

Will Hubner Mend the Mutilations?

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I do not (and will not here) engage in a thorough tit-for-tat defense of my original notes posting, entitled "[Jamin Hubner on Maliciously Mutilating Molinism's Meaning \(A Plea for Reformers to Get it Right!\)](#)." The reason is that Hubner makes no attempt at any serious challenges to the Molinist position (i.e., the biblical passages describing God's counterfactual knowledge, the grounding objection, the charge of indirect fatalism, the circularity charge, etc.). This is primarily due to his antecedent rejection of the view *before even understanding what the position is*. Careful critics will examine the primary source documents (instead of filtered versions from what other critics have to say) before rendering a judgment. Scripture admonishes, "Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (Jam 1:19 ESV). Instead, Hubner seems to prefer to traffic in rhetorical caricatures that spur fellow Calvinists to merely decry Molinism's threat; and fails to take seriously the position as properly advocated by its adherents. Despite this, I am interested in turning these lemons into lemonade. I shall preface my remarks with a brief background to my posted notes (hereafter, "Mutilating").

I had reluctantly moved forward in a two-evening debate to engage two Calvinist thinkers (Hubner was one of them) with my ministry colleague Jordan Fishel as my wingman.¹ Our objective was to *inform* as well as to *argue*. I am happy to say that both of those missional objectives were accomplished even if the debate came across as heated on occasion. In the subsequent days and months that ensued, Jamin Hubner has engaged in customary Monday-morning quarterbacking. Given Calvinism's defeat those nights, who could blame him? In partial preparation for the debate, I examined the scant writings Hubner did on Molinism and mastered Hubner's writings relevant to our debate topics. My notes on Hubner's (mis-)handling of Molinism, later posted as my "Mutilating" article, was parked on Facebook for interested readers to peruse.

In a follow-up blog responding to my "Mutilating" article, Hubner shocked me with a public set of admissions and declarations that

it is true that the quote of Craig I used in my opening statements to the Perseverance debate came from a less important work - *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views* (less important when compared to Craig's *Only Wise God* and Guthrie's own essay on Molinism and Perseverance) that I did not read. This fact would mean something if Guthrie can demonstrate that I've quoted from the book out of context or somehow misapplied it or misrepresented it, or can show how something in the work proves that I am wrong to quote Craig as I have, or can show that Craig's position in that work is different from his book *Only Wise God*. None of that has not happened either in the debates or after ("[On Maliciously Mutilating ... All Kinds of Things: A Plea for Guthrie to Get it Right](#)")

In other words, he's trying to save face in asking where the errors lie. Indeed. And I can overlook the defensiveness here. It also needs to be noted that I was *not* saying that

Craig should not have been quoted. He's a primary source as far as I'm concerned. But even more surprising – perplexing even! – is that Hubner insists that I never pointed out how he “misapplied ... or misrepresented” Craig's citations. This was one of the main points of my “Mutilating” article and I *did* mention it on the first night's debate. I cited several deviant interpretations of Molinism that should have driven Hubner to correct, re-edit, and re-state what Molinism accurately is prior to critiquing it (after all, by Hubner's own admission – e.g., not knowing what a “feasible” versus a “possible” world is and not knowing the difference between what one *can* do versus what one *would* do – he *didn't understand the basic vocabulary of Molinism before debating it!* Yikes!). But in a veiled request for elucidation on his mistakes, he ungraciously charges:

Guthrie does what most heretics, false teachers, and people in error do when their beliefs have been shown to be absurd. They look at the Christian apologist's summaries of their own position, far more simple and plain and honest than they prefer, and because they look bad (because they are) they respond by saying "This isn't what I believe" - and yet they do so without providing a single argument from their own written works or authoritative works from their position to show that their denial is justified.² ... [W]hy doesn't Guthrie actually say what Molinists *do* believe against the backdrop of what he believes are errors? ... Show me *how* these things directly contradict what Molinism truly is.

Other than having pointed out three things that were addressed both in our debate as well as in my written article (viz., God is a “massive supercomputer”, God saves a “maximum” number of people, and Molinism is man-centered), here is a comparison chart of the mistakes with explicit written corrections Hubner needs to absorb before he can carry about scrutinizing Molinism:

On Libertarian Free Will

“In the Molinistic perspective (like Arminianism), libertarian freewill sits on the highest throne ... because God has willingly put man's libertarian freewill on the throne, God Himself is literally unable to have saved every human person” (“[The Heart of Molinism](#),” Apologetics and Worldview blog entry, February 11, 2011)

Mending the Mutilation: Molinists do not worship free will. Free will is not an enthroned personage.³ Free will is a *require property to be a person with responsibility*. If God wants to save *persons* and not *action figures*, and since it is logically impossible to *make* someone *freely* do something, then it is a logical impedance to save all persons. Logical inhibitions are no more demeaning of God's sovereignty than God's necessary goodness inhibiting His ability to sin is demeaning of God's omnipotence!

Mutilated as Horribly Anthropomorphic

“God essentially needs the creature’s permission before actually doing something with the person’s heart and mind” (“The Heart of Molinism”)

Mending the Mutilation: Middle knowledge is nowhere a case where God asks “permission before doing something with the person’s heart and mind.” This is Pelagianism, not Molinism. Middle knowledge is propositional and takes into account what each person would do under every situation *where prevenient, necessary grace is given*. We simply disagree that that grace is indubitable.

On Divine Sovereignty

“Molinism cannot agree with biblical theology that God foreordains all that occurs and that the final determinative cause for all creational events – whether by secondary causes or whatever else – is ultimately the Creator Himself in accordance with His divine decree. And the God of Molinism certainly doesn’t choose some people to receive grace and others to receive justice simply because of God’s good will and purpose” (“The Heart of Molinism”)

“[T]he fact that God sets aside his divine sovereignty and power over the creature is a fact that should actually *invoke our worship*? ... does God’s own self-revelation (Scripture) assert that God should be worshipped because He has set aside the exercise of His divine attributes in order to let man be libertarianly free?” (“The Heart of Molinism”)

Preface: Where is “[God is] the final determinative cause for all creational events – whether by secondary causes or whatever else” in the Bible? Are not these terms and expressions *philosophical* expressions? What is Hubner doing promoting philosophy over Scripture? When Hubner disparages philosophical theology, he apparently only means to say that philosophy is inappropriate if and only if it does not agree with Calvinism (an obvious piece of rhetorical legerdemain).⁴

Mending the Mutilation: (i) Molinism agrees *better* with biblical theology (since Hubner admits that human free will and divine sovereignty both obtain, but hasn’t the slightest idea how, and Molinism *has* a reconciliation that accords perfectly with the Westminster and Belgic Confessions’ definition of sovereignty⁵). (ii) Regarding Molinism’s alleged “set[ting] aside the exercise of His divine attributes in order to let man be libertarianly free,” this is wrong on its face. Hubner is clearly confusing the *kenosis* controversy with Molinism. But if by this Hubner simply means “God does not *impose* Himself such that He *forces* persons to be saved,” then I find it trivially true.⁶ Either way, this is careless on his part.

On the Salvific Quantity

“[W]ithout touching the heart of man at any point in creation history, God already did everything he would and could do according to his character to save the maximum amount of human beings: create a world that would provide such a result.” (“The Heart of Molinism”)

Mending the Mutilation: William Lane Craig says (cited by Hubner himself), “in His omnibenevolence, [God] has actualised a world containing an *optimal* balance between saved and unsaved.” Perhaps Hubner does not know the difference between “optimal” and “maximum”? When “maximum” isn’t qualified, it connotes the highest superlative, e.g., best possible world. On this, both Craig and Alvin Plantinga are careful to deny it. I said as much in our public debate.

As I write this, Hubner appears to be amid a series dealing with Craig’s *The Only Wise God* (it’s about time!) so I shall watch with interest to see if he’s learned the lesson of James 1:19 here. And as far as Hubner claiming that he simply drew the same (verbatim?) conclusions that James White did certainly does not pass the smell test. Both not only cite the same passage but make the same colorfully mistaken commentary (i.e., “massive supercomputer”). *Just who does he think he’s kidding?*

I look forward to Hubner – who I’m sure aspires to be a responsible scholar – making the necessary corrections!

End Notes

¹ My reluctance was nothing against Hubner personally, only that I prefer not to base my ministry on infighting – a decision I loosely held ever since my debate with Calvinist Peter Pike.

² And one would expect that Hubner would have then silenced my criticism simply by citing those “authoritative works” that would have vouched for his representations. But nary was a passage or word uttered!

³ A common feature of Calvinists who debate non-Calvinists is to insist that there is only one of two positions one ultimately takes: Either one has a God-centered theology or a man-centered philosophy. It’s merely question-begging to insist that Calvinism is the first disjunct.

⁴ Calvinist philosopher and theologian John Feinberg gets it right when he says, “[W]hile Scripture surely teaches human freedom, it does not state what kind of freedom is in view. Thus, *one must turn to the philosophical discussion* for an explanation of the way in which human freedom can be understood” (*Predestination & Free Will*, (IVP Press, 1986), p. 20, n. 1; emphasis mine).

⁵ Article 13 of the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561): “We believe that the same good God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them or give them up to fortune or chance, but that He rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment”; Chapter 5 of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1648): “God the great Creator of all things does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.”

⁶ But then, just what would Hubner be suggesting is the correct understanding of “power over creation” if not by force? Does he think that God’s “power over creation” *just is* forcing personal salvation, and that *this* is the biblical portrait? On this, Hubner elsewhere defends as much:

God doesn’t force salvation on us because He makes us willing so that we are able to choose God. But, God’s choice is the basis for our choice and it is completely gracious – meaning it is freely given. In that sense, He does “force” salvation. ... What God says, happens!” (*The Saving Grace of God* (BookSurge, 2005), p. 80)

He then compares this with Lazarus’ inability to say “No” when called forth. He calls it God’s “blessed force”! Simply replace the nouns with other nouns and you can see the problem here: “The rapist doesn’t force sex on us because he makes us willing so that we are able to choose him. But, our choice is the basis for our choice and it is completely gracious – meaning it is freely given. In that sense, he does ‘force’ sex.” If this is what one has to believe to deny Molinism, then farewell, Calvinism!