

# THE THREE-STRANDED CORD

## Calling a Truce in The War Over God and Human Freedom

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### Abstract

The Schoolmen did much of their most interesting and original philosophizing in theology. An example is the dilemma in Renaissance Scholasticism on free will: how can we act freely if God causes and knows our actions? Basic issues are involved here: the antinomy between freedom and determination, modal semantics, tense logic, the logical status of counterfactuals. Mexican Jesuits Matías Blanco (d. 1734) and Antonio Peralta (d. 1736) wrote books on the subject. We describe here the “disjunctive” solution that Blanco advanced in his *Funiculus triplex* (*The Three-Stranded Cord*), published posthumously in Mexico in 1746. When someone is faced with choosing between *B* and *C*, conjectures Blanco, God does not actualize either, but rather their *disjunction B-or-C*. Blanco calls for a truce in the “war” among the contending schools so that they may consider his solution—for he thinks it may indeed be acceptable to all.

*Key Words:* mexican philosophy, disjunction, free will, determination, Báñez and Molina.

### Resumen

Gran parte de la filosofía más interesante y original los escolásticos la hacían en la teología. Un buen ejemplo es el dilema en el Siglo de Oro sobre el libre albedrío: ¿cómo podemos actuar libremente si Dios causa y conoce nuestros actos? La discusión incluye varios temas fundamentales como la antinomia entre la libertad y la determinación, la semántica modal, la lógica temporal y la lógica de los estados de cosas contrafácticos. Los jesuitas mexicanos Matías Blanco (d. 1734) y Antonio Peralta (d. 1736) escribieron libros sobre la cuestión. Se describirá aquí la solución “disyuntiva” que Blanco propuso en su *Funiculus triplex* (*La Cuerda de tres cabos*), publicado póstumamente en México en 1746. Cuando alguien ha

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de elegir entre las alternativas *B* y *C*, barrunta Blanco, Dios no actualiza ni *B* ni *C*, sino su *disyunción B-o-C*. Blanco propone una tregua en la “guerra” entre las escuelas contrincantes para que consideren su solución— pues cree podría ser aceptable para todos.

*Palabras clave:* filosofía mexicana, disyunción, libre albedrío, determinación, Báñez y Molina.

This lifted me toward Thy light, that I knew as well  
I had a will as that I had a life.

St. Augustine<sup>1</sup>.

Some of the most interesting philosophy the scholastics did they did in theology. I wish to give an example by describing how a Mexican Jesuit, Matías Blanco (c. 1660-1734) used a nicety of logic to tackle a theological puzzle typical of the Ibero-American “Golden Age”: how can human freedom be reconciled with God’s causality and knowledge? How can we act freely if God causes us to act? And how can we act freely if God knows how we shall act? Three solutions were in play. The Jesuits championed “middle knowledge”, the “*Thomists*” (Dominicans mostly) “premotion,” and the *Scotists* (Franciscans) “attendant decision.” Blanco, in his *The Three-Stranded Cord*, offered his own solution, hoping it would be acceptable to all three parties<sup>2</sup>.

The “battle fronts,” as Blanco says, between the Jesuits (Luis de Molina and Francisco Suárez) and Dominicans (Domingo Báñez) were drawn in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the war, went back a thousand years to

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<sup>1</sup>*Sublevabat enim me in lucem tuam, quod tam sciebam me habere voluntatem quam me vivere, Confessiones, 7: 3.*

<sup>2</sup>*Tractatus de libertate creata sub divina scientia, voluntate et omnipotentia/ Funiculus triplex, Divi Thomae praemotione, Scotico comitante decreto, et scientia media contextus*, Mexico City: Viuda de José Bernardo de Hogal 1746. Title page, prefaces (39 pp.), errata (1 p.), table of contents (2 pp.), author’s prologue (7 pp.), text (359 pp.), index (15 pp.). See appendix A for translation of prologue and first section. “B” followed by a Roman numeral refer to paragraphs in the prologue (pp. 1-7) and, followed by an Arabic numeral, to paragraphs in the first section (pp. 8-25). A contemporary Mexican Jesuit, Antonio PERALTA (1668-1736) contributed to the controversy with *Dissertationes scholasticae de divina scientia media*, Mexico City: 1725; Antwerp: 1734; and *Dissertationes scholasticae de divinis decretis*, Mexico City: 1727; Antwerp: 1734. The J. M. Lafragua Library in Puebla, Mexico, contains copies of these works.

St. Augustine. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Pope Clement VIII set up the “De auxiliis” commission in Rome to settle the often acrimonious debates. But his successor Paul V closed it after a decade of bickering, decreeing only that the Dominicans must not call the Jesuits “Pelagians” and the Jesuits must not call the Dominicans “Calvinists.”

But the controversy raged on, and Blanco, professor in the College of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Mexico City, called it “bloodless warfare” (Bi) and saw himself as a “peace envoy.” He wanted the warriors to declare a truce and take the time to consider his own theory. We do not know if his efforts had any effect at all; at any rate the war over human freedom goes on today in both philosophy and theology<sup>3</sup>. Blanco’s ideas are not irrelevant to current discussions; indeed, his use of logic to formulate his theory seems quite contemporary.

I shall describe Blanco’s peace plan, explain his theory as he summarized it in the prologue and first chapter of his *Cord*, and then offer a modest commentary—modest because much of the historical background is unresearched and the material itself is extremely complex<sup>4</sup>. A translation of the relevant sections is found in appendix A and a list of symbols in appendix B.

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<sup>3</sup>In philosophy libertarians (who reconcile freedom with physical law) clash with determinists (who deny free will in the strict sense). Some recent works in theology: W. Norris CLARKE, S. J.: “A New Look at the Immutability of God”, chapter 9 in *Explorations in Metaphysics*, Notre Dame University 1994; William HASKER: *God, Time, and Knowledge*, Cornell University 1998; William J. HILL, O. P.: “Does the World Make a Difference to God?” *The Thomist* Jan. (1974) and “Does God Know the Future?/ Aquinas and Some Moderns”, *Theological Studies* 36 (1975), pp. 3-18; Walter REDMOND: *El albedrío. Proyección del tema de la libertad desde el Siglo de Oro español*, Pamplona: University of Navarre 2007; Brian SHANLEY, O. P.: “Eternal Knowledge of the Temporal in Aquinas”, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 71 (1997), pp. 197-224 (with bibliography) and “Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas”, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1998), pp. 99-122; John WRIGHT, S. J.: “Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom”, *Theological Studies* 38 (1977), pp. 1450-77.

<sup>4</sup>It involves philosophical issues like modality (necessary and contingent propositions), tense logic, conditionals (“if...then” propositions), and counterfactuals (what could, but will not, obtain), as well as theological doctrines like grace, predestination, and the origin of evil.

## The Truce

For three decades, Blanco fought the war, studying the problem for twelve years and teaching it for seventeen (Bi). He used two metaphors to describe his role: peace envoy (*caduceator*) and flute player (*tibicen*). In ancient times, the *caduceator* was an emissary who proposed peace conditions during a truce, and the *tibicen* accompanied theater performances<sup>5</sup>. Blanco stressed that he was not an arbiter: “remember that I am not playing the role of a judge here but that of an ambassador whose office it is not to hand down decisions but to propose the conditions of peace” (B16). Nor did he see himself as a player in the intellectual drama, but as a musician providing background music. He asked his readers to hold their criticisms, which “are already occurring to them,” until they finish his book; then, when “war breaks out again,” they may “brand [him] as they please” (B16). Still, he is carrying a spear as well as a *caduceus*, for he has his own solution that he hopes all sides will accept (Bi).

Blanco (Bii) knows his readers will wonder if he is sending himself out as a peacemaker or if he is representing one of the “camps.” He does indeed assure us that each camp is sending him to the others, and for this he claims precedent, naming the authors who have shared his hope for reconciliation (Biii, vi, vii, B14).

First, his fellow Jesuits have sent him to the Thomist camp (Biii-Biv). For not only teachers like Sebastián Izquierdo and Adam Tanner but even the Jesuit Superior General, Tirso González, have used such key Thomistic terms as “predetermination” and “predefinition.” He had used them himself in his treatise on human acts two years before in Puebla, he said (Bvi),<sup>6</sup> and his approach was later confirmed in a book by

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<sup>5</sup>The *caduceator* carried a herald’s staff or *caduceus* (*kerykeion* in Greek from *keryx*, “herald”) which originally was an olive branch wrapped with bands as a sign of supplication and later with serpents (as the staff of Hermes or Mercury). The *tibicen* played the flute-like *tibia* (Greek *aulos*) and also performed at funerals and on other occasions.

<sup>6</sup>This work, *Tractatus de actibus humanis*, is not mentioned in C. SOMMERVOGEL: *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, 1960, which besides *Funiculus triplex*, lists two

an anonymous Jesuit which he chanced upon in Mexico City (Bv). And he was sent into the Scotist camp by Jesuit Gerolamo Fasolo, who had reconciled the Scotistic position with Jesuit “middle knowledge” (Bvi).

Several Scotists, said Blanco (Bvii), sent him into the Jesuit camp, among whom the Chilean Alfonso Briceño, who accepted Jesuit “middle knowledge”. And Thomists have sent him back into his own Jesuit camp, and into the Scotist camp as well (Bviii).

Finally, Pope Clement VIII sent him long ago when he urged the Jesuits and Dominicans to settle their differences according to the mind of St. Thomas and St. Augustine. Blanco believes (Bix) that since all sides are on the same road now is the time for them to “stretch forth their hands and arms to embrace each other.”

Blanco thinks (Bix) the big obstacle to reconciliation is semantics: “the disparity and incompatibility of our words.” He sees common meaning behind the confusing language used by the parties in the discussion, and he appeals (Bix) to St. Augustine to show that meaning is more important than words. In the interests of peace the Jesuits should be willing to borrow the language of their opponents. He illustrates his point (Bx, B9) with an incident from Virgil’s *Aeneid*. After Troy fell to the Greeks, Aeneas, wandering with fellow Trojans in the flaming ruins of the city, defeated a band of Greek soldiers under Androgeos. Blanco quotes the words of one of the Trojans urging his companions to don the armor of the enemy and use their weapons in order safely to flee the city— this is precisely what the Jesuits should do. And he wonders why his confrères, who wear the attire of the many peoples among whom they work throughout the world, refuse to put on the intellectual garb of the Scotists and Thomists to state a truth they would all accept. The Jesuit, he hopes,

this said, puts on  
the plumed helmet of Androgeos and the fair emblem  
of his shield,  
to his side straps the Argive sword.

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manuscripts by Blanco (*Pláticas doctrinales* and *De Deo et attributis tractatus*) as well as two short printed works.

The strands of “cord” are the three theories Blanco wishes to reconcile: Thomistic premotion, Scotistic attendant decision, and Jesuit middle knowledge (title page and B20). To distinguish between what he considers St. Thomas’s true position and the false interpretation of Dominican Báñez, he uses (B14) the word “Thomistic” of the latter but coins the word “Thomasian (*Thomasianus*)” for the former<sup>7</sup>. The strands also refer to the three roads that his “disagreement in agreement” will take (title page and B20).

## Love or Hate

Blanco’s theory is an “axiom system” consisting of six assumptions, which he asks us to accept at least for the sake of argument (B2), and eleven conclusions or theses which, he claims, follow from his suppositions (B3-B7). He lays his plan in the prologue and first chapter and defends it in the subsequent thirteen chapters (B3). In my exposition of his theory I combine his own formulas and symbols with current logical expressions which seem to capture his intent.

The key to Blanco’s solution is the *disjunction* which forms part of the object of the divine decision. But he does not claim to be completely original here. He points out that his fellow Jesuit Sebastian Izquierdo has reconciled a “disjunctive predetermination” with the Jesuit position (Biv) and that many Jesuits hold for “a similar disjunctive decision” (B12).

## The assumptions

Blanco’s first assumption (B1), the basis of his “disjunctive” theory, is a statement of God’s intent:

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<sup>7</sup>In his *Scholastica commentaria in I partem Angelici Doctoris D. Thomae*, two parts, Salamanca: 1584 and 1588, Domingo BÁÑEZ (1528-1604) opposed doctrines in the *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione*, Lisbon: 1588; *Appendix ad concordiam*, Lisbon: 1589, by Jesuit Luis MOLINA (1536-1600). Blanco indeed seems to be more interested in reconciling the Jesuits with the Scotists than with the “Bañezians.”

I will the help  $A$  for Peter and, by Peter, the love  $B$  or the hate  $C$ <sup>8</sup>.

The symbols “ $A$ ”, “ $B$ ” and “ $C$ ” are Blanco’s, and we may think of them as states of affairs or propositions. “Peter” here is a stand-in for some individual man, rational and free, who chooses or decides on a certain act or course of action (Blanco also refers to the agent as a “created cause,” a “created will,” or “created freedom”). “ $A$ ” means that God helps Peter to carry out his choice. The “help” here refers especially to *grace*,<sup>9</sup> but on the philosophical level the scholastics assumed the need for God to account for any act, free or determined. I shall suppose that “ $A$ ” includes reference to the content of the disjunction: Peter’s love or hate (B13). I shall use the symbol “ $Wp$ ” to indicate that God wills that  $p$  (the sense of “ $Wp$ ” will be defined below).

“ $B$ ” and “ $C$ ” represent the pair of alternatives facing Peter. “Love” and “hate” are of course examples of any objects of human choice. The important word here is the “or” that joins  $B$  and  $C$  in a disjunction. There are several types of logical disjunctions, but “ $B$  or  $C$ ” here has the sense “either love or hate but not both,” that is, they exclude one another. I shall use the symbol “ $\ddagger$ ” to express such an exclusive disjunction:

$$B\ddagger C^{10}$$

What God wills is the conjunction of “the help  $A$ ” and “the love or the hate,” that is, God wills both “ $A$ ” and the disjunction “either  $B$  or  $C$ .” The object willed by God can then be represented in the formula (where “ $\&$ ” indicates conjunction):

$$W[A\&[B\ddagger C]]$$

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<sup>8</sup> *Volo Petro auxilium A, et vel amorem B vel odium C ipsius Petri.*

<sup>9</sup> “De auxiliis,” the title of Clement VIII’s congregation, means “concerning helps.”

<sup>10</sup> “ $B\ddagger C$ ” implies that the disjunction is false in case  $B$  and  $C$  are both true or both false. Exclusive disjunction is “nonequivalence,” “ $B\ddagger C$ ” being an abbreviation of  $\neg[B\equiv C]$  (“not:  $B$  if and only if  $C$ ”). Blanco considers the case of “freedom of contradiction” where  $B$  and  $C$  are both false.

“God wills  $A$  and (either  $B$  or  $C$ ).” Later (B12-13) Blanco’s example of  $B$  and  $C$  will be “Judas repents” and “Judas does not repent.” Here  $B$  and  $\neg B$  (“not  $B$ ,” here taking the place of  $C$ ) is a contradiction<sup>11</sup>.

Blanco’s second assumption expands the notion of the divine willing. God’s decision is identical to His “action that produces the object that He wills”— the object being  $A \& [B \dagger C]$ . “ $W$ ” thus supposes an identity of God’s willing, His deciding, and His bringing about or actualizing (“the exercise of His omnipotence”). “ $W[A \& [B \dagger C]]$ ” then means “God wills-decides-actualizes His act of helping Peter and either Peter’s loving or his hating.” In his third supposition Blanco clarifies that God’s action is not identical to Peter’s.

The fourth assumption makes the key point that God’s “indifference” to Peter’s choice, which is necessary to make Peter’s freedom possible, is just this disjunctivity. The divine decision  $W$ , which must be applied indifferently to free causes, is a *disjunction*:

$$W[B \dagger C]$$

This is the *disjunctive principle* at the heart of Blanco’s solution that he hopes the warring parties will accept.

The fifth presupposition restricts the use of  $W$ . The divine decision  $W$  determines the help  $A$  ( $WA$ ) and the *disjunction*  $B \dagger C$  ( $W[B \dagger C]$ ), but *without determining either  $B$  or  $C$* . Therefore the states of affairs  $WB$  (God wills Peter’s love) and  $WC$  (God wills Peter’s hate) *are not forthcoming*; that is, these propositions are false. Blanco lays great stress on this point: God predetermines Peter, to *either* of the two acts. God does so (B8):

not by a predetermination of this [act] of the disjunction instead of the other [act], but by a predetermination of this [disjunction] rather than of another disjunction, seeing that God, by determining [him] to this disjunction rather than to another disjunction, does not predetermine [him] to this

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<sup>11</sup>The logic of the pairs  $B$  and  $C$  and  $B$  and  $\neg B$  is of course different ( $B \dagger \neg B$  is a truth of logic).



act of the disjunction rather than to the contrary act of the same disjunction<sup>12</sup>.

In his sixth and final assumption Blanco stresses that it is *Peter* who decides for *B* or for *C*. Hence either *B* or *C* may be true, but if *B* is true it cannot entail *WB*, nor can *C*, if true, entail *WC*.

(Bi) Another way to put this last point is to suppose that if an argument is constructed in this context, *B* or *C* may be asserted as true in a step in the proof (depending on whether Peter chooses love or hate), but *WB* and *WC* can never be asserted as true. We can capture an essential part of Blanco's thought by adding two rules to ordinary elementary logic<sup>13</sup>. The extralogical symbol "*W*" will range over any proposition or corresponding state of affairs *p* involving free human decision; "*Wp*" then expresses that God wills that *p* and brings it about that *p*.

The first is "*W-elimination*":

1	<i>Wp</i>	hypothesis
2	<i>p</i>	<i>W-elimination</i> , 1

That is, "if *Wp* then *p*"; if God decides for (hence brings about) a state of affairs, then the state of affairs obtains. We shall see an instantiation of this procedure in the fourth thesis below. It is important to notice that the opposite implication is *invalid*:

<i>B</i>	
<i>WB</i>	INVALID

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<sup>12</sup>"...hoc decreto et actione praemovet Deus Petrum ad utrumlibet actum, praedeterminat ad utrumlibet, praedeterminatione non hujus prae alio disjuncti sed praedeterminatione hujus prae alio disjuncto, quatenus Deus praedeterminans ad hoc disjunctum prae alio disjuncto, non praedeterminat ad hunc actum disjuncti prae contrario actu ipsius disjuncti." Blanco is deliberately using "Thomasian" words here.

<sup>13</sup>The lower functional calculus. The *W* operator functions here in the same way as the necessity operator in the modal system T. For sequents see W. REDMOND: *Lógica simbólica para todos*, Xalapa (Mexico): University of Veracruz 1999, pp. 17, 53, 174ff.

As the fifth assumption suggests,  $WB$  cannot be derived from  $B$  nor  $WC$  from  $C$ . The fact that Peter decides for love does not entail that God wills or actualizes Peter's decision by itself.

The second rule, " $W$ -introduction," presupposes use of a special subordinate sequent (a line to the right of the main sequent or line of the proof) marked with a " $W$ ." There is a restriction on what may be inserted into this  $W$  sequent: only formulas governed by the operator  $W$  (such as " $WA$ ," " $WB$ ," " $W[B \dagger C]$ ") may be iterated and when iterated must shed the operator  $W$ . Also,  $W$  prefixed to any formula taken out of the sequent (the  $W$  may of course be dropped by  $W$ -elimination). The rule:

1	$Wp$	hypothesis
2	$W \mid p$	iteration, 1
$\vdots$	$\vdots$	
$n$	$q$	(if provable)
$n + 1$	$Wq$	$W$ -introduction, 2– $n$

If God wills that  $p$  and  $q$  follows from  $p$ , then God also wills  $q$ . But since  $p$  alone may not be iterated, it does not follow that if  $p$  then God wills  $p$ ; that is, if Peter chooses to hate ( $C$ ), it does not follow that God wills that he hate ( $WC$ ).

With the help of the  $W$ -introduction rule, we can derive the disjunctive principle  $W[B \dagger C]$ , which Blanco allows in his fourth assumption, from  $W[A \& [B \dagger C]]$ :

1	$W[A \& [B \dagger C]]$	hypothesis
2	$W \mid A \& [B \dagger C]$	iteration, 1
3	$B \dagger C$	conjunction elimination, 2
4	$W[B \dagger C]$	$W$ -introduction, 2–3

If God wills both  $A$  and  $B$  or  $C$ , then He wills  $B$  or  $C$ .  $WA$  can also be derived from  $W[A \& [B \dagger C]]$ ; indeed we have the equivalence:

$$W[A \& [B \dagger C]] \equiv [W A \& W[B \dagger C]],$$

that is, God wills  $[A \& [B \dagger C]]$  just in case He wills  $A$  and He wills  $W[B \dagger C]$ .

### The theses

In his first chapter Blanco states his conclusions or theses “in a simple way” (B3), promising to go into the details later on. His first thesis is that the divine decision continues to affect the disjunction ( $B \dagger C$ ) while Peter chooses either of the alternatives ( $B$  or  $C$ ), since, he says,  $W[B \dagger C]$  is the only divine decision in the offing. This claim, following from the fifth assumption, accords with our rules, since  $WB$  cannot be derived from  $B$  nor  $WC$  from  $C$ . In the second thesis the divine decision is seen as anterior to Peter’s act— a delicate point in the controversy, involving the prefix “pre-” in “Thomasian” words like “premotion” and “predetermination.”

The third thesis is decisive, and, as Blanco admits (B21) and as we shall see (2.5), problematic: albeit the object of the divine decision is the disjunction  $B \dagger C$ , God also *actualizes* the disjunction. This claim follows from the second assumption since “ $W$ ” includes not only willing and deciding but bringing about or “producing.” So the fact that we cannot derive  $WB$  from  $B$  does not mean that God does not actualize  $B$ , since He does will and actualize the *disjunction*. The important ontological point here is that the actualization of the disjunction automatically “covers” one of the disjuncts.

The fourth conclusion involves “intentionality”: “no action can exist without some term” (B4), that is, without having some object. God’s decision must decide and actualize something, which in this case is Peter’s act as *either*  $B$  or  $C$ . This conclusion suggests the implication (demonstrable by our rules):

$$W[B \dagger C] > [B \dagger C],$$

that is, if God wills and hence actualizes  $B$  or  $C$ , then  $B$  or  $C$  obtains.

The fifth conclusion adds that the divine disjunctive decision  $W[B\ddagger C]$  enables Peter to carry out either of the two acts,  $B$  or  $C$ <sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, when Peter decides for  $B$ , he determines  $B$  (not  $C$ ), and if he chooses  $C$ , he determines  $C$  (not  $B$ )<sup>15</sup>. It is well to mention that for Blanco, the intentional relation is not only logical but ontological; he sees (B6) a human action related “metaphysically or logically” to its object.

According to the sixth thesis, although Peter’s act is distinct from the divine decision and although the object of the divine decision is a disjunction, God actualizes  $B$  or  $C$  *immediately*, not through Peter. The seventh conclusion widens these principles: neither what God does by Himself nor what Peter does by himself is enough for Peter to perform his act. Peter’s choosing  $B$  or  $C$  needs the divine decision or “con-course,” but the divine decision, since its object is a disjunction, does not suffice to determine Peter’s act. This is the reason why Peter’s act  $B$  (in case he chooses love) is attributed “not to God but to Peter.” Blanco sees God’s disjunctive actualization and Peter’s act as one single adequate and total “influence” on Peter’s act—but one which *Peter, not God, determines*. Again we see God’s “disjunctive indifference” here.

The eighth conclusion is similar. The “influence” relation is asymmetrical: God’s action influences Peter’s action but Peter’s action does not influence God’s action. But again, the divine influence is disjunctive: if Peter decides for  $B$ , God “influences” the disjunction  $B\ddagger C$ . The same divine decision is both “previous” to Peter’s act (it comes before Peter chooses actually, when he is only “in first act”) and simultaneous (as Peter carries out his choice “in second act”), as Blanco pointed out more generally in the first two theses. Hence the divine decision, as theses nine and ten imply, is both “attendant” or “accompanying” and “antecedent” with respect to Peter’s act. Blanco’s eleventh thesis includes a rather unclear example: he compares the divine decision to the journey of two people who set out from Mexico City at different times. The one who

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<sup>14</sup> *Constituatur... proxime potens ad utrumlibet* (B4).

<sup>15</sup> Peter also determines the disjunction  $B\ddagger C$  in the sense that  $B\ddagger C$  follows logically from  $B \& \neg C$  or  $\neg B \& C$ .

leaves first precedes the other who accompanies him— but he insists that God’s decision is from all eternity and, once again, that its object is a disjunction.

### The key to reconciliation

Blanco insists (B11) on the key importance of understanding the Jesuit position on middle knowledge correctly, for not only “outsiders” but even some Jesuits misinterpret it. The theory of the Company, he says, does not completely rule out the Thomasian view on premotion, that God knows free futures (that is, future events dependent upon the free choice of creatures) in His decision. Izquierdo, for example, admits (B12) that although God knows free futures through “middle knowledge,” He knows them in “some” of His decisions. “Coming at last to the point of this first section,” Blanco recapitulates (B13) his claim, now in terms of the repentance of Judas (“*J*” here symbolizes “Judas repents”):

$$W[[J \dagger \neg J] \& A],^{16}$$

but adding another variable to the “help” *A*: “efficacious” or not. Blanco opts for “inefficacious help,” as it seems he must, since the help is conjoined to a disjunction requiring Judas’s action<sup>17</sup>. He uses the Jesuit doctrine to explain how God knows how Judas will react to the divine help: God knows through middle knowledge the truth of the entailment “if God granted the help *A* to Judas, then Judas would repent,” where “*A*” includes whatever constitutes Judas’s freedom. The Jesuits placed

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<sup>16</sup>  $W[[J \dagger \neg J] \& A] \equiv W[A \& [J \dagger \neg J]]$  follows from our rules.  $W[J \dagger \neg J]$ ,  $W[J | \neg J]$ , and  $W[J \vee \neg J]$  are also provable, since here *W* governs logical truths; God’s “indifference” here would be logical.

<sup>17</sup> For Molina, “efficacious” grace, unlike (merely) “sufficient” grace, involves human consent; Francisco Suárez, S. J. (1548-617), preferred to speak of grace “congruous” with the circumstances that obtain human consent. Báñez believed that this claim implies that the divine decision depends on the human decision, but the Jesuits thought that Báñez’s position suppresses human freedom.

middle knowledge between the other types of divine knowledge: “simple understanding” and “seeing” (3.2)<sup>18</sup>.

Blanco then shows (B14) the “road” he will follow to reconcile middle knowledge with Thomasian premotion and with Scotistic attendant decision. The road is “the decision that we set forth at the beginning” (B15): God’s disjunctive decision.

## Problems

“As the three fronts stand ready to do battle,” Blanco foresees (B21) four difficulties that “seem to stand in the way and block the agreement” that he is hoping to achieve. He is following here the scholastic custom of stating “objections” at the beginning of the exposition to solve them later.

The first problem is that the person may simply fail to choose. Up until now Blanco has related God’s disjunctive decision to human “freedom of specification”: the choice between two alternatives such as loving or hating, repenting or not repenting. But Blanco knows his readers will wonder how God’s decision is related to “freedom of contradiction,” that is, the freedom to choose or not choose, to exercise freedom or not to exercise it.

The logical status of the two types of choice is indeed different. Let us use the expression “ $Dp$ ” to indicate that a human being, say Peter or Judas, decides to perform an action or course of action (designated by “ $p$ ”)<sup>19</sup>. The various relations of deciding can be expressed in a scholastic “square of opposition”:

$$\begin{array}{cc} Dp & D\neg p \\ \neg D\neg p & \neg Dp \\ \neg D\neg p \& \neg Dp, & \end{array}$$

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<sup>18</sup> Molina used middle knowledge to explain how God knows in any one case whether grace is efficacious (not merely sufficient), and Suárez used it to explain how God knows whether grace is congruous. Báñez rejected middle knowledge, believing that the two basic types of divine knowledge (seeing and simple understanding) suffice to explain all the objects of the divine knowledge.

<sup>19</sup> And we may restrict the universe of discourse to such actions.

Peter:

decides that $p$	decides that not $p$
does not decide that not $p$	does not decide that $p$
neither decides that not $p$ nor decides that $p$ .	

The usual logical relations of the square apply here; for example, if Peter decides that not  $p$  then he does not decide that  $p$  ( $D\neg p > \neg Dp$ ), but the converse implication is not valid.

We have seen that the disjunction between love and hate is exclusive ( $B\ddagger C$ ), implying that it is false if neither love nor hate is chosen. This would apply only to freedom of specification:  $DB\ddagger DC$ . But when we consider freedom of contradiction, that is, when Peter neither decides for love nor for hate ( $\neg DB \& \neg DC$ ), we need a different type of propositional relation where  $DB$  and  $DC$  would be false *only* if both are true. Such is the relation of non-conjunction, “not true together,” often symbolized by the vertical stroke “|”; thus  $DB|DC$  would allow three cases where one or the other is true and both are false<sup>20</sup>. Both the logic and ontology of God’s willing is different in freedom of specification ( $W[DB\ddagger DC]$ ) and contradiction ( $W[DB|DC]$ )<sup>21</sup>.

The second problem, I believe, is crucial. It touches the content of the divine decision. Decisions have definite objects; they are intentional. So a reader may well ask how the object of the divine decision can be a disjunction, which by very definition is *undetermined*. How can God actualize *either* love *or* hate, and, in the case of freedom of contradiction, *either* choosing *or* not choosing?

The third problem regards a possible discrepancy between the ordinary Jesuit position and Blanco’s interpretation. For the Jesuits suppose that there is but a single act of God and man; but Blanco seems (contrary

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<sup>20</sup>  $DB \& \neg DC, \neg DB \& DC, \neg DC \& \neg DC$ .

<sup>21</sup> Other truths of logic in the square are  $Dp|D\neg p, Dp\ddagger\neg Dp, Dp|D\neg p$ , and so  $W[Dp|D\neg p]$ , etc.; God is “logically indifferent” here, but for Blanco He chooses the particular disjunction, not one of the disjuncts (see passage in B8 quoted above, 2.1).  $Dp\ddagger Dq$  is not a truth of logic. We shall not discuss the problem of regress ( $D\neg[Dp \vee D\neg p], \neg D[\neg Dp \& \neg D\neg p]$ ).

to his seventh thesis) to suppose two actions, one by God and the other by man. The fourth problem is a warning that the very “war cries” of the troops could preclude agreement.

## A Comment

In the passages we have summarized Blanco is interested both in God’s omnipotence and in His omniscience. Any position on how human freedom is related to the divine actualization forms the basis of the position on how it is related to the divine knowledge. Let us consider both.

### God’s willing

The problem, as we have seen, is that God is not almighty if man is free and if God is almighty man is not free— or so it seems. Blanco’s solution attempts to escape the dilemma in the following way.

- $WB$  is disallowed; that is, it is not true that God wills and actualizes Peter’s love “exclusively” that is, not in disjunction with hate. If  $WB$  were true, Peter’s love would follow automatically since what God actualizes comes about (cf. our rule:  $WB > B$ ). But in this case Peter’s freedom would be threatened, since God’s decision would be the sufficient condition for Peter’s loving. Neither is the reverse implication true (nor does it follow by our rules), that if Peter loves, then God wills his love (invalid:  $B > WB$ ).
- Peter’s love does not even follow from God’s willing the *disjunction* of Peter’s love and hate (notice that our rules do not allow  $W[B \dagger C] > B$ ). If it did follow, Peter would again seem not to be free, because God’s disjunctive decision would be a sufficient condition for Peter’s loving. However, Blanco would allow that Peter’s love implies that God wills his, Peter’s, love or hate ( $B > W[B \dagger C]$ ), where God’s disjunctive will is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of Peter’s loving.



- Peter's love does not follow from his own decision to love ( $DB > B$  does not hold). If it did, Peter's decision would be the sufficient condition for his act and God's action would be superfluous. But Blanco would allow that Peter's love implies that he decides to love ( $B > DB$ ), since his decision is a necessary if not the sufficient condition of his loving.
- For Peter to love, both conditions are necessary, that God wills the disjunction of his love and hate and that he, Peter, decides to love. Indeed, it seems to be an essential part of Blanco's position that if Peter freely loves, then God wills (and actualizes) that Peter loves or hates and Peter decides to love:

$$B > [W[DB \dot{\vee} DC] \& DB]$$

Blanco insists that God actualizes Peter's act of love directly, not "through" Peter. For Peter does not "influence" God but God Peter, nor does God act only "while," but also "before," Peter acts. But what He actualizes is the *disjunction*: Peter's love or hate; God's actualization "covers" both Peter's loving and his hating. Peter's act is distinct from God's act, but there is a single *influence* on Peter's act,  $W[B \dot{\vee} C]$  and  $DB$ . The act is Peter's and not God's properly speaking, since Peter, not God, determines the truth of one disjunct, that there be love instead of hate; hence Peter's freedom is preserved and he is accountable for what he does.

Perhaps it is not too fanciful to imagine two positions in this controversy: one on the "*left*" and on the "*right*," parallel to those of the Jesuits and Dominicans<sup>22</sup>. The left (supposedly in the spirit of the renaissance) starts with man's freedom and must reconcile it with God's omnipotence and omniscience. The right (in a more old-fashioned spirit) starts from these divine attributes and must reconcile them with human freedom. A leftist position could be construed as  $B > [WB \& DB]$ : if Peter loves, then God actualizes his loving and Peter chooses to love, and a rightist position as  $[WB \& DB] > B$ , if God actualizes Peter's loving and

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<sup>22</sup>I omit the Scotist position here.

Peter chooses to love, then Peter loves. Blanco would probably reject both, because he would be suspicious of  $WB$  in conjunction with  $DB$ , for the two decisions seem to collide ontologically. His above position ( $B > [W[DB \dagger DC] \& DB]$ ) is leftist, but he might also accept a rightist version ( $[W[DB \dagger DC] \& DB] > B$ ), combining them in an equivalence:

$$B < > [W[DB \dagger DC] \& DB]$$

That is, the conjunction of God actualizing the disjunction and Peter deciding to love is the necessary and sufficient condition of Peter's freely loving.

Blanco's way out, then, is his interpretation of the object of God's decision as a disjunction. But he must deal with his second objection: how can God actualize a disjunction? The choice of  $B \dagger C$  implies two sets of possible worlds, as we have seen,<sup>23</sup> and the choice of  $DB \mid DC$  implies three sets. However, God may actualize the *disjunction* in the *actual* world.

### God's knowing

Christian philosophers have recognized two kinds of objects in relation to God, called *ideatio* and *creatio*. God must "ideate" the "divine ideas" (identified in some way with the divine essence) through His mind. These objects are necessary and obtain across all possible worlds. They include the necessary *possibility* of the states of affairs that He could bring about in the actual world<sup>24</sup>. On the other hand, God freely, through His will, has chosen to create or bring about certain of these possible states of affairs of the actual world, the realm of contingent things, which exist without being bound to exist.

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<sup>23</sup>I assume here "transworld identity" ( $B \dagger C$  presupposes worlds wherein Peter exists). Blanco says (B11, pp. 13-14) that it is not certain whether God is "connected" with "still possible" creatures. Molina used *ordines rerum et circumstantiarum earum* approximately as "possible worlds."

<sup>24</sup>In the modal system S5, often considered basic by philosophers, whatever is possible is necessarily possible.

The scholastics admitted two related types of divine knowledge: simple understanding (*simplex intelligentia*) and seeing (*visio*). God “understands” what is true across all possible worlds and “sees” what obtains in the actual world. God “understands” necessarily, since the object of His understanding, which involves only His mind is necessary. But what God “sees” must be related somehow to His will, since actual existence depends upon His will. Moreover, His “seeing” is contingent, since the object of His seeing is contingent.

How, then, does God know man’s free decisions? It seems that God neither “understands” Peter’s love (since his love, like all created things and events, is contingent), nor “sees” it (since Peter’s love, unlike purely “natural” happenings, does not depend solely on God’s will). The Jesuits therefore proposed a “middle knowledge” between God’s understanding and seeing for such objects, but the Dominicans thought understanding and seeing were enough to explain the facts.

In regard to Blanco’s example, we may first say that God “understands” necessarily that there are exactly three sets of possible worlds: where Peter chooses to love, where he chooses to hate, and where he chooses neither (God also “understands” that the conjunction  $B \& C$  is impossible). But He does not “understand” in which set the real world is located because that depends upon His will: His disjunctive actualizing and His “helping” ( $A$ ).

God does not “understand” Peter’s love, assuming that such is Peter’s choice, since Peter’s love is not necessary. But how can God “see” Peter’s love when He does not will or actualize it directly ( $WB$  is disallowed)? When God brings it about that Peter either decides to love or hate or neither ( $W[DB|DC]$ ), He “sees” that Peter either loves or hates or neither. On the other hand, how can He “see”  $DB|DC$  when  $DB|DC$  is true in three sets of possible worlds, without knowing which contains the actual world? This, it seems, is where Peter’s decision to love comes in, placing the actual world in the  $DB \& \neg DC$  set, and God “sees” this state of affairs since it is “covered” by his disjunctive willing.

But here is where the angels —and I— fear to tread. I hope that my brief introduction to the *Three-Stranded Cord* shows not only how theology wrestled with difficult philosophical problems but also the profundity of Father Blanco's solution<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup>Blanco's "disjunctive" solution is not unlike that recently offered by Norris CLARKE, S. J.: "A New Look at the Immutability of God", p. 206.

## APPENDIX A – TEXT

{Title page}

TREATISE  
ON CREATED FREEDOM  
UNDER DIVINE KNOWLEDGE, WILL, AND OMNIPOTENCE  
**THE THREE-STRANDED CORD**  
PLAITED OF  
SAINT THOMAS'S PREMOTION,  
SCOTUS'S ATTENDANT DECISION  
AND MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE  
DISAGREEMENT IN AGREEMENT

By the peace envoy [*caduceatore*], most wise author, Father Matías Blanco, of the Society of Jesus, of Durango, Nueva Cantabria, renowned, primary professor of sacred theology in the Major College of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul in Mexico City, then illustrious prefect of major studies and more recently of the Sodalitium of the purest Mother of God.

Published posthumously at care and cost of Miguel Buenaventura de Luna, honored with the royal robe of opposition in the Royal College of Saint Aloysius, Mexican doctor of Theology, confessor of Capuchin nuns, former canon of the Metropolitan Cathedral, now distinguished by the rank of choir director, and among the author's most sincerely devoted disciples.

Dedicated to the angelic youth, most holy Aloysius Gonzaga of the Society of Jesus, patron of the same Royal College and of the Pontifical and royal University of Mexico, newly<sup>26</sup> solemnly canonized, to be honored and promoted.

With the permission of superiors.

Mexico City, Widow of José Bernardo de Hogal.

In the year of Our Lord 1746.

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<sup>26</sup>[In 1726. Translator's notes in brackets.]

{p. 1}

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 TREATISE  
 ON CREATED FREEDOM  
 UNDER DIVINE KNOWLEDGE, WILL AND OMNIPOTENCE  
**THE THREE-STRANDED CORD**  
 PLAITED OF  
 SAINT THOMAS'S PREMOTION,  
 SCOTUS'S ATTENDANT DECISION  
 AND MIDDLE KNOWLEDGE

**PROLOGUE**  
**IN DEFENSE OF THE WORK**

**[The truce]**

{i} Here am I at last, after almost thirty years in this war —bloodless, to be sure, but no less noble or passionate for that— if to my seventeen long years of teaching theology you add the previous years {p. 2} I devoted to learning and pondering it— actually after over a thousand years if you count those our forerunners spent fighting the war, here I am, I say, a peace-maker [*caduceatorem*], or if you prefer, a flute player [*tibicinem*]<sup>27</sup>.

For I am saddened when I survey the fierce battle fronts —there the Thomists and Scotists, here the Jesuits— ever opposed, ever fighting over how to reconcile created freedom with the divine decision and knowledge, a problem pondered throughout all these past centuries, a solution pursued by so many scholars with such effort, offering so many theories. What else should I do, unimportant as I am, but play the part of a peace envoy or flute player— albeit I also carry a spear with my peace-maker's staff?

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<sup>27</sup>[See note 5.]

**[The commission]**

{ii} Now, since I am setting out as an envoy to discuss peace conditions and endeavoring to get agreement among antagonists who are obviously as opposed as they can be, I will be asked if I am taking this office upon myself or if I am being sent as an envoy by others. And if I am sent, one will wonder if I have accepted the staff from the defenders of middle knowledge —soldiers in the camp of our Society of Jesus—, or from the Thomists advocating their famous premotion, or from the Scotists who profess their attendant [*comitantis*] decision. For I would at once be accused of rashness and arrogance if I tried to get these warring {p. 3} parties of so many great scholars to agree, if I had not been sent by one of them or at least tacitly commissioned to represent them all.

**[An envoy of the Jesuits]**

{iii} My warrant to accept this ambassadorial office will emerge in the course of my treatise. However, so that heads may not be wanting at its very threshold wherewith to protect my own as I venture forth as peace-maker among the warriors, I claim first to have been called to seek agreement by Father Tanner, a master of our Society. He said:

many Thomists holding for the theory that places premotion in God's will do not disagree from the third,<sup>28</sup>

that is, from the Society's opinion, and

it may be rightly admitted in some sense that the second cause is moved, determined, and applied to act by the first cause, that is, by the action of the first cause<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup>(a) Vol. 1, q. 11, *dubium* 1, n. 6. [Blanco uses letters to refer to his marginal notes. Adam TANNER, S. J., 1572-1632, Austrian. Blanco twice (here and B15) quotes the first volume *Universa theologia scholastica, speculativa, practica, ad methodum S. Thomae*, 4 vols., 1626-7.]

<sup>29</sup>(b) N. 27.

He cited our *Doctor Eximius*<sup>30</sup> as well as other Jesuits from among us along with St. Thomas<sup>31</sup> and the holy fathers, who often use the words “predefinition” and “predetermination” for the same thing, and explain “pre-” in the sense of concurrence [*concurso*] that is still “previous,” a claim which the teachers of our Society do not deny when used in a proper sense.

{iv} Father Izquierdo, who served as Assistant [to the General] of the entire Society, sends me as legate<sup>32</sup>. The word “predetermination” so little fazes him that he has no difficulty in reconciling the disjunctive predetermination, said either of the decision or of anything else, with {p. 4} the Society’s position. Our Father General himself, the Very Reverend Tirso González,<sup>33</sup> sends me, together with our Cardinal Sforza, who derives the “previous motion indifferent to both” from St. Thomas<sup>34</sup>—hence none of our own should find fault with a word they hear spoken in our school by the Father Assistant and the Father General of our entire Society.

{v} The doctors of our Society have indeed used the word “predetermination.” So much so that after thinking about this matter a good deal and then accepting it two years ago in Puebla in my *Tractatus de actibus humanis*, a short time ago in Mexico City I chanced upon a little book by a certain anonymous author of our Society published in Augsburg and Dillingen under the title *Litterae ad R. P. Alexandrum, Dominicanum*, wherein the doctrine of the Thomists is compared to

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<sup>30</sup>[Francisco SUÁREZ, S. J.; he treated the question of free will in his *Opusculum de scientia Dei futurorum contingentium*.]

<sup>31</sup>[St. Thomas Aquinas, O. P., 1225-1274. There was enough leeway in his treatment of these “de auxiliis” questions to give rise to different interpretations.]

<sup>32</sup>(c) *De Deo*, vol. 2, tract. 10, disp. 30, q. 11, for four entire pages. [Sebastián IZQUIERDO, S. J., 1601-1681, Spanish, assistant to the General for Spain and the West Indies; *Opus...de Deo uno*, vol. 1, 1664, vol. 2, 1670. Blanco also mentions him in Bvii, 10, 11, 15.]

<sup>33</sup>(d) Vol. 1, disp. 27, sect. 7, n. 38. [Tirso GONZÁLEZ DE SANTALLA, S. J., 1624-1705, Spaniard, 13<sup>th</sup> General of the Society of Jesus (1687). Blanco seems to refer to the first volume of his *Selectae disputationes ex universa theologia scholastica*, 4 vols., 1680-86.]

<sup>34</sup>[SFORZA, S. J., †1667.]



that of the theologians of the Society of Jesus, and the point of the tenth letter is to interpret physical premotion derived from St. Thomas in the sense found in the theory of the scholars of the Society, which we shall develop extensively in the *Cord*.

### [As envoy of Thomists and Scotists]

{vi} Father Fasolo sends me from the camp of the Thomists and Scotists<sup>35</sup>. He is careful to cite their texts and explain the words of St. Thomas and Scotus in favor of {p. 5} the view of our Society on middle knowledge and the consequences of such a view. The distinguished Scotist, Professor Mastroio, actually praises Fasolo's interpretation<sup>36</sup> of Scotus's theory in favor of the Society, so much so that he boasts<sup>37</sup> of finding the mind of Scotus accurately explained by Fasolo, as we shall pursue it carefully below, after leading the Scotists and Mastroio himself along with their Scotus into the camp of the Society.

{vii} We shall not, however, do anything new, but only what has been done before. For Fasolo as well as many of our own and Izquierdo himself<sup>38</sup> already mentioned that the Scotists Filippo Fabri, Hugh McCaughwell, Jerónimo Tammarit, Mauricius, Luís Caspensis, Alfonso Briceño, Félix Teodoro Smising, Angelo de Montepeloso,<sup>39</sup> support middle knowledge, besides more recent authors, even in our

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<sup>35</sup>(e) Vol. 2 passim but especially q. 14, a. 13, *dubium* 17, n. 129 and n. 316. [Gerolamo FASOLO, S. J., 1583-1639, Italian. In *Primam Partem Summae S. Thomae Commentaria*, three vols., 1623, 1629, and 1636. See Bviii, 9, 16, 17.]

<sup>36</sup>(f) *Op. cit.* n. 316.

<sup>37</sup>(g) Vol. 1, disp. 3, q. 3, a. 5, n. 140. [Bartolomeo MASTRIO, O. F. M., 1602-1673, Italian. Blanco quotes from his *Philosophiae ad mentem Scoti cursus integer*, 1637ff. See 17, 19.]

<sup>38</sup>(h) *De Deo*, vol. 2, trac. 11, disp. 38, q. 3, n. 63.

<sup>39</sup>[Filippo FABRI, O. F. M., 1564-1630, Italian (works 1601, 1637). Hugh MCCAUGHWELL (Cavellus), O. F. M., †1626, Irish; works Venice, 1625. Jerónimo TAMARIT, O. F. M., Spanish; *Flores theologiae in totum primum librum Magistri Sententiarum*, 1622. Fildaeus MAURICIUS DE PORTU, O. F. M., †1514, Irish (works 1500-1520, 1603). Luis CASPENSIS, (vii), Spanish Capuchin; *Cursus theologicus*, 2 vols., 1641. Alfonso BRICEÑO, O. F. M., †1667, Chilean (work 1638). Theodor SMISING, O. F. M., 1580-1626, German; *De Deo uno*, 2 vols., 1624, 1626. Angelo Vulpes de

time, in many places who, as we see, are sending me from their camp into that of the Society. I will explain practically all their texts in the proper places if I have time, even reconciling a good part of the debates and controversies among the Scotists themselves.

{viii} Besides the Thomists whom Tanner mentioned without naming them and those whom Fasolo cited, I shall refer in the *Cord* to many through whose names and views {p. 6} I have been sent into the camp of the Scotists as well as into that of the Jesuits. Yet, were all lacking, the Angelic Doctor himself would be more than sufficient. I shall be pleased to take all his passages as they are, and with their help reconfirm more extensively what I sought in my *Tractatus de actibus humanis*: to bring our own opinion and that of the Thomists to that accord which I eagerly desire all to reach and which I hope to achieve here.

### [The Pope and St. Augustine]

{ix} Why further detain my reader? Lastly, I am sent as an envoy by the Supreme Pontiff himself,<sup>40</sup> who once bade us all to put an end to the controversy in accordance with the mind of saints Augustine and Thomas. And since we who follow the same path have all been given the same light and pillar to guide us,<sup>41</sup> is it not high time that we also stretch forth our hands and arms to embrace one other and work toward our common goal and accord?

There is but one obstacle to bringing this accord about: the disparity and incompatibility of our words. But since we have our great Father Augustine to encourage us, we quote his word and counsel. He is advising his disciple:

Call it what you will; words, when the reality is clear, ought not to be our concern.

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MONTEPELOSO, O. F. M., Italian; *Summa sacrae theologiae Scoti* and *Commentaria*, 9 vols., 1622-45.]

<sup>40</sup>[Clement XIII, who convoked the *De auxiliis* commission.]

<sup>41</sup>[*Exodus* 13: 21.]

And shortly afterwards:

I not only agree but also commend you to be pleased to  
care more for things than words.

This from St. Augustine, when speaking of the line<sup>42</sup>. {p. 7}

### **[Borrowing weapons and the raiment of the mind]**

{x} In regard to our own approach, let us even speak the tongue  
of our adversaries if necessary, use their own idiom, their own terms.  
And thus

Change we the shields of the Greeks and their devices  
bear...

They themselves will give us our arms<sup>43</sup>.

{xi} Now, if our Society everywhere wears all manner of dress to  
teach the full truth of the Gospel more easily and secure it against its  
adversaries, why are we holding so fast to our own words —the raiment  
of the mind as it were—, when with the language and garb of the Scotists  
and Thomists, too, we could guard and defend well enough the truth  
that we agree upon in this matter— our own truth as theirs and their  
own as ours.

May He who clothed Himself with our flesh in the Virgin's purest  
chamber yet clothe us with the unclothed truth in Himself, the truth  
that, reconciling us all, He publicly professed, as master at His podium,  
on the cross.

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<sup>42</sup>(i) *Liber unicus de animae quantitate*, ch. 6. [Pericopes 10 and 11. Augustine's friend Evodius speaks the first quotation and Augustine the second.]

<sup>43</sup>[*Aeneid*, 2: 389-390, 391; the quote is continued in B9, p. 14. Aeneas is addressing Dido, queen of Carthage, who warmly received him and his companions after their escape from Troy.]

{p. 8}

## SECTION I

### Proposal of the way to reconcile middle knowledge with St. Thomas's premotion and Scotus's attendant decision, Account of the purpose of the entire treatise

#### [Procedure]

{1} I need neither many nor sundry arguments, since by summarizing the sections it will be easier to show my intent more quickly, clearly, and directly as well as to bring together more handily the claims that will achieve my purpose, borrowing them from various places. Come, then, and allow me briefly to explain once and for all and at the very threshold what I am about.

#### [Assumptions]

[Assumption 1] {2} First, maintain and ponder often the range [*tendentiam*] of the divine decision [*decreti*]:

I will the help *A* for Peter and, by Peter, the love *B* or the hate *C*.

[Assumption 2] Second, maintain that this decision is really identical to God's action which outwardly produces the object that He in fact [*exercite*] wills. In the present case the object is thus:

the aid *A* and the love or the hate.

[Assumption 3] Third, maintain that the divine action and the action of a creature like Peter are really distinct.

[Assumption 4] Fourth, maintain that the divine {p. 9} omnipotence can be indifferently applied to free causes through such a disjunctive decision among these terms of the created will.

**[Assumption 5]** Fifth, maintain that the aforesaid divine action, identical to the decision, is in itself determined in regard to the help *A*, but not in regard to a determined love or hate; it is rather disjunctively indifferent to either, as the decision is seen to be.

**[Assumption 6]** Sixth and last, maintain that there are two actions by Peter: the one determinedly connected or identified with love and the other determinately connected or identified with hate.

### **[Theses]**

{3} Having thus baldly assumed for now these points that we are later to demonstrate, I shall draw the following inferences:

**[Thesis 1]** First. Owing to the divine decision, the omnipotence continues to be indifferently applied to one or the other act by Peter, since there is no other, more relevant, decision indifferently applied by the omnipotence to the free causes.

We shall see this later when demonstrating these and the following inferences. For now we are merely introducing everything in a simple way in keeping with the intention that we proposed for this section and for the entire treatise.

**[Thesis 2]** Second. This decision is understood to be prior to Peter's freedom, among other [things] constituting his created power which is indifferent to either [alternative].

**[Thesis 3]** Third. The decision, albeit a disjunctive action, is a performance of the divine will and omnipotence. For by His decision {p. 10} God not only wills either, but also produces either act of the creature in the way we shall explain and demonstrate below.

**[Thesis 4]** {4} Fourth. Just as the disjunctive decision connected with either cannot occur [*dari*] without one or the other willed act, so the divine action, identical to the decision, cannot occur without Peter's love or hate. And [the principle that] no action can exist without some term is thus verified, as the effective divine decision cannot exist without the object that [God] wills and in the way He wills it.

**[Thesis 5]** Fifth. Since by God's decision Peter is constituted as proximately able to [do] either, for this very reason he will be able to carry out either love or hate by calling forth either his action regarding love or his other action regarding hate. One of these actions of Peter is determinedly connected with love and the other with the contrary hate.

**[Thesis 6]** Sixth. Neither of these actions of Peter exists without being immediately produced at the same time by God. For although either is really distinct from that disjunctive action of God, nevertheless by the same divine disjunctive action God produces immediately at the same time with Peter any one of Peter's actions that here and now issues from Peter, in such wise that God produces whichever [of Peter's actions] by His divine action, albeit God does not produce it by the creature's action but by His own divine action.

**[Thesis 7]** {5} Seventh. The same decision, identical to the divine {p. 11} action, is the divine concurrence both in first act and in second act with respect to the creature. It is so in first act inasmuch as both the decision and the divine action in itself is disjunctively indifferent, undetermined, and as it were pending. It is so in second act as far as the divine action, when this action of the creature ensues instead of that one, is determined by this created action of Peter (for example, of love instead of hate).

And at the same time as Peter's action [the divine action] produces the love instead of the hate by a determination that should not be attributed to God but to Peter, because God, owing to His action considered in itself, does not produce the love instead of the hate, but either the love or the hate. But owing to his action connected determinately with love, Peter produces love instead of hate. For, having the power to call forth either of his actions, he here and now calls forth that connected with love and he does not call forth the one connected with hate, even though he produces his action at the same time as God. A single total adequate influence on the act, determined by Peter's, not God's, determination is made up of and results from this disjunctive act of God, inadequate for an influence in being and from Peter's inadequate act.

**[Thesis 8]** {6} Eighth. Next, according to the foregoing claim and explanation, God's decision is the previous divine concurrence indifferent in first act to Peter's freedom, and this very decision is the simultaneous {p. 12} concurrence determined in second act by Peter's action. Peter's action indeed does not influence God or the divine action, since it is rather God and God's action that influences Peter's action. But Peter's action influences his love at the same time as the divine action influences his love, and by His action God influences both Peter's love and his action, which is connected either metaphysically or logically with love rather than with hate. For God's action in itself, by not requiring love rather than hate, is no more connected with the love than with the hate, but with love or hate, since it is toward either act.

**[Thesis 9]** {7} Ninth. For this very reason, such a decision and action by God is attendant, inasmuch as it accompanies the action of a creature, say, Peter, by producing Peter's act at the same time as Peter's action.

**[Thesis 10]** Tenth. Nevertheless the divine decision and action is antecedent with respect to Peter's action, which God's action and decision precedes in some way and in some sign.

**[Thesis 11]** Eleventh. Therefore such a decision, identical to the divine action, is antecedent and attendant; antecedent in one sign and attendant in another. It is like someone who sets out earlier from Mexico City and precedes his companion on the road who leaves later and catches up with him. However, the parallelism is not complete here, because God's decision not only precedes Peter's action eternally, but it also precedes Peter's {p. 13} action as the divine action ranges over [*tendente*] either of Peter's acts which will be produced at instant *A*, inasmuch as it is indifferent at the previous sign of Peter's freedom. And God's decision, inasmuch as it is already determined by Peter's action, accompanies Peter's action, which as it were travels the philosophical road to its end, meaning, to love.

### [Terminology]

{8} Now, why are we tarrying over words that are indifferent in themselves and apt by themselves to signify anything? Let us call the decision to help, and let us also call the help itself that is at least compatible with the decision, “premotion” or “predetermination,” adding “indifferent,” in accordance with our own doctors named in the prologue; or if you prefer, “disjunctive premotion” and “predetermination, either “physical” or “moral” or “mixed”, in accordance with what we are to explain below.

What prevents us from calling them thus? For, besides the expressions of our own [scholars] and of others whom we shall see later, God, by this decision and action pre-moves Peter to either act, He predetermines him to either not by a predetermination of this [act] of the disjunction [*disjuncti*] instead of the other [act] but by a predetermination of this [disjunction] instead of another disjunction, seeing that God, by determining him to this disjunction rather than to another disjunction, does not predetermine him to this act of the disjunction rather than to the contrary act of the same disjunction.

Furthermore, besides the consistency {p. 14} of the terms, there are other points that will be more conveniently presented later in regard to the decision as bestowing the helps, according to the way of speaking both of St. Thomas and the scholars of the Society, who do not refuse to call at least this sort of premotion “physical” because of its identity with God’s physical decision and physical action, although we do not admit another sense of “physical” which we shall discuss later.

{9} So having settled on this term between ourselves and the very learned Thomists, what prevents us from also calling the decision “*attendant*,” the word used by our own Fasolo, who will be more fittingly introduced in its proper place? Whatever be the case with Father Rivadeneyra, whose opinion and understanding of “attendant decision” we totally reject as at odds with and foreign to the mind of our Society, as



we shall see in its proper place<sup>44</sup>. But let us agree with the best teachers of our family, and, for now at least in name, with the Scotists.

And what our goal is will soon be clear, both here and especially in the course of the entire treatise. The Jesuit now,

this said, puts on  
the plumed helmet of Androgeos and the fair emblem  
of his shield,  
to his side straps the Argive sword<sup>45</sup>. {p. 15}

### [A misunderstanding]

{10} However, before we come to blows —or rather before we come to mutual embraces—, we must completely remove a quite common mistake wherein not only outsiders but not a few of our own as well have been caught more than once. Content with the mere appearance of the words, they have not delved to the heart of our position. Hence whereas the teachers of the Society deny that God knows free futures, conditioned or not, in any decision, they always speak in such way as to exclude the antecedent decision connected in itself intrinsically and determinedly with the future love, say, of the creature rather than with his hate. However our own do not deny that God knows such futures in some way in His decision, or in His omnipotence, or in His essence, or in His Word, or in other attributes. Neither does Father Izquierdo, who is to be especially heeded here, nor others assert the contrary<sup>46</sup>.

{11} He states, citing many of our own, that the knowledge of creatures, even future, and existent creatures, even free, as in God, does not depend on God's connection with them. For it is certain from the teaching of the holy Fathers and of theologians that God knows all creatures in Himself, although it is not certain that God is connected {p. 16}

<sup>44</sup>[Antonio de RIVADENEIRA, S. J., 1619-1663, Mexican, or Gaspar †1675?]

<sup>45</sup>[Blanco continues the passage from the *Aeneid* (here 2: 391-393) that he began to quote in the prologue (Bx). The "Jesuit", then, is parallel to Coroebus, the Trojan leader.]

<sup>46</sup>(j) In the *De Deo*, vol. 2, disp. 25, q. 2, especially n. 17, and disp. 27, q. 8, nn. 113 and 114, as well as in other works.

with creatures still possible. And Izquierdo concludes that God's comprehensive knowledge knows futures in God's omnipotence and in some of God's decisions as in the object to which the futures somehow belong supposing that they are futures [will obtain]. Although futures in themselves are known in another way as the doctors of our Society hold from the teaching of St. Thomas, Scotus, and other holy Fathers and theologians.

{12} Indeed, whereas the whole Society of Jesus asserts that God knows by middle knowledge all free conditioned futures in themselves—for example, Judas's repentance—under the conditionally future help *A*, we do not say that such knowledge is completely independent of any divine decision yet to exist conditionally in God Himself. For although we do say that such knowledge does not depend on the divine decision existing now absolutely, subjectively, in God, we say nevertheless that middle knowledge itself depends on the decision about to exist when Judas's repentance under the help *A* would occur. For then, in that hypothesis that [the decision is] prior to Judas's freedom, the divine decision is conceived both as applying the omnipotence indifferently to Judas's repentance or non-repentance {p. 17} and as bestowing the help *A* under which there would be repentance.

And although we do say that the absolute existence of such decisions is subsequent to middle knowledge which is supposed by every absolute existence of any divine decision, as it supposes the knowledge of simple understanding, nevertheless according to all our own doctors, middle knowledge supposes objectively—of course on the part of the object in the conditioned sign—the decisions given on the part of the creature's free potency as at least obliquely constituting created freedom, which is also constituted by the omnipotence as indifferently applied by the indifferent decision of the type that is, according to many of our own, a similar disjunctive decision.

**[Our claim]**

{13} Now, coming at last to the point of this first section, we are saying —now with regard to Judas— that God did not have the following decision from eternity in its entire range:

I will Judas's repentance or his non-repentance and the help  
A, which is efficacious,

but [He did have] this other decision:

I will Judas's repentance or his non-repentance and the help  
A,<sup>47</sup> which is inefficacious.

We do, however, claim that God nevertheless has known from eternity by middle knowledge Judas's future repentance if instead of this second decision God had had, or in case he had, the first decision. And since we do in fact place in God this {p. 18} middle knowledge:

Judas's repentance would be given if the help A would have  
been bestowed on him under the condition if the help A  
would have been bestowed,

we include with the help A all the other [things] and only the [things] that constitute Judas's freedom, among which is doubtless found the decision applying the omnipotence and producing both the help and all the other [things] without which Judas's freedom could neither exist nor be conceived.

**[The road to travel]**

{14} Now, supposing all of this to be true, and since nothing else, according to what will be said below, persuades us to the contrary, here, then, is the road leading to the reconciliation of middle knowledge not only with premotion, meaning "indifferent" —duly inferred from texts of St. Thomas to be explained below (for brevity's

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<sup>47</sup>[I read "A" here for "B".]

sake I will call it “Thomasian” from now on to distinguish it from Bañezian or “Thomistic” premotion<sup>48</sup>)—, but also with Scotistic attendant decision—as duly inferred from the principles and words of Scotus himself, according to his texts that we shall present in their proper place, concerning which even many heads (I mean “doctors”) of the Scotists who disagree among themselves will come to agreement.

{15} The road is that decision that we set forth at the beginning. For since many Thomists identify premotion with the divine decision or with the divine action, as we saw {p. 19} in the prologue when citing Tanner and will again see further on, and moreover since the decision is in a certain way antecedent and in a certain way attendant, and also the concurrence is previous in its own way and simultaneous in its own way (as that decision precedes objectively, conditionally on the part of the prior created freedom as one of the things constituting the created free potency when the conditioned existence of the help willed by such a decision is joined to it), by this very fact the middle knowledge of our Society results or issues in God’s supreme cognitive power.

In our Jesuit opinion, God knows by middle knowledge the conditioned future in the future itself in such wise that (again, in our opinion cited in Izquierdo) He knows such a future while it is future. He knows it, I say, in His very decision; not as in one connected determinedly in itself with the future, as for example Peter’s love, but in His decision as the object to which Peter’s future love belongs, supposing that this love is future determinatively from Peter, when God co-produces the love at the same time, and in the words of Tanner, in some way “as it were co-determining” the love with Peter.

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<sup>48</sup>[Blanco applies the adjective “*Bañetianus*” or “*Thomisticus*” to the interpretation of the Bañez, which he rejects as unrepresentative of St. Thomas Aquinas (“Bañezianism” was used by Bañez’ opponents to imply his views were his own, not St. Thomas’s). Blanco reserves the word “*Thomasianus*” for what he considers St. Thomas true position.]

**[A truce before the resumption of hostilities]**

{16} When you hear “God as it were co-determining” —the phrase comes from the Scotists — remember that I am not playing the role of a judge here but that of an ambassador whose office it is not to hand down decisions but to propose the conditions of peace {p. 20}. I do this during the time the truce has been declared, especially in this [first] section, and until, after studying the matter at greater length and more maturely in the course of the treatise, it will finally be clear what should be said after the war breaks out again and the many reasons for misgivings (that are already occurring to some mind when he reads or hears what I have said) come up again for scrutiny and discussion.

May you hold off your criticism, I beg you, while St. Thomas speaks, Scotus speaks, Fasolo and other doctors of the Society speak— practically with the same words, indeed with the attitude and in the meaning of the Scotists. And then let the critics brand me with any stigma they please.

**[Middle knowledge]**

{17} On the road of the decision we described, then, middle knowledge, Thomasian premotion and Scotistic attendant decision will travel together. For as middle knowledge precedes in an objective, conditioned manner the decision on the part of an indifferent potency, say, of Peter, which determines God and himself by his action (as I have just described it and shall explain further and demonstrate later), the supreme cognitive power of God requires nothing else in order to know at once the future love, say, of Peter, and indeed to know such love both in the love itself and in the divine decision and determined action. God’s action is not indeed determined previously in itself and by itself; but determined attendantly or consequently.

Our {p. 21} Fasolo uses these two terms, which we are to present later within the Scotist camp, omitting for now other expressions that we shall save for a better place to defend our rapprochement, not without the surprise and joy of Mastroio himself, and adding the expression of our

own and of St. Thomas himself, as well as those of the Thomists and Scotists.

### [Thomasian premotion]

{18} Thomasian premotion or predetermination will also travel on the road of this decision. For the decision identified with the divine disjunctive action for love or hate and determined for the congruous help *A* is by this very fact understood to be the previous concurrence by which God pre-moves Peter to either [act] and also predetermines him to either in such a way that God's predetermination continues to be further determinable in another way by the free creature.

"Determinable", I say, not because of any poverty or insufficiency of God considered in Himself, but rather because of the divine condescension that constitutes the second free cause by His decision which wills to determine Peter in one direction owing to His role as first cause and first free [being] by ceasing to be determined [*se determinari*] in the other direction by the free creature, in order to save Peter's freedom. God wills and constitutes Peter's freedom in fact by such a decision.

Now, by that very decision, where {p. 22} God's will is terminated and determined as by its own immediate term seeing that it is in His own second act, there begins the first act of the created freedom about to issue into second act, ever attended by God's decision and concurrence. His concurrence is also simultaneous while in a posteriority of nature it is as it were drawn by the creature's action into love, say, rather than hate.

### [Scotistic attendant decision]

{19} Finally, Scotistic attendant decision travels the same road. For according to Scotus himself God (in Mastrio's words)<sup>49</sup> by one and the same act decides from eternity and works in time:

since it is the selfsame act whereby He decides from eternity what things are going to be and through which He afterwards produces them in time,

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<sup>49</sup>(k) Vol. 1, disp. 3, q. 3, a. 8, n. 171.

according to Scotus<sup>50</sup> —and others say the same thing—:

God's external concourse, that is, the concourse that passes in time, is the same as His inner, immanent concourse whereby from eternity He decides to concur with us.

Mastrio states<sup>51</sup>:

According to Scotus, God does not work at the working of the created will except when the latter determines itself in time to act. Nor has He decided for free created actions from eternity without the determination of the created will whose determination God's concourse attends without the simultaneity "wherein" (that is, the simultaneity of time), that is, of the same real instant, obstructing the priority "wherefrom."

This is seen in our decision by virtue of which God causes the creature's very determination wherewith in a certain way {p. 23} He co-determines the love by a co-determination at least of co-producer, that is of concourse, or of co-efficacy. Later we shall also present the expressions, arguments and ways of speaking commonly used by ourselves and by Scotistic scholars.

### [The "Cord"]

{20} These and other points that we shall make below led me to name my treatise *The Three-Stranded Cord*. My first reason is that it happens to be like a rope, firmly plaited of the three strands of middle knowledge, Thomasian premotion, and attendant decision. The second is that it is distinguished by several sorts of adornment and, if you will, of three colors, that is, the three schools I am calling to accord: Thomists, Scotists, and Jesuits. My final reason is that the disagreement in full agreement travels this hidden, truly threefold, road. For it advances by

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<sup>50</sup> (l) 2, dist. 37, v.

<sup>51</sup> (m) In the cited article.

the disjunctive decision as it were along a branching of three roads leading to love, hate, and help. God so to speak walks this road, the creatures walk it, and grace, too, walks it. Besides other lesser threesomes that each one will easily detect in my title, while we hasten to more important concerns.

### [Problems]

{21} As the three fronts stand ready to do battle, several issues come up that seem to stand in the way and block the rapprochement we are proposing.

**[Problem 1]** The first obstacle regards the possibility of a disjunctive decision between one or the other of the creature's acts, especially if what we call {p. 24} "freedom of contradiction" is to be brought in.

**[Problem 2]** The second is our identifying the action of the divine omnipotence with God's decision, in particular with a disjunctive decision, because such disjunctive and undetermined action appears beset with more difficulties since the concept of action entails that there be a determination of the cause to act.

**[Problem 3]** The third problem is our distinguishing created action from God's action, since the common opinion of our own implies that the creature and God produce by the same action, lest either we fall in with Durandus<sup>52</sup> or we attribute an action to an action.

**[Problem 4]** The fourth obstacle is the very war-cry of our own as well as of the Thomists and Scotists. We must pay careful attention to it lest no agreement be reached, if an agreement is asked of those who, after being invited reasonably, flatly reject it.

### [Reconciliation]

{22} However, to examine these and many other points involved in our claims with suitable reflection, we have stretched out our cord into

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<sup>52</sup>[Durandus de Saint-Pourçain, 1275-1332; although a Dominican bishop, he opposed teachings of St. Thomas. He did not recognize the universal causality of God's efficacious grace in human actions (God "is the cause of free actions only insofar as He creates and conserves free will," *In 2 Sent.* 37:1).]



several sections, as it were, into several strands, or chapters. But we have not done so in such a way that in the end we claim to play the role of a judge. For by ever discharging the office of ambassador of peace, we shall in such wise display everything that after offering from each side the best conditions for the accord that we desire, each will embrace willingly what he deems most acceptable. For I am not campaigning {p. 25} for [*ambio*] an agreement that any reasonable person would believe to be at odds with the truth, but one that so concords with the truth that no one will fail to embrace it out of an exaggerated bias toward his own. Let us see, then, what they have that would prevent the accord that we here have so simply described and proposed.

## APPENDIX B—SYMBOLS

<i>A</i>	(Blanco's symbol) <i>(God) helps</i>
<i>B</i>	(Blanco's symbol) <i>(Peter) decides for love</i>
<i>C</i>	(Blanco's symbol) <i>(Peter) decides for hate</i>
<i>J</i>	<i>Judas repents</i>
<i>p</i>	(any proposition)
$\neg p$	not <i>p</i>
<i>q</i>	(any proposition)
<i>Dp</i>	<i>(Peter, Judas...) decides that p</i>
<i>Wp</i>	<i>God wills (decides, actualizes) that p</i>
$p \& q$	<i>p and q</i>
$p \vee q$	<i>p or q</i>
$p > q$	if <i>p</i> then <i>q</i>
$p \equiv q$	<i>p</i> if and only if <i>q</i>
$p \ddagger q$	$(\neg[p \equiv q])$ either <i>p</i> or <i>q</i> (not both)
$p   q$	$(\neg[p \& q])$ not <i>p</i> and <i>q</i>