

1.

Luis de Molina

It is right and necessary to start this third, post-Reformation volume with the thought of Luis Molina (1535-1600), although this has not been a wholly pleasant experience. Let me explain. Molina is the root thinker in a movement called Molinism, which has been present in certain sections of the church since its inception in the late sixteenth century, but which has become popularised more recently because of its influence on thinkers such as William Lane Craig, and the debate over Molinism in the last fifty years has been more intense than at any since the original work was published.

The core issue, as we shall see below, is the relationship between grace and free will, and thus it demands a place in this volume. Forty years ago this would not have been the case because none of the *Concordia* had been translated, and only works that have been – and that readers can therefore go back to consult the original context of quotations – are being studied in the volumes in this series. However, in 1988 Professor Alfred Freddoso of the University of Notre Dame did translate into good English and publish an important section of the *Concordia*, part four on divine foreknowledge.

I therefore owe Professor Freddoso both a great debt of gratitude and a certain degree of frustration – again, an explanation is needed. Part four on divine foreknowledge is a key section for philosophers in particular in their discussions on the freedom of the human will. Freddoso's introduction is excellent for Molina's overall thought, although its focus is on the foreknowledge section of the *Concordia*.¹ This series needs to

1. The introduction does get a little peppered with 'philosophical algebra' at times, for example: 'Yet by His *natural* knowledge He does know that $F'(S)$

examine both this material and the wider context of Molina's thought in the relationships not only with grace, but with themes such as predestination, providence, sin and reprobation, in presenting Molina's theology.

This is where the frustrations lie. Because only part four has been translated, I have had to work through the other parts in the original Latin. I opened my copy of the *Concordia* to find it numbering 666 pages, a rather ominous number. I went to the excellent Catholic Encyclopedia online (newadvent.org) for some encouragement and found the following comment on the style that the work was written in:

As to style, the work has little to recommend it. The Latinity is heavy, the sentences are long and involved, and the prolix exposition and frequent repetition of the same ideas are fatiguing; in short, "Concordia" is neither easy nor agreeable reading. Even though much of the obscurity of the book may be attributed to the subject matter itself, it may be safely said that the dispute concerning Molina's doctrine would never have attained such violence and bitterness, had the style been more simple and the expressions less ambiguous.²

Such has been the project in putting this chapter together, with a commensurate joy for the later chapters for which research has been a much smoother road.

Molina himself was a Jesuit priest and a teacher of philosophy in Portugal and later in Madrid. The *Concordia*, despite its length, is a discussion of a very small part of Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*. The ideas he expressed in the *Concordia* were controversial from the outset, since they contrasted with a Thomist (from Thomas Aquinas) understanding of grace and free will in method while seeking a similar outcome, which was a belief in the necessity and efficacy of God's grace whilst upholding a free choice for humanity in responding to this grace. Molina delayed

on *H* would obtain and be a conditional future contingent *if* He were to resolve that in the event that *H* obtained at *t*, He would grant intrinsically efficacious concurrence to the causes of *S*' (Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988], p. 38).

2. J. Pohle, 'Luis de Molina', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), Vol. 10; available online: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/10436a.htm> (accessed 16 July 2019, originally published 1916).

the original publication of his work because he was aware of opposition, and only finally made it available together with a defence of the opinions that it contained.

Molinism is popularly associated with debates on free will, but as volume two of this series showed, there is a great difference in the medieval Latin tradition between will (*voluntas*) and choice (*arbitrium*), and Molina seems to refer exclusively to free choice throughout the *Concordia*. This is not surprising given that he is working with Aquinas, who, when discussing the will of God (the Question in the *Summa* is entitled ‘De voluntate Dei’), treats the freedom of God in relation to choice (the Article is called ‘Utrum Deus habeat liberum arbitrium’).³

The full title of the *Concordia* is thus, ‘On the Harmony of Free Choice with the Gift of Grace, Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination and Reprobation’. This title is important because it begins by accepting divine principles of grace, foreknowledge etc. and considers human free choice (and divine choice at times) in light of these unquestioned divine attributes – similar, though on a much larger scale, to the *De Concordia* of Anselm of Canterbury that was presented in volume two of this series.

Molina’s *Concordia* has seven main parts, after a brief initial discussion on God’s knowledge as the potential cause of things.⁴ These seven sections start with the power of free choice, then look at divine concurrence. Following this is a look at the aid of divine grace before the part Freddoso has translated on divine foreknowledge. Finally, there are two short parts on God’s will and on divine providence before a lengthy final treatment of predestination and reprobation.

This presentation will follow the structure of the *Concordia* but will differ slightly from other chapters in this series in presenting the successive themes and principles of Molina throughout rather than being a ‘reader’ that is dominated by quotations from the original – this mainly due to the fact that readers cannot simply go back to the context for quotations as is the case for other thinkers. This chapter will hopefully act as a guide through the stages of Molina’s thought,

3. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (ST), 1.19.10.

4. I have followed Freddoso in recognising these parts, although Parts 1 to 4 are not technically divided by Molina but rather continue through Disputations on the same parts of Aquinas’ *Summa*. The later parts restart the numbering of Disputations and are therefore more clearly separate sections of the *Concordia*.

highlighting important principles that are raised in their successive places.

This will mean that the first parts will be my presentations of the principles of Molina's thought, with a few direct quotations of my own, but readers will need a high standard of Latin to check the source context. When we get to the work on divine foreknowledge, the quotations there will remain my own, but at that point the reader can look at the wider writing on the themes in Freddoso's English translation. The work then continues beyond part four, returning to my overview of Molina's thought.

Introduction: On Whether God's Knowledge Is the Cause of Things

As mentioned in above, this is a very short, two-page discussion that addresses Article 7 of Question 14 in Part I of Aquinas' *Summa*, on whether God's knowledge is the cause of things. Molina recognises two conclusions in Aquinas' Article: the first is a simple acknowledgement of the principle; the second is that God's knowledge is determined through His will. There is then a note about the power of God that is considered by Aquinas in a later Question.

Molina supports the first conclusion through a range of scriptural quotations that link God's wisdom, primarily, to the creation of things, with some references also to the counsel and the will of God. The second conclusion, which links God's knowledge to His understanding and will, needs greater exploration by Molina, linked by both Aquinas and Molina to a craftsman and his work in which knowledge is processed through the will.

Molina then introduces two ways in which the knowledge of God can be seen to relate to His own free choices. The first holds that the 'natural' knowledge of God precedes the free acts and determination of His will by which He discerns what He will do in time. The second states that the free action of God's will precedes His knowledge, and 'therefore His knowledge of future contingent things, that is, what will be in the future, hangs from the free determination of the will of God, by which He establishes what will be, and therefore His knowledge does not precede this, but follows on from it.'⁵

5. Molina, *Concordia*, Introduction, 1 (references will indicate the Part and then the Disputation within that Part).

Molina quotes from both Augustine and Origen in considering God's knowledge and the existence of things, first from Augustine, 'it is not because they are that God knows them, but that they are because God knows';⁶ and then from Origen, 'Something does not therefore exist because God knows about the future, but because the future is, that is known by God before it came to be.'⁷ Molina concludes this short study by first recognising that the tradition coming from this Article of Aquinas is that 'the free knowledge, by which God knows some contingent things to be of the future, is not the cause of things' and then commenting that there are many dangerous deceptions (in Latin, *hallucinati*) surrounding divine foreknowledge of future contingent things. It is this last conclusion that is vital for the whole work, as is seen from the beginning of part one of the *Concordia*.

Part One: On Free Choice

The title of the first Disputation in part one of the *Concordia* picks up on the dangers mentioned at the end of the introductory part: 'About the errors around divine foreknowledge, and our free choice, and contingent things.'⁸ Before getting into some of the errors, Molina states that both Scripture and faith affirm that free choice is not impeded by God's foreknowledge, providence, predestination and reprobation, and that these with free choice are necessary for restoring friendship with God.

Molina then embarks on a presentation of a series of studies of errors throughout history, beginning with that of Marcus Tullius Cicero who is reported by Augustine as denying God's knowledge of future contingent events, which is declared to be sacrilegious.⁹ There is a lengthy section on fate – with a bit on the stars – as used by mathematicians, philosophers and heretics to develop threads of determinism, all of which are rejected by Molina with appeals to Augustine and others. Following this, the determinism of Manicheism is dealt with, including the error of Augustine during his time as a Manichee, and Augustine's response to this in the work *On Free Choice*.¹⁰

6. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 5.8, quoted in Molina, *Concordia*, Introduction, 1.

7. Origen, *Epistle to the Romans*, quoted in Molina, *Concordia*, Introduction, 1.

8. Molina, *Concordia*, Introduction, 1.

9. Augustine, *City of God*, 5.9, cited in Molina, *Concordia*, 1.1.

10. Molina, *Concordia*, 1.1.

Molina moves on to the Pelagians, at the opposing end of the spectrum, as those who ‘injure the necessity of grace for our salvation’,¹¹ holding that our free choice alone, without any help of divine grace, is sufficient. Molina notes that some monks fall into an error, based on Augustine’s *On Nature and Grace*, to neglect free choice and any human work. Against these, Molina extensively quotes Augustine’s *On Grace and Free Choice*, before the final error of Augustine’s time is dealt with by his book *On Rebuke and Grace*, the issue addressed being God’s originating corruption in order to enlarge His grace.

Molina deals finally with medieval and Reformation errors, starting with Peter Abelard arguing that all future things happen of necessity without either God or humankind being able to affect them.¹² The condemnation of Wycliffe and Hus is reported on the basis that all things happen by necessity, based on the idea that God must act out of the necessity of his nature, linking these thinkers with Abelard and with Lorenzo Valla and later Luther.

Luther receives a whole paragraph stating that he denied the reality of free choice after sin and before grace, ‘finally arriving in madness to say that free choice has no rule in a person’s actions, and that bad works and sins are no less from God than good works.’¹³ Molina is not pulling his punches in this section, concluding that, ‘It is greatly to be wondered at, because his error is no less impious than it is stupid, that he has been able to persuade so many people.’¹⁴

Melanchthon is seen to follow Luther, ‘asserting that all our works, whether they are indifferent, like eating or drinking, or good, like the calling and conversion of Paul, or bad, like the adultery of David, are rightly the works of God, who does not permit all things but creates the power in us for them; thus they are no less rightly called the work of God, as much the betrayal of Judas as the calling of Paul.’¹⁵ Calvin is the last to receive treatment, seen to persist in the errors of Luther in arguing against philosophers and the Church Fathers.

In the second Disputation for this section, Molina defines what is meant by free choice. He starts with freedom, which implies the lack of servitude, using passages from Corinthians and Romans. Then, the word ‘free’ indicates an absence of necessity, such that a human is able

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

to act based on their free choice.¹⁶ The bulk of this Disputation is taken up with the merit or blame that can be ascribed to those who do not have such freedom, including a lot of material on children or those out of their minds (*amentes*) depending on the degree of awareness of right and wrong and their roles in their actions. There is a link thus drawn between freedom and judgement.

The third Disputation deals with four states of humanity, although the first – human nature in natural purity, without sin, without grace and without any other supernatural gift – seems to be a purely philosophical speculation. The second deals with the first parents of humankind before sin, when all humanity was in Adam, rather unhelpfully considered in a single, 22-line sentence.¹⁷ In forsaking the state of original sanctity and justice, Molina does not reference the tempter as Early Church Fathers had done, focussing on the human rebellion. In this sentence, he upholds the Council of Trent's teaching on Original Sin, that all sin in Adam, thus losing sanctity and justice and receiving concupiscence.

The third state of humanity is after sin and before grace, excluded from glory, lacking grace, original justice and other supernatural gifts. There is then the need for the work of grace to bring humanity to the fourth state, having received the grace that restores the relationship. It is slightly frustrating throughout this section that free choice receives relatively little explicit attention in relation to the Fall and restoration of humankind, although towards the end Molina does state that even in regard to supernatural acts that require divine assistance there is still the power to cooperate or not with that help.

Disputation 4 returns to humankind in the state of innocence, holding that, 'through their own free choice, with only the general support of God and without any special help', they could have satisfied the whole natural law.¹⁸ They thus had the fullness of freedom in that innocent state, including the ability to persevere but without the reality of perseverance. Molina takes a lot of time to stress this, since it will be important in reflecting on the nature of grace working in and with restored humanity in comparison to that at work in Adam.

Disputation 5 focusses on the ability of humankind after the Fall still to do that which they ought, supported by texts such as Romans chapter two, as well as extensive quotations from Augustine. The conclusion is that these good works are not sufficient for justification

16. Ibid., 2.2.

17. Ibid., 2.3.

18. Ibid., 2.4, supported from Aquinas, *ST* 2(1), 109, 2-4.

without divine grace through Jesus Christ.¹⁹ This moves on to the sixth Disputation, which considers whether free choice with only the general support of God is able to do that which leads to a supernatural end. Molina deals with this question immediately, stating grace is necessary for such an end against a Pelagian position that might put humankind in the situation of their first parents. He quotes the Council of Trent to state the need for Christ and the Spirit for salvation, ending with a Pauline quote that no one is able to say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. This is important for situating the nature of free choice that will be considered through the rest of the *Concordia*, as one that is not acting independently of grace.

The focus moves in Disputation 7 to the ability of free choice to choose assent to the faith with only the general concurrence of God; and it is unsurprising, given his previous writing against the Pelagians, that Molina demands divine revelation. There is a lengthy, six-part refutation of various views on external revelation and internal grace of the Holy Spirit, concluding with an appeal for confirmation of Molina's views from the Council of Trent, Sixth Session, Canon III: 'If any one says that, without the prevenient inspiration of the Holy Spirit and without his help, a person can believe, hope, love or be as penitent as they ought, so that the grace of Justification may be bestowed upon them, let them be anathema.'²⁰ Towards the end of this Disputation, Molina goes further to state that free choice can only choose to do good things when there is 'divine illumination of the understanding and supernatural excitation of the will.'²¹

This is then the theme of the following Disputation, that prevenient grace is necessary in aiding both understanding and will towards salvation and, subsequently, grace works to develop a habit and disposition towards godly things in the Christian. At this point, the general concurrence of God becomes sufficient, although the result indicates that this is not a free choice apart from God: 'With an infused state of faith, accustomed to the Spirit of faith inhabiting a person and calling them from other things and faithful to that, as often as they want afterwards they are able to choose a supernatural act of faith with only the general concurrence of God.'²² Molina does move on to recognise Chapter five of the Sixth Session of Trent, which states that humans do

19. Molina, *Concordia*, 2.5.

20. Council of Trent, 6.3, cited in Molina, *Concordia*, 2.7.

21. Molina, *Concordia*, 2.7.

22. *Ibid.*, 2.8.