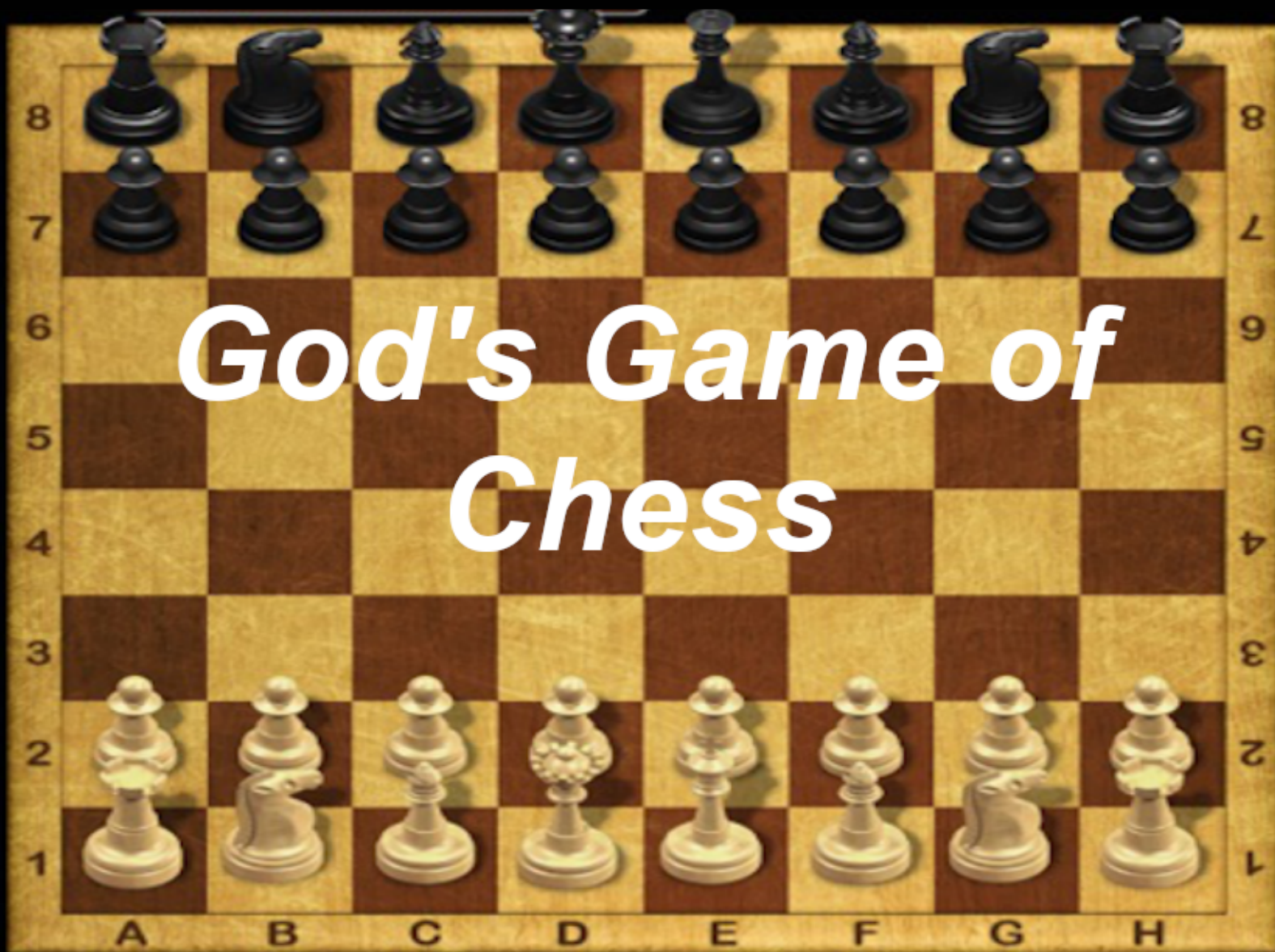


God's Foreknowledge & Providence

God's Game of Chess



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Divine Foreknowledge

Given the following definitions and quote (by William Craig in “*Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views*” James K. Beilby & Paul R. Eddy, eds., Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL.: 2001) consider the following metaphor as explanatory of God’s foreknowledge, providence, and predestination.

Counterfactuals - hypothetical statements in the subjunctive mood, the set of possibilities within scope of any circumstance. Our “what if’s” but God knows! All future possibilities contingent on current possibilities and choices we make foreknown by God. Also called “middle knowledge.”

Fatalism - The doctrine that all things happen according to necessity.

Natural Knowledge - God’s knowledge of all necessary truths, including all possibilities logically prior to his creative decree [Genesis 1:1].

Middle Knowledge - God’s knowledge of all true counterfactuals about what creatures would freely do under any circumstances logically prior to his creative decree.

Molinism - named after 16th-century Spanish Jesuit priest and Roman Catholic theologian Luis de Molina, is the thesis that God has middle knowledge: the knowledge of counterfactuals.... It seeks to reconcile the apparent tension of divine providence and human free will. [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molinism>]

Craig wrote: “Middle knowledge can help us understand how God knows truth about the future. Divine foreknowledge is based on God’s middle knowledge of what every creature would freely do under any circumstances and on His knowledge of the divine decree to create certain sets of circumstances and to place certain creatures in them. Given middle knowledge and the divine decree, foreknowledge follows automatically as a result.

Of course, the skeptic may ask how God knows counterfactual’s concerning human free choices if those choices do not exist. Molinists could respond either that God knows the individual essence of every possible creature so well that He knows just what each creature would do under any set of circumstances He might place him/her in, or that God, being omniscient, simply discerns all the truths there are and, prior to the divine decree, there are not only necessary truths but counterfactual truths, and therefore God possesses not only natural knowledge but middle knowledge as well.” [Craig, 133]

The Metaphor - The Game of Chess

If God made the game of chess, the natural knowledge would include the game board and the pieces [God made the Earth and its resources] and the various moves [rules by which] each piece is capable [middle knowledge]. He ordered or arranged the board in a checker-board fashion but unlike checkers, God's middle knowledge envisioned the rules by which each piece is capable of moving. The Divine decree is the end of the game in capturing the "King."

The counterfactual truths are the total number of "possible" moves which become more critical as the game progresses or as the circumstances change by the arrangement of the pieces on the board. God's middle knowledge includes what He knows about *us*, the players, you and me [Acts 15:8].

Accessing God's middle knowledge in prayer amounts to asking Him "What if I move my knight, is this wise ...my queen? etc.?" [1 Samuel 23:11-13]. A belief that God's foreknowledge requires He predestine all things or His providence direct all things [Isaiah 55:11; Romans 8:29] is fatalistic. Divine Providence has more to do with the rules of the game, knowing the players, and being "in the game" Himself, than controlling players' moves.

The best example was the Savior's pending death [Acts 2:23] that went according to a divine plan which God knew would be executed [no play on words intended]. When Jesus prayed in the Garden that this cup of suffering pass from Him, He then declared it His move also. "Nevertheless, Thy will be done" [Matthew 26:42].

Fatalism, or determinism, is more like the game of Checkers where each piece can only move forward into danger with little chance at surviving against one's opponent. As a far simpler game of strategy there are far fewer possible choices. Fatalism, might be seen as, less in control as the limit of moves approaches zero. The loser is the one whose checkers are all removed.

When God made "chess" He first thought about the middle knowledge and the counterfactuals (the variety of possible moves) that one could providentially make. Providence might be seen as the number of remaining moves as the game proceeds. For the player, his/her choices, which they make and for which they are responsible [1 Corinthians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:17] become more focused or directional in purpose or designed play. The game does not end with the removal of all pieces but with the defeat of an opposing king [Revelation 14:10; 21:27].