

Fr. Francisco Marin Sola, OP: On Divine Causality and Human Free Choice

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Abstract: Francisco Marin Sola is hailed as one of the greatest and most preeminent minds the Order of Preachers had to offer. His contribution to theology is profoundly felt in the celebrated theological debates between the Dominicans and the Jesuits mediated by the so-called 16th-century *Congregatio de Auxiliis*. These great debates were attempts to respond to the understanding (or misunderstanding) of questions regarding human beings' exercise of their freedom while enjoying God's grace. The Dominicans affirm God's overarching causality and providence, emphasizing God's necessary role in salvation. Thus, characterized as theocentric rather than anthropocentric, the Dominicans believe there is no inherent conflict between divine sovereignty and human freedom. Instead, they maintain that understanding human freedom requires grounding in fundamental principles concerning God's essence and actions. Their adherence to these principles shapes and delineates their interpretation of human freedom. For his part, Fr. Marin contributed to this theological debate by giving his "fresh takes" on the subjects of predestination, grace, sin, and reprobation encapsulated in his so-called "Ten Propositions." Fr. Marin lays down the basic Thomistic presupposition that Divine Causality is infallible concerning motion general governance. In the classic Thomistic sense, God is the unmistakable Unmoved Mover, the Necessary Being who efficaciously sets all motions that lead to the execution and realization of the universal end. Thus, infallibility is a true mark of divine causality since God, being the Prime Mover, according to Saint Thomas, is the only being capable of reducing potency to actuality.

Keywords: *Congregatio de Auxiliis*, Divine Causality, Freedom, Grace, Predestination, Sin

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Introduction

The book *Do Not Resist the Spirit's Call: Francisco Marin-Sola on Sufficient Grace* contains the critical points raised by Fr. Francisco Marin Sola, O.P. (Fr. Marin), on Divine Causality and Human Free Choice. In this work, Fr. Marin deals with critical questions such as, “How can God help human beings do good without taking away their free will?” or “How do human beings remain free under the influence of God’s grace?” Fr. Marin’s insights on this topic evoke the renowned exchange of ideas between the greatest and most preeminent minds that the sixteenth-century Dominicans and the Jesuits had to offer.¹ It was an event significant enough to elicit the arbitration of Pope Clement VIII (1536–1605), who saw the need to form a commission known as the *Congregatio de Auxiliis* (*CdA*) to mediate and recommend an official resolution by the Holy See. The great debates were attempts to respond to the understanding (or misunderstanding) of each one’s position about questions regarding human beings’ exercise of their freedom while enjoying God’s grace.²

Fr. Marin contributed to this theological debate by giving his “fresh takes” on the subjects of preemption, grace, sin, predestination, and reprobation encapsulated in his “Ten Propositions,” which respond to questions such as “How can the predetermination of the material of sin be reconciled with the responsibility of the creature?” “Was the efficacy of actual grace intrinsic and infallible or determined by the human recipient?”³ It is worth noting, to begin with, that these questions hark back to Saint Augustine’s letter to Simplicianus (ca 396), where he grappled with what he perceived were tensions that carry profound doctrinal implications, such as that God wills the salvation of all, yet some are lost. And that man freely determines himself regarding God’s law and saving help, yet at the same time, God alone has the initiative in salvation and exercises providential dominion over every human free choice.⁴ Here, Augustine invokes the effect of the fall on humanity and the necessity and prevenience of grace. Furthermore, Saint Augustine teaches that man only does good because of God’s grace and will to save individuals from all walks of life,

¹ Taylor Patrick O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin: A Thomistic Analysis* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2019), 1.

² O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 1. O’Neill quotes Antonio Astrain, “*Congregatio de Auxiliis*,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908). In his summary, Antonio Astrain articulates the main points separating the Dominicans and the Jesuits: “The Dominicans declared that the Jesuits conceded too much to free will and so tended toward Pelagianism. In turn, the Jesuits complained that the Dominicans did not sufficiently safeguard human liberty, and seemed in consequence, to lean towards Calvinism.

³ See Francisco Marin-Sola, *Do Not Resist the Spirit's Call: Francisco Marin-Sola on Sufficient Grace*, ed. and trans. by Michael D. Torre (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 7.

⁴ R.J. Matava, “A Sketch of the Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 7 (2020): 420.

not every human person⁵, evoking the “strait-jacket disjunctive, either election for eternal life or non-election, that is, negative reprobation.”⁶ Augustine’s emphasis on the prevenience and efficacy of grace does not contradict his affirmation of human free choice under the influence of grace, even if he does not explain precisely how the efficacy of grace coexists with the human person’s freedom in choosing.⁷

One in mind with some of the most influential minds of the twentieth century, such as Cardinal Charles Journet, Jacques Maritain, Bernard Lonergan, SJ, and Jean-Hervé Nicholas, O.P., Fr. Marin aims “To reconcile the mystery of sin with God’s governance, claiming various ways that God’s governance holds no influence neither causal nor even as a mere *conditio sine qua non* over man’s defecting from goodness into sin.”⁸ Fr. Marin sought to address these topics, which deeply engaged the main protagonists of the *CdA*, in a “new way.” And so, embarking on this work, first, Fr. Marin clears all clouds of suspicion that he is abandoning or destroying traditional Thomism and aligning himself to the Molinist position. Second, he asks for patience and open-mindedness from his brothers to see that the thoughts he develops about Thomism, even if they appear new or strange and sound anti-Thomist, are, in fact, in full conformance to the Thomistic tradition.⁹ Third, he invokes the practice of Dominicans in the past, which allows diversity or flexibility of opinion in those cases when “in the interpretation of Saint Thomas, the consent of his commentators is not unanimous or even common.”¹⁰ Specifically, Thomists must remain in unison in strictly preserving the substance of the teachings of Saint Thomas. Still, they must be flexible in those areas that pertain to modalities or accidental variables.¹¹ Therefore, Fr. Marin appeals to his brothers’ understanding to allow him to explore new points of view, which are the developments of scientific virtuality in Thomism, instead of repeating what commentators have already exposed.¹² Generally, as a Thomist, Fr. Marin clarifies that his task is to work for Thomism without fighting anyone. Despite his appeal, his approach encountered criticisms from his Dominican brothers, most notably Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. The intellectual exchange between these two great minds escalated to mutual public criticisms. This situation reached the attention of the then-newly elected Master of the Order of Preachers, Buenaventura Garcia

⁵ See Scott Steinkerchner, O.P. “Introduction: Dominicans and Jesuits, Through the Centuries,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 7 (2020): 357.

⁶ Manuel M. Piñon, O.P., *Predestination and Salvation* (Quezon City, Philippines: Dominican House of Studies, 1977), 129. The phrase “narrowed down” emphasis is mine.

⁷ See Steinkerchner, O.P. “Dominicans and Jesuits, 357.

⁸ O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 3.

⁹ Marin-Sola, on Sufficient Grace, 5.

¹⁰ Marin-Sola, on Sufficient Grace, 6.

¹¹ Marin-Sola, on Sufficient Grace, 8-9.

¹² Marin-Sola, on Sufficient Grace, 7.

Paredes, O.P., who ordered the two to desist in their exchanges.¹³ This eventful history ended with Fr. Marin being directed to give up his chair at Fribourg to return to Manila after he was found to have violated the directions of the Master of the Order.¹⁴

With this context established, I will delve into Fr. Marin's contributions to Thomism, focusing specifically on human freedom and divine causality. My discussion will unfold in three parts: first, I will highlight the critical moments of the *CdA*; second, I will present a sketch of the theological perspectives of the Jesuits regarding divine causality and human free will; and third, I will discuss the Dominican views on these critical subject matters in light of Fr. Marin's Ten Propositions.

An Overview of the Critical Moments of the Controversy *De Auxiliis*

To stand clear on the relationship between divine and human agency, the *CdA* firmly maintains two key points: first, that God moves the human will while fully preserving free choice, and second, that God cannot be considered the author of moral evil in any way.¹⁵ This issue is at the heart of the disputations between the Dominicans and the Jesuits, who struggled to agree on the efficacy of God's actual grace (called *auxilium* or "divine assistance") with human freedom. The conciliatory tasks lie in affirming that the *auxilium* works without clouding or compromising the capacity of man to perform actions volitionally. In other words, God helps humans do good without taking away their free will, or they remain free even under God's grace. The discussions became increasingly polemical and culminated in 1607 after the verdict issued by the *CdA*, upholding the positions of both sides, a decision considered more disciplinary than theological.

Significant Moments

The First Milestone. The inception of the controversy occurred during a theological dispute at the University of Salamanca in 1582 involving Dominican Domingo Báñez (1528–1604) and Jesuit Prudencio de Montemayor (d.1599). The crux of the matter revolved around whether Jesus freely and thus meritoriously sacrificed his life, considering the Father's decree for him to do so. Báñez argued that the Father preordained Jesus to lay down his life, akin to how he predetermines all other acts of free will by creatures. In contrast, Montemayor contended that the freedom of the human will preclude its predetermination by God. Consequently,

¹³ See O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 151.

¹⁴ See O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 152.

¹⁵ See Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 417. See Steinkerchner, O.P. "Dominicans and Jesuits," 357.

Báñez posited that grace is intrinsically and infallibly efficacious, while Montemayor asserted that the efficacy of grace depends on the recipient's response. Although this initial debate did not culminate in the formal condemnation of either scholar, both accused each other of heresy, and several of Montemayor's theses underwent scrutiny by the Spanish Inquisition.¹⁶

The Second Milestone in the controversy occurred during a dispute in Leuven involving Flemish Jesuit Leonard Lessius (1554–1623) and the steadfast followers of Michael Baius. Baius had previously been censured by the Holy See approximately twenty years earlier but had since risen to the influential position of faculty dean at Leuven. Lessius became alarmed by the teachings of the Baianist faculty, which included the belief that God predetermines the will in the act of choice, that God may require the impossible, that not everyone receives *sufficient grace* for salvation, and that predestination is *ante praevisa merita* (before foreseen merits) and not conditional upon foreseen merits (or *post praevisa merita*), as Lessius himself taught. Pope Sixtus V (1521–90) ultimately intervened to halt the conflict in Leuven without siding with either position, presaging Pope Paul V's resolution of the entire controversy almost twenty years later.¹⁷

The Third Milestone in the controversy, arguably the most significant, occurred with the release of the Jesuit Luis de Molina's (1535–1600) seminal work in Lisbon in 1588, titled "*The Reconciliation of Free Choice with Gifts of Grace, Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination and Reprobation for Several Articles of the Prima Pars of St. Thomas Aquinas*," commonly referred to as the *Concordia*. This publication can be seen as the focal point around which the entire controversy revolved. Essentially an extensive commentary on select articles from Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* (ST), Molina presented his doctrine on harmonizing human free will with God's causality and foreknowledge by introducing the concept of middle knowledge. According to this theory, God knows how every human being would hypothetically behave under any given circumstances they could be placed. However, the *Concordia* faced immediate condemnation upon its release from Dominican theologians, particularly Báñez, who suspected Molina of advocating propositions similar to those for which Molina's fellow Jesuit, Montemayor, had previously been reprimanded after his 1582 debate with Báñez in Salamanca. The printing and dissemination of Molina's book were even halted until Molina obtained approval from Cardinal Albert Austriaco (1559–1621), the grand inquisitor of Portugal.¹⁸

¹⁶ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 422.

¹⁷ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 423.

¹⁸ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 423.

The Fourth Milestone in the controversy can be understood as an unfolding of a series of events. As tensions escalated between the Dominicans and Jesuits regarding the effectiveness of God's grace, the extensive writings produced during the dispute were collectively sent to Rome. In response, Pope Clement VIII (1536–1605) established a papal commission known as the *Congregatio de auxiliis* to investigate the matter and recommend an official resolution by the Holy See. Over the ensuing decade, the *Congregatio* convened numerous times, experimenting with various formats for its proceedings to break the deadlock. Despite Clement VIII's determination to condemn Molina's perspective, he passed away before any such condemnation could be issued, consistent with an earlier prediction by the Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621). Following Clement VIII's death, his successor Leo XI (1535–1605) fell short of his promise to promptly resolve the controversy since he died after only twenty-seven days in his pontificate. Subsequently, Paul V was elected in 1605 and immediately took the cudgels of resuming the meetings of the *Congregatio*. Throughout this process, Molina narrowly avoided condemnation on several occasions. Although the position of Báñez and the Dominicans was also under scrutiny, it never received as much attention or faced as imminent a threat of condemnation. Finally, in September of 1607, following the counsel of Francis de Sales (1567–1622), Paul V officially concluded the controversy by affirming the viability of both viewpoints and prohibiting the publication of books on the topic without explicit approval from the Holy See. Paul V's decision brought about a resolution, though it was more of a disciplinary measure than a theological one.¹⁹ The failure to achieve a theological resolution to the *CdA* left the door open for subsequent challenges to Catholic doctrine. In light of these events, the question of divine-human cooperation remains one of Christian theology's most fundamental and contentious issues.

From the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, Thomists and Molinists “have been fighting without quarter for their respective systems.”²⁰ During the twentieth century, even if the ruminations of many theologians shifted to the problems spawned by modernity, these two groups remained steadfast in the position and system they had upheld for centuries. Fr. Marin emphatically points out that the intellectual combat has escalated “not only into the question of a School but of Family, being personified in two powerful religious orders.”²¹

¹⁹ Matava, “Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 423.

²⁰ Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 3.

²¹ See Marin-Sola, *Do Not Resist the Spirit's Call*, 4.di

The Main Theological Premises of the Jesuits

The standpoint elaborated and advocated by Molina and later alongside other influential Jesuits, particularly Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) and Robert Bellarmine, aimed to reconcile what appeared to be conflicting concepts: human freedom and divine sovereignty. In this framework, human freedom took precedence conceptually. This method of grappling with the mystery distinguishes the Jesuit stance, indicating a departure from the Dominican approach. Molina initiated from the side of the human person, presuming the need to reconcile two realities.

Three Basic Premises

Firstly, there is a steadfast adherence to a “libertarian” conception of human freedom. According to Molina, the essence of a choice being considered free lies in its independence from any preceding conditions or circumstances, including divine action.²² To use the example of a man trapped in the bottom of the well, God can only throw the rope of rescue but cannot actively cause the same man to pick up the rope and be lifted to safety.²³ This emphasis on human moral responsibility was paramount to the Jesuits, echoing Augustine’s concerns, as it facilitated a coherent explanation for the existence of evil within a universe fashioned by a benevolent, singular, and all-powerful God. The Jesuits were meticulous in their teachings to avoid attributing sin to God or positioning Him as the primary cause of an individual’s eternal damnation.²⁴

Second, an understanding of divine concurrence as non-determinative of the human will.²⁵ Concurrence is understood as the confluence of divine action with, but not on, the human agent. To give a visual representation, Molina uses the example of two men pulling a boat, where both men must work together in a partnership of simultaneous concurrence to bring about a good effect. In other words, the omnipotent God does not do all the work to produce a good effect. The human agent needs to act freely and volitionally lest God take over and make a puppet out of it. Therefore, God works with (concurr) the action of the human agent to bring about a certain effect, such that there is but one action and one effect, even though there are two agents. Seeing how the human agent chooses, God gives a grace that helps bring about what it has freely chosen. God’s grace does not determine the human agent’s decision but concurs to bring about the chosen good. Thus, grace is efficacious, and

²² Steinkerchner, O.P. “*Dominicans and Jesuits*,” 361.

²³ See O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 7.

²⁴ Steinkerchner, O.P. “*Dominicans and Jesuits*,” 361.

²⁵ See O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 4.

people still choose freely.²⁶ In this context, the human is a “particularizer” of divine causality. The human agent cannot choose apart from God, for he or she depends on the creator for being and action. But God does not supplant human agency in bestowing his concurrence, for that concurrence has to be channeled in a particular direction by the human agent. Thus, God does cause free choices, but not in a way that determines and consequently destroys them.

Third, a prevolitional “middle knowledge” (*scientia media*) of conditioned possibility on the part of God. Taylor Patrick O’Neill explains that the *scientia media* was used to explain how God could know free creaturely actions without being determined by his foreknowledge.²⁷ Once again, we see the libertarian or anthropocentric motif where human beings exercise their freedom amid God’s control or governance, and their actions are not reduced to the effects of divine causality. Furthermore, Manuel Piñon explains, “God may not act directly upon the creaturely will to order it to this or that choice, but what he can do, based on his foreknowledge of how an individual would act in some given circumstance, is to order the universe such that the individual in question will indeed choose as God would wish him to choose.”²⁸ As God knows everything possible in his simple knowledge, by his middle knowledge, God knows what is “feasible” as God knows everything, including how people will respond to any particular grace.²⁹ Hence, God chooses to give the graces he knows will be accepted.³⁰ From the Jesuit point of view, not everything possible is feasible for God. The reason for this is that creaturely freedom - understood as the capacity to do this or that, to act or not act, given all of the antecedents to choice - conditions God’s creative possibilities.³¹ Thus, Molina proposes the existence of middle knowledge in God as a solution to reconcile divine sovereignty with human free will.

The Voluntary Response of the Human Agent

According to Molina and Lessius, the effectiveness of efficacious grace is not intrinsic and infallible. Molina avers, “The knowledge by which God knew absolutely that such-and-such things would come to be is not the cause of things, but rather, once the order of things that we see has been posited by the divine will, then the

²⁶ Steinkerchner, O.P. “Introduction: Dominicans and Jesuits,” 361.

²⁷ O’Neill, Grace, *Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 4.

²⁸ See Scot Davison, “Foreknowledge, Middle Knowledge, and Nearby Worlds,” *Philosophy of Religion* vol. 30 no. 1 (1991): 29. Piñon, *Predestination and Salvation*, 146.

²⁹ See Piñon, *Predestination and Salvation*, 146.

³⁰ Steinkerchner, O.P. “Dominicans and Jesuits,” 361.

³¹ Matava, “A Sketch of the Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 425.

effects will issue forth from their causees...”³² To simplify, O’Neill explains, “How creatures will will in varying circumstances, His foreknowledge is entirely causally impotent.”³³ God’s grace does not actualize or is not the cause of free choice in human beings because if such is the case, the human agent will act under compulsion and lose its freedom. Instead, they argue that the effectiveness of grace depends on the voluntary response of humans to accept or reject it freely. As in the above example, God’s grace is equivalent to lowering the rope or setting up the circumstances for the human agent. That is why grace is only efficacious if the human agent cooperates, i.e., if it picks up the rope of rescue and uses it to be lifted up to safety. Molina and Lessius contend that predestination occurs not before foreseen merits (*ante praevisa merita*), but after foreseen merits (*post praevisa merita*), with human merits serving as the ultimate criterion for divine election.³⁴ These graces, referred to as “congruous,” are deemed suitable or proportionate to bring about the specific effect that God intends. Augustine’s Letter to Simplicianus describes this congruity - God’s foresight in his middle knowledge perceives the alignment of a particular grace with a particular effect on a specific individual.³⁵ Therefore, it is possible that if God provides two individuals with equal aid (grace) or sets up similar circumstances for them, they may respond in different ways. As a result, one person may find salvation while the other does not.

The Standpoint of Fr. Marin and the Dominicans

The Fr. Marin and the Dominicans’ perspective can be characterized as theocentric rather than anthropocentric. It begins by affirming God’s overarching causality and providence, emphasizing God’s necessary role in salvation. Fr. Marin and the Dominicans do not perceive any inherent conflict between divine sovereignty and human freedom. Instead, they maintain that understanding human freedom requires grounding in fundamental principles concerning God’s essence and actions. Their adherence to these principles shapes and delineates their interpretation of human freedom.³⁶

The Propositions of Fr. Marin to All Thomists

Fr. Marin summarizes his position regarding this celebrated controversy through the Ten Propositions, which he submits to all Thomists. In the interest

³² O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 6. O’Neill quotes Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, trans. Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), q. 14, a. 13, disputation 52, section 29 (184). See Piñon, *Grace, Predestination and Salvation*, 146.

³³ O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 6.

³⁴ R.J. Matava, “A Sketch of the Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 431.

³⁵ R.J. Matava, “A Sketch of the Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 432.

³⁶ Matava, “Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 435.

of brevity, we will view these propositions considering the two main themes we identified at the onset of this paper: Divine Causality and Human Freedom. But first, we enumerate these propositions as follows:

First Proposition. Although all divine providence is infallible or unfrustratable as regards the realization of the universal end, which is the glory of God and the good of the universe, nevertheless, general providence, whether natural or supernatural, is fallible or frustratable in respect to a particular end of each individual or each individual act.³⁷

Second Proposition. The divine motion is always of itself towards the good: but the actual defect of the human is what converts the premotion to the good into a premotion to the material of evil; or if one prefers to say it in a different manner, the divine intention is always to move to the honest good, but the actual defect of the human will is what objectively determines God to move it to the material of evil.³⁸

Third Proposition. The will or power, however perfect it may be, but before being placed in or entering into movement or action is one thing; another is the will or power, already placed in movement towards a term or directed actually towards it, but before reaching the term; another, finally, is reaching the end. As one thing is the arrow before being shot towards the target; another, finally, is reaching or arriving at the target. The first is called in Thomistic philosophy pure potency or pure posse; the second is called a true agere, but an imperfect agere, because it is still a posse with respect to the term or the perfect act; the third not only is agere but perfect agere.³⁹

Fourth Proposition. Predestination, not only to grace but also to glory, is completely free, without having as a cause, motive, foundation, or condition either merit or any other thing on the part of man: it has no other foundation or reason of being than the pure will of God. The first part of this proposition requires no proof for a Thomist because it is a fundamental point of the doctrine of Saint Thomas. The second part, that predestination and reprobation suppose the foresight of sins, we will prove its time by many reasons taken from the same Thomistic principles...⁴⁰

Fifth Proposition. The question as to whether predestination to glory is completely free a question which every Thomist ought to resolve affirmatively - is essentially distinct from the question of whether of itself it is before or after the predestination to grace or to merits. So long as one affirms that merits come not from a versatile grace or a general concurrence but from an intrinsically efficacious grace,

³⁷ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 14

³⁸ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 16.

³⁹ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 17.

⁴⁰ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 32.

it is of little importance for Thomistic doctrine whether one says that predestination to glory is before or after predestination.⁴¹

Sixth Proposition. As much imperfect acts, which precede justification, and which some call congruous merits, as healthy acts posterior to justification, and which are condign merits, can be considered under two aspects: a) in themselves abstracting from whether or not they are persevering to the end; b) insofar as persevering to the end, which is alone how they lead infallibly and in fact to glory. Well then, when the Thomists defend that predestination to glory is anterior to the foresight of merits, it is enough to understand merits in the second sense, insofar as they are persevering to the end, or insofar as efficaciously and infallibly connected with the attainment of glory.⁴²

Seventh Proposition. One can defend within Thomism that the sole elicited or proper effects or predestination are glory and final perseverance, and that therefore, all other acts or merits are or can be proper and elicited effects or general providence, if considered in themselves; although they are always imperated by predestination, if they are considered insofar as persevering or united with perseverance.⁴³

Eight Proposition. With this alone, then, that one admits truly that final perseverance is completely free, the Thomistic thesis of the complete gratuity of predestination to glory remains saved.⁴⁴

Ninth Proposition. Thus, according to what we saw in the second proposition, one can say in Thomism that the divine motion to the material of sin is posterior in nature to the actual defect of the human will, so one can also say that the eternal predefining or predetermining decrees of this motion are posterior in nature or the foresight of this defect of the will, and that, therefore, one can call these decrees postdefining or postdetermining.⁴⁵

Tenth and Final Proposition. Although in God, will is solely one, He wills everything in one most simple act, nevertheless, in our human manner of understanding and on the part only of the objects willed, the antecedent will of God, the decrees and motions corresponding to this will are by nature prior to the consequent will and its corresponding decrees and motions.⁴⁶ This antecedent will, with its corresponding decrees and motions, is antecedent, or conditioned, or inefficacious, or impedible, or fallible as regards the execution of a particular end; but

⁴¹ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 34.

⁴² See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 36.

⁴³ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 37.

⁴⁴ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 38.

⁴⁵ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 41.

⁴⁶ See Marin-Sola, *on Sufficient Grace*, 43.

it is consequent, or absolute, or simpliciter efficacious, or unimpedible as regards the application of the means sufficient for the execution of this end.⁴⁷

Following O’Neill’s synthesis, the second, third, fourth, and ninth propositions refer to the line of evil. Propositions fifth, seventh, and eighth pertain to the line of good. The first and the tenth act as bookends that connect all propositions together; specifically, “the two keys in the order of execution (motion or general governance) and in the order of intention (antecedent of the will of God) are common to both lines and like the bookends that bring all propositions together.”⁴⁸

Saint Thomas Aquinas as Touchstone

Needless to say, a factor that influenced the stakes of the Dominicans in the *CdA* is their unwavering commitment to preserving the teachings of Saint Thomas. Back then (and even up to now), the significance of Saint Thomas in the study of theology transcends the Dominicans because his teachings are universally acknowledged. Therefore, faithful to the teachings of Saint Thomas, the Dominicans assert that God is active in every creature’s actions and guides the free will of individuals in their choices.⁴⁹ We find this in the Angelic Doctor’s *Summa Contra Gentiles* (ScG),

It is evident that God is the cause enabling all operating agents to operate. In fact every operating agent is a cause of being in some way, either of substantial or of accidental being. Now, nothing is a cause of being itself unless by virtue of its acting through the power of God as we showed. Therefore, every operating agent acts through God’s power.⁵⁰

From the text, we can infer how Saint Thomas upheld the concept of the infallible efficacy of God’s will.⁵¹ Fr Marin affirms this in his First Proposition, saying, “all divine providence is infallible or unfrustratable as regards the realization of the universal end, which is the glory of God and the good of the universe ...”⁵² Beginning with the fundamental belief in God as the primary cause of all things, the Dominicans formulated a theory explaining how God pre-moves or “predetermines” secondary causes to act, including free secondary causes.⁵³

⁴⁷ See Marin-Sola, on *Sufficient Grace*, 43.

⁴⁸ O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 167.

⁴⁹ See Brian Thomas Beckert Mullady, O.P., *Grace Explained: How to Receive and Retain God’s Most Potent Gift* (Irondale, Alabama: EWTN Publishing, Inc. 2021), 17.

⁵⁰ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Summa Contra Gentiles, Book Three Providence Part I*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Company Inc., 1956), 220. ScG, III, 67. 1.

⁵¹ Matava, “Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 436.

⁵² Marin-Sola, on *Sufficient Grace*, 14.

⁵³ See O’Neill, O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 14. Matava, “Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 436.

The Concept of Premotion

Again, we locate Fr. Marin's concept of premotion in his First Proposition. Here, the doctrines of creation and Aristotelian principles of potency and act inform the Dominican view on God's interaction with secondary causes. God and the created agent are considered causal factors when activating a created agent's capacity for action. According to this viewpoint, God, as the source of existence (*esse*), the primary cause of all positive realities, is the one on whom causality primarily and necessarily rests. This is because an ultimate principle must cause the transition of the created agent from potentiality to actuality: nothing moves unless acted upon by another, ultimately by the prime mover, God.⁵⁴ But what does it mean for God to move a created cause to action? Saint Thomas posits God as the primary cause of everything, including human free will and individual decisions. We put this in the context of Saint Thomas' concept of motion, i.e., God reducing some operations or power in the creature from potency to act.⁵⁵ Here, the creature, as the contingent being, remains in potency unless moved in a state of actuality by one who is a pure actuality, no other than God as the Necessary Being and Pure Act.⁵⁶ Therefore, the will, as a power of the intellect, operates or moves by virtue of the divine power that works within or moves it, without which it remains inert. Saint Thomas explicitly asserts, "Every operation should be attributed to God as a first and principal agent."⁵⁷

In his Second and Third propositions, Fr. Marin posits God as the primary agent from whom action proceeds and likewise affirms Saint Thomas, who holds that nothing hinders the same action from proceeding from human beings as the secondary agents.⁵⁸ O'Neill explains, "The secondary agent depends on the primary agent for its operation, but this presupposes that the secondary agent does indeed operate. Far from denying its operating, the primary agent makes it to operate."⁵⁹ Therefore, God collaborates with human beings to achieve good, not by passively waiting for their decisions and offering grace to assist them, as in the concept of concurrence. Instead, God bestows a grace within individuals that guides them toward choosing what is best by narrowing down the range of possible options.⁶⁰ Then, we find in Fr. Marin's Fifth proposition his affirmation that God's grace augments individuals' capacity to choose rather than override it. For Báñez and the Dominicans, freedom entails pursuing the optimal course of action rather than any arbitrary set of actions,

⁵⁴ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 437.

⁵⁵ ST, I, q. 2, a. 3. See Dariusz Lukaszewicz, "Bochenski on Divine Providence and Human Freedom," *Studies in East European Thought* vol 65 no 1/2 (2013): 54.

⁵⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 2, a. 3.

⁵⁷ ScG III, 67, 4.

⁵⁸ ST, q. 105, a. 5, arg. 2.

⁵⁹ O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 16.

⁶⁰ See Mullady, *Grace Explained*, 17.

with one's free choice fundamentally grounded in intellect.⁶¹ According to this perspective, now established and perpetuated by subsequent Thomist scholars, God's act of moving a created individual toward the act of free choice is distinct from the Divine Act, which is God himself, as well as from the secondary cause, which in this case is the human agent, and from the act of the secondary cause, which is the individual's freely chosen action. Instead, God's premotion of the secondary cause constitutes a created reality separate from God.⁶²

Divine Causality

In Fr. Marin's fourth proposition, we can infer that premotion is characterized as a dynamic manifestation of God's efficient causality—a flowing current, an active force, an impulse, or an influx of God's causal power—establishing a connection between God as the first cause and the effect, which in this instance is the free action of the secondary cause. Premotion is described as the “ultimate complement of the first act,” serving as an intermediary between the initial and subsequent acts, wherein God actualizes the potentiality inherent in the created cause. This premotion not only intervenes between the initial and subsequent acts of the created cause but also between God and the secondary cause, as well as between God and the operation of the secondary cause. However, despite this intermediary role, the Dominicans perceive God's action in the secondary cause as immediate, as there is no intervening entity between God's action and the secondary cause or its operation. Moreover, no created cause intervenes between God and the secondary cause or the secondary cause's operation because premotion is not understood to be a created cause but rather God's *causality* (even if, *stricto sensu*, the premotion is created).⁶³ As St. Thomas states, “As far as the object moves the will, it is evident that it can be moved by something exterior. But in so far as it is moved in the exercise of its act, we must again hold it to be moved by some exterior principle ... it must of necessity be moved by something to will it.”⁶⁴

The Dominicans understand God's operation as the exterior principle that precedes the operation of the creature in the natural order and is not merely concurrent with it. This distinction is crucial as it underscores the natural dependence of secondary causes on the universal first cause. However, while God's premotion is described as “natural,” it is not solely reducible to his act of creating and sustaining the nature of the secondary cause, along with its potentialities for action. God operates within all active creatures by creating and sustaining their natures and by

⁶¹ Steinkerchner, “Introduction: Dominicans and Jesuits,” 362.

⁶² Matava, “Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 437.

⁶³ ScG, III, 92, 2. See also Matava, “Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 437.

⁶⁴ ST, I-II, q. 9, a. 4.

actualizing the potentialities inherent in the natures he creates and sustains.⁶⁵ As Mullady explains, relating it to the original state of innocence, “Adam had to realize that he had to depend more and more on God’s grace in order to preserve his integrity and to share in the divine nature.”⁶⁶ In summary, according to Saint Thomas, God’s causality can be perceived in three forms: giving the power for movement in general, upholding the power for that movement, and actually moving a thing to act its acts.⁶⁷

The Freedom of the Human Agent

Fr. Marin affirms that God’s premotion of the secondary cause involves his immediate intervention within the secondary cause itself rather than merely acting with or upon the secondary cause and its effects, as suggested by the Jesuits in their theory of concurrence. Although the Dominicans acknowledged that the effects produced by creatures are directly related to God as their cause, their emphasis was on the idea that God brings about the dependence of these effects on their respective created causes. Fr Marin’s emphasis on human freedom is clearly articulated in his propositions but with emphasis on the sixth to ninth propositions, where we can gather the perspective that God’s operation within the secondary cause empowers it to produce an effect that is truly its own. Despite God’s primary causal influence, the created cause retains its autonomy as a cause in its own right and remains the master of its acts, owing precisely to God’s involvement.⁶⁸ This assertion is derived from Saint Thomas, who states that “in the order of natural perfection, only the rational creature holds dominion over his acts, moving himself freely in order to perform actions.”⁶⁹ The Dominicans were mindful of Thomas’s scathing critique of the occasionalistic perspective held by Islamic Mutakallimun, and they were careful to assert that God’s premotion does not supplant the action of the created cause but rather renders the operation of the created cause possible.⁷⁰ By this means, human beings are always the active agent of their actions or operations. Preserving the causal integrity of created agents is one reason why the distinction between physical premotion and the action of the created cause itself, as delineated earlier, is deemed crucial. The action of the

⁶⁵ See Matthew Levering, “History, Eternity, and Divine Providence,” *Angelicum* 88, no. 22 (2011): 408. Matava, “Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 438.

⁶⁶ Mullady, *Grace Explained*, 57.

⁶⁷ O’Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 19.

⁶⁸ See Lukasiewicz, “Bochenski on Divine Providence,” 54. See Matava, “Controversy *de Auxiliis*,” 438.

⁶⁹ ScG III, 111, 1. See Joshua Brotherton, “The Integrity of Nature in the Grace-Freedom Dynamic: Lonergan’s Critique of Bañezianism Thomism,” *Theological Studies* vol. 7 no. 3 (2014): 554-555.

⁷⁰ Levering, “History, Eternity, and Divine Providence,” 409-410. “Aquinas is aware of the view of some Muslim thinkers that divine causality subsumes created causality, as in the view that “fire does not give heat, but God causes heat in the presence of fire ... In response, he notes that creatures possess a substantial form through which they act: thus, fire not God gives heat.”

created cause relies on God's action but must not be equated with it; otherwise, secondary causality would be nullified.⁷¹ To put this another way, according to Saint Thomas, God does not work as an exterior principle that acts against man's will. God's causality is not to the effect that it forces the human agent to choose what is contrary to its will by imposing His will on it; instead, far from frustrating the will, God's causality, animates it or moves human will to will.⁷²

Premotion can influence the actions of the secondary cause without negating its contingency or freedom. Since the entire positive reality of the secondary cause's action relies on God for its existence, God's premotion encompasses the determination and specificity of the secondary cause's action.⁷³ The Dominicans asserted that God's premotion was influential in shaping the actions of the secondary cause, often referring to it as "predetermination." Rather than viewing divine predetermination as a constraint on human freedom, the Dominicans considered God's predetermination of a human choice essential to its freedom. This is because, without God's predetermination, the human capacity for free choice remains in potency, i.e., open to pursuing various ends. The divine predetermination actualizes the human capacity for free choice, directing it towards a specific object of choice. In essence, there is no free act without the initial movement provided by the first mover.⁷⁴

Grace and Predestination. In propositions six to ten, Fr. Marin affirms Saint Thomas' teaching that "divine help is provided man so that he may act well is to be understood in this way: it performs our works in us, as the primary cause performs the operations of secondary causes, as a principal-agent performs the action of an instrument."⁷⁵ Here, we highlight two key points: first, grace is freely given, and second, grace is infallible and efficacious. As regards the first point, because divine aid is given causal priority for the actions of human beings, grace is not earned. It is freely given and antecedes all merits because, apart from divine causality, human beings cannot move toward perfection.⁷⁶ Saint Thomas explains this saying, "The soul cannot prepare itself to receive the influence of divine help except in so far as it acts from divine power."⁷⁷

⁷¹ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 438-439.

⁷² See Lukasiewicz, "Bochenski on Divine Providence," 59. Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 439.

⁷³ See Lukasiewicz, "Bochenski on Divine Providence," 59. Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 439.

⁷⁴ See O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 23. See also Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 439.

⁷⁵ ScG, III, 148.3. See Thomas F. O'Meara, "Grace as a Theological Structure in the *Summa Theologiae* of Saint Thomas Aquinas," *Recherches de Theologie Ancienne et Medieval* vol. 55 (1988): 143.

⁷⁶ See Piñon, *Predestination and Salvation*, 133.

⁷⁷ ScG, III, 149, 1.

This brings us to the second point: God's grace, given antecedently, is infallibly and intrinsically efficacious. Herein, Fr. Marin and the Dominicans strongly uphold Saint Thomas' anti-Pelagian stance: "Now by this, we set aside the error of the Pelagians who said that this kind of help is given us because of our merits and that the beginning of our justification is from ourselves, though the completion of it is from God."⁷⁸ Moreover, the emphasis on antecedence is due to the metaphysical characteristic of grace, which must ontologically come before the good act.⁷⁹ Fr. Marin upholds the Dominican view that merits are a prerequisite for heavenly glory; it is just that the merits on which heavenly reward is founded are due to God's eternal free decision—a decision that is unconditioned by foreknowledge of human merits.⁸⁰ It must be noted that grace does not negate the participation of human beings in the act. Saint Thomas says, "This help does not exclude from us the act of our will, but rather, in a special way, produces this act in us."⁸¹ In other words, consistent with the above discussion on the freedom of human beings amid divine causality, human actions as operations of the secondary agent are participated in and subordinated in relation to God, who is the primary cause.⁸²

The Divine Permission of Evil. For the Dominicans, a significant difference exists in how God ordains good and bad human choices. To understand this distinction, we begin by positing that God is the origin of all positive existence. Saint Thomas says, "God is ready to give grace to all; indeed, he wills all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth."⁸³ However, human beings choose evil due to their privation. As Mullady explains, "Grace is human integrity, sin is human destruction."⁸⁴ Thus, as a privation, evil represents a deficiency of what should be. The defect of human beings that leads them to depart from the moral order is attributable to their fallen state and creatureliness, which precedes that evil act itself.⁸⁵ This defect in human beings limits their insight to the point that they prefer the lower good over the higher good in their actions.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ ScG, III, 149, 8.

⁷⁹ See O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 38. See also Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 440.

⁸⁰ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 441.

⁸¹ ScG III, 148, 4.

⁸² See Piñon, *Predestination and Salvation*, 144. See also Bernhard Blankenhorn, "Double Agency in Saint Paul and Saint Thomas Aquinas," *Angelicum* 91, no. 1 (2014): 132-133.

⁸³ ScG III, 159, 2.

⁸⁴ Mullady, *Grace Explained*, 38.

⁸⁵ See Levering, "History, Eternity, and Divine Providence," 411.

⁸⁶ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 442. See De Malo, q. 1, a. 3, as quoted in O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin*, 45.

In the context of a human free choice, this privation stems from a departure from rectitude, from the moral order. Within the scope of free choice, Saint Thomas traces the origin of the deviation from human beings' "ability to impede or not to impede the reception of grace."⁸⁷ While God induces good choices by decisively prompting individuals toward goodness, he does not prompt individuals toward the evil (the absence of rectitude) inherent in a bad choice. Instead, the deficiency in the action arises from a flaw in the human agent.⁸⁸ Therefore, in the case of morally evil choice, divine causality moves the will toward the completion of the action or the causation of the materiality or positive existence of the act. The choice in favor of evil lies in the defect or flaw of human beings, who, according to Saint Thomas, "offer within themselves an obstacle to grace; just as while the sun is shining in the world, the man who keeps his eyes closed is held responsible for his fault..."⁸⁹

Finally, applying the idea that God is the origin of all positive existence to our understanding of sin, Fr. Marin maintains with Saint Thomas that first, God is the cause of the act of sin, and second, God cannot be directly the cause of sin. On the one hand, Saint Thomas explains, "The act of sin is both a being and an act; and in both respects it is from God... God is the cause of every action in so far as it is an action."⁹⁰ Therefore, God is the cause of the act in as much as every act must derive its existence from the First Being or something existing in act. On the other hand, Saint Thomas reasons out why God cannot be directly the cause of sin saying, "Whereas God inclines and turns all things to himself as to their last end as Dionysius states: it is impossible that He should be either to himself or to another the cause of departing from the order which is to himself."⁹¹ To distinguish, the completion of the act is attributable to God as the first cause while sinning, as a choice of the human will, to depart from God is caused by human imperfection. The state of fallen nature of Adam, according to Mullady, sheds light on the theological-pastoral sense of this reflection, "to persevere in grace without God's aid and therefore showing his lack of love for God, he lost grace and entered in a state of original sin."⁹²

⁸⁷ ScG III, 159, 2.

⁸⁸ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 442. Furthermore, Piñon clarifies, "When the actual grace of God induces the salutary desire and consent of the will, it does so, putting to action the will's motive and volitive reflexivity over its salutary desire and consent... From the very first moment, the will obtains full dynamic control and dominion over its salutary or meritorious act. Owing to this dominion, the will does not undergo determination to its salutary or meritorious act." Piñon, *Predestination and Salvation*, 146.

⁸⁹ ScG, III, 159, 2.

⁹⁰ ST I-II, q. 79, a. 2.

⁹¹ ST I-II, q. 79, a. 1.

⁹² Mullady, *Grace Explained*, 38.

Conclusion

In closing, worth recalling is Fr. Piñon's recollection of the query of young students about predestination: "What for should we strive to do good and avoid evil when God already knows if we are going to be saved or condemned?"⁹³ The answer to this very important question came in the form of a book that gathers ideas about the topic predestination and salvation. Fr. Marin, for his part, responds through his Ten Propositions, which showed that the dispute between the Dominicans and the Jesuits, in fact, served as a point of collaboration that never reached a resolution and was ultimately disrupted by Pope Paul V's decree, which declared that "neither side was heretical nor forbade further publishing on the issue without his explicit permission."⁹⁴

As we have belabored to explain hitherto, Fr. Marin lays down the basic Thomistic presupposition that Divine Causality is infallible concerning motion and general governance. In the classic Thomistic sense, God is the unmistakable Unmoved Mover, the Necessary Being who efficaciously sets all motions that lead to the execution and realization of the universal end. In this context, infallibility is a true mark of divine causality since God, being the Prime Mover, according to Saint Thomas, is the only being capable of reducing potency to actuality. The will of God and the decrees and motions corresponding to this will precede all consequent wills and their corresponding decrees and motions. On the other hand, using the same propositions, Fr. Marin argues that divine causality is also fallible as far as the particular ends of each individual or each individual act are concerned. Fr. Marin highlights that God cannot undermine the freedom He has gifted all human beings with. This means that in choosing good or evil, human beings exercise their free will and are, therefore, worthy of praise for good deeds done and deserving of punishment for evil actions. Otherwise, God is reduced to the role of a puppeteer and made the author of evil.**PS**

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⁹³ Piñon, *Predestination and Salvation*, 6.

⁹⁴ Matava, "Controversy *de Auxiliis*," 417. See Scott Steinkerchner, O.P. "Dominicans and Jesuits, 357.

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