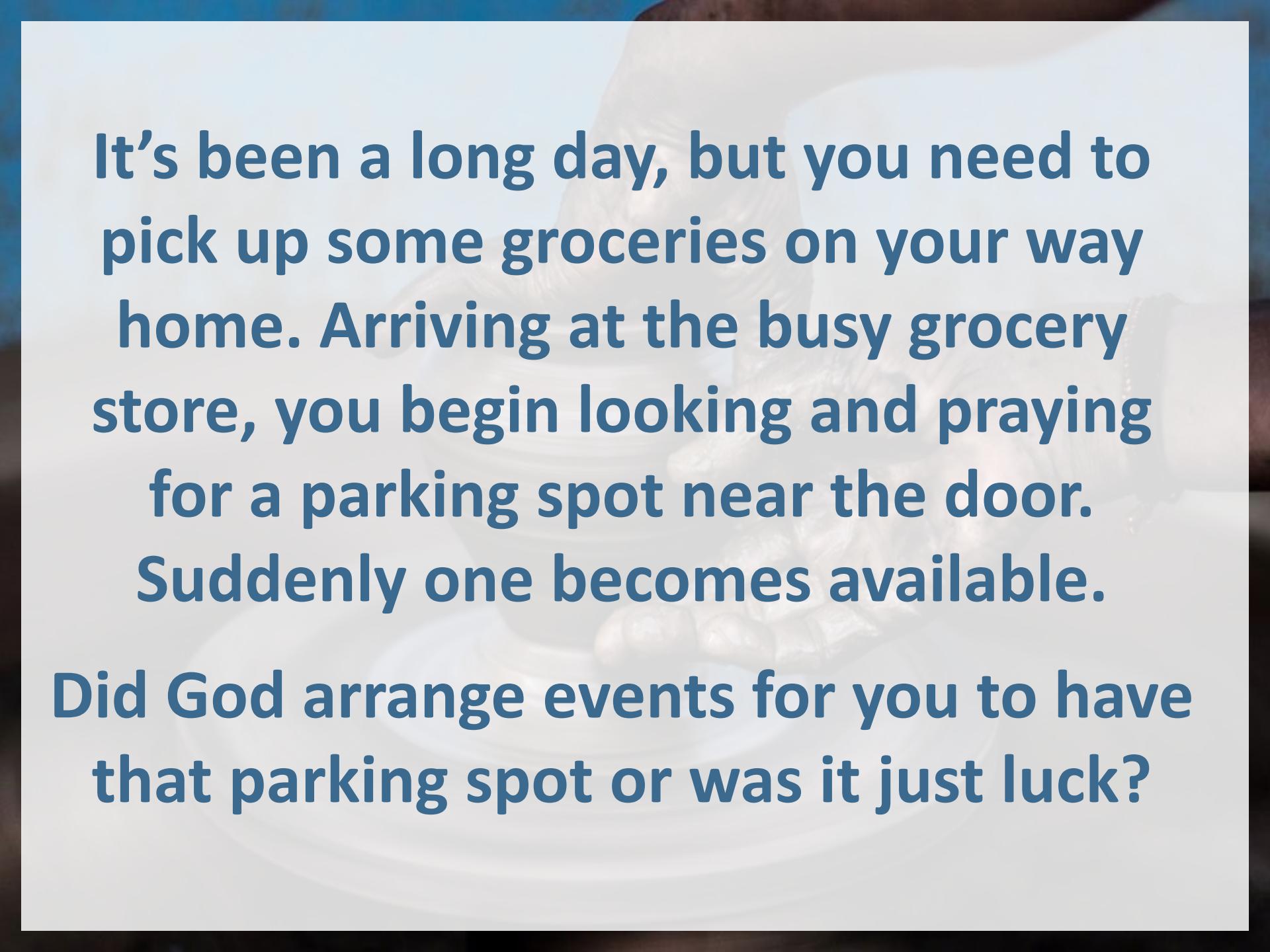


Week 1



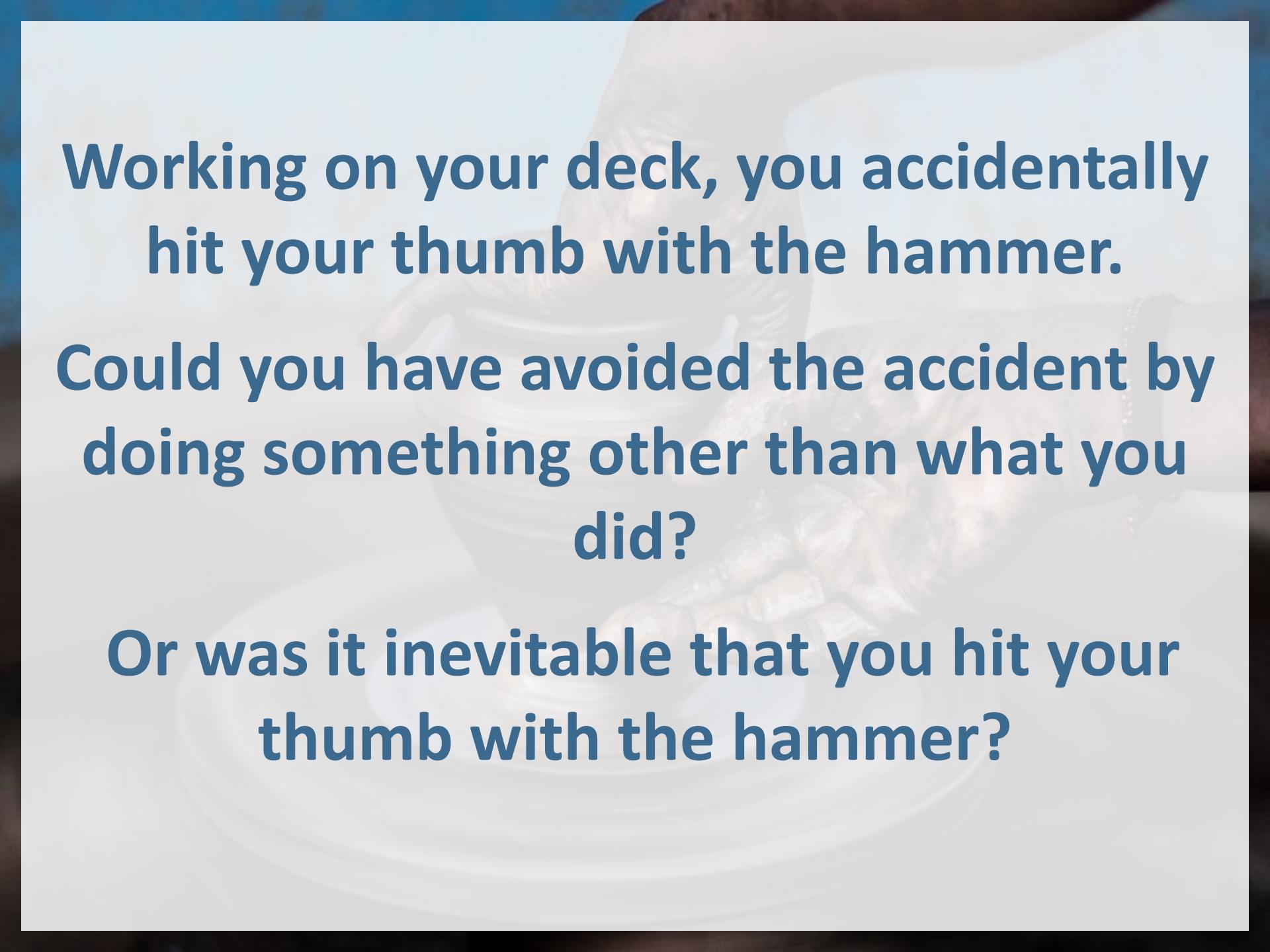
The Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man

Travis Echols

A soft-focus photograph of a woman with long hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a light-colored top and is holding a large grocery bag with both hands. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting.

It's been a long day, but you need to pick up some groceries on your way home. Arriving at the busy grocery store, you begin looking and praying for a parking spot near the door. Suddenly one becomes available.

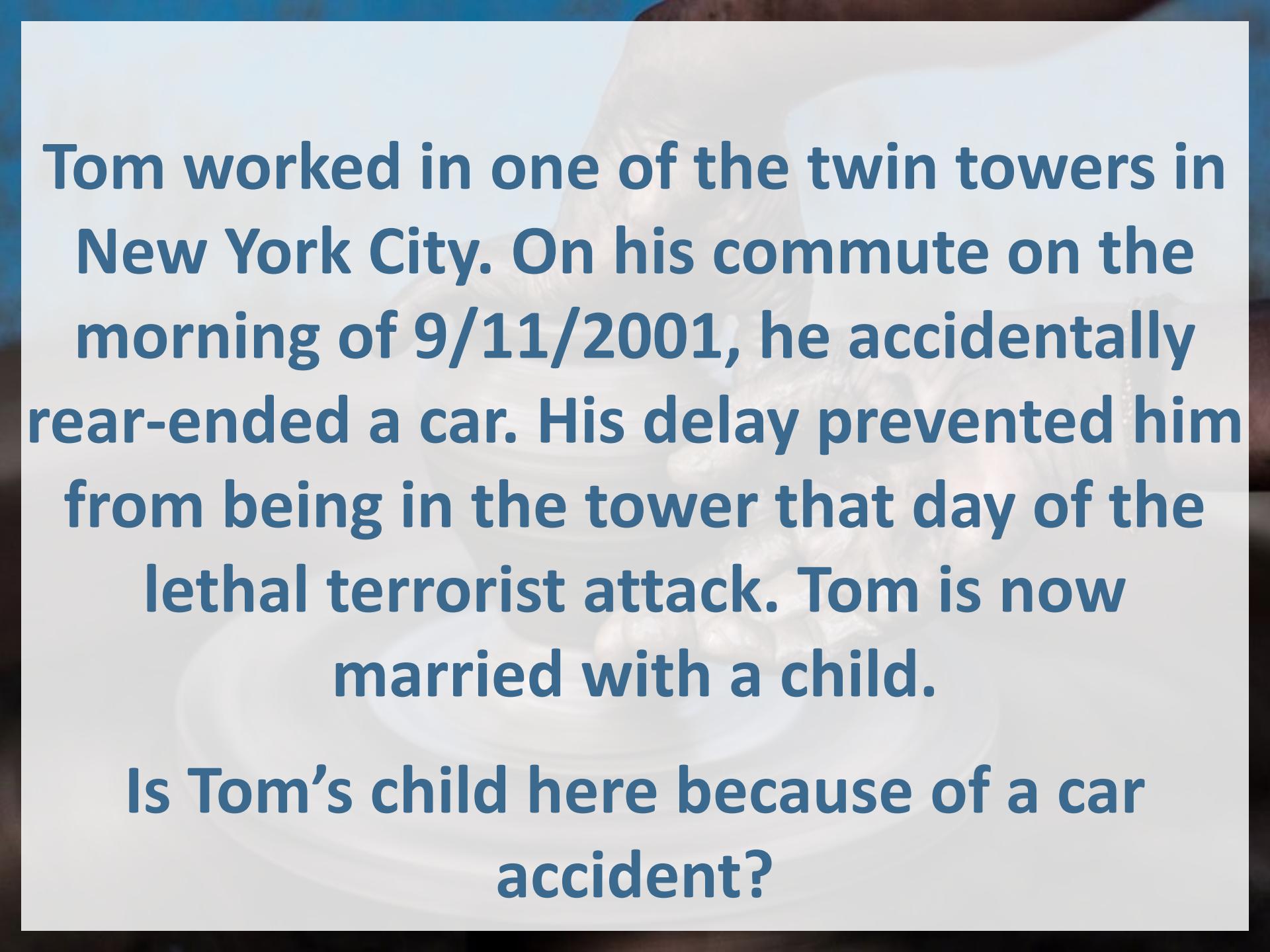
Did God arrange events for you to have that parking spot or was it just luck?



Working on your deck, you accidentally hit your thumb with the hammer.

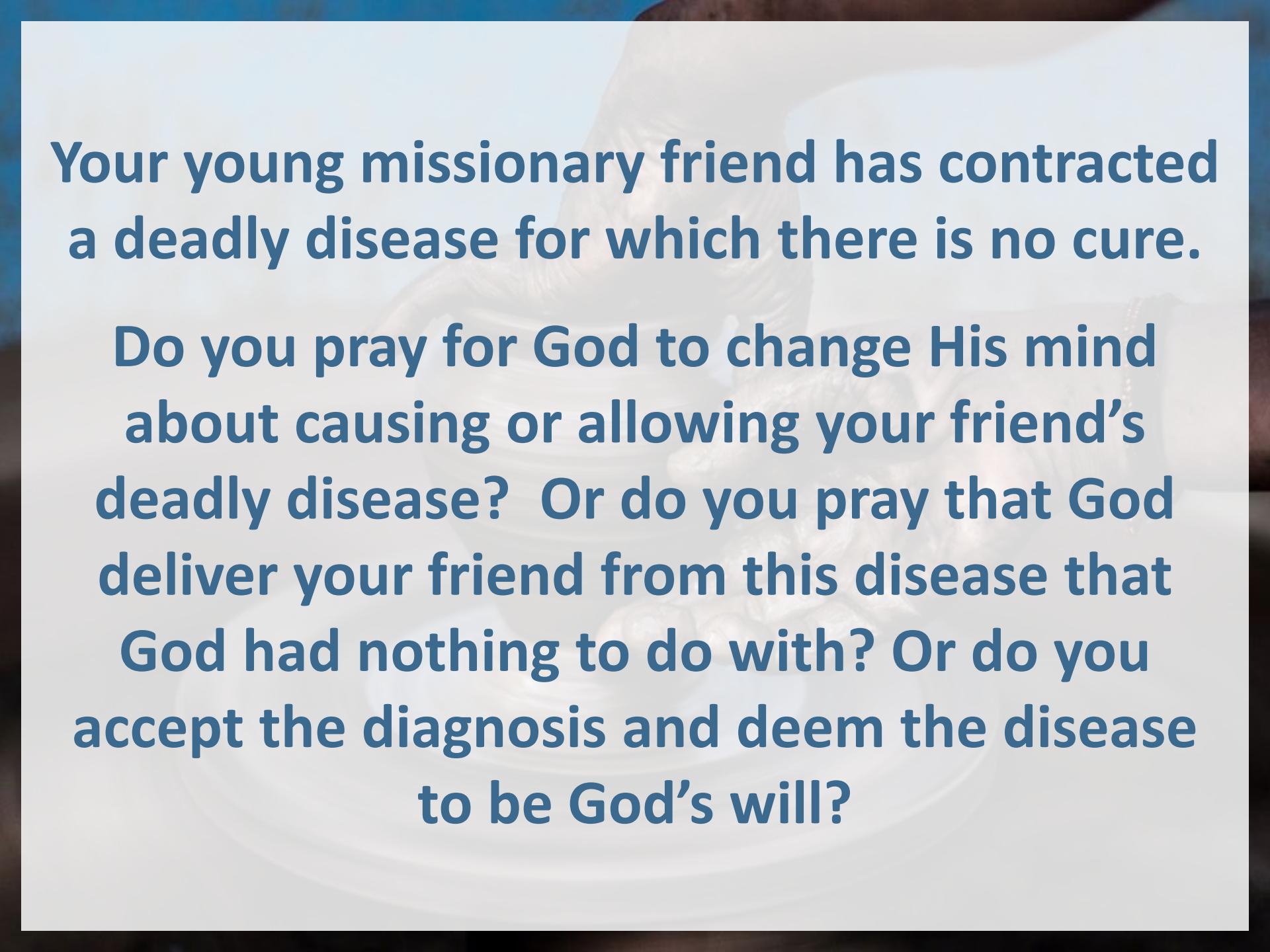
Could you have avoided the accident by doing something other than what you did?

Or was it inevitable that you hit your thumb with the hammer?



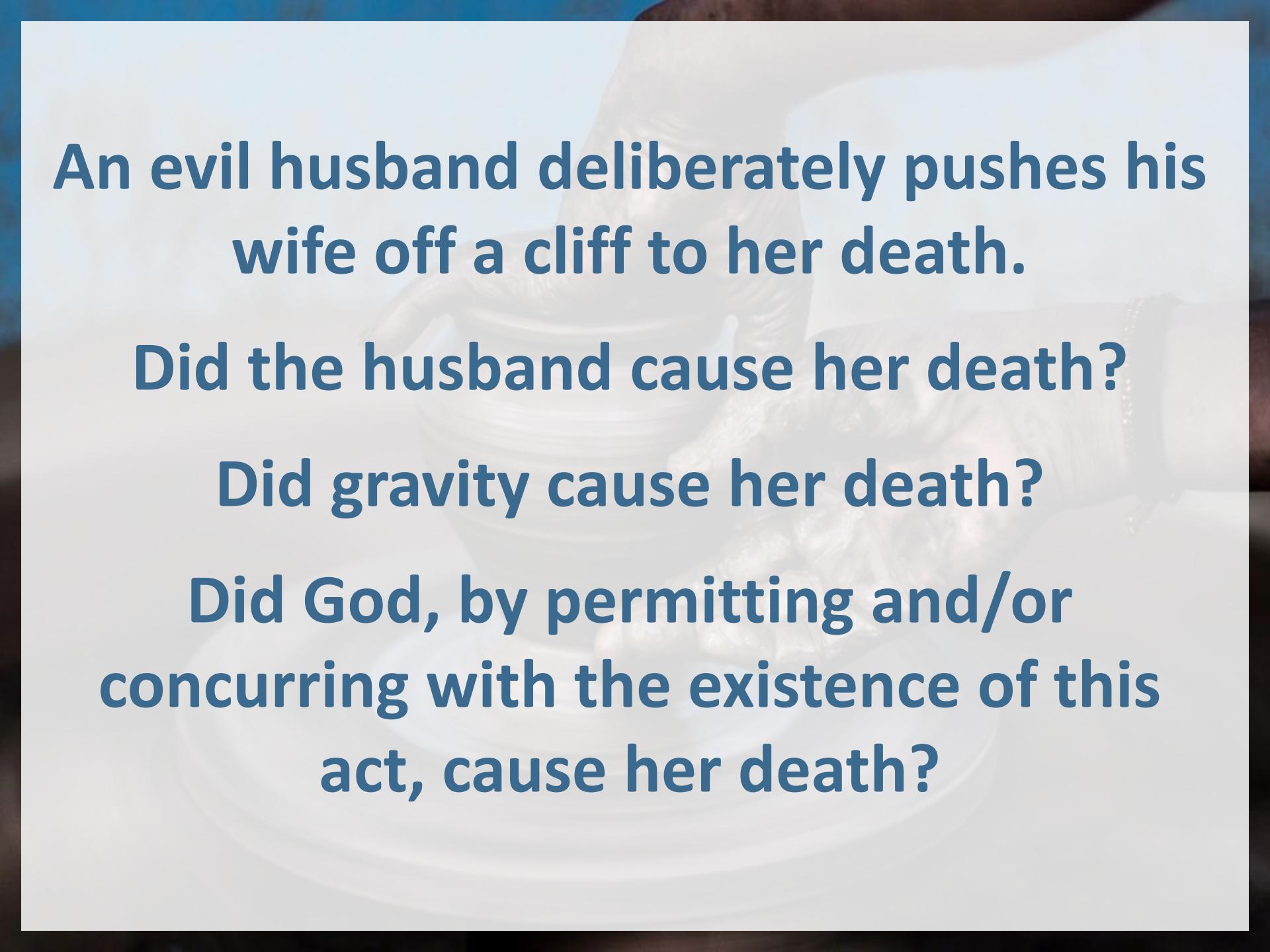
Tom worked in one of the twin towers in New York City. On his commute on the morning of 9/11/2001, he accidentally rear-ended a car. His delay prevented him from being in the tower that day of the lethal terrorist attack. Tom is now married with a child.

Is Tom's child here because of a car accident?

A soft-focus photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a light-colored top, holding a small child in her arms. They are both looking down at something in her hands, possibly a book or a small object.

**Your young missionary friend has contracted
a deadly disease for which there is no cure.**

**Do you pray for God to change His mind
about causing or allowing your friend's
deadly disease? Or do you pray that God
deliver your friend from this disease that
God had nothing to do with? Or do you
accept the diagnosis and deem the disease
to be God's will?**

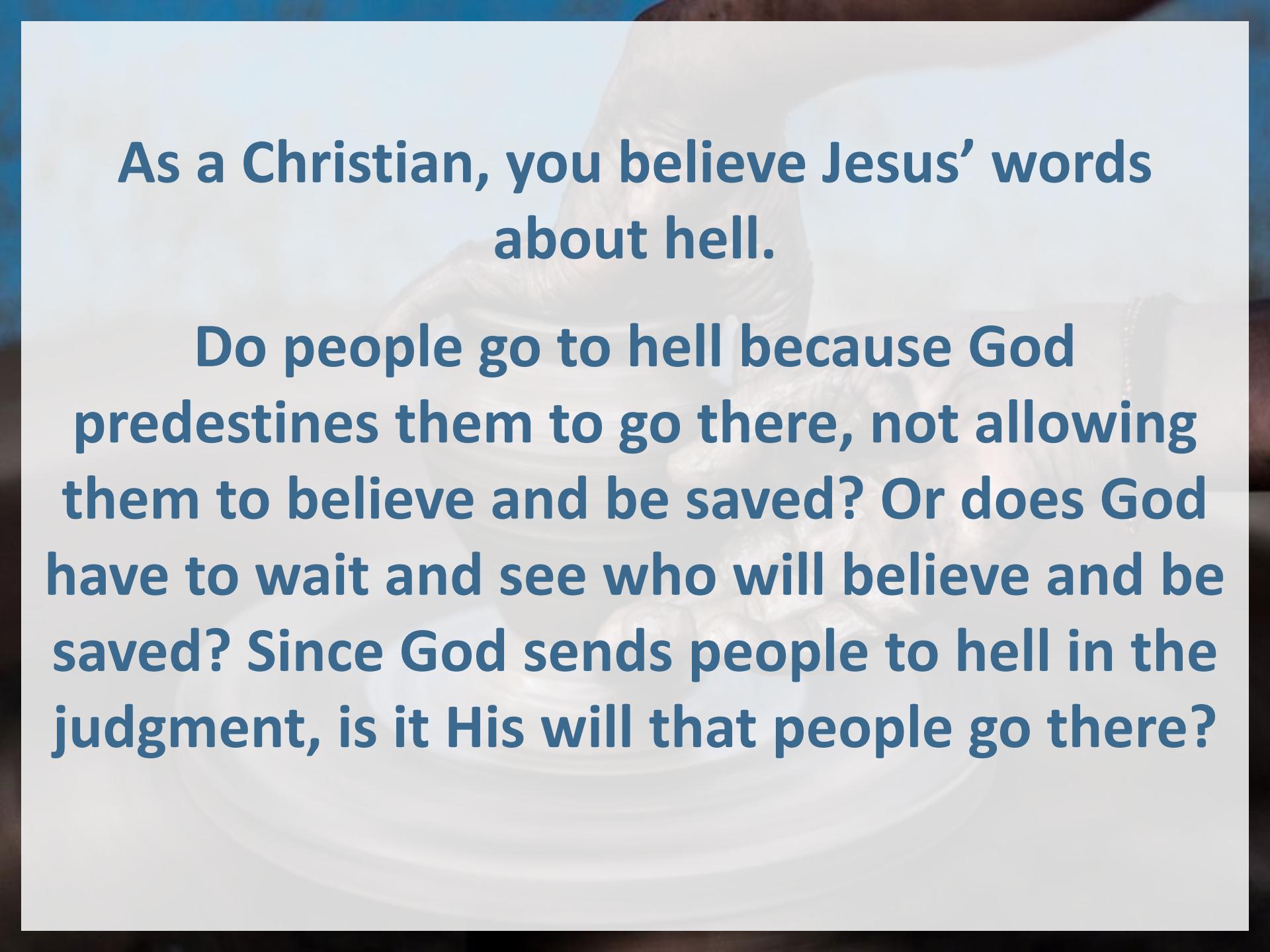
A woman in a white dress is shown from the chest up, looking down at her hands. Her expression is somber. The background is a soft-focus landscape.

An evil husband deliberately pushes his wife off a cliff to her death.

Did the husband cause her death?

Did gravity cause her death?

Did God, by permitting and/or concurring with the existence of this act, cause her death?



As a Christian, you believe Jesus' words about hell.

Do people go to hell because God predestines them to go there, not allowing them to believe and be saved? Or does God have to wait and see who will believe and be saved? Since God sends people to hell in the judgment, is it His will that people go there?

Course Overview

Week 1

The Landscape:

- Scriptural Considerations
- Philosophical Considerations
- The Challenge of Integration
- Overview of Six Common Views
- Definitions

Weeks 2 and 3

A Deeper Dive:

- Open Theism
- Arminianism
- Molinism
- Thomism
- Calvinism
- Fatalism

Week 4

Review:

- Certainty/Necessity Fallacy
- Persisting Mysteries
- Review of Six Views
- Conclusions

Course Overview

This topic greatly affects how we view God and our role in God's universe. Thus, it deserves prayerful and thoughtful analysis.

It is intellectually challenging, with many difficult philosophical and scriptural pieces to analyze and integrate. Thus, it deserves patience with ourselves and others.

Course Overview

My Goal

- A. To promote a deeper and broader understanding of the issues involved.
- B. To present a high-level approach for thinking about it.
- C. To recommend resources for further study.
- D. To present some of my conclusions for your consideration.

Course Overview

Disclaimer

- A. This survey study is far from exhaustive, focusing more on the underlying systematic theology issues associated with coherently integrating the scriptural information.
- B. In-depth philosophical and exegetical work is not included in this study. Resources are voluminous, especially on the scriptural soteriological aspect of divine providence.

Course Overview

Disclaimer

- C. There can be overlap in the six views presented. I tried to present the more common views that logically cohere, but variations across the views are also common.
- D. There are more than six views. Terrance Tiessen reviews eleven in his book *Providence & Prayer*. See Resources section at the end of this presentation.

Scriptural Considerations

Broad Motifs Speaking to God's Sovereignty

1. God is the Creator, Possessor, and Ruler of all things
2. God is the ultimate personal Cause of everything that happens
3. God elects His people
4. God is the unacknowledged source of good fortune or success

Scriptural Considerations

Broad Motifs Speaking to Man's Freedom & Responsibility

1. People face a multitude of divine exhortations and commands
2. People are said to obey, believe, and choose God
3. People often sin and rebel against God
4. People's sins are judged by God
5. People are tested by God
6. People receive divine rewards
7. The elect are responsible to respond to God's gracious initiatives
8. Prayers are not dictations or mere show-pieces
9. God pleads with sinners to repent and be saved

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
 - But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. (Gen 50:20)
 - And the Lord said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. (Ex 4:21)
 - Therefore look! The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you. (1Kings 22:23)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
 - I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. (Job 42:2)
 - All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?”(Dan 4:35)
 - But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. (Psalm 115:3)
 - Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations. (Jer 1:5)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
 - The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord. (Prov 16:33)
 - He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matt 5:45)
 - Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (Matt 6:26)
 - Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. (Matt 10:29)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
 - All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. (Jn 6:37)
 - No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. (Jn 6:44)
 - And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” (Jn 6:65)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
 - Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death (Acts 2:23)
 - For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. (Acts 4:27-28)
 - And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
- For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Rom 8:29-30)
- He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will... In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph 1:4-5, 11)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
 - ...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. (1Pet 1:19-20)
 - And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2Thes 2:11)
 - Who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2Tim 1:9)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
- And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.” As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.” What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.”
(continued...)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on God's sovereignty
- ...Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? (Rom 9:10-24)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on man's free will
 - And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen 2:16-17)
 - So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. (Gen 4:6)
 - And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." (Gen 22:12)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

➤ A few verses on man's free will

- Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them. (Deut 4:5-6)
- I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: (Deut 30:19)
- And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve. (Josh 24:15)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

➤ A few verses on man's free will

- How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him."
(1Kings 18:21)
- The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him;
...(continued)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

➤ A few verses on man's free will

- ...continued because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? says the Lord God, and not that he should turn from his ways and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die. Yet you say, The way of the Lord is not fair. Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? ...continued)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

➤ A few verses on man's free will

- ...continued) When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair? "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God.
...(continued)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

➤ A few verses on man's free will

- ...continued) “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”; (Eze 18:20-32)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

➤ A few verses on man's free will

- My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared out its stones, and planted it with the choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; So He expected it to bring forth good grapes, But it brought forth wild grapes. “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard. What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?” (Isa 5:1-4)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

➤ A few verses on man's free will

- Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you.” (Matt 11:20-22)
- So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God.” (Mk 11:22)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on man's free will
 - "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! (Matt 23:37)
 - But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him. (Luke 7:30)
 - You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. (Acts 7:51)

Scriptural Considerations

Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on man's free will
 - Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1Cor 10:12-13)
 - The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. (2Thes 2:9-12)

Scriptural Considerations

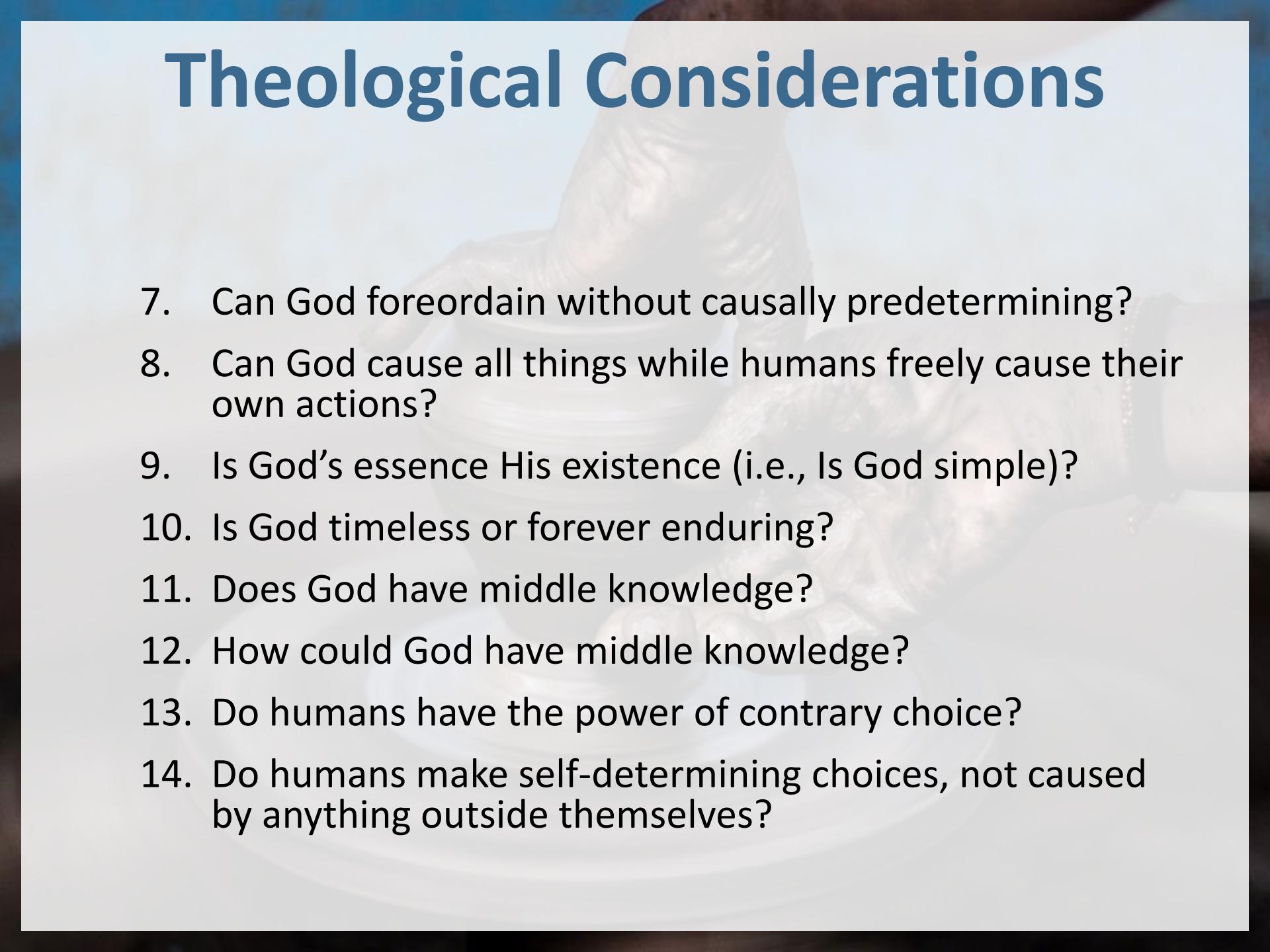
Relevant Biblical Passages

- A few verses on man's free will
 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (Jn 3:16)
 - And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Rev 22:17)

Theological Considerations

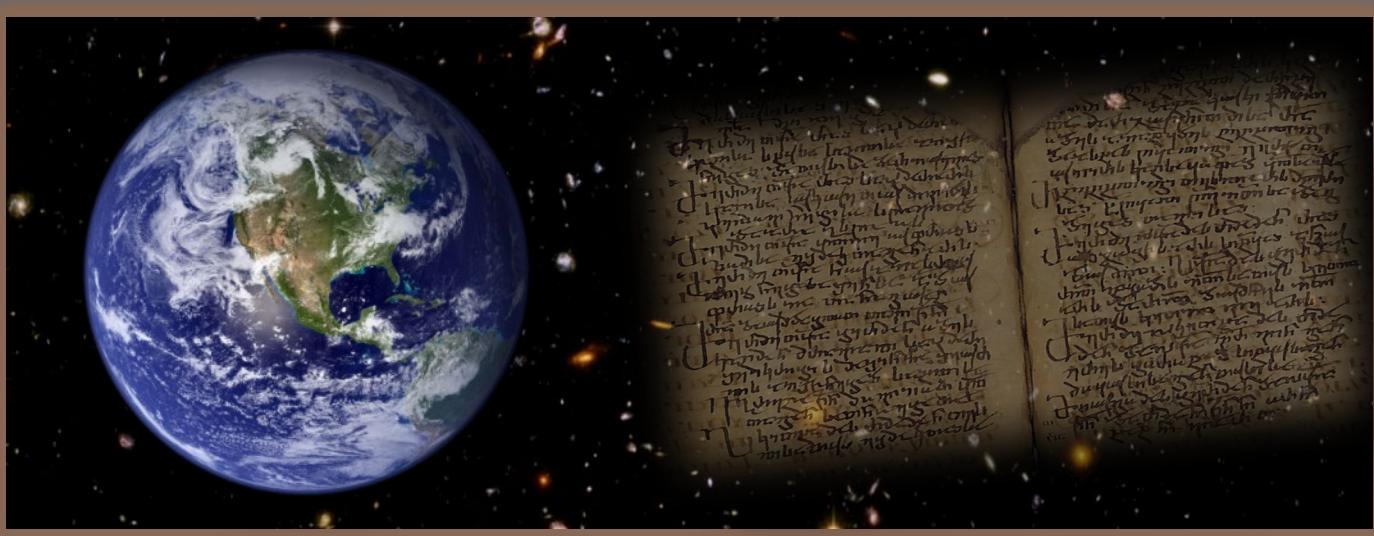
1. Does God know all things?
2. Does God know future things? How does God know future things?
3. Does God foreknow human free choices?
4. Does God foreknowing human free choices make them necessary (i.e., Does God's certainty entail man's necessity? Is God's knowledge of the future causal, predetermining the future?)
5. Has God foreordained all things?
6. Has God causally determined all things?

Theological Considerations

- 
7. Can God foreordain without causally predetermining?
 8. Can God cause all things while humans freely cause their own actions?
 9. Is God's essence His existence (i.e., Is God simple)?
 10. Is God timeless or forever enduring?
 11. Does God have middle knowledge?
 12. How could God have middle knowledge?
 13. Do humans have the power of contrary choice?
 14. Do humans make self-determining choices, not caused by anything outside themselves?

Philosophical Considerations

God's Revelation



GENERAL REVELATION
(ROM 1:20)

SPECIAL REVELATION
(2TIM 3:16)

Philosophical Considerations

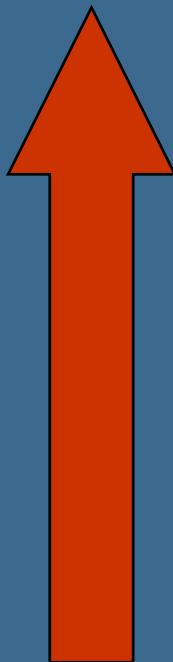
Some things from general revelation we must first accept in order to understand the Bible

- The reality of the physical world outside of our minds
- That our senses are generally reliable (even to see/hear the words of the Bible)
- The difference between things (e.g., earth, man, tree, stars)
- The basic laws of logic
- A correct concept of God (e.g., Does God literally have wings and feathers [Ps 91:4]?)
- That the Bible has an objective meaning the author(s) intended
- That the Bible was written/translated in a language we can understand
- The correct use of history and language
- The correct starting method of interpreting the Bible (this cannot come from the Bible)



Philosophical Considerations

The Order of Disciplines



Hermeneutics:

How do we understand what is communicated?

Linguistics:

How do we communicate what we know?

Epistemology:

How do we know that which is?

Metaphysics:

What is that which is?

Reality:

That which is.

Philosophical Considerations

The text of the Bible communicates objective truth that can be understood. Some parts are difficult to understand, but not impossible. Continued growth in understanding comes through praise, prayer, humility, study, and obedience.

Also, since God used human writers to pen his word in human language to communicate to human beings, sound principles of human language interpretation and application should always be observed.

The Holy Spirit uses means to teach us. The Holy Spirit's commandment to study cannot be disobeyed without peril. The Holy Spirit is not a shortcut for sound thinking and diligent study.

Philosophical Considerations

A body of truth that is logically, experientially, and spiritually robust is supported by four elements of knowledge, working together (not isolated), and grounded by foundational principles which must be accepted for any knowledge to be possible.

The Four Pillars of Knowledge

Sense Experience

- Our sense perception is generally reliable.
- Natural sciences obtain knowledge from sensory information.
- The scientific method uses the inductive method of reasoning to draw conclusions from particulars observed by the senses.

Sense data can provide knowledge of that which is beyond the empirical realm. Some immaterial things that cannot be grounded or explained by the reductionist view of naturalism are consciousness, life meaning and purpose, free will, laws of logic, the existence and applicability of mathematics, music, love, beauty, humor, moral values, principles of justice, human dignity and worth, personal identity and responsibility.

Sound Reason

- Faith and reason can work together (there are good reasons to believe some things).
- Deductive reasoning guarantees the conclusion from the premises, arguing from the general to the particulars.
- Inductive reasoning makes the conclusion more probable than its competitors, arguing from the particulars to the general.

Logic alone can only demonstrate what is possibly real, not what is actually real. (i.e., Logic alone can refute a self-contradictory truth claim, but it cannot validate an internally consistent truth claim). Also, the first principles of reasoning cannot be explained by reasoning. Insisting on a "why" for first principles denies that they are first principles and instead leads to an infinite regress in which no knowledge is possible.

Religious Experience

- Awareness of transcendence from ordinary experience (e.g., beauty, goodness, complexity/design)
- Supernatural experience (e.g., transformed life, answered prayer)
- Personal manifestation of divine presence (e.g., a sense of communion, indwelling, gifting, empowering)

Personal experience is not self-interpreting. An independent, objective truth source is needed to understand the meaning of subjective experience. Without an objective truth source by which to judge experience, no experientially-based truth claim could ever be considered wrong.

Reliable Sources

- We cannot reason and experience everything.
- Much of what we know is based on trust in the word/testimony of others (e.g., scientific data, historical events, facts from foreign locations).
- Trust is generally established/strengthened by the prestige of the authority's credentials, number of authorities who hold belief, and persistence of belief.
- We can have objective and adequate knowledge about the past through the testimony of reliable sources.

Other knowledge sources must be used to justify the source to be reliable and adjudicate between authorities when they disagree. Historical facts and their meaning are not self-interpreting, but are understood within the context of the interpreter's overall worldview.

The self-evident reality of the physical world (including myself and other people), and the resultant first principles of thought (i.e., the basic laws of logic: law of identity, law of non-contradiction, law of excluded middle, law of cause and effect) which are actually undeniable and/or existentially necessary to live. (See [http://studies.travisechols.com/We can know.pdf](http://studies.travisechols.com/We%20can%20know.pdf))

Philosophical Considerations

The Correct Interpretation of the Bible

Built on a solid philosophical, spiritual, theological, and hermeneutical foundation, integrating the appropriate disciplines of grammar, history, and theology will lead to greater and greater levels of correct understanding of the Bible

Grammatical Interpretation

- Literary genre classification
- Meaning of separate words
- Meaning of words in their connection
- Figurative use of words
- Interpretation of the thought

Historical Interpretation

- Personal characteristics of author or speaker
- Social circumstances of the author
- Circumstances peculiar to the writings

Theological Interpretation

- The Bible as a unity
- The fuller sense of scripture
- The symbolic and typical interpretation of scripture
- The implied sense of scripture

3. Starting points: a) a right standing and walk in Christ, b) a proper conception of the Bible, c) applying the grammatical-historical method (any other approach undermines objectivity), and d) performing exegesis before application.

2. Hermeneutical spiral: Changeable aspects of the interpreter's pre-understanding can be adjusted by interacting with the truths of the text and adjudication between conflicting interpretations can proceed by reference to unchangeable first principles.

1. First Principles: The self-evident reality of the external world and the undeniable first principles of logic, truth, and language provide a point of contact between the writer and the reader which allows objectivity in interpretation and a correct understanding of the biblical text.

Sources: Louis Berkhof *Principles of Biblical Interpretation*; Thomas Howe *The Jesus Quest* chapters 13 and 14

Philosophical Considerations

Hermeneutics

- Biblical theology—the careful exegesis of a biblical book or corpus (Pauline, synoptic, John, etc) to understand what God is saying through that book or corpus at that time in history with that particular vocabulary

Philosophical Considerations

Hermeneutics

- Systematic theology—the careful arrangement of truths in a self-consistent whole, relating each text of the Bible with all other texts of the Bible*

*Systematic theology, more broadly speaking, harmonizes natural theology (from God's general revelation, i.e., nature) with biblical theology (from God's special revelation, i.e., the Bible)

Philosophical Considerations

Hermeneutics

- Careful exegesis should always precede comparison, harmonization, and application (i.e., Biblical theology should precede systematic theology*)

*Systematic theology in the narrow sense of the word (i.e., reconciling verses from various books of the Bible)

Philosophical Considerations

Hermeneutics

- The Bible interpreter should start with the immediate context, then move to the wider context, then the book, then the corpus, then finally to the entire canon of scripture

Philosophical Considerations

Hermeneutics

- Failure to do good biblical theology can cause you to blur over important distinctions and distort your doctrinal understanding of a text with a pre-decided system or confession

Philosophical Considerations

Hermeneutics

- Failure to do good systematic theology can leave you with a disarranged and/or incoherent understanding of the doctrines of the Christian faith*

*The “analogy of faith” principle states that since all scriptures are harmoniously united with no contradictions, every proposed interpretation of any passage must be compared with what other parts of the Bible teach

Acts 2:23

g1012. βούλή *boulē*; from [1014](#);
volition, i.e. (objectively) advice, or
(by implication) purpose: — + advise,
counsel, will.

g3724. ὅρίζω *horizō*; from [3725](#); to
mark out or bound (“horizon”), i.e.
(figuratively) to appoint, decree,
specify: — declare, determine, limit,
ordain.

g4268. πρόγνωσις *prognōsis*;
from [4267](#); forethought: —
foreknowledge.

23 τοῦτον τῇ ὥρισμένῃ βούλῃ καὶ προγνώσει τοῦ θεοῦ ἔκδοτον λαβόντες, διὰ χειρῶν
Him - by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge - of God being delivered ye have taken and by hands
g5126 g3588 g3724 g1012 g2532 g4268 g3588 g2316 g1560 g2983 g1223 g5495

ἀνόμων προσπήξαντες ἀνείλετε:

wicked have crucified and slain
g0459 g4362 g0337

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Acts 4:26-28

26 Παρέστησαν οι βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς, καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες συνήχθησαν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸν
stood up - The kings - of the earth and - the rulers were gathered (together) - together
g3936 g3588 go935 g3588 g1093 g2532 g3588 go758 g4863 g1909 g3588 go846

κατὰ τοῦ κυρίου, καὶ κατὰ τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ.

against - the Lord and against - Christ his
g2596 g3588 g2962 g2532 g2596 g3588 g5547 g0846

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 συνήχθησαν γάρ ἐπ' ἀληθείας ἐπὶ τὸν ἄγιον παῖδά σου Ἰησοῦν ὃν ἔχρισας,
were gathered together For of a truth against - holy
g4863 g1063 g1909 g0225 g1909 g3588 g4309 g4253
hast anointed

Ἡρόδης τε καὶ Πόντιος Πιλάτος, σὺν ἔθνεσιν
Herod both and Pontius Pilate with the Gentile
g2264 g5037 g2532 g4194 g4091 g4862 g1484

g4309. προορίζω *proorizō*; from [4253](#)
and [3724](#); to limit in advance, i.e.
(figuratively) predetermine: —
determine before, ordain,
predestinate.

For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together.

28 ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἡ χείρ σου καὶ ἡ βουλὴ σου προώρισεν γενέσθαι.
For to do whatsoever - hand thy and - counsel thy determined before to be done
g4160 g3745 g3588 g5495 g4675 g2532 g3588 g1012 g4675 g4309 g1096

For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

1Peter 1:2

Peter, an a
Pontus, Galat

g4268. πρόγνωσις *prognōsis*;
from 4267; forethought: –
foreknowledge.

strangers scattered throughout
Ithynia,

2 κατὰ πρόγνωσιν θεοῦ πατρός, ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος, εἰς
according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto
g2596 g4268 g2316 g3962 g1722 g0038 g4151 g1519

ὑπακοὴν καὶ ράντισμὸν αἵματος Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ
obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ Grace unto you and
g5218 g2532 g4473 g0129 g2424 g5547 g5485 g5213 g2532

εἰρήνη πληθυνθείη.

peace be multiplied
g1515 g4129

*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through
sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of
Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.*

Example of Exegesis (1Peter 1:2)

1 Peter 1:1, 2

“Peter [writes his letter] to elect sojourners of the dispersion . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”

In spite of difficulties of interpretation, one seems reasonably safe in concluding that election, here, is subordinate to foreknowledge. The order is, “elect . . . according to foreknowledge.”

Nothing answers the question, Foreknowledge of what? Any answer we may arrive at will reflect our understanding of the meaning of “foreknowledge” here. That word (*prognōsis* or *proginōskō*) is used 7 times in the New Testament (all by Peter or Paul, in epistles or speeches). Only twice does the word refer directly to the plan of salvation (here and Rom. 8:29; see above). It can be foreknowledge of

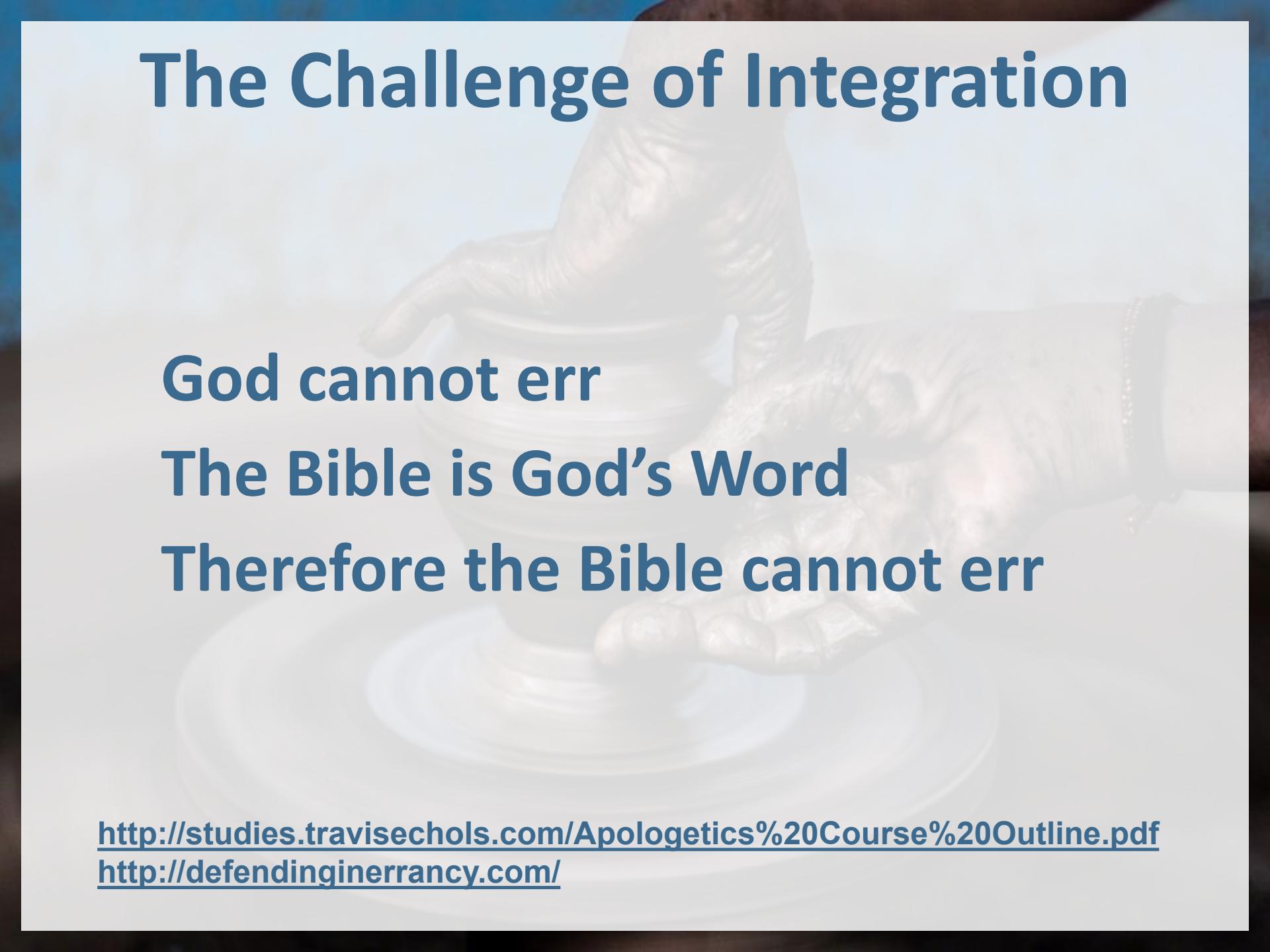
Example of Exegesis (1Peter 1:2)

persons (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:20; Acts 26:5—although things are incorporated in this last reference) or of *things* (Acts 2:23; 2 Pet. 3:17). The word obviously has a variety of meanings.

1. Once (Acts 26:5), perhaps twice (Rom. 11:2), it means *knowledge of the past* ("knowing previously").
2. Sometimes it means (mere) *prescience* or precognition (Acts 2:23; 2 Pet. 3:17), although this idea may incorporate the added notion of "foresight" in the sense of wise foresight.
3. *Pre-planning* (thus close to foreordination) is a possible meaning in 1 Peter 1:20 (the KJV prepared us for this with its translation of "foreknown" as "foreordained").
4. And *forelove* may be the meaning in Romans 8:29, as discussed above—in which case it is close to the idea of election, a loving acknowledgement by God of those who are His own.

Of the four shades of meaning just indicated, only two seem possible here in 1 Peter 1:1, 2, the second and third. (The fourth is ruled out on the grounds that making it equal to election would be tautology; then Peter would be saying, "Elect according to the election of God.") To give it the meaning of "foreplanning" would fit well enough: election according to the foreplanning of God. So would the meaning of prescience, with or without the added notion of foresight. Without any dogmatism, the meaning that strikes me as most likely is prescience, with a hint of wise foreplanning.

The Challenge of Integration



God cannot err

The Bible is God's Word

Therefore the Bible cannot err

<http://studies.travisechols.com/Apologetics%20Course%20Outline.pdf>
<http://defendinginerrancy.com/>

The Challenge of Integration

Contradictory propositions

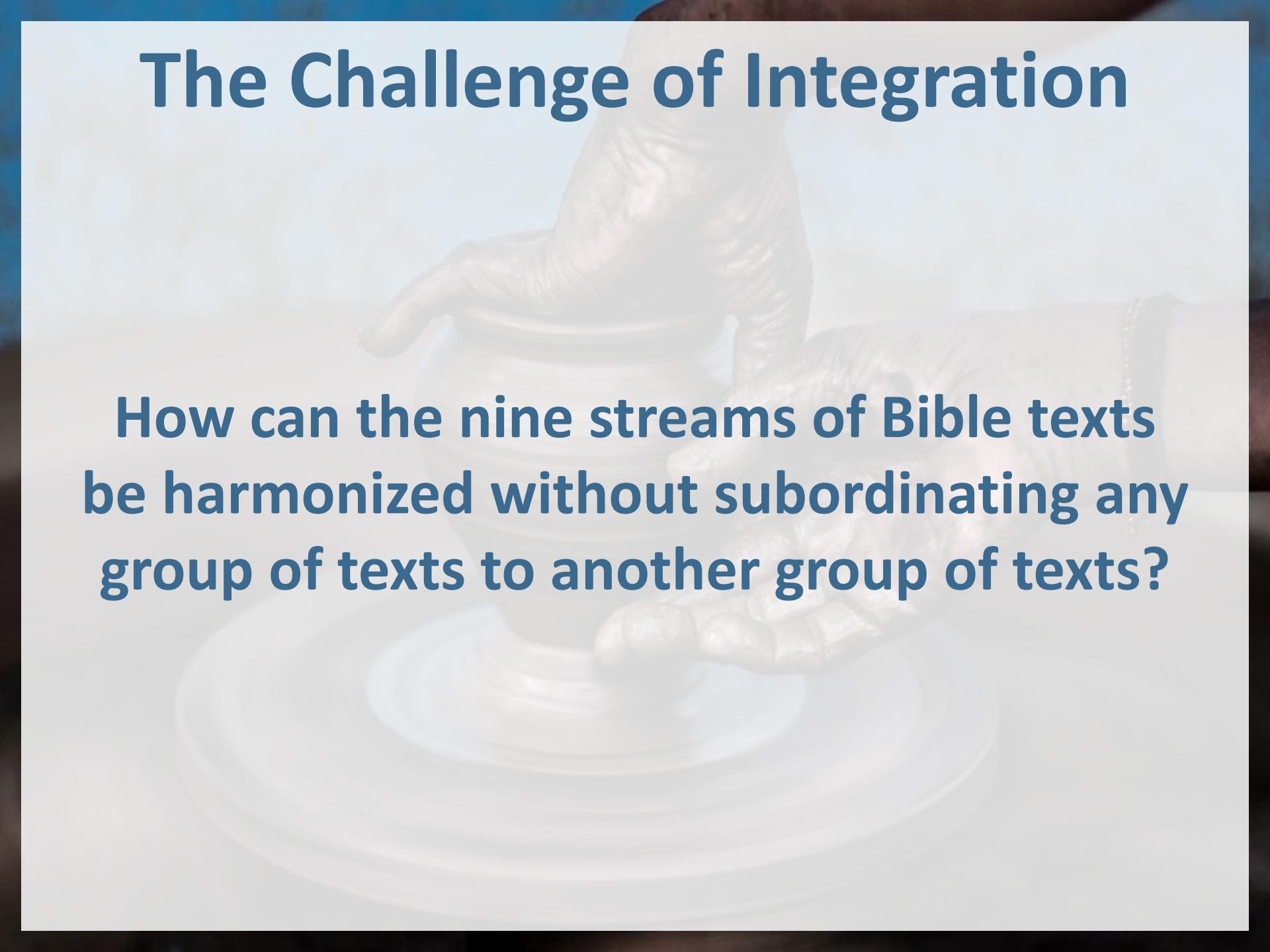
- A. God ordains all that we do, necessarily and inevitably such that we are not free to do other than what we do
 - B. God does not ordain all that we do. We are self-determining agents who are free to do other than what we do
-

- A. We are the only efficient cause of what we do
- B. We are not the only efficient cause of what we do

The Challenge of Integration

- Due to the foundational and actually undeniable law of non-contradiction, opposing propositions cannot both be true. To embrace contradictory propositions would not be going *beyond reason*, but *against reason*, and is self-refuting.
- Therefore, we should avoid chalking up contradictions to mystery or the inscrutability of God, because logic comes from God, who is rational. At the least, holding opposing views in tension should be a last resort after all avenues are exhausted.
- If our conclusions contradict, we should go back to the drawing board. We should carefully retrace our steps, examining all our presuppositions, premises, and logic, looking for our misstep along the way.

The Challenge of Integration



**How can the nine streams of Bible texts
be harmonized without subordinating any
group of texts to another group of texts?**

Overview of Six Common Views

1. Open Theism

- God ordains the ends, but not all the means, since God cannot know future human free choices

2. Arminianism

- God ordains the ends, but not all the means, by knowing what all human free choices will be

3. Molinism

- God ordains the ends and means by knowing logically prior to creation what all human free choices would be under any circumstances

Overview of Six Common Views

4. Thomism

- God ordains the ends and means, being the first cause of all human choices, but not the only cause

5. Calvinism

- God ordains the ends and means by causally determining all human choices, though the choices are voluntary

6. Fatalism

- God ordains the ends and means by knowing all future human choices, making all choices necessary and inevitable

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally						
God knows counterfactuals						
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity						
God's Control						
Man's freedom						

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind						
Prayer affects outcome						
Election to Salvation						
Drawing to Salvation						

Definitions

Cause

- That which produces an effect. In his theory of change and movement, Greek philosopher Aristotle identified four fundamental types of causation. Aristotelian philosophies and theologies such as Thomism may refer to these different causes to harmonize divine determinism with libertarian freedom.
- Material cause is the material that composes the moving or changing of things.
- Formal cause is the arrangement, shape or appearance of the thing changing or moving.
- Efficient cause is the immediate agent in the production of an effect, consisting of things apart from the thing being changed or moved
- Final cause is the end or purpose of a change or movement and is that for the sake of which a thing is what it is.

Definitions

Concurrence

- God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.

Conditional election (to salvation)

- God has chosen individuals to salvation in accordance with His foreknowledge of their faith. Or, God has chosen to salvation those individuals whom he foreknew would believe.

Contingent

- A contingent truth is a true statement whose negation does not imply a contradiction in reality, such that the negation could have been the case. A contingent truth is the opposite of a necessary truth.

Definitions

Corporate election

- The belief that God has chosen a group (i.e. the church) to salvation. This view does not require that people be individually chosen to salvation, but that individuals are instead elect by virtue of their freely believing unto salvation and thereby becoming a part of the elect church.

Counterfactual

- A conditional contrary-to-fact hypothetical if-clause statement whose antecedent (the first half of the statement) is false and whose consequent (last half of the statement) describes how the world would have been if the antecedent had obtained. The counterfactual takes the form of a subjunctive conditional (e.g. If kangaroos didn't have tails, they would topple over). A true counterfactual is one which corresponds to reality whether actualized or not (e.g., if kangaroos would in fact topple over if they had no tails, this is a true counterfactual statement).

Definitions

Determinism

- In the scientific sense, determinism is the theory that each event is necessarily as it is because of the factors or events that precede it. Theological determinism believes that events are as they are because God has determined they should be so.

Exegesis

- The hermeneutical discipline of extracting from a text what the author meant to his envisaged reader. Meaning can reside in the mind of the author as the meaner, it can reside in the text as meant, and it can reside in the reader as meaning. A biblical exegete may get hints and helps from extra-biblical sources, but the surest way of determining the intent of a biblical author is by reading what he wrote.

Definitions

Free Will

- Compatibilistic Free Will: A person's choices are free even though they are determined by God, and the person could not have chosen otherwise. Compatibilist Calvinists, especially those of the persuasion of Jonathan Edwards believe that a person has free will if they choose voluntarily, spontaneously or willingly, based on their nature and desire, without coercion. This limited freedom is "compatible" with determinism.
- Libertarian Free Will: Humans are free agents in that no created temporally antecedent causes to the free act of choice are sufficient to determine that act. A person's choices, while influenced, are contingent, not necessary. The "power of contrary choice" is a libertarian view, but power of contrary choice is not essential for libertarianism. This type of freedom is "incompatible" with causal determinism.

Definitions

Hard determinism

- Hard determinism, as contrasted with "soft determinism," is mechanistic in its assumption that an event is completely the product of the preceding state so that the idea that the event was brought about by someone's will is completely illusory.

Hermeneutics

- The discipline of understanding what is communicated. Biblical hermeneutics are the rules of Bible interpretation used throughout exegesis and application. The Holy Spirit influences through the entire process of gaining a correct mental grasp (meaning) and its significance--but the Holy Spirit is essential in the latter. The interpreter must start with the proper hermeneutic: grammatical-historical. A hermeneutical spiral (interpretational adjustments based on what has previously been understood from the text) can then be built on unchangeable pre-understandings.

Definitions

Indeterminism

- In the theological sense, indeterminism is the belief that most, if not all, events are determined neither by God nor by the preceding factors. All other things being equal, the event could have been different than it actually was if the intelligent agents involved had chosen to act differently.

Individual election

- God has chosen which individuals will be saved, whether conditionally (using foreknowledge of who would or will believe) or unconditionally (without using foreknowledge of who would or will believe).

Definitions

Middle knowledge

- Most often associated with Luis de Molina, who asserted that God has three kinds of knowledge: What *could* happen is God's natural knowledge. What *will* happen is God's free knowledge. Logically between these, what *would* happen under any possible circumstances is God's middle knowledge. Technically, it is pre-volitional knowledge of subjunctive conditionals regarding indeterministic events. It is God's knowledge of all contingently true conditional propositions (i.e., counterfactuals), including propositions about creaturely free actions. For example, logically prior to His creative decree, God knew that *if Peter were in circumstances C, he would freely deny Christ three times.*

Definitions

Necessary

- A necessary truth is a true statement whose negation must imply a contradiction in reality, such that the negation would be impossible. A necessary truth is the opposite of a contingent truth.

Omni-causal

- Causing all things with no exception

Definitions

Ordain

- To establish or bring about. This word is used differently by theologians. In this study, God's ordaining does not necessarily require God's determining or causing of a thing.
 - a. God's ordaining of a thing can be in His concurring with its existence. Under a divine concurrence view, God must concur with all things that happen, or they would not happen; thus, God is the ultimate cause that operates with, or on, secondary causes (Heb 1:3; Col 1:17).
 - b. With contingent and free actions, "ordain" can include God setting in motion the chain of events that He knows will lead to certain actions
 - c. God's ordaining of a thing can simply be in his allowing it, since he could have prevented it.

Definitions

Power of contrary choice

- The power of contrary choice is the ability to have done something other than one actually did in exactly the same circumstances.

The providence of God

- God's superintendence of the universe He created, guiding things toward their divinely ordained ends according to his purposes. This includes *ordinary* (or general) providence, which is God's arranging of the natural order, as well as *extra-ordinary* (or special) providence, which are miracles (i.e., events that have causes that are outside the causal capacity of nature).

Definitions

Secondary cause

- Assuming God to be the first or primary agent at work in bringing about an effect, a second cause is an agent other than God that also has a role in bringing about that effect.

Soft determinism

- Essentially the same thing as compatibilism, soft determinism affirms that everything is determined by God, but it denies that this can be understood in regard to moral creatures in a mechanistic fashion analogous to the form of determinism that may occur in the physical world.

Definitions

Sovereign

- The supreme authority that cannot be checked by anyone or anything. Divine sovereignty is God's authority to rule the universe and everything in it as He wills.

Definitions

Thomistic metaphysics

- Metaphysics is the study of being. Aquinas's metaphysics follows Aristotle, but Aquinas developed a unique concept of existence. For Aquinas, a thing cannot be unless it possesses an act of being, and the thing that possesses an act of being is thereby rendered an essence/existence composite. If an essence has an act of being, the act of being is limited by that essence whose act it is. If God is Pure Actuality, the uncaused First Cause, and the Unmoved Mover, His essence is His existence. God cannot be composed of metaphysical parts and is therefore uniquely simple in that vein. God's knowledge and will are the same and thus God's knowledge is not passive, but active. Thomists therefore reject Molina's concept of middle knowledge being logically prior to the divine creative decree.

Definitions

Univocal language

- In entirely the same sense, versus analogical language, which is in a similar sense, versus equivocal language, which is in an entirely different sense.
- If God is infinite and human language is finite, how can we engage in meaningful talk about God? There are three basic ways: through univocal, analogical, or equivocal language.

Univocal: God's love is the same as our love but in an infinite degree.

Analogical: There is something in God that we call love that is similar to what we know as love.

Equivocal: An infinite God' transcends language to describe the way God is.

Definitions

The will of God

- Being personal, God's will is His power of choosing or determining. His will is always consistent with His nature. The aspects of God's will can be categorized as follows:
 - a) The decretive (or sovereign or secret) will of God is the decision by God that an event should happen and thus always happens and is never thwarted (Dan 4:35; Psalm 115:3; Eph 1:11).
 - b) The moral (or preceptive) will of God (Psalm 119; 1Jn 5:3; 1Jn 2:17) is contained in God's commands (i.e., It is God's will that we love our neighbor). The moral will of God is all that he commands his creatures to do. They may disobey him so that God's will, in this sense, is not always done. (The perfect will of God reflects God's moral and/or preferential will and is the highest good and the end toward which we were all created.)

Continued...

Definitions

The will of God (...continued)

- c) The permissive will is God's allowance of his creatures to make morally inferior choices (Acts 17:30; Matt 19:8; Romans 1:21-28) and even morally evil choices which bring God's judgment, as well as God's allowance of natural evils. The permissive will of God is the decision of God to permit things to occur but not to be the one who actually brings them about or causes them.
- d) The preferential (or dispositional) will of God (Ezek 33:11; 1Tim 2:4; 2Pet 3:9; Rom 12:2) is God's desire for something that may not be feasible in view of other desires He has (e.g., Though it is God's desire to save all people, all people will not be saved in view of God's desire to create a world of free creatures and require faith in Christ for salvation—in such a world many will not freely believe in Christ for salvation.)

Q&A



Week 2



The Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man

Travis Echols

Course Overview

Week 1

The Landscape:

- Scriptural Considerations
- Philosophical Considerations
- The Challenge of Integration
- Overview of Six Common Views
- Definitions

Weeks 2 and 3

A Deeper Dive:

- Open Theism
- Arminianism
- Molinism
- Thomism
- Calvinism
- Fatalism

Week 4

Review:

- Certainty/Necessity Fallacy
- Persisting Mysteries
- Review of Six Views
- Conclusions

Course Overview

My Goal

- A. To promote a deeper and broader understanding of the issues involved.
- B. To present a high-level approach for thinking about it.
- C. To recommend resources for further study.
- D. To present some of my conclusions for your consideration.

Course Overview

Disclaimer

- A. This survey study is far from exhaustive, focusing more on the underlying systematic theology issues associated with coherently integrating the scriptural information.
- B. In-depth philosophical and exegetical work is not included in this study. Resources are voluminous, especially on the scriptural soteriological aspect of divine providence.

Course Overview

Disclaimer

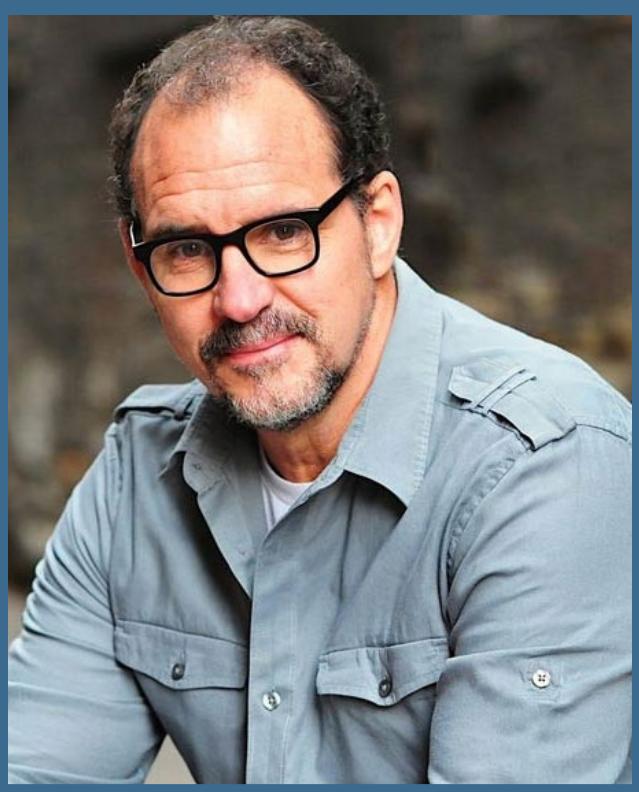
- C. There can be overlap in the six views presented. I tried to present the more common views that logically cohere, but variations across the views are also common.
- D. There are more than six views. Terrance Tiessen reviews eleven in his book *Providence & Prayer*. See Resources section at the end of this presentation.

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally						
God knows counterfactuals						
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity						
God's Control						
Man's freedom						

Overview of Six Common Views

1. Open Theism



*Gregory Boyd
1957-*

- *Reconciles a limited divine control and foreknowledge with libertarian human free will.*
- *Dates back to the 4th century, but prevalent in evangelicalism since 1980.*
- *Since God and humans are free, God's knowledge is dynamic (it changes as history unfolds) and His providence is flexible and responsive.*

Overview of Six Common Views

1. Open Theism

- *Human libertarian free will is a supreme priority for God since it enables genuinely loving relationships.*
- *However, God still expertly guides His creation through non-coercive means (through prayer, angels, the Holy Spirit's promptings, etc.)*
- *God does not have definite knowledge of future free choices. Future free choices are unknowable, even by God.*
- *God is infinitely intelligent and anticipates each possibility as perfectly as if it was a certainty.*

Overview of Six Common Views

1. Open Theism

- *God's precreation election to salvation is corporate, not individual.*
- *God loves all people with a saving love, therefore Christ died for the sins of all people. God applies the benefit of Christ's atoning work to those who freely believe the gospel.*
- *God's persuasive yet resistible drawing of all people can be received or rejected.*
- *The gospel (good news of Christ dying for our sins and rising from the dead) is a genuine, bona fide offer of salvation to all who hear it.*

Overview of Six Common Views

1. *Some Open Theism verses indicating that God doesn't know future human free choices*

- And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. (Gen 6:5-6)
- And the Lord said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.” (Gen 18:20-21)
- And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” (Gen 22:12)
- Perhaps everyone will listen and turn from his evil way, that I may relent concerning the calamity which I purpose to bring on them because of the evil of their doings. (Jer 26:3)

Overview of Six Common Views

1. *Some Open Theism verses indicating that God doesn't know future human free choices*

- It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the adversities which I purpose to bring upon them, that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin. (Jer 36:3)
- In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, “Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’ ” Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and said, “Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly. And the word of the Lord came to Isaiah, saying, “Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years. (Isa 38:1-5)

Overview of Six Common Views

1. Some Open Theism verses indicating that God doesn't know future human free choices

- Therefore, son of man, prepare your belongings for captivity, and go into captivity by day in their sight. You shall go from your place into captivity to another place in their sight. It may be that they will consider, though they are a rebellious house. (Ezek 12:3)
- And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. (Jonah 3)

Overview of Six Common Views

1. *Some verses indicating that God does know future human free choices*

- And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?’— when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. (Deut 18:21-22)
- Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You. (Psalm 139:16-18)
- Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. (Psalm 147:5)
- Since his days are determined, The number of his months is with You; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass. (Job 14:5)

Overview of Six Common Views

1. *Some verses indicating that God does know future human free choices*

- Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: (Isa 46:9-10)
- "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. (Jer 17:9-10)
- Seventy weeks are determined For your people and for your holy city, To finish the transgression, To make an end of sins, To make reconciliation for iniquity, To bring in everlasting righteousness, To seal up vision and prophecy, And to anoint the Most Holy. (Dan 9:24)
- "For I am the Lord, I do not change; (Mal 3:6)

Overview of Six Common Views

1. *Some verses indicating that God does know future human free choices*

- Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death. (Acts 2:23)
- Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered.' "But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee." Peter said to Him, "Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be." Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times." Mark 14:27-30)

Overview of Six Common Views

1. Open Theism Critique

- *God distinguishes himself from false gods on the basis of his foreknowledge (Isa. 40-48). We judge false prophets based on their inability to predict the future (Deut. 18:22). The Bible routinely states that God can accurately predict the future (e.g., Isa 44:6-8; 46:9-10; Dan 2:36-43; Matt 24; Eph 3:9; 2Tim 1:9-10; 1Pet 1:20).*
- *Open theism fallaciously views God's certainty to mean man's necessity (i.e., that God's foreknowledge is incompatible with human freedom).*

Overview of Six Common Views

1. *Open Theism Critique*

- *If God does not foreordain or foreknow future contingent human choices, how can God accomplish His purposes that involve these human choices without violating human freedom or lucking out?*

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No					
God knows counterfactuals	No					
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes					
God's Control	General					
Man's freedom	Liber- tarian					

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind	Yes					
Prayer affects outcome	Yes					
Election to Salvation	Corporate only					
Drawing to Salvation	Persua- sive & to All People					

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No					
God knows counterfactuals	No					
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes					
God's Control	General					
Man's freedom	Liber- tarian					

Overview of Six Common Views

2. Arminianism



Jacob Arminius
1560 - 1609

- *Reconciles a limited divine control (and a comprehensive divine foreknowledge) with libertarian human free will.*
- *God has chosen to limit his action in the world due to His gift of creaturely freedom.*
- *God has comprehensive knowledge of the actual future.*
- *God's purposes do not include every detail of human existence, so He doesn't control every detail.*

Overview of Six Common Views

2. Arminianism

- *God sovereignly allows humans to use their wills and minds in self-determination and does not intervene unless his special providential purposes call for it.*
- *God maintains his sovereignty because he maintains the right and the power to intervene if his purposes demand it.*
- *God's election is corporate and/or conditional regarding individuals (being in accordance with His foreknowledge of individuals' libertarian free-will faith in time.)*

Overview of Six Common Views

1. Arminianism

- *God loves all people with a saving love, therefore Christ died for the sins of all people. God applies the benefit of Christ's atoning work to those who freely believe the gospel.*
- *God's persuasive yet resistible drawing of all people can be received or rejected.*
- *The gospel (good news of Christ dying for our sins and rising from the dead) is a genuine, bona fide offer of salvation to all who hear it.*

Note: The Arminianism described here is a non-Molinistic, comprehensive simple foreknowledge view. In other usages of the word, all who hold to libertarian free will in salvation are Arminian.

Overview of Six Common Views

2. Arminianism Critique

- *It cannot be explained how God has foreknowledge of libertarian free human choices.*
- *God's control in human history is limited by the choices people freely make. If divine foreordination is simply God's prescience of what people will freely do, foreordination is like a fifth wheel that does nothing. How can God accomplish His purposes that involve these human choices without violating human freedom or lucking out?*

Overview of Six Common Views

2. Arminianism Critique

- *The Bible often portrays God as not having foreknowledge (Gen 18:20-21; Jer 26:3; 36:3; Ezek 12:3; Isa 38:1-5; Amos 7:1-6; Jon 3).*
- *Having denied causation and fate, the view cannot give an explanation for humans' free libertarian choices.*

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes				
God knows counterfactuals	No	No				
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No				
God's Control	General	General				
Man's freedom	Liber- tarian	Liber- tarian				

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind	Yes	No				
Prayer affects outcome	Yes	Yes				
Election to Salvation	Corporate only	Corporate only				
Drawing to Salvation	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People				

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>homism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes				
God knows counterfactuals	No	No				
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No				
God's Control	General	Genera				
Man's freedom	Liber- tarian	Liber- tarian				

Overview of Six Common Views

3. Molinism



Luis De Molina

1535-1600

- *Reconciles a robust divine control (and a comprehensive divine foreknowledge and middle knowledge) with libertarian human free will.*
- *God has middle knowledge logically prior to His decree to create the world.*
- *God's middle knowledge is His knowledge of what creatures would freely do under any freedom-permitting circumstance He may place them in.*

Overview of Six Common Views

3. Molinism

- *God accomplishes His purposes meticulously by creating the actual world knowing what every free creature would freely do (placing people in those freedom-permitting circumstances).*
- *Foreknowledge automatically falls out of God's exhaustive middle knowledge.*
- *God's election to salvation is corporate and/or conditional regarding individuals (being in accordance with His innate/middle knowledge of individuals' libertarian free-will faith in time.)*

Overview of Six Common Views

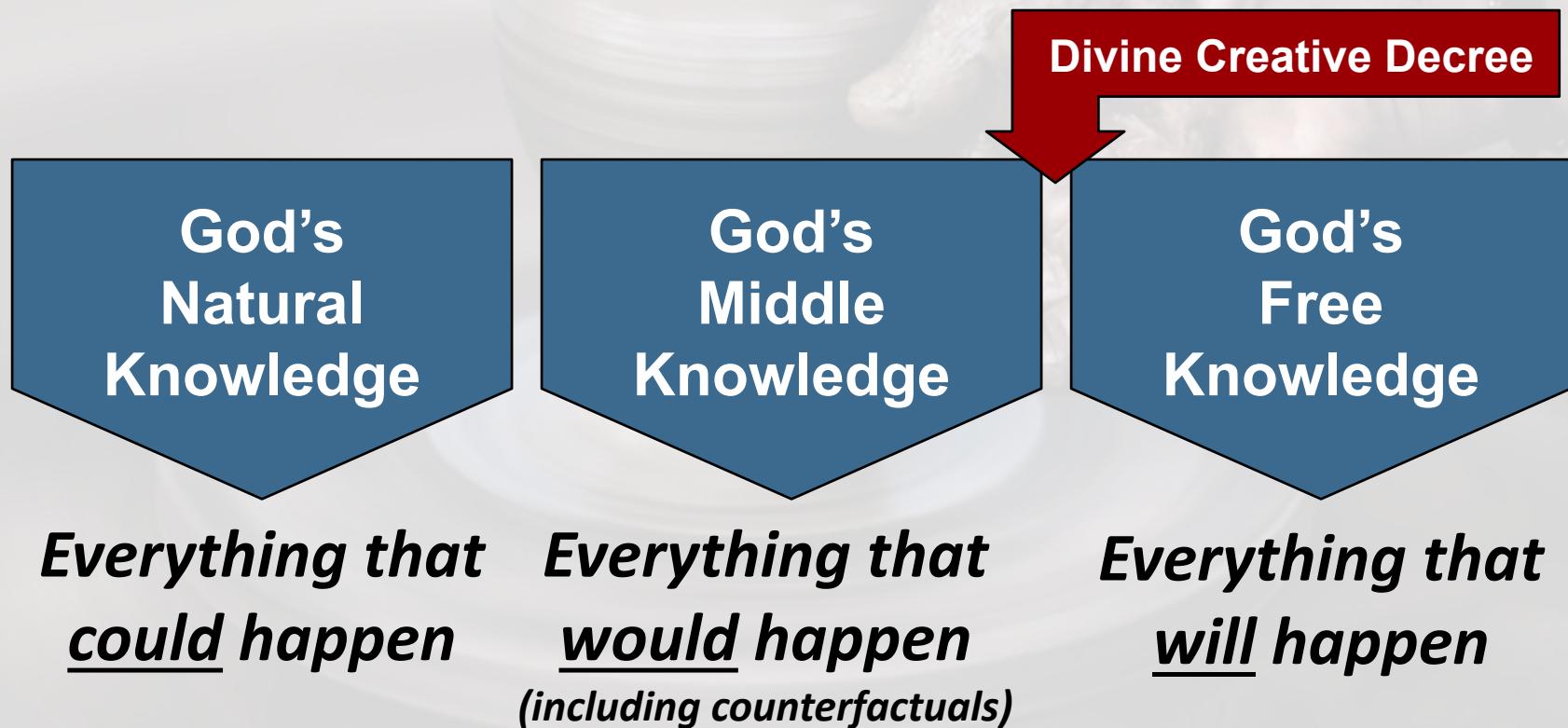
1. Molinism

- *God loves all people with a saving love, therefore Christ died for the sins of all people. God applies the benefit of Christ's atoning work to those who freely believe the gospel.*
- *God's persuasive yet resistible drawing of all people can be received or rejected.*
- *The gospel (good news of Christ dying for our sins and rising from the dead) is a genuine bona fide offer of salvation to all who hear it.*
- *Caveat: There are Molinistic Calvinists, but Molina and most Molinists reject Calvinism.*

Overview of Six Common Views

3. Molinism

According to Luis de Molina, God has middle knowledge and it is logically prior to His decree to create the world.



Overview of Six Common Views

3. Molinism

God's natural and middle knowledge are part of His nature--as conceptual versus perceptual knowledge. It cannot be caused by creatures since much of it is counterfactual conditional (hypothetical) knowledge that is never actualized (I Cor 2:8; I Samuel 23:6-14)

God's
Natural
Knowledge

*Everything that
could happen*

God's
Middle
Knowledge

*Everything that
would happen
(including counterfactuais)*

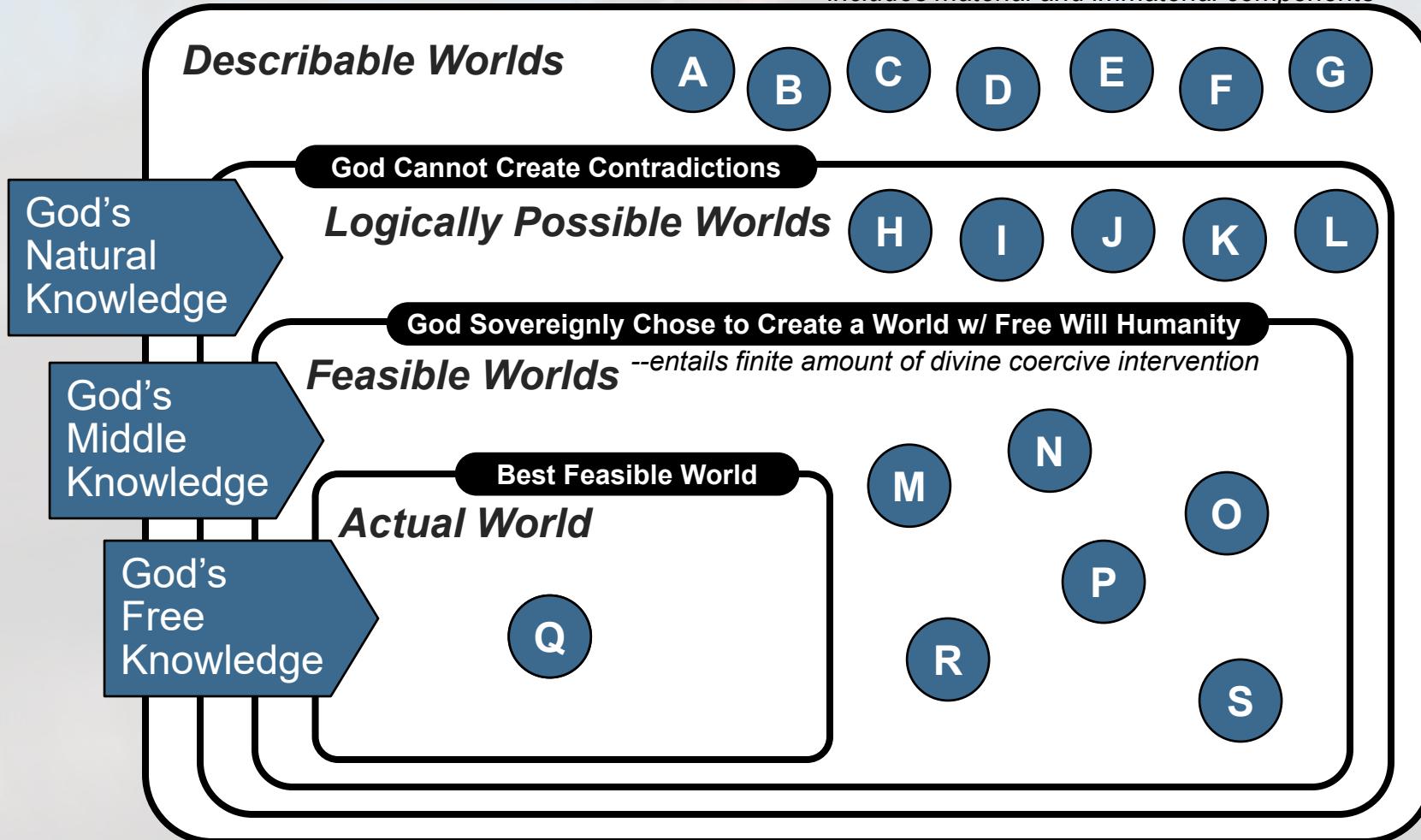
God's
Free
Knowledge

*Everything that
will happen*

Overview of Six Common Views

3. Molinism

--includes material and immaterial components



Overview of Six Common Views

3. Molinism Critique

- *It cannot be explained how God has innate/middle knowledge of human future free choices logically prior to the creation of the world.*
- *The Bible often portrays God as not having foreknowledge (Gen 18:20-21; Jer 26:3; 36:3; Ezek 12:3; Isa 38:1-5; Amos 7:1-6; Jon 3).*
- *God's control in creation is limited by the choices people freely make and counterfactuals of creaturely freedoms.*

Overview of Six Common Views

3. Molinism Critique

- *Having denied causation and fate, the view cannot give an explanation for humans' free libertarian choices.*

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes			
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes			
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No			
God's Control	General	General	Meticalous			
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian			

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind	Yes	No	No			
Prayer affects outcome	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Election to Salvation	Corporate only	Corporate only	Corporate & Individual			
Drawing to Salvation	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People			

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes			
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes			
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No			
God's Control	General	General	Meticolous			
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian			

Q&A



Week 3



The Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man

Travis Echols

Course Overview

Week 1

The Landscape:

- Scriptural Considerations
- Philosophical Considerations
- The Challenge of Integration
- Overview of Six Common Views
- Definitions

Weeks 2 and 3

A Deeper Dive:

- Open Theism
- Arminianism
- Molinism
- Thomism
- Calvinism
- Fatalism

Week 4

Review:

- Certainty/Necessity Fallacy
- Persisting Mysteries
- Review of Six Views
- Conclusions

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes			
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes			
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No			
God's Control	General	General	Meticalous			
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian			

Overview of Six Common Views

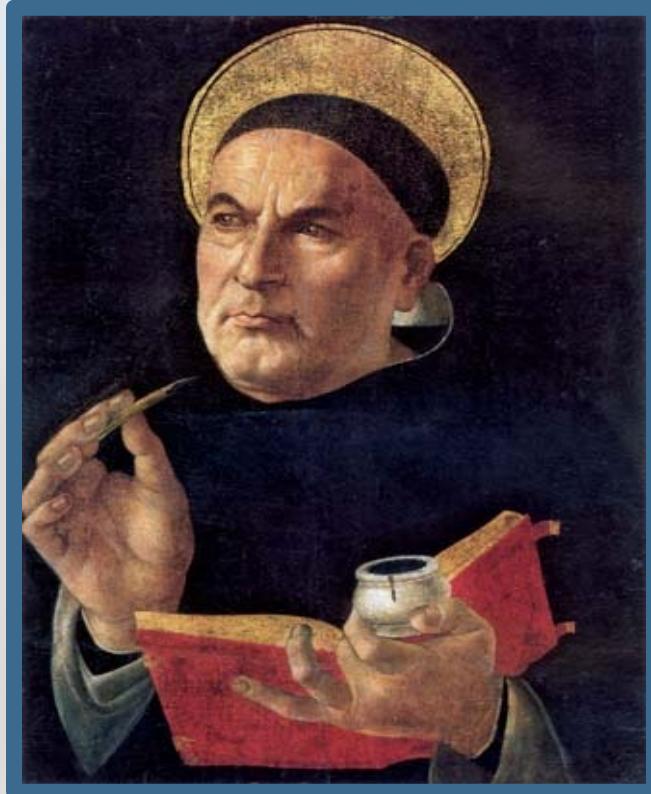
	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind	Yes	No	No			
Prayer affects outcome	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Election to Salvation	Corporate only	Corporate only	Corporate & Individual			
Drawing to Salvation	Persuasive & to All People	Persuasive & to All People	Persuasive & to All People			

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes			
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes			
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No			
God's Control	General	General	Metaculous			
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian			

Overview of Six Common Views

4. Thomism



Thomas Aquinas
1225-1274

- *Reconciles a comprehensive, deterministic, omni-causal divine control with libertarian human free will.*
- *God is timeless and has comprehensive knowledge of past, present and future in His eternal “now”.*
- *God is the cause of all things as an author is the cause of all things in his book. God does not cause things in the story the way the characters in the story do.*

Overview of Six Common Views

4. Thomism

- *Talk about God is analogical (not univocal or equivocal) because earthly categories of the physical world is the only language we have.*
- *God is the cause of everything's action inasmuch as He gives everything the power to act, preserves it in being and applies it to action, and inasmuch as by his power every other power acts.*
- *It is because God is the cause of all things that he has divine knowledge of all things in meticulous detail.*

Overview of Six Common Views

4. Thomism

- *God is simple (His essence is His existence). Being pure act (no potentiality), contingent beings and truths must be determined by God's will, otherwise God would be passive in his knowledge. God does not therefore know counterfactuals.*
- *Humans are free agents in that no created temporally antecedent causes to the free act of choice are sufficient to determine that act.*

Overview of Six Common Views

4. Thomism

- *God's moving of the human will in a general way, by sustaining its nature, or in particular ways directly through grace, does not preclude the will's moving itself as a secondary efficient cause.*
- *Human actions are self-caused (that is, caused by us), even though God determinately knew (and knowingly determined) we would so choose.*
- *God's middle knowledge is part of His free knowledge (i.e., logically after creation)*

Overview of Six Common Views

4. Thomism

- *God loves all people with a saving love, therefore Christ died for the sins of all people. God applies the benefit of Christ's atoning work to those who freely believe the gospel.*
- *God's persuasive yet resistible drawing of all people can be received or rejected.*
- *The gospel (good news of Christ dying for our sins and rising from the dead) is a genuine, bona fide offer of salvation to all who hear it.*

Overview of Six Common Views

4. Thomism Critique

- *Thomism is difficult to understand. Thomists disagree on how to harmonize divine deterministic omni-causality with human libertarian freedom. A causally determined free act is contradictory, using univocal language.*
- *Divine simplicity is the reason for God's omni-causal sovereignty and simultaneous determinate knowledge (which is not actually "fore"knowledge). Aristotelian/Thomistic metaphysics, which is difficult to prove, is the reason for divine simplicity.*

Overview of Six Common Views

4. *Thomism Critique*

- *The Bible often portrays God as not having foreknowledge (Gen 18:20-21; Jer 26:3; 36:3; Ezek 12:3; Isa 38:1-5; Amos 7:1-6; Jon 3).*

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes	No		
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No	No		
God's Control	General	General	Meticalous	Meticalous		
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian		

Overview of Six Common Views

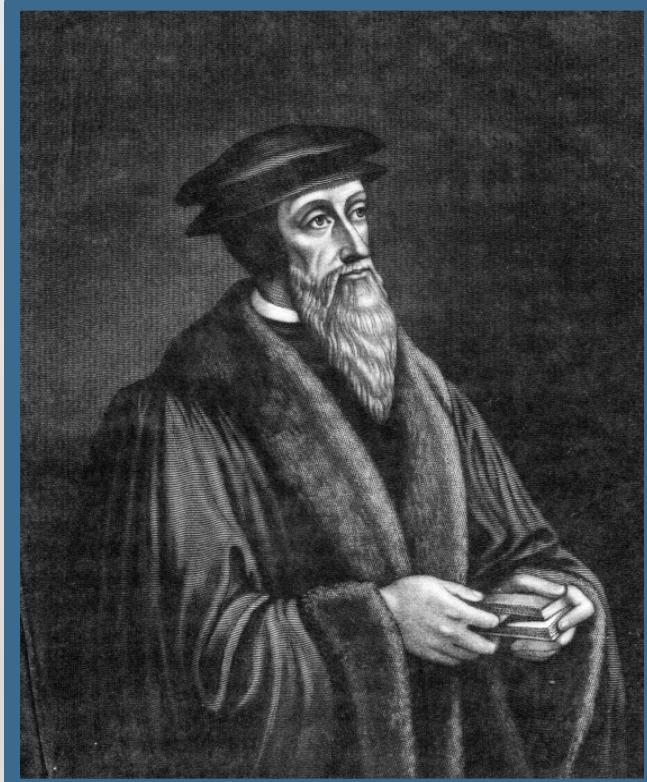
	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind	Yes	No	No	No		
Prayer affects outcome	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		
Election to Salvation	Corporate only	Corporate only	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual		
Drawing to Salvation	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People		

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Liber- tarianism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes	Yes		
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes	No		
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No	No		
God's Control	General	General	Metaculous	Metaculous		
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian		

Overview of Six Common Views

5. Calvinism (Augustinianism)



John Calvin
1509-1564

- *Reconciles a comprehensive, deterministic, omni-causal divine control with a limited (volitional) human free will.*
- *Everything that happens in the world comes about because God has freely, wisely, and in moral goodness, chosen that it should be as it is.*
- *It is because God is the cause of all things that he has divine knowledge of all things in meticulous detail.*

Overview of Six Common Views

5. Calvinism

- *God's knowledge is His knowledge of His own will and what He has determined the future will be. God's secret decreative will is always done and never thwarted, though His preceptive and preferential will can be resisted.*
- *God's comprehensive determination of all things makes human libertarian free will impossible.*
- *Creaturally freedom is voluntary and volitional. Humans do what they want to do and act in accordance with their nature.*

Overview of Six Common Views

5. Calvinism

- *God's election to salvation is corporate and individual (unconditional regarding individuals' future faith or God's knowledge of such faith.) God does not consider what people will or will not do (or would or would not do) in His choosing of the elect. The elect believe because of God's secret, sovereign, decretive will. The non-elect are sovereignly fore-hated and bypassed for salvation.*

Overview of Six Common Views

5. Calvinism

- *God only loves the elect with a saving love, therefore Christ died only for the sins of the elect. The benefit of Christ's atoning work is effectual to the elect, not provisional.*
- *God only draws the elect. His drawing is persuasive and irresistible, imparting new life (regeneration) in order for the elect to believe.*
- *The gospel (good news of Christ dying for our sins and rising from the dead) is to be preached to all people as the means to draw the elect. The good news does not apply to the non-elect.*

Overview of Six Common Views

5. Calvinism Critique

- *Scriptures presuppose libertarian free will (e.g., 1Cor 10:13) and our common-sense experience confirms it. We all live as though we have libertarian freedom.*
- *Calvinism's causal determinism view of divine sovereignty is problematic when applied consistently (e.g., to evil, to the Christian who sins, to Adam who sinned, to the non-elect).*
- *God's omniscience is diminished since God's only way of foreknowing is by causally determining.*

Overview of Six Common Views

5. Calvinism Critique

- *If God causally determines all desires and acts, voluntary “compatibilistic” free will is no freedom at all. A causally determined free act is contradictory, using univocal language.*
- *If God causally determines all desires and acts, how is God not the author of evil?*
- *If God causally determines the non-elect to not desire Him, to not believe, and to be damned, yet blames them for their unbelief, how is God equitable in judgment as scripture teaches?*

Overview of Six Common Views

5. Calvinism Critique

- *Since consistent Calvinism has God fore-hating the non-elect (i.e., before they are born), how can this be reconciled with God's nature being love (1Jn 4:8)?*

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes	No	No	
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No	No	Yes/No (varies)	
God's Control	General	General	Meticalous	Meticalous	Meticalous	
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Volun-tary	

Overview of Six Common Views

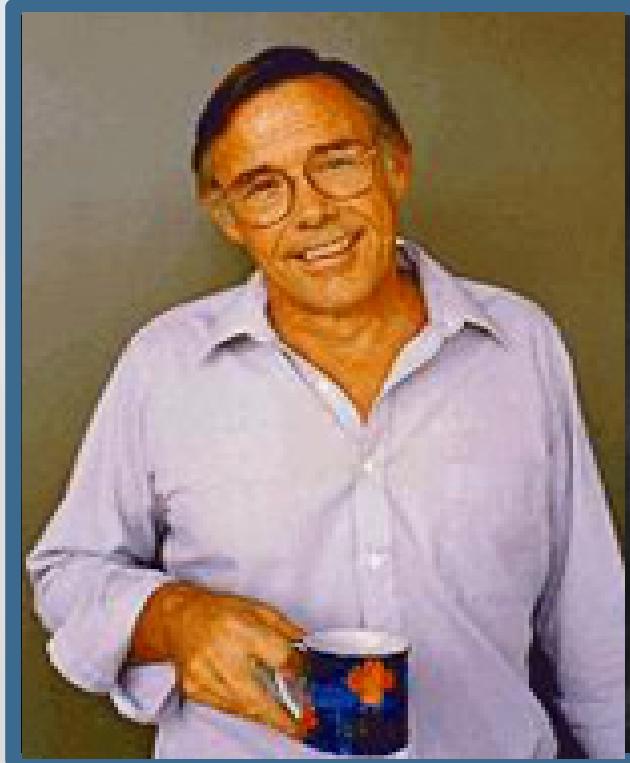
	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Prayer affects outcome	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Election to Salvation	Corporate only	Corporate only	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual
Drawing to Salvation	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Irresistible & to Elect Only

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes	No	No	
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No	No	Yes/No (varies)	
God's Control	General	General	Meticalous	Meticalous	Meticalous	
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Volun-tary	

Overview of Six Common Views

6. Theological Fatalism



Nelson Pike
1930-

- *Reconciles a comprehensive, indeterministic, non-causal divine control with an illusion of human free will.*
- *God is omniscient and comprehensively knows all things including future human choices.*
- *God is omniscient and thus cannot be mistaken.*
- *The past cannot be changed.*

Overview of Six Common Views

6. Theological Fatalism

- *God's belief in a future event is “tucked away” in the past and cannot be changed.*
- *Since God's beliefs are infallible, we do not have the power to do anything other than what God knows we will do.*
 - We do not have the power to make God's belief false
 - We do not have the power to erase God's past belief
 - We do not have the power to erase God's past existence

Overview of Six Common Views

6. Theological Fatalism

- *God's election to salvation is corporate and individual. The elect's and non-elect's decisions were "fated" since they were foreknown by God. Any sense of libertarian or voluntary trusting Christ is illusory.*

Overview of Six Common Views

6. Theological Fatalism Critique

- *Open theism fallaciously views God's certainty to mean man's necessity (i.e., that God's foreknowledge is incompatible with human freedom).*
- *Although God's beliefs are infallible, we can have the power to do other than what we do.*
 - We do not have the power to make God's belief false
 - We do not have the power to erase God's past belief
 - We do not have the power to erase God's past existence
 - We do have the power to act in a different way, and if we were to, God would have believed differently

Overview of Six Common Views

6. *Theological Fatalism Critique*

- *God is deceptive and life is a farce if (so contrary to our experience and intuition) our freedom is not real.*
- *If the non-elect are fated to not desire Him, to not believe, and to be damned, and free will is illusory, how can God blame people for their unbelief? How is God equitable in judgment as scripture teaches?*

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes	No	No	CFs do not exist
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No	No	Yes/No (varies)	Yes
God's Control	General	General	Meticalous	Meticalous	Meticalous	Meticalous
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Volun-tary	Illusory

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Prayer affects outcome	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Election to Salvation	Corporate only	Corporate only	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual
Drawing to Salvation	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Irresisti- ble & to Elect Only	Irresisti- ble & to Elect Only

Q&A



Week 4



The Sovereignty of God and the Free Will of Man

Travis Echols

Course Overview

Week 1

The Landscape:

- Scriptural Considerations
- Philosophical Considerations
- The Challenge of Integration
- Overview of Six Common Views
- Definitions

Weeks 2 and 3

A Deeper Dive:

- Open Theism
- Arminianism
- Molinism
- Thomism
- Calvinism
- Fatalism

Week 4

Review:

- Certainty/Necessity Fallacy
- Persisting Mysteries
- Review of Six Views
- Conclusions

Course Overview

My Goal

- A. To promote a deeper and broader understanding of the issues involved.
- B. To present a high-level approach for thinking about it.
- C. To recommend resources for further study.
- D. To present some of my conclusions for your consideration.

Course Overview

Disclaimer

- A. This survey study is far from exhaustive, focusing more on the underlying systematic theology issues associated with coherently integrating the scriptural information.
- B. In-depth philosophical and exegetical work is not included in this study. Resources are voluminous, especially on the scriptural soteriological aspect of divine providence.

Course Overview

Disclaimer

- C. There can be overlap in the six views presented. I tried to present the more common views that logically cohere, but variations across the views are also common.
- D. There are more than six views. Terrance Tiessen reviews eleven in his book *Providence & Prayer*. See Resources section at the end of this presentation.

Fallacy: Certainty = Necessity

Conflating God's certainty with man's necessity is an understandable and common fallacy.

It leads to either denying the foreknowledge of God or denying the libertarian free will of man.

Certainty is a property of persons, whereas necessity is a property of propositions (necessity indicating that a proposition cannot possibly have a different truth value).

Valid and sound argument

Necessarily, if God knows x will happen, x will happen

God knows x will happen

Therefore, x will happen

Fallacy: Certainty = Necessity

Invalid, and therefore unsound, argument

Necessarily, if God knows x will happen, x will happen

God knows x will happen

Therefore, necessarily x will happen

This argument is fallacious because both premises have to be necessary for the conclusion to be necessary, and premise 2 is not necessary (i.e., God could have known something different from x).

Fallacy: Certainty = Necessity

Valid, but unsound, argument

Necessarily, if God knows x will happen, x will happen

Necessarily, God knows x will happen

Therefore, necessarily x will happen

By both premises being necessary, the conclusion is necessary. This is a valid argument. But the argument is unsound because premise 2 is not true. God could have known something different from x. For example, God is free to have not created the world, in which if x happens in the world, x would be contingently, not necessarily, true.

Logically, if God is free (to have created or not created, or to have created or chosen differently than he did), then divine foreknowledge and future contingency are compatible.

Fallacy: Certainty = Necessity

For example, if I choose to mow my grass tomorrow, God has always known I would mow my grass tomorrow, and whatever God knows will happen, will happen.

But I am free not to mow my grass tomorrow. If I choose not to mow my grass tomorrow instead of mowing it (future contingency), God has always known I would not mow it.

In a more serious soteriological vein, the elect before the foundation of the world are those individuals God foreknew (has always known) as being in Christ, before they freely believed and were spiritually placed into Christ, each person being free to have received or rejected him.

Sources: Robert E. Picirrili, *Grace, Faith, and Free Will*

William Lane Craig, *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom subtitled Coherence of Theism: Omnipotence, and The Only Wise God.*

Foreknowledge and Causation

God's foreknowledge is not the cause of our choices. An entailment doesn't mean cause.

Example:

Connie is pregnant

Therefore, Connie is a female

Connie is not a female *because* she is pregnant.
But her pregnancy entails her being a female--
by principle versus cause.

Foreknowledge and Causation

Example:

God foreknows the elect are x

Therefore, x will be saved

x are not saved because God foreknows the elect are x. But His foreknowledge entails x will be saved--by principle versus cause.

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God knows the actual future totally	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
God knows counterfactuals	No	No	Yes	No	No	CFs do not exist
God's certainty of future entails man's necessity	Yes	No	No	No	Yes/No (varies)	Yes
God's Control	General	General	Meticalous	Meticalous	Meticalous	Meticalous
Man's freedom	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Liber-tarian	Volun-tary	Illusory

Overview of Six Common Views

	<i>Open Theism</i>	<i>Armin- ianism</i>	<i>Molinism</i>	<i>Thomism</i>	<i>Calvinism</i>	<i>Fatalism</i>
God changes His mind	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Prayer affects outcome	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Election to Salvation	Corporate only	Corporate only	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual	Corporate & Individual
Drawing to Salvation	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Persua- sive & to All People	Irresisti- ble & to Elect Only	Irresisti- ble & to Elect Only

Persisting Mysteries

Open Theism

- Why people make their choices
- How God accomplishes his purposes without fail through human free choices that He does not fore-ordain or foreknow without violating man's free will or lucking out

Arminianism (Simple Foreknowledge)

- Why people make their choices
- How God knows what free creatures will do
- How God accomplishes his purposes without fail through human free choices that he does not fore-ordain without violating man's free will or lucking out

Persisting Mysteries

Molinism

- How God knows what free creatures would do
- Why God chose to create this particular actual world
- Why people make their choices

Thomism

- How God moves man's will
- How humans are free if God is the primary cause of all things
- How the actual world is contingent versus necessary since God's will is the same as his knowledge

Persisting Mysteries

Calvinism

- How God compels man's will
- How God is not the author of sin
- How God can be fair and equitable in judgment
- How God can be love if He fore-hates the non-elect
- Why God blames people for things God caused them to irresistibly desire and do

Persisting Mysteries

Theological Fatalism

- How God is not the author of sin
- How God can be fair and equitable in judgment
- Why God blames people for things they were fated to desire and do

Review of Six Views

1. Open Theism

- God ordains the ends, but not all the means, since God cannot know future human free choices

2. Arminianism

- God ordains the ends, but not all the means, by knowing what all human free choices will be

3. Molinism

- God ordains the ends and means by knowing logically prior to creation what all human free choices would be under any circumstances

Review of Six Views

4. Thomism

- God ordains the ends and means, being the first cause of all human choices, but not the only cause

5. Calvinism

- God ordains the ends and means by causally determining all human choices, though the choices are voluntary

6. Fatalism

- God ordains the ends and means by knowing all future human choices, making all choices necessary and inevitable

Review of Six Views

View #1: Open Theism

- We have free will to do other than what we do.
- We are self-determining free agents. God cannot know our future free choices, for they are logically unknowable (as is a square circle).
- God ordains the ends but not all that comes to pass in meticulous detail.

Review of Six Views

View #2: Arminianism (Divine Simple Foreknowledge)

- God knows all the choices that we *will* freely make and accomplishes his purposes through what he knows we *will* freely do.
- We are self-determining free agents.
- God ordains all that comes to pass not in meticulous detail, but by permitting our free choices that He could prevent.

Review of Six Views

View #3: Molinism (Divine Middle Knowledge)

- Logically prior to God's decree to create the world, God knew what we, as free creatures, *would* do under any circumstances in which we might or might not be placed.
- We are self-determining free agents.
- God ordains all that comes to pass in meticulous detail by setting in motion what He knew would occur, placing us in those circumstances, and by permitting our free choices that He could prevent.

Overview of Six Common Views

View #4: Thomism

- All that we do is destined by God's will, through our choices.
- We are free to do other than what we do, although God causes what we do. Libertarian free will is compatible with God's causal deterministic foreknowledge.
- God ordains and determines all that comes to pass in meticulous detail by His simultaneous enabling of the human will to move itself in virtue of His first motion.

Review of Six Views

View #5: Calvinism (Compatibilist Determinism)

- All that we do is destined by God's will, through our choices.
- We are not free to do other than what we do, since God causally determines what we do. Free will is compatible only in the sense that we voluntarily choose according with, not against, our nature/desire.
- God ordains and determines all that comes to pass necessarily and inevitably in meticulous detail.

Review of Six Views

View #6: Theological Fatalism

- All that we do is destined by God's will, due to His foreknowing our choices.
- We are neither free to do other than what we do nor are we necessarily causally determined to do what we do.
- God ordains all that comes to pass necessarily and inevitably in meticulous detail.

Conclusions

- All views avoid logical contradictions, but fatalism.
- God's foreknowledge and libertarian freedom are logically compatible. Since God's certainty does not entail man's necessity, then Theological Fatalism is false. The dilemma of Open Theism or Theological Fatalism is therefore a false dilemma.
- The fact that God's foreknowledge and human libertarian freedom are logically compatible does not mean either is true. (Reason alone can only falsify, not verify, reality.)

Conclusions

- Calvinism (i.e., causal determinism) could be rejected as a comprehensive view of providence, but accepted regarding salvation (i.e., God doesn't causally determine all things, but He does in salvation: the elect must believe and the non-elect must not believe). However, exegetical and/or philosophical reasons other than God's comprehensive causal sovereignty and foreknowledge would need to be given.

Conclusions

- If God causally determines all things in a way that does not permit libertarian freedom, Calvinism is true and the other views are false (though Fatalism and Calvinistic Thomism/Molinism could also be true).

- If God has middle knowledge of counterfactuals logically prior to the creation and uses that knowledge to ordain (i.e., set in motion) all that humans freely do, then Molinism is true and the other views are false (in essence).

Conclusions

- If Thomistic metaphysics are true, then Molinism, Arminianism, and Open Theism are false.
(Calvinists and Fatalists could hold many of their tenants in harmony with adjustments to Aquinas.)
- If humans have libertarian free will, Calvinism and Fatalism are false.
- If humans don't have libertarian free will, Open Theism, Arminianism, Molinism (per Molina) and Thomism (per Aquinas) are false--and our common-sense intuition that we do have libertarian free will is an illusion.

Conclusions

- Calvinism's "compatible" voluntary free will is not free will at all if God causally determines our nature and desires, upon which we act.
"Voluntary" is meaningless under such conditions.

Conclusions on Methodology

- Philosophical and hermeneutical presuppositions greatly impact the way we do biblical and systematic theology. The more we are aware of them, and evaluate them, the less vulnerable we are to error.
- Being inquisitive and fair with all the possible views, with no agenda, is the best way to combat self-deception and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

Conclusions on Methodology

- Though we see through a glass darkly and can never plumb the depths of our infinite, inscrutable God, spiritual growth can be gained through the prayerful, hard work of study (2Tim 2:15).
- Our concept of God is of utmost importance. Therefore, our attitude, diligence, and approach to knowing God “as He is” cannot be overestimated.

Resources

- Comparison of 11 Views
 - Terrance L. Tiessen, *Providence & Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?*
- Open Theism
 - Greg Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*
 - Clark Pinnock, *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*
- Arminianism
 - Robert E. Picirrili, *Grace, Faith, and Free Will*
 - Roger Olson, *Arminian Theology*
 - Jerry Walls and Joseph Dongell, *Why I am not a Calvinist*
 - Paul Marston and Roger Forster, *God's Strategy in Human History*
 - *The Complete Works of James Arminius*
- Molinism
 - William Lane Craig, *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom*
 - Kirk MacGregor, *Luis de Molina: The Life and Theology of the Founder of Middle Knowledge*
- Thomism
 - Norman Geisler, *Chosen But Free*
 - Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate (On Truth)*
- Calvinism
 - D.A. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty & Human Responsibility*
 - R.C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology?* and *Chosen by God*
 - Robert Peterson and Michael Williams, *Why I am Not an Arminian*
 - John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*
 - *The Complete Works of Saint Augustine*

Q&A

