Predestination, Grace, and Free Will: Attempt at a Personal Synthesis

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Introduction

Having set forth the teaching of St. Thomas in other works, we want here first (1) to synthesize the essentials in a few propositions forming a doctrinal bouquet, with which we will take the opportunity to dispel some misunderstandings, then (2) to mention some limitations noticed in passing when reading the Common Doctor, and finally (3) to suggest some personal paths for overcoming, we hope, the difficulties encountered.

Picking a Doctrinal Bouquet and Dispelling Misunderstandings

We will examine the problems involved first in the divine plan in God (from the divine science and the divine will, to providence, predestination, election, and reprobation), and then in its realization in creatures. And on each aspect, we will follow the same order as in the previous developments.[1]

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[1] [Note of the translator (Fr. Bruno-Thomas Mercier des Rochettes, O.P.): This article is the translation of two articles of Father Basile Valuet, O.S.B.: "Prédestination, grâce et libre arbitre, tentative de synthèse personnelle (I)," *Revue thomiste* 119, no. 1 (2019): 67–90; "Prédestination, grâce et libre arbitre, tentative de synthèse personnelle (II)," *Revue thomiste* 119, no. 2 (2019): 299–322. These articles correspond to the synthesis of the second volume of his work *Dieu Joueur d'échecs? Prédestination, grâce et libre arbitre*, 2nd ed. (Le Barroux: Sainte-Madeleine, 2023): 1251–89. We have found useful

The Divine Plan in God

The Divine Science

The divine science of simple intelligence concerns all possible states of affairs and, in a stricter sense, unrealized possibilities. It becomes the cause of things only when the divine will is added to it, whereby it becomes the science of approval. It is not, however, the cause of evil, especially moral evil, of which it does not even possess an idea, and which it knows only as a deprivation of the good that it will not have caused and that God would have wanted to cause. This deprivation is rooted in another good, the subject of the act (person and faculty). The sum of God's knowledge of what he has caused and of the part of reality he has not caused (moral evil) is called science of vision. Through this science of eternal vision, God knows everything, including contingent and free singular events (good or bad), even those which for us are future. He would apprehend the latter conjecturally at best, if at all, if he knew them solely by contemplating their contingent causes, and therefore as future. Yet he knows them not only as such, but also as already carried out. Indeed, his eternity is present in and encompasses all time. And at the time when these futures occur, they are in act, and thereby take on a necessity of fact, or consequent necessity, thus becoming capable of being the determined objects of God's infallible science. The means by which he knows their essence and existence is the divine essence, the exemplary and efficient cause of all being and all good. This universal foreknowledge allows God to announce, in the form of a prophecy, either of threat (based on the second cause in potency of acting), or of predestination (knowing what he himself is going to operate), or of foreknowledge (through the vision of all reality that will have taken place). Finally, divine science is not caused by what it knows; but on the contrary, at least if it is a good, it causes it, without however always making it necessary.

This dispels a first misunderstanding: it is not the science of vision that is the cause of things, but the science of simple intelligence that has become the science of approval through the addition of the will. God knows all that there is of being and good in absolute free futures through this science of approval, which makes their being and their metaphysical goodness (which it causes) present to his eternity; on the other hand, their

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to make known the work of Father Valuet, but the views expressed here are his, and he has corrected and approved the translation. We give thanks to Fr. Cajetan Cuddy, O.P., for his reading and checking of the translation.]

morally bad aspect is known only through their presence to eternity in the science of vision as a privation annexed to the aforesaid metaphysical good caused and positively known, and in opposition to a moral good that should be there (because it is willed by antecedent will) and is not there.

The Divine Will

The foregoing leads to clarify a distinction of reason based on the objects of the one and simple divine will: in this will, we discern the antecedent will and the consequent will. The antecedent will has as its object what would be good in the abstract, considering only the nature of things, and this is particularly the case with the salvation of all free creatures, the object of the antecedent universal salvific will. The antecedent will, considered in general, is signified to us by commandments, counsels, and prohibitions. It is fallible, because it is not always realized. The consequent will, instead, has as its object what God wills once all circumstances and affairs have been considered: it is infallible. It is known to us by the facts: on the one hand, the good done, caused by God's operation; on the other, the evil done, in no way caused by God but made possible by divine permission. This permission is the consequent will, not of this evil, but of not preventing this evil.

The second misunderstanding to be clarified is that, while this permissive will makes moral evil *possible*, evil does not necessarily follow from this will. Indeed, since it is only a possibility, in place of what God has permitted, the opposite of what has been permitted, namely moral good, can also take place, except in the case where a *special* positive intervention of God would be indispensable to prevent moral evil, which is not the general case.

This permission is included in the will by which God wills in an absolute way that a given act of a creature be free, because it is the act of a freedom drawn from nothingness, and therefore capable of failing. This permission also explains why some of God's antecedent wills are not realized. However, even when moral evil actually occurs, its author, who deviates from God's antecedent will, cannot escape the consequent divine will. This will reintegrates the sinner into the order through the evil of punishment, which is a good of justice, and also by bringing about other goods from this moral evil. God's consequent will applied to an instant **T** in time takes into account all the circumstances of that instant **T**, and thus all the good and evil that has taken place *prior to* that instant **T**, in both the physical and moral realms.

A third misunderstanding to be dismissed, therefore, is that, when

St. Thomas affirms that nothing resists God's will, this applies only to the consequent will, and "in the end"; that is, even if someone resists the antecedent will, God eternally foresees how to reintegrate him into the order "after the fact" and carries out this forecasting in time.

If God permits certain morally evil actions, and thus makes them possible, it is because he knows he is sufficiently powerful and good to draw good from them should they be committed. Prior to the actual appearance of evil, this permission is a way of respecting the nature of created free will. Indeed, if God always prevented moral evil, he would in fact suppress the reality of created free will. Then, as we said, before the moral evil is committed, permission does not make it certain. Finally, once moral evil has been presupposed, God reintegrates it into the order of the Universe, on the one hand by drawing moral good from it, either by profiting from this evil for the sinner's amendment (his humility etc.) and forgiving him, or for the benefit of others in whom good is occasioned by evil (the patience of martyrs responding to the cruelty of persecutors, etc.): this is a manifestation of God's mercy. On the other hand, God punishes moral evil with a penalty, which is an expression of another of his attributes, justice. On the whole, since God knows all the good he is capable of drawing from evil, he is right in wanting absolutely to permit such singular sins, which he could nevertheless always prevent, if he wanted to. Otherwise, such permission would not be justified.

A fourth misunderstanding to avoid would be to say that it is of an antecedent will that God wills, independently of any consideration of demerits, that there should be men to punish so that his justice may be manifested. It is only after considering the demerits accumulated at an instant **T** by a particular person that he deems it opportune or not for that person to continue to live even though he is very sinful—hence his eventual loss. (This consideration acts not on God, but on the effect of the divine action).

Providence and Predestination

It follows that divine providence is universal and infallible, because nothing can escape it, even contingent and free events, including evil ones. Indeed, if a sinner avails himself of a permission granted by this providence, the latter has foreseen how to reintegrate this fault into order. In addition, part of this providence consists in organizing the eternal salvation of certain created persons. This organization or plan of salvation is called "predestination."

This word can be understood either of the divine act organizing the plan

of salvation of a creature, or of the effects of this plan. As for the divine act itself (sense 1), it is caused by nothing other than the attraction that God's own goodness exerts on God himself. In terms of effects, St. Thomas uses the term "predestination" almost exclusively to designate *the totality* of the effects of the act of predestination: the totality of the plan of salvation for a given man (sense 2). Since this plan begins with the decision to summon all men to salvation, it includes an antecedent universal salvific will, fallible but absolutely gratuitous. It also includes the conferral – provoked by this same universal salvific will – of the very first actual grace received by a human being. As a result, this set of effects, taken as a whole, is caused gratuitously. But it may have certain parts that depend on man's response to divine actions: from this point of view, it will not be entirely gratuitous.

The fifth misunderstanding to be debunked would be to think mistakenly that St. Thomas claims that only those predestined to eternal salvation taken precisely (sense 3) receive their first grace. There is, however, a predestination to this first grace, known as the grace "of vocation." This predestination (like predestination to any gift of grace) will later be called "precisive" predestination, in this case, *praedestinatio ad gratiam praecisive sumptam*.

It also follows that predestination, understood in its global sense (*praedestinatio adaequate sumpta*), in no way depends on the foreseen merits that the created person will acquire once he will have received habitual grace (since these merits are caused by habitual grace and other gifts included in this predestined set), nor even on the good that this person will do before his justification, with the help of merely actual grace (since this help too is part of the predestination set). It depends even less on the natural moral good that the person may do before his first actual grace, since this good cannot be a positive disposition to the supernatural.

However, one of the *effects* of the *act* of predestination—part of the *overall plan* mentioned above—may depend on *another effect* of predestination, and it is thus that God's conferring of *glory* may depend on *merits earned with grace*. Hence, we see that, if St. Thomas had accepted to call also "predestination" this third case (our sense 3), that of the divine decision to confer glory on us considered apart from the rest of the divine gifts, he would have concluded that this predestination depended on the foreknowledge of merits. Indeed, in one of his last works,[2] he explicitly

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[2] Let us reread Aquinas, *Super Rom* 8, lec. 6: "Some authors have said that foreknowledge of the merits of the good and the bad was the reason for predestination and reprobation. . . . This explanation would not be lacking in accuracy if predestination referred only to eternal life, which is granted to merits." See also *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] *I*, q. 23,

affirms the dependence of the gift of glory on the foreknowledge of the merits that precede access to glory. Now, much later authors will call this divine decision the *praedestinatio ad gloriam praecisive sumptam*, and it was this decision that they actually debated as to whether it was made *post praevisa merita* (better: *attentis meritis*), or not. Unfortunately, they all too often make the mistake of quoting—in favor of the thesis that God decides such a "predestination to glory taken precisely" (sense 3) without taking merits into account—Thomasian texts where it is not this decision that is at issue, but the other one, the whole plan of salvation (sense 2), which in fact is not caused by the foreknowledge of merits. This is a **sixth huge misunderstanding**, and one of the main aims of our whole book (see note 1) was to clear it up.

In any case, for the rest of his life, St. Thomas would never deny what he had explained at the outset of his career: predestination in sense 2 *includes* (but is not reduced to) a *consequent* will. This is because predestination to a particular gift (sense 3), included in the aforementioned predestination in sense 2, takes into account the foreknowledge of what *will have* happened *before* the predestined gift is bestowed (and not, of course, of what will happen *after* the gift is bestowed). From this point of view, God gives sanctifying grace on condition that we will *have consented to* the actual grace offering us to receive it, and *so that* we may use it well, not *because* he knows that we will use it well *in the future*. He gives glory because he sees in his foreknowledge that we *will have deserved it*, with the grace he will have previously given us. At no point does St. Thomas abandon the idea that predestination to the conferral of a particular favor depends on the foreknowledge of futures *prior to the moment of that conferral*. In the *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] III, his last major work, he even expressly states in very general terms: "praedestinatio praesupponit praescientiam futurorum"[3] a principle he applies in this case to the gift of hypostatic union, presupposing foreknowledge of the sins of Adam and Eve, future in relation to their creation but anterior in relation to the Incarnation. This foreknowledge is indeed that of future events in relation to the case under consideration, but chronologically prior to the gift that is predestined: this seems to us the key to understanding the whole of the Holy Doctor's thought on predestination as including a consequent will. This is a will that

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a. 5, corp. [Note of the translator: translations from the Latin are made by the translator of the whole article, based on the Latin text found at corpusthomisticum.org and on the French translation of Father Valuet.]

3 *ST* III, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4.

takes into account future events that are *prior to* the instant **T** at which the good effect it wishes to bring about appears in time.

As a result, predestination is infallible in the individual concrete of such a person. Notably in sense 3, predestination *ad gloriam praecisive*, is the consequent will to give glory, once all has been considered. Aquinas points out that the aforementioned infallibility does not introduce any necessity into the actions of the predestined, any more than does divine foreknowledge. Since it includes knowledge of everything that, de facto, will lead to salvation, its certainty is not, however, merely a certainty of foreknowledge, but the certainty that ordination to salvation achieves its goal. Nevertheless, the necessity of the result is a necessity of consequence, not of consequent. In this way, if a particular person is predestined, then it cannot be true that he will not have glory, but this glory he will merit in a contingent and fallible manner. In this way, regarding the result that is glory, which God has chosen for the person in view of all events, God will have provided for it by a series of contingent and fallible means.

The **seventh misunderstanding** to be cleared up is therefore the position that the infallibility of foreknowledge and order included in predestination implies that, among the means by which one is led to salvation, there is a whole series of intrinsically effective ones. Indeed, to bring someone to salvation, God does not need a causally infallible means. Therefore, an efficacious grace which, according to the Augustinians and Thomists, would always be intrinsically efficacious is not a requirement of the Thomasian position. The only means that must absolutely be intrinsically efficacious is the conjunction of the instant of death with the state of grace. Nothing can stand in the way of this conjunction, which is decided by the all-powerful consequent will of God. But the state of grace in question has not necessarily been maintained in man by some infallible means: a series of fallible means suffices.

Election and Reprobation

This decision is made for some men and not for others. Some men are therefore chosen, not others. This is the mystery of election. For St. Thomas, the predestination of a person logically presupposes his election. This position may remain acceptable if election is conceived as taking place once the merits that will have been acquired prior to the moment of application of election—the moment of death—have been considered. These merits do not cause the election, nor are they the adequate reason for it, but they are taken into account in the choice of the instant of death, and therefore of the glorification of the elect.

The election of some necessarily entails the reprobation of others: the concept of reprobation is in fact the opposite of that of election, and even its contradictory, since there are only two possibilities in all (heaven or hell). For Aquinas, reprobation is permission: permission for some not to reach their end. This concept presupposes permitting some to be in a state of sin at the moment of their death. This presupposes, on the one hand, that God has not restored grace to them (i.e., that they have obstructed it), and on the other, that they had committed at least one mortal sin, which in turn logically requires, as a *sine qua non* condition, that God will have permitted the mortal sin in question, will have decided to do nothing exceptional to prevent it.[4] If sin and the state of sin continue until death, God puts order to it by punishing the offender with eternal punishment: this is positive reprobation, which has all the above-mentioned presuppositions.

So, there is an **eighth misunderstanding** to be rejected outright. It is not in order to have men to damn that God permitted their sin. Indeed, firstly, the Holy Doctor asserted that sin does not always follow the permission, and secondly he established as an indisputable principle that God does not will a means to an end; he wills, on the contrary, that this created reality be ordered to that other created reality. The texts in which Aquinas declares that reprobation implies permission for sin are therefore to be understood as of a logical presupposition, not as of means.[5] Otherwise, God would have the primary initiative in damnation, which is absolutely contrary to the dogma, revealed in 1 Tim 2:4, of the postlapsarian antecedent universal salvific will. Reprobation does not cause sin, but it does cause punishment.

The Execution of the Divine Plan in the Creature

Subordination of Causes and Communication of Esse

The Angelic Doctor has always maintained that it is man, not God, who has the primary initiative of sin. The cause of reprobation is mortal sin.[6] But, as we have just seen, God then permits the person concerned to

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[4] But, remember, from this permission did not necessarily follow sin, either causally or logically. Furthermore, original sin alone does not seem to be able to be de facto a sufficient reason for damnation, even if it is the case *de jure.* On this point, we part company with St. Augustine and St. Thomas.

[5] See *Super Rom* 9, lec. 3, no. 1418.

[6] We will come back later on to the question of original sin as an alleged de facto sufficient cause.

remain in his sinful state. How does this happen? It is difficult to explain if we say that God has, even outside the case of the miracle of grace, a simple means of infallibly obtaining man's conversion, which would be an *ab intrinseco* causally infallible efficacious grace, which Master Thomas never explicitly mentions. In our view, this permission can be explained only by man's repeated refusal of the sufficient actual graces that God offers him at the appropriate time.[7] This aspect is also found in St. Thomas (without the locution "sufficient grace"), according to whom:

> It is not good that the unwilling and resistant be saved, since this is unjust. . . . God does not want this latter man, considered under these conditions, to be saved, but only the willing and consenting; and this is what is called the consequent will, since it presupposes the foreknowledge of works.[8]

As we have just seen, this presentation depends on the conception we have of the way in which actual grace "works." This grace is a kind of divine causality acting upon on second causality. On this subject, the brilliant medieval theologian always maintained that second causes function under the first cause, in subordination, and not in coordination. Thus, between God considered as a "supposit" and the action of the created "supposit," there is the mediation of this created "supposit." But, since the created second cause causes its effect through the first causality (the latter causes the causality in act of the second cause), it follows that God causes the effect of the second cause through an immediacy of virtue. Divine causality is, moreover, necessary to set in motion the second causality, and to apply it to the exercise of the act. What, then, is the proper effect of the first cause? According to the Holy Doctor, it is *esse.* Since *esse* is not the proportionate effect of a created cause, it is in the role of a purely instrumental cause that the latter transmits *esse*, and therefore the exercise, to its effect. But, the second cause itself provides its effect with its *essence*, its *specification.* This specification comes either from the natural form of the second cause (in the case of second causes acting in a manner determined by their form) or from the form known and chosen by the second cause (in the case of intelligent, deliberately acting second causes).

And here we have a **ninth misunderstanding** dispelled: the *esse* communicated by God, which is God's proper effect, is thus contracted by

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7 See *ST* III, q. 81, a. 2, ad 1.

8 *In* I *sent*., d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, corp. See also ad 3.

the *essentia* (either natural or intentional) of the second cause. It is in this sense that Aquinas asserts that the second cause "determines" the effect of the first cause and particularizes it. It is a question of determining not the first cause, but rather its action, and this "determination" is to be taken in the sense not of actuation, but of a contraction of act by potency, of *esse* by *essentia*, and thus ultimately of exercise by specification.

The Necessary Acts of the Created Will

Certainly, if no act of the created will can be compelled, some are posed by necessity. And God can, either by mode of final cause, called "moral" or "objective," or by mode of efficient cause, called "physical," bring about such necessary acts. When by mode of final cause, he does so by being himself the object seen face-to-face, or by being the ultimate final cause attracting all things and in particular created wills (sometimes without the creature knowing that it is God the ultimate end that is attracting it), or by presenting an object before the intervention of the indifference of intellectual judgment on the goodness of this object. When by mode of efficient cause, he brings them about by "plugging in" the will to its object (goodness in general) and its ultimate end (perfect beatitude), or by moving the will in the form of an unintentional impulse to act, thus elevating the will to the status of an instrument transmitting *esse* to its own subsequent deliberate action.

In the natural order, later authors refer to such impulses as "moral premotions" when they operate by the objective mode, and as "physical premotions" when they operate by the efficient mode. It should be noted that only God can move the will by this efficient mode. Furthermore, what readers of St. Thomas have not always seen—and here we need to clear up a **tenth and important misunderstanding**—is that moral premotions are the only ones to propose as the object of choice a *specification* (which the saint generally calls "determination"), whereas physical premotions provide the passage to the act of choosing—its exercise, not its specification.

Again, in the natural order, the *magister in sacra pagina* teaches us that God moves us to desire with necessity the good *in communi*,[9] or even natural happiness as our ultimate end, but that, under the final motion of this necessary willing impressed by God, it is the will that moves itself to the act of freely choosing the means, whether really good or good only in appearance.

Hence **an eleventh remark to avoid misconception** is: even in the

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[9] See *ST* I -II, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3.

choice of an apparent good, it is under the motion that is the attraction of the ultimate end, hence under divine final causality, that man moves. The moral motion of the attraction of the ultimate end is therefore indeed "indifferent": in general, the means are not specified to us by God. They are only sometimes (*interdum*[10]) proposed determinately (*determinate*), particularly in the case of grace. Otherwise, there is no need for a new divine motion for the created will to move from the act of willing the end—and thus from the potency to will a means—to the act of willing that means.

Actual Grace

A **twelfth misunderstanding,** this time in the realm of supernatural grace, also comes to light. In fact, "actual grace" has often been conceived as a created reality, the effect of divine action, an effect which in turn acts on the human soul. Yet, according to Aquinas, such an impulse is nothing other than the very movement of the soul. Indeed, on the one hand, faithful to Aristotle, whose *Physics* he comments on, the medieval master assumes that the motion of the motor in the mobile is nothing other than the movement of the mobile.[11] On the other hand, again quoting the Aristotelian text, he deduces that the efficient divine grace-motion in the will moved by God is nothing other than the very movement of that will.[12] Impulses received from God must therefore be conceived as the first nondeliberate movements of the intelligence and the will.

In this supernatural order, necessitating motions (i.e., such impulses when they are a nondeliberate movement) are a case of operative grace. They take place in both objective and efficient modes. What we said earlier about the specification and exercise of choice in the natural order applies here. To move to choose is not to determine to such and such a specification of choice.

Hence the evacuation of a **thirteenth misunderstanding**. An actual grace of supernatural physical premotion to the exercise of a choice may well be irresistible as to that exercise, whereas the supernatural moral premotion to the specification of the choice of a salutary act, a moral premotion that accompanies the physical premotion, will not be irresistible. This is precisely what explains why man can resist God's actual grace. It is therefore important, if we want to support the *ab intrinseco* efficacy of actual grace on a *deliberate* act, to no longer use the texts in which

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10 See *ST* I -II, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3.

11 See *In* III *phys*., lec. 4, no. 306.

12 See *ST* I -II, q. 110, a. 2, corp.

St. Thomas deals with cases where God causes *indeliberate*, necessary acts to be performed. In addition, we must avoid blocking the exercise and the specification in the same expression such as, for example "physical premotion to moral good." Finally, we must not confuse the exercise of *the act of choosing* and the exercise of *the chosen act* (good by hypothesis here).

The indeliberate movements of the will, caused by God, will lead to the act of election: the act of the will taking up a position with respect to the good proposed by God in objective form. After the nondeliberate movement, God accompanies the work of the intellect and the will, this time by mode of cooperating grace, since these two powers collaborate with him. The mystery is that God knows how to bring about the right election in the process. It is well known that the various schools of Catholic theology explain this phenomenon in different ways. Thomas Aquinas offers some answers to this question, but no complete synthesis, hence the endless discussions between those who want to claim to be more or less his disciples.

One point is clear throughout his work, however: God will remain the cause of all being and all good in the process. And, whatever the real event that takes place, he is its cause, at least as far as *esse* is concerned. If, then, we posit that God causes such and such an effect, it cannot be true at the same time that this effect does not take place. But then, here a **fourteenth misunderstanding** must be dismissed from our minds. For, Aquinas's constant assertion does not mean that, if God acts in some way on the will, it cannot happen that the will does not do what God urges it to do, at least if we misunderstand the latter assertion. Let us distinguish, then, with the help of the brilliant Dominican's own principles:

> If God, by *an antecedent* will, wants the creature to will a certain thing *deliberately*, it may still happen that the creature refuses to do it. But in that case, by hypothesis, he will not be making the creature deliberately do it, which would presuppose that God had not an antecedent will, but a consequent will.
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> If God, with his *consequent* will, wants the creature to will such and such a thing in an *indeliberate* way, then surely this willing of the creature will take place in a necessary, indeliberate way: here, no problem!
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> If, however, God wants by *consequent* will that the creature should choose such and such a thing (i.e., *deliberately*), then surely it will necessarily be true, *because this is the hypothesis*, that God will be

> causing this choice and therefore that the creature will be electing this thing; however, the event—the said particular choice, or more exactly the conjunction of *esse* with such and such a specification—will not be a necessary reality, but a contingent one. In other words, the logical link between the hypothesis of a consequent will of God and the fact that the event takes place is a necessity of logical consequence, but the consequent (the event due to divine action) is not a necessary event: it was possible for it not to take place, even under this efficient divine motion itself giving *esse*, provided we do not make the hypothesis of a motion to a necessary act, nor the hypothesis that such an act actually took place.

And it is at this point that a further reflection will enable us to see more clearly a **fifteenth misunderstanding**. This is the moment to recall that a consequent will is a will that takes into account everything that will have taken place *before* the instant **T** in which the object thus willed is realized. In this case, God's consequent will to make me perform an election and then a good action, a will that is irresistible because each and every will of God about man's choices corresponds bijectively to an election by man, takes into account my nonresistance to the initial impulse, which impulse was a necessary, indeliberate act. So, a new problem arises: where does my nonresistance come from? St. Thomas is adamant: nonresistance to an impulse of grace, at least in the economy of grace of fallen and repaired nature, while in the power of free will, is nevertheless an effect of grace. But from what grace? He does not explain. In our view, it is *the initial impulse itself* that gives free will the ability not to resist de facto, if it wants to. In other words, the combination of natural general concurrence for the operation of free will with the supernatural impulse that elevates it is a sufficient explanation for the nonresistance to what grace proposes in its objective, specifying aspect.

Let us clear up the misunderstanding, then, by using a recent vocabulary: it is in sufficient grace that we find all the perfection (of exercise and specification), all the actuality enabling free will not to oppose this same sufficient grace, which then allows God to give efficacious grace and thus the salutary act (e.g., attrition) resulting from this efficacious grace. So, it is not free will alone that has discerned itself: it has done so with the help of the very grace it was charged with accepting.[13] This sufficient grace is,

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[13] This should be easy to understand, for in everyday life, the impulses (by objective mode, certainly) to act in such a way that we receive from those around us are at the same time

in fact, an operative grace, a nondeliberate movement that moves us to the act of choosing.

The Causality of Sin

Here we have a **sixteenth problem** to solve. Since God is the first cause of all our acts, both as the ultimate end realizing the absolute good and as the first agent bringing to act every second cause being in potency to act, we must necessarily deduce that God is also the cause of our morally evil acts as real. We have already seen that the motion by moral mode toward the ultimate end results in an attraction toward the choice of means, the determination—that is, the precise specification—of which, however, is generally left to created free will. Under this final indifferent motion, the created free will is going to move towards a true or apparent good. Such an indifferent moral motion by mode of final object is clearly affirmed by *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3. But the same passage specifies that *sometimes* God moves to a precise object or means determinately. We have seen that this is done by a nondeliberate motion, irresistible in the first act, before which free will remains free in the second act.

But what about motions by efficient mode according to Aquinas? If, like the classical Thomistic school since Domingo Báñez, we posit that these motions lead not only to the exercise but also to the good specification of choice, it becomes incomprehensible that some of these motions are not efficacious, unless we think that purely sufficient graces (at least understood *by definition* as those that are resisted de facto) are not motions or *cannot* become efficacious, and that efficacious motions, being intrinsically efficacious, are causally irresistible. But, in this case, to avoid Jansenism, we would still have to posit that these intrinsically efficacious motions are efficacious only in the composite sense, as a result of the assumption that the good act is posited, and not in the divided sense—that is, prior (causally) to the position of the good act. Indeed, if it were in the divided sense, the act would become necessary, and no longer free *a necessitate.* However, to take these precautions, which are indeed indispensable, is to condemn ourselves to admitting that grace becomes efficacious only de facto, under the condition of consent, which is what Molinists affirm and Thomists deny. And to argue, as some Thomists do, that intrinsically efficacious grace is irresistible but does not take away the freedom of volitional *power*

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what incites us to do so, what often plays a "decisive" role in our decisions, and what gives us the strength to make up our minds, when we were in a state of indecision. All the more so when these are objective impulses from within our soul, coupled with efficient impulses from God.

is not to evade the condemnation of Jansenius's third proposition: it is the *acts* in question that must be free *a necessitate* in order to be meritorious or demeritorious, and not just voluntary *power* (for other acts).

Another major difficulty with the so-called "classical Thomistic" position—and it was this one in particular that required clarification—is that, if divine motion is irresistible when it takes place and concerns not only exercise but also specification, then how can we explain that evil acts are performed, if only when the will resists actual grace? Certainly, they cannot be performed without divine motion, but a divine motion cannot have an evil specification. Indeed, an efficacious motion for the exercise of choice is certainly required; neither its indispensability nor even its irresistibility is a problem. But if we say that such a motion is intrinsically efficacious as to specification also, the morally evil act is no longer possible.

We are then obliged to affirm that the motion to the physical aspect of the evil act is given only under the precondition of freedom's resistance to sufficient grace. This is indeed necessary in the Bañezian system, but it involves two insurmountable difficulties: first, it contradicts certain principles of the Thomistic School (although not Aquinas himself) according to which divine action cannot be conditioned by human acts, and according to which the divine decision to give an operation cannot be due to foreknowledge of a created reality (in this case, resistance to grace); second, it is forgetting that resistance to grace also requires a motion, and we go back to infinity. If we object to this last point that resistance is pure negation, an absence of consent, we forget that, according to St. Thomas, *defectus* in act (not considering the rule while choosing) is due to freedom, and that an omission, while negative, has as its cause in the final analysis a positive act of the will (wanting to omit consideration of the rule, or at least wanting to choose while omitting it).

These two sets of difficulties, however, could easily be avoided if we were to posit what should unravel a **seventeenth misunderstanding.** So let us posit again that divine motion by efficient mode is motion only *to the exercise of choosing*, not to a specification. More precisely, the motion to exercise is by efficient causality, while the motion to specification is by final causality, by mode of object. Under a motion to exercise, free will in potency undoubtedly cannot fail to *pass to the act of choosing*; the efficient motion lifts the *potential* indeterminacy of freedom and makes it pass to the act of exercising its *potestative* (i.e., dominant), actual indeterminacy on a specification that is proposed, but not "determined," by the motion of objective mode. In this way, the motion to exercise may well necessarily provoke the exercise of a choice and still end in a morally bad act; this

motion remains the primary cause of the bad act as an act in all that this act retains of being; the motion to good specification by moral mode, which all acknowledge to be fallible, has failed in this case. In the opposite case, the good act is posited both under the motion to exercise and under the motion to good specification: here, God is the first cause not only of the act as act but also of the act as morally good, or even as supernatural.[14]

The Necessity of Grace, Confirmation in Grace, and Hardening

Let us turn now to the Angelic Doctor's doctrine on the necessity of grace. This is Augustinian and traditional and raises no major problems.

As for habitual sanctifying grace, it is indispensable for doing stably all the good of which our nature is in itself capable. At the beginning of his career, the young Thomas was not yet certain that this grace was necessary (in the fallen state of nature at least) to love God above all else;[15] in his maturity, he professed this position without reserve. Sanctifying grace is also necessary to have a real and habitual possibility of avoiding the totality of mortal sins. Finally, the grace merited by Christ on the Cross is sufficient for all, even if it will not be in fact efficacious for all.

Grace in the sense of gratuitous, punctual divine help, both external and internal, has the initiative in setting an adult on the road to justification. Inner grace is nothing other than a movement of the soul, and therefore does not compel. It is necessary—generally but not always—in order to avoid mortal sin and always both to act in a salutary manner and to finally consent to receive the grace of justification.

But to those who do what they can to prepare for justification, with the help of this actual grace, God does not refuse habitual grace. Justification is freely received, but if God deems man sufficiently prepared, he infallibly gives sanctifying grace. As a consequence, the infusion of sanctifying grace triggers, as an operative grace, a first meritorious act of free will. Actual grace is also necessary for persevering for some time in the state of sanctifying grace. And a special actual grace is even required for final perseverance.

Some saints were confirmed in grace: their sanctifying grace was so perfect that it made even venial sin either metaphysically impossible (in Christ) or morally impossible (in the Blessed Virgin Mary); in the apostles, it made mortal sin morally impossible.

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[14] To avoid giving God the initiative in moral evil, it is no longer necessary, in the manner of John of St. Thomas, to resort to obscure and insecure reasonings based on the mutual precedence of causes.

[15] Nevertheless, we should mention *In* I *sent*., d. 1, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3, which seems to require the supernatural *habitus* of charity for that.

By contrast, how can we understand that sometimes God does not restore grace to those who lack it? Indeed, it is God who decides not to solicit a particular person languishing in a state of sin. However, this is always the punishment for some previous sin. St. Thomas, following St. Augustine, admits that, de facto, original sin is a sufficient reason for God to abstain from proposing grace; we will later criticize this opinion. It is however indisputable that the withdrawal of grace is the penalty of every mortal sin committed by a man who was previously in a state of grace. In the same way, *a fortiori*, the cessation of the proposal of actual or sanctifying grace is well explained in the case of someone who has steadfastly refused the grace proposed. And so, if God does not restore his *sanctifying* grace, it is because man has resisted the actual grace that would have helped him to consent to the proposal of sanctifying grace. Nevertheless, how can we explain that God (if this is the case) does not even repropose his *actual* grace to those who are in a state of sin? St. Thomas seems to answer as follows: God wants to show, in some cases, his justice by punishing, and in other cases, his mercy by forgiving sins. Nevertheless, it seems that this position needs to be perfected. Indeed, in our view, God solicits man until the last moment through his actual grace, which is at least sufficient, and only man's refusal causes him to die in a state of sin and thus damnation. God's permission then consists, on the one hand, in not preventing the sin of refusal, and on the other, in not preventing the ordinary causes of death from having their effect at a time when man is in a state of sin.

Discerning Limits in Thomasian Thought

Nowhere has St. Thomas realized a synthesis on our theme such as the one we have just attempted, based on his many writings. Nevertheless, the result seems to us to be positive, and we hope to have diluted some misunderstandings likely to harden the thought he expressed. Having thus attempted a synthesis of the most luminous data in the doctrine of the Common Doctor, we must, from the perch of our seven centuries of hindsight, have the audacity to express a few reservations about what we consider to be the defects of this thought. For Christians of the twenty-first century, it has some regrettable limitations, which become apparent only as a result of the unwrapping of the Tradition, and in particular the magisterial specifications that have occurred in the centuries that have passed in the meantime, in particular the condemnation of Jansenism. So, what are these limits? This is what the present section will seek to enumerate, following the same order of exposition as before: starting with the divine

plan considered in God, and then examining its execution in time. (Note that, for ease of reference, we have numbered our criticisms below throughout this major section).

The Divine Plan in God

The divine plan considered in God depends on two attributes: divine science and divine will.

Divine Science

[1] Concerning divine science, Thomas does not seem to us to explain sufficiently how the science of vision knows moral evil without being the cause of it (which is true), whereas he affirms in a general way that "the science of God is the cause of things."

[2] As for free *futuribles*, St. Thomas's position, as we have seen, is not very clear. It is made explicit in only three texts[16] concerning the purely futurible conversion of the Tyrians and the Sidonians. And it presents itself as a decal of St. Augustine's final position on this point. However, one gets the impression that, while the bishop of Hippo maintained a *certain* knowledge of the future, St. Thomas held only for a *foresight* of some kind, and that it must be a matter of conjecture. Indeed, it is through the Syro-Phoenicians' freedom in potency—and not yet in act—of choosing, with its dispositions, that God knows the case under consideration. Another limitation is that Thomas comes to think that, if these "Lebanese" were not saved (which is not so certain for all of them!), it is because God decided not to give them what they would have been saved by—namely, Jesus's preaching and miracles (but did God not have other means?)—and that, if he did not give it to them, it is because he decided to leave them in the *massa perditionis*.[17] This position, taken from St. Augustine—quoted in the *Catena in Matt*—is difficult to admit, although it is also expressed in the commentary on the same passage in Matt 11. Finally, we find it in the *tertia pars*, in the following terms, copied word-for-word from the bishop of Hippo:

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[16] A fourth text speaks of this only implicitly. *In* III *sent*., d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, ad 4, the same idea is evoked: if Christ did not perform the same miracles and preach among the Tyrians and Sidonians, it is because they were not predestined. *De articulis fidei* I supposes that the Tyrians and Sidonians will be damned, but with a lesser penalty than the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida. This may also be the meaning of *Catena in Luke* 10, lec. 4, and *Super Heb* [rep. vulgata] 10, lec. 3.

[17] This idea is from St. Augustine, *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 9 and *De dono perseverantiae* 14.35, which are taken up by St. Thomas *Catena in Matt* 11, lec. 7.

> God foresees who are those who would believe to his miracles if they were witnesses of them; he helps some because he wants to; he does not help others because, in his hidden but just predestination, he has judged otherwise. Let us therefore believe without hesitation in his mercy towards those he saves, and in his justice towards those he punishes.[18]

It's hard to understand why God would not want to come to the aid (at all) of those who—his science of the futuribles would have discerned—would believe in his miracles if they witnessed them. This very hard theory, copied from St. Augustine, says that God does not systematically come to the aid of those he foresees would respond favorably, but only to those among them whom he has chosen. This seems difficult to reconcile with the Church's later teaching on the antecedent universal salvific will already revealed in 1 Tim 2:4. Thomas's thinking also assumes that those who have never heard of Christ will be damned (even if—as he explains elsewhere—it will not be for their negative infidelity), which is no longer acceptable. It sets aside his reiterated assumption of the possible justification of any unbaptized child reaching the age of reason. Above all, it neglects several aspects of the Gospel text, which is concerned with the hypothetical act of faith at a given instant and of a collectivity (the Tyrians and Sidonians), and not with the eternal salvation of specific individuals. In addition, it is not proven that Jesus intended to express here a claim of infallibly knowing it.[19]

[3] As noted above, the way in which God knows with certainty morally bad, contingent futures without being the cause of them is not absolutely clear in the Scholastic saint either. If, for the knowledge of contingent futures, the latter always appeals to the presence of eternity at all instants of time, and never (at least not expressly) to some predetermining decree, it is not clear however how God does not then derive his science of realized evil from something created. This is the main difficulty of our research. It seems to be up to twenty-first-century theologians to find the solution, and elsewhere than in the literalness of the master's work. We will attempt to do so in another section. In any case, it is understandable that Thomists have always stumbled on this point, and have therefore tried (in our view wrongly) to find a way out by describing permissive decrees as "predetermining."

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[18] *ST* III, q. 1, a. 5, ad 2.

[19] Here, too, we disagree with Francisco Suárez, who will seek to demonstrate the opposite.

[4] As for the causality of contingent events, the Holy Doctor does indeed tell us that God's will is the cause of the fact that contingent events exist, and that it therefore prepares contingent causes for these contingent events, but the question of whether God wills with an absolute will the said contingent events in their singularity, from which he would derive the will that they be contingent, or whether, willing that there be contingent events, he wills them singularly only conditionally, is not clarified. In other words, what would be accomplished in an absolutely efficacious manner in a contingent event would be the absolute will that it be contingent, *if it is,* but not an absolute will *that it be* exercised on the contingent second cause (in the sense of endowed of free will *contingens ad utrumlibet*).[20]

[5] When discussing the infallibility of the divine will, Aquinas often neglects to point out that he is dealing with the consequent will. Rightly asserting from his youth that the act of the divine will is not caused by anything, not even by the knowledge of a thing, he sometimes fails to remind us that, on the contrary, *the effect* of this divine act can be conditioned in its realization by something known; yet he maintains this latter point right up to his last works.[21] And indeed, the fact that the consequent will has *an effect* that takes account of foreknowledge does not mean that *the will is itself caused* by the preknown object.

[6] Nor did St. Thomas take care to establish for us how the "principle of predilection"[22] applies in the case of the proposal of equal grace to two different men, which is a famous problem. If Peter consents to grace, is it because of a superior dilection on the part of God, compared to Paul, who does not consent, even though he received the same grace in the same circumstances?

[7] In addition, while Thomas de Roccasecca has often explained that the consequent will takes all circumstances into account, he does not draw from that all the *prima facie* obvious conclusions, such as the fact that God absolutely wants to give *esse* to man's operation only once resistance or nonresistance to an initial impulse has been taken into account. In the same way, he does not make it clear that God gives glory or refuses it once the whole of man's life and its outcome have been taken into account—man's current state of merit or demerit at an instant **T** in time, when it's a question of deciding whether or not he will die.

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20 This lack of clarity is particularly noticeable in *In* VI *metaphys*., lec. 3.

21 See *ST* III, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4, the statement "praedestinatio praesupponit praescientiam futurorum" referenced above.

22 See *ST* I, q. 20, a. 3, corp.; the same idea is found in a. 4, corp. and ad 5.

[8] The young bachelor on the *Sentences* did teach in detail early in his career that "the opposite of what God permits can take place."[23] He never disavowed this position, but he will never call it to mind again when dealing with God's permission of evil. This may have given the impression to those (few) Thomists who knew his original teaching that he had abandoned this position, even though it was obvious *per se*.

[9] One of the most criticized points in Thomasian thought is the way it justifies God's permission of evil in terms of various finalities. A first justification (due to Pseudo-Dionysius) poses no problem: God tolerates evil in order to let created freedom act, to respect its nature. This is a kind of antecedent reason. And it is surely the main one. For their part, the reasons drawn from the consequences of evil boil down to the undeniable fact that God knows that, if evil takes place, he will know how to draw good from it. We think of the humility acquired by the sinner or of the sanctity of the martyrs in the face of the evil of persecution.

The crux of the problem, however, is not so much the permission of *sin*, but rather the *eternal damnation* of certain men. What good can God derive from this? The only plausible answer (and one which Aquinas often uses) is the manifestation of his attribute of justice: it seems unjust that men of the "Nero" type (in our time Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Kim-il Sung, or Hitler) should not be punished in the afterlife. But the doctor's examples in the field of architecture and masonry (there must be stones underneath) or his "aesthetic" view of things (all the boxes of the types of beings in the universe must be filled, including the "punished for eternity" box...) are unsatisfactory: you cannot compare an intelligent, free person with a brick or a mosquito.

Another serious disadvantage of this type of presentation is that it risks being understood (although this is not Aquinas's thinking) as an antecedent will: God would see to it that there are people to be damned, because certain dark colors must serve as a contrast in his picture. Now, when Aquinas deals with this, it must surely be understood from a consequent will, but he does not state it clearly enough.

[10] In the field of predestination, the Dominican theologian cannot be directly responsible for the fact that later theologians often confused predestination in the sense it takes on in St. Thomas when he does not specify its object, *praedestinatio adaequate sumpta* with that which preoccupied them, *praedestinatio ad gloriam praecisive sumptam*. But it is regrettable that our Holy Doctor, although he has implicitly stated this,

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[23] *In* I *sent*., d. 47, q. 1, a. 2, corp.

has not explained how, if adequate predestination is globally gratuitous, it is because it includes a part of an antecedent, totally gratuitous will, the antecedent universal salvific will, from which at least the very first actual grace is derived. On the other hand, he has not sufficiently reminded us that adequate predestination includes a consequent will, one that takes account of merits. And yet (as his commentary on the Gospel of John explains), from these merits comes the collation of some of the later graces (which represent an intermediate part of predestination adequately considered), and finally of glory, when these merits have survived. Similarly, the saint did not sufficiently explain what he meant by an "infallibility of order" qualifying predestination (in the adequate sense), and how it possibly differs from an infallibility of causality, it being understood that neither is the mere infallibility of science.

[11] By way of parenthesis, we should also point out that, based on Rom 9:11–13, which quotes Mal 1:23 : "I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau," the Angel of the School, on several occasions—and apparently in imitation of St. Augustine—considers that this phrase concerns predestination in the proper sense, that which leads to the eternal salvation of each individual man,[24] whereas in reality, in Scripture, it concerns the divine election of a person or collectivity with a special role to play here below in the economy of mankind's salvation.

[12] To finish with predestination, let us add that the Common Doctor has not specified whether election (a notion correlative to that of reprobation, as its opposite) is an antecedent will, or whether, like predestination in the global sense, it is or includes a consequent will.

[13] The most worrying subject of our research is reprobation. Some of Aquinas's formulations are ambiguous. Thus, as we have seen, when he affirms that "reprobation includes the will to allow someone to fall into a fault,"[25] this could be understood—and some have misunderstood it—as if Thomas were asserting that God arranges for man to fall, so as to be able to punish him, or—less shockingly—that God, not having predestined such a person, draws the consequence, which is to allow him to remain in a state of mortal sin (the theory of antecedent negative reprobation, supported by a large proportion of classical Thomists), which obliges him to have previously allowed man to commit a mortal sin. But, as we have said, the meaning is quite different. It is that of a logical implication based on

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[24] What we consider to be an error of perspective can be found in: *De veritate*, q. 6, a. 1, corp.; a. 2, ad 7; *Summa contra gentiles* III, chap. 163, no. 1; *Super I Cor* 7, lec. 1; *ST* I, q. 23, a. 3, sc; *Super Rom* 9, 13, lec. 2.

[25] *ST I*, q. 23, a. 3, corp. See also *Super Rom* 9, lec. 3, no. 1418.

a hypothesis: if there is reprobation, it is because there has been permission for a fault, and that, following this fault, there has been a decision to punish it, on the one hand by abandoning the sinner to himself, and on the other hand by damnation.[26] In the same way, we could criticize this or that formula in which Brother Thomas assumes that de facto a sufficient reason for God to refuse his grace is that it is gratuitous.[27]

The Execution of the Divine Plan in the Creature

The execution of the divine plan in the temporal creature takes place on the one hand by means of the general divine concurrence, and on the other hand by means of a concurrence pertaining to grace.

Divine Concurrence and Created Freedom in General

[14] One of the other main drawbacks of Thomasian vocabulary, from our point of view, is his view that "coercion" (and his use of *cogere* is indeed polysemous[28]) is alone opposed to "freedom," whereas necessity would not.[29] Here, St. Thomas is dependent on a formula of the Bishop of Hippo,[30] which undoubtedly contributed to the subsequent confusion of the debates surrounding Jansenism. More precisely, in the issues at hand, and without warning, he uses the word *libertas* in two quite different senses: to designate either simply *libertas a coercitione*[31] or, more narrowly, *libertas a necessitate*, free will properly speaking (or psychological freedom).[32] Only occasionally does he draw a distinction between the two. Caution is therefore called for when quoting St. Thomas's assertion that man's "freedom" is safeguarded by this or that divine motion (for certain

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26 See *ST* I, q. 23, a. 3, ad 2.

27 See *ST* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3.

28 For example, in *In* I *sent*., d. 25, q. 1, a. 4, expos., he refers to the necessity to use such an expression against heretics, and in *In* III *sent.*, d. 39, q. 1, a. 3, qla. 2, corp., he refers to moral obligation. But in *In* II *sent*., d. 25, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3, or *De ver*., q. 22, a. 9, corp. and ad 1, he makes a clear distinction between *immutare* and *cogere*, and likewise in *De ver*., q. 22, a. 8, corp. Finally, in a text such as *In* II *sent*., d. 25, q. 1, a. 5, corp., he names the absence of coercion and the absence of necessity side by side as characteristics of free will. He was therefore aware of the distinction from his youth, but sometimes neglected to remind us of it.

29 See, e.g., *ST* I, q. 82, a. 1, ad 1.

30 See St. Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei* 5.10.

31 See another example in *Contra retrahentes*, ch. 13, corp.

32 See, e.g., *In* I *sent*., d. 38, q. 1, a. 1. This is for us a frequent drawback of his lexicon, as we have verified by examining the 682 or so occurrences (excluding objections) of the term *libertas* in his works.

actual graces are operative and therefore necessitating, and thus correspond to nondeliberate movements of the creature, endowed solely with the freedom of spontaneity).

[15] As for God's motion exercised on the will, Aquinas does not always specify whether it is a motion to the *exercise* of a choice or to its *specification*, or to both.[33] If God is said to be able to incline man's will to whatever he wills, it is not said whether he can infallibly incline it to such and such a specification regardless of man's nonresistance. It is not specified exactly how God infallibly moves the will, at what stage his influence becomes infallible with an infallibility of causality. And first of all, it should be made clear in each case whether this is an infallibility of science, of order, or of causality. Certainly, if we assume that a human act takes place at a given instant **T**, we can deduce that God eternally and infallibly sees and wills himself to cause this human act by giving it *esse*—which also applies to the physical aspect of the evil act. But the question of the *preconditions* under which *esse* is communicated to this act rather than another remains unresolved. In particular, to "incline" the will to this act is not to determine the will to it: and so, unlike the decision to actually give *esse* to an act, the decision to incline or move to such and such an act does not infallibly produce the result, and is not what provides God with the certain science that such will be the specification of this act.

Grace and Created Freedom

[16] Concerning grace, at the very beginning of his work, the young bachelor did not clearly profess the *necessity* of an interior motion of God *of a supernatural essence* to prepare the soul for justification, although he did mention *the existence* of a *gratuitous* divine help, both interior and exterior. In certain texts, one has the impression that he still conceives of this help as the general divine concurrence.

[17] While he constantly professes the sufficiency of Christ's merits to save all men and the antecedent universal salvific will, however, he does not always clearly deduce that God proposes to every man a real possibility of joining him eternally in beatitude. He even positively excludes this possibility in the case of a child who dies without baptism, accepting more generally—as we said, following in the footsteps of St. Augustine—that the existence of original sin in a man would be an obstacle that would

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[33] He does this occasionally, such as in *Super Rom* 9, lec. 3, no. 1418. Note here, for all our article, that, in the case of actual grace, to consent is to choose to consent, because when there are only two possibilities (here: yes or no), consent and choice are the same act.

suffice de facto for God to refuse to propose his grace, whereas he faithfully maintains that God, as far as he is concerned, proposes his grace to every man, just as the sun enlightens everything that does not shrink from its illumination, and he professes that every unbaptized child reaching the age of reason can prepare for and receive justification. The Thomasian doctrinal corpus has therefore not achieved harmony between these various components.

[18] A final limitation, which seems important to us, is that, with the exception of his very last letter to the Abbot of Monte Cassino, which deals with the issues of predestination and final perseverance, the Angelic Doctor devotes almost no space to the study of divine choice and causality of the instant of death of a free creature, even though in our view this aspect is crucial. Indeed, eternal salvation depends on two factors: God's choice of the instant of death, and the fact that, at that instant, man is in a state of grace. This second factor in turn depends both on God's prior action in maintaining or restoring sanctifying grace, and (in the case of adults) on man's prior cooperation in this maintenance or restoration. This cooperation was instigated by actual graces but depended, as a *sine qua non* condition, on the consent of the will (as St. Thomas explicitly teaches).[34]

Can we then, at the summit of the mountain that is the teaching of St. Thomas, lay down the little mound of our personal synthesis to overcome these drawbacks? This is what we shall attempt "cum confidentia divini auxilii . . . secundum quod materia patietur"[35] in the third and final section of this article.

Sketch of a Personal Synthesis

The aim here is to sketch out a solution to the points that remain unresolved and to make explicit our principles of solution, using images among other things.

Divine Science and Causality on Free Acts in General

The relations between God and the free acts of creatures raise difficulties at the level of (1) divine science and (2) divine causality, and more particularly (3) divine knowledge of man's possible resistance.

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[34] See *ST* III, q. 30, a. 1, ad 1 (already quoted).

[35] *ST* I, q. 1, prol.

Since St. Thomas does not base the infallible foreknowledge of God of the future free act (in the sense of a deliberate choice) of the creature on a causally infallible motion of God on the created will, we do not think that this is the way for God to know this act. The infallibility of his knowledge is an infallibility of science, not of causality, even if this science is required for him to be the first cause of the act. In other words, God knows the free act of the creature with certainty because he knows himself causing the *esse* and all that is of being and metaphysically good in the specification of this act, but not because his causality infallibly determines this specification. It is not in a predetermining decree that he knows this act, but because, contemplating his essence, he sees himself actually causing the *esse* of this act through the mediation of this created freedom (which posits a morally good or bad act). In other words, if his knowledge of the essence of this act is directing its causality, if his knowledge of the communication of the passage to the act of choosing by the gift of *esse* is directing and causal on the exercise of the act of choosing, however, his science of vision of the conjunction of *esse* with a given specification or essence effectively chosen by created freedom is causally *concomitant*, not antecedent, to the act thus known of certain science.[36]

In the case of actual grace, this is to be understood more precisely as follows: in the act of deciding to propose grace as sufficient (an act which belongs to the consequent will with regard to proposing sufficient grace and to the antecedent will with regard to the subsequent efficacy of this grace), the consent (or not) of man cannot be known by God and the knowledge of the nonresistance of man which conditions the gift of the efficacious grace is a presupposition of the act of deciding to confer this efficacious grace, but the knowledge of a subsequent consent of man is not presupposed; in the act of permitting evil, the actual evil cannot be known, because the opposite of what is permitted by God can come about,[37] and permission is an antecedent condition *sine qua non*, making sin possible, but in the act—hence in the decision—of conferring de facto *esse* on the physical act of sin, the evil committed is known.

When the act in question is morally good and supernatural, then, it is not because God knows that he will give an *ab intrinseco* infallibly efficacious grace that he knows that the act will be morally good and

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[36] Remember that the science that is causal is not the science of vision, but that of simple intelligence, which has become the science of approval through the addition of divine will.

[37] See *In* I *sent*., d. 47, q. 1, a. 2, corp.

supernatural, but because he causes it de facto (by efficient mode as to exercise, and by mode of object as to specification).

When the act in question is morally evil, it is not because he knows that he will refuse to give an *ab intrinseco* infallibly efficacious grace that he knows that the act will be morally evil, but because he causes de facto this act (by efficient mode as to exercise, but only indirectly by mode of object as to specification, which he knows by the contrast of the privation opposed to the specification he wanted to give).[38] Indeed, St. Thomas always explains the certainty of God's knowledge of contingent futures by means of the de facto—not *de jure*—necessity of the contingent effect.

As for free futuribles, God can know with the best of conjectures what a free will placed in such external conditions and with such a type of actual or even habitual grace would do.[39] But according to St. Thomas, God cannot know such free futurible acts with a *certain* science as long as he contemplates these acts only in the potency to be realized, without contemplating them as realized in act.[40]

At the opposite extreme, Luis de Molina's middle knowledge, in its two possible interpretations, must be rejected: The first interpretation, that God could know with a certain science what a human free will would do, being placed in such given circumstances, must be discarded. Indeed, such a position implies the determinism of circumstances over created free will. This must be rejected even if the circumstances in question include a particular type of grace, congruent grace, for it amounts to having the specification of free will determined by congruent grace. Obviously, in order to achieve his ends, God chooses actual graces adapted to circumstances and free will (otherwise, he would not really have the will to save), but these graces are not (in general) infallibly efficacious in the sense that it could not be that free will did not consent to them.[41] We must reject the second interpretation of middle knowledge. In it, indeed, God would have the certain science of what a human free will would do, being placed in such given circumstances, because what it would do would be such by definition, given that God would have chosen, from among the possible "universal scenarios," such a "scenario" of the course of the world, in which,

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38 In both cases, the causality in act that God exercises and by which he knows the act is both the *final* causality that is exercised by the *bonum in communi* and the ultimate end and the *efficient* causality that is the main problem addressed here.

39 See Matt 11:21–24 and parallel texts; and St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De infantibus qui mature abripiuntur* (*PG* 46, col. 184).

40 See *ST* I, q. 14, a. 13; *De ver*., q. 2, a. 12.

41 We therefore disagree with St. Robert Bellarmine and Suárez.

by hypothesis, man would act in such a way. In effect, this is assuming that it is God's choice of a "scenario" for the world that determines free-will choices. In addition to falling back into the difficulties of the Bañezian position of the "predetermination," it means denying historicity: the progressive course and successive continuity in which man lives. The world would be like a DVD already filmed, which God would put back into his DVD player.

Between the two, however, lies God's science of his own hypothetical decrees and actions. Classical Thomists have recognized the concept, but it needs to be refined. Firstly, the way in which classical Thomists describe it is not convincing. The certain science of the free future act due to a subjectively conditioned divine decree is acceptable only if it is a necessary act of the human will, and not an act of free will. In the latter case, if God knows with certain science the future free act in potency to be realized, it is not by means of a hypothetical decree of what he, God, would do in matters of actual grace or in those of permission of evil, if such a circumstance were realized. Such decrees exist, but cannot be a mode of infallible knowledge of the future.

We therefore suggest another approach to this hypothetical science:

First, it is proposed upstream of the creation of our world. Within the "science of simple intelligence," God possesses a "programming" of what he *would* do in any given situation of any given world. Conceivably, he would "formulate" this "programming" thus: If such and such a situation (with the billions of billions of billions of previous data) occurred at instant **T**, my pure and simple act would have such and such effects at that instant. This limited form of science of the futurible is acceptable, because God can thus infallibly know his own subjectively conditioned decrees, and even their *immediate, necessary* effects.

Secondly, this science is then proposed in the hypothesis of the creation of our world within the framework of the science of reality operated by God. It is the "science of approval" that is the cause of things—the science of simple intelligence to which a decision of the will has been added. Within this "science of approval," God possesses a "programming" of what he *will* do: the science explained above (of what he *would* do) becomes, passing from the conditional to the real. Since the situation created up to instant **T** will have been such (and this includes morally good and bad acts), my pure and simple act will produce such and such an effect at this instant **T**.[42]

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[42] See the "praedestinatio praesupponit praescientiam futurorum" of *ST* III, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4.

We suggest calling the knowledge of the situation that has been created up to time **T** the "divine science of the anterior futures." It is then a department of the science of vision, on which is based the science of approval: the decree of what God will do *for the rest of time*.

Additionally, in this presentation, it should be made clear that it is not God or his act in itself that is conditioned by this science of anterior futures; it is *the effect* of his action, formally one and virtually multiple that is. "If the situation is such and such at instant **T**, I, God, will produce such and such an effect." God does not change whether the situation takes place or not, but the effect depends on it. This resolves Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange's dilemma: "God determining or determined, no middle ground."

The Relationship Between Divine Science and Causality in Free Acts

And yet, according to St. Thomas, from a causal (not simply logical) point of view, it is not because something future will be that God knows it, but it is because God knows it that this thing will be. And nothing created can cause the divine act of knowing. On the contrary, all the being there can be in anything, and therefore in particular in a human act, comes from God's science of approval. In this sense, divine science is the cause of what will be. Hence the following theses on divine causality.

God knows the specification (essence) of the free choices that will have been realized, on the one hand insofar as he is the exemplary cause of all that is of being and good in them and is their final cause, and on the other hand insofar as he is the efficient cause of the exercise (*esse*) of the free choice. He thus knows himself from all eternity as giving *esse* to a choice through the instrumentality of a created will, which, in the act of choice to which God causes it to pass, turns toward this specification or that without being antecedently determined by God to this or that, even if God can *incline it* (impulsively, not compulsively, including through a prior nondeliberate, necessary act of the created will) to a well-determined specification.

In this way, if the will chooses the good, it actually chooses what God inclined it to (either through the general motion to the metaphysical good, the first motor of all will, or through awareness of the natural law, inclining to the moral good, or through a particular motion called actual grace, inclining to the supernatural good, which is dealt with in a later section). If the will chooses evil, it chooses the opposite of what God inclined it to, misusing an influx already received.

In all cases, it is God who, through the instrumentality of the created will, has provided the *esse* for the latter's act; he is therefore the cause of the passage to the act of choosing, and thus of the act of choosing ; and it is insofar as he causes it that he also knows it in its specification, which comes entirely from him and from the creature in its subordination (of instrumental cause as to *esse*, of noninstrumental second cause as to specification), if the act is morally good; but it comes from him only as to the *physicality* of the act if, though metaphysically good (as is all reality), it is nevertheless morally bad. In the latter case, the disorder of the act comes only from the creature. God then indirectly knows the evil specification as the deprivation of the good that is not there and ought to be there, a deprivation that otherwise has a real good (the will) as the subject in which it resides. In any case, having removed the *potential* indeterminacy of free will still in potency to choose, God has not removed the *potestative* indeterminacy, also called dominating, of created free will in act of making an election.

Causality and the Divine Science of Our Possible Resistance or Nonresistance

Our position obviously raises the question of the causality of divine science on our nonresistance. Let us posit the following thesis: By knowing himself from all eternity as causing in time the *esse* of resistance or nonresistance, God knows its positive specification (in the case of resistance, he knows its privative specification only indirectly). God knows from all eternity in his science of simple intelligence the operative and sufficient grace he is going to give, and adding to it the consequent—that is, absolute—will, he decides to cause in man the indeliberate movement; we deduce from this that he has the at least antecedent will that the free nonresistance and the free salutary act follow. Through the instrumentality of this nondeliberate movement, *esse* is then communicated to man's free stance with respect to this sufficient grace. God knows himself from all eternity as the cause of this free stance; knowing this *esse*, he knows what essence this *esse* actualizes (the positive specification whose exercise it is). By causing the *esse* of this free act through the instrumentality of indeliberate motion and free created will, God *causes* the existence of the free act endowed with such essence, but this essence has not been *determined* by him in a causally anterior manner as to specification in the sense that, under his causality, it could not have been otherwise. It is free will that has contracted this *esse* to this essence, this exercise to this specification (resistance or not, or if we prefer, choice without consideration of the moral rule, or under

this consideration). God thus knows the existence and essence of the free response of the will, and their conjunction, by looking at himself causing the *esse* of the will's decision. If this decision is nonresistance, God sees himself as de facto causing this nonresistance (as to the exercise of choice, and as to the proposed specification); if the decision is resistance, God sees himself as de facto causing resistance (as to the exercise of choice, and as to the metaphysical goodness of the chosen specification, but not as to the disorder). The creature's response does not cause divine science, but is a *sine qua non* condition for divine science to have this or that object.[43]

Let us be clear: it is not God who is being modified in this way, but his effect. To understand this, we can draw a comparison with a computer programmer, and for the sake of argument, a chess programmer. God provides the computer, the rules of the game, and the electricity (the physical causality of the exercise), and it is he who has the initiative—he who plays with white and makes the first move. He has programmed the software, and therefore the "divine riposte" he would make according to all the possible created ripostes of all possible creatures. The pure divine act therefore has on a given human response A the effect that is a given subsequent divine response B. In this way, the divine riposte B is an effect of God but changes nothing in God: created ripostes in no way cause God to make "new" decisions, just as the programmer of a chess software program is in no way modified by the way this or that player actually plays in front of his computer.

The difference with the human programmer of a software program is simply that God not only knows in his science of simple intelligence what man *might* do, and his own hypothetical divine decree of what he, God, *would* do in response to such and such a hypothetical attitude of man, but also knows, in his science of vision of futures anterior to B, what man (in A) *will have done* prior to the divine riposte B. Thus, God has programmed not only what effect of his otherwise immutable causality (since pure Act) would be triggered *if* such and such a player played such and such a move, but also what divine reaction will be triggered *given that* such and such a created player *will have played* such and such a move. The "given that" acts as a reason or cause not upon God, but upon the desired effect (*ex parte voliti*, wrote St. Thomas).

This approach reconciles the causal anteriority of divine action and

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[43] This last remark has always been made in equivalent form by Thomists commenting on *ST* I, q. 14, a. 13, to explain that St. Thomas did not mean that the creature's decision in act causes divine knowledge.

science, on the one hand, with created freedom, on the other, without—or so we are led to believe—undermining the transcendence of divine science with respect to its object.

Let us now apply our comparison to predestination or not to receive efficacious grace: this predestination is, like all precisive predestination, a consequent will, which therefore takes into account the way in which the free will *will or will not have resisted* the impulse of sufficient operative grace. This brings us to a more detailed examination of divine causality in supernatural acts.

Divine Causality in Free, Salutary, or Even Meritorious Acts

After this view of free acts in general, it is indeed important to transfer ourselves to the supernatural realm. This requires the study (1) of the absolute or conditional causality of predestination, (2) of the causality of precisive predestination to glory on the granting of grace, (3) of the causality of grace-motion on created freedom, and (4) of divine causality on the instant of man's death.

Vocation or Predestination to Eternal Salvation: Conditional or Absolute?

Before the ordeal, as after it, God, in an absolutely gratuitous way—that is, anteriorly to any act of a creature and to any consideration on his part of any action of intelligent creatures—orders them, and in particular mankind, to supernatural salvation. This is the universal salvific will. It can be said to be unconditional: as a divine will, it exists independently of any human decision, man being considered in it apart from circumstances and only as created in the image and likeness of God. It can also be said to be conditional, but in another sense: as a universal will, it is the will to save all men *if and only if* this does not hinder God's justice—that is, on condition that some man does not die deserving eternal punishment. So, in this second sense (the conditional), it is rather its application to such and such a man that is conditional, only actual salvation, or predestination. In short, as a will, it is unconditional, and only in its realization is it conditional.

Moreover, the universal salvific will of mankind "persists" after Adam's fall. Its first and foremost effect is to establish the general meritorious cause of salvation for fallen man: the sending of the Redeemer of the human race. The second effect of this universal salvific will is that, at least once in his

life, every human being is offered a real possibility of attaining salvation, a possibility consisting in actual grace.[44]

What then of the *consequent* or absolute salvific will, known as predestination? It can be understood as the divine act (sense 1), its effects considered globally in a man (sense 2) or a particular effect (sense 3). The act by which God predestines (sense 1), an act truly identical to God, cannot be caused by anything created. Predestination *adaequate sumpta* (sense 2) has no created cause either. This is because every form of predestination essentially presupposes in its notion the universal, totally gratuitous salvific will. *From this point of view*, every form of predestination is always gratuitous at its root, and independent of any consideration of the creature's moral goodness. In this sense, it is unconditioned.

But *praecisive sumpta* predestination (sense 3) concerns a particular effect, which in turn may have a created cause or reason, another particular effect of the act of predestination.[45] Let us be clear: the *praecisive sumpta* predestination to a particular gift cannot have as its reason what man will do with that gift *afterward*. However, as St. Thomas has repeatedly affirmed, the predestination of a gift includes a consequent will, a will that takes into account the circumstances of a given man. This presupposes that God decides that the gift will take into account, among other things, all that man *will have done before* receiving the gift (grace or glory) that God predestines for him. St. Thomas never denied this thesis, and at the end of his life, writing "praedestinatio praesupponit praescientiam futurorum,"[46] he even explicitly reaffirmed that predestination takes account of events anterior to its object.

In his early works, St. Thomas explained this: on the one hand, the good use of God's help (nowadays called "actual grace") that man *will have made before* justification is assigned by God as a *reason* for granting habitual grace (without being its *cause*); and on the other hand, the good use that man *will have made* of habitual grace *once conferred*, will be the *meritorious cause* of his eventual precisive predestination *to the glory* that will come at the end of the race. St. Thomas never retracted, even implicitly, this position; on the contrary, in his maturity, he writes that it would not lack accuracy if we were to take "predestination" in this sense (our sense 3).

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[44] This is the common doctrine endorsed by the magisterium of the Second Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* § 22, and which *may* also apply to human beings who have died without having had the material possibility of being baptized with water, desire (implicit or explicit), or blood: we disregard this case in our study.

[45] *ST* I, q. 23, a. 5.

[46] *ST* III, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4.

Some men are predestined to glory *praecisive sumpta*, without merit on their part. At least the baptized who die before they have the use of moral reason must be included in this number. Are there others? If so, they would be the objects of a special predestination: we cannot rule this out from the outset. The admission of such a restricted hypothesis no longer has the same disadvantages as the general hypothesis of predestination *ad gloriam praecisive ante praevisa merita*, which fatally brings in its wake the reprobation *ante praevisa demerita* of all other human beings, which is inadmissible, even in its negative form (for there are only two final possibilities: Heaven or Hell).

By the divine will, for all adults who have attained the use of reason, the antecedent universal salvific will has the temporal effect that all those who die with merit (i.e., in a state of grace) are predestined. In this way, merit has made certain their predestination, which was otherwise only conditional, at least generally. The merits that man will have earned with grace thus enter as a reason assigned by God to predestination *ad gloriam praecisive sumptam*, at least in the general case. In this sense, there is *praedestinatio praecisive sumpta ad gloriam post praevisa merita,* or better *attentis meritis*, though not *propter merita*.

Is Actual Grace an Effect of Predestination or of the Universal Salvific Will?

The very first grace is the effect of the antecedent universal salvific will and, in the case of the predestined, will have formed part of the predestination *adaequate sumpta* (our sense 2). But it does not derive from predestination *ad gloriam praecisive sumptam* (our sense 3). Indeed, there will be human beings at the Last Judgment who will have received the first actual grace but not ultimately be saved: it is therefore (by way of logical consequence, not causality) that they are not predestined for glory.

Let us go a step further: except for the grace of final perseverance, the conferring of a grace cannot be said to be the effect of predestination *ad gloriam praecisive sumptam*. In other words, it is not because God knows or has absolutely decided on someone's salvation that he confers sanctifying grace or a certain perseverance (since, as Augustine himself points out, some people persevere for a certain time without persevering *usque in finem*).

Finally, grace is the means God assigns to man to attain glory through merit. But grace is in no way a means for God to achieve God's end, which would be man's attainment of glory: God "vult ergo hoc esse propter hoc, sed non propter hoc vult [hoc]"—"wants this to exist in view of that, but

it is not because of that, that he wants [this]."[47] Glory is the end that God assigns to man to be attained by merit: grace and merit are means for man, not for God.[48]

How Does Grace Affect Free Will?

The very first interior actual grace consists in moving the soul without the will itself driving this movement: the will is moved, not motor. It is therefore an operative grace, hence a divine action producing in the soul a nondeliberate, necessary movement, tending toward the realization of a subsequent free action of a salutary nature. This impulse cannot be reduced to the general attraction toward the ultimate end formally considered—perfect happiness, or the good in itself, attractions already mentioned in connection with free actions of a natural order. It is an impulse-attraction toward a *particular* good of the supernatural order. Such an impulse is required, as it is for every act of a created power,[49] and in particular for the will, especially when it is for the will a question of willing something without this willing coming from a prior voluntary process.

In our opinion, the interior grace later called "sufficient" is an operative impulse of this type.[50] Consequently, sufficient grace not only makes the human act of salvation *possible*; it also *impels* to do it.

Insofar as divine action causes the movement of the soul, we can call it motion. And, still insofar as it causes this movement, the divine action precedes it (*naturâ*, *non tempore*), and under this aspect, we can call it "*pre*-motion." Nevertheless, in this respect, it is something divine, not created. Moreover, since motion in the mobile is nothing other than movement itself, it follows that this "premotion," considered in the soul, is nothing other than the very movement of the soul.[51] At the level of operative grace, this movement of the soul is therefore the indeliberate willing. Sufficient

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47 *ST* I, q. 19, a. 5, corp. We enclose the final *hoc* in square brackets, absent from some manuscripts.

48 In addition, God wants the prospect of glory to be a means of attracting man to acts of love for God.

49 See *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7.

50 It is accompanied by circumstances, both external and internal to the soul, which constitute a whole that makes it possible for the will to adhere to the free action proposed to the will, and that impels the will to do so. This whole, including the aforementioned internal operative grace, is, strictly speaking, what modern theologians have called "sufficient grace." But to simplify the study of the problems it poses, we will confine ourselves here to analyzing what sufficient grace is at the level of the *internal grace* for which God has the initiative, and which invites man to consent.

51 *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 2, corp., quoting Aristotle (*Physics* 3) in this sense.

grace is the passage of the will, hitherto in potency to willing, to the act of willing.[52] Moreover, this passage to the act is not free, but necessary, both in terms of exercise (making a decision) and in terms of specification (making a decision about this proposed object). Insofar as this nondeliberate movement precedes the deliberate movement and moves to it, we can also say, by derivation, that it is itself premotion with respect to the deliberate movement.

This divine action and its immediate effect, the nondeliberate movement, are accompanied by the proposition of a specifying object but are not reduced to it, for they act in such a way as to also lead to the *exercise of the free act to which they make us tend*, insofar as they determine to make a decision, to pass to the act of choosing (but without determining to choose this way rather than that, except de facto). There is thus both a moral premotion, by itself fallible, to the specification of the choice, and a physical premotion, by itself infallible, to the exercise of a choice with respect to that specification.

As for *the exercise of the salutary act to which the motion leads*, the solution seems to us to be to consider that what efficiently causes the will to choose to exercise a given act is the cause that causes the will to make a choice about the act to be performed.[53]

In any case, the indeliberate willing caused by God prior to our intervention according to these two lines—efficient (of exercise) and final (of specification)—has a total of five effects. The first four effects below are as for specification, while the fifth is as for exercise.

1. The attraction of evil is compensated: this is the healing function (*sanans*) of actual grace.
2. The faculties are raised to the supernatural level, enabling them to perform a salutary act: this is the "elevating" (*elevans*) function of actual grace.
3. A specification, a supernatural, salutary object, is proposed.

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[52] We write "willing" and not yet "choosing," but it is this necessary willing that will then trigger the deliberation process leading to the election, the choice.

[53] We could also envisage a divine action by mode of final causality, or "attraction," but exercised immediately on the will, without passing through a representation, which would reduce it to an attraction by mode of object. This interpretation seems to us to have been insufficiently studied, and is not without interest. Certain texts of St. Thomas incline to support it. It would also be in line with a fundamental idea of St. Augustine.

4. For all these reasons, free will is immediately rendered capable of not resisting *this indeliberate willing itself*.[54]
5. The will, hitherto led in the act of a simple, uninhibited will, then passes from the *potency to choose* to *the act of choosing*, to election; thus, God does *cause* this election, but he does not *determine* it. This, in our view, is the only way to conceive of the causality of such a passage to the act (indispensable causality according to St. Thomas) while preserving in this act the freedom from necessity of the will.

In a first sense, this impulse can be said to be "indifferent" with regard to specification, because it does not "determine *ad unum*" the specification of the free choice, to the extent that the will could not fail to choose this specification. In a second sense, it is by no means "indifferent," since it inclines to a very precise, "determined" salutary act.[55]

If this sufficient grace does not in fact obtain man's consent, it remains purely sufficient and is not efficacious. If, on the contrary, man consents to this grace, the divine action will have been efficacious.[56] Indeed, the nonresistance of free will to this impulse conditions the granting of efficacious grace, which will therefore be efficacious de facto, and not *de jure*. If, as a result of this sufficient impulse, the free will effectively decides not to resist the impulse itself, then the will is infallibly led to perform the salutary act toward which the first nondeliberate movement tended: this time, the grace in question is an efficacious grace in second act. Insofar as we could have resisted it at its root, we can be said to remain free "under efficacious grace"; but insofar as by definition it is efficacious if and only if its effect follows—namely, the free salutary act—it cannot be that a grace has been efficacious, and that we have resisted it.[57]

In addition, if in fact you do not resist the nondeliberate impulse, it is because de facto that impulse has played a "determining" role. It is from this angle, and only in this way, that we can say that "physical

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[54] It seems to us that this point is not known well enough and would solve many difficulties: in ordinary human relations, an impulse to act in a given direction is at the same time an impulse not to resist that impulse itself!

[55] That is, this time, "determined" in the sense of "precise." See the expression *ad aliquid determinate faciendum* from *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 6, ad 3.

[56] For the moment, we will not consider the question of whether efficacious grace is numerically or even specifically distinct from sufficient grace.

[57] Our presentation seems to circumvent the insurmountable difficulties of the Bañezian position on composite and divided senses.

premotion," in the sense set up above, is "determining." As this "determination" has been proposed to the will prior to its choice, we can also say it is "*pre*determining."[58]

Furthermore, our explanations do not seem to rule out the possibility that the efficacious grace of the salutary act is an additional gift, numerically different from the sufficient operative grace that impels to this salutary act. Indeed, since free will has not (by hypothesis) resisted operative grace, the latter is prolonged by cooperating grace; in other words, sufficient grace is prolonged by efficacious grace.[59] God has in fact decided that every sufficient operative grace will be followed by an efficacious grace of the free salutary act, if free will decides (with the help of that same operative grace) not to resist (that same operative grace). In this way, if we do not resist, we owe it to the grace that is the nondeliberate movement or operative grace, which is sufficient (in its physical and moral components); and if we do resist, it is not for lack of having received a missing efficacious grace. From our point of view, therefore, we can conceive of efficacious grace as a new gift, automatically triggered by nonopposition to the first gift, and as a reward for this nonresistance. Effective grace helps us to perform an act that is formally different from nonresistance, such as attrition or faith, to which sufficient grace invited us.

One consequence of our understanding of St. Thomas is that, with the same operative grace (if grace can be identical in two different people), one could resist and another consent. This brings us naturally to the next topic. As we have emphasized, the efficacy of grace on the free salutary act is conditioned (not, of course, caused) by the will's nonresistance to the impulse of grace toward this free salutary act.[60] This nonresistance needs no other explanation than the impulse itself, which is sufficient operative grace, for it is this impulse that leads to the act of election (in the hypothesis, this will be, in fact, the good election consisting in not resisting this impulse). If, then, we do not resist the proposition made by sufficient operative grace to become—or to be followed by—an efficacious cooperative grace—that

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58 But of course, any reader familiar with Báñez's theory of "predetermining physical premotion" will understand that our conception of such a notion is very different from his.

59 It is not certain that *De ver.*, q. 27, a. 5, ad 1, in which Aquinas affirms that operative grace and cooperative grace are in essence one and the same grace, means the opposite of what we are proposing here, since it refers to habitual grace, not to actual grace. But, even if this were also the case for actual grace, it would not call into question the rest of our presentation, and would even tend to support it.

60 On this point alone, we agree with Molina, although we do not think we are in opposition to St. Thomas in this respect.

is, to make us perform a deliberate act resulting from an election—it is because God has given sufficient operative grace: man cannot claim to have discerned himself on his own, with respect to what he was before.[61] Certainly, the efficacy of grace is a new gift, but it is virtually contained in the gift of sufficient operative grace. If, on the contrary, we resist, the new gift is refused. In that case, we have discerned ourselves, but in a bad way, with respect to someone who would possibly have received the same operative grace and would not have resisted.

Thus, it remains true that efficacious grace is not *compossible* with the hypothesis of the free act of resistance, and vice versa: if there is efficacious grace, it is because there has been nonresistance, and if there has been nonresistance, there is efficacious grace. However, it is not efficacious grace that causes nonresistance: on the contrary, efficacious grace is given as a reward for nonresistance.

Salvation and the Divine Decision of the Moment of Death

The actual realization of our salvation by God depends not only on the aforementioned relationship between grace and free will, but also on God's choice of *the instant of death*. This is where the mystery of predestination lies. But, in any case, with the explanations we have just given, it becomes much less terrible.

The "*praecisive*" predestination to glory is a divine decision whose effect is the conjunction of death with an instant when man is in a state of grace. If this is the case, it is certainly because the instant of his death is such, and if it is such, it is the fruit of a decision of providence (merciful here too, for his case could worsen), but it is also because the just man (at least an adult) has freely cooperated with divine grace, which has always had the initiative, but without determining man as to the specification of his *deliberate* acts. God has prompted man to cooperate, but man is not a pawn, nor a machine, nor a DVD spinning in a player.

On the contrary, if a man finds himself in a state of mortal sin at the moment of his death, it is certainly because the moment of his death is

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[61] This "discernment" corresponds to "Quis est enim qui te discernit? Quid est quod non accepisti?"—"For who makes you different? What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor 4:7). But it is distinct from the difference that nonresistance establishes, with that of the man who, through his fault, has resisted an operating grace that the aforementioned hypothesis has assumed to be identical in quality. The nerve of St. Paul's text lies in the fact that the good achieved comes from a gift, and not in any possible comparison with other men, which is forbidden precisely because the good achieved comes from a gift, but not because there would have been no merit in collaborating with grace.

such. And if it is such, it is because of a decision (positive or permissive) of providence (merciful, because his case could get worse), but it is not for want of a prior supernatural help from God; if it is true that it is also due to the fact that God decides not to try again to convert this person, it is not for want of having done what he considered it his duty to do: it is solely the fault of the human being. We have never the authorization to find ourselves, at any moment, in a state of mortal sin (and therefore, the divine decision is also just, as it is merciful); God has *nothing* to do with it.

All in all, if God decides or permits the conjunction of the moment of death with such and such a state, it is the effect of a judgment of his supremely just and merciful wisdom all at once. This decision takes into account the good and evil previously accomplished, and whether it is opportune or not to "continue the experiment." Death can always be seen as a mercy, preventing us from falling into mortal sin if we are in a state of grace, or from worsening our case if we are already deep in evil—all is mercy. It can also be seen as supreme justice: the one who is in a state of grace is entitled to the promised reward, and this is God's justice toward himself; he who is in a state of mortal sin is entitled to eternal punishment, and this is God's justice towards himself, in accordance with the threat he made.

Divine Causality on Evil Acts and on Their Consequences

Above all, we have contemplated divine causality as it relates to what is good (metaphysically and morally) in a man's action. But sin poses problems that require special clarification. As for the possible disordered aspect of the human act, God never has the positive initiative. This is a truth defined by the Council of Trent.[62] What then of a positive decision by God, but consisting of a *permissive* divine decree, a permission that in turn relates to a singular sin? We know that permission does not inevitably mean that this morally evil action will take place: such a decree cannot therefore be *predetermining*. Furthermore, the permission—the toleration—of an evil act is included in the positive will to give *esse* and *operari* to psychological freedom, accompanied by the simple absence of a positive decree to intervene specifically to prevent the sin. In other words, what makes such and such a sin of such and such a created freedom possible is, on the one hand, God's positive decision to create the will in question (created *per se* free and *per accidens* fallible) and, on the other, the absence of

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[62] See Council Trent, Decree on Justification, anathema 6 (Denzinger-Schönmetzer [DS] no. 1556).

God's positive decision to prevent that sin in particular. What gives *esse* to this sin is God's positive decision to give *esse* to free human choice, which by accident (in the case under consideration) gives *esse* to a bad choice.

Conversely, God can prevent sin altogether, either externally, by modifying the circumstances that would otherwise have tempted the sinner, or internally, by operative graces that are incompossible with sin, operative graces that he can multiply and make last as long as he decides. However, such operative graces are necessary movements of the will, and therefore not meritorious. What is more, as we see in *De veritate*, their mediate results, if taken one by one, are fallible.[63]

Finally, God does not decide on anyone's damnation independently of the consideration of their demerits. And of course, God does not predispose "in advance" that he needs a certain number of sacrificed people (the damned).[64] If, then, St. Thomas affirms that reprobation includes the will of permitting sin, it is according to a logical consideration: if God decides that such and such a person should die while in the state of mortal sin—that is, reprobates this person, granting neither further delay nor a new assault of grace—this logically presupposes that God has permitted the person to end up in sin through the person's own fault. This is in no way to be understood as meaning that God needs victims to represent his attribute of justice such that he will need the damned—so "bad luck! it falls on so-and-so." But to achieve this goal, God must manage to get a particular person there, so God must make a permissive decree predetermining that they sin mortally!

General Conclusion

Can we now sum up the main features of our way of seeing in a few briefer points?

1. The certainty of predestination does not rest on that of *causality*—the intrinsic efficacy of each grace taken singularly—but on *the infallibility of* divine *science* (God cannot see that a thing is a fact if that thing will not be a fact) and on the infallibility of the organization of successive fallible means (infallibility of order), including that (infallible) of the instant of death, in obtaining the entrance to glory, which he eternally sees himself operating. Master Thomas also places it in the infallibility of God's will, but *consequently*, taking into account the foreknowledge of prior facts.

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63 See *De ver*., q. 6, a. 3, corp.

64 See *De ver*., q. 6, a. 1, ad sc 5, already quoted. There is no antecedent reprobation.

2. The cause for which God bestows a gift cannot be an act performed by free will *after* the gift has been received; but the gift may well have as a *reason*, or even as a *dispositive material cause*, what man *will have done before the gift*. In other words, the authentic thought of St. Thomas seems to us to resolve itself in a divine science *of anterior futures*.

3. Our work underlines that the opposite of what God permits can take place, and that consequently God's antecedent permissive decree making a moral evil possible is not automatically followed by the said moral evil. As a result, this decree cannot be God's infallible means of knowing free future evil.

4. The divine operative motion to a specific singular act gives the created will the passage from the potency to the *exercise* of choice (and lifts the *potential* indeterminacy of free will), without determining the *specification* of choice (and therefore without removing the *dominating* indeterminacy). And the cooperative divine motion is the reward for nonresistance to this operative motion, which is itself what has caused nonresistance to itself. In this way, the gift of cooperative motion is predestined according to the foreknowledge of that anterior future which is nonresistance, just as the predestination of the infusion of sanctifying grace is made according to the foreknowledge of the anterior future consisting in the good use of actual grace, and predestination to glory is decided by taking into account the foreknowledge of future merits anterior to the instant of death.

5. Our "Dad in Heaven" cannot be responsible for damnation if we damn ourselves, whereas he is fully responsible for salvation if we save ourselves. But in both Molinism and classical Thomism, if someone is damned, it is either because God did not put him in the circumstances where his middle knowledge made him see that such a one would be saved (Molinism), or because God did not give him efficacious grace (classical Thomism). This is to forget too much about the antecedent universal salvific will and *merciful Love*. This does not take them seriously enough.

We therefore believe that we have shown (1) that we can approach the mystery studied here in a better way by emphasizing that, for St. Thomas, divine decisions (including predestination to a particular gift, notably glory taken "precisely") depend on a *science of anterior futures*, (2) that we can very well, while rejecting Molinism, its only simultaneous concurrence, and its middle knowledge, as well as congruism (in our opinion unacceptable), admit in the natural and supernatural order a "physical premotion" by efficient mode on *the exercise* of human choices, not predetermining in the sense of Domingo Báñez—that is, as for the *specification* of these choices—and refuse that a permissive decree be the means of God's

foreknowledge of evil, and (3) that St. Thomas's position can very well be understood as we have done, subject to the aforementioned specifications and adjustments to take seriously a universal antecedent postlapsarian salvific will. In short, for us, both the so-called "classical Thomist" position and the Molinist one are incompatible with the little way of childhood and trusting abandonment to merciful Love.[65] *Salvo meliori judicio Ecclesiae*.

N&V

[65] Readers wishing to see how our Thomistic position differs from that of Francisco Marín-Sola and Jacques Maritain should refer to our article "Marín-Sola *redivivus*," *Revue thomiste* 115, no. 3 (2015): 481–94.