A Qualified Middle Knowledge under the Decree: Gomarus, Alsted, Crocius, and Le Blanc de Beaulieu

Gerald Milton Smith, Jr.

Written for my grandson Samuel, and Drs. Maddox and Thomas in partial completion of the requirements of the PhD program at North American School of Theology

Abstract

Did any of the Reformed orthodox of the seventeenth century, besides Antonius Walaeus, grant that God knows how a free creature would act under a condition, and if they did, where did they place that knowledge with respect to God's decree? Certain Jesuit writers had given such a knowledge a name, middle knowledge, and had set it before every free decree of God's will. Most of the Reformed rejected it under that name. A few did not reject it outright, and the Reformed writers who came after them, among them Heidegger, Heppe, Spanheim, Marck and de Moor, knew who they were. This paper takes up four of them: Franciscus Gomarus, Johann Heinrich Alsted, Ludwig Crocius, and Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu. They did not write together, they did not use the same terms, and they did not all draw the line at the same place. My claim is that, with Walaeus, they nevertheless held a common position, a qualified middle knowledge held under the decree, which can be stated in four points. God knows certainly what would come to pass if a condition were posited. That knowledge is not a third knowledge standing on its own footing beside God's natural and free knowledge. The condition includes God's own will. And the knowledge does not cause the decree, for the certainty of what will in fact come to pass rests on God's decree alone. Not every writer states every point, and the differences among them are real, but they are differences within one position and not between two.

Contents

1. The Question and the Witnesses.....1
    1.1 The Later Witnesses.....1
    1.2 Walaeus and Gomarus.....3
2. Franciscus Gomarus.....3
    2.1 Two Foreknowledges.....4
    2.2 The Conditioned Foreknowledge.....4
    2.3 The Object of God's Knowledge.....5
    2.4 The Reconciliation.....6
    2.5 Tyre and Sidon.....7
    2.6 Gomarus's Position.....7
3. Johann Heinrich Alsted.....8
    3.1 The Intellect of God.....8
    3.2 The Will of God.....9
    3.3 The Knowledge of God.....10
    3.4 The Compendium and the Distinctions.....11
    3.5 Alsted's Position.....11
4. Ludwig Crocius.....12
    4.1 The Certainty of Conditioned Futures.....12
    4.2 The Instants.....13
    4.3 The Definition He Accepts.....13

4.4 Two Statements....14
4.5 Crocius's Position....15
5. Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu....15
5.1 The Jesuit Doctrine as He States It....15
5.2 The Reformed Who Admit It....16
5.3 His Own Position....17
5.4 Le Blanc's Position....19
6. What They Held in Common....19
Works Cited....21

1. The Question and the Witnesses

The question taken up here is a narrow one. Did any of the Reformed orthodox of the seventeenth century, besides Antonius Walaeus, grant that God knows what a free creature would do under a condition, and if they did, where did they place that knowledge with respect to God's decree? Certain Jesuit writers had given such a knowledge a name, middle knowledge, and had set it before every free decree of God's will. Most of the Reformed rejected it under that name. A few did not reject it outright. They accepted what I shall call a qualified middle knowledge, or a conditioned knowledge, held under the decree and not in the Jesuit sense, and the Reformed writers who came after them knew who they were.[1]

Four of them are the subject of this paper: Franciscus Gomarus, Johann Heinrich Alsted, Ludwig Crocius, and Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu. With Walaeus they make five. They did not write together, they did not use the same terms, and they did not all draw the line at the same place. My claim is that they nevertheless held a common position. Each grants a knowledge in God of what would come to pass if a condition were posited. Each puts God's own will into the condition, or sets the knowledge after the decree, or does both. None makes it a third knowledge that stands before God's will on its own footing and supplies the ground on which God decrees. And each keeps the certainty of what will in fact come to pass in the decree alone. The differences among them are real, and I shall not smooth them over, but they are differences within one position and not between two.

1.1 The Later Witnesses

The witnesses who mark this minority are later Reformed writers.

Herman Bavinck names Gomarus and Walaeus together on this point. For Gomarus he points to the tenth of his theological disputations, at the thirtieth thesis and following; for Walaeus he points to the locus on the knowledge of God in his Common Places; and he sends the reader to Heppe.[2]

Johann Heinrich Heidegger, in his body of Christian theology printed at Zürich in 1700, opens his section on middle knowledge with a sharp rejection of the Jesuit doctrine, but before he gives his arguments he sets the Reformed exceptions apart:

> "For although a certain conditioned knowledge, whose object is a conditional proposition necessary from the Decree of God, befits God (in which sense even some orthodox Theologians, Gomarus, Walaeus, Ludov. Crocius, and others, defend a middle knowledge, moreover in respect of evil actions, to which Divine Providence concurs not effectively but permissively, and on the supposition of a conditioned or permissive decree; who nevertheless would more rightly refer it to the natural knowledge of God), yet that conditioned [knowledge] by which God, before the Decree and the determination of [His] will, would have known the free acts of Angels or men from the connection of the condition, state or circumstances

[1] Quotations from Latin and German sources are given in English, and the renderings are mine. Words in square brackets are supplied. Scripture is quoted from the English Standard Version (ESV).

[2] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2, *God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 199–200 and n. 92. In the note Bavinck cites Gomarus's disputations, X, 30 and following; Walaeus's Common Places in his collected works, I, 174–76; and Heppe, 64.

> to be posited by God with the liberty of the rational creature, is altogether unworthy of God, dangerous, harmful and useless."[3]

Three things in the sentence matter. Heidegger calls Gomarus, Walaeus, and Crocius orthodox. He grants that a conditioned knowledge befits God when its object is a conditional proposition that is necessary from God's decree. And the knowledge he condemns is the one by which God would know the free acts of creatures before the decree and the determination of his will. His one criticism of the Reformed three is that they would have done better to refer the knowledge to God's natural knowledge. He does not say that they held the Jesuit doctrine. He says that they defended it "on the supposition of a conditioned or permissive decree," and that they defended it "moreover in respect of evil actions." The word is "moreover." He does not restrict their position to evil actions.

Heinrich Heppe repeated Heidegger's list in 1861, with two changes. He narrowed Heidegger's "moreover" to "yet only … in respect of evil actions," which says less than Heidegger says, and he added Alsted, quoting Alsted's definition of middle knowledge.[4] Heppe's narrowing should not be read back into Heidegger. Heppe's addition of Alsted is sound, and Alsted's own text bears it out.

Friedrich Spanheim the Younger, in his refutation of the Remonstrant controversies, denies that the Reformed who used the phrase held the Remonstrant doctrine:

> "Falsely, too, is the Middle Knowledge of the Remonstrants imputed to Gomarus, Walaeus, or to our Theologians, who always suppose an intervening Decree as the condition, 'if God should so decree this and that'; and so suppose that nothing at all of those things which God, by His infinite perspicacity, is said to have foreknown by His natural knowledge is future except by the intervention of His Decree."[5]

Spanheim does not say that Gomarus and Walaeus rejected a conditioned knowledge. He says that the knowledge they held was not the Remonstrant one, and he gives the reason: they always put God's decree into the condition.

Johannes Marck went a step further, and Bernhard de Moor quoted and endorsed him. Marck's compendium says that "some of Ours agree in the thesis, in part imprudently, not in the hypothesis," and in his textual exercises he gives the judgment that De Moor quotes at length:

> "If any of Ours formerly have spoken of some Middle or Hypothetical Knowledge of God, we find that they dissented from us more in phrasing than in substance. Thus our Walaeus … acknowledging such Knowledge together with Gomarus, at the same time disputes against its Jesuitical abuses, and in the substance itself declares himself orthodox enough."[6]

---

[3] Johann Heinrich Heidegger, *Corpus theologiae christianae*, vol. 1 (Zürich, 1700), locus III, §LXII, 85. Heidegger names Gomarus, Walaeus, and Crocius, and then "others." He does not name Alsted.

[4] Heinrich Heppe, *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformirten Kirche* (Elberfeld, 1861), locus V, 64. Heppe gives Alsted's page as 90. In the Hanau edition of 1618 the definition stands on p. 97, in chapter XXIV, on the knowledge of God; p. 90 falls in chapter XXII, on the will of God, and does not treat the question. See section 3.3 below.

[5] Friedrich Spanheim the Younger, *Elenchus controversiarum* with the Remonstrants, VII, "De scientia Dei media," §II, in *Opera*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1703), col. 859.

[6] Bernhard de Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elencticum*, pars 1 (Leiden, 1761), cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, quoting Marck's compendium and his *Exercitationes textuales* XIV, pars IV, §10. On these pages De Moor and Marck name only Gomarus and Walaeus among the Reformed.

Marck then states the terms on which, as he sees it, no real controversy remains: that the condition be "a condition to be decreed by God together with the event," and that every condition "that would be left to second Causes alone, neither determined nor to be determined by God," be removed far from God's knowledge and will.[7] He doubts that the phrases are apt, and he fears what heretics have made of them, but he does not doubt the orthodoxy of the men. De Moor sets Spanheim's sentence beside Marck's as saying the same thing.[8]

Le Blanc is both a witness and a party. In his theses on the order of the divine decrees he names "Ludovicus Crocius, Professor in the School of Bremen, Gomarus and Walaeus" among those who "seem to admit in God that conditioned knowledge."[9] I take him up in his own section below.

1.2 Walaeus and Gomarus

The tie to Walaeus is direct. In the locus on the knowledge of God in his Common Places, Walaeus records that the question divides the orthodox. Some, he says, do not admit the knowledge. Then he turns to the other side, and he writes that there are "some among the orthodox, and among others Franciscus Gomarus," who think "that it should be affirmed outright."[10] He then states his own position:

> "from those places and others like them it is manifest that there is some such hypothetical knowledge in God before every decree of his, concerning what was certainly going to be."[11]

He adds at once that a conditional decree is included in the conditional predictions, and that "this does not remove the thing itself."[12] Walaeus therefore names Gomarus as one who holds what he holds, and he holds it with a decree included in the condition. That is the position the later witnesses describe.[13]

The paper takes the four writers in turn, Gomarus, Alsted, Crocius, and Le Blanc, and then asks what the five held in common and how their position differs from Molina's.

2. Franciscus Gomarus

Franciscus Gomarus (1563–1641) taught theology at Leiden from 1594 to 1611, where he opposed Arminius, and from 1618 until his death he was professor at Groningen. He sat at the Synod of Dort

---

[7] De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, quoting Marck.

[8] De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660, citing Spanheim, *Elenchus controversiarum*, in *Opera*, vol. 3, col. 859.

[9] Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu, *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae* (London: Moses Pitt, 1675), "De decretorum divinorum ordine," th. XLI, 185.

[10] Antonius Walaeus, *Loci communes*, "De Dei scientia," in *Opera omnia*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 174 (right column)–175 (left column).

[11] Walaeus, *Loci communes*, "De Dei scientia," 175 (left column).

[12] Walaeus, *Loci communes*, "De Dei scientia," 175 (left column).

[13] Henri Krop, "Reformed Orthodoxy and the *Libertas philosophandi* in the Netherlands," *Church History and Religious Culture* 100, no. 2–3 (2020): 190 n. 17, says that the knowledge Walaeus refers to at this place was rejected by Gomarus and received by other orthodox theologians. Walaeus says the reverse. The writers who do not admit it are left unnamed, and Gomarus is named among those who affirm it.

as a delegate of Groningen.[14] His collected works were printed at Amsterdam, and the second edition of 1664 is the one cited here. Four places in it bear on the question: the tenth of his theological disputations, on predestination; the third, on the true God; the sixth chapter of his reconciliation of the orthodox doctrine of providence; and his comment on Matthew 11:21.

2.1 Two Foreknowledges

In the disputation on predestination Gomarus explains God's foreknowledge before he explains the decree, because, he says, what he has said of predestination will become clearer "by a succinct and distinct explanation of the foreknowledge of God, properly taken."[15] The foreknowledge of God is "the most perfect knowledge in God of all things universally, and of each singly, that can come to be."[16] Its object is whatever can come to be, and with respect to that object it is distinguished in two ways: one foreknowledge is of things possible simply, which are defined to neither side, and the other is of those possibles that are future.[17] He names the two:

> "Hence the former has customarily been called indefinite foreknowledge and foreknowledge of simple intelligence, and also natural and necessary, because it would belong to God nonetheless even if He had decreed nothing at all. The latter is named definite, because it is occupied about things as defined by the decree."[18]

The division is the ordinary Reformed one. The first knowledge is natural to God and does not depend on any decree. The second is of things as the decree has defined them. Gomarus adds the reason why the first must be wider than the second: all future things can come to be, "but innumerable things can [come to be] which are never future," and if God were ignorant of anything that he could effect, he would not be omniscient, "and therefore not God."[19]

2.2 The Conditioned Foreknowledge

Into that division Gomarus places the conditioned knowledge. He does not add a third member. He puts it under the first:

> "Now under indefinite foreknowledge (which regards all the modes of things simply possible) is contained also that [foreknowledge] which is commonly named conditioned. And it is that by which God, out of the infinite light of His knowledge, foreknew certain future things, not absolutely, but upon a certain condition posited."[20]

He explains what that means. If a certain series of things and circumstances were posited, God most certainly foreknew what event would follow from it, necessary or contingent, "not by Stoic fate, but according to the nature of the causes," and he foreknew it "whether that series, upon the decree

---

[14] J. C. van Slee, "Gomarus, Franciscus," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 9 (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1879), 363–65.

[15] Franciscus Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, "De divina hominum praedestinatione," th. XXIII, in *Opera theologica omnia*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Joannes Janssonius, 1664), Pars II, 27 (right column).

[16] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXIV, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

[17] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXV–XXVI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

[18] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXVII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column). The proof texts are Acts 2:23 and 15:18.

[19] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXVIII–XXIX, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

[20] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXX–XXXI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).

of God following, be defined, or remain undefined."[21] Then comes the sentence on which the whole place turns: "this indefinite foreknowledge does not at all depend on the defining decree, but necessarily precedes it in the order of nature (as the object, its adjunct)."[22]

Gomarus is plain about the order. The conditioned foreknowledge precedes the defining decree, as an object precedes the act that is about it, and it does not depend on that decree. But the precedence is the precedence of the indefinite foreknowledge as a whole. The conditioned knowledge is not given a place of its own between the two foreknowledges. It is part of the knowledge that would belong to God "even if He had decreed nothing at all."

He gives two kinds of example. The first kind is of a series that remained undefined, where neither the condition nor the event came to pass. God foreknew "that David, if only he remained in the city of Keilah, would be attacked by Saul and delivered up by the citizens," and neither was carried out, "because of David's flight." And God foreknew, and foretold, that foreign nations would hear Ezekiel if he were sent to them, "although neither the thing itself nor the antecedent condition of the future thing came to pass."[23]

The second kind is of a series that the decree afterward defined, and the example is the Fall. God foreknew that if he should create certain men in Adam in the upright state of original righteousness, "and should give a command concerning abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, should not hinder the temptation of Satan, and should direct [it] agreeably to His holy power and to the liberty of men (as He did)," then they would fall by transgression of the command.[24] The condition here is made up of what God would do: create, command, not hinder, direct. Gomarus does not say in so many words that God's will is included in the condition. But by inference it is, since every member of the antecedent is an act of God, and the knowledge is a knowledge of what would follow upon God's so acting. That is near to what Spanheim later says of the Reformed, that they suppose an intervening decree as the condition.

The next thesis sets the limit. God regarded this series of things as set before him, "not as a cause but as an occasion in this predestination," and "by a free and wise decree distinctly predefined it."[25] The conditioned foreknowledge supplies the matter of the decree. It is not the cause of the decree. The decree is free, and the event is the certain index of it.

2.3 The Object of God's Knowledge

The disputation on the true God says the same thing more briefly. The object of God's knowledge is everything that can be known, and under that object are contained things past, present, and future, all things possible, and:

> "things future by hypothesis, that is, what would come to pass upon a condition posited: not only what is necessary from a necessary cause, but also what is

[21] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).
[22] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column). The antecedent of "it" is the defining decree.
[23] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXIII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column). Gomarus cites 1 Sam 23:11–12 and Ezek 3:6.
[24] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXIV, in *Opera*, Pars II, 27 (right column).
[25] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXV, in *Opera*, Pars II, 28 (left column).

> contingent from a contingent cause (1 Sam 23:12; Matt 11:21). All which things God embraces by the infinite light of His essence."[26]

The proof texts are the two that recur throughout this dispute, Keilah and Tyre and Sidon. The knowledge is one knowledge with a single act, "by one infinite and simple act of intelligence," and the things future by hypothesis are one part of its object.[27] Gomarus does not speak here of a middle knowledge. He speaks of a knowledge that takes in the hypothetical with everything else.

2.4 The Reconciliation

The sixth chapter of the reconciliation of the orthodox doctrine of providence works out the relation between the two foreknowledges and the decree, and it ends with a rule that bears on the later verdict about Gomarus.

The definite foreknowledge, Gomarus says, is the proper and necessary effect of predefinition. The order is set out in one sentence:

> "For as the indefinite foreknowledge of God (by which God knows all things that can simply happen …) precedes the predefinition of God in order, as the subject and matter from which certain future things can be defined; so also predefinition, determining certain future things out of the foreknown possibles, precedes definite foreknowledge (which is of future things) in order and in causality, as the efficacious object and the first principle of the determination of future things."[28]

The indefinite foreknowledge, which includes the conditioned, is the matter from which the decree defines. The decree is the first principle of the determination of future things. And so "the definite foreknowledge of God does not flow from the future things, but from the decree of God determining the future things."[29] Gomarus goes on to ask whether foreknowledge is the cause of things, and he answers with distinctions. Taken properly, as bare knowledge, foreknowledge is not the efficient cause of things: "there are innumerable things (as we showed before) which God indefinitely foreknew which will never be future."[30] Taken in the wide sense of a ground of consequence, "indefinite foreknowledge cannot be a cause, but definite [foreknowledge] can, excellently," because the definite foreknowledge is of things predefined by the decree, and the decree "is constant and immutable."[31]

He closes the chapter with a rule for reading the orthodox when they speak differently:

> "Therefore, since the Orthodox agree among themselves in the thing itself, there is no reason why, offended by variety of speaking, we should set them at odds either among themselves or with the Sacred Letters. For it belongs to a candid man to interpret the sayings of others kindly, unless the contrary opinion is more thoroughly established."[32]

---

[26] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. III, "De Deo vero," th. XLII, in *Opera*, Pars II, 7 (left column).
[27] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. III, th. XL, in *Opera*, Pars II, 7 (left column).
[28] Gomarus, *Conciliatio doctrinae orthodoxae de providentia Dei*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 129.
[29] Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 129 (right column).
[30] Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 130 (left column).
[31] Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 130 (left column).
[32] Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 130 (right column).

He wrote this of the dispute over whether foreknowledge may be called a cause. Marck later applied the same measure to Gomarus himself and judged that he differed from the other orthodox "more in phrasing than in substance."[33]

2.5 Tyre and Sidon

Gomarus's comment on Matthew 11:21 is the place that others quoted.[34] Christ says that if the mighty works done in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. Gomarus first asks what kind of repentance is meant, and, as Le Blanc reports his reading, he takes it to be of the kind "which is common to the Elect and the Reprobate, to believers and non-believers," such as the repentance of the Ninevites in sackcloth.[35] Then he asks how the truth of the saying is known:

> "But as to what He asserts concerning this future repentance of the Tyrians, that condition being posited, its truth stands firm from the indefinite foreknowledge of His divine nature, by which He knew what would have followed upon a given antecedent being posited, even though neither [antecedent nor consequent] came to pass. For that, this condition being posited, one or the other would have come to pass (namely that they would either repent or not repent) is known to all, from that principle that two opposites cannot be true at the same time. But which of them would have been future, since the matter was contingent, He alone foresaw who by His infinite knowledge sees all things, and certainly foretells not only necessary things but also future contingents."[36]

The comment agrees with the disputation. The knowledge of what Tyre would have done is placed under the indefinite foreknowledge of God's nature, which is his natural knowledge. Gomarus does not call it a third knowledge, and he does not make it the ground of any decree. He says only that God, who sees all things, knew which of two opposites would have been future.

2.6 Gomarus's Position

Gomarus holds a conditioned foreknowledge in God, and he holds it plainly. He places it under the indefinite and natural foreknowledge, not beside it. He says that it does not depend on the defining decree and precedes it in the order of nature. He treats the series of things that it presents as an occasion of the decree and not as its cause. And he makes the decree the first principle of the determination of all that is future, and the only ground of definite foreknowledge. His example of the Fall puts God's own acts into the condition, and by inference God's will is in the hypothesis from the start. That is the position Walaeus names when he names Gomarus.

---

[33] De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660.

[34] Matt 11:21 (ESV): "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

[35] Le Blanc, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, th. XXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 449. Compare Gomarus, *Explicatio* of Matthew, on Matt 11:21, in *Opera*, Pars I, 56 (right column).

[36] Gomarus, *Explicatio* of Matthew, on Matt 11:21, in *Opera*, Pars I, 56 (right column). Gomarus adds that Ezek 3:6–7 is a similar place. Le Blanc quotes the same passage; see section 5.2 below.

3. Johann Heinrich Alsted

Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638) taught at the academy of Herborn, in the philosophical faculty and then in the theological, took part in the Synod of Dort, and from 1629 until his death worked at Weissenburg in Transylvania. He was the author of encyclopaedic works in philosophy and theology.[37] His scholastic and didactic theology, printed at Hanau in 1618, treats God's intellect and will in two chapters and then gives a chapter on God's knowledge, and it is in the last of these that he defines middle knowledge. The two earlier chapters show what he means by it.

3.1 The Intellect of God

The chapter on the intellect of God has one rule on the extent of its object. God understands himself, and next "He knows all possible things, of which there are three kinds." The first kind is of things that God's power can reach immediately. The second is of this kind:

> "The second is of those things which can exist from creatures (whether these are to exist or not) by His conservation, motion, aid, concurrence, permission; and which would exist from creatures, if this or that hypothesis were posited (1 Sam 23:11–12)."[38]

The third kind is of "those things which God can do concerning the acts of creatures, either agreeably to Himself or to the acts."[39] Alsted then gathers the rule into a summary: God knows all things that have any entity, "will have it, can have it, [or] would have it by hypothesis," and "He knows all things which would exist upon some hypothesis being posited."[40]

Two points are clear. The things that would exist on a hypothesis are counted among the possibles, which are the object of God's natural knowledge. And they are described as what would exist from creatures "by His conservation, motion, aid, concurrence, permission." God's concurrence and permission belong to the description of the thing known. Alsted does not use the name middle knowledge anywhere in this chapter.

The last rule of the chapter guards the knowledge on two sides. God understands all things "infallibly," because his essence is infinite, so that he understands all things most presently, "even future contingents." He understands them "independently," so that his understanding is "caused by no external cause, not even by the object." And he understands them agreeably to the nature of things: "the understanding of God, however certain and infallible, yet imposes no necessity on things, but rather establishes contingency in them."[41] The knowledge of what a creature would do does not depend on the creature, and it does not destroy the creature's contingency.

---

[37] Otto Weber, "Alsted, Johann Heinrich," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953), 206.

[38] Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica, exhibens locos communes theologicos methodo scholastica* (Hanau: Conrad Eifrid, 1618), sect. I, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79.

[39] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79. The proof texts are Matt 11:21, Jer 18:6, and Isa 44:7.

[40] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 80.

[41] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. X, 82.

3.2 The Will of God

The chapter on the will of God supplies the other half. Here the question is how God's will stands to the acts of creatures that his knowledge foresees, and Alsted gives a series of distinctions and rules.

The will of God is absolute or conditional. "The absolute is that by which God wills to do or to hinder something." "The conditional will of God is that by which He wills something to be done or not done by creatures endued with intellect, with a condition adjoined. It is called the will of the sign; also the inefficacious will."[42] In the rules he adds that the conditional will is called the will of the sign because it signifies what is pleasing to God and what is our duty, while the absolute will is the first and supreme cause of all things.[43]

The will of God also regards either God only or the creature. "The will which regards God only is that by which God wills something of Himself, not on account of any cause placed outside Himself." "The will of God which regards the creature is that by which He wills something on account of another prior cause placed on the part of the creature."[44] And it is antecedent or consequent, according as the act of the divine will precedes or follows the volition or action of the rational creature.[45]

Alsted then holds this together with the independence of God's will. The act of God's will is independent, because God is the first cause, and all other wills depend on it, "but that the will of God is not moved and ordered by the will of the creature." It is infinite, because it is not moved to will by any external cause, "not even by the object." And he adds: "To this truth it is no obstacle that He would not will or do some things unless some act of the creature intervened."[46]

The order of the objects of God's will is completed in five degrees, and the fifth is "those things which God according to His infinite wisdom judges are to be done concerning the acts of rational creatures."[47] The next rule allows that the act of a creature, or its omission, "can thus far be the occasion … of some divine volition: so that, apart from the consideration of that act or omission, God would forbear such a volition."[48] And the rule after that keeps the second causes in their own mode. God acts through them so as to let them produce their effects according to their proper mode: "necessary [causes] necessarily, contingent contingently, free freely." Their contingency and liberty do not hinder the certainty of what God works through them, and "therefore the certain futurition of the event does not include the necessity of coaction."[49]

The connection with the knowledge chapter is direct. God wills some things on account of a prior cause placed on the part of the creature, and some of his volitions have the creature's act as their occasion. If so, God must know the creature's act in the circumstance in which he places it. But Alsted does not let that knowledge move God's will. The will is independent, it is not moved by its object, and the creature's act is its occasion and not its cause. By inference, then, the knowledge of

---

[42] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, praec. V, 83.
[43] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. XIII, 91.
[44] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, praec. VII, 84.
[45] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, praec. VIII, 84.
[46] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. IV, 86.
[47] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. V, 87.
[48] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. VI, 87.
[49] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. VII, 87–88.

what a creature would do serves God's will without governing it. Alsted does not say this in one sentence. He says it in the rules taken together.

He says one thing more that bears on the order of God's acts. God's free volitions concerning creatures can be necessary "not absolutely, but in a certain respect and from hypothesis; namely, inasmuch as it can be bound by another act of willing prior in order."[50] The order among God's volitions is an order of hypothesis, in which one free act is presupposed by another. A like pattern appears in his account of knowledge.

3.3 The Knowledge of God

The chapter on God's knowledge gives three divisions. Knowledge is theoretical or practical. It is knowledge of vision, by which God knows himself and all beings that are, will be, or have been, or knowledge of simple intelligence, by which he knows all possible things. And it is natural, free, or middle:

> "It is natural or necessary, free, or middle. The natural knowledge of God is that by which God knows Himself and all possible things. Free is that by which He knows all other beings. Middle is that by which He knows: if this should be, that will be future."[51]

This is the sentence that Heppe quoted. Alsted places the three in order in the rule that follows:

> "The necessary knowledge of God precedes every free act of the divine will. The free [knowledge] follows the act of the will. The middle [knowledge] does indeed precede the act of the will, but sees something to be future from the hypothesis of it."[52]

The words "of it" can be read in two ways. They can refer to the act of the will, so that the middle knowledge sees something future on the hypothesis of a divine act of will. Or they can refer more widely to the "this" of the definition. The gloss that follows fits the wider reading. But on either reading, the middle knowledge is a knowledge from hypothesis, and on the first reading God's act of will is itself the hypothesis.

The gloss is the more important part of the rule, because in it Alsted qualifies the threefold division:

> "All knowledge of God is necessary. For, any object whatever being posited, the divine intellect necessarily knows it on account of the infinity of [His] essence. Likewise, any object whatever being posited from hypothesis, God necessarily understands what will come forth from it. Nevertheless it is rightly divided into necessary, free and middle, in the mode in which we said in the precepts."[53]

The middle knowledge, then, is necessary knowledge. It is God's knowledge of what will come forth from an object posited by hypothesis, and it is necessary in the same way that his knowledge of any posited object is necessary. The threefold division stands, but only "in the mode in which we

---

[50] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXII, reg. IX, 88. Alsted cites Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, bk. 1, c. 83.

[51] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, praec. III, 97.

[52] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. III, 98.

[53] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. III, 98.

said in the precepts," where the three are defined by their objects. By inference, it is a division of what God knows and of its order, not of God's knowing into three distinct knowledges.

The next two rules settle what causes what. The free knowledge, or knowledge of vision, follows the free act of God's will and "is not the cause of things."[54] The practical knowledge of simple intelligence, which is necessary, is the cause of all things "by way of prescribing and directing, the action of the will and the power being added. Although it is necessary that that middle knowledge intervene in things which depend on the liberty of created choice."[55] The middle knowledge intervenes. It is not itself the cause of things. The cause is God's practical knowledge with his will and power added.

3.4 The Compendium and the Distinctions

Alsted repeats the threefold division in his theological compendium of 1624. The aphorism on God's intellect lists the ways God knows, and ends: "Himself by necessary knowledge; by free knowledge the creatures and all existing things; by middle knowledge all that which is future if this or that should be."[56] The same aphorism puts all possible things under the knowledge of simple intelligence. It does not say whether the middle knowledge precedes the will or follows it. The definition is the definition of 1618.

His distinctions of 1626 give the division a single line among others: "The knowledge of GOD is natural, or necessary, free, or middle; of simple intelligence or of vision; … absolute or conditional."[57] Between the last two members he sets a division into theoretical, practical, and permissive knowledge. The middle knowledge stands beside the pair of simple intelligence and vision, and the pair of absolute and conditional knowledge stands beside both. A later distinction adds that God knows things after they are "necessarily, but not from necessity of nature," which agrees with the rule of 1618 that all God's knowledge is necessary.[58]

3.5 Alsted's Position

Alsted uses the name middle knowledge, which Gomarus does not, and he defines it in a single line: the knowledge by which God knows that if this should be, that will be future. He says that it precedes the act of God's will. But he places its objects among the possibles, he describes them as what would exist from creatures by God's conservation, concurrence, and permission, he says that it sees what is future from a hypothesis that may be God's own act of will, and he says that all God's knowledge, the middle included, is necessary. It intervenes in what depends on created free choice, but it is not the cause of things. On the side of the will, the creature's act may be the occasion of a divine volition, but God's will is not moved by its object or ordered by the will of the creature. Heppe was right to add his name, and the definition Heppe quoted stands in Alsted's chapter on the knowledge of God.

---

[54] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. IV, 98.

[55] Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. V, 98.

[56] Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Compendium theologicum* (Hanau, 1624), pars IV, locus II, aph. VII, 205.

[57] Johann Heinrich Alsted, *Distinctiones per universam theologiam* (Frankfurt, 1626), cap. III, dist. 13, 17. The next distinction gives the will of God as absolute or conditional.

[58] Alsted, *Distinctiones*, cap. III, dist. 50, 22.

4. Ludwig Crocius

Ludwig Crocius (1586–1655) was pastor in Bremen and professor at its gymnasium, which he later headed, and in 1624 he became superintendent of the Bremen church. With Matthias Martinius and Heinrich Isselburg he represented Bremen at the Synod of Dort.[59] His system of sacred theology, printed at Bremen in 1636, treats the intellect of God in the fifteenth chapter of its third book, and the question of conditioned knowledge falls in the middle of that chapter.

4.1 The Certainty of Conditioned Futures

Crocius begins from the certainty of God's intellect: "The intellect of God is always certain, nor can it ever be deceived, not even in future contingents." Future contingents, he says, are of two kinds, some future absolutely and some future under a condition. That the first are foreknown certainly is established from Scripture. Of the second, some deny that they are known by God, and others grant that they are known but only doubtfully and by conjecture. Crocius answers: "the knowledge of these also is certain and infallible to God."[60] He gives four reasons. God is the first truth; his intellect is infinite; God permits sins for a certain end, and to permit is to foresee what will be unless one hinders it; and if God knew conditioned futures only by conjecture, David could have doubted the divine answer at Keilah without sin.

He then asks where the certainty is to be sought. First, "from the infinite perfection and perspicacity of the divine intellect," which knows more in the causes than is in them in act. A prudent father who knows his sons can foresee probably what each would do in a given occasion, and "much more can God foresee certainly and infallibly what each man would do if these or those circumstances were." Second:

> "From the in-some-manner determinate truth of future contingents, which in conditioned futures does not presuppose any free decree of the divine will, but in absolute [futures] does presuppose [it]."[61]

He gives the reason for the difference. Things would not be absolutely future "unless God had decreed to produce them, whether through Himself or also through second causes, or at least not to hinder that they come to exist from second [causes]."[62] The truth of what is absolutely future rests on the decree. The truth of what would be future under a condition, he says, does not presuppose a free decree.

Crocius is honest about what he cannot explain. How things that are indifferent to being and not being are known certainly by God, "that, I confess, it is not in our power here to explain more clearly."[63] And the next aphorism, on the contingency that God's knowledge leaves in things, repeats almost word for word Alsted's rule: "The intellection or knowledge of God, however certain and infallible, yet imposes of itself no necessity on things, but rather establishes

---

[59] Walter Hollweg, "Crocius, Ludwig," in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 3 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1957), 418.

[60] Ludovicus Crocius, *Syntagma sacrae theologiae quatuor libris adornatum* (Bremen: Bertholdus Villerianus, 1636), lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 569–70.

[61] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 570.

[62] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 570.

[63] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 571. He refers the reader to Zanchi, Suárez, Molina, and Álvarez.

contingency in them."[64] Crocius then appeals to Walaeus. He refers here, not unwillingly, to a saying that "the celebrated Dr. Walaeus" writes had always pleased him greatly in this hard question: the saying of Stadianus, Melanchthon's teacher, who said that he knew both that God foreknows and determines all things and that there is contingency, "but how these things should be reconciled so as to satisfy any contentious person, he did not altogether perceive."[65]

4.2 The Instants

Crocius then turns to the divisions of God's knowledge. The doctors, he says, to declare a very arduous matter in some fashion, "distinguish three instants or signs, not of time but of reason." In the first they place the knowledge of simple intelligence, in the second the free decrees of the will, in the third the knowledge of vision. And:

> "Some set up a fourth instant after the first, in which they consider a certain middle knowledge, before the free decrees of the will."[66]

He defines the knowledge of simple intelligence as "the cognition of all possibles, that is, of all and singular things which can come to pass, whether they have a contingent or a necessary connection with their causes, preceding in God the free act of the will," and the knowledge of vision as the knowledge "by which God knows, after the decree of the will, all other things besides Himself which are, will be, or have been."[67] The natural knowledge, he adds, is "in a certain mode the same as the knowledge of simple intelligence."[68]

4.3 The Definition He Accepts

The decisive passage comes in the gloss on the free knowledge. Crocius first repeats, again almost word for word, Alsted's rule:

> "If we speak strictly, all knowledge of God is necessary. For not from this, that the free act of the will furnishes the intellect with an object, is the intellection of God free; but, any object whatever being posited, the divine intellect necessarily knows it on account of the infinity of His essence and perspicacity. So also, any object whatever being posited from hypothesis, God necessarily understands what would come forth from it."[69]

He then reports that some younger men of the school, "as is to be seen in Suárez, Molina, Fonseca, Bellarmine and Becanus, here set up a middle knowledge, which not all explain clearly enough, on account of conditioned possibles." Others define it differently:

> "But some define it thus: that it is the knowledge by which God, after the decree of His will, knew, not absolutely but under a condition, what men and angels would do

---

[64] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 14, 571. Compare Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. X, 82.

[65] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 14, 571–72. Crocius cites Walaeus against Corvinus, chapter 3, on providence, and gives the saying as Chytraeus reports it of Melanchthon.

[66] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XII, 572–73.

[67] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XIII–XIV, 573.

[68] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVI, 574.

[69] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 574. Compare Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXIV, reg. III, 98.

> according to their liberty, if they were placed with these or those circumstances, in such or such an order of things."[70]

And he gives his verdict:

> "The thing itself comprehended in this definition I judge is not to be denied, but so that we make this foreknowledge a part of simple intelligence, which is the knowledge of all possible things and connections: so that by the infinite perfection of [His] nature He necessarily understands not only that that can be if this be, but also that it either is going to be or is not going to be. Yet there seems to be no need of a knowledge distinct from simple intelligence and vision."[71]

The verdict has three parts. The thing itself is not to be denied. It is to be made part of simple intelligence. And no third knowledge is needed. Crocius then gives the order in three steps. First there is the natural intelligence of what God himself can create, and of what would be future in such a creation, one thing being posited after another, "He either determining or permitting." Second, when the end he sees arising from a world so founded and governed has pleased him, God decrees all the antecedents together, "relating Himself to some effectively and properly, to others permissively." Third comes the knowledge of vision, by which he foresees as truly future all that he had understood would follow, necessarily or contingently, "if the prior things were posited."[72]

4.4 Two Statements

The two passages do not sit easily together, and they should not be made to. On page 570 Crocius says that the determinate truth of conditioned futures does not presuppose any free decree of God's will. On page 575 he accepts the thing contained in a definition that says God knew conditioned free acts after the decree of his will, and he places that knowledge in simple intelligence, which by his own definition precedes the free act of the will.

One way of reading the two together may be offered as inference. What Crocius accepts on page 575 is the content of the definition, a knowledge of what men and angels would do under given circumstances, and not its placement after the decree; he relocates the content into simple intelligence. And the simple intelligence of his first step already includes God's own acts in the hypothesis, since it is the knowledge of what would follow in a creation "He either determining or permitting."[73] On that reading the statement of page 570, that the conditioned truth presupposes no free decree, means no actual decree, while God's determining and permitting are supposed within the condition itself. Crocius does not say this. It is what his three steps imply, but the statement of page 570, taken as it stands, says more than the three steps require.

What is not in doubt is where Crocius places the certainty of what will in fact come to pass. The theoretical knowledge, which is the knowledge of vision, is called foreknowledge because God sees something to be future in act, "because He decreed that that should be created upon whose existence He certainly understood that other thing would follow." Of this knowledge it is said that the decree is the cause of foreknowledge:

---

[70] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 574–75.
[71] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575.
[72] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575.
[73] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575.

> "For the ground of it is the decree, partly efficacious, by which God determined to produce that cause, and those things upon whose existence He understood that some act, whether good or evil, would contingently follow; partly permitting, by which He determined not to hinder that which, a condition being posited, He understands will be future, contingently indeed, but certainly. For without this decree He would never see something to be future in act and in reality."[74]

4.5 Crocius's Position

Crocius holds that God knows conditioned futures certainly and infallibly. He accepts the thing that the name middle knowledge was used for, and he accepts the thing contained in a definition that places it after the decree. He refuses to set it in a fourth instant before the decrees, and he folds it into simple intelligence, so that there is no third knowledge. His order runs from natural intelligence, which includes God's determining and permitting, to the decree of the end and of all the antecedents, to the vision of what will in fact be. And the decree, partly efficacious and partly permitting, is the ground of all foreknowledge of what will actually come to pass. Heidegger names him with Gomarus and Walaeus, and Le Blanc names him first.

5. Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu

Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu (1614–1675) was professor of theology at the Academy of Sedan and was known for a conciliatory spirit.[75] His theological theses, printed at London in 1675, include a series on the concord of human liberty with the divine decrees, in three parts. The first part treats the conditioned knowledge, the second the doctrine of the Roman school, and the third the doctrine of the Reformed school. Le Blanc is the latest of the four, and he reports the views of others more fully than any of them.

5.1 The Jesuit Doctrine as He States It

The first part opens with the title of its subject: the cognition attributed to God "of things contingently future, not absolutely but under a condition, which in the Schools they call middle or conditioned knowledge." Le Blanc says that among the things devised to reconcile human liberty with the certainty of the divine decrees, this knowledge "has above all prevailed," and that Luis Molina and Fonseca first sought the reconciliation in it, "and after them very many, both in the Roman School and among the Protestants themselves."[76]

He states the doctrine with care. The foreknowledge of what is absolutely future follows a decree of God's will. But of the things that would be future only on a hypothesis, "they will have it that this knowledge of those things which are not simply future, but would be future only from hypothesis,

---

[74] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XIX, 576.

[75] John McClintock and James Strong, "Beaulieu, Louis le Blanc de," in *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867–1887); Post-Reformation Digital Library, "Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu (1614–1675)."

[76] Le Blanc, "Theses theologicae de concordia libertatis humanae cum decretis divinis," pars I, title and th. I, in *Theses theologicae*, 445.

precedes in God every free decree of the will."[77] And he adds that even on their account a decree is included in the condition:

> "But although this knowledge precedes any free decree in God, nonetheless, as is plain from what has been said, in the condition under which the thing is said to be future a decree is included: not indeed one which is conceived to be in God in act, but one which would necessarily have to be posited in God in order that that thing could be."[78]

The point matters for what follows. Le Blanc does not distinguish the Reformed position from the Jesuit one merely by saying that the Reformed put a decree in the condition. On his account the Jesuits do so too. He records as well that some in the Roman school called it simply conditioned knowledge and reduced it to the knowledge of vision or to simple intelligence.[79] The difference lies elsewhere.

5.2 The Reformed Who Admit It

Le Blanc then turns to the Protestants. The Remonstrants, he says, approve the middle knowledge by common consent, and he quotes Episcopius's threefold division and reports that Curcellaeus praised Gomarus for having acknowledged "a conditioned knowledge in God."[80] Then he comes to the Reformed:

> "But also among the Reformed who subscribe to the Synod of Dort there are found some acknowledging in God that conditioned knowledge by which, before every decree of His will, He knew what any free cause whatever would do, in any order of things whatever, according to the liberty inborn in it."[81]

He names four. The first is Gomarus, and he quotes the comment on Matthew 11:21 by way of Balduinus Walaeus.[82] The second is Robert Baron, who "expressly approves the opinion of Fonseca, who posits in God a certain conditioned knowledge, before His free decree, which precedes the absolute foreknowledge of future things."[83] Le Blanc quotes Baron's comparison of God with a wise builder, who before he decrees absolutely "thought what would follow" if he should set up the heaven and the earth in the order in which he afterward disposed them.[84]

The third is Walaeus, and Le Blanc quotes him. Walaeus acknowledges in God "a middle knowledge, by which things future by hypothesis are known, even though they are not, or are not yet, absolutely future," and he proves it from Scripture, so that there is "some such knowledge in God, before every decree of His, concerning that which certainly was going to be."[85] But in the

---

[77] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. III, in *Theses theologicae*, 446.
[78] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. IV, in *Theses theologicae*, 446.
[79] See Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. VIII–XI, in *Theses theologicae*, 446–48.
[80] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXII–XXIV, in *Theses theologicae*, 448–49. Curcellaeus's praise of Gomarus stands in his preface to Arminius's examination of Gomarus's theses on predestination.
[81] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 449.
[82] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 449.
[83] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXVI, in *Theses theologicae*, 449.
[84] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXVII, in *Theses theologicae*, 449–50, quoting Baron, *Metaphysica generalis*, sect. 12, disp. 2, nn. 55 and 56.
[85] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXVIII, in *Theses theologicae*, 450. Le Blanc cites the quarto edition of Walaeus's Common Places, p. 160. Compare Walaeus, *Loci communes*, "De Dei scientia," 175 (left column).

same place Walaeus warns "that it is not necessary that this hypothetical knowledge be set up as some third species of knowledge, because it pertains to the knowledge of simple intelligence," and he warns against two abuses: resting the decree of election on the good use of free choice, and denying God's efficacious operation in converting the will.[86]

The fourth is Paul Ferry, minister at Metz, who admits "this conditioned knowledge of future things, and [one] which precedes the free decree." Ferry writes that God first foresaw "that man would fall, if he were created fallible and tempted," and that then, "because He saw that it was expedient that it be so," it pleased him that this should come to pass, "not by bringing force upon man, but by so creating man and permitting [him] to temptation and to himself."[87]

Le Blanc closes the list with the majority: "But many other Theologians of the Reformed reject this Middle and conditioned knowledge in God as vain and superfluous; not all, however, in the same mode, nor resting on the same foundations."[88]

The list is not the same as the later witnesses' list. Le Blanc adds Baron and Ferry, and he puts Baron with Fonseca. Of the five considered in this paper, he names Gomarus and Walaeus here, and he names Crocius in his theses on the order of the decrees. He does not name Alsted.

5.3 His Own Position

Le Blanc then states what he himself thinks, and his first point is one that he says all grant:

> "But that I too may briefly open what I myself think: First, this is certain and, as is plain from what has been said, granted by all, that nothing is freely future under any condition, and can be known as such, unless in the condition under which it is said to be future there is included a decree of God concerning not denying to the creature the concurrence necessary for acting."[89]

His second point is that propositions about conditioned free futures, with that condition understood, are determinately true or false. He then meets the objection that nothing is future except dependently on God's decree:

> "I answer that, in order that a thing be absolutely future, there is indeed prerequired some decree of God on which its futurition depends; but in order that a thing be not simply future, but only would be future under some condition, there is not required a decree which is in God in act, but a decree suffices which, according to the hypothesis, would have to be posited in God."[90]

From these points he draws his conclusion:

---

[86] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXIX–XXX, in *Theses theologicae*, 450.

[87] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXXI, in *Theses theologicae*, 450, quoting Ferry, *Vindiciae pro scholastico orthodoxo*, 203, 209, and 210.

[88] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XXXII, in *Theses theologicae*, 450.

[89] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XLV, in *Theses theologicae*, 453.

[90] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XLVIII, in *Theses theologicae*, 453.

> "It cannot therefore with any reason be denied, and it ought to be granted by all, that there is given in God a certain knowledge of those things which are freely and contingently future under a certain condition, before we conceive any actual decree in God concerning future things. The whole difficulty is whether the condition under which the thing is said to be future must include a decree concerning premoving and predetermining the second cause to act, or whether it suffices that the decree which, according to that condition, would have to be posited in God be only concerning furnishing a certain concurrence of itself indifferent, and which is determined by the second cause to a certain species of action."[91]

Le Blanc takes the second side. "But we are of this opinion, that second causes do many things in time to which they are not predetermined by God," for he does not see how God would not be the author of sin if he predetermined free causes to acts evil in themselves.[92] He therefore concludes: "I see nothing therefore why we should deny to God the knowledge of those things which would be freely future under a certain condition, although in that condition there is not included a decree concerning predetermining the free cause to this or that."[93]

Two limits follow at once. The first is that this knowledge is not needed for the purpose for which the Jesuits devised it:

> "I add that this knowledge of things conditionally future, such as we have so far described, has no necessary connection with the various errors for defending and plastering over which very many abuse it. Especially, however, we contend that it in no way fights with grace efficacious of itself, nor is it necessary that we apply it for reconciling the efficacy of divine grace with the liberty of human choice."[94]

The second limit comes in the third part of the series, on the doctrine of the Reformed school. There Le Blanc reports that Arminius's disciples, Grevinchoven among them, "expressly apply middle knowledge for untying this knot, as very many Jesuits are wont," and that among the Reformed who subscribe to Dort there are some who follow the same way, among them Robert Baron.[95] After reviewing the opinions he says that he cannot rest in any of them, and of the opinion that builds a conditioned knowledge before the decrees he writes:

> "For that opinion which builds a conditioned knowledge before the divine decrees, concerning the future inclination and propensity of the will to this or that part if such an occasion of acting be offered to it … this opinion, I say, avoids indeed many inconveniences by which the other opinions are pressed; but with it can hardly be reconciled the victorious and of itself efficacious grace which subjects free choice to itself, and is by no means to be subjected to free choice, which the orthodox School proclaims."[96]

---

[91] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LIII, in *Theses theologicae*, 454.
[92] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LIV, in *Theses theologicae*, 454.
[93] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LXIII, in *Theses theologicae*, 455.
[94] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. LXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 455.
[95] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars III, th. II–III, in *Theses theologicae*, 462.
[96] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars III, th. XXXIV–XXXV, in *Theses theologicae*, 467.

He adds that even if God foreknows what the will would do in given circumstances, a decree that predefines something as simply future brings a certain antecedent necessity with it, "since that knowledge does not make such a decree of God to be in our power."[97]

5.4 Le Blanc's Position

Le Blanc grants more than any of the other four. He grants a knowledge of conditioned free futures before any actual decree, and he grants that the decree supposed in the condition need be only a decree of indifferent concurrence and not of predetermination. In that respect he stands nearest to the Jesuit account as he himself states it. But he denies the use for which the Jesuits devised the knowledge. It is not needed to reconcile efficacious grace with liberty, it has no necessary tie to their errors, and the opinion that builds God's decrees on a foreseen inclination of the will can hardly be reconciled with the grace that subjects free choice to itself. He holds the knowledge, but he does not let it govern the decree.

On the narrower question, whether a conditioned knowledge of how men would use their free choice is to be put before the decree of predestination, he reports that very many of the Reformed deny it, and that "Some, however, seem to admit in God that conditioned knowledge, as Ludovicus Crocius, Professor in the School of Bremen, Gomarus and Walaeus, and others whom we have mentioned in our Theses on Middle knowledge."[98] The word is "seem." And in his own report of Walaeus he records that Walaeus forbids this very use of the knowledge for election.

6. What They Held in Common

The five did not write as a party, and they did not all say the same thing. Gomarus does not use the name middle knowledge; Alsted does. Gomarus and Walaeus say that the conditioned knowledge precedes the decree. Crocius accepts a definition that places it after the decree and then folds it into simple intelligence, which precedes. Alsted says that the middle knowledge precedes the act of the will but sees something future from the hypothesis of it. Le Blanc places it before any actual decree, with a supposed decree of concurrence in the condition. These differences are real. But the common position can be stated in four points. Not every writer states every point, and where a point is only implied I say so.

The first is that God knows what would come to pass if a condition were posited, and knows it certainly. Gomarus calls it the conditioned foreknowledge. Alsted calls it the middle knowledge. Crocius says that the knowledge of conditioned futures is "certain and infallible to God."[99] Walaeus calls it the hypothetical knowledge. Le Blanc says that it cannot with any reason be denied.

The second is that this knowledge is not a third knowledge standing on its own footing beside God's natural and free knowledge. Gomarus puts it under the indefinite and natural foreknowledge. Walaeus says that it pertains to the knowledge of simple intelligence and need not be set up as a third species. Crocius makes it part of simple intelligence and says that no distinct knowledge is needed. Alsted keeps the threefold division, but he says that all God's knowledge, the middle included, is necessary, and that the division holds only in the mode he gave. Le Blanc does not take

[97] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars III, th. XXXVI, in *Theses theologicae*, 467.
[98] Le Blanc, "De decretorum divinorum ordine," th. XLI, in *Theses theologicae*, 185.
[99] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. 13, 569.

up the point in his own name. He reports Walaeus's reduction of the knowledge to simple intelligence, and in his own theses he grounds it in the principle that no truth escapes the divine intellect.[100] Heidegger's one criticism of the Reformed three, that they would more rightly have referred the knowledge to God's natural knowledge, is in effect a criticism of their terms more than of their doctrine, since that is where Gomarus, Walaeus, and Crocius in fact place it.

The third is that God's own will is in the condition. Walaeus says that a conditional decree is included in the conditional predictions. Le Blanc says that all grant that nothing is freely future under any condition unless a decree of concurrence is included in it. Crocius's first step is a knowledge of what would follow in a creation "He either determining or permitting." Alsted describes the hypothetical objects as what would exist from creatures by God's "conservation, motion, aid, concurrence, permission." Gomarus's example of the Fall makes the condition out of God's own acts. Gomarus and Alsted do not say in so many words that a decree is included, and for them the point is an inference from the way they state the condition. But it is the point on which Spanheim rested his defense of the Reformed, that they "always suppose an intervening Decree as the condition."[101]

The fourth is that the knowledge is not the cause of the decree, and that the certainty of what will in fact come to pass rests on the decree alone. Gomarus says that the series of things the knowledge presents is regarded "not as a cause but as an occasion," and that definite foreknowledge flows from the decree and not from future things.[102] Alsted says that the middle knowledge intervenes in what depends on created choice, but that God's will is not moved by its object and that the creature's act is at most an occasion of a divine volition. Crocius says that without the decree God would never see anything to be future in act. Walaeus writes that the treasure of things known by the divine mind "is not to be set up as the cause of any decree afterwards [made] by God."[103] Le Blanc says that the futurition of what is absolutely future depends on a decree, and that the knowledge may not be used to subject grace to free choice.

How does this position differ from Molina's? Not chiefly in the order of the instants, and not chiefly in whether a decree is supposed in the condition. Le Blanc, who sets out the Jesuit doctrine at length, reports that on their account too a decree is included in the condition, and Le Blanc himself places the conditioned knowledge before any actual decree. The difference lies in what the knowledge is permitted to do. In the Jesuit account, as Le Blanc states it, the knowledge is the ground of the reconciliation of liberty with the decrees. In the opinion he examines in his third part, God foreordained the actions of men no otherwise than by willing to create them in a given state and to offer them occasions from which he foresaw how they would act.[104] The five refuse that order. Walaeus forbids the knowledge to be used to rest election on the good use of free choice or to take God's efficacious operation out of conversion. Le Blanc says that it is not needed to reconcile grace with liberty and that the opinion which builds the decrees on a foreseen inclination can hardly be reconciled with efficacious grace. Gomarus calls the foreseen series an occasion and not a cause.

---

[100] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. XLIX, in *Theses theologicae*, 453.

[101] Crocius, *Syntagma*, lib. III, cap. XV, aph. XVII, 575; Alsted, *Theologia scholastica didactica*, cap. XXI, reg. IV, 79; Spanheim, *Elenchus controversiarum*, VII, §II, in *Opera*, vol. 3, col. 859.

[102] Gomarus, *Disputationes theologicae*, disp. X, th. XXXV, in *Opera*, Pars II, 28 (left column); Gomarus, *Conciliatio*, cap. VI, in *Opera*, Pars II, 129 (right column).

[103] Walaeus, *Consilia et epistolæ*, letter to Johannes Polyander, in *Opera omnia*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643), 406 (right column).

[104] Le Blanc, "De concordia," pars I, th. I and III, in *Theses theologicae*, 445–46; pars III, th. XXXV, 467.

Alsted makes God's absolute will the first and supreme cause of all things, and Crocius makes the decree, partly efficacious and partly permitting, the ground of all that is actually future. By inference, the knowledge of what would be serves God's free decree in all five, and in none of them does it govern it.

That is why the later witnesses could judge as they did. Heidegger called the three he named orthodox and said only that they would more rightly have referred the knowledge to God's natural knowledge. Spanheim said that the Remonstrant knowledge was falsely imputed to them. Marck said that they differed from the rest "more in phrasing than in substance,"[105] which is the measure Gomarus himself had laid down for reading the orthodox when they speak differently. The five held a conditioned knowledge in God, and they held it under the decree. Their common ground is the ground on which the question of God's knowledge within the decree has to be taken up.

Works Cited

Alsted, Johann Heinrich. *Compendium theologicum*. Hanau, 1624. Digitized by SLUB Dresden, id 382805100. https://digital.slub-dresden.de/id382805100.

Alsted, Johann Heinrich. *Distinctiones per universam theologiam*. Frankfurt, 1626. Digitized by SLUB Dresden, id 358306663. https://digital.slub-dresden.de/id358306663.

Alsted, Johann Heinrich. *Theologia scholastica didactica, exhibens locos communes theologicos methodo scholastica*. Hanau: Conrad Eifrid, 1618. Digitized by Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, Halle (Share_it). VD17 39:130175H. https://doi.org/10.25673/opendata2-21641.

Bavinck, Herman. *Reformed Dogmatics*. Vol. 2, *God and Creation*. Edited by John Bolt. Translated by John Vriend. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

Crocius, Ludovicus. *Syntagma sacrae theologiae quatuor libris adornatum*. Bremen: Bertholdus Villerianus, 1636. Digitized by SLUB Dresden, id 335860389. https://digital.slub-dresden.de/id335860389.

Gomarus, Franciscus. *Opera theologica omnia*. 2nd ed. Amsterdam: Joannes Janssonius, 1664. Digitized by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, bsb11205033. https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb11205033.

Heidegger, Johann Heinrich. *Corpus theologiae christianae*. Vol. 1. Zürich, 1700. Digitized by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, bsb10866056. https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb10866056.

Heppe, Heinrich. *Die Dogmatik der evangelisch-reformirten Kirche*. Elberfeld, 1861. Google Books full view, id 0GDohFaMHIoC. https://books.google.com/books?id=0GDohFaMHIoC.

Hollweg, Walter. "Crocius, Ludwig." In *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 3:418. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1957. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd116733322.html.

[105] De Moor, *Commentarius perpetuus*, pars 1, cap. IV, §XXXVIII, 660.

Krop, Henri. “Reformed Orthodoxy and the *Libertas philosophandi* in the Netherlands.” *Church History and Religious Culture* 100, no. 2–3 (2020): 187–202. https://doi.org/10.1163/18712428-10002005.

Le Blanc de Beaulieu, Louis. *Theses theologicae, variis temporibus in Academia Sedanensi editae et ad disputandum propositae*. London: Moses Pitt, 1675. Internet Archive, bub_gb_eOkHAW4G0-wC. https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_eOkHAW4G0-wC.

McClintock, John, and James Strong. “Beaulieu, Louis le Blanc de.” In *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867–1887. https://www.biblicalcyclopedia.com/B/beaulieu-louis-le-blanc-de.html.

Moor, Bernhard de. *Commentarius perpetuus in Johannis Marckii Compendium theologiae christianae didactico-elencticum*. Pars 1. Leiden, 1761. Google Books full view, id 4JnZxVctn3oC. https://books.google.com/books?id=4JnZxVctn3oC.

Post-Reformation Digital Library. “Louis Le Blanc de Beaulieu (1614–1675).” Accessed October 6, 2026. http://prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=1749.

Slee, J. C. van. “Gomarus, Franciscus.” In *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 9:363–365. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1879. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd119455447.html.

Spanheim, Friedrich, the Younger. *Opera*. Vol. 3, *Theologica scripta omnia*. Leiden, 1703. Digitized by Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, bsb10867361. https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/view/bsb10867361.

Walaeus, Antonius. *Opera omnia*. Leiden: Franciscus Hackius, 1643. Vol. 1 and vol. 2, digitized in one file, Internet Archive, https://archive.org/details/walaeusoperaomnia01.

Weber, Otto. “Alsted, Johann Heinrich.” In *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 1:206. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1953. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/gnd118644858.html.