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Open theism: does God risk or hope?

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Abstract: **Open theists have generally affirmed that God exercises general sovereignty, seeking to achieve an overall providential goal related to our freely choosing to love Him, though the path to that goal is uncertain. This understanding of God's relationship to the world has the implication that God risks failure in achieving His purpose, since His success ultimately depends upon our free choices. In this paper, I first outline some concerns about the risks involved in God's exercising general sovereignty, and then explain how an alternative 'hopeful' view alleviates these concerns. I conclude that the hopeful view is a promising alternative that deserves further exploration.**

Open theists have generally understood God's relationship to the world as one in which He overcomes His lack of knowledge of the contingent future by intervening throughout time to keep His world on track toward the fulfilment of His purpose for creation. While open theists deny that God exercises meticulous sovereignty, whereby each and every event would occur in accord with His will, they have affirmed that God exercises general sovereignty, seeking to achieve an overall goal while allowing that the path to that goal is uncertain. This understanding of God's relationship to the world affords Him as much providential control over creation as can reasonably be maintained given the limitations of God's knowledge upon which open theists insist.

In this paper, I will suggest that open theists should consider a different understanding of God's relationship to creation, an understanding that is more radical in its rejection of any eschatological goal towards which God works, but that is more akin to the traditional theistic emphasis on the success of a perfect being's projects. I will first outline some concerns about the risks involved in God's exercising general sovereignty. I will then explain how an alternative view, which I dub the 'hopeful' view, alleviates these concerns. I conclude that the hopeful view is promising enough to deserve further exploration.

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The charge of inappropriate riskiness

Open theists claim that God's general purpose in creating this world was to allow us freely to enter into loving personal relationships with Him. 'The open view of God emphasizes that He is a loving person; love is the very essence of His being. God created others so that He could enjoy them and they could experience His love and reciprocate it.'[1] While those who come to advocate open theism based on philosophical considerations often do so because they see the traditional view of providence as incompatible with our libertarian freedom, it is important to note that love, not freedom, plausibly provides the justification for God's creation of a world in which so much pain and suffering are possible. 'God does not desire that we have the liberty of choice without concern for what we choose. Rather, God wants a relationship of personal love and grants freedom to that end.'[2] God's purpose in creating was not to grant us freedom for the sake of autonomy alone; He gave us freedom in order that we might freely enter into loving communion with Him.

God's overarching purpose for creation is that we might attain salvation by freely coming into loving personal relationships with Him.[3] How shall we understand this purpose? There are two alternatives that this paper will consider. The 'hopeful' view, to be considered later, holds that God merely *hopes* that we will take advantage of the opportunity He has given us to love Him. The more usual version of open theism, which I will label the 'standard' view, holds instead that God aims to *achieve* a certain providential goal for creation, where that goal is related to our salvation. In order to achieve this goal, God periodically intervenes in the world in ways that encourage us to freely choose to love Him.

If God's aim in creating was to achieve a particular providential goal, then we may assume that God's subsequent actions are undertaken with the intent of furthering this purpose. Let us make the simplifying assumptions that God's sole purpose in creating was that we would freely enter into loving relationships with Him, and that the proportion of free creatures who enter into loving relationships with their creator relative to those who do not is an appropriate measure of the degree to which God's purpose is achieved. I will call this the proportionality measure. Let us also arbitrarily assume that God's purpose for creation will be achieved if a simple majority of persons freely choose to love Him. Can God be assured of success? In a word, no. God cannot *guarantee* that even one person will freely choose to love Him. Given the truth of open theism, a fundamental risk of failure is implicit in understanding God's purpose in creating as involving the achievement of some general providential goal at the end of time, where that goal is dependent upon our personal freedom.

It may be granted, 'given all the blessings that God provided', that the chances of all persons rejecting God are negligible.[4] However, the chances of more than half doing so are more significant. It is 'extremely implausible (at least from a

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libertarian perspective) to think that, in every situation, the factors influencing a free agent in one direction vastly outweigh those inclining him toward some other action'.[5] This being the case, God's knowledge of what free agents will do, or even are likely to do, is quite limited. God presumably knows us so well that He can predict our actions better than any human person. But the further in the future an action is, the more factors there are that are presently undetermined and that might influence an agent's future choice. Primarily, these factors are not yet determined because they will be affected by other free choices of the agent in question and by choices of other free agents. If there is genuine indeterminism in creation other than human freedom, then there may be additional undetermined events that will influence whatever factors are relevant to agents' free choices. And of course, through the moment of choice, the agent retains the power to do otherwise regardless of the factors influencing that choice, so that there is always a fundamental element of unpredictability inherent in free action.

Given these constraints on God's knowledge of free actions, it is plausible that when He created the world, God could not know how agents many thousands (or billions) of years in the future would, or even would likely, act. At the moment of creation, it is quite plausible that the probability distribution with which God was faced along the dimension of the proportionality measure was such that a significant area of the distribution was on the negative side of the break-even point, regardless of the specific actions He initially planned to take throughout time. Thus, the risk of God failing in His purpose of bringing it about that a majority of persons freely choose to love Him was significant.

The effectiveness of subsequent divine interventions in response to observation of the course the world has actually taken is likewise constrained by God's limited knowledge of the repercussions of His activity. God cannot know the immediate consequences of His intervention upon agents directly affected by His action, given their libertarian freedom. And He certainly cannot know how His intervention will influence the long-term course of the world as the ripples of His intervention spread ever wider, lapping over more and more persons who freely choose how to react to events whose casual history includes God's action. The most that God can know are the probabilities that a particular action on His part will have various effects in the future. It may be that there are relatively few opportunities for God to undertake actions where He knows that doing so will substantially increase the odds of a long-term providential goal being attained, where that goal is dependent on human free choice. And even if there are frequent opportunities for God to raise the probability that His purpose will be achieved, a substantial risk of failure will attend God's efforts to carry out this project so long as it depends upon our free choices.

Perhaps God might significantly reduce the risk of failing to attain a favourable ratio of saved to unsaved persons if He intervened in the created order fairly

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constantly. Even if the long-term probability of any particular action having an overall beneficial or deleterious effect on His goal is very close to 0.5, the probability of particular actions having a positive impact in the short term might well be significantly higher. If we assume that there are always actions available to God that increase the probability of a favourable proportionality measure obtaining in the short term, then perhaps God might increase the chances of attaining some future goal by continually taking such actions. Eventually, as the end of time approaches, God will be able to increase the odds of the final proportionality measure being favourable, as the number of variables influencing free choices decreases.

Of course, the assumption that there will always be actions available to God that would increase the chances of a favourable proportionality measure in the short term could be questioned. Even if it is granted, however, God's project of ensuring a favourable ratio between those who freely love Him and those who do not remains fundamentally risky, even if less risky, no matter how often He intervenes. No matter how able God is in increasing the odds of succeeding in attaining a general providential goal, so long as that goal depends upon our free choices, whether or not God succeeds is ultimately up to us.

An additional objection also weighs against God adopting the practice of unilaterally intervening in order to increase the chances of achieving a providential goal. God cannot know the impact, especially the long-term impact, of His actions on individuals that might be affected by them, but He does know how any particular action He takes affects the odds of any particular person choosing for or against God in the future. It is likely that for some actions that God might take to improve the odds of obtaining a favourable proportionality measure, He knows that these same actions will make it less likely that particular persons will freely choose to love Him. In taking such actions, God would be negatively affecting certain agents' chances of freely choosing to love Him, without knowing that the risk to them will yield a better world. God would be risking the salvation of particular persons by making it more difficult for them to freely love Him, without knowing that the risk to them will in fact have any beneficial effect on God's ultimate purpose of attaining a favourable proportionality measure at the end of time. In the words of David Hunt, criticizing John Sanders, 'Our eternal felicity is on the line! Yet the ethics of risk-taking when others bear the brunt is not even raised by Sanders.'[6]

The crucial point to recognize is this: if God's project is to ensure that a satisfactory proportion of persons freely love Him, then God risks failure. While the risk of failure may perhaps be lessened by frequent intervention, it cannot be removed, no matter how often God intervenes in attempts to improve the odds of success.

It is plausible that risking the failure of one's overarching project is inappropriate for a perfect God, and that this is true regardless of the resources with

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which we believe He is afforded. Open theists believe that there are good philosophic reasons for denying that God has certain resources (such as middle knowledge) that advocates of meticulous providence have predicated of God. But they might well continue to think that divine perfection requires that God set Himself a project assured of success, given those resources. Some open theists, like William Hasker, might find a risk-taking God intrinsically attractive.[7] But others, who see open theism as the only philosophically viable position for one who wishes to maintain that we have libertarian freedom, are likely to only reluctantly predicate risk-taking and its incumbent possibility of failure to God.

Furthermore, given that divine intervention likely has the consequence that particular persons are put at greater risk of rejecting God, it is plausible that unilateral intervention in the created order is generally inappropriate because of the risk to us inherent in such intervention. If God loves and cares for us all, then He should not risk making it more difficult for some of us to choose to love Him than others, given the assumption that He cannot know the consequences of doing so.

Open theists have usually understood God's relationship to creation as one in which He is constantly playing the odds, intervening whenever it seems more likely than not that His intervention will improve the chances of attaining some general providential goal. And though He cannot be sure of the eventual results of such intervention, open theists have suggested that we trust that God's efforts will be good enough to bring about an end result that is acceptable to Him. But if it is inappropriate for God to risk failure, then open theists must seek an alternative understanding of God's relationship to the world. For their standard view involves a significant risk of failure. And if it is inappropriate for God to increase the risk of individuals attaining salvation by intervening in the created order without knowledge of the consequences of such intervention, then the standard view is unacceptable. For it stresses God's resourcefulness in adapting to our free choices, and thus is most plausible when it predicates frequent interventions by God.

In the remainder of this paper, I will suggest an alternative view of God's relationship to the world that counters the concerns that God risks failing in His purpose and that He diminishes the chances that certain persons will freely love Him. I will not go so far as to claim that the standard view that God aims at a general providential goal while risking failure is untenable, or to insist that it is inappropriate to predicate the possibility of failure to God. Rather, I will outline an alternative conception of God's relationship to His creation and claim that it warrants further consideration. I invite my readers to consider this alternative and to further reflect upon whether it is preferable to understand God's relationship to us primarily in terms of risk or of hope.

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The hopeful view

Let us consider the possibility that God has a general policy of not unilaterally intervening in the created order – a 'hands-off' stance towards His creation. While He is always able to intervene unilaterally (this is not process theism), we will assume that He rarely does so, because He cannot know whether His intervention will ultimately improve or diminish the proportion of those who freely choose loving relationships with Him compared to those who do not. While He cares deeply about how we respond to His love for us and may take actions in response to prayer (this is not deism), God generally does not unilaterally enter the created order, having given it into our care.[8] God's purpose in adopting this policy may be stated succinctly: God's purpose in creating was to present us with the *gift* of the *opportunity* to freely enter into loving relationships with Him; He has extended an *invitation* to us and *hopes* that we will accept it. I will call the view that predicates this purpose of God the 'hopeful' view.

If the hopeful view is correct, then God does not risk the failure of His project in creating, and He generally does not intervene in a manner that makes it more difficult for some of us freely to accept His invitation to commune with Him. On the hopeful view, we owe God our admiration and thanks for creating the world in such a way that this gift is extended to us. So long as all that is required for salvation is acceptance of God's gift,[9] responsibility for failing to enter into a loving relationship with God falls solely on our human shoulders, unless God subsequently intervenes in ways that decrease our chances of loving God.

One might wonder, given that our knowledge is constrained in the same manner as God's, and to a much greater degree, why we should not also adopt a 'hands-off' policy. Simply put, we cannot do so. We *find ourselves* as agents within a world where our inactions have consequences to the same degree as our positive actions. In contrast, God is responsible for creating the initial conditions of the world in which we act, but He is not an agent within the world in the same way as we are. He is, of course, responsible for any positive action He takes that affects the world, but He is not responsible for inactivity in the same way that we are because He occupies a different role than we do.[10]

In what follows, I will briefly consider how the hopeful view addresses the risk that God might fail in His purpose for creation, how it addresses the risk to us inherent in God acting in a manner that contributes to certain persons having a better chance of salvation than others, and how it compares to more traditional views of providence. It is my judgment that the hopeful view compares favourably to the standard interventionist brand of open theism, while maintaining the primary attractiveness of open theism against more traditional views of providence that predicate meticulous sovereignty to God.

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Risk to God

How does the hopeful view affect the assessment of risk for the success of God's project? If we emphasize the concepts of gift, opportunity, invitation, and hope, then there is a fundamental sense in which God's project is successful regardless of the manner in which His creatures utilize their freedom. Even in the limiting case in which all persons freely reject God's offer of communion, there would be a sense in which His project does not fail. If God's project is understood in terms of the giving of the gift of an opportunity, as an invitation, then it is a project whose success depends only on Him. The gift of an opportunity remains a gift even if the one to whom it is given rejects it, though this rejection may well bring pain to the giver. An invitation remains an invitation even if it is ignored by those to whom it is extended. If God's project is understood in these terms, then at the initial moment of creation, God's creation was 'very good', and remains so regardless of how we respond to our creator.

Of course, God's hope that we will each freely accept His invitation to love Him seems often disappointed. There remains, on the hopeful view, a significant risk of disappointment for God. But this risk of disappointment is secondary to the fundamental success of God's project of extending an invitation to us to fellowship freely with Him. The risk to God is not that He might not achieve a goal He sets Himself, but rather that, having accomplished all He planned, His creatures might disappoint Him by not utilizing the gift that He has given them as He hoped.

If the hopeful view is correct, then it is inappropriate to measure the success of God's project in terms of the proportion of those who accept God's invitation relative to those who do not. Fundamentally, there is no measure of the success of God's project – it is wholly successful. Rather, the proportionality measure serves as an indicator of how well-pleased God is with *our* success in responding appropriately to His invitation. While God takes a significant risk of many persons rejecting Him, this risk is not a risk to the success of His project, given that His purpose in creation was to afford us with the *invitation* freely to love Him, rather than attempting to *ensure* that a certain proportion of us respond as He hopes. God risks disappointment, but He does not risk failure.

Risk to us

Does this hopeful view of God's project involve a risk to us that it is inappropriate for God to allow? I think that it does not. I agree with Sanders that, 'God is more vulnerable than we are because God cannot count on our faithfulness in the way we may count on His steadfast love.'[11] We may be assured that God loves us and will grant us eternal felicity if only we trust in Him. What risk is there for us? We cannot be assured that we will not face significant difficulties

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in our lives, but our lives here plausibly have very little to do with our eternal felicity except insofar as our free acceptance or rejection of God's love has implications for our afterlife.

If Hunt's charge that God inappropriately risks our salvation is to be levelled against the hopeful view, then any claim that God puts us at risk inappropriately must be understood in terms of a charge that God has created a world in which people are not given equal opportunities to consider and accept God's offer of love. Certainly, it seems that some persons have a greater opportunity to consider God's invitation of salvation than others. If God bears a significant share of responsibility for this inequity, then Hunt's charge might stick. And God would bear a significant partial responsibility if He has frequently and unilaterally intervened in ways that contributed to the inequities we observe in the world. But so long as God has not unilaterally acted in ways that potentially put individuals at greater risk of rejecting Him, it is we who are solely responsible for any inequity in the chances that individuals will freely choose to love God. While Hunt's charge might be appropriately levelled at the standard understanding of open theism, it does not constitute an objection to the hopeful view I am outlining precisely because responsibility for the current state of the world is shifted from God to us.

Hunt's objection might be pressed further, however, by suggesting that God would have known that there was a high probability of inequities of opportunity for salvation arising in a world such as the one He created. One might suggest that in creating a world in which He knew that there would likely be such inequities, God assumed partial responsibility for the risk to us engendered by these inequities, even if it was human free actions that led to them. This modified accusation of inappropriate risk-taking on God's part may be met if we affirm an inclusivist view of Christianity, according to which one need not be fully aware of the Gospel message in order to commit oneself to God, but instead may implicitly accept His salvation through Christ even if one has never heard of God's Son.[12] We may assume that God has created the world in such a way that the minimal conditions necessary for mature persons freely to choose to love or reject God are always in place, regardless of culture or knowledge of Christ. And we may trust in God's mercy that He does not condemn those who die before reaching an age at which they may make a responsible choice for or against a relationship with God.

So long as God has ensured that persons cannot be disenfranchized of their ability to accept His invitation to communion, then I believe that the modified charge of inappropriate risk-taking is not successful. We are directly responsible for any inequities in the chances that particular persons freely choose to love God. God is responsible for creating a world in which there was the possibility, and even likelihood, that such inequities would develop, but His project of inviting us freely to choose to love Him was conditional upon this possibility.

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God could and did lessen the risk to us incumbent upon this possibility by making the conditions we must meet to attain salvation minimal, and such that they cannot be removed by human actions. God has addressed the risk to us to the extent that it was possible, given His desire that we freely choose to love Him. God's creation of a world in which inequities of opportunity for salvation were likely to arise does not warrant disapprobation, though our human actions that have caused these inequities do.

Affirming inclusivism remains consistent with the view that each of us bears significant responsibility for working to *optimize* the conditions in which others come to a decision about whether to accept God's love, through evangelism and through humanitarian efforts that work to ensure that persons do not find life so oppressive that they curse their lives and any God who allowed them to come into such a world. God has given the earth into our care, and we must do a better job of managing it in such a way that few, if any, of us have only the minimal opportunity for salvation that God has ensured always exists. We must work to ensure that all persons have an opportunity to respond to God's invitation to love Him that is comparable to the opportunity with which those reading this paper have likely been afforded.

If one affirmed universalism, the view that all persons are eventually saved, then Hunt's charge of inappropriate risk-taking on the part of God would obviously fail. Eric Reitan has plausibly argued that universalism remains a viable option for open theists.[13] I will not discuss this issue here, other than to point out that, while adopting universalism plausibly removes the worries about risk I have been raising, it is not clear that doing so would privilege the standard interventionist version of open theism over the hopeful view, unless God's frequent intervention is necessary to ensure that all are saved. Reitan's argument is based on the idea that any choice for God eternally 'sticks' while choices against God are always correctable. Given a finite number of persons who all are free to love God (and who cannot permanently give up this ability), and given an infinite amount of time, it is plausible that God could be assured of the eventual salvation of all persons without recourse to special interventions in the created order. Thus, if one adopted universalism, one might yet argue that the hopeful view should be considered, though the motivation for this consideration would no longer be a concern to ensure that a perfect God cannot fail in His purposes.

Comparison to more traditional views

I think that the hopeful version of open theism shares the attractiveness of open theism generally with regard to the issue of risk to us when compared to more traditional 'strong' views of God's providence such as Molinism and Thomism. While God cannot ensure that even a single person will accept His

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invitation to loving communion, neither does He ensure that anyone is damned. The responsibility for our salvation or damnation rests with us, individually and corporately. These themes are common to any version of open theism and are sounded strongly by the hopeful view. While the hopeful view offers a view of providence that is very far from the traditional understanding of grace, open theists should thank God for graciously allowing us to enter freely into a loving relationship with Him merely by responding positively to the gift of His invitation, and work with God to enable others to experience His presence more fully, that they might also trust in Him.

This hopeful version of open theism also does as well as traditional views of providence that attribute meticulous sovereignty to God with respect to the risk of failure to God's project. In this respect the hopeful view does better than the standard understanding of open theism. God's project, understood as the giving of an opportunity, is wholly successful. The project is not the traditional one of ensuring that the 'best possible world' available to God is created, but God's success in carrying out the project He undertakes is no less. God does not know the end result of His creation in the same way that He traditionally has been thought to, but the end result is not understood to be His purpose on this view. Regardless of how we respond to Him, God will continue to exemplify the perfect loving relationship He invites us to partake in by eternally being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[14] He *hopes* that each of us will participate in that relationship, but He does not aim to ensure this.

It is important to note that this kind of hope is unavailable to God as conceived by Molinists and Thomists. On both of those views, God decides exactly what events will occur, and thus the gift of the opportunity to love God cannot be separated from the knowledge of the response. Even if one can maintain the particular responsibility of the agent for her rejection of that offer, God remains responsible for creating a world in which He knows that certain agents will accept that offer and certain agents reject it. This rules out the hope that certain persons will reciprocate God's love, even while ensuring that others will.

The hopeful view of God's relationship to the world, predicated on the belief that God's purpose in creating was to extend to us the gift of the opportunity to love Him freely, fares at least as well as more traditional views of providence with regard to the charge that God has risked too much in creating a world like ours. God's purpose in creating was to extend an invitation to us to commune with Him. God's project, by its very nature, is wholly a success. God desires that we not only individually reciprocate His love for us, but that we also work with Him to bring others into loving personal relationships with Him, and by extension, with each other. We may trust that God will always listen to us and will often offer guidance to us,[15] but we may not suppose that He will solve our problems, or the problems of the world, unilaterally. If we 'lift up the scriptural principle of relationships of love with freedom, which upholds human dignity and

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significance', then 'a biblically grounded humanism is on the mark'.[16] God has called us to be His partners in becoming more faithful to His will, and in making this world one which reflects His respect for us in our mutual respect for all persons. While the overall response to that call and to God's project is unknown even to God, we may trust that He has reason to hope that many will respond appropriately to His invitation. And we must work to fulfil that hope.

Conclusion

I have not claimed that the standard version of open theism, according to which God is a risk-taker who attempts to achieve a general providential goal by playing the odds in ways that make it more likely that we will freely love Him, is untenable. But I have pointed out some of the risks implicit in that view of God's providence, and I have suggested an alternative 'hopeful' view of God's relationship to His creation. I have argued that this hopeful view removes certain concerns about the risks to God's overall project and to us. In these respects, it fares at least as well as the more usual view of open theism. I have also argued that the hopeful view fares at least as well as the more usual understanding of open theism in comparisons with more traditional views of providence. Thus, the hopeful view warrants further consideration.[17]

Notes

1. Clark Pinnock *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Book House, 2001), 81.
2. John Sanders *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 258.
3. A complete analysis of what the freedom to love God amounts to would have to include a discussion of the attraction human nature has to God's objective goodness and a discussion of the hiddenness of God. I will not delve into these matters here. Even if we could not fail to love God were He to fully reveal His goodness to us, He has chosen to create a world in which much of His goodness is hidden. I believe that the decision to love God is thus genuinely a matter of choice involving faith – faith in God's promises and faith in a goodness that we see imperfectly.
4. Sanders *The God Who Risks*, 172.
5. Thomas P. Flint *Divine Providence: The Molinist Account* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 103.
6. David P. Hunt 'Perfection at risk?', *Philosophia Christi*, **1** (1999), 95.
7. William Hasker *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 197–205.
8. I believe that a place for divine intervention in response to prayer can be allowed in the hopeful view if petitioners are understood to accept responsibility for their requests. I should also point out that the hopeful view need not insist that God *never* unilaterally intervenes, but only that He does not do so in order to achieve a providential goal, and that He generally avoids doing so because of the risk that His actions might lead to specific persons being disadvantaged with respect to their salvation. It is possible that certain actions could be seen by God to be so generally beneficial for our attaining salvation that He knows that the chances of salvation will be improved for all persons (distributively as well as collectively) as a result of those actions. The Incarnation, understood as creating a new covenant in which faith, rather than obedience to Mosaic law, is sufficient for salvation, might be one such action. The gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, understood as an additional aid to believers in communing with God and doing His will, might be another.

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9. One might understand acceptance of God's gift as acceptance that God has given us the opportunity for communion with Him. This would be a kind of epistemological awareness. When I discuss the acceptance or rejection of God's gift of this opportunity, I have in mind the moral or relational stance one adopts towards God. In this sense, acceptance of the gift implies that one freely enters into a loving relationship with Him. If inclusivism is true, then one might accept God's gift in this sense, without accepting it in the epistemological sense.
10. We might think of this difference in role as analogous to the difference between the creator and arbitrator of a game and the players who play the game. The game-maker should produce a game whose rules are fair and she should fairly administer those rules. But she is not herself bound by all of those rules, so long as she does not participate within the economy of the game. The game players, on the other hand, must play by the rules set them. Usually, players have the option of choosing to play or quit a game; in the game of life, however, we must simply trust that the rules set us are indeed fair, even if we do not always fully understand the reasons for the rules.
11. Sanders *The God Who Risks*, 178.
12. See for instance, Karl Rahner 'Christianity and the non-Christian religions', in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, Karl-H. Kruger (tr.) (Baltimore MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 115–134.
13. Eric Reitan 'Human freedom and the impossibility of damnation', in Robin A. Parry and Christopher H. Partridge *Universal Salvation? The Current Debate* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 125–142. My thanks to an anonymous referee for *Religious Studies* for bringing this article to my attention.
14. For a similar discussion, see Sanders *The God Who Risks*, 228–229.
15. If we accept responsibility for the consequences of God's guidance – see n. 8 above.
16. Pinnock *Most Moved Mover*, 140–141.
17. I would like to thank those who commented on earlier versions of this paper at the Eastern Regional Meeting of the Society of Christian Philosophers in December 2003 and at the University of Notre Dame Philosophy Department Colloquium in January 2004, as well as the anonymous referees for this journal. I would especially like to thank Thomas Flint for several discussions of the material in this paper, and Matthew Rissler for his help with elementary probability theory.

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