Introduction

Since the 17th century, there has been a dispute between two different camps within Protestantism that have tried to explain a tension that exist within the doctrine of election, concerning the cause of spiritual salvation for humanity. On one hand, Calvinism, founded by John Calvin, teaches that the sovereignty of God is the main cause for people receiving divine salvation. That the reception of salvation by human beings is a passive act on their part, because God has elected or chosen before the world and humanity was created (Eph. 1:4-5), who He would save from eternal damnation and separation from Himself and who He would grant salvation to, leading to eternal life with Him after death (Rom. 9:14-24). The other view known as Arminianism, founded by a contemporary of Calvin’s, Jacob Arminius, teaches that humanity has an active choice concerning whether or not they want to receive salvation from God in the first place (Jn. 3:18). Since God is omniscient, and His knowledge is perfect, He knew who would be desirous of a relationship with Him and would accept His offer of salvation and also, who would reject it. It is those people who God knows would receive Him as Lord and Savior, are considered elected by God to receive salvation (Rom. 8:29-30). There appears to be an apparent contradiction or at best a paradox that exist; Is it God alone in His sovereign will and judgement who grants salvation to only a specific few or does humanity, free from God’s influence and control, contribute to that decision by God, effecting their eternal state? Since there is Scriptural support for both the sovereignty of God and the libertarian free will of mankind that contribute to humanities eternal state, the tension exist. The doctrine of the inerrancy of God’s word does not allow for mistakes in His word. Therefore, there cannot be any contradiction. Perhaps there is another option that may provide a possible solution to removing the present tension, by affirming both truths. This option is a theological system that was created by 16th Century Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina, known as Molinism. “Specifically, it seeks to maintain a strong view of God's sovereignty over creation while at the same time preserving the belief that human beings have self-determined freedom, or libertarian free will” (Theopedia, http://www.theopedia.com/molinism).

There are three important goals of this paper to be explored. The examination of Scripture as seen primarily in the gospels, focusing on the teachings of Jesus about the doctrines of God’s sovereignty and humanities libertarian free will as it applies to salvation. What did the Jewish people and Jesus Himself believe about these doctrines? The second goal of this paper, is to examine those Scriptural passages that explain who and why some receive salvation and some receive “reprobation.” The third goal is to examine the application of Molinism to these two doctrines listed, and to mankind’s salvation and reprobation. It is important to try and comprehend, as best as one is able to with the limited and finite knowledge that we possess, the nature of our salvation and its relationship to the character of God as it relates to his love and justice toward humanity.

**The Teachings of Jesus**

**The Sovereignty of God**

Jesus had a profoundly deep and intimate relationship with the Father that was characteristic of his triune relationship to God prior to his incarnation. This is evidenced by how Jesus referred to God as

(quote).

1. **What does Jesus’ relationship with Father teach about sovereignty?**
2. **The Parable of the Wedding Feast.**
3. **The Rich Young Ruler**
4. **The Drawing of the Sinner to God**
5. **The Crucifixion**

**Human Freedom**

1. **Do human beings have free will, if so, in what sense?**
2. **Different types of freedom.**
3. **Examples of Jesus’ teachings on free will.**
4. **Scriptural examples of free will.**

**Eternal Destinies**

1. **Eternal salvation**
2. **Eternal damnation**
3. **Reprobation**
4. **Scriptural support for these three doctrines.**
5. **Jesus’ teaching on the afterlife**

**Molinism**

The teachings concerning the sovereignty of God and human free will as it pertains to election are both doctrines taught by Jesus in the Gospels. The difficulty with this paradox deals with the question of eternal life which every human being experience, either in a state of eternal bliss or eternal damnation. It is clear through the Scriptures that Jesus taught this fact (script). That not everyone will spend eternity in Heaven. This horrifying reality forces the majority of Christian and non-Christian alike, at one time or another in their lives, to look to God with questions about the extent of God’s character, love, justice, divine sovereignty and human freedom, and how it applies to them and those they love. There are no easy answers because God is unlike any other being existing in the universe as mentioned in the introduction. Ultimately God, not humanity, has the last word. (quote about sovereignty and creation). Today in the world of philosophers and theologians, there have been theories and theological systems created to try and understand how all of this works together. One such approach that attempts to reconcile God’s determinism with the choice that a person has to determine whether or not they want to believe and accept that God wants, through Christ, to have a personal relationship with him and the spiritual ramification of that choice. One such approach to confronting this tension, is a theological system developed by a 16th century Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina (1535-1600). He proposed that there was a relationship between God’s omniscience and man’s election to salvation. According to Keatherly:

So Molinism simultaneously affirms meticulous divine sovereignty and genuine human freedom. But how does it do this? In short, Molinism argues that God is able to exercise his sovereignty primarily by his omniscience. In this way, God controls all. things, but is not the determinative cause of all things. How is this possible? The distinctive feature to Molinism is its contention that God’s knowledge of all things can be understood in three logical layers, or moments. Molinism is particularly noted for its view that God can infallibly assure the choices of free creatures by utilizing what it calls God’s middle knowledge.

**The Different Aspects of God’s Omnicience.**

Molina proposed that there are three different types or moments of knowledge that God possess. Craig (1989), explains these types:

1. Natural knowledge: In the first, unconditioned moment God knows all *possibilia*, not only all individual essences, but also all possible worlds…the content of such knowledge is essential to God and in no way depends on the free decisions of His will. By means of His natural knowledge, then, God has knowledge of every contingent state of affairs which could possibly obtain and of what the exemplification of the individual essence of any free creature could freely choose to do in any such state of affairs that should be actual.
2. In the second moment, God possesses knowledge of all true counterfactual propositions, including counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. That is to say, He knows what contingent states of affairs would obtain if certain antecedent states of affairs were to obtain; whereas by His natural knowledge God knew what any free creature could do in any set of circumstances, now in this second moment God knows what any free creature would do in any set of circumstances. This is not because the circumstances causally determine the creature's choice, but simply because this is how the creature would freely choose. God thus knows that were He to actualize certain states of affairs, then certain other contingent states of affairs would obtain. Molina calls this counterfactual knowledge "middle knowledge" because it stands in between the first and third moment in divine knowledge.
3. In the third moment. Given God's free decision to actualize a world, in the third and final moment God possesses knowledge of all remaining propositions that are in fact true in the actual world. Such knowledge is denominated "free knowledge" by Molina because it is logically posterior to the decision of the divine will to actualize a world.

**The Creation of this World.**

The 2nd moment or middle knowledge is the part of God’s knowledge that was active in creation. This is important to understand because it has to do with why he created a world that would allow human beings the free will to resist God and the possibility that this resistance would lead to condemnation that Craig (1989), refers to as trans-world damnation which Craig defines as (quote). Also, since God is omniscient, doesn’t it stand to reason that God could have created a world in which everyone would want to go to heaven? According to Craig (2003), “It may not be within God’s power to create such a world. If such a world was feasible, God would have created it. But given His will to create free creatures, God had to accept the fact that some would reject Him and be lost” (p. 161). God in His omniscience, created such a world that would allow the maximum number of people to be saved and the minimum number of people to be lost. Knowing that many would be lost, Lane (2003), points out that because God wanted to share His love with those He created, He knew that many would reject Him and be lost. “But the blessedness and happiness of those who would accept Him should not be precluded by those who would freely reject Him” (p. 161). Out of all possible worlds he could have created that would give human beings the best possible chance at salvation, because he knew that sin would eventually come into the world; would unfortunately mean that while some would freely choose a relationship with God, some would not and would have to go to hell as a result of their choices as truly free human beings. To take that choice away, God is still controlling the free will of human beings and the result is the same as God preordaining people to hell. He created a world in which he knew all possible circumstances that people would be in that would give them the best possible chance at salvation, even with his (type) of grace given, God knew who would still choose to reject God. He even takes this idea to the next step.

**Divine Election, Predestination and Molinism.**

**Conclusion**