

A MOLINIST RESPONSE TO SCHELLENBERG'S
HIDDENNESS ARGUMENT

JACOBUS ERASMUS*
TIMOTHY A. STRATTON**

School of Philosophy at North-West University
Trinity College of the Bible and Theological Seminary

ABSTRACT John Schellenberg argues that divine hiddenness is evidence against God's existence. More precisely, according to Schellenberg's well-known *Hiddenness Argument*, God's existence entails that there would never be any nonresistant non-believers; however, there are some non-resistant non-believers; therefore, God does not exist. In this paper, we offer a Molinist response or solution to the *Hiddenness Argument*. First, we briefly explain Molinism, we then describe Schellenberg's Hiddenness Argument, and, finally, we argue that Molinism undercuts the view that God would necessarily ensure there will never be any nonresistant non-believers.

KEYWORDS: John Schellenberg, hiddenness argument, divine hiddenness, Molinism

Introduction

Why would God, if He exists, not make His existence clearer or more evident to us? [Since we are writing from a Christian perspective, by 'God' we mean the omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God of Christianity.] Why is God seemingly hidden from us, at least to some degree? This is the so-called *problem of divine hiddenness*. Broadly speaking, the problem includes two distinct issues. [Cf. Sarah Coakley (2015: 229–230, note 3): 'It has often been pointed out that the "problem of divine hiddenness" may be construed in two rather different ways: 1. As an aporetic philosophical problem of theodicy or "defense," closely linked to the "problem of

*Dr. Jacobus Erasmus is extraordinary researcher for the School of Philosophy at North-West University. He is author of *The Kalām Cosmological Argument: A Reassessment*. Email: je@JacobusErasmus.com Erasmus is the corresponding author.

**Dr. Timothy A. Stratton is a professor of Theology at Trinity College of the Bible and Theological Seminary. He is the author of *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism*. Email: tim@freethinkinc.org

evil;” or 2. as an intra-Christian theological riddle about the reasons for divine obscurity or ineffability.’] The first is the *theological problem* about whether there is a theological reason for God’s hiddenness for both believers and non-believers. This problem is not an argument against theism but, rather, it is a theological puzzle, so to speak, similar to the issue about how to reconcile God’s sovereignty with human responsibility. The second issue is the *philosophical problem* about whether divine hiddenness is evidence against theism, and John Schellenberg (2015a; 2015b) is one of the influential philosophers who argue the affirmative (i.e., divine hiddenness is evidence against theism). More precisely, according to Schellenberg’s well-known *Hiddenness Argument*, God’s existence entails that there would never be any non-resistant non-believers; however, there are some non-resistant non-believers; therefore, God does not exist.

In this paper, we offer a Molinist response or solution to Schellenberg’s *Hiddenness Argument*. The paper is organized as follows. We first briefly explain Molinism, then we describe Schellenberg’s Hiddenness Argument, and, finally, we argue that Molinism undercuts the view that God will ensure there will never be non-resistant non-believers.

Molinism

Molinism is a theological view, named after Luis de Molina, that explains God’s sovereignty in terms of omnipotence and omniscience. According to Molinism, God created a world containing libertarian free will and, thus, some creatures’ actions are not causally determined by external factors. [For present purposes, it is sufficient to understand libertarian free will as ‘a categorical ability to act or think otherwise’ or ‘source agency without any ultimate external causes’ (Stratton 2020: 4). Libertarian freedom may also be understood in terms of *opportunity*. For example: the opportunity to exercise an ability to choose among a range of options, each of which is compatible with one’s nature in circumstances where the antecedent conditions are insufficient to causally determine the agent’s choice.] Molina (1988: 94) writes: ‘Given the same constitution of the universe and given that God does nothing over and beyond the common course and order of things, the *primary, though remote*, source of contingency for the effects of all the secondary causes belonging to the natural order is God’s will, which created the free choice of human beings and angels and the sentient appetite of those beasts that seem to be endowed with some sort of trace of freedom with respect to certain acts.’ However, according to Molinism, since God is free in a libertarian sense, He could have created (or actualized) any other feasible world, or even refrained from creating any world at all (where a ‘feasible’ world is a possible world that is logically consistent with the counterfactuals of creaturely freedom).

Moreover, Molinism says God, having *middle knowledge*, knows everything that would happen—including any free actions—in any feasible world if He were to create it. God's middle knowledge is situated 'between' (in the logically or explanatory sense) His natural knowledge (i.e., knowledge of everything that *could be*, or of all logically possible situations) and His free knowledge (i.e., knowledge of everything that *will* and *will not* happen after creating some world) (Molina 1988: 168–169). Accordingly, middle knowledge is knowledge of what libertarian free creatures *would freely do* in any circumstances they may find themselves in. [As Molina puts it (1988: 168), '[T]he third type [of divine knowledge] is *middle* knowledge, by which, in virtue of the most profound and inscrutable comprehension of each faculty of free choice, [God] saw in His own essence what each such faculty would do with its innate freedom were it to be placed in this or in that or, indeed, in infinitely many orders of things.'] So, loosely speaking, Molinism views omniscience as including knowledge of all that *could* happen, *will* happen, and *would have* happened in the various feasible states of affairs.

Molinism, although not necessarily a soteriological model, is a good middle ground between Calvinism and Arminianism because, as with Calvinism, Molinism affirms predestination and God's sovereignty, and, as with Arminianism, Molinism affirms humans have libertarian freedom and are, thus, responsible (in a desert sense) for their moral actions. We will not defend Molinism here but, rather, we will assume it is a sound theological position, and we believe it helps one solve the problem of divine hiddenness. [For a defense of Molinism, see Stratton (2020).] Let us now look at Schellenberg's argument.

The Hiddenness Argument

Schellenberg's *Hiddenness Argument* may be stated broadly as follows. [Although Schellenberg (2015a: 24–25; 2015b: 103) expresses or formulates his argument in various ways and in greater detail than our concise formulation, ours emphasizes the core of the argument, and it is sufficient for present purposes.]

1. If God exists, there will never be any nonresistant non-believers.
2. There are some nonresistant non-believers.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

The key terms are the following. First, by 'God,' Schellenberg means the generic theistic God; he (2015a: 15) refers to God as 'a being unsurpassably great who is a person or very much like a person, possessing all power, all knowledge, all goodness and having created every other concrete thing.' His argument targets many monotheistic views, including Christianity. However, since we are writing from a Christian

Molinist perspective, we will understand 'God' to mean the Christian God. Second, 'non-believer' denotes a finite or non-divine person (whether or not they are human) who (i) is capable of having a relationship with God, if God exists, but (ii) is in a state of nonbelief in relation to the proposition that God exists (Schellenberg 2015a: 23, 26). Third, by 'resistant non-believer,' Schellenberg (2015b: 54) means a non-believer who freely and resistantly deceives themselves on whether God exists and, in turn, falls into agnosticism or atheism. Conversely, by 'nonresistant non-believer,' Schellenberg (2015b: 17) means a non-believer whose non-belief did not arise from any resistance toward God on their part. For example, certain nonresistant non-believers

'... are people who have looked at all the relevant evidence they could find—perhaps even lived it, in the case of experiential evidence—but who do not believe: that is, they are either in doubt about whether there is a God or they disbelieve' (Schellenberg 2015b: 79).

Hence, a nonresistant non-believer is a finite person who believes that God does not exist, or doubts that God exists, because of *intellectual* reasons, or *having never considered* the matter of God's existence, and not because of *emotional* reasons. Such a person is not emotionally opposed to the idea of God, and they do not dislike or loath the idea that God exists. Some nonresistant non-believers might even wish that God is real, but they either have intellectual doubts about God's existence or they are intellectually convinced that God does not exist. This kind of non-believer, then, might have *intellectual* resistance or disinclination toward belief in God, but they do not have *emotional* resistance toward belief in God—they are a *nonresistant* non-believer.

Consequently, the first premise of the Hiddenness Argument states that, if an omnibenevolent God exists, there will never be any finite persons who (i) are capable of having a relationship with God, (ii) either doubt (in the sense of lack faith in the proposition) that God exists or believe that God does not exist, (iii) are not in a relationship with God, and (iv) are nonresistant toward God. But why does Schellenberg affirm this first premise? First, Schellenberg (2015a: 23) argues that a person must believe that God exists in order to be in a personal relationship with God. According to Schellenberg, this seems evident enough; surely one cannot be in a *personal* (or conscious and reciprocal) relationship with another party without believing the party exists.

It should be noted, however, that a minority of Christian theologians do not find this evident. For example, the Jesuit inclusivist, Karl Rahner, defends the notion of an 'anonymous Christian,' that is, a person who lives under God's grace and has salvation despite their lack of belief in Christ or Christianity. Moreover, it should also

be noted that proponents of universalism use passages such as Ephesians 1:9–10 and Philippians 2:10–11 to argue that everyone will eventually be saved, even if that means God's love will continue to draw to Himself all people in hell until they repent. Either way, the Christian inclusivist or universalist will object that certain people (perhaps everyone) may be saved despite not believing in God *in this life*, and they will eventually enter into a personal relationship with God. Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, we will grant that a person must believe that God exists to be in a personal relationship with Him in this life, since our aim is to focus on a different weakness of the Hiddenness Argument.

Next, Schellenberg (2015a: 23; 2015b: 57) argues that the following principle, which he calls *Not Open*, is obviously true:

'Necessarily, if a person A, without having brought about this condition through resistance of personal relationship with a person B, is at some time in a state of nonbelief in relation to the proposition that B exists, *where B at that time knows this and could ensure that A's nonbelief is at that time changed to belief*, then it is not the case that B is open at the time in question to having a personal relationship with A then' (Schellenberg 2015a: 23).

Consequently, to be *open* to having a personal relationship with someone is to be *not* closed to the relationship in terms of *Not Open*. Accordingly, God's all-loving nature implies that God would always be open to a relationship with any *nonresistant seeker*, that is, a nonresistant, finite person who is trying to be, and capable of being, in a relationship with God (Schellenberg 2015b: 89–103). Schellenberg (2015b: 96) writes: 'An unsurpassable love, for various reasons, would seek meaningful, conscious relationship with the beloved; it would always at least be open to sharing *itself* in such relationship.' God would not prevent, or make it impossible for, a nonresistant seeker to participate in a relationship with Him, and God would reveal Himself, in some way, to the person to ensure they believe He exists. Therefore, if God exists, there will never be any nonresistant non-believers.

What about premise 2—that there are some nonresistant non-believers? Why does Schellenberg affirm this premise? Unfortunately, he does not offer much in support of the premise because it is 'an evident empirical fact' (Schellenberg 2015a: 25). Indeed, the premise is obvious, he says, because the category of nonresistant non-believer is very broad: it includes reflective doubters and those who have not yet thought about God, from both past and present (Schellenberg 2015a: 27). Therefore, Schellenberg affirms the second premise. [Although some people have never thought about God (e.g., infants), it is plausible that a non-believer might *mistakenly* think they are nonresistant when they are sub-consciously resistant. This would be similar

to how people often insist they will no longer commit some wrong (e.g., lie, mistreat their spouse, break the speed limit, etc.) only to commit it later. Moreover, a person (perhaps one who stands to gain something from the advance of the Hiddenness Argument) can be deeply resistant toward the idea of God and, thus, *claim* to be a nonresistant seeker in order to give the impression that the Hiddenness Argument is a good argument. Nevertheless, for the sake of argument, we will grant that there are some nonresistant non-believers.]

It follows, then, from the premises that God does not exist. Although Schellenberg has more to say and clarify about the argument, we have described its crux, and as Schellenberg (2015a: 26) admits, it 'is really a fairly simple and straightforward argument'. Let's now offer a Molinist response.

A Molinist Response to the Hiddenness Argument

The Hiddenness Argument faces various objections (see Inman 2018; Jordan 2017; Rea 2015). For example, from a Molinist perspective, Michael Thune (2006) argues that God will not provide some non-believer *S* with sufficient evidence for belief in God, if God knows *S* will not freely choose to enter into a self-denying or self-emptying kind of relationship with God upon receiving the evidence. However, Thune does not consider that the conversion of a non-believer may have numerous, enormous ramifications or ripple effects that extend into the far future.

On the other hand, Jason Marsh (2008) offers a Molinist response to the following objection: probably, God would not allow there to be an uneven distribution of theistic belief globally. In response, Marsh argues that God sequesters non-believers, or groups them together, because he knows (via his middle knowledge) that 'their lack of opportunity to believe ... [will] keep them from developing negative affections toward God. God's decision for remaining at an epistemic distance, then, ... is to keep these individuals innocent for a later time, when they will be in a position truly to love God' (Marsh 2008: 468). But Marsh's argument is terse and focuses solely on the problem about the disproportionate spread of believers.

We therefore offer a Molinist response to the Hiddenness Argument that focuses on the broader picture surrounding a person's conversion. We are presupposing the soundness of Molinism as a theological position, and we will argue that Molinism undercuts the Hiddenness Argument. Our response is as follows.

The above description of the Hiddenness Argument makes clear that it depends on the following principle:

- (A) Necessarily, if God exists, then, for some time *t* and some finite person *S* who is a nonresistant seeker at *t*, God will ensure that (or provide sufficient evidence for belief

in God such that) at t , S believes God exists. [This is similar to the following premise in one of Schellenberg's (2015a: 25) formulations of the argument: 'If for any capable finite person S and time t , God is at t open to being in a personal relationship with S at t , then for any capable finite person S and time t , it is not the case that S is at t nonresistantly in a state of nonbelief in relation to the proposition that God exists.']

(A) is the heart of the Hiddenness Argument and it is a succinct summary of Schellenberg's defense of premise 1. Thus, if (A) is false, then premise 1 is false and the argument is unsound.

Now, Molinism undercuts (A). Why? Since God knows both (i) what a person would freely do in any circumstances they may find themselves in and (ii) the repercussions of the person's free actions, there are feasible scenarios in which God knows it is *better* that a nonresistant seeker does not become a believer immediately or, indeed, at all. [Following Schellenberg, by 'believer' we do not necessarily mean 'Christian' or 'saved believer' but simply 'finite person who believes that God exists.' Nevertheless, we should note that, according to Christianity, simply being a mere *believer* does not guarantee being *saved* or being in an eternal love relationship with God (James 2:19).] In other words, given God's middle knowledge, it is possible that God will not ensure—or provide sufficient evidence for belief in God such that—certain nonresistant seekers become believers. Although there are many such possible/feasible scenarios, we will discuss two only to illustrate the point.

1. *After coming to believe in God, a person may rebel against God and, in turn, damage the faith of other believers.* It is possible that a person loses their faith in God, rebels against God, and becomes a non-believer *after* having been a nonresistant seeker who became a mere believer. Many of us have witnessed such sad situations, and Schellenberg (2015b: 80) himself acknowledges that 'many doubters began while they were still believers, and quite happy and also quite busy in their belief.' So this does happen. Unfortunately, the de-conversion of a believer may have devastating effects on the faith of other believers, especially believers who admire or look up to the person de-converting.

But this raises an important question: if God knows, for example, that, if some nonresistant seeker S becomes a believer, then (i) S will eventually deny God's existence, (ii) S will become even more bitter toward God than S was before becoming a believer, and (iii) S 's de-conversion will cause other believers to doubt or leave the faith, then why would (or should) God ensure that the nonresistant seeker becomes a believer? It seems obvious that, in such a case, God, as being perfectly wise and loving, would not ensure that the nonresistant seeker becomes a believer (at least at a specific time t). God knows that, in the grand scheme of things, it would be better

to *not* ensure that *S* becomes a believer (at *t*). Thus, to protect certain other believers' relationships with God, God would not ensure that *S* becomes a believer (at *t*), and this would not be unfair but would be expected from a wise and loving God.

However, there are cases in which believers leave the faith or renounce their belief in God and, in turn, damage the faith of other believers. Why does God allow this to happen? Why would God ensure that some nonresistant seeker becomes a believer if He knows that the seeker will eventually de-convert, apostatize (as Hebrews 5:11–6:20 warns against), and damage the faith of other believers? Does God not always try to protect the faith of his children? In response, it is possible that, in these cases, if the nonresistant seeker *did not* become a believer, more damage *would* have resulted than otherwise would have been the case, which God knows. For example, perhaps God knows that, while a certain nonresistant person is a believer, they will lead many people to faith, and this good outweighs the minor damage done by the person's later de-conversion. Thus, clearly, God has good, or morally sufficient, reasons for allowing such nonresistant seekers to become believers even though He knows they will eventually apostatize.

The salient point, then, is that in each individual situation regarding nonresistant seekers, God knows whether it would be better for the nonresistant seeker to become a believer. However, since there are feasible situations in which it would be better for God not to ensure that a nonresistant seeker becomes a believer, (A) is false—it is not the case that, necessarily, God will ensure that any nonresistant seeker believes that God exists.

2. *Becoming a believer at a later time may benefit both the nonresistant seeker and others.* Another possibility is that God does not ensure that some nonresistant seeker *S* becomes a believer at some time *t* (the time that *S* becomes a nonresistant seeker) because He knows that (i) *S* will become a believer at some later time *t** and (ii) it would be better that *S* becomes a believer at *t** than at *t*. For example, suppose that Jones becomes a nonresistant seeker at time *t*. Suppose further that the following two propositions are true and that God, through His middle knowledge, knows them:

1. If Jones becomes a believer at *t*, then Jones will get married in France, his home country, remain in France his entire life, and lead no one to faith in God.
2. If Jones does not become a believer at *t*, then Jones will move to Africa, become a believer in Africa at time *t** (a year later than *t*), get married in Africa, start a Christian school in Africa, have a tremendous positive impact on the lives of the many students in his school, and lead three hundred and five people to faith in God, which otherwise would not have been the case.

It is clear that, in the above scenario, it would be *better* that Jones does not become a believer at *t*. Indeed, it would be unloving and unwise for God to ensure that Jones becomes a believer at *t* and, hence, a perfectly wise and loving God would not do this.

Moreover, there are possible scenarios, similar to the above, that involve various time frames between a person's *becoming a nonresistant seeker* and their *becoming a believer*. For example, it is surely possible that it would be better that a certain non-resistant seeker becomes a believer, not when they become a nonresistant seeker, but many years later on their deathbed. Of course, we, as human beings limited in knowledge, might not know the actual reasons why God does not ensure that certain nonresistant seekers immediately become believers, but this does not imply God (given middle knowledge) lacks good reasons for doing so. Consequently, since the above possible scenarios are inconsistent with (A), it follows that (A) is false and this, in turn, implies that the first premise of the Hiddenness Argument is false and, therefore, the argument is unsound.

Proponents of the Hiddenness Argument might object that it is highly implausible that God would have morally sufficient reasons for not ensuring that *each and every* nonresistant seeker becomes a believer immediately or at all (cf. McBrayer & Swenson 2012). This objection has two problems. First, it presupposes that there are, in the actual world, numerous nonresistant seekers as opposed to merely a few. The objector must presuppose this because it is surely plausible that God has morally sufficient reasons for not ensuring that a few, or a handful of, or merely one or two, nonresistant seekers become believers. Second, even if there were many nonresistant seekers, why think God lacks morally sufficient reasons for not ensuring they all become believers immediately? Given chaos theory (or that seemingly small events can be significantly consequential), the frailty or sensitivity of human nature, and the thought experiments above, it is plausible that God would have good reasons for not ensuring this. For all we know, the actual world is the best feasible freedom-permitting world, even with its moral, natural, and gratuitous evils, as well as its divine hiddenness. For example: it is *possible* that the actual world is the one feasible freedom-permitting circumstance where evil is ultimately defeated and all [who are not trans world damned] are saved (the bracketed words leave room for *hopeful* universalism). If this specific feasible "maximal harvest world" exists, then a perfectly wise and loving God would either create it—no matter how much finite suffering, evil, or divine hiddenness existed—or refrain from creation altogether. [It is possible for there to be a best feasible world. However, it is also possible that there are an infinite range of feasible worlds tied for the status of being the best. An omniscient God is in a position to know.]

Proponents of the Hiddenness Argument might also try to modify the argument.

For example, Aaron Rizierri (2021) tries to strengthen the argument by introducing the concept of negative afterlife consequences, and he offers this reformulation:

1. If God exists and humans risk experiencing negative afterlife consequences due to not believing God exists, then there are no nonresistant non-believers.
2. There are nonresistant non-believers.
3. Therefore, it is not the case that God exists and humans risk experiencing negative afterlife consequences due to not believing God exists.

Immediately, it is evident that Rizierri has not strengthened the Hiddenness Argument but, rather, he has *weakened* it by narrowing its target and making it depend on the additional proposition “humans risk experiencing negative afterlife consequences due to not believing God exists”. Unlike with Schellenberg's argument, this former proposition simply needs to be rejected to refute Rizierri's argument.

Nevertheless, the first premise is the central one in Rizierri's argument, so how does he defend it? All he says, essentially, is that it would be wrong for God to hide Himself from a nonresistant non-believer when the stakes are negative afterlife consequences, such as eternal torment or hell. However, as argued above, given Molinism, God has good reasons for hiding Himself from certain non-believers, and Rizierri's argument does not withstand our objection. For example, God knows that, if Sally comes to believe God exists, she would eventually become more than a mere believer and love God dearly forever; and God knows that, if Joe comes to believe God exists, he would eventually reject God and despise Him forever. In this case, God has good reasons for ensuring that Sally becomes a believer and that Joe does not.

Furthermore, if Rizierri's argument is sound, this should not trouble theists, especially Molinists. So what if the argument is sound? So what if (C) *it is not the case that God exists and humans risk experiencing negative afterlife consequences due to not believing God exists*? C is not the complete picture anyway, and Rizierri overlooks other important factors that, when considered, don't cause trouble for theism. In other words, a theist can affirm C and affirm that the true situation is something as follows:

(D) God exists and humans risk experiencing negative afterlife consequences due to both (i) not believing God exists and (ii) being such that one would eventually reject God permanently if one were to become a believer.

From a logical perspective, affirming both C and D is consistent and, thus, Rizierri's argument is inconsequential. [Consider two propositions of the form ‘not (P and Q)’ and ‘P and R’. Now, the former is logically equivalent to ‘not P or not Q’ (De Morgan's law) and, thus, if one affirms P but denies Q, then one affirms ‘not (P and

Q)'. Accordingly, if one also affirms *R*, then there is no logical inconsistency in also affirming '*P* and *R*.'

Perhaps Rizierri's argument should be adjusted to focus solely on hell and deaths of nonresistant non-believers:

1. If God exists and humans risk entering hell due to not believing God exists, then no one dies as a nonresistant non-believer.
2. Some people die as nonresistant non-believers.
3. Therefore, it is not the case that God exists and humans risk entering hell due to not believing God exists.

However, the above argument faces difficulties. First, there is no way to justify the second premise. A non-believer who was once nonresistant may have been resistant when they died, or a deathbed conversion may have occurred unbeknownst to us. Since we don't have access to the heart or deep psychological states of others, especially those busy dying, we simply cannot prove that some people die as *nonresistant* non-believers.

Second, it is plausible that, if some people die as nonresistant non-believers, God has good reasons for allowing this. For example, perhaps anyone who dies as a non-resistant non-believer goes to heaven and avoids negative afterlife consequences, and God allows them to remain non-believers in this life because a greater good will result than otherwise would be the case. To defend the first premise, Rizierri has to show that such situations are impossible, but this task is virtually impossible for us given our limited knowledge.

Finally, the reformulation is also inconsequential for Molinists who may affirm the conclusion but argue that it's not the complete picture, which may be something similar to *D*. Therefore, there is no reason to accept the adjusted argument.

In conclusion, Molinism undercuts the Hiddenness Argument because the former gives us reason to doubt that an all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful God *who has middle knowledge* will necessarily ensure that there will *never* be any nonresistant non-believers. [In one sense, the Hiddenness Argument fails, for Molinism is impervious to it. In another sense, however, the argument successfully shows which views of God (and God's sovereignty) ought to be rejected. For example, Rizierri's argument challenges Open Theism. Open Theism denies middle knowledge and a determined future, and affirms God gives us free will and, in turn, risks that many of us will reject Him. Consequently, the defense of the Hiddenness Argument's first premise, if sound, refutes the Open Theist's view that God takes such risks with humans.] Moreover, there is no indication that the Hiddenness Argument may be

strengthened somehow to avoid the Molinist solution to the problem. [Calvinists usually deny libertarian freedom and middle knowledge, so they might reject our critique of the Hiddenness Argument. But can Calvinists critique the argument on other grounds? Well, they could deny premise (2) (i.e., that there are some non-resistant non-believers) and argue that God would determine that no non-believer is nonresistant. However, in this case, they would have to address the difficult issue as to why an omnipotent God, who is love (1 John 4:8), would not determine that everybody is saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Perhaps, then, the inclusivist or universalist critique is the best option for Calvinists. However, it seems to me that the Calvinist universalist, or any Christian universalist, has a good response to Schellenberg's argument. The universalist could have principled reasons for denying both (1) and (2). If the Calvinist rejects universalism, then Schellenberg's argument serves as a defeater against Calvinism.]

References

- Clay J (2017) *Why does God allow evil?* Eugene: Harvest House Publishers.
- Coakley S (2015) Divine hiddenness or dark intimacy? How John of the Cross dissolves a contemporary philosophical dilemma. In: Green A and Stump E (eds) *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 229–245.
- Inman RD (2018) Beholding the face of a hidden God: assessing the argument from divine hiddenness for atheism. *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 60: 155–173.
- Jordan J (2017) Divine hiddenness and perfect love. *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 9: 187–202.
- Marsh J (2008) Do the demographics of theistic belief disconfirm theism? A reply to Maitzen. *Religious Studies* 44(4): 465–471.
- McBrayer JP and Swenson P (2012) Scepticism about the argument from divine hiddenness. *Religious Studies* 48(2): 129–150.
- Molina L de (1988) *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia* (tran. AJ Freddoso). New York: Cornell University Press.
- Rea MC (2015) Hiddenness and transcendence. In: Green A and Stump E (eds) *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 210–225.
- Rizzieri A (2021) How to make the problem of divine hiddenness worse. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*. DOI: 10.1007/s11153-020-09784-6.
- Schellenberg JL (2015a) Divine hiddenness and human philosophy. In: Green A and Stump E (eds) *Hidden Divinity and Religious Belief: New Perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 13–32.
- Schellenberg JL (2015b) *The Hiddenness Argument: Philosophy's New Challenge to Belief in God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stratton TA (2020) *Human Freedom, Divine Knowledge, and Mere Molinism: A Biblical, Historical, Theological, and Philosophical Analysis*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Thune M (2006) A Molinist-style response to Schellenberg. *Southwest Philosophy Review* 22(1): 33–41.