

John Plaifere (d.1632) on conditional predestination: a well-mixed version of *scientia media* and resistible grace

JAE-EUN PARK

Chongshin University, Seoul, South Korea

This article argues that John Plaifere's doctrine of predestination appearing in *Appello Evangelium* (1651) can be labelled as 'conditional predestination', since it embodies two Arminian features: *scientia media* and resistible grace. His conditional predestination needs to be considered as recognizing at least five different variations of predestination in his time. It is distinctive in English Arminianism, but not because Plaifere introduces *scientia media* and resistible grace or because he is unique in adopting these notions (as is not the case). Rather, Plaifere's doctrine of predestination is distinctive because it is a hybrid version embracing core tenets of Molina, Arminius, Arminianism, and the Remonstrants. Although not every English Arminian or Dutch Remonstrant had much concern for *scientia media*, Plaifere's conditional predestination advances resistible grace, which is substantially based on the notion of *scientia media* as its metaphysical foundation. In analyzing Plaifere's *Appello Evangelium*, one can gain a sense of the specific technical-theological components with which English Arminianism was constructed.

KEYWORDS John Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, *scientia media*, resistible grace, conditional predestination, English Arminianism

Introduction

There has been much discussion in the surveys of anti-Calvinism in England regarding the rise of English Arminianism during the Stuart period (specifically, 1603–1685).¹ Since these studies have mostly been general historical surveys, they have

¹ See, for example, Nicholas R.N. Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter Revolution', in *The Origins of the English Civil War*, ed. C. Russell (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1973), 119–43; N.R.N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, C. 1590–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); N.R.N. Tyacke, 'Debate: The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered', *Past & Present* 115 (1987): 201–16; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman*

not dealt much with the detailed theological arguments of that time. As a result, the characteristics of English Arminianism they delineate are somewhat superficial, generalized, and focused on a single aspect, namely, a 'rejection of absolute or double predestination' or 'synergism'.² Yet many other factors besides the issue of double predestination promoted the rise of English Arminianism against Calvinism (such as their different viewpoints on ecclesiology³ and worship⁴). Nevertheless, throughout the whole discussion of English Arminianism the important factors that build the underlying metaphysical and theological arguments of Arminian conditional predestination have been neglected, namely, *scientia media* [middle knowledge] and resistible grace. Even though the notion of *scientia media* has been actively discussed in connection with Molinism and its application to resolve the conundrum of the relationship between God's foreknowledge and freedom of will regarding future conditional contingencies, the inclination has still been to discuss only those issues that are far removed from the context of English Arminianism.⁵

Indeed, scholars who study Arminianism have not only largely ignored the doctrines of *scientia media* and resistible grace but have also ignored the English Arminians themselves. Specifically, in comparison with the other English anti-Calvinists including Peter Heylyn (1599–1662) and William Laud (1573–1645), John Plaifere (or Playfere or Playford, d.1632)⁶ and his work titled *Appello Evangelium for the True Doctrine of the Divine Predestination, concorded with the Orthodox Doctrine*

and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 377–447; Peter White, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered', *Past & Present* 101 (1983): 34–54; P. White, 'The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered: A Rejoinder', *Past & Present* 115 (1987): 217–29; P. White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); P. White, 'The *via media* in the Early Stuart Church', in *The Early Stuart Church 1603–42*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 211–30; John Fielding, 'Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603–1642', in *The Early Stuart Church: 1603–1642*, ed. Kenneth Fincham (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 93–113; G. J. Hoenderdaal, 'The Debate About Arminius Outside the Netherlands', in *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century: An Exchange of Learning*, eds. Lunsingh Scheurleer, Theodoor Herman, and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 137–59.

² See Tyacke, 'Debate', 204; White, 'The Rise of Arminianism', 54. While Tyacke recognizes different predestinarian positions, he does not subject them to much analysis; see Nicholas R.N. Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism, c. 1530–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 3–4, 215.

³ See Fielding, 'Arminianism in the Localities', 96; Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, *passim*.

⁴ See Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored: the Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547–c.1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 131–75, 284–304.

⁵ See, for example, Eef Dekker, 'Was Arminius a Molinist?' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27 (1996): 337–52; E. Dekker, *Middle Knowledge* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000); Richard A. Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991); R.A. Muller, 'God, Predestination, and the Integrity of the Created Order: A Note on Patterns in Arminius' Theology', in *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, ed. W. F. Graham (Kirkville: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994), 431–46; R.A. Muller, 'Grace, Election, and Contingent Choice: Arminius' Gambit and the Reformed Response', in *The Grace of God and the Bondage of the Will*, eds. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, 2 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), vol. 2, 251–78; R.A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 4 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), vol. 3, 417–24 (abbreviated as PRRD).

⁶ The subtitle of the 1651 edition of *Appello Evangelium* offers some clues by referring to Plaifere as 'sometime Fellow of Sidney-Sussex College, in Cambridge, and late Rector of Debden in Suffolk.' However, very little biographical information on Plaifere is available. For a brief discussion on this aspect, see Richard Cattermole, *The Literature of the Church of England Indicated in Selections from the Writings of the Eminent Divines: With Memoirs of Their Lives, and Historical Sketches of the Times in Which They Lived* (London: J. W. Parker, 1844), 334–42; John Venn and John Archibald Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, 1922–1927*, vol. 3, 371. In the preface of *Appello Evangelium* (1719 edition), brief biographical information about John Plaifere (not definitive, but hypothetical) is included.

of *God's Free-Grace and Man's Free-Will* (1651)⁷ is hardly discussed. Although Seán Hughes has dealt minutely with Plaifere and *Appello Evangelium*, his focus was not on Plaifere's doctrine of *scientia media* and resistible grace but rather to review a doctrinal diversity regarding predestination in the context of the relationship between the Reformed and the Roman Catholic Church.⁸ Barry Bryant's study and Gregory Dodds's mention of Plaifere are also fragmentary.⁹ Even though Richard Cattermole neatly summarizes the historical background of *Appello Evangelium* and its content, he does not specifically mention *scientia media*.¹⁰ Both Plaifere and his *Appello Evangelium* are either forgotten by researchers or the content is only superficially touched upon.

However, because the notion of Plaifere's conditional predestination, which is based on the ideas of *scientia media* and resistible grace, occupied a full-fledged place in English Arminianism, his ideas merit attention. The notion of *scientia media* derived originally from Pedro da Fonseca, Molina, and Arminius plays an underlying metaphysical and philosophical role in building Plaifere's conditional predestination.¹¹ At the same time, the doctrine of resistible grace functions as a human condition that supports the existence of *scientia media* throughout Plaifere's notion of Arminian conditional predestination. If Peter Baro in the latter part of the sixteenth century can be regarded as 'Arminius *avant la lettre*' within English anti-Calvinism as H.C. Porter indicates,¹² Plaifere's *Appello Evangelium* in the early seventeenth century could be called a full-blown Arminian text as indeed it fully embodies two important Arminian factors, namely, *scientia media* and resistible grace. Therefore Plaifere's conditional predestination needs to be considered when portraying the nature of English Arminianism.

⁷ Plaifere's posthumous work *Appello Evangelium* went through three editions in 1651, 1652, and 1653. The 1651 edition included a 1629 vindication of the theological position of Christopher Potter (1590/91–1646). *Appello Evangelium* was reprinted in 1719 with a fine print including the following title: 'An Appeal to the Gospel, for the True Doctrine of Divine Predestination, concorded with God's Free Grace, and Man's Free-Will. With an Appendix, Concerning the Salvability of the Heathen', in *A Collection of Tracts Concerning Predestination and Providence, and the Other Points Depending on Them* (Cambridge: University Press, 1719), 2–222. In the *Arminian Magazine* (July 1778–February 1779), Plaifere's *Appello Evangelium* once more appeared. This current essay uses the 1719 reprinted edition. All further references are to the pagination and text of the 1719 reprint. Original spelling, italics, and punctuation are also retained in all quoted passages.

⁸ Seán F. Hughes, 'The Problem of "Calvinism": English Theologies of Predestination c. 1580–1630', in *Belief and Practice in Reformation England: A Tribute to Patrick Collinson from His Students*, eds. Susan Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 229–49. The present study will get into Plaifere's argument more deeply than Hughes's work specifically in light of the specific ideas of *scientia media* and resistible grace.

⁹ Barry E. Bryant, 'Molina, Arminius, Plaifere, Goad, and Wesley on Human Free-Will, Divine Omniscience, and Middle Knowledge', *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27 (1992): 93–103. Gregory D. Dodds, 'Constructing the Moderate Middle in Early Stuart England', in *Exploiting Erasmus: The Erasmus Legacy and Religious Change in Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 171–72.

¹⁰ Cf. Cattermole, *The Literature of the Church of England*, 334–42.

¹¹ Cf. Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 167–80 (disp., 52.8–19); James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, vol. 1, trans. James Nichols (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956), 434–60 (pub. disp., IV.1–77). For the London edition of Arminius' work, see *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols, 3 vols (Buffalo: Derby, Miller and Orton, 1853).

¹² Harry C. Porter, *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 281. For the discussion on Arminius *avant la lettre* within English anti-Calvinism, see also Tyacke, 'Debate', 204; Keith D. Stanglin, 'Arminius *Avant la Lettre*: Peter Baro, Jacob Arminius, and the Bond of Predestinarian Polemic', *Westminster Theological Journal* 67 (2005): 51–74. Cf. Peter Baro, 'Summary of Three Opinions Concerning Predestination', in *The Works of James Arminius*, vol. 1, trans. James Nichols (London: Longman, 1825), 92–100.

This essay progresses as follows. After examining the five types of the doctrine of predestination that Plaifere proposes, this discussion considers the notion of *scientia media* from a metaphysical basis and the doctrine of resistible grace as a human condition, as expressed in Plaifere's fifth type (i.e. conditional predestination). Finally, this paper examines and reevaluates Plaifere's conditional predestination as it is based on the ideas of *scientia media* and resistible grace, in the historical theological debates between God's salvific sovereignty and human free will.

The five categories of the doctrine of predestination

Earlier attempts at defining the theological characteristics of English Arminianism as simply a 'rejection of absolute-double predestination' or as 'synergism'¹³ provided limited opportunities to consider on what kind of technical-theological elements the English Arminian doctrine was formed and built. Specifically, Plaifere's Arminian predestination contained two related elements. First, *scientia media*, which has a strong continuity with Molina and Arminius, provided an underlying philosophical and metaphysical foundation for his doctrine of predestination. Second, the notion of resistible grace, substantially shared with the thought of Arminians and Remonstrants, led to a conditional and synergistic predestination.

The chief concern of *Appello Evangelium* was the doctrine of predestination. In the extremely controversial context of the ongoing predestinarian debate, Plaifere wanted to appeal to 'the light of Divine revelation in God's holy word' to better understand 'predestination and election, which may seem hard and obscure', but were still the 'fundamental principles of Christianity, and the Grounds of [the] Catechism'.¹⁴ To introduce the existing doctrines of predestination and then defend their own type based on their analysis, Baro proposed three types of predestination¹⁵ and Arminius four.¹⁶ However, Plaifere suggested five types: First, there was supralapsarian predestination; second, infralapsarian; third, a different version of infralapsarian; fourth, a predestination based on God's foreknowledge; and fifth, a predestination based on the notion of *scientia media*. Just as both Baro and Arminius chose their last doctrine as the correct one even while conceding that all options (of course including their own) existed 'in the Reformed Church', Plaifere also affirmed that his own option, the last one listed, was much truer than the others.¹⁷ Plaifere insisted that the other types were 'so obscur'd and mingl'd with defects, that they seem to me to lead [one] both into error in faith, and corruption of Manners'.¹⁸

¹³ The term 'synergism' refers to the Arminian view that as Muller defines, 'not only supposes the cooperation of the will with Word and Spirit, but the ability of the will to apply or attach itself to grace. In the Arminian view, the will is the effective ground of salvation. This perspective is not only synergistic but also fully semi-Pelagian'. See Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1995), 294 (s.v. *synergismus*).

¹⁴ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 5.

¹⁵ Baro, 'Summary of Three Opinions Concerning Predestination', 92–100. Here Baro categorizes the predestinarian options as three types: The type that sounds like a classic example of what is later called supralapsarianism, infralapsarianism, and his own conditional predestination.

¹⁶ Arminius, *The Works of James Arminius*, 1, 614–53. Here Arminius categorizes as four types: supralapsarianism (the first option), infralapsarianism (the second and third options), and his own conditional predestination (the fourth).

¹⁷ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 37.

¹⁸ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 1.

Yet for Plaifere even the fifth type could not be accepted as absolute truth; he acknowledged that ‘in the *fifth Opinion*, I will not say there [is] the full and naked truth; for since we see now *thro’ a Glass Darkly* [1 Cor. 13:12].¹⁹ Plaifere believed that this dim and faint sight could be made vivid only through ‘*the depth of the riches, and wisdom, and knowledge of God*’ (Rom. 11:33) revealed in the Gospel descended from the Apostles.²⁰ This is why Plaifere titles his writing *Appello Evangelium* [I Appeal to the Gospel].

The first of the five types that Plaifere proposed resembles the doctrine later called supralapsarianism, or as Plaifere called it a Lambeth faith. This type was defended by ‘Beza, Piscator, Whitacre, Perkins, and other Holy and Learned Men’, but rejected by ‘Peter Moulin, Robert Abbot the Bishop of Salisbury, and Arminius, and his followers in the low Countries’.²¹ Since in this first type the eternal decrees of the election and reprobation of individuals based on God’s will are prior to the eternal decrees of the Fall and redemption (thus, *supra lapsum*, above or before the Fall), Plaifere exposed its theological defects as follows: ‘it is charg’d, *With making God the Author of Sin; With reprobating Men before they were Evil; With Electing Men not in Christ*’.²² Using a quotation from Montagu’s *Appello Caesarem*, Plaifere points out that the most serious problem of this type is that ‘in it there is no respect had to anything fore-known, not so much as the fall of Man, much less Christ, or Faith, giving to God no fore-knowledge, or no use of it at all’.²³ Plaifere sees too much emphasis on God’s eternal decree thereby ignoring whether human beings accept or reject God’s grace, thus not only making God the author of sin but also destroying God’s fore-knowledge of man’s response.²⁴ Through revealing the theological weaknesses of the Lambeth Articles word by word (only from the first to the fourth articles) Plaifere tries to expose the theological invalidities of the first opinion. He begins by saying that although the particular part, ‘*God hath Predestinated*’, in the first section of the Lambeth Articles is ‘most true’, there is a critical problem because ‘it saith nothing *concerning the Order and Manner* [of predestination]’.²⁵ The real question Plaifere poses regarding the cause of predestination as presented in Lambeth’s second article is ‘not concerning the Cause of Predestination, but the Object of it, [namely,] whether it be simply *Man*, or *Man considered as fallen*, or *Man with respect to his repentance*, or *stubbornness in*

¹⁹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 1–2.

²⁰ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 5.

²¹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 7. Plaifere summarizes the first option as follows: ‘1. That God from all Eternity decreed to create a certain number of Men. 2. That of this number he Predestinated some to everlasting Life; and some other he reprobated unto eternal Death. 3. That in this Act he respected nothing more than his own Dominion, and the Pleasure of his own Will. 4. That to bring Men to these ends, he decreed to permit Sin to enter in upon all Men, that the reprobate might be condemned for Sin; and decreed to send his Son to recover out of Sin his Elect, fallen together with the reprobate’, Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 7.

²² Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 7.

²³ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 8. Cf. Montagu, *Appello Caesarem: A Just Appeal From Two Unjust Informers* (London: Matthew Lowndes, 1625), 49, 54.

²⁴ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 7–12.

²⁵ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 11. Cf. The first article of Lambeth: ‘1. God from eternity hath predestinated certain men unto life; certain men he hath reprobated’. See Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, 3 vols (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919), vol. 3: ‘The Lambeth Articles’, 523.

Sin'.²⁶ Furthermore, Plaifere agrees that a certain number of predestined people as presented in the third article of Lambeth is also 'very true, but [it should be] founded on the infallibility of God's foreknowledge, as well as the immutability of his Will'.²⁷ Plaifere adds a strongly-worded note, saying that the fourth article related to the notion of reprobation is 'the most ambiguous assertion ... [because it] supposes Non-predestination to be the cause of the necessity of condemnation for Sin'.²⁸ Due to these theological defects, Plaifere concluded that the first type of predestination, the supralapsarian view that is substantially implied in the Lambeth Articles, is far removed from the orthodoxy.²⁹

The second type of predestination is a classic example of what was later called infralapsarianism. Plaifere mentions that 'St. *Austin* [Augustine] was the first Author' and has as 'its defenders the *Dominicans*, *Bellarmino*, *Cajetan* and many other Papists; among Protestants, the Synod at *Dort*, P. *Moulin*, Dr. *Abbot*, Dr. *Carleton* Bp. of *Chichester* and others'.³⁰ This view asserts that God's decrees of election and reprobation logically succeeded the decree of the Fall (thus, *infra lapsum*, below or after the Fall). In this scheme, described as 'out of Mankind seen fallen into Sin and Misery', God elects some and rejects the rest.³¹ Plaifere believes that the theological benefit of the second option is that unlike the first, God's foreknowledge could be secure to a certain degree, for 'God decreed something based on his foreknowledge of what Man would do'.³² However, as Plaifere acknowledges, the problem for the second option is that inasmuch as 'it teacheth Christ to be sent only to the Elect, and the Word and Spirit only to call them', the reprobates 'are more oppressed' and they are 'more deeply condemned'. The second doctrinal type presents another problem in that it makes Original Sin the cause of reprobation. Plaifere insists that whereas in the first type, by imputing original sin 'to an antecedent irrespective Decree' sin becomes the cause of condemnation, while in the second type, by 'foreseeing infidelity or the disobedience [of human beings]' original sin becomes the cause of reprobation. Setting aside this difference and seeing that both types make Original Sin the cause of reprobation, Plaifere concludes that they both 'offend much against God's Goodness and Truth'.³³

²⁶ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 11. Cf. The second article of Lambeth: '2. The moving or efficient cause of predestination unto life is not the foresight of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of anything that is in the person predestinated, but only the good will and pleasure of God'. See Schaff, *Creeds* 3, 'The Lambeth Articles', 523.

²⁷ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 11. Cf. The third article of Lambeth: '3. There is predetermined a certain number of the predestinate, which can neither be augmented nor diminished'. See Schaff, *Creeds*, 3, 'The Lambeth Articles', 523.

²⁸ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 11–12. Cf. The fourth article of Lambeth: '4. Those who are not predestinated to salvation shall be necessarily damned for their sins'. See Schaff, *Creeds* 3, 'The Lambeth Articles', 523.

²⁹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 8.

³⁰ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 12. Plaifere builds the order of predestination based on this view as follows: '1. That God from all Eternity decreed to create Mankind Holy, and Good. 2. That he fore-saw Man being tempted by Satan, would fall into Sin, if God did not hinder it; he decreed not to hinder. 3. That out of Mankind seen fallen into Sin and Misery, he chose a certain number to raise to righteousness, and to Eternal Life; and rejected the rest, leaving them in their Sins. 4. That for these, his chosen, he decreed to send his Son to redeem them, and his Spirit to call them, and sanctify them; the rest he decreed to forsake, leaving them to Satan and themselves, and to punish them for their Sins', Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 12.

³¹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 12.

³² Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 13.

³³ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 13.

Plaifere's third classification of predestination is similar enough to the second type, i.e. infralapsarianism, that they are not always distinguished from each other. For example, while Cattermole classifies Plaifere's second type as the sublapsarian option and the third as the presentation of the *via media*, Hughes binds the second and third types together into one category, the infralapsarian option.³⁴ Yet Plaifere sees a clear difference between the second and the third types, arguing that whereas in the second option God sends his Son only to the Elect, in the third option God sends his Son 'to the world and all men, with a common and sufficient Grace in the means to work faith in Men'.³⁵ Moreover, in the scheme for the third type, 'out of God's foreknowledge of Man's infirmity', God decreed 'to add a special Grace more effectual, and abundant, to whomsoever he pleased, through which they would then believe'.³⁶ Although the second and third types are basically the same in terms of their following the logical order of *infra lapsum*, Plaifere argues that their manner and application are different. Unlike the second, the third type maintains the Remonstrants' tenets, namely, the concept of 'sufficient grace for all' (unlimited atonement) and 'salvation depended on belief' (conditional application).³⁷ In this regard Plaifere's third option can be seen as a different version of infralapsarianism among the diverse infralapsarian views already implied in the Arminian tenets.³⁸ Plaifere points out that not only '[t]he Reverend and Learned late Bishop of Norwich, Dr. Overall, and Richard Thompson' but also 'five Articles controverted in Holland' share the spirit of the third type.³⁹ Plaifere argues that the third option is 'nearer to the Truth, than the former [the first and second]', for the third type embraces several arguments which the previous types overlook, namely, that Christ died for the whole world, the promise of the Gospel is universal, sufficient grace is given to all, and God's foreknowledge is extended to all men in particular, but a more effectual grace is extended to some who are prepared by God based on their belief.⁴⁰

³⁴ See Cattermole, *The Literature of the Church of England*, 335–36; Hughes, 'The Problem of "Calvinism"', 240–42. Cattermole seems to use the term infralapsarianism and sublapsarianism interchangeably.

³⁵ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 16. Plaifere organizes the order of the third option as follows: '(1). That God decreed to create Mankind Good, as the second Opinion said. (2). That he foresaw the fall of Man, as in the same second Opinion was said. (3). That he decreed to send his Son to die for the World, and his Word to call, and to offer Salvation unto all Men, with a common and sufficient Grace in the means to work faith in Men, if they be not wanting to themselves. (4). That out of God's foreknowledge of Man's infirmity, and that none would believe by this common Grace, he decreed to add a special Grace more effectual, and abundant, to whomsoever he pleased, chosen according to his own purpose and Grace, by which they shall not only be able to believe. but also actually believe'. See Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 16–17.

³⁶ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 16–17.

³⁷ Cf. Schaff, *Creeds* 3, 'The Five Arminian Articles (1610)', 545–49.

³⁸ Modern systematic theologians tend to regard this kind of combined version as sublapsarianism. For example, Millard Erickson defines the order of predestination in sublapsarianism as follows: (1) the decree to create human beings; (2) the decree to permit the fall; (3) the decree to provide salvation sufficient for all; and (4) the decree to choose some to receive this salvation. Based on this order, Erickson regards the sublapsarian view as being closed to Arminian tenets. See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 843, 852, 931. Erickson largely depends on Augustus Strong's thesis. Cf. Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Westwood: Revell, 1907), 777–79. However, what both Erickson and Strong miss is that infralapsarianism and sublapsarianism are basically the same in terms of holding the notion of *infra lapsum* and that both are translations of the same Latin (*infralapsus*). See Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 19.

³⁹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 17–18.

⁴⁰ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 19. Plaifere's third type is similar to the 'Five Arminian Articles (or Five Articles of Remonstrance, 1610)', Cf. Schaff, *Creeds* 3, 'The Five Arminian Articles', 545–49.

The fourth doctrine in Plaifere's scheme is a predestination based on God's foreknowledge, which Plaifere attributes to '*Melanchton, Hemingius, and the Lutherans ... the Remonstrants, or Arminians, and many Papists*'.⁴¹ Although this opinion is similarly based on the third opinion in its holding to the logical order of *infra lapsum*, namely, that 'God [firstly] Decreed to create Man, to permit him to Fall, and to send Christ to Redeem the World', the difference arises from the following argument which is based on an emphasis placed on the notion of conditional predestination and God's foreknowledge of that:

[God] made a general conditional Decree of Predestination, under the condition of Faith, and Perseverance; and a special absolute Decree of Electing those to Life, whom he foreknew would believe and persevere under the means and aids of Grace, Faith and Perseverance: and a special absolute Decree of condemning them, whom he foresaw would abide impenitent in their Sins.⁴²

Even though Plaifere endorses this conditional predestination that is based on God's foreknowledge when he talks about the fifth type he ironically also expresses herein his dislike of the fourth type because of its implication of a man-centered way: 'I mislike it ... because the Decree of special Election of such as believe (no better declared than thus) seemeth to make Men choose God first, rather than God them'.⁴³ Nevertheless, for Plaifere, the fourth option 'doth well' and 'agreeth with the Scriptures that build Election upon Fore-knowledge at large, simply and properly taken, and promise Salvation to the Believer, but upon condition of persevering to the end'.⁴⁴

Before moving more directly into the fifth type of predestination, Plaifere evaluates the four previously addressed opinions: 'None of those four give full satisfaction, some pieces of Truth being found in every one of them, but joined with some inconvenience'.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, for Plaifere each opinion has its own theological benefits in terms of revealing God's attributes and properties, respectively, 'His *Dominion and Power*, according to the *first* opinion, His *Mercy and Justice*, asserted in the *second*, His *Truth and special Grace*, with the *third*, His *Wisdom and Foreknowledge*, which the *fourth* contends'.⁴⁶ However, Plaifere still believes that none of these options make good; rather, he states that 'I can make that good ... by the Doctrine of the fifth Opinion'.⁴⁷

Plaifere's own position is that of the fifth doctrine of predestination, which he acknowledges substantially shares its theological foundations with Arminius, many Jesuits, Molina, Vasquez, Suarez, Becanus, and the Greek and Latin fathers before Augustine.⁴⁸ Here is Plaifere's account of the fifth view:

⁴¹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 25.

⁴² Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 25.

⁴³ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 25.

⁴⁴ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 26.

⁴⁵ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 26.

⁴⁶ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 26.

⁴⁷ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 14.

⁴⁸ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 27.

- (1) God by his infinite understanding, from all eternity, knew all things that were possible to be.
- (2) Among other infinite things possible, he conceived all of this one frame of the world as it is now, and every individual person in it, as possible.
- (3) God knew how to vary or alter the ordering either of all, or of any part, of person in the race of Men, in order to bring forth other effects.
- (4) But God considered it to be good, for the manifestation of his wisdom and power, justice and mercy, to bring this particular frame of the world and this particular order of humankind into being.
- (5) God foreknew that, if he brought this universe into being, particular persons would inevitably be saved and others, by their own fault and by God's justice, would inevitably be damned.
- (6) But God determined to bring all this into being, and in so doing, to predestinate all human beings either to eternal life or to eternal death. Yet when God could have ordered them otherwise to produce another event, he would not do it.⁴⁹

Plaifere's account is a subtle presentation of the doctrine of predestination and its basis which is closely related to the notion of *scientia media*. In the relationship between God's foreknowledge and the future contingencies based on human choice in the context of predestination, the notion of *scientia media* plays a role in the philosophical and metaphysical underpinnings of Plaifere's fifth opinion. As shall be seen below, the fifth option is the form that is mingled with the doctrine of *scientia media* as a philosophical basis for conditional predestination and also resistible grace as a human condition.

Scientia media

Compared to his Arminian contemporaries Plaifere was a strong advocate of *scientia media*.⁵⁰ Still, Plaifere was clearly influenced by Molina and Arminius; he not only cites Molina and Arminius in a footnote, but also his account of *scientia media* is basically the same as theirs.⁵¹ In addition, given that even the Oxford divine (Walter Browne) owned a copy of Molina's *Concordia* along with five writings of

⁴⁹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 28–29. This is a summarized account of Plaifere's lengthy order.

⁵⁰ Although Plaifere's contemporary, Thomas Goad (1576–1638), seems to keep in mind the notion of *scientia media*, he does not use the term *scientia media*, nor does he mention Molina and Arminius in his disputation. Yet, it should not be too hastily concluded that Goad does not relate to the doctrine of Molina and Arminius, for Goad consistently uses a concept similar to *scientia media*, namely, 'middle point' or 'middle manner' when referring to the space between necessity and contingency. See Thomas Goad, 'A Disputation, *Partly Theological, Partly Metaphysical*, Concerning the Necessity and Contingency of Events in the World, in Respect of God's Eternal Decrees', in *A Collection of Tracts Concerning Predestination and Providence, and the Other Points Depending on Them* (Cambridge: University Press, 1719), 377, 380.

⁵¹ With regard to the question of whether Arminius was a Molinist, a positive answer is dominant, e.g. Muller argues that '[L]ike Molina, he [Arminius] assumes that God elects or rejects on the basis of a foreknowledge of human response to grace. The basic outline is Molinist, then, inasmuch as the divine foreknowledge includes knowledge of the rejection as well as the acceptance of grace'. See Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence*, 163; Muller, 'Grace, Election, and Contingent Choice', 251–78; Muller, 'God, Predestination, and the Integrity of the Created Order', 441–43; Muller, *PRRD*, 3:418. See also Dekker's account, 'Was Arminius a Molinist?' 337–52. Stanglin and McCall add that although Arminius makes very important changes to Molina's account — for example, predestination to justification is by God's foreknowledge of faith, not merit, Arminius's view, apart from this adaptation, is close to that of Molina and indeed heavily relies on it. See Keith D. Stanglin and Thomas H. McCall, *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 69. For Plaifere's mention of Molina and Arminius in a footnote, see Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 27, 45.

Arminius (discovered when his library was cataloged in 1613),⁵² it can be assumed that Molina and Arminius' writings were read at that time and that Plaifere also had them in his own library.

Plaifere distinguishes God's knowledge as being of three types just as Molina and Arminius do, namely, simple knowledge, visionary knowledge, and middle knowledge.⁵³ While Plaifere's forerunners expand these types of God's knowledge with several expatiations — e.g. the first is necessary, natural, and indefinite; the second is free, voluntary, and definite, Plaifere tends to simplify that knowledge classification into fixed terms, namely, *scientia simplicis intelligentiae*, *scientia visionis*, and *scientia media*.⁵⁴ Plaifere expounds a bit more on these terms, explaining that 'the first [*scientia simplicis intelligentiae* or knowledge of uncompounded intelligence] is the knowledge of all things possible, understood as the Omnipotency of God himself; the second [*scientia visionis* or knowledge of vision] is of things that shall be, [based] on the decree [that was] made that they shall be; for then they are seen as [being] present'.⁵⁵ Thus, while the first knowledge is God's simple knowledge of all that must be (in the sense of logical necessity), it is also God's knowledge of all that could be (in the sense of logical possibility).⁵⁶ Plaifere adds that the '*knowledge of simple or mere understanding* is also called his *natural* Knowledge, because it is in God, who is of infinite understanding, before any act of his Will be supposed to have passed'.⁵⁷ The second, knowledge of vision or God's free knowledge, is his knowledge of what will be, and is logically dependent on the Divine Will: 'Knowledge of Vision ... is followed [by] some free act of the Will of God'.⁵⁸ To offer a definition of the third knowledge, *scientia media*, Plaifere quotes directly from Arminius' *Public Disputation* in that middle knowledge 'precedes indeed the free act of the Divine will, but hypothetically from this act it seems that some particular thing will occur'.⁵⁹ Thus, *scientia media* is that aspect by which God knows conditionally that 'if this thing happens, that will take place'.⁶⁰ This, *scientia media* is God's knowledge of all that would be, according to a certain conditional occurrence. It is a kind of divine knowing that is intentionally placed between God's necessary and his voluntary knowledge.⁶¹

Throughout the discussion of *scientia media* in *Appello Evangelium*, Plaifere's main concern is to rectify several misunderstandings that commonly result from those who object to *scientia media*. First, Plaifere advocates the necessity of *scientia*

⁵² Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists*, 65–66; Stanglin, 'Arminius *Avant la Lettre*', 68.

⁵³ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 38–47.

⁵⁴ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 40, 164–66. Cf. Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 167–80 (disp., 52.8–19); Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius* 1, 434–60 (pub. disp., IV.1–77).

⁵⁵ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 40.

⁵⁶ Stanglin and McCall, *Jacob Arminius*, 66. Cf. Muller, *Dictionary*, 274–75 (s.v. *scientia Dei*).

⁵⁷ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 165.

⁵⁸ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 164.

⁵⁹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 43. Cf. Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius* 1, 448 (pub. disp., IV.43).

⁶⁰ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 43.

⁶¹ Cf. Muller, *PRRD*, 3, 419. Molina states that 'middle knowledge partly has the character of natural knowledge, since it was prior to the free act of the divine will and since God did not have the power to know anything else, and that it partly has the character of free knowledge, since the fact that it is knowledge of the one part rather than of the other derives from the fact that free choice, on the hypothesis that it should be created in one or another order of things, would do the one thing rather than the other, even though it would indifferently be able to do either of them'. See Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 169 (disp., 52.10).

media to his detractors who only argue that ‘this kind of Knowledge hath no Object, and consequently there is no such kind of Knowledge’.⁶² Plaifere answers, saying that this notion is necessary to know how to deal with the conundrum of how ‘future, contingent, conditional things, especially the free Acts of a created Will, [can] be a subject knowable unto God by his Knowledge of *simple Understanding*’.⁶³ Plaifere argues that if *scientia media* does not exist, ‘all the acts of a Freewill are determined by a Divine Decree ... so God knows no otherwise that they will be, because he hath Decreed that they shall be’.⁶⁴ Thus for Plaifere, the notion of *scientia media* is without doubt crucial in that it guarantees human freedom to choose future contingencies apart from an already fixed divine decree. Second, Plaifere responds to Paulus Ferrius’s (or Paul Ferry, 1591–1669) criticism which is based on the humanistic implication of *scientia media* that ‘it [*scientia media*] supposes such free actions of a created Will, as [it] does not pre-suppose a Divine Decree, but in order at least precedes it’.⁶⁵ Plaifere’s answer also is simple, namely, that *scientia media* ‘evidently partaketh more of the Knowledge of *simple Understanding*, than of that of *Vision*’.⁶⁶ Plaifere then adds:

I have therefore enough to conclude that all things, whatsoever Acts of God, or Acts of the Creature, Necessary, Free, Contingent, Future, Good, Evil, that are, after the Decree of God, certainly known by the *Knowledge of Vision*, were, before that Decree, when they were suspended under the pleasure of God, whether they should absolutely be or no, known as certainly by the *Knowledge of simple Understanding*: for any object whatsoever being supposed to be, it necessarily followeth that the Divine Understanding hath knowledge of it, because of the infinity of his Essence; supposing also any object as possible to be, God necessarily understands what would arise from it.⁶⁷

Plaifere’s argument is based on his logical understanding that *scientia media* does not restrict God’s simple knowledge as Ferrius thinks it does; rather, ultimately it is based on God’s knowledge of simple understanding. Yet Plaifere’s answer is not convincing because Ferrius’s core question concerns the degree to which God’s knowledge or Will is controlled by human free will within the scheme of *scientia media*, not whether *scientia media* is grounded in God’s simple knowledge. The third and last objection to *scientia media* is attributed to the Dominicans. The gist of this criticism is that ‘they [advocates of *scientia media*] deny absolutely, that God doth foreknow future conditional things [without *scientia media*]’.⁶⁸ On this point, Plaifere questions in return whether God can really ‘know things conditionally future’ in ‘fix [ed] ways’ (that is, without *scientia media*).⁶⁹ Plaifere believes that if future

⁶² Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 43.

⁶³ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 43.

⁶⁴ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 43–44.

⁶⁵ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 44. Turretin’s critical argument on *scientia media* is also similar to that of Ferrius’s. Turretin regards the notion of *scientia media* as foreknowledge of future conditionals or conditional future contingencies arising from the free choice of creatures prior to the divine willing. See Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Electic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger, 3 vols (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1992), vol. 1, 212–18 (III. xiii.1–23).

⁶⁶ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 44.

⁶⁷ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 45.

⁶⁸ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 44.

⁶⁹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 44–45.

contingent events are understood, except for *scientia media*, the outcome is highly likely to lead to a deterministic or fatalistic form.⁷⁰ Plaifere applies *scientia media* in a way that ensures the specific conditions that rest between God's simple knowledge and knowledge of a vision. His view is the counter-philosophical argument to the first predestinarian type, namely, supralapsarianism, which Plaifere regards as a deterministic formulation that admits to a double predestination before the Fall without considering any future conditional contingencies.⁷¹

Plaifere thus intentionally places *scientia media* between *scientia necessaria* and *scientia voluntaria* so as to guarantee creative space for the participation of human decision-making as part of God's knowledge and will.⁷² It is not surprising that Plaifere strongly holds to this very notion; it is necessary as a metaphysical underpinning in order for him to develop his Arminian conditional predestination concept based on the doctrine of resistible grace.

Resistible grace

Based not only on *scientia media* as a philosophical basis, but also on the Five Articles of Remonstrance as a theological foundation, Plaifere criticizes the main traditional Calvinistic teachings and then based on this criticism he formulates the detailed elements of his fifth type of conditional predestination doctrine. First, with regard to both absolute and double predestination (specifically, 'eternal reprobation'), Plaifere shows his strong signs of uneasiness, arguing that it is 'cleareth the most doubtful part; for that eternal Death is *from the retribution of Justice*, is a Truth most clear, and not possible to be Decreed from before, without foreknowledge of Sin'.⁷³ According to Plaifere, the reason human beings are judged 'was not [because of] God's act, but Man's, a contingent act of a free Creature'.⁷⁴ Put differently, when it comes to the difference 'betwixt two persons, of whom it is supposed possible, that being equally called, the one should convert the other not', Plaifere determines that 'Man putteth this difference, and not God: because God judgeth not his own Acts, but the Acts of Men'.⁷⁵ Here Plaifere attempts to place double predestination into what he calls a 'Stoic fate' (determinism), while significantly understating any compatible sense that may exist between predestination and human free choice. This choice seems to stand up to the frequent and stereotypical criticism that the Reformed tradition is often charged by the Jesuits, Remonstrants, and Socinians.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 43–47, 164–73.

⁷¹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 164–68.

⁷² Michael McGiffert tries to find a sound way, which secures human liberty within the context of undiminished divine sovereignty, in Herbert Thorndike's usage of *scientia media*. See Michael McGiffert, 'Herbert Thorndike and the Covenant of Grace', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58, no. 3 (2007): 440–60. Yet, one thing that should not be missed is that the very nature of *scientia media*, which essentially depends on the future conditional contingencies, inevitably has high possibilities to lessen divine sovereignty. Cf. Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence*, 156.

⁷³ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 160.

⁷⁴ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 31, 53.

⁷⁵ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 112.

⁷⁶ W. J. van Asselt, J. Martin Bac and Roelf T. te Velde, *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 15–19. In light of the texts (Zanchi, Junius, Gomarus, Voetius, etc.), this book argues that both sin and salvation in terms of the Reformed perspective center around the free will of God and human beings, and the merciful divine initiative does not exclude, but requires, human freedom. Cf. Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 100.

Second, regarding the question of ‘whether Grace be *resistible*? Or [using] words more frequent in Scripture, whether Grace can be *disobeyed*?’ Plaifere’s answer is clear: Our free will can resist or even disobey divine grace.⁷⁷ Opposing the Calvinistic doctrine of ‘irresistible grace’, Plaifere equates ‘having the free will’ with an ‘enabling to resist grace’, stating that ‘*to resist and not to resist are the proper acts of the Will*’.⁷⁸ Based on his definition that ‘freewill is a natural Power in a reasonable Creature, whereby it can will or nill this or that, choose it, or refute it, be it Good; be it Evil’,⁷⁹ Plaifere emphasizes that the act of ‘preventing grace’ by ‘resistance and disobedience’ is enabled by man’s free will.⁸⁰ He adds the biblical evidence:

The difference in the measure of Gifts of all sorts, may come from God that giveth; but the different using of these Gifts doth come from Man, who must be accountable to God for the usage of them: that one Servant received five, another two, another one Talent, this difference was from the Lord; but that one Servant gained five, another two, another none, this difference was not from the Lord, but from the Servants; whence it is that one heareth, *well done, thou good and faithful servant* [Matt. 25:21]; and another; *thou wicked and slothful Servant*. [Matt. 25:26]⁸¹

In this instance Plaifere believes that whether the servant becomes faithful or wicked is not based solely on God’s decision beforehand in terms of what the servant will do, but on God’s foreknowledge of what the servant would do according to his/her free will. Stated in the language of *scientia media* therefore, whether one is elect or a reprobate is not simply a reliance on God’s eternal decree before the Fall, but rather on God’s foreknowledge of all future contingencies based on *scientia media* according to conditional occurrence, namely, whether one receives or rejects divine grace by the free choice of one’s will.⁸² Thus the human ability to resist grace not only reinforces human autonomy in salvation; it also ultimately consolidates the foundation of predestination as humanistic and conditional.

Third, Plaifere also uses the notion of resistible grace to call into question the Calvinistic teaching of the so-called ‘perseverance of the saints’. He argues that although ‘the Churches of upper *Germany*, and *Denmark*’ have already renounced this teaching, only ‘the *Calvinists* are singular and alone in their Opinion’.⁸³ According to Plaifere, the tenet of the judicious divines at Dort who indicated that ‘the generate sinning are still actually in the state of salvation’ was total nonsense, arguing that ‘I by no means think it any cogent Argument’.⁸⁴ Rather, he believes that ‘even

⁷⁷ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 53, 100, 108. Plaifere’s position is basically the same as the fourth article in the Five Articles of Remonstrance: ‘as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost, Acts vii, and elsewhere in many places’. See Schaff, *Creeds* 3, ‘The Five Arminian Articles’, 547 (art. IV).

⁷⁸ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 103.

⁷⁹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 91.

⁸⁰ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 106.

⁸¹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 114.

⁸² Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 99–100.

⁸³ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 145.

⁸⁴ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 148. Here, Plaifere tends to interpret the fifth article of the Synod of Dort in a somewhat disparaging sense. Cf. ‘Art. I. Whom God calls, according to his purpose, to the communion of his Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, he delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world’. See ‘The Canons of the Synod of Dort (A.D. 1619)’, in Schaff, *Creeds* 3, 592.

after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from Grace'.⁸⁵ Through not only forsaking Christ and the Gospel but even by committing sin willingly and willfully after regeneration we can be '*declining from God ... and falling from God*'.⁸⁶ Conversely, Plaifere also argues that '[God] should condemn them that had refuted his many Mercies, [but] receive them to favour, who returned to him'.⁸⁷ In effect, the status of the elect and the reprobate, according to Plaifere, is controlled by that certain floating condition wherein the elect departs from grace or the reprobate returns to grace. Thus neither status is fixed and determined, but instead can vary and be modified. All aspects considered, Plaifere delivers a clear and concrete shape of his fifth doctrine of predestination type as follows:

- (1) That if it pleased him [God] to create amongst other his Glorious works, some Creatures endued with reason, and of a free nature, they should be more fit than the rest for him to shew forth in them, his Wisdom, Goodness, Bounty, Justice, Mercy, Fidelity, and all his Glorious properties; but it remained at his pleasure to create them or not.
- (2) That such Creatures according to their freedom would vary in their choices, some cleaving fast to Good, some declining to Evil.
- (3) That of them whom he knew would forsake their first good Estates, if he permitted them, he might justly forsake some, and punish them for their Rebellion: or he could find means to restore them, and reconcile them to himself; but as yet he determined neither.
- (4) Among many, some would thankfully receive his Mercy, some ungratefully reject it, for the sake of the Pleasures of Sin. The very particulars he knew, of all his own Mercies in their several degrees and varieties, of all the Persons in their several conditions and Events: but still the determination of what should be done or permitted of all this, was as it were held in suspense.
- (5) That if he should condemn them that had refused his many Mercies, and receive them to favor who returned to him; he should do Justly to the one, and Mercifully to the other, and judge them all Righteously.⁸⁸

Plaifere thus says in an assured voice that this type of predestination is 'truth' and 'harmonious', and 'consonant with itself in all circumstances'.⁸⁹ The core of Plaifere's scheme is therefore that no one is rigidly determined to be either an elect or a reprobate. In other words, one is held in suspense unless a certain condition is established, and then, according to whether one is accepting or rejecting divine grace (that is, establishing a certain condition), the outcome will vary based on the *scientia media*. This scenario is full-fledged 'conditional predestination', which relies heavily on human beings' conditional responses. Plaifere also adds that 'all things, from the beginning to the end of the World, with every particular circumstance ... are under execution, being understood as under condition, and with

⁸⁵ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 140.

⁸⁶ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 145.

⁸⁷ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 167.

⁸⁸ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 166–68.

⁸⁹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 37.

supposition'.⁹⁰ This condition and its supposition depend on the creature's choice, free will, and response.⁹¹ In light of his mention that 'the nature of a free Creature is the *Subject and Root of most of the contingencies* in the World', such certain condition is decided by human beings *and only then* God subsequently makes a decision based on that previously established condition.⁹² Plaifere's fifth predestination type could make God's sovereignty and immutability powerless and thus invalid.⁹³ Although he does emphasize that any conditional future contingencies cannot be outside or prior to God's Will, so long as Plaifere firmly embraces the doctrine of *scientia media* and resistible grace, he cannot be totally free from the criticism that any foreknowledge of conditional events fundamentally depends not on God's decree, but substantially on the liberty or free choice of the creature, namely, humans.⁹⁴

Of the five doctrines of predestination, Plaifere's fifth type looks to be the one in which the meaning of 'conditional predestination' is best revealed. Perhaps he believes that to formulate a cogent counter-argument against supralapsarian predestination, one needs the doctrine of resistible grace based on the notion of *scientia media*. In terms of fully embracing not only the tenets of Molina and Arminius (mostly *scientia media*), but also the Remonstrants' doctrines (mostly resistible grace) in the context of English Arminianism, Plaifere and his *Appello Evangelium* are of historical and theological significance for English Arminianism.

Conclusion

The doctrinal colour palette of English Arminianism was indeed far from dull. Plaifere proposes at least five types of the doctrine of predestination, which constitute the nature of the diverse doctrinal palette of that time. Considering this diversity, including infralapsarianism, the different version of infralapsarianism based on the practice of *via media*, predestination based on God's foreknowledge, and predestination based on *scientia media* and resistible grace, the attempt to oversimplify or overgeneralize the theological characteristics of English Arminianism into one or two themes (for example, 'rejection of double predestination' or 'synergism') needs to be reconsidered. Based on this doctrinal variety, categorizing predestination

⁹⁰ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 167.

⁹¹ Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 53, 103, 172–73.

⁹² Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 172.

⁹³ Thus, *pace* Herbert Thorndike's argument that God's sovereignty can be safeguarded through the notion of *scientia media*, while affirming man's free will. Cf. McGiffert, 'Herbert Thorndike', 440.

⁹⁴ Cf. Plaifere, *Appello Evangelium*, 168, 172–73. For the Reformed criticism regarding the problematic relationship between *scientia media* and God's sovereignty, immutability, divine will, and foreknowledge, see Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, 214 (III.xiii.9–10). It states that 'Natural and free knowledge embrace all knowable things and entities and are not to be multiplied unnecessarily. There is nothing in the nature of things which is not possible or future; nor can future conditional things constitute a third order. For they are such either from a condition only possible or powerful, yet never to take place, or from a condition certainly future and decreed Now conditional future things are not true apart from the determination of the divine will'. See also Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, ed. Ernst Bizer and trans. G. T. Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950), 77–81, 143–45, 190–92; Muller, *PRRD* 3, 417–24; Muller, 'Grace, Election, and Contingent Choice', 265–69; Muller, *God, Creation, and Providence*, 151–66. For the confessional formulation of God's immutability, see 'The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647)', in Schaff, *Creeds* 3, 608 (ch. 3.1); and for the relationship between divine causality and future contingencies, see the same Confession in Schaff, *Creeds* 3, 612 (ch. 5.2).

simply into a limited scheme of supra- or infralapsarian also should be avoided. Although the second to fifth types of predestination that Plaifere proposes do fall under infralapsarianism, and therefore — as an anonymous editor of *A Collection of Tracts* notes — they ‘seem to be very little different,’ Plaifere clearly acknowledges that each of these types contain differently nuanced emphases.⁹⁵ Specifically, Plaifere’s fifth type, namely, conditional predestination, occupies one of the most visible positions in the diverse doctrinal spectrum of English Arminianism due to its components of *scientia media* and resistible grace. The significance of Plaifere’s formulation can be described as offering two pertinent dimensions, namely, the historical-circumstantial and the theological-historiographical.

First, Plaifere’s conditional predestination is unique in the context of English Arminianism, not because he invents its elements of *scientia media* and resistible grace from the start, or even because he is the first adopter of these notions among English Arminians. Rather, it is because Plaifere’s doctrine of predestination is a well-mixed version that includes the core tenets of Molina, Arminius, Arminianism, and the Remonstrants. Although not every English Arminian or Remonstrant had much concern for *scientia media*, Plaifere’s fifth opinion embraces the doctrine of resistible grace, which is substantially based on the notion of *scientia media*, metaphysically.⁹⁶

During the Stuart period, which was politically and theologically confusing due to the abrupt shift of royal authority and acute predestinarian debates,⁹⁷ Plaifere may have thought that embracing the doctrine of *scientia media* was a solid choice for a metaphysical foundation that could be used to support and defend his conditional predestination against absolute-supralapsarian-unconditional predestination. However, his position also appears to have been hanging by a thread in that the notion of *scientia media* in the context of Arminian conditional predestination was much criticized by Reformed theologians in the seventeenth century (such as Turretin, Twisse, Baxter, etc.) due to its questionable elements, not only in terms of the doctrine of God, but also in terms of the philosophical and ontological discussions of future contingencies.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Plaifere’s argument is significant, for it

⁹⁵ Anonymous, ‘The Preface’, in *A Collection of Tracts Concerning Predestination and Providence, and the Other Points Depending on Them* (Cambridge: University Press, 1719).

⁹⁶ Yet, it must be noted that some later Remonstrants held the doctrine of *scientia media*, like Simon Episcopius, *Institutiones theologicae*, IV.ii.19, in *Opera theologica* (Amsterdam: John Blaeu, 1650), vol. I, 303–04. Cf. Dennis W. Jowers, ‘Introduction’, in *Four Views on Divine Providence*, ed. Dennis W. Jowers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 17; Stanglin and McCall, *Jacob Arminius*, 69, n. 97.

⁹⁷ For a detailed historical background, see John Coffey, *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 199–232; Patrick Collinson, ‘England and International Calvinism 1558–1640’, in *International Calvinism, 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 197–223; Richard Cust and Ann Hughes, eds., *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642* (London: Longman, 1989); Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Sheils, eds., *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 168–87; Margo Todd, ed., *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1995), 13–96; Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: the Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 155–202.

⁹⁸ Cf. Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, 212–18 (III.xiii.1–23); William Twisse, *A Discovery of D. Jacksons Vanities* (Amsterdam: Giles Thorp, 1631), 335–38. Baxter also argues that ‘the sense of the question *de Scientia Media*, is not *de conditionatis necessariis*, as If the Sun set, it will be night ... But of such conditionals as have some reason of the *Connexion*, and yet leave the will in an *undetermined power* to act or not. But we know no

sets out the specific technical-theological components on which English Arminianism was built and formulated.

Second, Plaifere's deep involvement in the debate between conditional predestination and absolute predestination was not merely a case of dipping his toe into a theological tributary; rather, he became immersed in one of the main theological streams of church history, namely, the huge tension between predestination or salvation and human free will. When examined more broadly, his active engagement in the predestination controversies of his time can also be seen as an extension of Augustine-Pelagian, Dominican-Jesuit, Luther-Erasmus, Calvinism-Arminianism (or later, the Remonstrant) debates regarding freedom of the will. Given that the purpose of *Appello Evangelium* (as an anonymous editor of *A Collection of Tracts* points out) was to reveal that 'the force of an Irresistible Decree is herein proved *absurd*, and derogatory from the Divine Honor ... and *the liberty of a Rational Being is Asserted and Vindicated*',⁹⁹ Plaifere clearly demonstrated which side of the debate he preferred and the type of theological argument he rejected. In seventeenth-century England, Plaifere thus chose a fight with the same enemy that his theological camp had often faced earlier.

To defend his thesis, Plaifere embraced a sturdy supporting argument represented in his fifth type, namely, conditional predestination, which includes the doctrine of resistible grace and the notion of *scientia media* within the scheme of infralapsarianism. This combination is Plaifere's Arminian way out of the theological chaos and sharp antagonism which existed in England between the Calvinist and anti-Calvinist beliefs on the tension which existed between predestination and human free will.

Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Dr Richard A. Muller and to anonymous reviewers of *Reformation & Renaissance Review* for valuable comments on an earlier version of this article.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Arminius, Jacobus. *The Writings of James Arminius. Translated from the Latin in Three Volumes, the First and Second by James Nichols, the Third by W. R. Bagnall, with a Sketch of the Life of the Author.* 3 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1956.

Baro, Peter. 'Summary of Three Opinions Concerning Predestination.' In *The Writings of James Arminius*, vol. 1, translated by James Nichols, 92–100. London: Longman, 1825.

Baxter, Richard. *Catholick Theologie: Plain, Pure, Peaceable, for Pacification of the Dogmatical Word-Warriours.* London: Robert White, 1675.

difference between these ex parte Dei Scientis, but only denominatione extrinseca ex parte obiecti ... Therefore, the doctrine of God's knowledge of such Conditional propositions, and contingents as so circumstantiated, seemeth True materially, (that They are the objects of God's knowledge) but false efficiently as if there were any Causes of his knowledge, (which hath no Cause) but only extrinsecal denominators of it in that act'. See Richard Baxter, Catholick Theologie: Plain, Pure, Peaceable, for Pacification of the Dogmatical Word-Warriours (London: Robert White, 1675), I.xii.264, 267.

⁹⁹ Anonymous, 'The Preface'.

- Episcopius, Simon. 'Institutiones theologicae, IV.ii.19.' In *Opera theologica*. 2 vols. Amsterdam: John Blaeu, 1650.
- Goad, Thomas. 'A Disputation, *Partly Theological, Partly Metaphysical*, Concerning the Necessity and Contingency of Events in the World, in Respect of God's Eternal Decrees.' In *A Collection of Tracts Concerning Predestination and Providence, and the Other Points Depending on Them*, edited by Anonymous, 357–92. Cambridge: University Press, 1718.
- Molina, Luis de. *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*. Translated, with an Introduction and Notes, by Alfred J. Freddoso. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Montagu, Richard. *Appello Caesarem: A Just Appeal From Two Unjust Informers*. London: Matthew Lownes, 1625.
- Plaifere, John. *Appello Evangelium for the True Doctrine of the Divine Predestination, concorded with the Orthodox Doctrine of God's Free-Grace and Man's Free-Will*. London: Printed by J.G. for John Clark, 1651.
- . 'An Appeal to the Gospel, for the True Doctrine of Divine Predestination, concorded with God's Free Grace, and Man's Free-Will. With an Appendix, Concerning the Salvability of the Heathen.' In *A Collection of Tracts Concerning Predestination and Providence, and the Other Points Depending on Them*, edited by Anonymous, 2–222. Cambridge: University Press, 1718.
- Turretin, Francis. *Institutes of Eclenctic Theology*. Translated by George Musgrave Giger. 3 vols. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1992.
- Twisse, William. *A Discovery of D. Jackson's Vanities, Or A Perspective Glasse, wherby the Admirers of D. Jackson's Profound Discourses, may see the Vanitie and Weaknesse of Them, in Sundry Passages, and Especially so Farre as They Tende to the Undermining of the Doctrine hitherto Received*. Amsterdam: Giles Thorp, 1631.

Secondary sources

- Bryant, Barry E. 'Molina, Arminius, Plaifere, Goad, and Wesley on Human Free-Will, Divine Omniscience, and Middle Knowledge.' *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 27, no. 1–2 (1992): 93–103.
- Cattermole, Richard. *The Literature of the Church of England Indicated in Selections from the Writings of the Eminent Divines: With Memoirs of Their Lives, and Historical Sketches of the Times in Which They Lived*. London: J.W. Parker, 1844.
- Coffey, John. *John Goodwin and the Puritan Revolution: Religion and Intellectual Change in Seventeenth-Century England*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006.
- Cust, Richard and Ann Hughes. *Conflict in Early Stuart England: Studies in Religion and Politics, 1603–1642*. London: Longman, 1989.
- Dekker, Eef. 'Was Arminius a Molinist?' *Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. 2 (1996): 337–52.
- . *Middle Knowledge*. Leuven: Peeters, 2000.
- Dodds, Gregory D. *Exploiting Erasmus: The Erasmian Legacy and Religious Change in Early Modern England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Fielding, John. 'Arminianism in the Localities: Peterborough Diocese, 1603–1642.' In *The Early Stuart Church: 1603–1642*, edited by Kenneth Fincham, 93–113. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Fincham, Kenneth, and Nicholas Tyacke. *Altars Restored: the Changing Face of English Religious Worship, 1547–c.1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Hoenderdaal, G. J. 'The Debate About Arminius Outside the Netherlands.' In *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century: An Exchange of Learning*, edited by Lunsingh Scheurleer, Theodoor Herman and G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, 137–59. Leiden: Brill, 1975.
- Hughes, Seán F. 'The Problem of 'Calvinism': English Theologies of Predestination c.1580–1630.' In *Belief and Practice in Reformation England: A Tribute to Patrick Collinson from His Students*, edited by Susan Wabuda and Caroline Littenberger, 229–49. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998.
- McGiffert, Michael. 'Herbert Thorndike and the Covenant of Grace.' *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58, no. 3 (2007): 440–60.
- Milton, Anthony. *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

- Muller, Richard A. *God, Creation, and Providence in the Thought of Jacob Arminius: Sources and Directions of Scholastic Protestantism in the Era of Early Orthodoxy*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991.
- . ‘God, Predestination, and the Integrity of the Created Order: A Note on Patterns in Arminius Theology.’ In *Later Calvinism: International Perspectives*, edited by W. F. Graham, 431–46. Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1994.
- . ‘Grace, Election, and Contingent Choice: Arminius’ Gambit and the Reformed Response.’ In *The Grace of God and the Bondage of the Will*, vol. 2, edited by Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, 251–78. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995.
- . *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003.
- Porter, H. C. *Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958.
- Quantin, Jean-Louis. *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: the Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17th Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Schaff, Philip, ed. *The Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, 3 vols. 6th ed. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1919.
- Stanglin, Keith D. ‘Arminius *Avant la Lettre*: Peter Baro, Jacob Arminius, and the Bond of Predestinarian Polemic.’ *Westminster Theological Journal* 67 (2005): 51–74.
- Stanglin, Keith D., and Thomas H. McCall. *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Todd, Margo. *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Tyacke, N.R.N. ‘Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter Revolution.’ In *The Origins of the English Civil War*, edited by C. Russell, 119–43. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1973.
- . *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590–1640*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- . ‘Debate: The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered.’ *Past and Present* 115 (May 1987): 201–16.
- . *Aspects of English Protestantism, c.1530–1700*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001.
- Van Asselt, W. J., J. Martin Bac, and Roelf T. te Velde. *Reformed Thought on Freedom: The Concept of Free Choice in Early Modern Reformed Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Venn, John, and John Archibald Venn. *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge*, vol. 3. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1922–1927.
- White, Peter. ‘The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered.’ *Past and Present* 101 (November 1983): 34–54.
- . ‘The Rise of Arminianism Reconsidered: A Rejoinder.’ *Past and Present* 115 (1987): 217–29.
- . *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Notes on contributor

Jae-Eun Park did his doctorate at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, and is now a lecturer in systematic theology at Chongshin University, Seoul, South Korea.

Correspondence to: Dr Jae-Eun Park. Email: jepark.theopneustos@gmail.com

Copyright of Reformation & Renaissance Review: Journal of the Society for Reformation Studies is the property of Taylor & Francis Ltd and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.