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THE PRIVATION SOLUTION: A REPLY TO FURLONG

W. Matthews Grant

Peter Furlong has recently raised an objection to my defense of Aquinas's approach to explaining how God could cause all creaturely actions without causing sin. In this short paper, I argue that the objection fails.

If God is the universal cause of all entities distinct from himself, and thus causes all creaturely actions, does that make God a cause of sin? In previous work, I defended what I take to be Aquinas's argument for a negative answer to this question.¹ Peter Furlong has recently raised an interesting objection to my defense of Aquinas's argument.² I want to thank Furlong for his thoughtful and constructive discussion. In what follows, I offer a response, arguing that the objection fails.

In the first section, I set out the essentials of the account to which Furlong is objecting. In the second section, I present and respond to Furlong's objection. I tie up a few loose ends in a short conclusion. For the sake of brevity, I do not develop my defense of Aquinas's approach any further than what is necessary to understand Furlong's objection. Nor do I attempt here to defend the approach against the host of other objections that might be raised against it.³

Before proceeding, a note regarding two assumptions. First, we cannot sin unless we have the freedom requisite for moral responsibility, and, of course, it makes no sense to ask whether God's causing our acts makes God a cause of sin unless we can sin. Thus, the question of this paper never gets off the ground unless we allow (at least for the sake of discussion) the controversial assumption that God's causing our acts is consistent with the freedom required for moral responsibility. This controversial assumption includes both the contention that God's causing my act is consistent with

¹See Grant, "Aquinas on How God Causes the Act of Sin without Causing Sin Itself." Strictly speaking, I would describe this article as a partial defense of Aquinas's approach, since I did not attempt to defend the approach against all the objections that could be raised against it.

²Furlong, "Is God the Cause of Sin?" Although Furlong takes himself to be objecting to a particular *type* of approach, he focuses on my defense of Aquinas as his chief representative of that type.

³There are, in fact, lots of objections one could raise. Apart from the article already cited, I attempt to answer some of these objections (though not Furlong's) in my "The Privation Account of Moral Evil," and my "Moral Evil, Privation, and God."



whatever sort of power, or ability to do otherwise, is needed for me to have moral responsibility for the act, and the contention that God's *not* causing a possible act of mine is consistent with my power or ability to have performed that act (even though there is no possible world in which I perform the act without God's causing it).⁴ Second, traditionally, those who have held that God causes all entities distinct from himself have typically also thought that these same entities have creaturely causes and explanations. Aquinas certainly thought so, and I think the discussion of Aquinas's solution makes more sense if we allow this assumption. Neither assumption is a target of Furlong's objection.

1. *The Privation Solution*

How could God cause all creaturely acts, even sinful acts, without causing sin?⁵ Aquinas answers that, to cause a sin of action, an agent must cause not only the act, but also the privation—the act's lack of conformity to the moral rule—in virtue of which the act is sinful. The sinner causes both the act and the privation, and thus causes the sin. God, too, causes the act, since the act is an entity distinct from God. But privations are not entities. Thus, we can affirm God as universal cause yet deny that he causes the privation. While the sinner causes both the act and the privation, Aquinas insists that God causes the act, but not the privation, and so, unlike the sinner, does not cause the sin.⁶

A challenge for this *privation solution*⁷ consists in explaining how the privation—the act's lack of conformity to the moral rule—could be causally reducible to the sinner without being reducible to God. On the one hand, if the sinner does something to cause the privation, then, since this doing will be an act, it will be caused by God, the universal cause. And if God causes the act by which the sinner causes the privation, then it looks as if God will, at least indirectly, also cause the privation. On the other hand, if the sinner does not do anything to cause the privation, then it is difficult to see how the privation could be imputable to the sinner.

Aquinas's solution is to argue that the privation can, in fact, be imputed to the sinner in virtue of what the sinner doesn't do. In particular, Aquinas

⁴What is here left as an assumption I defend in my "Divine Universal Causality and Libertarian Freedom."

⁵As is likely obvious, the problem concerns a tension between the propositions (a) God causes all creaturely actions, (b) Some creaturely actions are sinful, and (c) God does not cause sins.

⁶For Aquinas's statement of this solution, see, for example, *Summa Theologica* IaIIe q. 79, a. 2. For a more detailed and developed presentation of the approach described in this section, see my "Aquinas on How God Causes the Act of Sin without Causing Sin Itself."

⁷I prefer "privation solution" where Furlong uses "privation defense" because of the strong association that "defense" has with a particular kind of response to the problem of evil. As we will see below, and as Furlong recognizes ("Is God the Cause of Sin?," 423), the privation solution is not really a response to the problem of evil, in that it does not address the question how the amount and type of evil we find in the world might be consistent with a being having the attributes traditionally ascribed to God.

holds that the privation is imputable to the sinner in virtue of the sinner's not considering, using, or applying the moral rule at the time he commits the sin. The sinner ought to have applied the moral rule, since he ought to govern himself by the moral law. Had he applied the moral rule, he would have chosen to refrain from the sinful act in question. And, had there been no such act, there would have been no privative lack of conformity of the act to the moral standard. Thus, the lack of conformity is explained by the sinner's failure to apply the rule, and is imputable to the sinner on the basis of this non-performance. And, since a non-performance is not an entity, God need not be held to cause it. Thus, the worry that the privation is indirectly caused by God because God causes that in virtue of which the sinner causes the privation disappears.

Nevertheless, a problem remains. On Aquinas's account, necessarily, a creature performs an act if and only if God causes that act. It follows that, if God causes the sinner's applying the rule, then the sinner applies it; and the sinner does not apply the rule only if God does not cause the sinner's applying it. But, then, if the privation is imputable to the sinner in virtue of the sinner's not applying the rule, why isn't it also imputable to God in virtue of God's not causing the sinner's applying?

To answer this last question, Aquinas needs some principle for determining when an effect is imputable to an agent in virtue of that agent's non-performance. The principle that emerges is the following:

Effect e is caused by agent S in virtue of S 's not Φ -ing if and only if

- (a) S 's Φ -ing would have insured or at least made it likely that e not occur, and
- (b) S had the power to Φ , and
- (c) S ought to have Φ -ed.

A key insight behind this principle is that we don't take an agent's non-performance to be explanatory of an effect unless the agent *ought* to have performed the act, in some suitably broad sense of "ought." To use an example from my earlier paper, while we would explain the fish food's (unexpectedly) still floating atop the water in the aquarium in terms of the fish's not having eaten the food, we wouldn't explain it in terms of the plants in the aquarium not having eaten it. The fish, in some sense, ought to have eaten it, while this is not true of the plants. Similarly, we might explain the mice still scampering about the basement in terms of the cat's not having caught the mice, but we wouldn't explain it in terms of the crickets not having caught them. Unlike cats, crickets don't solve rodent problems. Or, to use Aquinas's example, if a helmsman were not obligated to steer the ship to safety, then the ship's sinking would not be set down to him.⁸

⁸See *Summa Theologica* IaIIae q. 6, a. 3. In the case of the aquarium plants and the crickets, it is true not only that there is no sense in which they *ought* to perform the act in question, but also that they are *not able* to perform the act in question. They, thus, fail both conditions (b)

The foregoing principle enables Aquinas to justify imputing the privation to the sinner in virtue of the sinner's not applying the rule, but not to God in virtue of God's not causing the sinner's applying it. In both cases, had the act in question been performed (the sinner's applying, and God's causing the sinner's applying) there would have been no act of sin, and thus no privative lack of conformity to the moral rule (condition (a)). Moreover, both God and the sinner had the power to perform the act in question (condition (b)). But while the sinner clearly ought to have applied the moral rule, it is not the case in a situation where God does not cause the sinner's applying the rule that he ought to have caused it (condition (c)). And this latter claim follows from the simple and uncontroversial fact that, if he exists, God never fails to do what he ought.

To be very clear, none of what has been said here addresses the excellent question of whether God's not causing the sinner's applying the moral rule could ever be consistent with God's perfect goodness. What it does show, however, is that given God's perfect goodness with its implication that God never fails to do what he ought, in any case where God does not cause the sinner's applying the rule, God's causing the sinner's applying it is not something God ought to have done. And, from that and Aquinas's principle for causing by non-performance, it follows that God's not causing the sinner's applying the rule would not satisfy all the necessary conditions for imputing the privation to God in virtue of God's non-performance.

2. Response to Furlong's Objection

There are lots of questions one might raise about the privation solution, questions I attempt to address in the original essay and in the other work cited above. Furlong, however, is prepared to grant the essentials of this solution. He seems prepared to accept that a sin of commission involves both a positive act and a privation, and that to cause the sin an agent must cause both the act and the privation. He is prepared to accept that the privation is imputable to the sinner, not in virtue of something the sinner does, but in virtue of the sinner's not considering or applying the rule. And he is also prepared to accept that the privation is not imputable to God in virtue of God's not causing the sinner's applying the rule.⁹ Nevertheless, Furlong maintains that the solution fails, because he thinks proponents of

and (c). Often (though not always) when it comes to non-rational creatures, what a creature has the power to do and what it "ought" to do are one in the same. If one wanted an example, unlike the aquarium plants, where a thing had the power to eat the fish food, yet it was not the case that it ought to have eaten it, Mark Murphy helpfully suggests the case of a different species of fish that was capable of eating that kind of food, but where eating it was not a part of that species's normal or appropriate functioning. For more discussion of "ought" and "power" as these concepts bear on the privation solution, see my "Aquinas on How God Causes the Act of Sin Without Causing Sin Itself," 480–486.

⁹For these points see Furlong, "Is God the Cause of Sin?," 428. Furlong does raise a worry (425) about whether God could cause an act without causing its accompanying defects, but he does not develop this objection and, instead, focuses on the objection I will now discuss. For my attempt to explain how God could cause an act without causing its accompanying defects, see my "Moral Evil, Privation, and God."

the solution will still be “committed to the claim that God is the cause of the defect of sin through his activity.”¹⁰ In particular, Furlong thinks that God is causally responsible for the privation because, through his activity, he is causally responsible for the sinner’s failure to apply the rule.

Furlong certainly seems correct that agents sometimes cause, through their activity, the omissions of other agents. He uses the example of a child who neglects to say “please” because his anti-social parents have taught him that saying “please” expresses an inappropriate attitude of docility.¹¹ Picking up on my aquarium example, Furlong points out that I would be causally responsible for the fish’s not eating the food had the fish not eaten the food because the water temperature was too low, and had I been responsible for the low temperature by having lowered the aquarium’s thermometer. In such a case, I would seem to be responsible for the fish food’s still floating through my activity, namely, through my act of lowering the water temperature, which caused the fish not to eat, which not eating accounts for the fish food’s still floating. I would certainly seem to be responsible for the fish food’s still floating if I did not intervene, say, by introducing a chemical into the water that would make the fish more active, despite the low water temperature which I had caused.¹²

From such examples, Furlong distills the following set of criteria the satisfaction of which he takes to be jointly sufficient for an agent’s causing through its action another agent’s omission:

The not *f*-ing of agent *S* is caused by agent *R* in virtue of *R*’s acting if

- (i) *R* is causally responsible for state of affairs *p*
- (ii) *p* unfailingly leads to *S*’s not-*f*-ing unless *R* performs action *a*
- (iii) *R* does not *a*.¹³

I have no quarrel with Furlong’s principle, provided that the phrase “leads to” in (ii) means “causes” or “accounts for,” as the low temperature of the water caused or accounted for the fish’s not eating, in Furlong’s example. But I am puzzled by how Furlong thinks the principle can be used to show the failure of the privation solution.

Furlong’s direct application of the principle to the privation solution is actually fairly brief; as far as I can tell, it is just a couple of short paragraphs. The first of these paragraphs reads:

Now let us turn back to the criteria suggested above. All three criteria are met in the case of sin. The agent’s not-attending to the moral rule is guaranteed, given God’s activity, and barring additional intervention by God. When God does not preserve agents in grace, they unfailingly fall into sin.¹⁴

¹⁰Furlong, “Is God the Cause of Sin?” 428.

¹¹Ibid., 428–429.

¹²Ibid., 429–430.

¹³Ibid., 430.

¹⁴Ibid., 431.

This passage is especially puzzling, because it is not at all clear how it connects with the criteria within Furlong's principle and the aims of his objection. In particular, Furlong doesn't here identify the state of affairs p for which God is causally responsible and from which the sinner unfailingly falls into sin? Is it a lack of grace? Let us grant that if God does not preserve an agent in grace, the agent will not have that grace. But God's *not preserving* an agent in grace is a non-performance, not an action, and Furlong's aim was to show that, given the privation solution, God would still cause the defect in the act of sin *through his activity*.¹⁵ Moreover, Furlong explicitly accepts Aquinas's principle for causing by non-performance. But, given that principle, since God never fails to do what he ought, we couldn't impute a creature's lack of grace to God in virtue of God's not preserving that grace. As Furlong says, "we are not forced to say that God is causally responsible for the defect of sin through his omission."¹⁶ This first paragraph, then, given Furlong's own parameters, poses no threat to the privation solution.

The second paragraph requires more attention:

Consider, in light of the above criteria, Paul and his act of theft. God (R) is causally responsible for the complete state of affairs (p) that includes all that has being in Paul, his environment, and indeed, even Paul's act of sin. Thus, (i) is met. Given this state (including God's free causal activity) (p), Paul unfailingly chooses to steal the watch, and does so without attending to the moral law (S's not-*f*-ing) unless God (R) intervenes and chooses to cause Paul to start attending to the moral law (a). Thus, (ii) is met. God (R) does not choose to cause Paul to start attending to the moral law (a). Thus (iii) is met.¹⁷

To determine whether there is a threat to the privation solution here, we must move methodically. We must ask whether Furlong identifies any state of affairs, to which a proponent of the privation solution is committed, that God causes through his activity, and which state of affairs unfailingly causes Paul not to attend to or apply the rule, unless God intervenes. Furlong mentions four states of affairs, which he includes within the complete state of affairs p :

- (a) All that has being in Paul.
- (b) Paul's environment.
- (c) Paul's act of sin.
- (d) God's free causal activity.

¹⁵It is true that we might sometimes speak of an agent's "activity" in a broad sense that encompasses not only the agent's positive actions but also what the agent doesn't do. But that is clearly not (and should not) be Furlong's use of the term "activity" in the present discussion, on which so much turns on the distinction between causing by a positive act and causing by non-performance, and in which Furlong agrees that God does not cause the defect in the act of sin by what God doesn't do.

¹⁶Furlong, "Is God the Cause of Sin?," 428.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 431.

To begin with the first two, a proponent of the privation solution is, indeed, committed to God's causing (a) all that has being in Paul and (b) all entities within Paul's environment. But Furlong doesn't identify any entity within Paul or Paul's environment to which a proponent of the solution is committed that *unfailingly causes* Paul not to apply the rule. I certainly can think of no such entity. It seems completely open to the proponent of the privation solution to hold that no entity within a sinner or the sinner's environment unfailingly causes him to refrain from applying the rule, absent God's intervention. (a) and (b), thus, do not provide what the objection needs.

What, then, of (c), Paul's act of sin? Well, certainly, a proponent of the privation solution is committed to God's causing Paul's act of sin. But Paul's act of sin does not unfailingly cause Paul not to apply the rule. For that would make Paul's act explanatorily prior to the non-applying of the rule, when in fact it is the non-applying of the rule that is explanatorily prior to the act. We can appreciate the order of priority here when we consider that, according to the privation solution, the sinner's not applying the rule explains the lack of conformity because of two things: (a) the sinner ought to have applied the rule, and (b) had the sinner applied the rule there would have been no lack of conformity. But, there would have been no lack of conformity because, had the sinner applied the rule, there would have been no *act* lacking conformity—the sinner would have refrained from the act. Thus, the sinner's not applying the rule is explanatorily prior to the lack of conformity only because it is explanatorily prior to the act that lacks conformity. But, then, given that explanatory priority is asymmetrical, the act cannot be explanatorily prior to the sinner's not applying the rule as it must be to make sense of the claim that the act *unfailingly causes* the sinner's not applying; and this is so, even though the act of sin is incompatible with the sinner's having applied the rule. (c) Paul's act of sin, then, also does not provide the objection what it needs.

An analogy might be helpful: If, to use our frequent example, the fish food's still floating on top of the water is accounted for by the fish's not having eaten the food, then the fish's not eating is explanatorily prior to the fish food's still floating. But, then, the fish food's still floating does not cause the fish's not eating, even though the fish food still floating is incompatible with the fish's having eaten it. The fish food still floating could cause the fish's not eating only if the still floating food explained the fish's not eating. But it doesn't. The explanation runs in the other direction.

One might object that my argument for rejecting (c) turns on my reading "leads to" in phrase (ii) of Furlong's principle as meaning "causes" or "accounts for." But what if by "unfailingly leads to" Furlong means, not "unfailingly causes," but rather "is logically sufficient for," where *a* is logically sufficient for *b* just in case it is not possible for *a* to exist (or hold or obtain) without *b*'s existing (or holding or obtaining)? On this alternative reading of phrase (ii), Paul's act of sin "unfailingly leads to" Paul's not applying the rule after all. For, as I indicate in the previous two paragraphs,

on the privation solution, it is no more possible for Paul's act of sin to exist and yet Paul to have applied the rule than it is for the fish food still to be floating and yet the fish to have eaten it.

In response to this objection, let me say two things. First, this alternative reading of phrase (ii) is, as an interpretation of Furlong, far less plausible than my original reading. In setting out the chief example from which he distills his principle, Furlong states that "the temperature of the water dropped, and this *caused* a state of lethargy in the fish," and that "the drop in temperature *caused* both the fish's not eating and the food remaining on top of the water."¹⁸ Clearly, then, Furlong is not envisioning the state of affairs *p* in his principle to be merely logically sufficient for *S*'s not-*f*-ing. He intends "lead to" to be interpreted causally.

Second, if Furlong *had* intended "unfailingly leads to" to mean simply "is logically sufficient for," then his principle would be false. For the mere fact that a first agent causes through its action some state of affairs *p* that is logically sufficient for a second agent's not acting does not make the first agent the cause of the second agent's not acting. If I cause the low water temperature, I do not thereby cause God's not hating himself, even though the low temperature is logically sufficient for God's not hating himself. Moreover, in cases where the non-performance is explanatorily prior to the state of affairs *p*, it makes no sense to say that an agent causes the non-performance in virtue of causing *p*, even if *p* is logically sufficient for the non-performance; for that would assume that *p* can be explanatorily prior to the non-performance even though the non-performance is explanatorily prior to *p*. It wouldn't make sense, then, to say that God causes the fish's not-eating by causing the fish food's presence atop the water, since the not-eating is explanatorily prior to the fish food's presence. Any principle that implied that God causes the not-eating in these circumstances, as does Furlong's principle on the alternative reading, would just be false.

Finally, we come to the last candidate mentioned by Furlong as a state of affairs, to which a proponent of the privation solution might be committed, that God causes through his activity, and which state unfailingly causes Paul not to apply the rule unless God intervenes. This last candidate is (d) God's free causal activity. Keep in mind that Furlong needs a positive act of God; he has agreed that God does not cause the sinner's not applying the rule through an omission or non-performance on God's part. Although God presumably engages in much free causal activity, Furlong doesn't tell us which of this activity he thinks unfailingly causes Paul not to apply the rule. As far as I can tell, the only divine causal act, to which a proponent of the privation account is committed, that *might* seem relevant here is God's act (his causal act) of causing Paul's act of sin. Could God's act of causing Paul's act of sin unfailingly cause Paul not to apply the rule?

¹⁸Ibid., 429. Emphasis added.

I have defended elsewhere an account of divine causal agency on which a divine causal act consists simply in an effect together with a causal-dependence relation to God.¹⁹ The account has various motivations, including its fit with the doctrine of divine simplicity and the fact that it seems to be entailed by the traditional doctrine of God's universal causality (together with some very common theistic assumptions). I have also tried to show that a benefit of the account is that it renders God's causing our actions consistent with their being free in the libertarian sense. It does so, in large part, because on this account of divine agency, God's act of causing a creaturely act does not introduce any factor that is *both* causally or explanatorily prior to *and* logically sufficient for that creaturely act; and hence does not introduce any factor that renders that act "determined" in the sense of the term that is opposed to libertarian freedom. Indeed, on the requisite account—which I've called the "extrinsic model" of divine agency—a divine causal act does not cause the effect to which, together with the causal-dependence relation, that divine causal act consists in; nor is it causally or explanatorily prior to that effect. *God* is a cause of God's effect, but not God's act. God's act can't be, for on the extrinsic model God's act of causing an effect partially consists in that effect, and (I take it) nothing can be causally or explanatorily prior to what it wholly or partially consists in. On the extrinsic model, God's act of causing an effect is explanatorily concurrent or simultaneous with, not prior to, that effect (i.e., neither the effect nor God's act of causing it is explanatorily prior to the other).

Obviously, now is not the place to describe in detail, or defend, the extrinsic model of divine agency. Here I only wish to show its relevance to Furlong's objection. Does God's act of causing Paul's act of sin unfailingly cause Paul's not applying the rule? Well, I take it that, if *x* is explanatorily prior to *y*, then just as that precludes *y* being explanatorily prior to *x*, so also does it preclude any *z* that (at least in part) consists in *y* being explanatorily prior to *x*. *z* can't precede *x* in the order of explanation, if *z* consists (wholly or partially) in that which follows *x* in the order of explanation. Now, we have already seen in considering candidate (c) that Paul's not applying the rule is explanatorily prior to Paul's act of sin. But, on the extrinsic model of divine agency, God's act of causing Paul's act of sin consists in Paul's act together with its relation of dependence on God. Since Paul's not applying the rule is explanatorily prior to Paul's act of sin, and since God's act of causing Paul's act of sin consists (in part) in Paul's act, then God's act of causing Paul's act of sin cannot be causally or explanatorily prior to Paul's not applying the rule. There is then an account of divine agency, available to proponents of the privation solution, on which Paul's not applying the rule clearly is not caused by God's act of causing Paul's act of sin. And, so, candidate (d), like all the others,

¹⁹See my "Can a Libertarian Hold that Our Free Acts are Caused by God?" and my "Divine Universal Causality and Libertarian Freedom."

does not provide Furlong's objection what it needs. The objection proves unsuccessful.

Would it matter if the extrinsic model were rejected and God's act of causing Paul's act taken to be something causally or explanatorily prior to Paul's act? It is not obvious that it would. Were God's act prior to Paul's act we wouldn't be able quickly to rule out God's act's causing Paul's not applying the rule in the simple way we did for the extrinsic model, namely, by arguing that God's act couldn't be prior to Paul's not applying. But it doesn't follow that we would have good reason to think that God's act of causing Paul's act causes Paul's not applying the rule. The situation would be one where both God's act of causing Paul's act and Paul's not applying the rule would be explanatorily prior to Paul's act. But the relationship between God's act and Paul's not applying would be left unclear, with the possibility that neither is explanatorily prior to the other. Similarly, on a model where God's act of causing the fish food is explanatorily prior to the fish food, both God's act and the fish's not eating would explain the fish food's presence atop the water. And there wouldn't appear to be any reason forcing us to say that God's act or the fish's not eating was explanatorily prior to the other, or, if so, which was prior to which. It seems, then, that we are far from having a good case that God's act of causing Paul's act causes Paul's not applying the rule, even if we assume that God's act is prior to Paul's act, an assumption that a proponent of the privation solution could, in any case, reject. And we are very far from having a good case that some causal activity of God, to which a proponent of the privation solution is actually committed, causes Paul's not applying the rule.²⁰

3. Conclusion

Despite his objection, Furlong appears largely sympathetic with the privation solution. As we have seen, he accepts Aquinas's principle for causing by non-performance and agrees that it can be applied to show that God does not cause the defect in the act of sin by what God doesn't do. Another

²⁰There is an ambiguity, similar to the potential ambiguity in phrase (ii) of Furlong's principle, between a "causal" meaning and a mere "logical sufficiency" meaning in a proposition that Furlong employs in setting out the problem to which he takes the privation solution to be a solution. I have described the problem as a tension between, (a) God causes all creaturely acts, (b) some creaturely acts are sinful, and (c) God does not cause sin. Furlong ("Is God the Cause of Sin?" 422) describes the problem as a tension between (1) Every worldly event is a consequence guaranteed by God's unimpedible causal activity, (2) People sin, and (3) God is not the cause of sin. (1) is ambiguous. Does it mean that God's causal activity unfailingly *causes* every worldly event? Or does it mean only that God's causal activity is logically sufficient for every worldly event? If the former, then a proponent of the extrinsic model would reject (1), since on that model God's causal act does not do the causing. But, even though he rejects (1), if the proponent of the extrinsic model takes God to cause all entities distinct from himself, he will still be committed to my (a), and therefore still need to answer the problem as I have framed it. Finally, we have just seen that, even if, contrary to the extrinsic model, God's causal activity does unfailingly cause all creaturely entities, including acts of sin, it would not clearly follow that God's causal activity causes the sinner not to apply the rule. Thus, it would not clearly follow that God causes the privation in the act of sin in virtue of causing the non-performance by which the sinner causes that privation.

indication of Furlong's sympathy is that he *restricts* his criticism to what he calls the "unadorned" privation solution, which suggests that he thinks an "adorned" solution might well avoid his objection. By "unadorned" Furlong means a solution that does not appeal to the unique or special nature of God's causal activity in order to solve the problem. An "adorned" solution would appeal to the special nature of God's activity.²¹

In light of the foregoing distinction, perhaps Furlong would classify as an "adorned" solution any solution that appealed to the extrinsic model of divine agency in order to answer his objection. If so, then he might agree that appeal to the extrinsic model enables one to circumvent his objection, but insist that such an adorned approach was not the target of his criticism anyway. Furlong is certainly correct that my original article in defense of Aquinas's solution did not make appeal to any claims about the special nature of God's causality, and, to that extent, was "unadorned."²² What exactly, then, is my position with respect to the adorned/unadorned alternatives? On the one hand, I am a proponent of the extrinsic model. If appealing to that model were to prove necessary for solving the problem, and if it were to make my solution adorned, then I would be happy to be counted among the "adorned" camp. On the other hand, it doesn't seem to me that Furlong has shown his objection to hold even for an unadorned approach. To have done that, he would have had to identify some item caused by God that, on an unadorned approach, unfailingly causes the sinner not to apply the rule. As should be clear from the previous section, I don't think he has identified such an item. And, if he has not done that, then he has not, even for the unadorned approach, shown that God causes the privation in the act of sin, in virtue of causing the non-performance by which the sinner causes that privation.²³

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²¹For this distinction, see Furlong, "Is God the Cause of Sin?," 422–423, 424n3, 424n4, and 433–434.

²²See Furlong, "Is God the Cause of Sin?," 424n4.

²³My thanks to the editor, Mark Murphy, and to an anonymous referee for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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