should give up some traditional doctrines concerning God.

In this thesis, I want to defend and articulate the traditional account of divine providence and human freedom by adopting a Thomistic viewpoint. I shall argue that the Thomist solution provides an idea that divine providence is compatible with *libertarian* freedom. In the next chapter, I will critically examine three solutions to the problem of providence and human freedom. They are compatibilism, open theism, and Molinism. I will argue that the solutions are unsatisfactory in that they too easily give up some of the important doctrines concerning God and humans. In Chapter III, I will develop a Thomistic account of divine providence and human freedom. The Thomistic account, I believe, well preserves the traditional doctrines concerning both God and humans, without damaging either providence or libertarian freedom for humans. In particular, I will briefly examine some characteristics of God, which are timelessness and his activity as the First Cause. Based on these features of God's nature, I will show how human beings enjoy entire freedom in the libertarian sense although God has complete sovereignty over human free choices in the world. If this view is correct, what makes it less attractive is that the theory seems to make God the author of sin. So I will finally deal with the problem of responsibility and the problem of evil and sin, showing

that humans, not God, are the author of sin. I will contend that God wills that humans sin but he has a certain purpose for doing so within his providence. But that never destroys human freedom, so humans are responsible for their decisions and actions. Within the Thomistic account we can have a logically coherent view of compatibility of divine providence with libertarian freedom of humans.

Before I discuss the main issue, I want to address some assumptions about God. I follow the traditional conception of God, according to which is that he is an absolutely perfect being. In Anselm's words, God is to be thought of most fundamentally as "that than which no greater can be conceived."¹¹ Specifically, God is, first of all, omniscient or all-knowing. He knows all and only true propositions. His knowledge is entirely infallible and it does not change. Second, God is omnipotent or all-powerful. He can do everything that is logically possible. Third, God is wholly good. His plans and action are always aimed at the perfect goodness.¹² Finally, God is creator and has sovereignty over the universe. He created the universe *ex nihilo* and maintains it with his plan. These four assumptions underlie Christian philosophy and perfect being theology, and my viewpoint in the thesis is also based on them.

¹¹ I cited this phrase from Thomas V. Morris, *Our Idea of God: An Introduction to Philosophical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 35. Anselm's basic idea of God is interpreted to mean that God is "the greatest possible being, an individual maximal perfection." See the same page.

¹² Hugh J. McCann, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2001 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2001/entries/providence-divine/>>.

CHAPTER II

NEITHER COMPATIBILISM NOR OPEN THEISM NOR MOLINISM

To solve the problem of divine providence and human freedom, philosophers have suggested various solutions. They can be categorized into three main theories, strong compatibilism, strong incompatibilism, and Molinism.

I want to begin by examining compatibilism. The basic thesis of compatibilism is that determinism is compatible with human free will. Here a standard characterization of determinism states that every event is causally necessitated by antecedent events. When it comes to human action, determinism asserts that all actions are determined ultimately by factors external to and not under the causal control of their agents. It is worth noting that compatibilism is different from fatalism or hard determinism, according to which determinism is incompatible with human freedom so humans are not free. Theological fatalism asserts that God's providential plan of a human act makes the act necessary and hence unfree. A human person cannot perform any act freely because God's sovereignty cannot fail and hence what God preordained necessarily occurs.¹³ On this view, human freedom is regarded as an illusion.

Compatibilism, however, does not assert that humans are not free although it is true that their actions are causally determined by events external to them. Unlike fatalists, compatibilists argue that free will is compatible with determinism in such a way

¹³ For an detailed argument for theological fatalism, see Linda Zagzebski, "Recent Work on Divine Foreknowledge and Free Will," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 46-47.

that an agent can perform an action if she decides to perform it and she can refrain from performing the action if she decides not to do it. So long as an agent can decide and act as she wants, then the fact that the action is determined by external events is not to be understood as robbing her of freedom.

Many Christian philosophers can be labeled theological compatibilists, but the modern champion of the doctrine is Jonathan Edwards. Having a strong belief in God's sovereignty and infallible knowledge, Edwards argues that human free decisions are determined by God's decree:

Nothing in the state or acts of the will of man is contingent... God does decisively, in his providence, order all the volitions of moral agents, either by positive influence or permission... if we put these things together, it will follow, that God's assistance or influence, must be determining and decisive, or must be attended with a moral necessity of the event.¹⁴

In the text Edwards clearly claims that God's providential involvement in individual persons determines their volitions. Even though a decision is a future event, it is not a contingent event since it is predetermined by the determinate order of divine decree; any future decision necessarily follows from the antecedent event on God's side. But Edwards does not remain a determinist. He does believe that humans are free although their actions are determined by God's will, because they act according to the previous inclination they have. Indeed, without any inclination or disposition an act cannot be performed, for "that act which is performed without inclination, without motive, without end, must be performed without any concern of the will. To suppose an act of the will

¹⁴ Jonathan Edwards, *Freedom of the Will*, ed. Paul Ramsey (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), 433-434.

without these, implies a contradiction.”¹⁵ Edwards believes that it is not possible that the will rise up against any inclinations for:

as long as prior inclination possesses the will, and is not removed, it binds the will, so that it is utterly impossible that the will should act otherwise than agreeably to it. Surely the will can't act or choose contrary to a remaining prevailing inclination of the will.¹⁶

It is clear, according to Edwards, that a human person performs his action according to a desire he previous has. He “never, in any instance, wills anything contrary to his desires, or desires anything contrary to his will.”¹⁷ That is, desires necessarily determine the will since the latter cannot be contrary to the former.

It is obvious that Edwards believes that having a predominant desire for A is the same as deciding to A, and that such desires causally determine the agent's action.

Based on the view, he claims a compatibilist idea that that a person is free so long as he can do as he desires:

The plain and obvious meaning of the words ‘freedom’ and ‘liberty,’ in common speech is power, opportunity, or advantage, that anyone has, to do as he pleases. Or in other words, his being free from hindrance or impediment in the way of doing ... as he wills.¹⁸

The text cited shows the very idea of compatibilism. In this picture, our willing of choice or decision is a necessary consequence of our desires. But we claim to be free since we can perform an action that we want to do and we can refrain from performing it if we decide not to perform it.

¹⁵ Ibid., 333.

¹⁶ Ibid., 205.

¹⁷ Ibid., 139.

¹⁸ Ibid., 163.

If Edwards's view is correct, the notion of divine providence will not be destroyed and the freedom of human will also will be secured. God's decree causes every course of human desires and eventually their decisions and actions. By doing this, he can have complete sovereignty over individual humans as well as the entirety of human history and can achieve his goal for humankind. But humans are said to be free since they still decide according to their desires. They decide as they please.

Edward's compatibilism is, however, untenable. One problem concerns the relation between desires and decisions. It is doubtful that strongest desires are the same things as decisions. Desire is a dispositional state, whereas decision is a conscious and intentional act.¹⁹ I might desire to fly to the sky. Though it is impossible for me to fly to the sky, there is no irrationality in my saying, "I desire to fly to the sky." But if I say, "I decide to fly to the sky," and decide to leap off the roof of a building to fly, that decision is definitely irrational. Desire and decision are different sorts of thing.

The difference between desire and decision is very crucial. I might desire to A but not decide to A because my desire is changed before I make a decision. Suppose that I desire to go to a Chinese restaurant at t . But my desire does not necessarily make me decide to go there because I might change my desire at t_1 and decide to go to a Korean restaurant for some reason. My desire to go to a Chinese restaurant is not an intentional state but just an inclination, so it is not a fixed mental state. That stage is not enough for making a decision yet. But my decision to go to a Korean restaurant is clearly an intentional state, not an unstable state like desire. When I decide to go there, I

¹⁹ Hugh J. McCann, "Edwards on Free Will," in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and O.D. Crisp (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Press, 2003), 37.

already intend to decide to go there and I intend to decide a course of action to carry out the intention such as finding out how to get to the Korean restaurant and thinking of what to eat there. Desire, in contrast, does not have that kind of commitment attached.²⁰

So decision is a different state of mind than desire. We do not decide just in virtue of having a predominant desire. Furthermore, whether a cause is a natural or a divine one, if our willing is caused by external events to our control, it will be hard to see how we enjoy freedom of the will. We do not decide and act because our mental states cause us to do so, but we decide and act in a way in which we can control them. Here is the true locus of agency. We voluntarily exercise our will to perform an action and hence we can be responsible for it. Only if that is the case are we fully responsible for our decisions and actions. If Edwards' compatibilism is true, the true locus of agency will not be secured. Even though he believes that humans are free to decide and act, they cannot be free within the causal theory. It is hard to see how they freely choose a course of action when their decisions are completely determined by God's action prior to their deciding. If a decision is caused by a desire and God is the ultimate cause of the desire, human willing will come to be just a passive event. Although Edwards's compatibilism gives us a strong conception of God's providential control, it does not provide an explanation of freedom of human will. Unless we want to give up the idea of libertarian freedom, his theory is not a satisfactory solution to the problem of divine providence and human freedom.

²⁰ Ibid., 38-39.

Let's turn to open theism. Some libertarians, unlike compatibilists, argue that since it is certain that humans enjoy entire freedom of the will, we need to consider a change in the traditional doctrine of God. The distinctive feature of theological libertarianism is its thoroughgoing anti-fatalism. According to libertarians, God creates humans as entirely free beings in the libertarian sense, so even he cannot know what they will do. Richard Swinburne thinks that God limits the range of his knowledge by creating entirely free creatures:

If our universe is created by God and the human beings in it have free will, then the limitation that God cannot know incorrigibly how those humans will act will be a further limitation which results from his own choice to create human beings with free will. Choosing to give others freedom he limits his own knowledge of what they will do.²¹

Swinburne goes on to say that the truth value of future contingent propositions, especially concerning human free actions, is not determined until the events occur. But this does not hurt the idea of omniscience:

But if propositions about the future actions of agents are neither true nor false until the agents do the actions, then to be omniscient a person will not have to know them.²²

Some libertarians have recently developed this view under the name of open theism. For example, Clark Pinnock, a theologian, argues:

If choices are real and freedom significant, future decisions cannot be exhaustively foreknown. This is because the future is not determinate but shaped in part by human choices.... The future does not exist and therefore cannot be infallibly anticipated, even by God.... God knows everything that can be known – but God's foreknowledge does not include the undecided.²³

²¹ Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 181.

²² *Ibid.*, 179.

²³ Clark Pinnock, "Systematic Theology," in *The Openness of God*, ed. Clark Pinnock, Richard Rice, John Sanders, William Hasker, and David Basinger (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 123.

Pinnock, like Swinburne, believes that propositions about future free choices are neither true nor false until the decisions are actually made. Thus, for future contingent propositions, even God cannot distinguish the true propositions from the false ones.

But open theists do not believe that God cannot know anything about the future. They contend that God knows future contingent truths in a probabilistic way. William Hasker, the most well-known open theist, says that although free actions logically cannot be known with certainty, God “has a vast amount of knowledge about the probabilities that free choices will be made in one way rather than another.”²⁴ By knowing probabilities of beliefs he has, God can have a plan toward us. But, since his plan is not based on prior *knowledge* of how we will act, God takes a risk in making it. God’s knowledge is determined by the actual occurrence of future events, so his plan toward us is also influenced by our actions. Within this theory it is natural to think that God’s plan might fail. God knows that his will might not be done, but he freely chooses to create a world in which he gives humans libertarian freedom. In this sense, God is “a risk-taker.” He “opens himself up to the real possibility of failure and disappointment.”²⁵

Open theism adheres to a very strong theory of the libertarian freedom. Open theists maintain that we are not caused or determined by anything outside our control. We are the ultimate agents who decide and act. Even God cannot intervene in our free choices; otherwise, he would destroy the freedom of the will. In this sense, open theism appears to solve the problem of human freedom in the dilemma above. It could also suggest a promising response to the problem of evil. Only human beings are the author

²⁴ William Hasker, “A Philosophical Perspective,” in *The Openness of God*, 151.

²⁵ Ibid.

of sin since they freely choose to sin. God cannot be involved with future free choices of humans so he cannot be involved with the sin-event in any way.

In Michael Dummett's words, open theism is a kind of *anti-realism*, according to which one cannot know truth and falsity about undecidable sentences, especially those that involve some time in future. Open theists reject a realistic position, according to which a sentence is true or false and there is no third value other than truth and falsity.²⁶ But one striking thing is that Dummett supports the anti-realistic position only about human knowledge; he believes that humans are finite creatures who are not omniscient or perfect to know about the truth value of a future contingent event. Open theists apply the position to God's knowledge by maintaining that even God cannot know the truth value of a proposition about a causally undetermined future event before it occurs.

Open theism, therefore, preserves human freedom at a very high cost. It is obvious that it destroys the concepts of omniscience and sovereignty. Christians traditionally have believed that God *knows* the future in all of its detail. Epistemologically speaking, knowledge is justified true belief. S knows that p if and only if (1) p is true, (2) S believes that p, and (3) S is justified in believing that p.²⁷ Thus,

²⁶ See Michael Dummett, "Truth," in *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978). Dummett's concern is clearly with epistemological issues. He thinks that truth of a proposition that p is related to knowing that p. So he argues that a sentence is true means that we are manifesting that we have a certain ability to know that the sentence has been verified. In my understanding, open theists take this view by arguing that both God and we do not know the truth-value of a future contingent event. But by extending the anti-realistic viewpoint to the range of God's knowledge, open theists make God a finite being as human beings.

²⁷This is a traditional view of the condition of knowledge. As well known, Edmund Gettier criticized it four decades ago in "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" in *Epistemology: Anthology*, ed. Ernest Sosa and Jaegwon Kim (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 58-59. Since then, many philosophers have tried to solve the called Gettier problem. Some of them, for example Alvin Plantinga, maintain that Gettier problem is to be understood in terms of current internalism-externalism debate. Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 31-37. In this sense, JTB and

God knows that *p*, a proposition about my future free choice, if and only if (1) *p* is true, (2) God believes that *p*, and (3) God is justified in believing that *p*. Open theism denies (1); they contend that God does not know whether *p* is true or false since my choice has not yet occurred. God cannot know *p*'s truth value until my choice actually takes place. Instead, God could have some beliefs about my future choices. God could have a highly probable belief, say 98% certain, that I will have a donut for my breakfast. But according to the conditions of knowledge, the belief is not knowledge yet since it could be false because of the 2% possibility that things might go otherwise. There could be probable beliefs but there is no probable knowledge. So if God's belief is not 100% certain, it cannot be knowledge. If open theism is correct, God cannot have any knowledge, but just probable beliefs about future contingent events. Then it comes to be obvious that open theism denies the idea that God has knowledge of future free choices and eventually rejects the notion of omniscience, which is one of the most important Christian doctrines.

It is hard to believe that God, like us, has to wait until some particular time to know about a contingent event. The denial of omniscience is not supported by the Bible. For example, Jesus told Peter, "Tonight, before the rooster crows, you *will* deny me three times."²⁸ He did not say that it was highly probable that Peter would deny him. Rather, Jesus's belief was true knowledge and Peter exactly did what Jesus prophesized.

Gettier problem are still important issues in contemporary epistemology. But in this thesis, I assume that the traditional view is correct.

²⁸ Matthew 26:34. Another example of Jesus' foreknowledge is found in John 6:64. "But there are some among you who don't believe. For Jesus knew from the beginning those who would not believe and the one who would betray him."

If open theism were true, it would be hard to see how Jesus was able to know what Peter would do.²⁹ Open theism cannot explain how biblical prophecy works.

Since open theism denies God's omniscience, it cannot adhere to the traditional doctrine of divine providence. It is odd to argue both that God has a providential plan toward us and that God does not know whether certain future contingent events will occur. It is hard to see how God is in total control of every event with only probable beliefs. Not surprisingly, when probabilities of events are multiplied, probability of the events taken together decline. So, as Thomas Flint points out, "God's control of his world, especially his long-range control, is drastically diminished. For long-range probabilities are a function of short-range ones, and when probabilities are multiplied, they swiftly decline."³⁰ A probable belief could be true and could be false. If God does not certainly know its truth-value, his providential plan could be based on a false belief. God's plan might fail because there is always a chance that what God did not expect will occur. He might not be able to achieve his goal. A great many events, whether good or evil, are taken out of God's hands. Although open theism could preserve the idea of human freedom, it does not provide an account of how God can be in control of every event in human history. Open theism does not satisfy most Christians.³¹

²⁹ Scott A Davison, "Divine Providence and Human Freedom," in *Reason for the Hope Within*, ed. Michael Murray (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 230.

³⁰ Thomas Flint, *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 104.

³¹ Another problem of open theism is its hermeneutical fallacy. See Alfred Freddoso, "The Openness of God: A Reply to William Hasker," *Christian Scholar's Review* (28): 124-133. Freddoso argues that open theists are not consistent with interpretation of verses on God's nature in the Bible. For example, open theists believe that the idea of God's eternity comes from Hellenistic, especially Platonic, philosophy so we should reject the idea and accept another idea that God is in time. But if that is true, it will be also inconsistent for them to accept God as an immaterial being, which might be also a Hellenistic viewpoint.

Finally, I want to examine the theory of middle knowledge or Molinism.

According to the theory, developed by the sixteenth-century Spanish Jesuit, Luis de Molina, there are three kinds of God's knowledge. God's natural knowledge is a knowledge of all "necessary truths whose truth is independent (or prior to) any free act of will on God's part."³² Examples of such knowledge include "One plus two equals three," "Nothing is both blue all over and yellow all over at once," and "Every triangle has three sides." God's free knowledge is a knowledge of a contingent event whose truth is dependent on God's free will so God could have prevented its truth by creating a totally different situation. Such knowledge includes "Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel," "There is a computer on my desk," and "The color of my pencil is yellow." God could have brought it about that the propositions were false by his will. The third kind of knowledge God possesses is middle knowledge. The object of middle knowledge is a contingent event which is not dependent on God's will. Molinists think that God's knowledge of human future decisions stands between God's knowledge of necessary truths and his knowledge of his own creative will; human decisions are both contingent events and are beyond God's control.³³ God knows human free choices by using a conditional proposition so the object of middle knowledge can be called counterfactuals of freedom. God's middle knowledge describes what people would freely do if they were placed in possible situations. Consider the following propositions:

Furthermore, it is not clear how open theists classify scriptural descriptions of God as literal and metaphorical.

³² Thomas Flint, "Two Accounts of Providence," in *Divine and Human Action*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 156. Also see, Davison, "Divine Providence and Human Freedom."

³³ *Ibid.*, 157.

- (1) If person S were in circumstances C1, S would freely do X
- (2) If person S were in circumstance C2, S would freely do Y.

God is able to actualize circumstances C1 and C2 and knows what S would freely do in each situation. But the actualization of S's choice is not up to God but S.

God knows all possibilities of S's choice in every possible situation in which S can act freely. The knowledge is logically prior to God's creative will and God uses it when he decides what to create. God "has complete control over which feasible world will become actual" because God surveys the feasible worlds prior to creation and chooses one of them.³⁴ By combining the knowledge of counterfactuals of freedom with his decision of what to create, God is able to know what future free choices will occur. So in his middle knowledge God knows my free decision prior to my existence and my actual act. By knowing the counterfactuals of freedom for every set of circumstances in which I can freely decide and act, my free choice comes to be a contingent event which is independent of God's will and at the same time God comes to have sovereignty over my decision and action.

Is Molinism a reasonable theory of divine providence and human freedom? The theory appears an attractive solution in that defenders of it try to preserve both providence and human freedom. However, it faces a serious problem. If Molinism is true, it can be said that God does not gain knowledge about future things directly but indirectly in a sense that he uses a kind of deductive reasoning. According to the theory of middle knowledge, God applies *modus ponens* to subjunctive conditionals like (1) and (2) above to know about future events. God does not know what S would freely choose

³⁴ Ibid., 159.

until he creates possible circumstances in which S would be. In the process God has to use the rule of *modes ponens* to know every possible consequent of every possible antecedent. But why does God, the Creator, have to depend on one of his creations to know truth of a contingent event? It is hard to believe that God, who created every rule of logic, cannot gain knowledge without using it. If we believe that God is the creator of all things, we should also believe that God is able to know human free choices without any aid of his creation. God's ability to have knowledge cannot be limited by anything created by him.

A more serious problem with Molinism is that it is not clear how God could gain such knowledge. As I mentioned above, God knows that p if and only if (1) he believes that p, (2) p is true, and (3) he is justified to believe that p. One problem with Molinism is concerned with the condition of justification. Let me briefly explain why the condition is essential to knowledge. Suppose that right after John's wife goes to a mall for shopping, heavy rain suddenly starts. John does not have any evidence that his wife has taken her umbrella. John comes to worry that she might catch a cold because of the rain and wishes that she had taken her umbrella. From the strong wishful thinking, John believes that she has taken an umbrella. Suppose that his wife actually took her umbrella when she left, and this was unknown to John. In this case, John believes that she took her umbrella and the belief is true. But it is not knowledge because his belief is not based on some relevant evidence but some strong wishful thinking. Although his belief is true, it cannot be said that he knows that his wife has an umbrella now since he is not justified to believe it; he does not have any reason to believe it.

This kind of problem applies to Molinism. For God to gain knowledge, he must be justified to believe propositions, that is, he must have reason to believe them. But what kind of justification could God have for believing the propositions that are supposed to be middle knowledge? The object of middle knowledge is not a necessary truth but a contingent one. It is not a necessary truth that if I were in circumstance C1, I would freely have a donut for breakfast today. Middle knowledge is not the object of God's natural knowledge. So it is obvious that the justification God could have is not a priori. Then is middle knowledge a posteriori knowledge, which is gained by experience? It seems not. According to Molinism, it is not the case that God gains middle knowledge from my actual behavior, that is, by observing that I actually make a decision to have a donut today. God does not wait to know the truth of free creatures' decisions until they actually decide, since from the beginning he knows which creatures and situations he is going to create and thereby knows with certainty that they are going to decide and act in certain ways. If middle knowledge is neither a priori nor a posteriori, how is God justified to accept beliefs which are supposed to be middle knowledge? It seems that Molinists do not suggest some other justification for middle knowledge. God could believe certain counterfactuals of freedom but his belief is not enough to be knowledge if he does not have any reason to accept it. If there is no epistemic justification concerning middle knowledge available to God, the existence of it should be doubted.³⁵

³⁵For this argument I am much indebted to Hugh J. McCann. There is another approach to criticize Molinism. See William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), chapter 2 and 197-198, Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993),

So far I have argued that Edwards's compatibilism, open theism, and Molinism do not give us reasonable explanations of the relation between God's providence and human freedom. Compatibilism does not preserve the pure agency of humans by making no difference between desire and decision although it provides a very strong notion of providence. With open theism, the notion of God's providence is seriously destroyed although human freedom is well secured. With Molinism, the notion of middle knowledge is unacceptable due to its ambiguous position.

These theories are unsatisfactory, so we need another theoretical model. In what follows, I will argue that God's providence and libertarian freedom of humans are compatible with each other on a Thomistic theory. It does not destroy either of the two factors but preserves both of them.

55-66, and Robert C. Koons, "Dual Agency: A Thomistic Account of Providence and Human Freedom," in *Philosophia Christi* 4 (2002): 400-402.

CHAPTER III

A THOMISTIC VIEW ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND HUMAN FREEDOM

Thomistic Assumptions

In the first chapter, I introduced two aspects of the notion of divine providence. Not only does God preserve the existence of the universe, he also directs the entire course of events in it according to his plan. If God sustains the universe and guides all the events, it is obvious that there are no contingent truths independent of his will. Rather God makes them exist in the universe. They cannot exist without God's willing them to be true. That naturally leads to an idea that God's knowledge cannot be determined or caused by something external to him. Put differently, creation cannot affect the creator but only vice versa. Indeed, according to Aquinas, God is the first cause of all things. He claims, "God's knowledge is the cause of things. For God's knowledge stands to all created things as the artist's to his products. But the artist's knowledge is the cause of his products, because he works through his intellect."³⁶ He goes on to say that it is logical that "if certain things are going to happen, God foreknows them; but the things that are going to happen are not themselves the cause of God's knowledge."³⁷ As first cause, God knows a proposition about a contingent event by ordaining or freely willing that it be true. It is not the case that God knows a future event because it has happened. If a real occurrence of an event were a cause of God's knowledge, that would destroy the idea of God's sovereignty as creator in that God's

³⁶ Aquinas, ST, I, Q. 14, A. 8.

³⁷ Ibid.

knowledge depends on the created feature. It also would violate divine omniscience because God would not know anything about the future until it really happens. In order to explain God's omniscience, we should admit that God's knowledge does not depend on creation at all. And only such an idea can be the base for explaining God's providence and sovereignty as creator.

At this point, it is very worth noting that the way in which God knows future contingent events is not that God knows them *before* they will occur but that he knows them as they actually do exist *now*. This is probably the most important conception in Thomistic account of God. According to Aquinas, God is not in time but outside of time, that is, God is timeless. Aquinas says:

Whatever is found in any part of time coexists with what is eternal as being present to it, although with respect to some other time be it past or future. Something can be present to what is eternal only by being present to the whole of it, since the eternal does not have duration of succession. The divine intellect, therefore, sees in the whole of its eternity, as being present to it, whatever takes place through the whole course of time. And yet what takes place in a certain part of time was not always existent. It remains, therefore, that God has a knowledge of those things that according to the march of time do not yet exist.³⁸

In this text, Aquinas holds that God, unlike us, does not experience events as past, present, and future. It is wrong to say that God has existed, that he exists now, or that he will exist forever. God does not exist within the temporal framework in which his creatures exist. Rather, according to Aquinas, God exists timelessly. Temporal terms cannot apply to God. If God existed in time and created all creatures, time would be one

³⁸ Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, tras. Anton C. Pegis (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), B. 1, C. 66, 7. Hereafter, it will be referred to as SCG, and I will use the standard abbreviations for book numbers and chapter numbers.

thing God did not create. This denies the idea of God as the creator of all. Moreover, if God were in time, he would be subject to the limitation of time. He would have to experience temporal differences as we do. He would have to wait for a certain time when he wants to do an activity in the world. It is hard for Christians to believe that the supreme creator is confined to doing his activity within his created thing, time.

Moreover, if God existed in time, he would not be able to have complete sovereignty over the world since he does not know anything about the contingent future until it occurs. Aquinas avoids these problems by claiming that God exists atemporally.³⁹

Since God is outside of time, God does not, as we do, know all contingent future events successively but “all at once.” God’s knowledge is “measured by eternity, as is also his existence.”⁴⁰ A timeless God knows every event from eternity so all the events that happen in time are present to him.

Therefore, it is not correct to say that God knows a future contingent event *prior to* its occurrence. God’s knowledge is not *foreknowledge* because his belief about it was not in the *past*. Rather, just as a center of a circle is simultaneously related to every point of its circumference, so God’s knowledge from eternity is simultaneous with

³⁹ Some people might argue that since God is timeless, there is one thing God does not know, that is, what time it is. But this critique is very naïve because if we accept that God is the creator of all things, it must be that he knows of time. God timelessly knows all the truths, including truths about time and future contingent events. See McCann, “The God Beyond Time,” in *Philosophy of Religion: An Anthology*, ed. Louis Pojman (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 216-230, and John Martin Fisher, “Introduction,” in *God, Foreknowledge and Freedom*, ed. John Martin Fisher (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 1-56. Nicholas Wolterstorff has argued that God is not timeless but everlasting in “God Everlasting,” in *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*, ed. Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 139-148. But I am worried that his approach is based on too much anthropomorphic interpretation of the Bible.

⁴⁰ Aquinas, SCG, B. 1, C. 66, 7.

a temporal event.⁴¹ That means that God does not know a future contingent event by means of inference from present events. For example, God's knowledge is not dependent upon *modus ponens*, that is, $P \rightarrow Q$, P , then Q . Although the logical rule is correct, God does not use it to gain knowledge. His knowledge is not dependent upon his creation. Rather, a timeless God knows directly all contingent events from eternity. Aquinas says:

God knows all contingent events not only as they are in their causes but also as each of them is in actual existence in itself... Hence all that takes place in time is eternally present to God...because he eternally surveys all things as they are in their presence to him."⁴²

Indeed, a contingent event *already* exists in some sense because as, we discussed above, God atemporally knows every contingent event by willing that it occur. Since God has providence and is omniscient and timeless, God knows a contingent event in its actual existence and it is eternally present to God. God knows a contingent event because he wills it. So Aquinas holds that "the divine intellect through its knowledge is the cause of things."⁴³ In this sense, God's knowledge and God's will are identical to each other; God's knowing that p is the same as God's willing that p be true. It can be said that in the Thomistic picture, God knows that p through only one mode of knowing, that is,

⁴¹ Aquinas takes the example of circle as follows:

Let us consider a determined point on the circumference of a circle. Although it is indivisible, it does not co-exist simultaneously with any other points as to position, since it is the order of position that produces the continuity of the circumference. On the other hand, the center of the circle, which is no part of the circumference, is directly opposed to any given determinate point on the circumference. Ibid.

⁴² Aquinas, ST, I, Q. 14, A. 13

⁴³ Aquinas, SCG, B. 1, C. 61, 7.

“executive self-knowledge.”⁴⁴ So the contingent event cannot exist independently of God’s willing. God wills that a contingent event exist, and thereby he knows the truth value of the corresponding proposition. In this way, God comes to be omniscient and has sovereignty over the event.

So far I have presented some important Thomistic assumptions about God. They are summarized as follows:

Thomistic Assumptions (TA)

- (1) God preserves his creation and enacts his intended purposes (divine providence).
- (2) Due to divine providence, there are no contingent truths independent of God’s will. God knows contingent propositions by willing them to be true.
- (3) God is timeless so every event is present to him eternally. He knows each event immediately.

Here every contingent event is literally *everything* in the universe. Definitely it includes human decisions and actions. Then we face a very significant issue of the relation between divine providence and human free will. If God ordains human will, then it seems that humans are not free to will and act. If humans are entirely free, it seems that God’s providence and omniscience are violated. How can the Thomist view accommodate both God’s providence and a libertarian freedom? In what follows I will deal with this topic.

⁴⁴ I borrowed this term from Robert C. Koons, “Dual Agency: A Thomistic Account of Providence and Human Freedom,” in *Philosophia Christi* 4 (2002): 398.

Compatibility of Divine Providence and Human Freedom

If TA is correct, human will and action must be subject to God's will because they are also contingent events in the world. First, God preserves our existence. Without God's sustenance of our existence, we cannot will and act. We as creatures do not have any inherent power of existence. God is directly responsible for our existence at each moment. Moreover, God has a certain purpose for our will and action. He fulfills his plan by using every event in an individual human's history. No human will or action is outside of God's providential plan. Second, there is no human willing or action independent of God's will. God is the first cause of our willing and action. God knows what we will do by willing the event to occur. God's knowledge is the cause of human willing and action. Aquinas says that "God is for us the cause not only of our will, but also of our act of willing."⁴⁵ He goes on to say that "every movement of the will must be caused by the first will, which is the will of God."⁴⁶ It is not the case that our decisions and actions determine God's will and knowledge. The former is temporal and something temporal cannot be the cause of something eternal.⁴⁷ Finally, our will and act are present to God eternally. His knowledge is simultaneous with every event on our side. It is wrong to say that he knew before T_1 what I would do at T_1 . Rather God eternally knows my action and it is already existent to God eternally.

Given TA, it is certain that God's providence is well preserved. But what about human freedom? If my will and act of decision are subject to God's plan and his will, is

⁴⁵ Aquinas, SCG, B. 3, C. 2, 89.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Aquinas, *De Veritate*, 2. 14. I cite the text from Craig Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Foreknowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1988), 122.

it possible that I am free to will and act? First, we need to see how Aquinas answers the question. At this point it is worth noting that Aquinas never supports fatalism. Rather he rejects it. He believes that although God is the first cause of human willing and action, that does not mean that they are determined by God. According to Aquinas, God does move human will but he does that without violating human freedom so humans can perform their actions voluntarily:

And just as by moving natural causes He does not prevent their actions from being natural, so by moving voluntary causes He does not deprive their actions of being voluntary; but rather is He the cause of this very thing in them, for He operates in each thing according to its own nature.⁴⁸

When God wills my decision, he makes me freely make a decision. Although my decision is a consequence of God's will, I am free to voluntarily make the decision. When I make a decision, God does not take the voluntary power of doing the action away from me. In this way, my voluntary act of deciding is not violated by his will and the action comes to be mine. God wills my action and at the same time I am free to act. Here my will and act are not the cause of God's will and knowledge although I am free to voluntarily will and act. My act of deciding is still in God's control and so God can fulfill his plan within his providence. If God is not the cause of my decision and he cannot do anything about my decision at all, there is no way in which God can guide it according to his plan. If we believe that every event in the universe occurs within God's providence, it follows logically that God controls human will. For Aquinas, the two aspects, providence and human freedom, are compatible with each other and either of the two is not violated at all.

⁴⁸ Aquinas, ST, I, Q. 83, A. 1.

But some might complain about the Thomist viewpoint, for it still seems to violate human freedom. They might argue that this view faces an objection that since God determines human decision and action in some way, God's action destroys human freedom. If God brings about a human decision, for example, that John freely chooses to go fishing, John cannot decide otherwise, so John is not free to decide to go fishing. Critics could argue that the Thomistic account of providence and human freedom is an event causal theory, according to which God's will is a cause and it produces an effect. In Donald Davison's terms, God's will is the reason that John chooses to go fishing. John does that because God wills that he do so.⁴⁹ In this case, John's deciding is passive and involuntary because God's will, an event independent of John's decision, causes his decision. John comes to be like a puppet manipulated by a master. For the critics, Aquinas's explanation appears very ambiguous because when he says that God moves human will, that exactly means that God causes humans to will and this does not offer any guarantee of human freedom. For this reason, they think that the Thomistic account eventually leads to a version of fatalism, according to which the only free agent is God, not a human being. Human will is determined by God's will, so humans cannot enjoy libertarian freedom.

I think this complaint results from some misunderstanding of the Thomist viewpoint. I want to show that the Thomist view gives a reasonable account of both divine providence and libertarian freedom.

⁴⁹ As well known, Davidson argued for causalism in "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *Journal of Philosophy* 60 (1963): 685-700. According to him, in order to explain a reason for an action, we should accept the idea that the reason in question causes the action.

According to TA, all of our willing and action come from God's will. And for every contingent event E, including human free actions, God's knowing that E is the same as God's willing that E. Now consider the following propositions:⁵⁰

- (1) John freely chooses to go fishing.
- (2) God wills that John freely choose to go fishing.

The Thomist holds that the truth of (1) does not determine the truth of (2). As we have discussed above, something temporal cannot determine something eternal but only vice versa. He also believes that the truth of (2) necessitates the truth of (1); God is the first cause of John's willing. But the Thomist does not believe that (2) is *causally* prior to (1). In other words, it is not the case that the truth of (1) is determined by the truth of (2) before (1) happens. Why? For TA (3) asserts that God is timeless and God's will is eternally simultaneous with every event in the universe. That is to say, (2) is eternally simultaneous with (1). The relation between the two propositions is not characterized by a causal relation because every causal relation is involved with some temporal features. A cause must be prior to an effect. But given TA, God's will and knowledge are not subject to time. It is wrong to say that God's willing that John freely choose to go fishing occurs prior to the event that John freely chooses to go fishing. Rather the proposition (1) is present to God eternally.

Therefore, if we accept TA, then we should admit that (1) and (2) are not causally connected to each other. Rather we can say that (1) is identical with (2). That is to say, the truth-maker of (1) is the same as the truth-maker of (2). So in every world

⁵⁰ I am much indebted to Koons, "Dual Agency" for this argument.

in which (1) is true, (2) is also true. It is impossible that (1) is true and (2) is false in a world or (2) is true and (1) is false in another possible world.

It is very important to note that although the truth-maker of (1) is identical with that of (2), this does not mean that the degree of each agent's control of the decision of going fishing is less than 100%. It is not the case that God's responsibility for John's decision is 60% and the remaining 40% is up to John. Nor is it the case that John is more up to his decision than God. The Thomist believes neither a partial fatalism nor a partial open theism.

With this in mind, consider following propositions:

- (3) Karl, a baby, picks up a pencil.
- (4) Mary, Karl's mom, wills that Karl pick up a pencil.

Mary could directly move Karl's arm and hand, making him grab a pencil. Or Karl could pick up a pencil under threat of Mary's punishment; he knows that he will not eat if he does not do what his mom asks him to do. In this situation, it is obvious that Karl's decision to pick up a pencil is not fully up to him because it is caused by Mary's will in some way. Perhaps Karl's degree of control of his action is less than the degree of Mary's control. In this sense, in order for Karl to choose his action, Mary's willing must be joined to his willing. Mary's will plays a role as a prior cause of Karl's action. In this case, therefore the truth-maker of (3) is not identical with the truth-maker of (4).

Definitely the example of Karl does not fit with the Thomist viewpoint. In (1) and (2), there is no distribution of the degree of control over the single event. It is impossible that in order for John to perform his act of decision, God's act is joined to his act as temporally prior cause. Nor is it possible that John's willing must be joined to

God's willing in this way. Rather, each agent enjoys a 100% degree of control of the decision to go fishing. The decision is 100% up to John while it is also up to God at the equal degree of control. But there is no temporal, causal connection between the two actions because at the moment of God's willing that John choose to go fishing, John decides to go fishing. The timeless God wills what John does so his decision is always present to God eternally.

The fact that (1) is identical with (2) shows both that God is in control of John's decision and that at the same time John is entirely free to make the decision. John's decision is not caused by God's will before he makes the decision. Indeed, John's decision is fully up to him although it comes from God's will.

It is obvious that within the Thomist theory, a human being is entirely free in the libertarian sense although his will is subject to God's will timelessly. There are two conditions of libertarian freedom.⁵¹ One is spontaneity. My action is free only if I voluntarily control the action. I do not make a decision accidentally or involuntarily. The decision does not just happen to me, but I am actively involved with it. A decision is entirely in my control and hence it is mine. The other condition is intentionality. I am free to decide to do an action only if I do intentionally. There is no unintentional decision. In making a decision, I intend to decide. When I decide to A, I intend to decide to A, and I intend to decide exactly as I do. In this sense, the act of deciding is intrinsically intentional.⁵² Intentionality is intrinsic to the decision. It is worth noting

⁵¹ For the part of the conditions of libertarian freedom, I rely upon arguments in Hugh J. McCann, *The Works of Agency* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), chapters 8 and 9.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 163.

that this phenomenon of intentionality is basically teleological. I intend to decide to A not because some things cause me to decide to A but for the sake of attaining some goals by A-ing. Exercises of agency “have to be undertaken for the sake of some objective the agent deems worthy of attainment.”⁵³

These two aspects of action are sufficient for a libertarian freedom. When I decide, I know that I am the very agent who decides. I am consciously aware that I am freely making a decision and no other things cause me to do that. Also, I am conscious of my intention of deciding. I intend to decide to A to achieve some objectives I think of as valuable. I certainly decide for a reason and that can explain why I decide to A. But that does not mean that the reason causes me to decide to A. Rather, I decide to A for the sake of achieving some goals and the intention is the reason itself. I form an intention and the content of it reflects the goals that I want to achieve. I am not controlled by reason, but I see myself as freely controlling my decision by forming an intention. So my deciding is not a causal process but a teleological one. My decision does not just befall me. I do not decide to A by accident or unintentionally. My act of

⁵³ Ibid., 180. Some libertarians claim that in order for my decision to be free, I have to confer existence on it. They think that a decision is free only if it is caused by the agent herself. According to them, when I decide, I produce or bring about the very act by following internal causal structure. This view is usually called agent causation theory. Roderick Chisholm held the view in “Human Freedom and the Self,” in *Free Will*, 2nd ed. ed. Gary Watson. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27-37. Timothy O’Connor has developed the theory on the basis of the idea of emergence. See his “Agent Causation,” in *Free Will*, 257-284. But the view is untenable. If I conferred existence on my decision to A, I had to do so either through a separate act or as part of my very act of deciding itself. If it is a separate act independent of the act of deciding, it, not the agent, will become the true locus of agency and I will need explain how it exists. So the first option leads us to an infinite regress. If I confer existence on my action as some aspect of my deciding itself, the act of my deciding has ontological priority over itself, which is impossible. Therefore, a libertarian theory of freedom should not assume that I have to confer existence on my decision and act in order for me to be free. See McCann, *The Works of Agency*, 186.

deciding is both conscious and purposive toward some objectives and I am certain of the phenomena. The two features provide me with a perfect libertarian freedom of the will.

This view obviously rejects any kind of causalism or determinism for human will and act, according to which every event is causally necessitated by antecedent events. Causalists argue that every truth about the future is determined by the past fact in conjunction with the laws of nature. The most important feature of the laws of nature is that no one can render them false. One cannot change the truth of “The earth spins around the sun,” or “Magnets attract iron.” As for the past event, no one can change the truth value of the past fact. The truth of the proposition that Bush was reelected in 2004 cannot be changed in any way. According to causalists, a current event is related to the past event with the laws of nature; it is caused by them in a nomic way. My mental states shaped by past events in conjunction with the laws cause my decision. There are only nomic relations between my will and belief states. On this viewpoint, ‘I’ am not the active agent but I am controlled by other states of affairs. I decide to A because some of my mental states cause me to decide to A and so I cannot do otherwise; there is only one possible future.⁵⁴ So in the determinist theory one’s spontaneity and intentionality are destroyed. Within causalism, it is hard to see how I can be fully aware of the process of deciding so I can control my act of deciding. And I choose to A not for the sake of achieving a goal but because of my reason-states cause me to decide A.

Let’s turn to the case of John in which he freely chooses to go fishing. It is obvious that he spontaneously decides to go fishing if there is no coercion or

⁵⁴ Peter van Inwagen, “An Argument for Incompatibilism,” in *Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 43-45.

interference to force him to decide to go fishing. He exactly knows what he decides. He is clearly aware of his deciding to go fishing, and his decision is entirely under his direction. Furthermore, he has a certain reason to go fishing. He might want to take a rest at a beautiful lake by enjoying his favorite thing. He might desire to be a champion of a fishing competition. He does not decide because the reason state causes him to do so, but he intends to decide for the sake of achieving his goal. His act of deciding is not accidental but intentional. Since he has both spontaneity and intentionality for his decision, he entirely enjoys libertarian freedom of will.

In the example it is clear that God's willing is not a past event and that there is no causally nomic relation between John's decision and it. If God's willing is a past event, that would destroy the notion of the timelessness of God. If God were in time, it would be possible to say that his willing caused John's decision in a deterministic way. But this is not the Thomist view we have discussed so far. In the theory God is outside of time and eternal. So even though God's willing is the cause of John's decision, that does not mean that the former causes the latter in a deterministic way. Rather the relation between his decision and God's activity is too close for there to be any temporal differences. God's determination of his decision is not a separate event from John's decision. In fact, John's act of deciding is the content of God's will that he decide that way.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Hugh J. McCann, "Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will," *Faith and Philosophy*, 12 (October 1995): 591-593. For this reason, I think Frankfurt style of free will does not capture the Thomist point. By using a thought experiment, Frankfurt argues that the principles of alternate possibilities(PAP) is wrong in that it is possible for an agent to freely act and be morally responsible for her action even if she does not have alternate possibilities or it is even impossible

So we have dual aspects of a single event. One is that a human agent is entirely spontaneous and intentional in her action, so she is entirely free in the libertarian sense. The other aspect is that her will comes from God's will. Her will is a contingent event and according to TA, there is no contingent event independent of God's will. So a human will cannot be independent of his will. God wills her will not in temporal way but in atemporal way so a human will comes to be present to God eternally. But her will is not involved in any causally deterministic factor.

I believe that only this Thomist view can explain both divine providence and libertarian human freedom. Human beings are created by God and sustained in being entirely by God's will. Since humans are creatures, they cannot exist by themselves. Furthermore, they cannot decide and act apart from the creator's will. God is the first cause of every human will and thereby he can be fully in control of a human action. By doing this, God directs the entire course of human events, eventually fulfilling his purpose. In this way every human will is involved with divine providence. But humans are entirely free to decide and act since they are not caused by God's will but simultaneous with it in conjunction with their spontaneity and intentionality. God does not cause humans to do certain actions. As James Ross puts it, "God does not make the

for her to avoid performing the action. In the Frankfurt example there is a temporally causal antecedent which determines a human action. See "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Philosophy* 66 (December 1969): 834-836. But his view is untenable and PAP, I assume, is true. In the present view there is no temporal difference between God's will and human decision. For critique of Frankfurt style, see David Widerker, "Responsibility and Frankfurt-Type Examples," in *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 323-327, and McCann, *The Works of Agency*, 174-175. Paul Helm uses Frankfurt style to argue for compatibility of divine providence and human freedom in his *The Providence of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

person act; he makes the so acting person be.”⁵⁶ A determinist account is good for preserving God’s providence, but it destroys human freedom. Open theism can explain human freedom but it cannot provide a good account of divine providence and so destroys God’s nature. But the present Thomistic account does not hurt either divine providence or human freedom; it provides a logically coherent explanation of both.

Responsibility and the Problem of Sin

I have argued that the Thomist view preserves both God’s providence and libertarian human freedom. But some people might argue that the view makes God the author of sin because he wills everything that a human being does. According to the present view, a human being cannot decide anything without God’s will. Then if he decides to commit a sin, God’s will must be involved with the decision. Consider the following two propositions:

- (5) John feely decides to kill Mark.
- (6) God wills that John feely decide to kill Mark.

According to the Thomistic account, the truth-maker of (5) is the same as the truth-maker of (6). John’s act of deciding is the content of God’s act of willing that he decide so. Since John is a creature and his decision is a contingent event, he cannot make any decision without God’s activity. Due to this fact, critics argue that God is involved with John’s decision to kill Mark in such a way that God is the author of the sin, or at least a sinner along with John. How can the Thomist deal with this problem?

⁵⁶ James F. Ross, “Creation II,” in *The Existence and Nature of God*, ed. Alfred J. Freddoso (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 130.

It is true, according to the Thomist view, that God does will that John decide to kill Mark. In this sense, God is involved with the decision and is responsible, with John, for the existence of the sin. They are co-responsible for the decision. But that does not follow that God incurs the equal blame for the evil decision. For when John decides to kill Mark, the decision is fully up to him if he does spontaneously and intentionally. We can apply the two features of libertarian freedom to the issue of moral responsibility. John incurs blame for evil only if he performs the action with a clear consciousness of what he is doing. His act of decision does not happen to him but he voluntarily engages in the decision; so his action is his, not that of anyone else. Suppose that John is determined to kill Mark by other facts. He might be manipulated by another person, Paul, who really wants to kill Mark. He puts a computer chip into John's head so he can fully control the process of his making decisions. Paul makes John make a decision to kill Mark. In the case, it is hard to say that John is guilty of killing Mark because he cannot engage in his volition freely but his decision is just manipulated by Paul. His decision to kill Mark is responsible only when he spontaneously makes it.

Furthermore, one incurs blame for evil only if he acts intentionally. When he performs his act of will, he exactly knows what he is doing since he does not decide accidentally or unintentionally. He intends to decide to do an evil thing in order to achieve a certain goal. If he does not have any intention to do the evil thing, it is hard to blame him for moral evil. Suppose that John kills Mark unintentionally. Mark might be hit by John's driving car by accident. Mark might die when John pushes Mark to the wall for fun and his head is hit by the wall accidentally. In the case, John does not have

any intention to kill Mark. His intention does not include killing someone, so he is not guilty of Mark's death. But when John intends to decide to kill Mark, he definitely becomes a murderer.

One is morally responsible for sin only if he commits it spontaneously and intentionally. Suppose that when John decides to kill Mark, he is clearly aware of what he decides and does have a certain reason, for example, to steal some money from him. His decision is not caused or manipulated by others and it is not made accidentally. He is consciously and actively involved with killing Mark in order to achieve a certain goal. In this case, it is obvious that he incurs blame for the murder since he is entirely free to do the act of deciding in the libertarian sense. His decision and action belong fully to him. If he freely decides to kill Mark and he actually kills him, he, not any other, is responsible for the decision and the act.

And according to the present view of providence and human freedom, God does not cause John to decide to kill Mark. As we have discussed in the last section, the relation between (5) and (6) is not a causal one, that is, (6) does not causally necessitate (5). God does not cause John to decide to kill Mark. God is not like Paul, the manipulator, in the example above. Nor is it the case that 50% of the responsibility for the decision is with God and the rest of it with John. It is not the case that God's will is joined to John's decision as cause to effect. He does not cause him to kill Mark. God does not make John decide to kill Mark, but he makes him deciding.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Hugh J. McCann, "The Author of Sin?" *Faith and Philosophy* (forthcoming), manuscript, 5.

God is the ground of John's being and his decision; he makes the so deciding person exist, not causing him to decide. In this sense, God is somehow responsible for John's decision to kill Mark. Without God's will, John cannot so decide and Mark's death cannot occur. But although God is responsible not only for John's decision but also for its efficacy, that is, Mark's death, the act of killing Mark, that is, of doing that nomically causes his death, is predicated only of John and belongs only to him. It is John, not God, who performs the act of deciding with a certain intention. The act of deciding to kill Mark entirely belongs to John. So John, not God, commits the sin.

Furthermore, whether one is guilty of a moral evil is determined by whether he breaks a law or a rule which he has to obey. If we believe that God is the source of morality, that is, he has the ultimate moral authority so he can establish moral laws, he cannot sin. For sin is defined as rebellion against God and the meaning of rebellion is determined by the moral authority. Then it is absurd to think that God rebels against himself. God cannot break moral laws or rules which he has established. Therefore, it is impossible for God to sin in his position.⁵⁸

If we believe that we are free to decide and act, there is no reason to think that God makes us sin and hence is the author of sin. If we enjoy libertarian freedom, it is we that decide and act. If we do something wrong, we deserve to have moral responsibility for it.

Now let's turn to the problem of evil and sin. Why does evil exist? Why did God the Sovereign permit humans to sin? Some atheists take the questions very

⁵⁸ McCann, "The Author of Sin?" 15

seriously and use them to attack theism. For example, J. L. Mackie argues that the existence of evil and sin is inconsistent with the existence of God. Theists believe that an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good God exists. But to be sure, evil exists in the world. Mackie argues that these two statements are not consistent with each other. If we believe that the first statement is true, we should reject the second one. But it is hard to believe that evil does not exist. If the second statement is true, one of the assumptions about God must be rejected. Perhaps then there is something it is impossible for him to do, that is, create a being who always freely chooses the good. Mackie believes that this fact destroys the doctrine of God's omnipotence. He also argues that if we believe that God permits evil for some reason, it is also reasonable to think that he is not wholly good. Mackie concludes that God's "failure to avail himself of this possibility is inconsistent with his being both omnipotent and wholly good."⁵⁹

A popular response to Mackie's challenge is to argue that the existence of God and the existence of evil are logically compatible by showing that both the proposition that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good and the proposition that evil exists in the world can possibly be true even if they might not be in fact true. One way to show that the two statements are logically possible is to find a third statement whose conjunction with the statement about God is consistent and entails the statement about evil. The strategy underlies the so-called the free will defense. Alvin Plantinga, the representative philosopher of the free will defense, thinks that the idea of possible worlds helps us to find the third statement. A possible world is "a way things that could

⁵⁹ Ibid., and 209. Mackie's basic argument is this: (1) God is omnipotent, (2) God is wholly good, and (3) Evil exists. He believe that (3) defeats both (1) and (2).

have been” or “a possible state of affairs.”⁶⁰ Plantinga stipulates a possible world in which God’s omnipotence, omniscience, and perfect goodness are related to human freedom. First, he thinks that a free world is a better and more valuable world than a world containing no free creatures. Here a *free* choice always has to do with plurality. That is, that I freely choose A entails that I choose it rather than another option. I claim to be free to choose A only if there are other choices like B or C or not-A that I can freely choose. If there is no choice other than A and hence I have to choose it in every situation, I am not free in my deciding. Based on the viewpoint, Plantinga argues, “God can create free creatures, but he cannot *cause* or *determine* them to do only what is right. For if he does so, then they are not significantly free after all; they do not do what is right *freely*.”⁶¹ In order for us to be free to decide to do what is good, God must not determine us to do so. We must have a power to not do the good or to choose what is evil. So Plantinga goes on to say:

To create creatures capable of *moral good*, therefore, he must create creatures capable of moral evil; and he cannot leave these creatures free to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so.⁶²

Within this possible world, we are entirely free to decide and act, so the source of moral evil is fully up to us in that we human beings have gone wrong in the exercise of our freedom. So the fact that we free creatures go sometimes wrong “counts neither against God’s omnipotence nor against his goodness; for he could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by excising the possibility of moral good.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 45.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 166-167.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 167.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

From the scenario, Plantinga extracts the third statement at issue. A basic idea of it is that although God is omnipotent, it is not within his power to create a world containing only moral good but no moral evil. That is, in order for God to provide human beings with the entire freedom to do good and evil, God's ability to control them must be limited in some way. So it is possible that God would create a world of free creatures who choose to do evil. The third statement is that it is "possible that God could not have created a universe containing a moral good (or as much moral good as this one contains) without creating one containing moral evil."⁶⁴ This statement, in conjunction with the statement that an omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good God exists, entails that evil exists. That is, it is possible that both God and evil exist in the world and the statement refutes Mackie's charge that God could create a free creature with a guarantee that they would never sin.

Such a kind of free will defense appears very attractive for some reasons. First, the defense well preserves the value of human freedom without destroying the traditional beliefs about God's nature. If one believes that what God can do is only logical things, the notion of omnipotence is not destroyed. For, according to Plantinga, it is not illogical that God creates a world in which a human person freely chooses to do evil. God's power of omnipotence is "limited by the freedom he confers upon his creatures."⁶⁵ Furthermore, it gives us a good account of moral responsibility. According to the free will defense, like the present Thomist view, it is we who sin. We are not determined or caused by God to do something wrong; but we do it with the exercise of

⁶⁴ Ibid., 167.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 190.

free will, so only we deserve blame for the sin. God is not the author of sin, but we are sinners. This is possible because God created significantly free creatures who produce moral good.

However, I think that the defense is not a sufficient account to be a good model for theodicy. Mackie could still ask why God does not create human beings who freely choose only righteous things. For it is logically possible that an omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good God could have created a world containing free creatures who always do what is good. So Mackie argues that “if God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have men such that they always freely choose the good?”⁶⁶ The free creature could always make good decisions spontaneously and intentionally, and that could preserve God’s providence and human freedom. That is, God could guide and direct human beings to freely decide only good things so they can always do good works. Their decisions are not caused since they consciously do the act of deciding in order to achieve good consequences. If God is omnipotent, it is logically possible that he could have created the free creature who can freely choose to do what is good.⁶⁷ Atheists could think that if God cannot make this kind of human being, some traditional beliefs about God would be defeated. Another problem is that the free will defense cannot explain

⁶⁶ J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence,” *Mind* 64 (April 1955): 209.

⁶⁷ Here is a crucial difference in understanding of the logic of free will between Plantinga and Mackie. Plantinga thinks that human free choice necessarily entails the existence of evil because in order for humans to be free, they must have an ability to choose an evil. This idea is based on incompatibilism. No one, including God, cannot cause them to choose what is good if they are said to be free. Mackie, in contrast, puts forwards his argument based on compatibilism. That is, humans can be entirely free to do what is good even though their decisions are determined by God’s will. So it is possible that God could have created a world containing moral good but no moral evil. For the purpose of my thesis, I do not want to go into the debate but I think Mackie’s complaint is plausible at this point. For Plantinga’s reply, see *The Nature of Necessity*, 167-189.

natural evil, although it can explain moral evil as just mentioned above. Humans cannot bring about natural evil. Only natural causes bring about natural evil. The free will defense is only concerned with the moral agency of humans, not natural causes. So it cannot explain why natural evil happens in the world. But a more serious problem is about human freedom. How much are humans free? The free will defenders argue that it is logically impossible that God creates free creatures who are causally determined by some events outside of their control. But if that means that humans are entirely free without God's will, the defense is untenable because it insists that there are contingent facts independent of God. That is, whether a person performs or refrains from performing an action would be fully up to her, not God. Then the free will defense threatens some of God's nature. For example, God's knowledge of my action comes to depend upon whether I will actually do it. God does not know my performance of evil until I will do it. So if this view is correct, it is hard to explain God's sovereignty over my evil action. If God's knowledge depends upon human, temporal events, it is hard to see how God can control human actions, whether good or evil, to fulfill his plan.

Furthermore, the free will defense seems not to provide an explanation of the origin of moral evil. Those who support the view could claim that moral evil originates from the abuse of human wills. According to them, human beings, say Adam and Eve, freely did not obey God's commandment, and that is the origin of moral evil. But does that mean that the moral evil was out of God's control? Did God not know that Adam and Eve would eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge? Then did God not know something wrong would happen until they did it? If moral evil results only from human decisions and

actions with their exercise of free will, then there is no way to explain how God knows whether humans sin and how he can control the event.

To be sure, the free will defense does not fit with the Thomist view. As we have discussed, the Thomist view does not admit any contingent event, even a human act, independent of God's will. Like the free will defense, it too claims that God does not determine or cause human decisions and actions and thereby humans enjoy entirely libertarian freedom. But God is directly and intimately involved with them by willing them to occur.⁶⁸ The same happens to the occurrence of sin. Since it is also a contingent event, it cannot exist without God's will. God wills sin to exist in the world. Since the free will defense does not capture the point, we need another model for theodicy in terms of the Thomist view, especially the idea of providence. I want to suggest an idea.

Why does God create human creatures who can freely sin? I admit that there is no perfect answer to the question. But one of the best answers I can think of is related to the idea of God's providence. It is this: the fact that we sin is needed for our own benefit in a sense that God wants to share his being and goodness with us, and we can be such God-like only if we realize that we are weak beings who often sin. Let me explain this point.

According to the Christian tradition, a human being is a unique and precious being since only this creature was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). A human being, unlike other creatures, has some reflection of God's nature intrinsically, and hence only he is able to have a personal relationship with God. He is a manifestation of

⁶⁸ McCann, "The Author of Sin?" 6.

the existence of God and his nature. God's perfection and power are manifested in other creatures, but it is in intelligent beings like humans that they are best revealed. God did not create human beings as puppets, but as free and moral agents so that they can voluntarily communicate with him and share his creativity and goodness in the world. So the relationship between God and human beings is much more valuable than the relationship between God and other creatures, such as animals and natural objects. The former is a person-to-person relationship, whereas the latter is person-to-object. God really wants humans to find him voluntarily and try to have a fellowship with him. If humans are just caused by God to love him, they cannot have a true fellowship. Suppose that I make some characters by using some computer programs. When I turn on my computer, they are supposed to show up on the screen. To be sure, I can be in control of everything about them because I am the creator of them. I can make them praise me and say they really love me. They smile at me and even cry because of their 'sincere' love toward me. Would I be happy for their praise and confession of love? Could I have a real personal relationship with them? Neither would I be happy nor could I have a fellowship with them, because they are not real persons and they are determined to praise and say they love me, so there is no voluntary action in them. But if real human persons, who are not caused by others, praise me and say they love me with all their hearts, I will definitely be happy, since I know they are persons like me and they voluntarily do the act.

Likewise, in order for God to have a true, personal fellowship with us, we must voluntarily perform our acts toward God. A true fellowship is "a matter of mutual

commitment.”⁶⁹ Both God and we must voluntarily love each other. We must spontaneously and intentionally choose to love God. Here it has to be remembered that a free choice has to do with plural options. That is, in order for us to be free to find God, there are at least two options we can choose. If we can love God, then it must be that we can disobey him. If that is not possible, we cannot be free to choose to love God. But it is worth noting that the existence of plural options we can choose is not just a logically necessary condition for our being free, as in the free will defense. It is not just a metaphysical, logical possibility but must be a *real* experience in us. Put differently, in order to have a real fellowship with God, we have to experience both what it is to love God and what it is to disobey him. As Hugh McCann points out, “guilt, remorse, a sense of defilement, and the hopeless desolation of being cut off from God cannot be understood in the abstract, because if they are only understood abstractly they are not *ours*. Only through experience can we understand what it means to be in rebellion against God, and we gain that experience by sinning.”⁷⁰ Then there is a good reason to think that that we sin is a necessary condition for our being voluntarily and personally choosing to love God. We really need God’s love and voluntarily accept his offer of fellowship only if we understand that we are sinners who are separated from him and that we will be miserable without having a personal relationship with him. True fellowship with God cannot begin until we realize the poor condition of ourselves. Since it is possible that we sin, we know what the good and the evil are and hence we can be

⁶⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 17.

morally responsible for our decisions. It is “only from a stance of sinfulness that we are able to settle our destinies in an informed, responsible, and morally authentic way.”⁷¹

If the view is correct, sin is a process through which we are getting more morally mature and eventually becoming God-like. God can share his perfection with his intelligent creatures who are developing their moral level. In terms of divine providence, God uses the sin event to help us become morally mature. So the whole purpose of creation is to bring imperfect beings to more perfection so that God and they can enjoy personal fellowship.⁷² As Aquinas puts it,

There is no question of the first agent, who is purely active, acting in order to achieve some purpose; he intends only to communicate his own completeness, which is his goodness. Each and every creature stretches out to its own completion, which is a resemblance of divine fullness and excellence. Thus, then, divine goodness is the final cause of all things.⁷³

⁷¹ Ibid., 18.

⁷² One of the most important assumptions for this view is that God did not create human beings in perfection, but with the capacity for perfection through experience of growth. It is called Irenaean-type theodicy, according to which Adam and the original creation were innocent but not mature. They were not created perfect. So the origin of evil has to do with weakness and frailty in human beings. So Irenaeus says, “God made humanity to be master of the earth and of all which was there... Yet this could only take place when humanity had attained its adult stage... Yet humanity was little, being but a child. It had to grow and reach full maturity... God prepared a place for humanity which was better than this world... a paradise of such beauty and goodness that the Word of God constantly walked in it, and talked and talk with them, associating with human beings and teaching them righteousness. But humanity was a child; and its mind was not yet fully mature; and thus humanity was easily led astray by the deceiver.” In *The Christian Theology Reader*, 2nd ed, ed. Alister McGrath (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 173. But humans possess the privilege of becoming good by loving God and fellow creatures. Moral maturity requires some evil experience such as temptation. In this sense, evil is not a decline from a state of pristine purity and goodness, but an inevitable state in the gradual growth and struggle of human race. John Hick supports the Irenaean-type theodicy by calling it “soul-making” theodicy. He thinks that the sin event is God’s grand scheme of helping human being become morally and spiritually mature. The goodness of the goods outweighs the evils which are permitted. He says, “Man as he emerged from the evolutionary process already existed in the state of epistemic distance from God and of total involvement in the life of nature that constitutes his ‘fallenness.’ He did not fall into this from a prior state of holiness but was brought into being in this way as a creature capable of eventually attaining holiness. In Irenaeus’ terminology, he was made in the image but had yet to be brought into the likeness of God.” In John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 287. See also *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 80.

⁷³ Aquinas, ST, I, Q. 44, A. 4.

God's providence concerning sin is to create beings who can share his perfection as much as possible. The existence of sin is the best way to achieve his ends for us. God creates a sin in some sense, but he does so only out of his love toward his creature. Given that sin exists, God is able to direct it in such a way that much more goodness is produced out of it. Specifically, God wants to use evil to help us be more mature so we can be more conformed to his likeness,⁷⁴ and eventually be his "friends." He creates sin as a necessary condition of our coming to share his friendship. The eventual goodness is not personal pleasure or personal health or wealth. Rather, it is real fellowship with God, who is our creator. In this sense, that we freely sin is a necessary evil which can lead to the fulfillment of God's purposes within his providence.

A sin event is a process within God's providence to fulfill God's purpose. It is to be understood in terms of God's plan for us. When he wills that we sin, he has his own intention, which is different from ours.⁷⁵ The story of Joseph in the Bible is a good example showing the point. To his brothers, who sold him to Egyptians long time ago,

⁷⁴ Romans 8:29.

⁷⁵ McCann, "Divine Sovereignty and The Freedom of the Will," 587. According to McCann, the Thomist view can explain why they did not choose otherwise. For this reason, the view can overcome a weakness of libertarian theory of human freedom, which is that it cannot fully explain why one chooses a certain course of action rather than another one. For example, I choose to eat a Chinese food for lunch. I have a reason to eat it. I might want to enjoy an unique Asian atmosphere in a Chinese restaurant. I might think that Chinese foods are healthier than hamburgers, so I decide to have it for lunch. To be sure, I decide to eat a Chinese food for the sake of a certain reason and that could explain why I go to a Chinese restaurant. But that is not enough. That could not fully explain why I choose another course of action, such as deciding to eat a Japanese food. There is an unique Asian atmosphere in a Japanese restaurant. I also believe that Japanese foods are healthier than hamburgers. Then why should I decide to eat a Chinese food rather than a Japanese one? An answer could be that that is what I decide. But that is not enough. The answer does not provide why I do not choose to eat a Japanese food. McCann tries to solve the problem by appealing to a theistic solution, according to which only God has sufficient reason for the occurrence of a contingent event. It does not exist without God's will. God wills every contingent event for reasons in his providence. See the same article, 582-589.

Joseph says, “You intended it for evil, but God intended it for good.” His brothers spontaneously and intentionally sold their little brother, making him a slave in Egypt. But when God willed what they did, he had another reason for it. God’s plan was for good, whereas their intention was for evil. Perhaps, the most striking and dramatic story in the Christian tradition presenting this point is of Jesus’ death. People in Israel crucified him on the cross. Their decision was not caused or determined by any other exterior factors to them. But it was a contingent event, so they could not make the decision without God’s will. To be sure, they spontaneously and intentionally did something evil so they deserve to blame for it. But God’s intention for the event was not just that Jesus should die on the cross, so people incur blame for it. They certainly intended the crucifixion for evil, but God intended it for good, that is, saving all humans and restoring the relationship with them. People had a reason for their decision and action but God had another reason, which was more profound than theirs. He, unlike them, had “sufficient reason” why they should decide to crucify Jesus. His reason fully explains the occurrence of the sin event in terms of his perfect goodness. But again this does not mean that people do not have any moral responsibility. It was they, not God, who crucified Jesus on the cross for an evil reason.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The view I have presented preserves both divine providence and human freedom. A timeless God freely chooses to create an intelligent creature who can decide and act spontaneously and intentionally. God wills every course of human action, and hence he can be in control of it according to his plan. At the same time, humans are free in the libertarian sense since their decisions and actions are not caused or determined by anything at all other than themselves. So humans do have moral responsibility for their decisions and actions. If they can spontaneously and intentionally decide and act, it is they, not God, who sin although they cannot sin without God's will. A timeless God is intimately and directly involved with the occurrence of sin. The reason God creates human beings who feely sin is to give them a real freedom and to have a real, personal fellowship with them. It is only the sin-experience through which humans seriously feel that they are sinners so they voluntarily try to find God. God uses the sin-event to fulfill his plan within his providence.

If this view is correct, it provides a very interesting idea of us as human beings. We live normative lives in a descriptive feature. As for descriptivity, we have our being in the creator. Our decisions and actions come from God's creative will. His creative will describes our history according to his plan. He has a certain purpose for us and eventually accomplishes it within his providence. In this sense, the relationship between God and us is analogous to a relationship between an author of a novel and her

characters. In the novel, the character's being is in the author.⁷⁶ Characters decide and act in the novel but that is what the author describes. She describes a story by showing lives of characters. When she does that, she does have something to tell her readers. She wants to deliver a certain message to them. Likewise, God as the author of human history creates our decisions and actions. He directs and guides every course of action to manifest his existence and love toward the world. He freely chooses a certain outline in which human history is to be described and performs his creative activity according to it. His sovereignty and intention are directly involved with every event in the world.

Although God is the author of human history, that does not mean that we are like his puppets. As I have argued above, we are free in the libertarian sense only if we decide and act spontaneously and intentionally. There is no event-causal relation between God's will and our decisions. God does not make us act but makes us exist as acting persons. It is we, not God, who decide and act. So we are responsible beings as well as free beings. When we spontaneously and intentionally do something wrong, we, not God, deserve blame for it. So any normative features of our decisions and actions are not destroyed within the present view. We are entirely free to obey or disobey God's word so we are responsible for our decision of obedience or disobedience. This also suggests to us that we not be fatalists but can be activists on moral evil. We should not think that all moral evils are what God wants in the world for his plan so we do not have to worry about them and we just wait God's judgment on them. This fatalistic idea is mistaken. It is just an event-causal understanding of God's will and human freedom.

⁷⁶ I use the analogy from McCann, "The Author of Sin?"

Within the determinist theory, moral evil is a consequence of a causal relation between God and human beings so they are not responsible for their evil actions. But the Thomist view does not support the idea of fatalism. As I have discussed, the author of moral evil is not God but humans since they are entirely free to choose their actions. They have moral responsibility for all of their decisions and actions and they deserve blame for wrong doings. So there is every reason to judge them according to a certain moral principle. We can criticize those who do evil and try to stop the spread of the evil over the world.

Therefore, although we are like characters in a novel and God is the author, our first-person integrity is not violated at all.⁷⁷ Indeed, we do not have to worry that we are manipulated by God as a puppet is manipulated by a human master. If I think that I am manipulated by God, that thinking is fully up to me. I am entirely free to think that I am manipulated by God. Then my ability to think is not manipulated by God and I who can freely think exist as I do. If I doubt I am not free, that proves that I am a free being. In my part, I am entirely free so I can do everything I want and I am responsible for it.⁷⁸

Due to the first-person property, we are not just characters in a novel or in *Matrix*. For example, in *Matrix*, people decide and act spontaneously and intentionally although all of their decisions and actions are manipulated by an evil computer. However, people,

⁷⁷ For the first person approach, see Lynne Baker, "Why Christians Should Not Be Libertarians: An Augustinian Challenge," *Faith and Philosophy* 20 (October 2003): 460-478. She argues that even though we are caused to decide X by God, we are free to decide X since we know the provenance of our wanting to decide X. Although her argument is based on a sort of causalism, especially Augustine's philosophy, I think her insight on the first person is very unique and helpful to understand the relation between divine providence and human freedom.

⁷⁸ Definitely, this argument is a kind of Cartesian. Descartes' cogito argument is like this: (1) I doubt that I exist, (2) If I doubt that I exist, I exist, then (3) I exist. I apply this argument to the issue of human freedom. (1) I doubt that I am free to think, (2) If I doubt that I am free to think, I doubt, then (3) I am certain that I doubt, that is, I can freely think.

except for Neo and his friends, do not know they are manipulated by it. In the case, it is hard to say that people in *Matrix* enjoy libertarian freedom. But, unlike them, we know who the author of the novel in which we are living is. We also know that the author is perfectly good so we believe that the story will be a happy ending. Moreover, according to our religious tradition, we have personal relationships with the author while we still live in the novel. Not only do we freely decide and act in the novel, but we also have knowledge of the author of the novel and have intimate relationships with him.

So on this account we are in a very unique position. We are free and responsible beings whose decisions and actions are within God's providence. I think that it is the privilege of believers that know the mysterious but profound truth. We believe that we are free to decide and act, and we know that our freedom of the will is not violated at all. But we also believe that God within his providence controls every event, including our decisions and actions, in the universe, through which God will finally fulfill his good plan for us. We live hoping for the day when God will fully accomplish his will in the world we are living. That is, I think, why Christ taught us to pray, "Thy will be done."

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