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Luis de Molina's Doctrine of Predestination and the Controversy with the Dominicans of Salamanca in the Second Half of the 16th Century

ABSTRACT: This article analyses the doctrine of predestination in the work *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione* (1588) by the Jesuit Luis de Molina (1535-1600) and examines the criticism aimed at this doctrine by the Dominicans of Salamanca, contained in the work *Apologia fratrum praedicatorum in provintia hispaniae professorum sacrae theologiae, adversus quasdam novas assertiones cuiusdam Doctoris Ludovici Molinae* (1595), coordinated by Domingo Báñez (1528-1604). Within the analysis of Molina's doctrine of predestination, we analyze the author's positions on providence, foreknowledge, the efficacy of God's assistance and predestination as a prediction of merits and as an act of divine will. We conclude our paper by discussing the main criticisms addressed to Molina's doctrine by Báñez and the Dominicans of Salamanca.

SOMMARIO: L'articolo analizza la dottrina della predestinazione nell'opera *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, Providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione* (1588) del gesuita Luis de Molina (1535-1600) ed esamina la critica rivolta a tale dottrina dai Domenicani di Salamanca, contenuta nell'opera *Apologia fratrum praedicatorum in provintia hispaniae professorum sacrae theologiae, adversus quasdam novas assertiones cuiusdam Doctoris Ludovici Molinae* (1595), coordinata da Domingo Báñez (1528-1604). Nell'ambito dell'analisi della dottrina della predestinazione di Molina, si analizzano le posizioni dell'autore sulla provvidenza, sulla prescienza, sull'efficacia dell'assistenza di Dio e sulla predestinazione come predizione di meriti e come atto di volontà divina. Si conclude discutendo le principali critiche rivolte alla dottrina di Molina da Báñez e dai Domenicani di Salamanca.

KEYWORDS: Luis de Molina; Domingo Báñez; Predestination; Foreknowledge; Divine Assistance

1. INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, the Society of Jesus aimed at two main objectives: carrying out a renewal of the Catholic doctrine capable of providing an effective response to the challenges posed by the reform movement; and contributing to the development of teaching, science and theology under a Christian perspective.

Luis de Molina embodied the ideals of the Society of Jesus in the second half of the 16th century.¹ Master of theology at the Jesuit college in Évora in 1568-1584, he

1. On Molina's biography, see Macgregor 2015a; Rabeneck 1950; Fraga Iribarne 1941; Rodrigues 1931.



commented on Thomas Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* in accordance with the academic curriculum. The commentaries to the *Summa theologiae* I, which he wrote in his first years of teaching in Évora, included the difficult and highly controversial questions about divine foreknowledge, providence and predestination and the compatibility of these divine attributes with human freedom.² Molina discussed these issues in lectures as well as in public and private sessions. His ideas were innovative and gained fame. But from 1582 onwards, his ideas were associated with the theses of Alonzo Deza, Miguel Marcos, Prudencio de Montemayor and Luis de León, which had been rejected by the Salamanca theologians Domingo Báñez and Francisco Zumel, and condemned by the Spanish Inquisition.³

After the publication of Domingo Báñez's commentaries on the *Summa theologiae* I in 1584, Molina was finally authorized (in 1585) to publish his own commentaries on this part of the *Summa theologiae*, which allowed him to explain his ideas and defend himself against the accusations levelled against him. As only a few issues were controversial, Molina chose to prepare two works: one with the complete commentaries and another addressing the most problematic issues. This second work was entitled *Concordia liberii arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione*, and was the one that Molina chose to publish first. This publication followed the usual procedure, the manuscript being first examined by an internal commission of the Society of Jesus and then by the Holy Office in Lisbon. The Society of Jesus's internal commission was formed by the Jesuits Fernando Peres, Jorge Serrão, António Carvalho and Luís de Cerqueira.⁴ The commission took around two years to examine the work and asked for several amendments.⁵ In 1587, the *Concordia* was submitted for examination by the Inquisitor General of Portugal, the Dominican Bartolomeu Ferreira. The work was approved on 21st June 1588 and its printing was completed in December of that same year in Lisbon. The *Concordia* was, therefore, published before the commentaries on the *Summa theologiae* I, which were not printed until 1592.

However, as they were unable to prevent the *Concordia* from being printed, the theologians from Salamanca lodged a complaint with Archduke Albert. They asked for the sale and distribution of the work to be suspended since it defended the theses condemned in 1582 by the Spanish Inquisition. In 1589 Molina wrote an appendix to the *Concordia* and an apologia addressed to Archduke Albert.⁶ Although the suspen-

2. See Molina 1953: I, d. 1, 1. On the history of the problem of future contingents: Knuuttila 2010; Craig 1998; Normore 1982.

3. On the history of the *De auxiliis* controversy, see Torrijos Castrillejo 2024; Gaetano 2021; Franceschi 2018; Romano 1969; Béltran de Heredia 1968.

4. Letter dated 19 June 1587 from Luis de Molina to Claudio Aquaviva: Stegmüller 1935: 641 ff.

5. Letter dated 19 June 1587 from Luis de Molina to Claudio Aquaviva: "Este Agosto que viene hará dos años que se vee esta obra por orden de V. P. El março pasado hizo un año que la vee el Padre Fernan Perez, y ni a acabado ni sé quando acabará": Stegmüller 1935: 639.

6. See Ludovicus Molina, *Libellus supplex*, 1589: "[...] doy gracias a Dios N. Señor, que siendo las materias, de que trata, tan dificultosas, despues de tres meses de examen no se halló escriptura, tradicion, Concilio, ni otra cosa de fe, que contra él se oppusiese; ni vy proposicion

sion of the sale and circulation of the work was lifted, the persistence of the Salamanca theologians' complaints ended up by forcing General Claudio Aquaviva to request a new examination, this time by a commission formed specifically for this purpose.⁷ The names of the censors involved remain unknown, but it is very likely that Roberto Belarmino might have chaired it.⁸ The commission asked for several amendments, but didn't find enough reasons to ban the work. The amendments were later taken up by Molina in his commentaries on the *Summa theologiae* I (1592) and in the second edition of the *Concordia* (1595).

On 5 March 1594, the student Alfonso Romero defended some theses of Molina's *Concordia* in an academic event at the Jesuit college of San Ambrósio de Valladolid. The event aroused such fierce controversy that one of the Dominicans who attended it, Diego Nuño Cabezudo, organized an academic event at the College of San Gregorio in Valladolid on 17 May 1594 aimed at refuting the errors of Molina's theses.⁹

After the controversy generated in Valladolid by these events, and following complaints from the Dominicans that forced papal intervention, the Inquisitor General Gaspar de Quiroga requested that the Salamanca Dominicans put their arguments against the theses of Molina's *Concordia* into writing. The task was headed by Domingo Báñez, with the help of Diego Alvarez and other Salamanca theologians. The resulting work was entitled *Apologia fratrum praedicatorum in provintia hispaniae professorum sacrae theologiae, adversus quasdam novas assertiones cuiusdam Doctoris Ludovici Molinae* and was published in 1595. To complement the task, they also prepared other documents against Molina: *Pro defensione gratiae efficaci tractatus adversus Molinam*. *Ad Illustrissimos Cardinales Sancti Officii*; *Informatio in causa fidei, adversus doctrinam P. Ludovici Molinae Societatis Iesu*; and *Pro Theologis Provinciae Hispaniae Ordinis Praedicatorum, directa Cardinalibus Sancti Officii*.

After the Dominican documents reached Pope Clement VIII, the Molinists wrote an apology for the theses defended in the *Concordia*, entitled *Ad Censuram aliquorum Patrum Ordinis Praedicatorum Provinciae Castellae in Hispania contra assertiones Patris Ludovici Molinae e Societate Iesu, responsio Patrum eiusdem Societatis*, which was published and distributed in 1598.

The Molinists accused the Dominicans of falling into Lutheranism, while the Dominicans accused the Molinists of falling back into Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism. Unable to resolve the conflict and decide on the accusations, Pope Clement VIII or-

censurada de erronea, malsonante o peligrosa; mas solo se me opuso, que algo de mi doctrina conuenia con ciertas proposiciones de otros, que puesto que en el Consejo de la Inquisicion de los Reynos de Castilla ni auian censurado, ni condenado todavia, se auia ordenado, que no se enseñasen hasta ser primero uistas mas de propósito, y entenderse la qualidad dellas. Y pensando yo ser solas tres que me auian sido mostradas con censura del Padre Fray Domingo de Bannes, religioso de santo Domingo, hallé treze en el papel que V. A. me dió, aunque acerca de algunas dellas no se me notaua nada": Stegmüller 1935: 377.

7. See Rabeneck 1953: 695-707.

8. *Ibid.*: 695. See Torrijos Castrillejo 2022a.

9. See Romano 1969: 155.

ganized a congregation in Rome to analyze the controversy. The congregation, known as *De auxiliis*, lasted almost a decade (1598-1607) and was resolved by Clement VIII's successor, Pope Paul V. On 28 August 1607, not being able to resolve the controversy, Paul V forbade the Molinists and their opponents to accuse each other.¹⁰

2. THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION IN LUIS DE MOLINA'S *CONCORDIA*

2.1 Prescience and Providence

In the penultimate part of the *Concordia*, Molina defines providence as the plan, existing in the divine mind, of the order of things and their ends, which can be carried out by God directly or through creatures.¹¹ Since there are different causes, some natural and some free, orientated towards different ends, both natural and supernatural, the plan of providence also includes the plan of predestination. Predestination concerns free causes orientated towards supernatural ends.

Molina rejects the existence of events happening by chance and sees providence as certain, infallible, immutable and ordered to the good, applied to all of creation. However, the existence of free causes requires divine providence to accommodate the indifference and contingency that characterizes the action of these causes. To ensure that the certainty of providence does not suppress freedom, Molina rejects the influence of any efficacious motion or divine predetermination on free causes. For there to be providence, it is enough that the free causes have, in the order in which they find themselves, all the means so that they can fulfil the end for which they are ordained. However, they do not achieve this end in a necessary way. Therefore, God wants with a conditioned will that the free cause achieves its end, if the free causes wants to cooperate with the means and assistance God gives it:

God has indeed the providence to direct all men and angels to eternal life, because he has in himself the will to execute the order of means by which, if they willed, they would have attained this end; nevertheless, this providence does not include an absolute will to the end, but a conditioned one; consequently, on many of the means this order of divine providence can be frustrated and has been frustrated.¹²

In spite of that, according to Molina, neither the uncertainty of the effects resulting from the actions of free causes nor God's conditioned will make providence uncertain. The certainty of providence is guaranteed by the certainty of divine foreknowledge. To explain the certainty of divine foreknowledge, Molina does not accept the solution of

10. Hevia Echevarria 2007: 14.

11. See Molina 1953: VI, q. 22, a. 1, d. 1, 1: "[...] providentia divina non aliud quam ratio seu conceptio ordinis rerum in suos fines in mente divina existens cum proposito eum per se vel etiam interventu causarum secundarum executioni mandandi [...]."

12. *Ibid.*: VI, q. 22, a. 1, d. 2, 16: "sit quidem in Deo providentia qua homines omnes et angelos in vitam aeternam dirigit, quandoquidem est in eo voluntas exequendi ordinem mediorum quo, si vellent, ad eum finem pervenirent, ea tamen providentia non voluntatem absolutam, sed condicionatam finis includit ac proinde in multis ordo ille divinae providentiae frustrari postest et frustratus est".

eternity given by Aquinas in question 14 of the *Summa theologiae* I¹³ (solution which Augustine and Boethius had previously explored¹⁴). Therefore, in order to explain the nature of the knowledge of God, Molina does not consider to be sufficient neither the distinction between the knowledge of simple intelligence and the knowledge of vision,¹⁵ nor even the distinction between a natural knowledge and a free knowledge.¹⁶ Molina solves the problem by identifying a third kind of knowledge in God – the middle knowledge – between natural and free knowledge, through which “[...] God saw in his essence, through his lofty and inscrutable understanding of all free will, what this would do with its innate liberty, if it were set in this, in that, or even in any other of the infinite orders of things, despite the fact that in reality it could also do the opposite with that same thing, should it wish to do so”.¹⁷

It is through middle knowledge that Molina explains the certain and infallible divine knowledge of all the future acts of free causes, while maintaining the indifferent and contingent nature that characterizes the action of these causes. Only with the middle knowledge, thought of as part of a triple knowledge (natural, middle and free), can God always know the totality of creation. Because of this knowledge, the order of providence can be certain, infallible and immutable, insofar as all the effects of all the causes are known, in any order, circumstance and plan of means and assistance.

2.2 Divine Assistance

Contrary to the example proposed by Thomas Aquinas – “as the craftsman wields the axe in order to cut”¹⁸ – and opposed to Domingo Báñez and Francisco Zumel thinking, Molina rejects any concurrence, premotion or predetermination of God over free causes which make them similar to an instrumental cause.¹⁹

The idea that secondary free causes may be moved or applied by a prior one presupposes the limitation or suppression of their innate liberty. On the one hand Molina states that a divine concurrence remains necessary in order to preserve the being and the specificity of creatures, as well as that of creation in general, supplanting their indigence; on the other hand, precisely because this assistance allows it, these creatures possess autonomy and liberty, beyond any motion or external determination.

According to Molina, the divine concurrence is in fact indispensable, but it cannot be previous, nor can it place at risk the constitutive liberty of free agents. General

13. Aquinas 1888: I, q. 14, a. 13. See also, Goris 1997.

14. See Marenbon 2005.

15. Aquinas 1888: I, q. 14, a. 9.

16. Molina reveals Scotus's influence: see Anfray 2014.

17. Molina 1953: IV, q. 14, a. 13, d. 52, 9: “[...] qua ex altissima et inscrutabili comprehensione cuiusque liberi arbitrii in sua essentia intuitus est, quid pro sua innata libertate, si in hoc vel illo vel etiam infinitis rerum ordinibus collocaretur, acturum esset, cum tamen posset, si vellet, facere re ipsa oppositum”. See Franceschi 2011; Ocaña García 1998; Hellín 1967.

18. See Aquinas 1888, I, q. 105, a. 5; and Molina 1953: II, q. 14, a. 13, d. 26, 1-2 ff.

19. See Larraguibel Diez 2019.

divine concurrence must, therefore, be immediate and simultaneous with the secondary causes, centering itself always upon the idea of a cooperation between God and his creatures. It deals, therefore, with a joint concurrence of two different natures of being which in this way become complementary. The concept of immediacy implies precisely that there is no form of anteriority and that, accordingly, the previous meanings of motion and application suggested by Aquinas are rejected. In turn, the concept of simultaneity points to cooperation, to the joint action between God and the secondary cause. Molina gives the example of the boat being rowed simultaneously by two men.²⁰ The movement results from the addition of the two different forces. Precisely what this example seeks to symbolize is that both the divine general concurrence and the creature's particular concurrence are always partial causes which separately are not sufficient to produce the action and the effect. It is always necessary to have these two concurrences together.²¹ The point of the cooperative question is that the secondary cause cannot act and consummate an effect without divine concurrence and divine concurrence cannot produce a particular effect without the secondary cause. Both sides are necessary. The divine concurrence has an enabling role, the secondary cause a concretizing role. The secondary cause performs an active role which is irreplaceable.

This concurrence is provided to all natural and free causes so that they are able to produce their natural effects, according to their nature and particular purpose. The cooperative relationship between this universal cause and this particular cause is hereby established, the latter having the function of determining the divine assistance which is given in an open and indeterminate way. At the basis of this position is a concept of major importance and consequence to Molina: the concept of indifference.²²

Divine concurrence is given indifferently so that the secondary causes can determine it in the case of free causes, according to their will and to the exercise of their liberty. Molina takes a remarkable step. His view on the subject imbues the creature with a notable concretizing power, attributing to free causes the responsibility of determining divine concurrence. If the natural causes act necessarily, the free causes determine the indifferent divine concurrency within a horizon of different possibilities, expressing their autonomy and liberty, which also has consequences on natural causes stemming from the set of relations they establish with them.

20. See Molina 1953: II, q. 14, a. 13, d. 25, 12.

21. *Ibid.*: II, q. 14, a. 13, d. 26, 15: “[...] neque Deus per solum concursum universalem sine causis secundis neque causae secundae sine concursu universali Dei sufficient ad effectum producendum. At cum dicimus neque Deum per concursum universalem neque causas secundas esse integras, sed partiales causas effectuum, intelligendum id est de partialitate causae, ut vocant, non vero de partialitate effectus. Totus quippe effectus et a Deo est et a causis secundis”.

22. *Ibid.*: II, q. 14, a. 13, d. 26, 11: “Deus namque generali concursu influit ut causa universalis influxu quodam indifferenti ad varias actiones et effectus, determinatur vero ad species actionum et effectuum a particulari influxu causarum secundarum qui pro diversitate virtutis cuiusque ad agendum diversus est [...]”. See also, Hoffmann 2009; Queralt 1977.

The divine general concurrence should then be thought of as a co-operative concurrence which brings together different influences with differing functions that complement one another. God's general concurrence assists all the particular occurrences.²³ This concurrence is characterized as being continuous, ordinary and never denied.²⁴ The free cause always has at its disposal general and particular divine means and assistance to fulfil its end and rise from sin, as long as it is available to cooperate with God.

2.3 Predestination: Knowledge and Will

Molina's commentary on question 19 of the *Summa theologiae* I²⁵ develops a problem prior to analyzing the question of predestination. In question 19, Thomas Aquinas concludes that, since God is the universal cause, the effects of God's will must always and inevitably be fulfilled in one or another of the orders of things. In this question, in response to the first objection, Aquinas discusses the meaning of the famous passage from St Paul's *First Epistle to Timothy*: "God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (*1 Timothy* 2:4). The difficulty with this passage lies in the fact that it seems to indicate that God's will is not always accomplished, since not all men are saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Calvin, like other reformers, understands the divine will as absolute and interprets Paul's words as a general reference to human nature and not to *each* individual man.²⁶ Molina rejects the generic sense of the reformist interpretation, making a distinction, in God's relationship with free causes, between an absolute will and a conditioned will. Molina states that God wants, with an antecedent absolute will, the order of things and of ends, which he knows through his threefold knowledge. And with a conditioned will, he wants the salvation of *every* human being, provided that *every* human being also wants it.

The questions about predestination²⁷ are analyzed by Molina in the last part of the *Concordia*, in the context of the commentary on question 23 of the *Summa theologiae* I. In question 23, Aquinas argues that divine providence orders things to their respective ends.²⁸ As there are different natures of beings, there must also be different ends. Aquinas distinguishes between two ends: a natural end, to which natural causes are ordered; and a supernatural end, to which rational causes are ordered.²⁹ The supernatural end to which rational causes are ordered is eternal glory and beatitude, which is realized in the vision of God. This end transcends the natural forces of rational crea-

23. Molina 1953: II, q. 14, a. 13, d. 26, 15.

24. *Ibid.*: II, q. 14, a. 13, d. 26, 12-15.

25. Aquinas 1888: I, q. 19, a. 6.

26. Calvin 1861: 54 ff.

27. On predestination: see Marschler 2016; Macgregor 2015b; Rebalde 2015 (about predestination, in this article I have added and modified some commentaries I had included in the work mentioned); Cowburn 2008; Garrigou-Lagrangé 1939.

28. Aquinas 1888: I, q. 22.

29. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, 1.

tures and therefore it is God who orders and sends the rational creature to eternal glory, like the arrow is sent to the center of the target by the archer.³⁰

Deriving the sense of *destining* and *sending* from the term *predestine*,³¹ Aquinas defines predestination as a reason, contained in the divine mind, for some rational creatures to be led to eternal glory.³² The fulfilment of this reason is active in God and passive in creatures. Predestination concerns the one who predestines, and not the predestined.³³

Predestination then supposes a determination of the divine will, which includes both an act of election, approval and love, by which God wills the good of salvation for some creatures,³⁴ and an act of reprobation, by which God allows other creatures to fall into sin, condemning them and keeping them from eternal glory.³⁵

Aquinas considers it unwise to attribute the cause of predestination to the merits of rational creatures.³⁶ There are no merits in the action of any creature without God's assistance, which is already part of predestination, so it is not possible to distinguish merits from the effects of predestination. In Aquinas's view, predestination is an act of divine will, and does not depend on any disposition, effect or action of the creature or on the prediction of their merits.³⁷ The cause of predestination is the will and goodness of God.³⁸

Aquinas therefore concludes that, if the cause of predestination is God's will, then predestination is an order certain and infallible, and the number of the predestined is determined.³⁹ However, for Aquinas, predestination does not suppress the freedom of rational creatures. The effects of providence, being infallible, happen necessarily in natural causes, and contingently in free causes. Since predestination is a part of providence, just as free causes contingently realize the effects of providence, they also realize the effects of predestination.⁴⁰

As we have seen, Molina agrees with Aquinas when he distinguishes, within the scope of providence, a supernatural end to which free causes are ordered. For Molina, this part of providence corresponds to predestination, which consists of God's ordering and prior determination of the free causes that reach the ultimate end, that is, eternal glory and the vision of God. However, Molina seeks to reinterpret the meaning Aquinas attributes to the term *predestine*. Molina suggests two interpretations for Aquinas's proposal to read *predestine* in the sense of *destining* and *sending*: God leads the rational creature to where it cannot reach by its natural forces (to eternal glory); or he prede-

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, a. 2.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, a. 4.

35. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, a. 3. See O'Neill 2019.

36. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, a. 5.

37. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, a. 5, 1.

38. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, a. 5.

39. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, a. 7.

40. *Ibid.*: I, q. 23, a. 6.

termines and leads some causes to salvation and others to damnation. Molina understands the second sense as a form of determinism (and associates theologians Domingo Báñez and Francisco Zumel with this position and, to a certain extent, Paul, Augustine and Aquinas himself⁴¹).

According to this position, God moves and predetermines the predestined. Yet, Molina considers that, conceived in this way, predestination raises two difficulties: firstly, it presupposes a prior determination of the end of free causes, which jeopardizes the freedom of these causes; secondly, the election of some causes presupposes the reprobation and condemnation of other causes, which is incongruous with divine goodness.

Molina rejects the determinist position. He argues that the existence of an effective predetermination of second causes decreed by God, regardless of the merits or faults of these causes, devalues or suppresses the relevance that these causes have in their own process of salvation. Furthermore, divine predetermination holds God directly responsible for reprobation and condemnation. The reprobation of second causes would be determined by God, solely by a decree of his will, prior to any relationship with the effects produced by these causes, in such a way that these causes, not having been elected from all eternity, would not receive in any condition the means and assistance necessary for salvation. For Molina, such an effective and infallible determinative motion contradicts God's justice and goodness and suppresses the freedom of creatures.

Faced with these difficulties, Molina defines predestination as "the plan of the order or the means in God, through which he foresees the rational creature which is to be led to eternal life, with the intention of carrying out that order".⁴² Molina's definition is based on Aquinas's definition, but favors the first sense of the term *predestine*. Predestination means the plan in which creatures find all the conditions to be led to eternal glory. That's why predestination doesn't really have an opposite.

In this sense, Molina distinguishes two elections in predestination: an antecedent election, which concerns the order, means and assistance conferred by God for the salvation of all free causes; and a subsequent election, which properly consists of approval or disapproval, and which will depend either on the quality of the indifferent actions carried out by the second causes, based on their innate autonomy and freedom, or on their co-operation with divine assistance. Approval and disapproval do not derive from a predetermination of the creature by God.

The order created by God includes causes, means, assistance, effects and ends, and, therefore, the entire horizon of possibilities for natural and free causes. Once placed in the created order, free causes achieve well, or not so well, their effects and ends, and God has foreknowledge of all these effects. No cause can be saved by its natural forces alone. All free causes need the extraordinary and particular assistance of divine grace in order to persevere in virtue. And such assistance is attributed according to the decree

41. Molina 1953: VII, q. 23, a. 1-2, d. 1, 4 ff.

42. *Ibid.*: VII, q. 23, a. 1-2, d. 1, 8: "praedestinatio est ratio ordinis seu mediorum in Deo quibus praevidet creaturam rationalem perducendam in vitam aeternam cum proposito eundem ordinem exequendi".

of God's will. However, Molina argues that God does not deny assistance to the cause that co-operates and does what is in itself,⁴³ so that it can rise again and be led to glory, as indicated by the famous axiom *facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam*.⁴⁴ Therefore, for Molina, God has created an order in which he provides sufficient means and assistance for all causes to fulfil their purpose. Even the permission of sinning can providentially be included within this assistance. In this sense, as Paul says, "God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth". But, as we have seen, the means and assistance conferred by God are not necessarily effective, and their effects can be frustrated by the action of free causes.⁴⁵ Approval or disapproval depend on the merit or guilt of the cause. Molina's position is clear in the following passage on approval:

that no adult has been predestined for eternal life unless through his [or her] own merits which are in the power of free will to acquire or not to acquire, as it has chosen (provided that holy assistance and gifts have not in the slightest opposed to it). It is for this reason that [those merits] are imparted upon to him [or her], as a way of praise and gain.⁴⁶

According to Molina, predestination is linked to the merits of free causes. His position seems to move away from the doctrines of Paul, Augustine and Aquinas and draws closer to Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism, giving reason to the accusations made against him by his opponents. However, Molina is well aware of the limits set by the ancient controversy between Augustine and Pelagius and does not defend a Pelagian position. Molina incorporates the merits of free causes into predestination without reducing the cause of predestination to the merits alone.

According to Molina, God knows all the actions and merits of the free cause in every order in which it is placed. This knowledge is guaranteed by the triple divine knowledge, which includes the middle knowledge, without which foreknowledge of the effects of free causes would not be possible. Therefore, predestination depends in part on foreknowledge, because God must know, in a certain and infallible way, which causes achieve salvation, in all possible orders and in all the complexity of relationships between causes, means and assistance. However, Molina also sees predestination as a decree of divine will, associated with the knowledge of the plan of the order and the means by which the cause is saved. This order, and with it the conditions and horizon of possibilities for creation, is known by God and precedes the action of the free cause. And since predestination is partly foreknowledge, when God chooses the order in which he knows in advance which causes are approved and which ones are disapproved, divine will becomes the cause of creatures' predestination contained in the chosen order. With this position, Molina comes close to Aquinas's doctrine, in that

43. See *ibid.*: I, q. 14, a. 13, d. 10, 1.

44. *Ibid.*: I, q. 14, a. 13, d. 10, 4. See Franco 1961; Hellín 1960.

45. Báñez 1968: I, cap. 22, 6.

46. Molina 1953: VII, q. 23, a. 4-5, d. 1, m. 9, 2: "nullum adultum praedestinatum esse in vitam aeternam nisi per propria merita quae auxiliis et donis divinis nihil omnino impediuntibus in potestate liberi arbitrii situm sit re ipsa habere vel non habere, ut maluerit, qua de causa laudi et merito illi tribuuntur".

he establishes the decree of divine will as the cause of predestination. However, for Molina, God doesn't choose the order with the intention of wanting to approve some creatures and disapprove others, as if he didn't want the salvation of all of them.⁴⁷

Molina's interpretation, with which he tries to reconcile the freedom of causes with the positions of Paul, Augustine and Aquinas, is not without its difficulties. Molina himself identifies one of these difficulties: God's election of the order implies the knowledge that, in that particular plan, some causes are approved and others are disapproved. The causes that are disapproved, placed in another possible order, could be approved. The choice of a specific order seems to imply a destination of the causes: God chooses the causes he wants to save by choosing the plan of the order in which they are saved. The question is addressed by Molina⁴⁸ and in his answer he refers to the inscrutability of the reasons that justify God's will, as Paul, Augustine and Aquinas had anticipated.

However, Molina rejects the idea that divine choice is an act of discrimination between causes or an act aimed at the intentional predestination of some to the detriment of others. Molina concludes that divine choice happens as if God had no foreknowledge.⁴⁹ The order created by God is the best possible one, where all causes have equal conditions to be approved. In this way, divine goodness becomes the only guarantee of just election and the only guarantee that the plan of order chosen by God tends towards what is the best.

3. SALAMANCA DOMINICANS' CRITICISM OF LUIS DE MOLINA'S DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

Domingo Báñez's *Apologia* against the *Concordia* is probably the most systematic criticism of Molina. Molina's doctrine of predestination is rejected in chapters 22-26 of the first part of the *Apologia*. The criticism focuses initially on Molina's (and Francisco Suárez's) doctrine of middle knowledge.⁵⁰ For Báñez, Molina invented middle knowledge, which until that moment had never been defended among theology schools,⁵¹ to hide the fact that he rejected predestination and the predetermination of good acts of the human will. Báñez believes that the knowledges identified by Thomas Aquinas are sufficient to explain divine foreknowledge and that Molina's (and Suárez's) doctrine of middle knowledge undermines divine omnipotence.

Báñez's criticism of middle knowledge anticipates his criticism of Molina's doctrine of predestination, which he accuses the Jesuit of denying. He adds that Molina "invents a thousand ways of explaining predestination" so that it will not be obvious that his new doctrine contradicts the doctrines of Paul, Augustine and Aquinas.⁵² This

47. *Ibid.*: VII, q. 23, a. 4-5, d. 1, m. 13, 11: "Deum electione totius ordinis rerum qui usque ad consummationem saeculi decurrit, quantum est ex parte sua, salutem omnium expetivisse".

48. See *ibid.*: VII, q. 23, a. 4-5, d.1, m. 13, 4-5.

49. *Ibid.*: VII, q. 23, a. 4-5, d. 1, m. 13, 11.

50. Báñez makes no reference to Pedro da Fonseca: see Rebalde 2023.

51. Báñez 1968: I, cap. 15, 1.

52. *Ibid.*: I, cap. 22, 1.

is Báñez's main criticism: Molina's presumption of innovation, contained in his argument, against the traditional authorities of the Church.⁵³

Báñez rejects a series of theses about predestination proposed by Molina. These theses can be summarized as follows: firstly, there is only one reason why free causes are not the cause of predestination, which is that it is God who chooses the order of the causes, the means, and the divine assistance, from among many possible orders;⁵⁴ secondly, predestination presupposes two conditions: divine foreknowledge guaranteed by middle knowledge and divine will to confer assistance to free causes knowing through middle knowledge that with this assistance they attain salvation;⁵⁵ thirdly, divine will and the assistance it provides are not the reason for the good use of the free will of the second cause;⁵⁶ fourthly, the infallibility of predestination is guaranteed by middle knowledge and not by divine will and the assistance it confers;⁵⁷ fifthly, the reason for predestination lies in the good use of free will,⁵⁸ which God has always known through middle knowledge.⁵⁹

As well as rejecting these theses, Báñez accuses Molina of defending positions openly critical of the doctrines of Paul, Augustine and Aquinas, of advocating a doctrine similar to Pelagianism and of favoring Lutheranism.⁶⁰ Báñez considers the Molinist doctrine similar to the Pelagian doctrine because Molina attributes the reason for predestination to the foreknowledge of the merits of the free cause and because divine will can only be the certain cause of predestination if it is thought of together with the foreknowledge of the merits and demerits of these causes.⁶¹

Moreover, Báñez adds that Molina's conclusions favor the Lutheran doctrine. Báñez's accusation, which at first seemed incongruous with the accusation of Pelagianism, is consequential. Molina interprets the positions of Augustine and Aquinas in the same way as Luther, that is, attributing to these authors a deterministic doctrine, according to which the decree of divine will suppresses the free will of creatures. Molina therefore validates Luther's interpretation by considering, as Luther claims, that the traditional doctrines of the Church do not defend free will.

Báñez's critique highlights the two great theoretical limits of the debate on human freedom and on the compatibility of human freedom with the divine attributes among peninsular theologians from the second half of the 16th century. The whole debate must be situated in a middle position between Pelagius and Luther. Báñez summarizes these limits as follows: in order to defend free will, Pelagius rejects predestination; in order to

53. See Régnon 1890.

54. Báñez 1968: cap. 22, 2.

55. *Ibid.*: cap. 22, 3.

56. *Ibid.*: cap. 22, 4.

57. *Ibid.*: cap. 22, 6.

58. *Ibid.*: cap. 22, 5.

59. *Ibid.*: cap. 22, 7.

60. *Ibid.*: cap. 23, 3.

61. See Wetzel 2001.

defend predestination, Luther rejects free will.⁶² The middle position taken by Báñez advocates that neither free will implies the denial of predestination, nor predestination implies the rejection of free will.⁶³ In order to reconcile the two positions, Báñez argues that, according to the “Thomist school”, God applies effective premissions and assistance to the predestined that make them perfect and enable them to attain salvation in a certain and infallible way. Therefore, against Molina, Báñez rejects the idea that the prediction of the merits of the free cause can be the cause of predestination. And he also rejects what Molina considers fundamental to safeguarding the freedom of causes, namely that it is the free will that gives efficacy to divine assistance by making good use of it, by acting according to the innate freedom of free will. Furthermore, when rejecting Molina’s doctrine on the permission of sin, Báñez argues that it is not to ensure free will or to punish its misuse that God allows sin, but to show his love and mercy to the predestined.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, in rejecting Molina’s doctrine and in defending effective premissions and divine assistance,⁶⁵ Báñez assumes that he is incapable of explaining the compatibility of the free will of the second cause with these predeterminations. He concludes that the way to explain this compatibility is incomprehensible to reason, an obscure mystery, so inscrutable that the theologian must reduce himself to the dogmas of faith and to the humility of not wanting to know more than is convenient.⁶⁶

4. CONCLUSIONS

Profound connoisseurs of the *De auxiliis* controversy, such as Vicente Beltrán de Heredia, accept that Molina defended a doctrine of predestination *post praevisa merita*.⁶⁷ However, Juan Cruz Cruz rightly observes that Molina does not defend a predestination *post praevisa merita*, but a predestination *per praevisa merita*.⁶⁸

In fact, Molina argues that no cause is predestined without taking its merits into account, and that divine means and assistance are not effective on their own. Through the triple divine knowledge, which includes the middle knowledge that Molina introduced for the first time in the *Concordia*, God has a foreknowledge that is certain and infallible of the total plan of causes, means, actions, effects and ends. And God also has knowledge of the plan of the merits and of the good use of the will and of the divine assistance, of each free cause, in each of the possible orders. Therefore, for Molina, the approval or disapproval of free causes is linked to the prediction of merits.

In this sense, predestination depends on foreknowledge as being knowledge that guarantees the certainty and infallibility of the whole plan of creatures’ actions. This

62. Báñez 1968: cap. 23, 4.

63. *Ibid.*: cap. 23, 5.

64. *Ibid.*: cap. 26, 4.

65. See Matava 2016; Cai 2012.

66. Báñez 1968: I, cap. 23, 5.

67. Beltrán de Heredia 1968: 53; also, Rabeneck 1952.

68. Cruz Cruz 2014: 104 and 2021: 54.

is a fundamental element of Molina's definition. But Molina does not reduce predestination to an election by merits nor to the certainty of foreknowledge. And it is not possible to reduce Molina's doctrine of predestination to a discussion of the efficacy of the assistance of divine grace.

For Molina, as we have seen, predestination is at the same time a decree of God's will. God chooses the order and thus chooses the complete plan of causes, means, assistance, effects and ends. It can be said that with this choice he destines, by an absolute determination of his will, some causes for approval and others for disapproval. However, the causes are destined only indirectly and are not chosen but for their merits. Báñez and the Salamanca Dominicans interpreted Molina's doctrine in this way: the only reason for the cause of predestination not to be the creature, is God's choice of order. For Báñez and the Salamanca Dominicans, this solution is not enough and fails for being innovative. But with it Molina tried to reconcile all the variables present in the problem of predestination: he safeguards the free will of second causes; he values merit and the good use of divine assistance; he avoids falling into Pelagianism; he defends divine foreknowledge, providence and predestination; he agrees that predestination comes from a decree of divine will independent from the merits of free causes, as Thomas Aquinas claimed; and he avoids Lutheranism.

Finally, it can be concluded that, for Molina, predestination, through foreknowledge, is inseparable from the prediction of merits. But predestination is at the same time an act of divine will which, in choosing the order, indirectly determines the choice of causes, independently of merits, as if there were no such prediction.

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