

## Many are culled but few are chosen

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**Abstract:** In his recent book *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account*, Thomas Flint suggests that necessarily, a world is culled iff it is chosen. I argue that there is good reason to think that this thesis is false. I further argue that the thesis is inconsistent with certain other claims that many theists will want to endorse and hence that many theists will want to reject Flint's claim. I next consider Flint's reasons for endorsing the thesis and argue that his reasons are not good ones. I then examine the implications of this debate with respect to two varieties of Molinism: Fourth Momentism and Fifth Momentism. Finally, I consider some objections to my view.

### Introduction

Suppose that the God of orthodox Christianity exists. Such a God is, among other things, the omnipotent, omniscient, morally perfect, provident creator of the world. Suppose that God not only decides which world to create; He further decides which world He would have created, had circumstances been different from what they in fact are. Suppose, for example, that He in fact decides that had He been in (non-actual) circumstances C, he would have created a particular world, W<sub>1</sub>. Here a question arises: does it follow from this that He would have made this same decision had He been in circumstances other than those that in fact obtain?

In his recent book *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* Thomas Flint claims that the answer to this question is 'Yes'. In this paper I will argue that there is good reason for thinking that Flint is wrong on this point. In order to show this a bit of stage setting will be required.

Orthodox Christianity has it that God has both complete foreknowledge of and complete control over everything that happens in the world. On the face of it, this doctrine appears to be at odds with the claim that human beings sometimes perform actions that are free – free in the libertarian sense, which implies at least that such actions are not completely causally determined by factors outside of the agent.

Flint's book is an extended explication and defence of the sixteenth-century theologian Luis de Molina's account of how it is that God has both complete foreknowledge of and complete control over everything that happens in the world and yet that human beings sometimes perform actions that are free in the libertarian sense.

What is distinctive about the Molinist position is its division of God's knowledge into three parts. The first of these is natural knowledge, which includes God's knowledge of truths that are necessarily true and are true independently of God's free will (their truth does not depend on what God freely wills).<sup>1</sup> It is through His natural knowledge that God knows all metaphysically necessary truths. The second part of God's knowledge is His middle knowledge, which includes God's knowledge of truths that are contingently true and are true independent of God's free will.<sup>2</sup> The third part of God's knowledge is His free knowledge, which includes God's knowledge of truths that are contingent and whose truth does depend on what God freely wills.

The most interesting truths that God knows via His middle knowledge are true counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. Counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are counterfactuals of the following form:

If creaturely essence P were instantiated in non-determining complete circumstances C at time t, the instantiation of P would (freely) do A.<sup>3</sup>

Circumstances C are complete just in case C includes all of the causal factors affecting the relevant agent's actions.<sup>4</sup> By knowing every true counterfactual of creaturely freedom, God knows, for any creature He could create and for any (complete) set of circumstances in which He might place that creature, what the creature would freely do in those circumstances.

It is on the basis of His middle knowledge that God decides which creaturely essences to instantiate and in which circumstances to place those instantiations. In virtue of His free knowledge, God knows which essences will be instantiated in which circumstances. Thus, His middle knowledge and His free knowledge together provide him with complete foreknowledge of free human actions. Moreover, because God's knowledge of free human actions is in no way the *cause* of those actions, His knowledge of them in no way threatens their freedom.

Before turning to consideration of the central topic of the present essay, it will be useful to familiarize ourselves with some of Flint's terminology.

Flint offers this account of a *creaturely world-type*:

CWT3 T is a creaturely world-type iff for any counterfactual of creaturely freedom ( $C \rightarrow A$ ), either  $(C \rightarrow A)$  or  $(C \rightarrow \sim A)$  is a member of T.<sup>5</sup>

A world W is *chosen* just in case there is some world-type T such that had T been actual, God would have actualized W. A world W is *culled* just in case there are

world-types T and T' such that had T been actual, God would have decided that had T' been actual, He would have actualized W.

### Could there be culled but unchosen worlds?

In chapter 2 section 7 of his book, Flint considers the following question: 'Given that a certain world is a chosen world, would it still have been a chosen world if a creaturely world-type *other than the one which is in fact true* had been true?'<sup>6</sup> Using Flint's terminology, we can restate the question as follows: could there be any worlds that are culled but not chosen? After careful consideration of this question, Flint concludes that 'if a world *is* a chosen world, then that world still *would have been chosen* had any other world-type been true... my own inclination is to reject the alleged distinction between the culled and the chosen'.<sup>7</sup> Flint's position then, is that not only are there in fact no culled-but-unchosen worlds, but there couldn't be any such worlds. Flint holds that necessarily, a world is culled just in case it is chosen (I will call this the 'Culled = Chosen Thesis').<sup>8</sup>

I will argue that the Culled = Chosen Thesis is false. I will claim that there could be worlds that are culled but not chosen. I think that once we see the reasons in support of this claim we will be able to see that Flint's reasons for holding the Culled = Chosen Thesis are not compelling ones. I will then consider some objections to my argument against the Culled = Chosen Thesis.

### How God decides

On the Molinist view, God is faced with a particular world-type, T, where this world-type determines a certain *galaxy* of worlds, G, such that a given world, w, is a member of G just in case if T were actual, God could actualize W. Worlds belonging to the galaxy determined by the actual world-type are *feasible* worlds; worlds not belonging to this galaxy are *infeasible*. Thus, God can actualize a given world just in case that world is feasible.<sup>9</sup>

Having considered the various feasible worlds, God performs a complete creative act of will. By performing this act of will, God actualizes one of the feasible worlds. So in performing this act of will, God decides which of the feasible worlds is to be actual. But this is not all God decides. God also decides, for each non-actual world-type T, which world in the galaxy determined by T He would have actualized, had T been actual. On the Molinist picture, then, God decides not only which world He will in fact actualize; He also decides which world He would have actualized, for any creative situation He might have faced.<sup>10</sup>

We can distinguish three kinds of galaxies, based on the relative overall goodness of the worlds belonging to them:

- D1 Galaxy G is a *One-Best Galaxy* = df. there is a world in G, W, such that for any distinct world in G, W', W is better than W'.

- D2 Galaxy G is a *Multi-Best Galaxy* = df. there are two worlds in G, W and W', such that (i) the value of W = the value of W', and (ii) it's not the case that there is some world in G distinct from both W and W', W\*, such that W\* is better than W.
- D3 Galaxy G is a *No-Best Galaxy* = df. for any world in G, W, there is some distinct world in G, W', such that W' is better than W.

While many philosophers and theologians agree that God's moral perfection constrains His choice concerning which world to actualize, there is significant disagreement concerning just how much God's moral perfection constrains this choice.<sup>11</sup> One view on this issue is captured by the following principle:

MP Necessarily, if God exists, then He actualizes a world that is better than any other feasible world.

But MP is too strong. Suppose God faces a Multi-Best Galaxy. He must actualize some world in this galaxy; yet there is no world in the galaxy that is better than every other feasible world. So MP is inconsistent with the claim that possibly, God faces a Multi-Best Galaxy. The latter claim is extremely plausible, so we ought to reject MP. A more plausible principle might be this one:

MP' Necessarily, if God exists, then He actualizes a world that is at least as good as any other feasible world.

MP' may be too strong as well. Suppose God faces a No-Best Galaxy. He must actualize some world in this galaxy; yet there is no world in the galaxy that is at least as good as any other feasible world. So MP' is inconsistent with the claim that possibly, God faces a No-Best Galaxy. If we think this latter claim is plausible, then we ought to reject MP'. A final principle avoids this difficulty:

MP'' Necessarily, if God exists and does not face a No-Best Galaxy, then He actualizes a world that is at least as good as any other feasible world.

MP'' treats the case in which God faces a No-Best Galaxy as a special case and specifies that, aside from this special case, God's moral perfection requires Him to actualize a world at least as good as any other feasible world. MP'' is, of course, not beyond question, but it does have a significant degree of prima-facie plausibility.

I have distinguished three sorts of galaxies, but it remains an open question which of the three types are instantiated. Let us consider a few of the possibilities and attempt to draw out of the implications of each possibility for the Culled = Chosen Thesis.

Suppose first that every galaxy is a One-Best Galaxy. If this is the case, then MP''

implies that God's choice of which world to actualize is necessarily constrained to a single world. This implies that if a world is a chosen world, then that world is necessarily a chosen world. And if every chosen world is necessarily chosen, then the Culled = Chosen Thesis is true.<sup>12</sup>

Now suppose that not all galaxies are One-Best Galaxies; suppose that some galaxies are Multi-Best Galaxies. Suppose God finds Himself faced with a Multi-Best Galaxy. What is God to do in such a situation?

In such a situation, God must select a world for actualization from a group of equally good worlds. It is plausible to suppose that God is indifferent concerning which of these worlds to actualize. He must select one; what He needs is a way of deciding.

Let us suppose that God has an infinite number of tie-breaking methods at his disposal. That is, He has an infinite number of ways of ranking worlds such that for any set of distinct worlds  $W$ , each method will pick out a unique world in  $W$  as the one to be actualized. When He is faced with a Multi-Best Galaxy, God simply applies one of these methods to the set of worlds that are tied for best. Since all these worlds are equally good, we can suppose that God is, in a sense, indifferent to which is actualized. He simply arbitrarily selects one of the tie-breaking methods and uses that method to decide which world He will actualize.

Let's say that  $T_1$  indicates the actual world-type. Suppose that the galaxy determined by  $T_1$  is a Multi-Best Galaxy. God, seeing this, selects tie-breaking method  $A$  to break the tie, and hence selects a particular world,  $W_1$ , for actualization. This means that

$$(1) \quad T_1 \rightarrow W_1$$

is true. Now suppose that God considers non-actual world-type  $T_2$  and notices that the galaxy determined by  $T_2$  is a Multi-Best Galaxy as well. He arbitrarily decides that had  $T_2$  been actual, He would have used tie-breaking method  $B$  to break the tie. He notices that under such circumstances method  $B$  would pick out  $W_2$  as the world to be actualized. Hence, God decides that had  $T_2$  been actual, He would have actualized  $W_2$ . So

$$(2) \quad T_2 \rightarrow W_2$$

is true as well.

Finally, suppose God makes this further decision: 'Had  $T_2$  been actual, I would have used method  $B$  to break the tie for best among the feasible worlds, and I would have decided to use method  $C$  to break the tie for best among the worlds determined by world-type  $T_1$ , had  $T_1$  been actual'. Suppose that method  $C$ , when applied to the worlds tied for best in the galaxy determined by  $T_1$ , picks out a world for actualization distinct from the world that method  $A$  picks out when applied to those same worlds (call the former world  $W_5$ ). This means that had  $T_2$  been actual,

God would have decided that had T1 been actual, He would have actualized W5. This implies that

$$(4) \quad T2 \rightarrow (T1 \rightarrow W5)$$

is true as well.

I see nothing incoherent or even implausible about the scenario I have described. But notice that the possibility of this scenario implies the falsity of the Culled=Chosen Thesis. In the scenario I have described, W5 is culled but not chosen. Furthermore, as Flint notes, 'it would be odd to think of W5 as being the only culled-but-unchosen world'.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, if some galaxies are Multi-Best Galaxies, it is plausible to suppose that it at least could have been the case that many worlds are culled but few are chosen.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, suppose that not all galaxies are One-Best Galaxies; suppose that some galaxies are No-Best Galaxies. Suppose God is faced with a No-Best Galaxy. What is God to do in such a situation?

Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder have suggested that a morally perfect being faced with this situation might randomly select a world for actualization from among a certain range of worlds.<sup>15</sup> If this is correct, then the story of God's creative choices with respect to a No-Best Galaxy might go much the same as the story I told above concerning His creative choices with respect to a Multi-Best Galaxy.

The upshot here is that the Culled=Chosen Thesis is a consequence of the claim that every galaxy is a One-Best Galaxy together with MP". On the other hand, if some galaxies are either Multi-Best Galaxies or No-Best Galaxies, then there is good reason for thinking that the Culled=Chosen Thesis is false.

Notice that if MP" is true, then every One-Best Galaxy contains exactly one possible world.<sup>16</sup> In an earlier article called 'The problem of divine freedom', Flint argues that the claim that (i) some galaxies contain a single possible world, is incompatible with (ii) God is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, morally perfect, possessing of freedom in the libertarian sense, and existent.<sup>17</sup>

If Flint is right about this (and I think that he is), and MP" and (ii) are both true, then no galaxies are One-Best Galaxies, and hence every galaxy is either a Multi-Best Galaxy or a No-Best Galaxy. I suspect that many theists would endorse both MP" and (ii). Such theists appear to be committed to the denial of (i) and therefore, I would argue, to the denial of the Culled=Chosen Thesis.

At least three interesting conclusions can be drawn from all of this. First, it seems quite plausible that at least some galaxies are either Multi-Best Galaxies or No-Best Galaxies. If this is correct, then it is conceivable that there are culled but unchosen worlds. To the extent that conceivability is an indicator of metaphysical possibility, then, the claim that some galaxies are either Multi-Best Galaxies or No-Best Galaxies implies that the Culled=Chosen Thesis is false. Given the high plausibility of the claim that some galaxies are either Multi-Best Galaxies or No-Best Galaxies, we have good reason for rejecting the Culled=Chosen Thesis.

Second, if (ii) and MP<sup>w</sup> are true, then every galaxy is either a Multi-Best Galaxy or a No-Best Galaxy, and thus it is conceivable that there are culled but unchosen worlds. Again, to the extent that conceivability is a guide to metaphysical possibility, the conjunction of (ii) and MP<sup>w</sup> is incompatible with the Culled = Chosen Thesis. I suspect that many theists would be inclined to accept both (ii) and MP<sup>w</sup>; such theists ought to reject the Culled = Chosen Thesis.

Third, Flint himself rejects the claim that all chosen worlds are necessarily chosen.<sup>18</sup> This claim follows from the claim that every galaxy is a One-Best Galaxy together with MP<sup>w</sup>. So, to the extent that MP<sup>w</sup> is plausible, Flint ought to admit that some galaxies are either Multi-Best Galaxies or No-Best Galaxies. Such a concession suggests that the Culled = Chosen Thesis is false; thus, Flint himself ought to admit the falsity of the Culled = Chosen Thesis.

### **Why maintain the Culled = Chosen Thesis?**

Flint offers two reasons for holding the Culled = Chosen Thesis. The first reason is simply that there would be something peculiar about denying it. Flint writes:

[I]t seems odd to think that there could be culled-but-unchosen worlds, for it is difficult to imagine what might motivate God to perform the strange creative act of will needed to make both (1) and (4) true.... If, given the true creaturely world-type (call it Tx), God has decided that he would actualize W1 if T1 were true, what reason could he possibly have to alter this decision if T2 rather than Tx were true?<sup>19</sup>

In the previous section I told a story according to which God makes the ‘strange creative act of will’ in question. True, various elements of this act of will are done arbitrarily – God could just as easily have decided differently – but there doesn’t seem to be anything particularly odd about His deciding in the way I described above. In particular, God’s deciding in a way consistent with the truth of the Culled = Chosen Thesis would have been just as arbitrary as His deciding in the way I described.

Notice that the Culled = Chosen Thesis is a modal claim. It claims that it is a necessary truth that a world is culled if and only if it is chosen. I have told a story which implies that possibly, there is a world that is culled but not chosen. If the Culled = Chosen Thesis is true, then the story I have told above is an impossible story. Yet the story seems perfectly conceivable. Therefore, to the extent that conceivability is an indicator of metaphysical possibility, the story I have told tells against the Culled = Chosen Thesis.

Flint’s second reason for holding the Culled = Chosen Thesis is that the denial of that thesis is incompatible with a certain principle which, according to Flint, is ‘very plausible’.<sup>20</sup> Flint draws a distinction between the unconditional portion of God’s complete creative act of will and the conditional portion of that act. The

unconditional portion ‘involves God’s deciding which beings *are* to be created and what situations they *are* to be placed in’.<sup>21</sup> The conditional portion ‘involves God’s deciding which beings *would have been* created and what situations they *would have been* placed in if a certain creaturely world-type had been true’.<sup>22</sup>

Given this distinction, Flint’s principle can be stated as follows:

- P Necessarily, if  $V_c$  is the set of true propositions determined by the conditional part of God’s creative act of will, then for any creaturely world-type  $T_n$ , it is possible that both  $V_c$  and  $T_n$  are true.<sup>23</sup>

Flint then argues that P, together with the assumptions required to deny the Culled = Chosen Thesis, entails a contradiction. Since P is plausible, the denial of the Culled = Chosen Thesis is implausible.

One of the steps in Flint’s argument is this proposition:

$$(7) \quad V_c \Rightarrow [T_2 \rightarrow (T_1 \rightarrow W_5)]$$

(7) tells us that the conditional portion of God’s creative act of will determines the truth of (4). Flint says earlier that the conditional portion of God’s creative act of will includes His decisions about which beings would have been created and what situations they would have been placed in had a certain world-type been true. But in deciding on (4), God doesn’t seem to be making a decision of this sort. Rather, He is making a decision on an issue that is almost impossible to state in English: a decision about which beings it would have been the case that He would have created, and which situations it would have been the case that He would have put those creatures in, had a certain world-type been actual. Nevertheless, Flint wants to include decisions of this sort as elements of the conditional portion of God’s creative act of will.

But once we see that  $V_c$  includes decisions of this type, it becomes clear that P is implausible. For on this reading of P,  $V_c$  involves God’s deciding both: (i) if  $T_1$  were actual, then I would use method A to break ties among worlds determined by  $T_1$ , and (ii) if  $T_2$  were actual, then had  $T_1$  been actual, I would have used method C to break ties among worlds determined by  $T_1$ .

But God could not consistently make both of these decisions if  $T_2$  were actual. Doing so would require Him to decide both (iii) if  $T_1$  were actual, then I would use method A to break ties among worlds determined by  $T_1$ ,<sup>24</sup> and (iv) if  $T_1$  were actual, then I would use method C to break ties among worlds determined by  $T_1$ . Since  $T_2$  is actual, God knows that  $T_2$  is actual; hence, by making decision (ii) above, He is also thereby making decision (iv). Suppose I decide, knowing that I have been working for at least an hour, that if it were the case that I had been working for at least an hour, I would take a break. This is just an odd way of deciding to take a break. Similarly, if God makes decision (ii) while knowing that  $T_2$  is actual, this is tantamount to making decision (iv). Finally, since method A and method C are



distinct, if T2 were actual, God could not consistently decide to make both (iii) and (iv) true.<sup>25</sup>

Flint and I agree on this point: P is inconsistent with the falsity of the Culled = Chosen Thesis. We disagree on the plausibility of P. Flint views P as quite plausible, and so thinks the moral to be drawn from P's inconsistency with the denial of the Culled = Chosen Thesis is the implausibility of the denial of the Culled = Chosen Thesis. I think the moral to be drawn here is that P is implausible. Are there any considerations that tell in favour of either my or Flint's position on this issue?

Notice that P is a modal claim. It claims that it is a necessary truth that the conditional portion of God's creative act of will is consistent with every possible world-type. In the previous section I told a story according to which it is not the case that the conditional portion of God's creative act of will is consistent with every possible world-type. If P is true, my story is an impossible one. Yet the story seems perfectly conceivable. Therefore, to the extent that conceivability is an indicator of metaphysical possibility, the story I have told tells against P.

It seems to me, then, that there is good reason for thinking that both P and the Culled = Chosen Thesis are false, and that Flint's reasons for thinking that the Culled = Chosen Thesis is true are not very powerful ones.

### **Fifth Momentism**

At one point, Flint suggests that the Molinist thinks of God's knowledge and creative activity as being divided into four 'moments':

On the Molinist view, the knowledge of a providential God can be thought of as in a sense growing through four logical moments. First, God has natural knowledge – he knows all necessary truths. Second, he has middle knowledge – he knows all contingent truths over which he has no control. ... given this natural and middle knowledge, God knows what world would in fact result from any creative act of will he might perform. In the third logical moment, God decides upon a particular creative act of will – he decides which beings to create in which circumstances. From this divine decision and the knowledge which precedes it flow not only the contingent creaturely events ultimately precipitated by God's creative action, but also ... the fourth logical moment, in which God knows all the contingent truths under his control.<sup>26</sup>

The four moments, then, are these:

<i>First moment</i>	Natural knowledge
<i>Second moment</i>	Middle knowledge
<i>Third moment</i>	Creative act of will
<i>Fourth moment</i>	Free knowledge

One consequence of this view is that God's knowledge is not all on a par. Some

portions of God's knowledge are logically prior to other portions of His knowledge. A more interesting consequence is that in the third moment, God's creative act of will, some portion of God's knowledge is not available to Him – namely, His free knowledge. This means that God cannot use or appeal to His free knowledge in making His creative act of will. His decision concerning which world to actualize cannot be based on His free knowledge.

Later, Flint considers the suggestion that the Molinist ought to think of God's knowledge and creative activity as being divided into five logical moments. The Fifth Momentist, noting the distinction between God's conditional act of will and His unconditional act of will, suggests that God's knowledge grows through the following five moments:

<i>First moment</i>	Natural knowledge
<i>Second moment</i>	Conditional creative act of will
<i>Third moment</i>	Middle knowledge
<i>Fourth moment</i>	Unconditional creative act of will
<i>Fifth moment</i>	Free knowledge

The most important feature of Fifth Momentism for our purposes is that in the second moment, God's conditional creative act of will, neither God's free knowledge *nor His middle knowledge* is available to Him. That is, when God decides, for any possible world-type of creaturely freedom, which world He would have actualized, had that world-type been true, He cannot base this decision on either His free knowledge or His middle knowledge. Since it is through His middle knowledge that He knows which creaturely world-type of freedom is true, it follows that on Fifth Momentism, when God performs His conditional creative act of will, it is as if He does not know which world-type of creaturely freedom is true. Thus, His conditional creative act of will must be logically compossible with the truth of any possible world-type – otherwise He runs the risk of making decisions that are logically incompatible. In short, Fifth Momentism implies Flint's principle P, and hence Fifth Momentism implies that there cannot be any culled but unchosen worlds.

In arguing that P is false, I assumed that God's knowledge of which world-type is true is available to Him when He performs His conditional creative act of will. But this is precisely what the Fifth Momentist denies. So my argument against P begs the question against Fifth Momentism.

So, Flint might maintain the Culled = Chosen Thesis on the grounds that Fifth Momentism is true. If this were the case, I would be guilty of begging the question against Flint. But this is not the case. Flint himself rejects Fifth Momentism in favour of the simpler four moment view sketched above.<sup>27</sup> Given this, it seems clear that Flint has no good reason to maintain the Culled = Chosen Thesis; indeed, he ought to reject it.<sup>28</sup>

### An infinite regress?

To this point I have argued that it is plausible to suppose that the Culled=Chosen Thesis is false, and that if one is a Fourth Momentist, as Flint is, one ought to reject the Culled=Chosen Thesis. But admitting the possibility of culled but unchosen worlds seems to open the door to a whole range of increasingly complicated decisions that God might make.

Let us say that a world  $W$  is *sub-culled* just in case there are world-types  $T$ ,  $T'$  and  $T''$ , such that had  $T''$  been actual, God would have decided that had  $T'$  been actual, He would have decided that had  $T$  been actual, He would have actualized  $W$ . If it is possible that there are culled but unchosen worlds, surely it is possible that there are sub-culled but unculed (and unchosen) worlds. And surely it is possible that there are sub-sub-culled but un-sub-culled (and unculed and unchosen) worlds; in short, it seems that we have opened the door to an infinite hierarchy of culledness of worlds.

In the section above, 'How God decides', I told a story according to which world-type  $T_1$  is actual and God makes each of the following decisions:

- (1)  $T_1 \rightarrow W_1$
- (2)  $T_2 \rightarrow W_2$
- (4)  $T_2 \rightarrow (T_1 \rightarrow W_5)$

The existence of an infinite hierarchy of culledness of worlds reveals that God's conditional creative act of will is much more complicated than we previously supposed. For consider some non-actual world-type  $T_3$ . God must make a decision concerning this issue: Had  $T_3$  been actual, then had  $T_2$  been actual, then had  $T_1$  been actual, which world would I have actualized? Suppose God decides that the answer is  $W_8$ . This means that

- (5)  $T_3 \rightarrow [T_2 \rightarrow (T_1 \rightarrow W_8)]$

is true.

A little reflection reveals that God will have to make an infinite number of increasingly complicated decisions concerning sub-culled, sub-sub-culled, and so on, worlds. Is this a problem?

I do not think that it is. The reason is that there is no problem in supposing that God's conditional creative act of will contains an infinite number of decisions. Indeed, even if the Culled=Chosen Thesis were true, the Molinist would still be committed to this claim. The reason is that there are an infinite number of possible world-types of creaturely freedom. Since in making His conditional creative act of will God decides, for each possible world-type, which world He would actualize, were that world-type actual, His conditional creative act of will contains an infinite number of decisions.

It is true that if the Culled=Chosen Thesis is false, then God has an infinite

number of decisions to make concerning each world-type, whereas if that thesis is true, He has just one decision to make concerning each world-type.<sup>29</sup> But in both cases God has the same number of total decisions to make: an infinite number (and the order of infinity is the same in each case).

So recognizing the possibility of an infinite hierarchy of culledness of worlds reveals that God's conditional creative act of will is much more complicated than we previously realized, but it gives us no reason to endorse the Culled = Chosen Thesis.

### Conclusion

I have argued that there is no good reason to endorse the Culled = Chosen Thesis and there is good reason for rejecting it. Anyone who accepts MP" and who holds that God is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, morally perfect, possessing of freedom in the libertarian sense, and existent ought to reject the Culled = Chosen Thesis. Furthermore, any Molinist who, like Flint, is a Fourth Momentist, ought to reject the Culled = Chosen Thesis. The falsity of the Culled = Chosen Thesis implies that God's creative act of will is more complicated than we might have otherwise supposed, but this is no problem, since God's creative act of will would be just as complex if the Culled = Chosen Thesis were true.<sup>30</sup>

### Notes

1. Thomas P. Flint *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 42.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Flint *Divine Providence*, 47.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, 49. The '→' indicates counterfactual implication. Flint in fact offers three accounts of a creaturely world-type that he suggests are roughly equivalent. I state this one here as it seems to be the easiest of the three to grasp.
6. *Ibid.*, 59.
7. *Ibid.*, 63.
8. Given our definitions of 'culled' and 'chosen', it is trivial that necessarily, if a world is chosen, then it is culled. So what is really at issue here is this claim: necessarily, if a world is culled, then it is chosen.
9. Flint *Divine Providence*, 51–54.
10. *Ibid.*, 57.
11. See, for example, Robert Adams 'Must God create the best?', 275–288; Philip Quinn 'God, moral perfection, and possible worlds', 289–302; both in Michael Peterson (ed.) *The Problem of Evil: Selected Readings* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); William L. Rowe 'The problem of divine perfection and freedom', in Eleonore Stump (ed.) *Reasoned Faith: Essays in Philosophical Theology in Honor of Norman Kretzmann* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 223–233; Daniel and Frances Howard-Snyder 'How an unsurpassable being can create a surpassable world', *Faith and Philosophy*, 11 (1994), 260–268.
12. Consider an arbitrary One-Best Galaxy, G, and consider the chosen world in that galaxy, W. MP" implies that necessarily, if God actualizes a world in a One-Best Galaxy, then that world is the best world in that galaxy. So W is the best world in G. Furthermore, this is a necessary truth about W. So W

is chosen and is necessarily the best world in G. MP" further implies that necessarily, if W is the best world in G, then if God faced G, G would actualize W. Thus, if W is chosen, then W is necessarily chosen. Therefore, if every galaxy is a One-Best Galaxy, then every chosen world is necessarily chosen. To see that if every world is necessarily chosen, then the Culled=Chosen Thesis is true, suppose for *reductio* that there is a world W that is culled but not chosen. Since the world is culled, there are world-types T and T' such that had T' been actual, then had T been actual, God would have actualized W. Thus, had T' been actual, W would have been chosen. So there is a possible world in which W is chosen. But if every chosen world is necessarily chosen, then, had T' been actual, W would have been necessarily chosen. So W is possibly necessarily chosen. It is a theorem of modal logic that possibly necessary *p* implies necessary *p*. So if W is possibly necessarily chosen, then W is necessarily chosen. Thus, W is necessarily chosen, and hence actually chosen, which violates our initial assumption. Therefore, if every chosen world is necessarily chosen, then necessarily, every culled world is a chosen world. This is one half of the Culled=Chosen Thesis. The other half (necessarily, every chosen world is a culled world) is trivially true; therefore, if every chosen world is necessarily chosen, then the Culled=Chosen Thesis is true.

13. Flint *Divine Providence*, 60.
14. Credit for this joke goes to Flint.
15. Howard-Snyder 'How an unsurpassable being can create a surpassable world', *passim*.
16. Recall that a galaxy is the set of worlds that God could have actualized, had a certain world-type been true. In a One-Best Galaxy, MP" implies that God can actualize only the best world in that galaxy. Since God can actualize only one world, and the galaxy is just the set of worlds God can actualize, the galaxy contains a single world.
17. Thomas P. Flint 'The problem of divine freedom', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 20 (1983), 255–264, *passim*. Flint writes: '... a God presented with such a galaxy would have had literally no alternative but to actualize that world. If such a galaxy is possible, then the Anselmian avowal of God's essential freedom would indeed be mistaken' (260).
18. *Idem Divine Providence*, 59: '... no chosen world is necessarily chosen ... That a certain world is a chosen world ... is a contingent fact'.
19. *Ibid.*, 61.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. (iii) is equivalent to (i).
25. This argument establishes, in part, that P is incompatible with the falsity of the Culled=Chosen Thesis. Flint himself argues for this conclusion, so Flint and I agree on this point. What I hope to bring out here is simply that, contrary to what Flint suggests, there is no good reason to accept P.
26. Flint *Divine Providence*, 43.
27. *Ibid.*, 64.
28. Another possibility is that the lesson to be learned here is that Fifth Momentism ought to be taken more seriously than Flint takes it. At any rate, Flint ought to either (i) reject the Culled=Chosen Thesis or (ii) embrace Fifth Momentism. The position he endorses in the book – that the Culled=Chosen Thesis is true and Fifth Momentism is false – is an untenable one.
29. I would like to thank an anonymous referee for *Religious Studies* for prompting me to acknowledge this point.
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