

QUESTION 23

Predestination

Now that we have considered God's providence, we have to discuss predestination (question 23) and the book of life (question 24).

On the topic of predestination there are eight questions: (1) Is predestination fitting for God? (2) What is predestination, and is it an entity that exists in the one who is predestined? (3) Does God reprobate some men? (4) As regards the relation of predestination to election, are the predestined elected? (5) Are merits a cause of, or explanation for, predestination or reprobation or election? (6) As regards the certainty of predestination, are the predestined infallibly saved? (7) Is the number of the predestined fixed? (8) Can the prayers of the holy assist in predestination?

Article 1

Are men predestined by God?

It seems that men are not predestined by God:

Objection 1: In *De Fide Orthodoxa* 2 Damascene says, "We must understand that God foreknows all things but does not predetermine all things. He foreknows the things that exist in us, but He does not predetermine them." But human merits and demerits exist in us insofar as we are masters of our own acts through the power of free choice. Therefore, whatever pertains to merits and demerits is not predestined by God. And thus the predestination of men is ruled out.

Objection 2: As was explained above (q. 22, a. 1), all creatures are ordered to their ends by God's providence. But other creatures are not said to be predestined by God. Therefore, neither are men predestined.

Objection 3: Angels are capable of happiness. But, so it seems, angels are not predestined, since there was never any unhappiness in them and, as Augustine says, predestination is a work of mercy. Therefore, men are not predestined.

Objection 4: The gifts that God has conferred on men are revealed to holy men by the Holy Spirit—this according to the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 2:12 ("We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God"). Therefore, if men were predestined by God, then given that predestination is a divine gift, the predestined would know about their own predestination. But this is clearly false.

But contrary to this: Romans 8:30 says, "And whom He predestined, them He also called."

I respond: It is fitting for God to predestine men. For as was shown above (q. 22, a. 2), all things are subject to God's providence. But as was explained (q. 22, a. 1), it pertains to providence to order things to their end.

Now there are two kinds of ends to which created things are ordered. The one kind is disproportionate to, and exceeds the power of, a created nature; and this end is eternal life, which consists in the vision of God and which, as has been shown (q. 12, a. 4), lies beyond the nature of any creature. The other kind of end is proportioned to a created nature, so that the created thing can attain it by the power of its own nature.

Now the kind of end that a thing cannot attain by the power of its own nature is such that the thing must be dispatched (*transmitti*) to it by another, in the way that an arrow is dispatched to a target by an archer. Hence, properly speaking, a rational creature, who is capable of eternal life, is led to eternal life only as dispatched to it by God. But the plan for this dispatching preexists in God, in the same way that there exists in Him a plan for ordering all things to their end—which, as we explained above (q. 22, a. 1),

is His providence. But a plan of action that exists in the mind of the agent is a sort of preexistence in the agent of the very thing that is going to be done. Hence, the plan for the dispatching of a rational creature to the end of eternal life is called predestination. For to dispatch something is to launch it toward a target (*destinare*). And so it is clear that with respect to its object, predestination is a certain part of providence.

Reply to objection 1: Damascene is using the name ‘predetermination’ for the imposition of necessity, as happens with natural things that are predetermined to a single effect. This is clear from the fact that he adds, “For He does not will malice, nor does He compel virtue.” Hence, predestination is not being ruled out.

Reply to objection 2: Non-rational creatures are not capable of that end which exceeds the power of human nature. Hence, they are not properly said to be predestined—even if the name ‘predestination’ might sometimes be used in an improper sense with respect to other ends.

Reply to objection 3: It is fitting for angels to be predestined, just as it is for men, even though the angels were never unhappy. For a movement takes its species not from its terminus *a quo*, but from its terminus *ad quem*. For instance, it makes no difference, as far as the nature of whitewashing is concerned, whether the thing that is being whitewashed was black or gray or red beforehand. Similarly, it makes no difference, as far as the nature of predestination is concerned, whether or not it is from a state of unhappiness that someone is predestined to eternal life.

Still, as was explained above (q. 21, a. 3), one can say that there is an act of mercy when a good is conferred that goes beyond what is owed to the one on whom it is conferred.

Reply to objection 4: Even if, by a special privilege, their own predestination is revealed to some men, it is not appropriate for it to be revealed to everyone. For if it were so revealed, then those who are not predestined would despair, and among the predestined the security of predestination might engender negligence.

Article 2

Is predestination an entity that exists in the one who is predestined?

It seems that predestination is an entity that exists in the one who is predestined:

Objection 1: Every action of itself entails an instance of being acted upon (*passio*). Therefore, if an active predestination (*actio predestinationis*) exists in God, then an instance of passive predestination (*passio predestinationis*) must exist in those who are predestined.

Objection 2: In his commentary on Romans 1:4 (“Who was predestined”) Origen says, “Predestination belongs to one who does not yet exist, whereas the dispatching (*destinatio*) belongs to one who does exist.” But in *Praedestinatio Sanctorum* Augustine replies, “What is predestination, if not the dispatching (*destinatio*) of someone?” Therefore, predestination belongs only to something that exists. And so it is an entity that exists in the one who is predestined.

Objection 3: Preparation is an entity that exists in a thing that is prepared. But as Augustine says in *Praedestinatio Sanctorum*, predestination is a preparation for God’s gifts. Therefore, predestination is an entity that exists in those who are predestined.

Objection 4: What is temporal does not appear in the definition of something eternal. But grace, which is something temporal, appears in the definition of predestination. For predestination is said to be “a preparation for grace in the present and for glory in the future.” Therefore, predestination is not something eternal. And so it must exist not in God, but in those who are predestined. For whatever

exists in God is eternal.

But contrary to this: Augustine says that predestination is the foreknowledge of God's gifts. But foreknowledge is an entity that exists in the one who has the foreknowledge and not in the things that are foreknown. Therefore, predestination likewise exists in the one who predestines and not in those who are predestined.

I respond: Predestination is an entity that exists only in the one who predestines and not in those who are predestined. For it has been explained (a. 1) that predestination is a certain part of providence. But providence is not an entity that exists in the things that are provided for; instead, as has been explained (q. 22, a. 1), it is a plan that exists in the provider's intellect. On the other hand, the execution of providence, which is called governance, is indeed something passive that exists in the things that are governed, whereas it exists as something active in the one who governs.

Thus, it is clear that predestination is a plan, existing in God's mind, for ordering certain persons to eternal salvation. On the other hand, the execution of this ordering is something passive that exists in those who are predestined, whereas it exists in God as something active. Now this execution of predestination is a *calling* and *glorification* according to the Apostle in Romans 8:30: "And whom He predestined, them He also called. And whom He called them He also glorified."

Reply to objection 1: Actions that pass into a exterior subject (*transeuntes in exteriorem materiam*)—e.g., heating and cutting—entail of themselves an instance of being acted upon (*passio*). However, this is not the case with actions that remain within the agent—e.g., understanding and willing, as was explained above (q. 14, a. 2 and q. 18, a. 3). And predestination is an action of this latter sort.

On the other hand, the execution of predestination, which passes into exterior things, exists as a certain effect in those things.

Reply to objection 2: 'To dispatch' or 'to destine' (*destinare*) is sometimes taken for the real transmission of something toward a target, and in this sense an instance of being dispatched is an entity that exists only in something that itself exists.

In a second sense, 'to dispatch' or 'to destine' is taken for a sending which someone mentally conceives of, and in this sense we are said to 'destine' something when we firmly intend it in our minds—this according to 2 Maccabees 6:20, where Eleazar "destined himself (*destinavit*) not to do any unlawful things for the sake of the love of life." And in this sense destining can belong to something that does not yet exist.

However, because of the antecedent status that 'predestination' implies, predestination can belong to something that does not yet exist, regardless of how the term 'destine' is taken.

Reply to objection 3: There are two kinds of preparation. The first kind is the preparation of what is acted upon insofar as it is being acted upon, and this kind of preparation exists in the thing that is being prepared. The second kind of preparation belongs to an agent with respect to its acting, and this kind of preparation exists within the agent. Predestination is a preparation of this latter kind. For an agent, through his intellect, is said to prepare himself for acting insofar as he preconceives a plan for what is going to be done. And in this sense God prepared from eternity by predestining, conceiving of a plan for ordering certain persons to salvation.

Reply to objection 4: Grace appears in the definition of predestination not as something that is part of the essence of predestination, but rather insofar as predestination implies a relation to grace, viz., the relation of a cause to its effect, and the relation of an act to its object. Hence, it does not follow that predestination is something temporal.

Article 3

Does God reprobate some men?

It seems that God does not reprobate any man:

Objection 1: No one reprobates someone whom he loves. But God loves all men, according to Wisdom 11:25 (“For You love all things that are, and hate none of the things that You have made”). Therefore, God does not reprobate any man.

Objection 2: If God reprobates some man, then it must be the case that reprobation is related to those who are reprobated in exactly the same way that predestination is related to those who are predestined. But predestination is a cause of salvation for those who are predestined. Therefore, reprobation will be a cause of perdition for those who are reprobated. But this is false; for Hosea 13:9 says, “Your perdition is from yourself, O Israel: your help is only from me.” Therefore, God does not reprobate anyone.

Objection 3: No one ought to be held responsible for what he cannot avoid. But if God reprobates someone, then that person cannot avoid perishing; for Ecclesiastes 7:14 says, “Consider the works of God, that no man can correct whom He has despised.” Therefore, men should not be held responsible for perishing. But this is false. Therefore, God does not reprobate anyone.

But contrary to this: Malachi 1:2-3 says, “I have loved Jacob, but have hated Esau.”

I respond: There are some whom God reprobates.

For it was asserted above (a. 1) that predestination is a part of providence. But as was explained before (q. 22, a. 2), it pertains to providence to permit some defects in the things that are subject to providence. Hence, since it is through divine providence that men are ordered to eternal life, it likewise pertains to providence that it should permit some to fall short of this end. And this is what is called reprobation.

So, then, just as predestination is the part of providence that has to do with those who are divinely ordained to eternal salvation, so reprobation is the part of providence that has to do with those who fall short of this end. Hence, reprobation does not signify just foreknowledge, but adds something to it conceptually—as was explained above (q. 22, a. 1) in the case of providence. For just as predestination includes the intention (*voluntas*) to confer grace and glory, so reprobation includes the intention to permit someone to fall into sin and to impose the punishment of damnation for that sin.

Reply to objection 1: God loves all men—and, indeed all creatures—in the sense that He wills some good for all of them, but not in the sense that He wills every good for all of them. Therefore, insofar as He does not will the good of eternal life for some, He is said to hate them or reprobate them.

Reply to objection 2: Reprobation is different from predestination in the way it functions as a cause.

For predestination is a cause both (a) of that which awaits in the future life for those who are predestined, viz., glory, and also (b) of that which is perceived in the present, viz., grace.

By contrast, reprobation is not a cause of that which exists in the present, viz., sin. However, it is a cause of one’s being abandoned by God and a cause of what is rendered in the future, viz., eternal punishment. Sin, on the other hand, comes from the free choice of the one who is reprobated and deserted by grace. It is in this sense that what the prophet said is verified: “Your perdition is from yourself, O Israel.”

Reply to objection 3: God’s reprobation does not take away any power at all from the one who is reprobated. Hence, when it is claimed that one who is reprobated cannot obtain grace, this should be understood to mean a relative impossibility rather than an absolute impossibility—in the same way that,

as was explained above (q. 19, a. 8), one who is predestined is necessarily saved, but with a relative necessity that does not destroy free choice. Hence, even if someone who is reprobated by God cannot obtain grace, nonetheless, the fact that he falls into this or that sin happens because of his free choice. Hence, he is rightly held responsible for his own sin.

Article 4

Are the predestined elected by God?

It seems that the predestined are not elected by God:

Objection 1: In *De Divinis Nominibus*, chap. 4, Dionysius says that just as the corporeal sun emits its light to all bodies without choosing (*eligendo*) them, so too God emits His goodness without election (*electio*). But God's goodness is communicated in a special way to some by their participation in grace and glory. Therefore, God communicates grace and glory, which pertain to predestination, without any election.

Objection 2: Election is of those who exist. But predestination from eternity is also of those who do not exist. Therefore, some are predestined without election.

Objection 3: Election implies a certain selectivity. But as 1 Timothy 2:4 says, God wills all men to be saved. Therefore, predestination, which preordains men to salvation, occurs without election.

But contrary to this: Ephesians 1:4 says, "He elected us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world."

I respond: Predestination logically presupposes election, and election logically presupposes love.

The reason for this is that, as has been explained (a. 1), predestination is a part of providence. But providence, like prudence, is a plan which exists in the intellect and which issues commands about the ordering of certain things to their end, as was explained above (q. 22, a. 1). However, one does not command anything to be ordered to an end unless the end has already been willed.

Hence, the predestination of some to eternal salvation presupposes that God has willed their salvation. And it is to this willing that election and love are relevant. Love is relevant insofar as He wills the good of eternal salvation for them; for, as was explained above (q. 20, a. 2 and 3), to love is to will a good for someone. On the other hand, election is relevant insofar as He wills this good to some in preference to others; for as was said above (a. 3), there are some whom He reprobates.

However, election and love have an ordering in God that is different from their ordering with us, since in our case the will does not cause goodness by its love; instead, we are spurred to love by a preexisting good. Thus, we elect someone in order to love him, and so in our case election precedes love. With God, however, the reverse is the case. For His act of will, by which He wills a good to someone in loving Him, is a cause of the person's having that good in preference to others. And so it is clear that love is logically presupposed by election, and that election is logically presupposed by predestination. Hence, all those who are predestined are elected and loved.

Reply to objection 1: If one considers the communication of God's goodness in general, then He communicates His goodness in the absence of election, since, as was explained above (q. 6, a. 4), there is nothing that does not participate in His goodness. However, if one is considering the communication of this or that particular good, then He does not confer the good without election, since He gives certain goods to some things which He does not give to others things. And it is in this way that election is present in the conferral of grace and glory.

Reply to objection 2: When the will of the one who elects is spurred to love by a good that

preexists in the thing, the election must be from among the things that exist—as happens when we elect something. But things are otherwise with God, as has been explained. And so as Augustine puts it, “Those who do not exist are elected by God, and He who elects them does not err.”

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 19, a. 6), God wills *antecedently* that all men should be saved—which is not to will it absolutely speaking, but only relatively speaking. However, He does not will this *consequently*. i.e., He does not will it absolutely speaking.

Article 5

Is the foreknowledge of merits a cause of predestination?

It seems that the foreknowledge of merits is a cause of predestination:

Objection 1: In Romans 8:29 the Apostle says, “Whom He foreknew, He also predestined.” Again, in Ambrose’s gloss on Romans 9:15 (“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy”) he says, “I will give mercy to him whom I foreknow will turn to me with all his heart.” Therefore, it seems that the foreknowledge of merits is a cause of predestination.

Objection 2: Since, as Augustine says, predestination is a work of mercy, God’s predestination includes the divine act of will, which cannot be unreasonable. But there can be no reason for predestination except the foreknowledge of merits. Therefore, the foreknowledge of merits is the cause of, or explanation for, predestination.

Objection 3: As Romans 9:14 says, “There is no injustice with God.” Now it seems unjust that those who are equal should be treated unequally. But all men are equal both with respect to nature and with respect to original sin, whereas inequalities are present in them because of the merits and demerits that stem from their own actions. Therefore, God prepares unequal treatments for men, by predestining some and reprobating others, only because of His foreknowledge of different merits.

But contrary to this: In Titus 3:5 the Apostle says, “Not by the works of justice which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us.” But He predestined us to be saved in the same way that He saved us. Therefore, it is not the case that the foreknowledge of merits is a cause of, or explanation for, predestination.

I respond: Since, as was explained above (a. 3 and 4), predestination includes an act of will, a reason for predestination has to be sought in the same way that a reason for God’s act of will is sought. But it was explained above (q. 19, a. 5) that it is impossible to assign a cause of God’s act of will on the part of the act of willing itself, whereas it is possible to assign an explanation on the part of the things willed to the extent that God wills one thing to exist for the sake of another. Thus, no one has been crazy enough (*insanae mentis*) to claim that merits are a cause of God’s predestination with respect to the very act of predestining. Instead, this matter has been discussed under the question of whether predestination has some cause on the part of the effect. And this is just to ask whether it was because of merits that God preordained that He would give the effect of predestination to someone.

Thus, there have been some who claimed that the effect of predestination is preordained for someone because of merits that preexisted in another life. This was the position of Origen, who held that human souls were created from the beginning and that when they were united to bodies in this world, they were assigned different states according to differences in their works. But the Apostle excludes this position in Romans 9:11-12, when he says: “For when they had not yet been born, nor had done any good or evil Not of works, but of Him that calls, it was said to her: ‘The elder shall serve the younger.’”

Thus, there have been others who claimed that preexisting merits in this life are the explanation for, and cause of, the effect of predestination. For instance, the Pelagians held that the beginning of good works comes from us, whereas their consummation is from God. And so the reason why one person, and not another, is given the effect of predestination is that the one, and not the other, had made a beginning by preparing himself. However, this position is contrary to what the Apostle says at 2 Corinthians 3:5, “Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves.” For no principle can be found that is prior to thought. Hence, it cannot be claimed that some beginning exists in us that might be the explanation for the effect of predestination.

Hence, there have been others who claimed that the merits which follow upon the effect of predestination are the explanation for predestination. The idea is that God gives grace to someone, and preordained that He would give it, because He foreknew that this person would make good use of the grace—in the way that a king might give a horse to some soldier whom he knows will make good use of it.

However, these thinkers seem to have distinguished what comes from free choice and what comes from grace in such a way that the same effect could not come from both of them at once. Now it is clear that what belongs to grace is an effect of predestination, and it cannot be counted as a reason for predestination because it is included under predestination. Therefore, if something else on our part is an explanation for predestination, it will not be an effect of predestination. But what comes from free choice is not distinct from what comes from predestination, since what comes from a secondary cause is not distinct from what comes from the first cause. For God’s providence produces effects through the operation of secondary causes, as was explained above (q. 22, a. 3). Hence, what comes from free choice comes from predestination as well.

Therefore, one should claim that the effect of predestination can be thought of in two ways:

(a) One way is *in particular*, and in this sense nothing prevents one effect of predestination from being a cause of, and explanation for, another effect of predestination—where a later effect is a *final cause* of a prior effect, and a prior effect is a *meritorious cause* (which is traced back to a material disposition) of a later effect. So we may say that God preordained that He would give glory to someone because of that person’s merits, and that He preordained that He would give him grace in order that he might merit glory.

(b) The second way to think of the effect of predestination is *in general*, and in this sense it is impossible that the whole effect of predestination in general should have any cause on our part. For whatever there is in a man that orders him toward salvation is wholly included under the effect of predestination—even the very preparation for grace, which does not come about except through God’s assistance, according to Lamentations 5:21 (“Convert us, O Lord, to You, and we shall be converted”). Predestination, taken in this way on the part of the effect, has God’s goodness for its explanation. For it is God’s goodness to which the whole effect of predestination is ordered as to an end and from which it proceeds as a first efficient principle.

Reply to objection 1: The foreknown use of grace is not a reason for the conferral of grace except as a final cause in the sense just explained.

Reply to objection 2: Predestination, taken in general, has God’s goodness as an explanation on the part of the effect. But as has been explained, one of the particular effects is an explanation for another.

Reply to objection 3: An explanation for the predestination of some and the reprobation of others can be taken from God’s goodness itself. For God is said to have made all things because of His goodness in such a way that the divine goodness is represented among things. But it is necessary for God’s goodness, which is one and simple in itself, to be represented in a multitude of ways in the things, since created things cannot attain to God’s simplicity. And so diverse grades of things are required for

the completion of the universe—with some things occupying high places and others the lowest places in the universe. And as was explained above (q. 2, a. 3 and q. 22, a. 2), in order for this multiplicity of grades to be conserved among things, God permits certain evils to be effected, lest many goods should be impeded.

So, then, suppose that we think of the whole human race as a complete collection of things. God willed that some men, whom He predestines, should represent His goodness in the mode of mercy, by sparing them; and He willed that other men, whom He reprobates, should represent His goodness in the mode of justice, by punishing them. And this is the reason why God chooses some and reprobates others. This is the explanation the Apostle gives in Romans 9:22-23 when he says, “God, willing to show His wrath [*read*: the vindication of His justice] and to make His power known, endured [*read*: permitted] with much patience vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, so that He might show the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy which He has prepared unto glory.” And in 2 Timothy 2:20 he says, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some indeed unto honor, but some unto dishonor.”

However, there is no explanation other than God’s will for why He chose these *particular* men for glory and reprobated those *particular* men. Hence, in *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, “As to why He draws this one to Himself and not that one—do not dare to judge if you do not want to be mistaken.”

Similarly, among natural things one can give an explanation for why the whole of primary matter, which is uniform in itself, is such that one part of it was created by God at the beginning under the form of fire and another part under the form of earth, viz., in order that there might be a diversity of species among natural things. But why this *particular* part of matter should exist under this *particular* form and that *particular* part of matter should exist under that *particular* form—this is something that depends on God’s simple act of willing. In the same way, it depends on the craftsman’s simple act of will that this *particular* stone should be in this *particular* part of the wall and that *particular* stone in another part of the wall—even though the nature of the art itself dictates that some stone or other should be in this part and that some stone or other should be in that part.

Yet it does not follow from this that there is any injustice in God when He prepares unequal treatments for equals. This would be contrary to the nature of justice if the effect of predestination were rendered as a debt and not conferred as a grace. For in those things that are given as a grace, one can, without any prejudice to justice, give as he wills to whom he wills, and he can give more or less, as long as he does not withhold what is owed. And this is what the master of the house says at Matthew 20:14-15: “Take what is yours, and go your way. Or is it not lawful for me to do what I will?”

Article 6

Is predestination certain?

It seems that predestination is not certain:

Objection 1: In commenting on Apocalypse 3:11 (“Hold fast that which you have, that no man take your crown”) Augustine says, “Another will not be accepted unless this one perishes.” Therefore, the crown—i.e., the effect of predestination—can be gained and lost. Therefore, predestination is not certain.

Objection 2: When something possible is posited, nothing impossible follows from it. But it is possible for someone who is predestined, say Peter, to sin and then be killed. But if this is posited, then it follows that the effect of predestination is thwarted. Therefore, this is not impossible. Therefore, predestination is not certain.

Objection 3: God is now able to do whatever He was able to do. But He was able not to have predestined someone whom He has in fact predestined. Therefore, He is even now able not to predestine that person. Therefore, predestination is not certain.

But contrary to this: The Gloss on Romans 8:29 (“Whom He foreknew, He also predestined”) says, “Predestination is foreknowledge plus the preparation for God’s gifts, and whoever is liberated by it is liberated with utter certainty.”

I respond: Predestination attains to its effect infallibly and with utmost certainty, and yet it does not impose necessity in the sense that its effect issues forth by necessity. For as was explained above (a. 1), predestination is a part of providence. But not all the things subject to providence are necessary; instead, some occur contingently according to the status of their proximate causes, which God’s providence has ordered to effects of this sort. And yet, as was shown above (q. 22, a. 4), the order of providence is itself infallible. So, then, the order of predestination is likewise certain, and yet this does not undermine free choice, from which the effect of predestination issues forth contingently.

On this point, notice also what was said above about God’s knowledge and God’s will (q. 14, a. 13 and q. 19, a. 8), which do not destroy the contingency of things even though they themselves are infallible and utterly certain.

Reply to objection 1: There are two ways in which a crown can be said to belong to someone: (a) *from divine predestination*, and in this sense no one loses his crown, and (b) *from the merit of grace* (since what we merit is in some sense our own), and in this sense someone can lose his crown through a subsequent mortal sin.

Now someone else receives this lost crown insofar as he is substituted for the one who has lost it. For God does not permit any to fall without raising up others—this according to Job 34:24: “He shall break in pieces the many and the innumerable, and shall make others to stand in their stead.” Thus, men were substituted for the fallen angels, and Gentiles were substituted for the Jews. Moreover, the one who is substituted into the state of grace receives the crown of the one who has fallen even in the sense that he will rejoice in eternal life over the good things that the latter did. For in eternal life each one will rejoice over both the good things that he himself has done and also the good things that others have done.

Reply to objection 2: Even though it is possible for someone who is predestined, considered just in himself, to die in mortal sin, this is nonetheless impossible once it is assumed (as indeed it is being assumed here) that he is predestined. Hence, it does not follow that predestination can fail.

Reply to objection 3: Predestination involves God’s will, and so just as it was explained above (q. 19, a. 3) that it is conditionally necessary that God will that some created thing should exist—and this because of the immutability of God’s will—but that this is not absolutely necessary, so too the same thing should be said about predestination. Hence, one should not say, in the composed sense, that it is possible for God even now not to predestine someone whom He has in fact predestined—even though, considering the matter absolutely, God is able to predestine him or not to predestine him. But this latter point does not undermine the certainty of predestination.

Article 7

Is the number of the predestined fixed?

It seems that the number of the predestined is not fixed:

Objection 1: A number to which an addition can be made is not fixed. But, it seems, an addition can be made to the number of the predestined; for Deuteronomy 1:11 says, “May the Lord our God add

to this number many thousands,” and the Gloss adds, “that is, as determined by God, who knows those who are His own.” Therefore, the number of the predestined is not fixed.

Objection 2: No reason can be given for why God should preordain this particular number of men to salvation rather than some other number. But God does nothing without a reason. Therefore, the number of those whom God preordains to be saved is not fixed.

Objection 3: God’s action is more perfect than nature’s action. But in the works of nature the good is found in most cases, whereas defects and evils are found in fewer cases. Therefore, if the number of those to be saved were fixed by God, then there would be more who were going to be saved than were going to be damned. But Matthew 7:13-14 proves just the contrary, when it says, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who go in there. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leads to life, and few there are that find it!” Therefore, the number of those whom God preordains to be saved is not fixed.

But contrary to this: In *De Correptione et Gratia* Augustine says, “The number of the predestined is fixed, and it can be neither increased nor decreased.”

I respond: The number of the predestined is fixed.

However, some have claimed that the number is fixed formally, but not materially; that is, they claimed it to be certain that, say, a hundred or a thousand are saved, but not that these *particular* hundred or thousand are saved. However, this position undermines the certainty of predestination, which we have already talked about (a. 6). Therefore, one must claim that the number of the predestined is fixed by God not only formally, but also materially.

Notice, though, that the number of the predestined is said to be fixed by God not only (a) by reason of His cognition, in the sense that He knows how many are to be saved—for even the number of drops of rain or of the sands of the sea are fixed by God in this sense—but also (b) by reason of His choice and determination.

To see this clearly, notice that every agent intends to produce something definite, as is clear from what was said above about the infinite (q. 7, a. 4). Now when someone intends a determinate measure in his effect, he thinks out fixed numbers for the essential parts that are required *per se* for the perfection of the whole. However, he does not choose *per se* any particular number for those things that are not required principally, but required only for the sake of something else; rather, he uses things of this sort in as great a number as is required for the sake of the other. For instance, a builder thinks out determinate measurements for the house, along with a determinate number of rooms that he wants to construct in the house, and determinate measurements for the walls and the roof. However, he does not choose a determinate number of stones, but instead uses as many as are sufficient to fill out such-and-such a measurement for the wall.

This, then, is how we should think about God’s relation to the whole of the universe, which is His effect. For He preordained what the measurement should be for the whole universe, and what particular numbers would be appropriate for the universe’s essential parts, i.e., those parts that contribute in some way to its perpetuity; more specifically, He preordained how many spheres there would be, and how many celestial bodies, and how many elemental bodies, and how many species of things. On the other hand, corruptible individuals are ordered to the good of the universe not primarily but only, as it were, secondarily, insofar as the good of the species is preserved in them. Hence, even though God knows the exact number of all individuals, He did not preordain *per se* the number of cows or gnats or other things of this sort; rather, God’s providence produced as many of these sorts of things as are sufficient for the conservation of the species.

Now among all creatures, the ones that are ordered most principally to the good of the universe are the rational creatures, who as such are incorruptible—and, most especially, those rational creatures who attain happiness, since they attain the ultimate end in a more immediate way. Hence, the number of the

predestined is fixed by God not only through the mode of cognition, but also by way of a primary predetermination. However, the same thing does not hold true entirely for the number of the reprobate, whom God seems to preordain for the good of the elect, for whom all things work together for good.

Now as regards the precise number of all the predestined men, some claim that as many men are saved as the number of angels who fell. But others claim that as many men are saved as the number of angels who remained faithful. And still others claim that as many men are saved as the number of fallen angels plus the number of angels that were created. But here it is better to say that “the number of the elect who will find the highest happiness is known to God alone.”

Reply to objection 1: This passage from Deuteronomy should be understood to be talking about those who were foreknown by God with respect to justification in the present life. For the number of these both increases and decreases—but not the number of the predestined.

Reply to objection 2: The explanation for the quantity of a given part must be taken from that part’s proportion to the whole. For the reason why God made just this many celestial bodies or just this many species, and the reason why He predestined just this number, is derived from the proportion of the principal parts of the universe to the good of the universe.

Reply to objection 3: The good that is proportioned to the common condition of nature occurs in most cases, and the lapses from that good occur in fewer cases. However, a good that exceeds the common condition of nature is found in fewer cases, and the lapses from that good are found in most cases. For instance, it is clear that most men have sufficient knowledge to direct their own lives, whereas a few, who are said to be half-wits or foolish, lack this knowledge. However, there are very few, compared to the others, who attain to the possession of a deep knowledge of intelligible things.

Therefore, since eternal happiness, which consists in the vision of God, exceeds the common condition of nature—especially given that grace was lost through the corruption of original sin—it follows that there are fewer who are saved. And God’s mercy is especially apparent in the fact that He raises some to that salvation which the many fail to attain according to the common course and inclination of their nature.

Article 8

Can the prayers of the holy contribute to predestination?

It seems that the prayers of the holy (*sanctorum*) cannot assist in predestination:

Objection 1: Nothing eternal is preceded by anything temporal and, as a result, what is temporal cannot assist in anything that is eternal. But predestination is eternal. Therefore, since the prayers of the holy are temporal, they cannot assist in someone’s being predestined. Therefore, the prayers of the holy cannot assist in predestination.

Objection 2: Just as nothing requires deliberation except because of a lack of knowledge, so too nothing requires assistance except because of a lack of power. But neither of these belongs to God, who is the one who predestines; hence, Romans 11:34 says, “For who has assisted the Spirit of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?” Therefore, the prayers of the holy cannot assist in predestination.

Objection 3: Whatever can be assisted can also be impeded. But predestination cannot be impeded by anything. Therefore, it cannot be assisted by anything.

But contrary to this: Genesis 25:21 says, “And Isaac besought the Lord for his wife and He made Rebecca to conceive,” and from this conception was born Jacob, who was predestined. But his predestination would not have been brought to fulfillment if he had not been born. Therefore, the prayers

of the holy assist in predestination.

I respond: On this question there have been widely divergent errors.

For some, concentrating on the certainty of divine predestination, have claimed that prayers—or, for that matter, any other things that might be done to attain eternal salvation—are superfluous, since the predestined will attain salvation, and the reprobate will not attain it, regardless of whether or not these things are done. But contrary to this position are all the admonitions in Sacred Scripture that exhort us to prayer and other good works.

Others have claimed that God’s predestination is changed by prayers. This is said to have been the opinion of the Egyptians, who held that God’s ordination, which they called fate, can be impeded by certain sacrifices and prayers. But the authority of Sacred Scripture is likewise contrary to this position. For 1 Kings 15:29 says, “The triumpher in Israel will not spare, and will not be moved to repentance.” And Romans 11:29 says, “The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance.”

Therefore, one must reply in a different way. There are two things that have been taken into account with respect to predestination, viz., (a) God’s very act of predestining and (b) the effect of predestination.

As for the first, there is no way in which the prayers of the holy assist in predestination. For it is not because of the prayers of the holy that someone is predestined by God.

As for the second, the prayers of the holy, as well as other good works, are said to assist in predestination in the sense that providence, a part of which is predestination, does not eliminate secondary causes, but instead provides for their effects in such a way that even the order of secondary causes is subject to providence. Thus, just as natural effects are provided for in such a way that the natural causes without which the effects would not issue forth are ordered to those natural effects, so too someone’s salvation is predestined by God in such a way that whatever falls within the order of predestination moves the man toward salvation—whether this be his own prayers, or the prayers of others, or other good works, or anything else of this sort, without which this particular person would not attain salvation. Thus, those who are predestined must strive to pray and do good works because it is through things of this sort that the effect of predestination is infallibly brought to fulfillment. This is why 2 Peter 1:10 says, “Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.”

Reply to objection 1: This objection shows that the prayers of the holy do not assist in predestination in the sense of assisting in the very act of preordaining.

Reply to objection 2: There are two ways in which someone is said to be assisted by another.

In the first way, he is assisted in the sense that he receives power from the other, and this is the way in which someone who is weak is assisted. Hence, God cannot be assisted in this way in predestination. And this is how to understand the passage, “For who has assisted the Spirit of the Lord?”

In the second way, someone is said to be assisted by another in the sense that his action is carried out by the other, in the way that a lord is assisted by his ministers. It is in this way that God is assisted by us to the extent that we carry out what He has ordained—this according to 1 Corinthians 3:9: “We are God’s coadjutors.” This is not because of any defect in God’s power, but rather because He makes use of mediating causes in order to preserve the beauty of the order of things and in order to communicate even to His creatures the dignity of being causes.

Reply to objection 3: As was explained above (q. 22, a. 2), secondary causes cannot escape the order of a universal first cause; instead, they execute that order. And so predestination can be assisted by creatures, but cannot be impeded by them.