



# Manuel Piñon, O.P.'s<sup>1</sup> Retrieval of the Biblical Significance of the Doctrine of Predestination

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Fr. Manuel Piñon, O.P., in his work *Predestination and Salvation*, insisted that it is imperative to clarify and rediscover the original features of the content of the doctrine of predestination,—a doctrine that has engendered misunderstanding within the Christian circle in the past—inasmuch as it is at the heart of the theology of Christian revelation. This study on the above proposition of the said Dominican scholastic is carried out through a threefold discussion. It traces the development of the dogma by utilizing as markers the two major thinkers in the Catholic tradition, namely Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, making their respective theological reflections as the premise upon which M. Piñon's own exposition will be constructed. Moreover, the developments in the doctrine of predestination that had been introduced by thinkers reacting to the propositions of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas respectively are likewise to be investigated. It is in order to account for M. Piñon's insistence on the need to rediscover and rearticulate the original understanding of the said doctrine. Without discounting the implication to human freedom, this study takes the stance that the issue of predestination is concerned more about the right doctrine of God. The theology of predestination, as proposed by M. Piñon, will be explored around the question: How to reconcile the notion of God who is solicitous about the salvation of all, with the view that some will end up condemned for eternity?

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<sup>1</sup> M. Piñon, O.P. was "born on February 2, 1924 in Jolo, Sulu, Republic of the Philippines [...]. He entered the Order of Preachers on July 1, 1939 and pursued philosophical and theological courses in the Studium Generale of St. Albert's Priory in Hongkong. He took up post graduate studies in Philosophy and earned his doctorate at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas, Angelicum in Rome." (From the back cover of *Psychological Freedom*, Quezon city 1987). He taught philosophical courses at the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila from 1957-1977 and served as the dean of the Faculty for 10 years, from 1965 to 1974. From 1978 to 1984, he was the Rector and President of the Aquinas University of Legaspi, in Albay Province.

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## Introduction

Why study a difficult question of dogma like the doctrine of predestination that has contributed in the past so much misunderstanding and division in the Church? Instead of asking the question of the relevance of studying it, Manuel Piñon, O.P., a Lecturer in Theology and Professor of Philosophy at the University of Santo Tomas from the late 50s to late 70s, contends that it is imperative to rediscover and clarify the original features of the content of doctrine of predestination, inasmuch as it is at the heart of the Christian faith. As he puts it succinctly: “The story and theology of Christian Salvation are nothing else than the story and theology of God’s implementation of His Divine Predestination and Christian Election.”<sup>2</sup> For “the early Christians, the doctrine of predestination was a matter of consolation in their trials rather than of apprehension, of hope rather than of hopelessness.”<sup>3</sup> It ascertained for the early Church the belief in a God who, by whose goodness and mercy, seeks and prepares all for their union with Him.

However, this original insight of the doctrine of predestination, preached by the Apostle to the people of his time, has lost taste to the contemporary Christians due mostly to the distortion of its teaching. It has been coated with propositions that are no longer consistent with its fundamental understanding found in the Sacred Scriptures. Contemporary Christians are allergic to talk about predestination because it is the miscarried meaning that has been imputed to it that comes into mind to many when such theme is brought in as the topic of discussion.<sup>4</sup> However, just because what the other people hold about the said doctrine is incorrect, that one should abandon referencing to it altogether, instead of trying to rediscover its original comforting message that it may be preached to the people? M. Piñon believes that the appropriate course of action is to restore to the doctrine of Predestination its biblical sense. The message that had accorded early Christians with the sense of hope and

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<sup>2</sup> Manuel Pinon, O.P., *Predestination and Salvation*, Quezon City, 1977, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> This attitude is observable according to M. Piñon in the literatures that were composed after Vatican II. He writes: “Yet, it seems to be course taken in our post-conciliar period. It is hard to find the word predestination mentioned in the post-conciliar theological literature. The same phenomenon may be observed in the New English versions of the Holy Scriptures of the Holy Scriptures which have proliferated in the post-conciliar period.” (*Ibid.*, 7).

the feeling of being loved by God.<sup>5</sup> M. Piñon undertakes to recover the theological significance of the doctrine of predestination that Christians, according to his own words, may “beheld once more the radiance of the beauty of God’s goodness.”<sup>6</sup>

### From Augustine to Peter Lombard

M. Piñon claims that the reason the talk about predestination within the Catholic Church is not heard anymore is because of what he calls the “gross error”<sup>7</sup> of limiting its sense to the understanding of a disjunctive pre-ordination on the part of God of some to salvation and others to eternal damnation, apart from the consideration of the merits and demerits to be incurred by men. Such view is unacceptable because it renders a notion of God who unjustly excludes others from salvation. Moreover, it runs contrary to the universal salvific will of the God revealed in the Holy Scriptures. To rectify this perceived distortion of meaning, M. Piñon, at the outset of his work *Predestination and Salvation*, distinguishes the different senses that the word predestination tenders. He specifies, very early in his exposition, that in his eternal existence there are three forms of pre-assignment done by God in relation to men: “(1) the pre-ordination of men to the goal of eternal life, which is formal pre-ordination proper; (2) and the pre-ordination of some individuals to reward of heaven in the wake of their foreseen merits, (3) or the pre-ordination of other individuals to the punishment of hell in the wake of their foreseen demerits.”<sup>8</sup>

Having specified these distinctions, he proceeds by pointing out that, strictly speaking, only the first sense befits properly the term predestination as pre-assignment.<sup>9</sup> The second and the third senses are not properly called predestination. Because, although, from the point of view of material consideration they can be considered pre-ordinations “inasmuch as they are done in eternity prior to their implementation in time,” however, from the point of view of their formal nature they are not so, “inasmuch as they are assignments in the wake of merits and demerits

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 455-456.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* I have inserted numbers for the purpose of making the distinction explicit.

<sup>9</sup> In this regard, M. Piñon advises his readers to bear in mind, so as to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, that the word ‘predestination’ without qualification in his work has as its intended meaning the formal predestination, while predestination with the sense of terminal and a consequence of merits or demerits incurred is always qualified as ‘retributive’ (*Ibid.*, 58). Moreover, as regards the relation of these two kinds of predestination the same author clarifies that the “retributive predestination is terminal and posterior to the formal and antecedent gratuitous predestination of God to the goal of eternal life, as attainable by merits and rewards” (*Ibid.*, 69). This same qualification is adopted by this writer in this article.

respectively.”<sup>10</sup> For this reason, M. Piñon concludes: “they are not pre-assignments but post-assignments in the providence of God.”<sup>11</sup> Expressing this same distinction in a different manner, he further specifies that the first sense is understood as antecedent formal predestination, inasmuch as it connotes both “the previous destination [of men] to the supernatural goal proper,” it being “the starting point and aspect of God’s supernatural providence,”<sup>12</sup> while the disjunctive meaning rendered in the second and third senses are by nature retributational, each being the consequence of the action of man, which either merits reward or punishment—we will again encounter these classifications later in our discussion of the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

Unfortunately, these two senses of predestination have been conflated. It resulted into the reduction of the meaning predestination solely into the disjunctive pre-ordainments of some to eternal life and others to hell, and the ascription to this of the formal aspect of the antecedent predestination. The confusion has been located to their analogous character as both taking place in the eternity of God and are known to God before their implementation in time. Because of this, the antecedent aspect of formal predestination has been thrown back to the disjunctive and consequent predestination,<sup>13</sup> ending with the erroneous teaching of double predestination, with God pre-ordaining men to either salvation or damnation apart from their foreseen merits or demerits. It then generated a belief that those who were presumed to have perished and are to perish, did perish and will perish due solely to the absolutely will of God. Two positions came out to account for this mistaken belief: namely, either God is directly responsible by positively acting on the condemnation of others, or God is indirectly responsible by not doing anything to save those men who end up in hell. In theological parlance, the first position is referred to as the teaching on the ‘positive reprobation’ on the part of God and the second, ‘negative reprobation’.

As regards the first, M. Piñon credits it to those ecclesiastics, known to modern readers today as predestinarians, whose error, first recorded officially in a Church document in 473 during the celebration of the provincial synod of Arles,<sup>14</sup> came about due to their misreading of the passage from the *Letter of Paul to the Romans* and its reiteration by Augustine. He opines: “In all likelihood the error originated from the misunderstanding of the obscure passages from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans, or from the misinterpretations of the imprecise passages from St. Augustine in his pioneering discussion on this matter.”<sup>15</sup> The misconceived reading rendered

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

by this group of likeminded ecclesiastics to this Pauline theme and Augustinian testimony can be drawn from the recantation submitted by a certain Lucidus to the assembly of bishops. Apparently, it taught that "Christ, our Lord and Savior, did not undertake death for the salvation of all; [...] that the foreknowledge of God impels man violently to death, or that by God's will perish those who perish; that some are destined to death, whereas others are predestined to life." The predestinarians then conceived of a "double antecedent election by God, either for eternal life, or for eternal damnation."<sup>16</sup>

The doctrine of double predestination that renders God as the one responsible for some people who commit sin and eventually meet their perdition did not sit quietly with the Scholastics. Since it had been apprehended as going against the biblical revelation of a benevolent God, who became man and offered himself willingly on the cross, that humanity may be liberated from the shackle of sin. Even so, the scholastics were also cognizant of the fact that there are other people who will end up in eternal damnation, for refusing the salvation of God, as it is also attested to in Scriptures. The early Scholastics endeavored to reconcile the doctrine of double predestination with the notion of God who wills the salvation and not the condemnation of the people. Peter Lombard, the acknowledged master of the Scholastics, was to undertake this project. He gave birth to the modification of the sense of reprobation from its active construction, preached within the predestinarian circle, to the notion of reprobation that attributes to God no direct responsibility for the damnation of certain number of people, except the suspension of grace from them.

Peter Lombard explained his stand on negative reprobation in relation to his remark about the hardening of the heart of some people, a point which likewise commented on by Augustine in his *Letter to Pope Sixtus*.<sup>17</sup> The master of the *Sentences* distinguished it from his understanding of predestination, which he exposed under the umbrella of God's mercy. He linked the notion of negative reprobation with the act of divine justice. Accordingly, in the act of negative reprobation, God merely allows the natural course of justice to take place upon those guilty of sinfulness, guilt which they incur either by personal choice or through inheritance as part of the fallen humanity. According to this, the sense of reprobation refers to the divine "intention not to be merciful, so that hardening by God is his not being merciful: so that there is nothing conferred by Him, wherefore man becomes worse, but merely the aid is not granted wherefrom man would become better."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, Book I, Distinction XLI (G. Silano [trans.], Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies 2010, 224ff).

<sup>18</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 110.



M. Piñon could not believe Peter Lombard misrepresenting the teaching of Augustine on this particular point. Especially that he even quoted the Augustinian letter to Pope Sixtus, wherein the celebrated African bishop made a distinction, albeit not plainly explicit as we would like it to have been, between the notions of God's mercy and justice: "But if we seek a deserving of obduracy and mercy, we find deserving of obduracy; but we do not find a deserving of mercy, because there is no deserving of mercy lest grace be made empty, if it is not given freely, but is rendered for merits."<sup>19</sup> Clearly, when Augustine spoke of mercy, M. Piñon argues, he was referring to the antecedent predestination wherein, under such divine decree and proceeding from no other cause except God's merciful gaze, all men have been extended the offer of God's grace of salvation. It is for this reason that no one can be said to have been worthy of God's mercy and compassion. On the other hand, when Augustine spoke of obduracy, which is an indication of the absence of grace, not necessarily because God has withdrawn it without considering the foreseen demerits, but simply because some have repeatedly refused to adhere to the divine aid, the bishop of Hippo was thinking of the consequent punishment that such person deservingly gets. M. Piñon frames this point more succinctly: "They to whom grace is not imparted are neither worthy or deserving from God's mercy; but they are worthy and deserving from God's justice."<sup>20</sup>

Modern scholars critical of Augustine still would not give quarters to the African bishop, despite the clarification of the Augustinian insight in contemporary Augustinian scholarship, reiterating the perennial accusation that he was responsible for pioneering the teaching of divine reprobation of some people. These scholars failed to perceive the point that Augustine cannot be regarded to have held the opinion that God ordains some to enjoy eternity with him and others to their damnation, because he denied to have taught it, when the Pelagians, on account of their misapprehension of his explanation about why some infants received baptism while others died without it, attributed such teaching to him. It is because, Augustine reasoned, the picture of the divine that such view renders is an unjust God.<sup>21</sup> What was given emphasis in the work of the bishop of Hippo was that those who have been predestined to eternal life are brought to salvation by the grace of God.

We can identify two Augustinian pronouncements that can provide reason why the erroneous interpretation that speaks of God as either expressly willing or deliberately leaving out others to their damnation still persists in the mind of some scholars prejudicial of Augustine. The first is the misunderstanding of the Augustinian

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<sup>19</sup> Augustine, *Letter 144*, 14 quoted by P. Lombard, *Sentences I*, XLI, 1 (G. Silano, 224).

<sup>20</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 119.

<sup>21</sup> cf. Augustine, *De dono perseverantiae*, 12, 30.

teaching about the *massa damnata*.<sup>22</sup> Some conceived of this concept as if Augustine taught that after the Fall, the whole of humanity is in effect already condemned to die, owing to the inheritance of sin. Such that the idea of God abandoning others in their condemned situation, in other words, reprobating others, is an expression of God's justice. However, if divine justice were taken as the first data of God's providence, then sustaining it would be difficult. This is because the *massa damnata* teaching of Augustine only points to the fact that the whole of humanity after the Fall is on slippery slope, sliding towards damnation without the distinctive help coming from God.<sup>23</sup> They are not though in effect damned. Immediately after the Fall, God has started his plan to restore the original salvation offered by God to humanity with the promise of salvation, the fulfillment of which will be secured upon the coming of the redeemer. According to this, the justice of God is not the starting point of God's dealing with humanity because humanity, though tainted with sin, is ontologically not censured from communion with God. Since the *massa damnata* teaching speaks not the ontology of man as *de facto* condemned, but rather its orientation towards evil, due to the effect of the original sin and its inability to overcome it without the help from God, then the sense of divine justice is appropriately delineated as a consequence of the decision of man either to act on the offer of salvation from God or to refuse it.

Secondly, the teaching of Augustine on the inscrutable judgment of God also serves for some as critical evidence in favor of the argument that reprobation is a corollary theme of the Augustinian reflection on divine predestination. Augustine employed the inscrutability of the judgment of God in response to those who query about why grace is given to some and not to others. However, critics of Augustine, both coming from his own period and from modern scholarship, read in this response a sheer arbitrariness of God's choice. It follows from this that the decision of God to elect some to salvation and others to perdition is beyond human comprehension, and also that human effort has no significance in what one meets at the end of one's earthly existence. But, the inscrutability of God's judgment was appealed to by Augustine not so much to make a static pronouncement that God had, from eternity, without taking into account human merits and demerits, already determined some to salvation and others to damnation. That was not the purpose for which Augustine employed such tenet, since he was certain in his belief that God is never the cause of the perdition of some people. Rather, the appeal to the inscrutability of God's judgment, as S. Ticciati demonstrates,<sup>24</sup> "is not intended to map out the settled state

<sup>22</sup> Erik A. de Boer, *Augustine on Election: The Birth of an Article of Faith*, in *Acta Theologica* 32/2 (2012), 69.

<sup>23</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 70.

<sup>24</sup> See Susannah Ticciati, *Reading Augustine Through Job: A Reparative Reading of Augustine's Doctrine of Predestination*, *Modern Theology* 27/3 (July 2001), 414-440.



of affairs, but to bring about the transformation of its hearers by moving them to embrace their salvation.”<sup>25</sup>

In other words, the correct understanding of the Augustinian teaching on predestination is to distance it from the teaching of ‘reprobation,’ conceived as an antecedent pre-assignment and as a disjunctive alternative to divine election to eternal life. As one modern interpreter of Augustine puts it: the “doctrine of reprobation is not an ill conceived rider of his doctrine of predestination; it is profoundly in contradiction with it.”<sup>26</sup> M. Piñon stresses the same opinion, in reaction to Peter Lombard missing the important distinction offered by Augustine, which resulted in the latter’s acceptance of the notion of negative reprobation, affirming that “it cannot be said that [Augustine] taught Predestinarianism [...] or even claimed that he taught antecedent negative reprobation.”<sup>27</sup> While some modern critics of Augustine faulted the African bishop for the introduction of the teaching of double predestination in Catholic theology, M. Piñon exculpates him as responsible for the unbiblical orientation to which the predestinarians has bent the teaching of predestination. He evaluates objectively Augustine’s groundbreaking contribution to the discourse about this important Christian message, declaring: “St. Augustine was a pioneer theologian in this matter and, therefore we cannot expect him to be precise in his terminology in every instance, or that he should have been cognizant and wary of the subtle distinctions that need to be made.”<sup>28</sup>

### Thomas Aquinas and the Post-Tridentine Reflection

During the time of the angelic doctor, the disjunctive understanding of divine predestination was already a well-received belief within the Catholic circle. Peter Lombard, the author of the *Sentences*, dealt with the issue. He explained it in a way that responsibility is taken away from God as regards the fate of those who would end up condemned. He was able to achieve this by distinguishing between predestination, understood as the divine election of some to eternal life, and reprobation, as the non-election of some to eternal life, based on the divine foreknowledge of their iniquity. However, the master made a clarification, quoting Prosper Aquitaine, that though sinners have been foreknown, their iniquity have not been prepared by God, only the punishment that it demands.<sup>29</sup> Such view is termed among the Scholastics as

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 430.

<sup>26</sup> See James Wetzel, *Snares of Truth: Augustine on Free Will and Predestination*, in R. Dodaro and G. Lawless (eds.), *Augustine and His Critics*, London 2000, 130.

<sup>27</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 119.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Lombard, *The Sentences*, Book I, Distinction XL, Chapter 2 (Giulio Silano [trans.], Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies 2007, 222-223).

‘negative reprobation,’ to distinguish it from ‘positive reprobation’ which holds that God exerts influence on the foreknown sinners to actually commit iniquity. While the view of the ‘negative reprobation’ exonerates God from responsibility for the fate of those numbered among the condemned, it, however, does give a picture of a God who has no universal concern for the salvation of humanity.<sup>30</sup>

Thomas Aquinas was conscious about this difficulty. On his part, he provided the framework through which the disjunctive sense of predestination might be reconciled with the view of God who is solicitous of the salvation of all people and, as Scriptures reveal, not wanting the perdition of even one lost sheep. The synthesis offered by the Dominican master resolves the problematical issue that emerged from the teaching of negative reprobation of Peter Lombard, that of God withdrawing grace from some people and leaving outside the embrace of grace those foreknown to fall into sin. He did this by adapting John Damascene’s distinction between the antecedent and consequent will in God.<sup>31</sup> Peter Lombard was not cognizant about this. The distinction between the antecedent and consequent will in God can be deduced analogously from how human will functions. Sometimes man antecedently wills a particular objective that one has to carry out, preparing beforehand all the details needed for its actual execution. At other times, man merely reacts to a given incident and wills a particular course of action in a consequent manner. The same function of the human will is analogously found in God. However, in God, all of these varied operations occur simultaneously and instantaneously in eternity. It also does not mean that there are two wills in God (or in man), inasmuch as the distinction merely accounts for the different functions of the one and the same faculty of volition.

With the distinction of the antecedent and consequent function in the divine will, Thomas Aquinas was able to provide an explanation of predestination that excludes no one. He asserted that antecedently, out of his bountiful goodness and unbounded compassion, God predestines everyone without exception to be saved. Only in a consequent manner, that is, by way of retribution, that God predestines certain others to share in his communion, having incurred for themselves merits worthy of God, and some others to perdition as punishment, in consequence of their refusal to act on the bestowed grace. These two functions of the divine will are not opposed to each other, inasmuch as the consequent divine predestination, to either salvation or perdition, necessarily presupposes the prior existence of the antecedent desire of God to save all mankind. Thus, man is able to achieve meritorious acts and is consequently rewarded for them with salvation because of the antecedent divine desire to predestine all to be saved. It equips man with grace that supports him to carry out salutary functions. The meritorious act is then the result, not the cause, of

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<sup>30</sup> cf. M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 102.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

predestination. Likewise, the retributational character of the predestination of some to perdition, as a form of divine punishment imposed upon some people, is premised on the foreseen act of refusal to the offered grace.

With this framework, the disjunctive sense of predestination has been placed in its proper perspective and the problematic issue that emerged from its reception has been given a clarification. In relation to this point, Thomas Aquinas was able to make two significant affirmations. First, the formal predestination, which cannot be understood in the disjunctive sense, refers to the primordial intention of God to share eternal life with all of mankind. The notion of predestination is here revealed as integral in the divine plan of God for the whole of humanity. It is the same principle of predestination that governs the will of God to send his only begotten Son to become incarnate so that the grace of union between the divinity and humanity may be communicated to all, not excluding sinners who have repented. The ministry of the Son of God, who never thought that a sheep gone astray is not worth looking for or saving, negates the notion of reprobation, as taught by some scholastics. Predestination taken from its formal nature as the primordial will of God to share his life with humanity, being a manifestation of God's offer of universal salvation, does not have a room for the doctrine of reprobation, understood as negative or otherwise.

Second, the disjunctive sense of predestination is limited to the secondary understanding of predestination in the given distinction of Thomas Aquinas, which is the consequent kind of predestination. The resultant separation between those saved for eternal life and those condemned to eternal punishment presupposes the primordial antecedent predestination of all mankind to the goal of supernatural life. While those destined to salvation will take advantage of the effect that the gratuitous grace of God brings, by freely cooperating with its power to do salutary acts that merit salvation, those condemned will adamantly resist the offer of salvation that such grace bears, thereby meriting justly the sentence of punishment. In this regard, Thomas Aquinas was able to overcome the inadequacy in the exposition of Peter Lombard, given that, in the work of the angelic doctor, there is no notion of God who leaves out those who will end up condemned in eternal punishment, as they too have been antecedently willed by God to be saved. The decree of condemnation to some comes after their refusal of the original offer of salvation.

Thomas Aquinas clarifies more precisely what he means when he talks about predestination, detailing a twofold manner of presenting the formal nature of predestination, in the following:

Predestination is said of several things in a twofold way: either of the aim and of those things that contribute to the attainment of the aim; and in this

manner it is said of grace and glory. Or it is said of those who attain the aim; and thus it covers all those who attain glory through the grace of God. Both of the aforesaid may be understood from the term predestination [ ... ]<sup>32</sup>

The first sense speaks of both the effect of predestination itself, articulated in terms of the supernatural end (glory) to which all humankind are called to share, and of the preparation set by God for humankind to achieve such end, which takes the form of the actual graces. Moreover, the supernatural end, which is communion in the glory of God “has as meritorious cause the human act.”<sup>33</sup> With regard to this, “predestination has the nature of distributive justice. [ ... ] God confers glory to this one and not to the other, because this one deserves it and not the other.”<sup>34</sup> This corresponds to the consequent predestination discussed above. The second sense of predestination, according to the above Thomistic text, concerns with the divine aid, which prepares humankind and enables one to do salutary acts worthy of the gift of glory. With regard to grace, preparing mankind to partake of God’s glory, “predestination has more of the nature of liberality than of justice; because grace is given gratis, and is not awarded because of merits.”<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, this second sense of predestination is explored by Thomas Aquinas in relation to the individuals themselves who attain the goal of supernatural life. This way of looking at predestination, from the perspective of the individual that is effectively brought into the offered communion in divine glory, yields a sense of predestination, which necessarily “includes the attainment of eternal life as reward for the foreseen merits earned by the elect.”<sup>36</sup> This is the type of predestination which effects divine election for eternal life, and so “includes the favorable retributational predestination.”<sup>37</sup> The certainty of it taking place as designed lies not on the act of the person granted with such privilege, but on God who, by virtue of his purpose and divine election, grants a particular grace with such efficacy, that it moves the person to indefectibly will and perform salutary acts meriting eternal life.<sup>38</sup> However, the Dominican master was also quick to point out that the efficacy of grace spoken about merely secures the infallible performance of the salutary acts by the person generously selected by God for a particular purpose, but not his human will. This is because even if the person is infallibly moved by grace to do salutary acts that profit for him the goal of eternal life, still, under such circumstance, the human will can properly function without compromising its freedom.

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<sup>32</sup> *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bk. I, Dist. 40, a. 2, body.

<sup>33</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 152.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>35</sup> *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bk. I, Dist. 41, a. 3, reply 2.

<sup>36</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 153.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

The compatibility of the grace of God effecting infallibly human will to do salutary acts and the assertion that human freedom is preserved under the influence of grace was difficult for the theologians that followed Thomas Aquinas to rationalize. Before going into the development of predestination after Thomas Aquinas, let us put in evidence here, as it will be crucial in the development of our topic later in the discussion, the distinction between the two mentioned senses of predestination. The first sense of predestination wherein God grants actual grace, antecedent of any foreseen merits or demerits on the part of the recipients, that prepares mankind for eternal life, and by this same grace enable mankind to perform salutary acts worthy of the supernatural goal, can be conceived of as the general mode by which mankind is brought to salvation. Under this consideration, man is either brought to eternal life as a reward for good works or consequently condemned to eternal damnation following his refusal to act and cooperate with the offered divine aid. Again it needs to be recalled here the disjunctive sense of the terminal retributive predestination, which is applied by God consequent to the foreseen acquired merits and demerits of each. Moreover, it always presupposes the antecedent will of God to save the whole of mankind.

In the second understanding of predestination, the promise of eternal life through communion in the divine glory is comprehended in the given grace, which infallibly ensures that such and such person, specifically chosen by God for a particular purpose in his divine plan, will consistently carry out salutary acts or persevere in the life of grace, until the final moment of his earthly existence to merit him or her salvation. God grants to some, not to all mankind, this singular privilege of divine election to eternal life. It must be affirmed that in his theological reflection, the angelic doctor had held that divine election is not just the exclusive manner by which God predestines humankind, such that those who have not been favored by divine election can still be granted with the gift of divine life, provided that they avail of the effects of the offered divine aids.<sup>39</sup> However, the theologians that came after Thomas Aquinas, both the critics of the Thomistic system from the rival school and also the adherents of Thomistic tradition hailing from the Bañezian camp, as M. Piñon proficiently notes,<sup>40</sup> failed to grasp this important Thomistic insight. That the divine plan of predestination is not carried out exclusively through divine election to eternal life.

The two above-mentioned theological schools grappled with the same vexing question that confronted Thomas Aquinas: “How to reconcile, or at least hold in tension, God’s benevolent will that all humans should be saved—witnessed

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<sup>39</sup> See *Ibid.*, 402-403.

<sup>40</sup> *cf. Ibid.*, 154 ff. He will develop this point in his own theological reflection. We shall explore this proposition in the third section of this study.

perhaps most starkly in Romans 9 and Augustine's doctrine of predestination—that all humans will, in fact, actually attain to final salvation?"<sup>41</sup> However, contrary to the conclusion of the angelic doctor, their respective theological resolutions to the said issue both implied the teaching of predestination as exclusively effected by way of divine election to eternal life,—the second sense in the classification of Thomas Aquinas—as each had a diffident understanding of the quality of grace, in consequence of their effort to overstate the freedom of man. In a way, it can be said that the post-Aquinas Scholastics reverted back to the solution of Peter of Lombard, of making God choose only those whom God has foreseen to persevere in his grace until the end and leave out those others, without God actually causing them to sin, who have been foreseen to repudiate God's offer of salvation.

Even with the rehearsal of the notion of divine election to eternal life being the sole mode by which humankind is brought to its supernatural end, the theological reflection of this period did not dwell much, as in the preceding period, on the sovereignty of the divine power, as it revolved around the issue of the preservation of human freedom under the influence of grace. The preference of the conviction that apparently gives more emphasis on human freedom over divine action was prompted by the realization that biblical data do attest that some men end-up condemned to eternal perdition. In attempting to resolve how the human person can exercise its volitive function according to its mode of operation as a free individual if he is predetermined by divine election to eternal life, the scholastics inadvertently introduced a flawed portrait of the influence of grace over mankind. It gave rise to further distinctions in the traditional doctrine of grace. To the traditionally acknowledged classifications of sanctifying grace and actual grace, the scholastics of this period additionally introduced, within the category of actual grace, the distinction between sufficient and efficient grace.

The Molinists,<sup>42</sup> in their effort to preserve the freedom of man under the influence of divine grace, recourse to the postulate of the 'middle science' of God. This refers to "God's certain knowledge of the 'would be' free response of the will to His divine grace, in particular theoretical sets of circumstances, in which the particular will may be found, owing to God's super comprehension of the will and of the circumstances."<sup>43</sup> For every salutary act worthy of salvation, there are two essential elements that need to be present in the mind of the Molinists. First, it should be a free

<sup>41</sup> Franklin Harris, *The Early Aquinas on the Question of Universal Salvation, or How a Knight May Choose Not to Ride His Horse?*, in *New Blackfriars* 95/1056 (February 2014), 208.

<sup>42</sup> It is a theological system that was developed and advanced by the Jesuit Luis de Molina. For the thought of Molina on the issue at hand, see his work, *On Divine Foreknowledge, Part IV of the Concordia* (A. Freddoso [trans.], Ithaca 1988).

<sup>43</sup> cf. M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 146.

human act, with the understanding that it is man, on his own accord, who solely performs it, with no intrinsic interference from an external influence. The second aspect concerns with the notion that such act must proceed from the prior divine initiative. In this regard, the free salutary act of man is conceived as a response to God desiring man to act in a manner that will merit him salvation. Such is conceived as a response to God because without the divine initiative choosing and preparing “a program of such set of circumstances, wherein He has foreseen that the will shall infallibly give its free consentful cooperation,”<sup>44</sup> it is impossible for man to perform salutary acts. However, the problem with the view of Molina is, as M. Piñon observes acutely, it limits the effect of the divine aid to the external circumstances, which, accordingly, as they are agreeable to the will, are instrumental in drawing infallibly its consent to salutary acts.<sup>45</sup> Also, it denies that the grace of God can efficaciously and directly elicit the will of the human agent to perform good works.<sup>46</sup> Consequently, the efficaciousness of the grace of God is denied inasmuch as, in the thought of Molina, the efficacy of the grace is rendered dependent on the consent of the will.<sup>47</sup>

The Jesuit colleagues of Molina,<sup>48</sup> realizing this difficulty, tried to introduce a variation in his teaching that would allow the notion of God’s grace to have a direct influence in garnering the consent of the will. However, still the variation of the Jesuit school would not concede giving divine grace a direct causal role over the human agent. They still held on to the Molinistic opinion “that if God, through his efficacious grace, should directly move the will to desire and pursue meritorious act in an indefectible manner, the will could not do otherwise and would not be free.”<sup>49</sup> Instead, they introduced a notion of the congruent grace which, accordingly, in a given specific set of circumstances, as known to God by virtue of his middle science, will indefectibly move the human will to perform meritorious acts, being perfectly suited to the natural disposition of the human person to produce his free affirmative response.<sup>50</sup>

Along this line of thought, the Jesuits of the ‘congruist school’ were able to accept the distinction, not stressed in the Molinist system, between the efficient grace and sufficient grace. The former is believed to be congruent to the human will in the particular set of circumstances in which God chooses to grant it, while the latter is not congruent in the given set of circumstances in which they would be found and

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>45</sup> Msgr. R.P. Phillips, *Modern Thomistic Philosophy, An Explanation for the Students*, Editiones Scholasticae 2013, vol.2, 343.

<sup>46</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 147.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>48</sup> At the forefront of this were Robert Bellarmine and Francis Suarez: cf. *Ibid.*, 206, 331.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce A. Ware (ed.), *Perspectives on the Doctrine of God: 4 Views*, Nashville 2008, 39.



so does not garner the consent of the will.<sup>51</sup> However, just like the Molinist view, its 'congruist' variation cannot escape the criticism that "the granting of efficacious graces, [an important effect of God's predestination in the intentional order,] is made to depend on the foreseen consent or meritorious good use of the will; even if in the order of execution the earning of merits would depend on the said graces."<sup>52</sup> Such view runs contrast to the well-established Thomistic principle that divine predestination, in its primary sense, is antecedent to merits and is the fundamental factor for the possibility of meriting salvation.<sup>53</sup> Just like their Molinist colleagues, the efficacy of divine predestination and of grace is made dependent by the congruists upon the contingent will of the human agent. For them, it is alongside, not due to the primary causality of, God's initiative, that man indefectibly performs salutary good works.

In reaction to the Molinists and the congruists, the Thomists of the Banezian school reaffirmed the long-standing belief in the universal causality of God's activity over finite creatures. First, the Molinists postulated the 'middle science' of God, which allowed them to assert certainty in the foreknowledge of God over those who, in the given set circumstances, will infallibly persevere in the grace of God and those who will end up refusing the offer of salvation. It accorded them the pretext to maintain the mastery of man over his own actions, inasmuch as God accordingly chooses to concede man with grace, having considered the circumstances that God knows would be favorable to inspire in him the performance of salutary acts. Against this, the Banezians held on to the teaching of the angelic doctor about the presential knowledge of God of everything including the future actions of man endowed with free will and intellect.<sup>54</sup> Second, the congruists, to rectify the perceived weakness in the position of their Molinist colleagues, postulated the simultaneous concurrence of the divine initiative, in the form of congruent grace, and human action to account for the performance of meritorious works that proceed freely from the human will, without direct causal influence from God, but at the same time not absolutely discounting the divine factor. Against this, the Bañezian school offered an alternative explanation for the complementarity of the divine action and human agency in finite affairs according to its teaching of the 'divine premotion.'

However, the precept of 'divine premotion' as proposed by Bañez, subsequently distorted the doctrine of predestination because "it does not carry a

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<sup>51</sup> cf. M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 331.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>54</sup> Here, Bañez followed faithfully Thomas Aquinas' point, which is summarized in this quotation: "What is measured by eternity is simultaneous with all time, in such a manner that it is not measured by any part of time. And so, the act of divine foreknowledge cannot be placed to be as of now, as if it were measured by the present time; so that it should bear the relation of its known object as present to future: but, with regard to every time and to every known thing, it bears the relation of something present to another present object." (*Commentary on the Sentences* Bk. I, Dist.40, q.3, repl.5.)

margin for the will to be and to act as relative principal agent and primary mover of its particular psychical sphere.”<sup>55</sup> Bañez could not conceive of a way to explain the universal and principal causality of God over the action of creaturely agents except by way of divine premotion, understood by him in the sense of God physically premoving the will of the human person to the elicitation of every act.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the Bañezian qualification of this divine action as infallible with regard to everything made it vulnerable to the criticism that, according to its understanding, the will would be behaving like an inanimate object, without power to resist if it wishes to do so.<sup>57</sup> Francisco Marin-Sola summarized the position of Bañez, commenting that his was an innovation of, not being faithful to, the original thought of Dominican master of the *Summa Theologiae*, in the following:

Into this cement, in our judgment there figured four theses that Bañez and his companions added to the Thomistic edifice, without taking them from the pure doctrine of Saint Thomas: *first*, that the antecedent will of God is not a will of *beneplacito* and that, as a result, it is not formally, but only eminently, found in God; *second*, that all divine providence is infallible as regards everything, even as regards the execution of a particular end; *third*, that every divine premotion is infallible or irresistible in fact as regards everything; *fourth*, that every divine decree is infallible as regards everything.<sup>58</sup>

The Bañezian addition to the Thomistic teaching on predestination resulted to its tragic restriction to the sense of special providence conferred upon a few through the grace of divine election to eternal life. It is so because Bañez expostulated as essential in the teaching of predestination the need for the postulate of the infallible decree of God’s providence in bringing to salvation those who have been predestined.<sup>59</sup> It consequently leads to the specification of the divine act to grant efficacious grace, it being the instrumentality used by God that indefectibly elicits salutary acts from the human will, as the sole means through which the divine decree of predestination is applied to humankind. Meanwhile the conferral of sufficient grace, a fallible act of divine providence, that is, a divine provision which, unlike the efficient grace, does not indefectibly produce salutary acts, but nonetheless is adequate to elicit salutary acts from man, is excluded from that act of divine providence that brings mankind to salvation.

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<sup>55</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 352.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>58</sup> F. Marin-Sola, *Do Not Resist the Spirit’s Call: Francisco Marin-Sola on Sufficient Grace*, M. D. Torre (trans.), Catholic University of America 2013, 132.

<sup>59</sup> See also the critique of the teaching of Bañez by F. Marin-Sola, in *Ibid.*, 136-139.

The post-Thomas Aquinas theological discourse on the compatibility of the teaching of divine predestination in relation to the affirmation of the freedom of the human will has encouraged deeper probing on the nature of grace and its influence on human action. From this came the classifications of efficient grace and sufficient grace. Generally, the former is believed to indefectibly bring into fulfillment the divine plan of salvation for those people to whom it has been granted, while the latter is perceived to lack this efficacy. Both the Molinist/congruist camp and the Bañezian camp subscribed to the given general descriptions of the two classifications of grace, but not without notable differences, as noted above. However, the efficient-sufficient framework, as accommodated in their respective systems, has unwisely popularized a shortchanged view of God. Both the Molinist/congruist God who imparts sufficient grace, as it has been foreknown that, under the given set of conditions, it will not be congruent to the personality of the human agent so as to garner free salutary acts in him, and the Bañezian God who concedes sufficient grace that cannot make mankind share in the divine communion, feature a hypocritical and insincere God who grants grace without the intention of saving. Against this view, M. Piñon will show that “God provided sufficient chances for salvation to all men, in general, by providing an original salvific plan for mankind.”<sup>60</sup>

### **The Need for the Two-Parallel Affirmations for the Right Doctrine of Predestination: The Proposition of Manuel Piñon, O.P.**

The above discussion specifies two things that the angelic doctor had contributed in the development of the understanding of the doctrine of divine predestination. First, he offered a template that helped clarify the confusion between the two senses of divine predestination that was lacking in the thought of his predecessors, enabling its understanding according to its proper framework: formal predestination is always antecedent in nature referring to God’s universal desire to save mankind in general, and the disjunctive sense of consequent predestination, either to salvation or to damnation, is terminal in nature and always premised on the foreseen merits and demerits of men. Second, he also hinted an understanding that departed from the practice of limiting the understanding of predestination to elective predestination to eternal life. Notwithstanding this advancement in the understanding of the doctrine of predestination, M. Piñon deems the need to re-affirm and represent its original content on account of the innovation that was introduced into it by the scholastics that came later. Innovation that unfortunately removed its explanation away from the biblical doctrine of divine providence that guided the reflection of Thomas Aquinas, and before him, Augustine. Also because, the employment of the

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<sup>60</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 236.

distinction between antecedent and consequent predestination did not adequately provide definitive answer to the difficulty why others are saved by the grace of God and some others, despite the divine decree to save all, fall into their perdition.<sup>61</sup>

To this end, M. Piñon joins the effort of contemporary theologians to provide a satisfactory answer to the question why it is that some are not drawn to consent freely to the supernatural end by performing meritorious works, if “God is omnipotent and it is impossible to imagine that his will might be foiled by men?”<sup>62</sup> However, the solution afforded by some of these theologians ends up with the implication that inadvertently puts the blame of the condemnation of some people on the hand of God. This is true for instance with the thought of Hans von Balthasar. H. von Balthasar stresses the infinite love and mercy of God, manifested in the sacrifice of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross in order to affirm the fact of the universal salvation offered for humanity. Unlike the theologians of Thomistic adherence, he locates his theological solution to the question not on the permissive will of God which allows for the resistance of men, on account of their freedom, to the influence of God’s grace.<sup>63</sup> Instead, he “displaces the locus of the mystery away from God’s permissions of moral evil and the creature’s persistence in such evil toward the question of our ambivalent status before the twofold dimension of an infinite divine love, as that which can either freely condemn us, or liberate us.”<sup>64</sup> However, by doing so, H. von Balthasar, as M. Levering observes, arrives with the end result that “damnation, were it to occur for any creature, would become a failure on God’s part rather than on the part of the rebellious creature: God could liberate the creature but chooses not to do so.”<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, the solution of Jacques Maritain, a distinguished representative of the Thomistic school, articulates the position that “underscore[s] the freedom of rational creatures, who does not compete with the transcendent freedom of God.”<sup>66</sup> His interpretation of the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas leads him to identify two moments in man with regard to the emergence of free and evil acts. He pronounces unambiguously this conviction, when he claims that for Aquinas,

the emergence of a free and evil act resolves in two moments—distinct, not according to the priority of time, but according to an ontological

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<sup>61</sup> John Dool, *Predestination, Freedom and the Logic of Love*, in *Logos*, 11/3 (Summer 2008), 114.

<sup>62</sup> Matthew Levering, *Biblical Thomism and the Doctrine of Providence*, in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 83/3 (2009), 344.

<sup>63</sup> See for instance the discussion of Michal Paluch, OP, *Recovering a Doctrine of Providence: A Report*, in *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, 12/4 (2014), 1165ff.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Joseph White, OP, *Divine Providence: Von Balthasar and Journey on the Universal Possibility of Salvation and the Twofold Will of God*, in *Nova et Vetera* 4/3 (Summer 2006), 649.

<sup>65</sup> M. Levering, 345.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

priority. At a first moment there is in the will, by the fact of its very liberty, an absence or a nihilation which is not yet a *privation* or an evil, but a mere lacuna: the existent *does not* consider the norm of the *thou shouldst* upon which the ruling of the act depends. At the second moment the will produces its free act affected by the privation of its due ruling and wounded with the nothingness which results from this lack of consideration.<sup>67</sup>

In the production of an evil act, the first moment, which, as J. Maritain explains, consists in nothing else but the absence or lacuna of consideration of the norm of what should be, is not yet regarded as a privation or an evil. This condition of non-consideration of the norm is of itself not the object of the duty of the will, nor it is an act of the will, because in this moment the will does nothing. The precept to conform one's being to what one ought to become arises only in the second moment, that is, at the moment of action, when the will applies itself to the production of an act, "at which time the will begets the free decision in which it makes its choice."<sup>68</sup> Even so, J. Maritain charges the first moment as the first cause, understood however not in the efficient or active sense, of the evil act in the second moment, it being "the matrix of the *privation* itself by which the free act [ ... ] is morally deformed or purely or simply evil."<sup>69</sup> Since this first moment of non-consideration of the norm is not an act, God can not be involved in it in anyway. With regard to good acts, for one to perform meritorious works, the will need only to choose to consider the norm, and for the will to be able to do so requires the movement of the divine agency as its first cause.<sup>70</sup> Evidently, the result of this explanation "is not only that the human free will (in its non-action), without God's actual participation, becomes the 'first cause' of evil actions, but also that human free will (without acting) becomes determinative for the efficacy for the divine grace."<sup>71</sup>

Although J. Maritain, in contrast to H. von Balthasar, is able to successfully remove the accountability of the emergence of evil from the plate of God, his Thomistic synthesis, notwithstanding his affirmation of the prior reception in the 'first moment' of the divine movement,<sup>72</sup> could not give an adequate solution to the question why God did permit some people to the point of falling into evil without doing nothing. In a way, the thought of J. Maritain did not pass beyond the implication that the post-Tridentine reflection, as shown above, had paraded, that of explaining the condemnation of some people in terms of the absence of the divine initiative to

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<sup>67</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent: An Essay on Christian Existentialism*, L. Galantiere and G. B. Phelan (trans.), New York: Image Books 1957, 97. Emphases are original.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> See M. Levering, 348.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 349.

act in behalf of their salvation. As M. Levering himself, evaluating J. Maritain's take on the issue, gauges: "Even when Maritain were right about nihilating [ ... ], he cannot avoid the fundamental problem anymore than his opponents can: Why would God, infinite wisdom and love, permit things to reach the point of eternal punishment for his own rational creatures?"<sup>73</sup>

The shortcomings inherent in previous reflections on the doctrine of divine predestination, specifically concerning the attempts at solution to the questions, why God elects only some to eternal life—a subject which was already present in the musings of the medieval theologians and reemerged as an important concern in the work of contemporary theologians—, and how to account for the freedom of man without discounting the causal influence that God exerts over human affairs—a crucial issue for the post-Tridentine scholastic theologians—, could be argued to have been escaped by M. Piñon. This is because instead of opting for the approach of highlighting either the assertion of the universal causality of God or the preservation of the freedom of man, the either/or path taken by many theologians who engaged themselves with the said issue, M. Piñon makes both affirmations and maintains a balance view between the two, such that in his re-articulation of the doctrine of predestination, he is able to overcome the mentioned inadequacies found in previous theological expositions.

The first of these two indispensable affirmations, stressed by M. Piñon in his work, concerns with the assertion that the will of man remains free even under the causal influence of the divine initiative. M. Piñon, following the lead of Thomas Aquinas, expostulates an explanation of the intervention of God in the life of man that preserves, instead of curtails, human freedom. He is able to safeguard the free will of man under such condition, by expounding on the nature of the will as a reflexive faculty.<sup>74</sup> He takes as point of departure the following description of the will, as specified by Thomas Aquinas himself in his *Summa*, for this:

Free will is the cause of its motion, because man by free will moves himself to act. But it is not necessary for freedom that the free agent should also

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>74</sup> The articulation of the activity of the will as reflexive is the contribution of M. Piñon to the Thomistic elaboration of the nature of the will. The Thomistic reflections are not wanting in the affirmation of the intellect as a reflexive faculty, but there is not much reflection done that deals with the faculty of the will as having the same characteristics. The insight that the will is a reflexive faculty, however, is not original to M. Piñon as it pervades the treatment of the nature of the will in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Though, it could be argued, that the exposition of the will as a reflexive faculty is not codified as such in the writings of the angelic doctor, in the manner of the treatment of the faculty of the intellect. M. Piñon elaborates on this Thomistic doctrine. He expounds more profoundly on this notion of the will as a reflexive faculty in his book, *Psychological Freedom*, Quezon City 1987, i-292.

be the first cause of itself (in the dynamic order); just as, in order that something should be the cause of another thing. God is, therefore, the first cause that moves the natural and the voluntary causes. And, just as by moving the natural causes, He does not exclude that their action should be natural; so also, by moving the voluntary causes, He does not exclude that their action should be voluntary; but on the contrary, He makes it to be so in them, because He acts in each thing according to its property.<sup>75</sup>

How is the will a reflexive faculty? M. Piñon, building on his Thomistic education, regards the will as 'intellectual appetitive faculty.' He unpacks this statement thus: "As an 'intellectual faculty' the will is not formally bound from necessity to any particular good, or course of action. As an 'appetitive faculty,' the will is of its nature essentially volitive or volitional; that is, its proper act and role is to desire, or to take a liking for something. Next, as an intellectual appetitive faculty,' the will is concerned with the universal good and the universal well-being of the individual; and as such, the will is the supreme and first motive faculty in the psychic sphere with regard to the voluntary and imperable acts of the individual."<sup>76</sup> It means to say that the will is the faculty from which one can trace the origin of every voluntary action that an individual takes, as it gives or withdraws consent to its liking for a particular object or course of action, depending on its own awareness of said desire. That is, either as worth fulfilling, hence must be pursued, or detrimental to one's personal growth, hence must be abandoned.

The character of the will as free, which "obtains and enjoys motive control and dynamic mastery over its act, when it acts and every time it acts,"<sup>77</sup> is further demonstrated when its reflexive character is put in evidence. The will starts to become reflexive the moment when it starts acting since every time the will elicits its act, it does so in a reflexive mode.<sup>78</sup> Every act of the will is reflexive upon itself and upon its act, that is, according to its volitive role and motive role, similar to the intellectual activity that is reflexive unto itself according to its cognitive function. When the intellect knows something, it knows that it knows that thing and it knows how much or how scarce it knows the object of its knowledge. Similarly, when the will takes a liking for a particular object, the will, as supplied by reason, comes to the awareness of itself desiring something. Being a rational appetite, the will is not just supplied by reason with the information about the desirability of its object, but also reason provides the will with the awareness of itself and of its desire. The will shall continue to desire its object in the subsequent manner, if it does take a liking in what it desires

<sup>75</sup> ST I, q.83, a.1, rep.3.

<sup>76</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 334.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>78</sup> *cf. Ibid.*, 335ff.



and apply its power to secure that it comes into fruition. On the contrary, the will would cease its desire for something, if it does not give its consent because it dislikes what it desires. The will shall subsequently abandon what it initially desires, after it has been made to realize that its fulfillment will not contribute to one's personal growth.

Now, in connection to the question about the freedom of the will, M. Piñon declares that the notion of freedom consists primarily in the mastery of the will over its act. There are two senses of freedom that have been distinguished in scholastic discourses, namely, the 'freedom of specification' and the 'freedom of action.' The freedom of specification, which unfortunately many have taken to be the primary sense of freedom, refers to the condition wherein one is given several choices to choose from. Apparently, according to this perspective, the one who has more options is regarded as enjoying more freedom than the one who has limited choices. However, this is not necessarily true because freedom, as argued by M. Piñon, does not consist in the condition of active indifference. That is, the condition by which the will, with no external or internal factors affecting its disposition, is accorded with the competence of freely choosing from several courses of action. This is where M. Piñon differs from J. Maritain who specifies freedom in his description of the 'first moment,' where the non-consideration of the norm by the will is possible.<sup>79</sup> Although M. Piñon maintains that the condition of active indifference, the sphere of freedom of specification, is a necessary condition of freedom, he insists that it is not yet freedom unless it is exercised in the conduct of human action. The exercise of freedom is measured in the manner by which the will produces its act. This is the second sense of freedom: the 'freedom of action.' It refers to the mastery of the will over its act. This is perceived in the will that, without external stimulus affecting its decision, freely approves of its desire and actively undertakes to work for its fulfillment, because it has been known to be desirable. It must be added though that while the will commits itself to its current desire, it still maintains its ability to cease to act on it whenever it wishes to decide so.

With the above understanding of freedom, conceived as 'freedom of action,' it is not contradictory to maintain the freedom of the will and have the grace of God exerting causal influence over it.<sup>80</sup> It is because even under such circumstance, the will, being a reflexive faculty that gives consent or disapproves of what it desires

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<sup>79</sup> See the discussion above on J. Maritain.

<sup>80</sup> Some Thomists would explain this point from the metaphysical point of view, stressing the two distinct levels or modes of causation that are not and cannot be in competition (See the work of J. Dool, *Predestination*, 109ff.). Though this point has also been mentioned by M. Piñon in his work, I am, however, limiting my discussion here to his elaboration of the nature of the will to arrive at the same conclusion.

and applies itself to the realization of said desire when judged good or subsequently abandons it when disadvantageous, can still have motive control and dynamic mastery over its action. According to this understanding, the human will shall remain completely free not only under the influence of sufficient grace, which is said to be a fallible divine decree of salvation, but even under the influence of efficient grace, whose effect indefectibly and infallibly illicit the consent of the will and the execution of meritorious acts. This is so because even if the efficient grace secures infallibly both the salutary desire and acts of the will, it is still possible that the mode by which the will is made to approve of such desire and acts is according to the precept of its natural liberty. That is, not taking away from the will the option to approve of and undertake said desire, following its own awareness of their inherent goodness. M. Piñon cannot be clearer about this point when he writes: "The motion of the will by God does not necessitate or determine the will. It necessitates and determines only the salutary or meritorious acts of the will according to their existential reality."<sup>81</sup>

The will may be drawn infallibly to do salutary acts owing to the granting of efficient grace on the part of God, but the will cannot be determined in its own action, even on account of an infallible divine initiative. M. Piñon explains why this is so: "Again owing to the motive reflexiveness and mastery that the will obtains over its operational dynamism whenever it acts, the will acting under efficacious grace has the full power and capability to resist, and to do the contrary of what it is doing."<sup>82</sup> The will does not resist the working of grace in this regard because God, by effectively making the human agent realize the goodness of divine suggestion and reinforces his resolve to embrace it until the final moment, makes sure that the will of the human agent choose only the meritorious acts. This does not mean that freedom has been denied even if there is only one resultant course of action that is possible for the human will. The will, owing to its reflexive character, still has the mastery over its act, first approving and then continuing on this one course of action until its completion, not despite of but because of the efficacious grace by which the will is enabled to desire without fail such salutary option. Even if there is only one option for action the will can still retain its freedom adopting it, if it so decides to embrace it. In this regard, "even though nothing can resist the divine will, our will, like everything else, carries out the divine will according to its own proper mode."<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, being a reflexive faculty, M. Piñon, still expounding on the work of Thomas Aquinas, claims that the will does not necessarily require that it is the first cause of its movement to sustain the belief in the dynamic mastery over its elicited

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<sup>81</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 342.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

<sup>83</sup> *De veritate*, q.6, a.3, ad.3.

acts. With regard to this point, he distinguishes the divine action in terms of the actual grace that God concedes over mankind, according to the following phases: the initial grace, the subsequent graces that man is provided with for his journey to God, and the final grace of perseverance. M. Piñon states that the initial grace that motivates man to initiate his journey along the path that leads to God is always involuntary in nature because God is the sole first cause of the movement toward Himself.<sup>84</sup> Since the supernatural goal of salvation is beyond the reach of humanity, there is a need for an external and powerful benefactor that can effect this gift for mankind. God is that benefactor which quickens that desire, without requiring prior or concomitant consent of mankind, by giving each one initial grace and so prompting their desire for the good.

If in the initial stage the movement of the will toward God, one cannot speak of voluntary action on the part of mankind, the same cannot be claimed in the subsequent stages where the reflexive acts of the will carry a function. In the subsequent stages, some are continued to be provided with the needed subsequent graces because they freely consent (or, to regard it from the divine perspective, have been foreseen to consent) to the initial divine impulse, whereas others are denied of subsequent graces because they refuse (or, again to regard it from the divine perspective, have been foreseen to refuse) to act on the initial invitation of God to walk with him on the path of salvation. The will applies itself to remain in this desire because the will consciously likes the initial desire infused in it by God. Likewise, the will abandons the initial grace because it adamantly refuses to partake of this invitation from God, notwithstanding its revealed benefits for the self. The quality of freedom is here presupposed for the granting of subsequent graces. It would be unfair to subsequently grant grace to some and deny the same to others, if, following the divine motion, men were coerced to act in the manner that they do. The same presupposition of the liberty of the human free will is required for the granting of the grace of the final perseverance. All of these have to be regarded in the consequent and retributational aspect of the predestinatory act of God, having as presupposition the existence of antecedent formal predestination.

The second affirmation, secured by M. Piñon in his reworking of the doctrine of predestination, concerns with the doctrine of God revealed by Scriptures who does not want his creatures to perish. For this purpose, M. Piñon expands the notion of predestination. This is to counter the restrictive development in the post-Tridentine scholastic reflections, which has limited it to the sense of predestination by election to eternal life. While acknowledging the distinction made between the efficient grace and sufficient grace, M. Piñon rectifies its understanding so that his

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<sup>84</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 346.

theology will not end up with the unfortunate implication that came out from the post-Tridentine elaboration. He clarifies that all have been granted with sufficient grace as immediate effect of the antecedent salvific predestination in general. It is the common instrumentality employed by God to prepare all humankind for glory. On the other hand, there are also those who have been especially selected by God for eternal life and are granted with efficient grace, which inflexibly dispose them to perform meritorious works that secure their salvation.

There is obviously a distinction between these two classes of grace employed by God to prepare mankind for its goal of supernatural life in God. However, despite acknowledging this classical distinction, one must not speak of several kinds of grace for there is only one grace from God that is salvific both in nature and purpose. The acknowledged distinction only proceeds from the diverse effects that it brings about, considered from the perspective of the people that receive it. The proposed distinction may be ascertained by considering its effect on people. When the presumed grace is unable to infallibly elicit salutary desire and consent of the will, then one can confidently claim that only sufficient grace has been conceded. For if it were efficient grace, then it would have induced salutary desire in the person and motivated him to perform the needed good works for the completion of said desire. However, M. Piñon is likewise aware that when man is able to perform meritorious action and persevere in it until the end, it is difficult to say whether it has been carried out due to the sufficient grace or efficient grace. At the most, one can only say that a successful grace it was. Still one must not say that the efficaciousness of the grace of God is dependent upon the cooperation of man. Since the grace of God in itself has intrinsic force to elicit from man his free cooperation to work out his salvation.

Let us go back again to the question: does the divine will that only chooses some to eternal life correspond to the God revealed in the Scriptures as the loving and compassionate God “who does not delight in the death of the living (Wis. 1:13)”? the response of M. Piñon is in the affirmative, since the divine election to eternal life is not the exclusive path set by God for man to attain salvation. For the better appreciation of this point, M. Piñon offers the following distinctions. First, the ‘predestination to eternal life’ is the elective kind of predestination whose primary instrumentality is the efficacious grace, granted antecedent of any merit on the part of man. Such grace infallibly garners the consent of the will and moves one to undertake meritorious actions that profit salvation.<sup>85</sup> Second, the ‘predestination to glory’ is the type of predestination that governs those who have not been specially favored to be included among those elected by God to eternal life. It has for its instrumentality sufficient grace, which is granted, likewise, in an antecedent manner, without the consideration

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<sup>85</sup> This corresponds to the second manner of speaking of predestination given in the text of Thomas Aquinas as mentioned in the preceding discussion.

of merits or demerits.<sup>86</sup> To these two types of predestination articulated in the work of Thomas Aquinas, M. Piñon further adds a third classification: the “predestination of many to the Christian Faith and incorporation with Christ, for the effect of divine adoption.”<sup>87</sup> Such addition is not contrary to the teaching of the angelic doctor, but simply an explication of what is a latent message in his teaching.

M. Piñon weaves this third classification of predestination from the distinction made by the angelic doctor between the ‘predestination of mankind to glory’ and the ‘predestination of some to eternal life.’ The ‘predestination to glory,’ as we have already explained, above is the general way by which God governs mankind toward salvation. Now under this category, M. Piñon makes two further distinctions, namely, those who have been predestined to the Christian faith and those who are excluded from this, namely, the non-Christians. The offered distinction does not warrant the assertion that those who do not belong to the Christian faith are devoid of any means of salvation, inasmuch as they are still governed by the formal antecedent predestination of mankind in general to salvation. What M. Piñon merely claims is that those who belong to the Christian faith are provided with clear and effective means to salvation through the sacraments—this is particularly true with the Catholic tradition—and the received teachings of the biblical revelations! As regards those who do not share the Christian faith, M. Piñon is certain that the grace of God, sufficient to effect salvation is also available to them. For, the grace of God is operative within the non-Christian traditions, especially those aspects in their belief system that reflect God’s presence.<sup>88</sup>

At this juncture, it is imperative to clarify the notion of sufficient grace? There is no salvation for mankind without God preordaining eternal life to be the just reward for those who do salutary works, and without God enabling mankind through the granting of grace to carry out the entailed salutary acts for the merit of salvation. For this to take place, it is enough to be granted with sufficient grace. Even if in actuality, not all who come under its influence will be rewarded with the gift of salvation. It is not because the aid provided by God is deficient, but because the recipients are so broken, that they are unable to take advantage of the power of the available divine help. M. Piñon, in contrast to the Post-Tridentine scholastics, maintains that sufficient grace which man receives is capable of bringing man to

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<sup>86</sup> It corresponds to the first sense of predestination provided by Thomas Aquinas as presented in the above discussion.

<sup>87</sup> cf. M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 402.

<sup>88</sup> Included here are the scattered rays of God found outside the Christian tradition. For this reason, M. Piñon conceived of the doctrine of predestination as affirming the work of ecumenism and so it is consistent with the theology and the agenda of the Vatican II. In fact, in his work, M. Piñon dedicates chapter 21 to the compatibility of the doctrine of predestination with Vatican II movement. (*Ibid.*, 300-311)

salvation. However, due to humankind's brokenness as a consequence of the original sin, the giving of efficient grace has become necessary to secure that those who have been elected for a particular mission will have the necessary aid to carry it out, without fail. Having said so, it needs to be pointed out that in giving sufficient grace, God has all the intention of saving all those who have received it. It is in itself adequate to enable man to reach out for God and work for his salvation. But, there are those who, for some reason, refuse this offer of salvation. The failure to act on this offer of salvation is not to be charged on God who provides mankind with grace adequate for salvation. It is merely on the hardness of man's heart that he fails God's grace.<sup>89</sup> Having said so, I think M. Piñon is to agree with this judgment of J. Dool when the latter writes that "the inexplicable mystery at the heart of predestination is [...] why human beings might reject that love that is offered as universally as it is gratuitously."<sup>90</sup>

Ultimately, the discussion of the right understanding of the doctrine of divine predestination boils down to the right conception of God. Whether its understanding gives a picture of God consistent with the biblical portrait of the God to whom foremost is the salvation of all. This is the reason M. Piñon refuses to accept the predestinarian concept of elective predestination to hell, for as he puts it: "The picture that they, [i.e., the proponents of the predestinarian error,] have given us of God is not that of a merciful Father, but of a despotic unmerciful master, at least with regard to those supposedly predestined to eternal death and damnation in an antecedent manner."<sup>91</sup> Likewise, M. Piñon was able to keep a balance between the tension of divine causality and human freedom, which the Post-Tridentine theologians failed to achieve. In his own Thomistic synthesis, the significance of human effort in the performance of good works, freely consented and performed, becomes an indication of the active involvement on the part of God in soliciting the salvation of mankind. It is God who provides man with grace, by which man completes, according to his own mode of operation, salutary works, because, without the antecedent working of grace, it is impossible for man to receive the promised glory.

## Conclusion

Let us go back to the question raised at the beginning of this study: Why is it necessary to reclaim the doctrine of predestination? M. Piñon argues that it is necessary to articulate the theology of predestination in order to proclaim the benevolence of God who wills and prepares all mankind for the life of communion in the Trinitarian God. In the history of its development, however, the doctrine of

<sup>89</sup> See *Ibid.*, 388-389.

<sup>90</sup> J. Dool, *Predestination*, 124.

<sup>91</sup> M. Piñon, *Predestination*, 83.

predestination has been misunderstood by many and, to this date, the residual effect of this unfortunate development is still felt. In the past, predestination was given the sense of God acting on man by taking away human freedom, instead of looking at it according to the sense that mankind is in need of the predestinatory act of God to lift human nature to enter into divine communion.

In the Augustinian reflection, the requirement of human effort was not denied, although it is not given due emphasis, as in the work of Thomas Aquinas. This allowed for the reading that predestination is absolutely dependent on God, and that human effort is not essential or required of those who are to be brought to salvation. It then led to the belief, as regards those condemned, that God has predestined them to their perdition. The early schoolmen, under the authority of Peter Lombard, excluded God from the responsibility of sending people to perish, by positing the theory of 'negative reprobation.' He posited the view that God does not actually cause men to sin, but merely leaves some outside the power of grace. Thomas Aquinas did not receive this particular teaching of the author of the *Sentences*, as it is not consistent with the biblical God who desires all to have life in Him. On his part, he justified the decision of God to withdraw from some people subsequent graces, including the final grace of perseverance, according to the perspective of the consequent and retributational predestination. The angelic doctor was able to clarify the difficulties surrounding the theme of predestination, which were current in his time, by making a distinction between the formal antecedent predestination and the terminal consequent predestination. However, the clarification constructed by Thomas Aquinas was reversed by the post-Tridentine scholastics with the defective definition that they have assigned to the notion of grace. This was particularly true with their effort to distinguish the sense of sufficient grace from the efficient grace. It led to the resurgence of the teaching of the negative reprobation.

M. Piñon does not only purify the essential Thomistic teaching of predestination from the notion of negative reprobation, an unfortunate novelty introduced by the Bañezian wing. As M. Piñon persuasively avows: "The doctrine of St. Thomas concerning a salvific will and mercy of God that is open, in an antecedent manner, to all men, is inconsistent with the concept of any antecedent reprobation of a portion of men by God previous to demerits, whether it be the positive kind of the Predestinarians and Reformers, or the negative kind of the ancient scholastics."<sup>92</sup> He retrieves the biblical teaching of predestination by making two crucial parallel affirmations. First, he asserts that the liberty of man is preserved even under the causal influence of divine grace. And second, he reiterates that the biblical God desires no one to end up condemned for all eternity. He significantly stresses in his work the

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<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.



divine effort to save everyone, by expanding the notion of predestination to include, other than the path of elective predestination to eternal life, the many divine aids available for mankind, such that everyone has the opportunity and the needed help to realize their supernatural goal of eternal life. He does this after having clarified the objection that in wanting to share the Trinitarian communion to humankind, God does not act imperially taking away from the man his freedom and coercing him to follow divine initiative. In closing, what the exposition of M. Piñon reveals to us is this: the question about predestination should not be framed according to whether God imparts or does not impart grace, because the doctrine of predestination is primarily about God's antecedent and universal desire to share the Trinitarian communion of love and life with everyone. ■

