

Brief on Predestination¹

By Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

“For all things were known to the Lord God, before they were created.”
(Eccus. 23:29) “O eternal God, who knowest hidden things, who knowest all things
before they come to pass.” (Dan. 13:42)

The Catholic doctrine on predestination preserves the necessity of God’s grace and the cooperation of man’s freewill in his salvation or damnation, while taking into account God’s knowledge of all things (his *omniscience*), which thus includes his foreknowledge of all things (his *praescientia*). God’s foreknowledge of all things, his almighty power over all things, and his perfect wisdom over all things enables him to know the ultimate disposition of all men for good or evil even before the world was created and enables him to create and place them where and when he desires according to his all wise plan that preserves his perfect justice and perfect mercy and the necessity of his grace and man’s cooperation in their salvation or damnation.

God knows all things before they come to pass:

“For the Lord knoweth all knowledge and hath beheld the signs of the world, he declareth the things that are past and the things that are to come and revealeth the traces of hidden things. No thought escapeth him and no word can hide itself from him.” (Eccus. 42:19-20)

“O eternal God... who knowest all things before they come to pass.” (Dan. 13:42)

“To the Lord was his own work known from the beginning of the world.” (Acts 15:18)

“For all things were known to the Lord God before they were created.” (Eccus. 23:29)

Hence God knew who was among the elect and the damned before the world was created:

Pope Benedict III, *Council of Valence III*, 855: “On Predestination: Canon 3.
...Faithfully we confess the predestination of the elect to life and predestination of the impious to death.”

God knew whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world and thus those who were reprobates:

“The inhabitants on the earth, whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, shall wonder...” (Apoc. 17:8)

This does not deprive men of freewill. God knows who will use their freewill to ultimately cooperate with his grace and be saved and those who will not and be damned before they are created. In his foreknowledge, God’s knows the choices men will make with their freewill aided by his grace before they are created. Hence in God’s foreknowledge, he knows who will be ultimately evil (the reprobates) and end up in hell and who will be ultimately good (the elect) and end of in heaven even before he created the world. With this in mind, when I speak of a man being of ultimate good will or ultimate bad will, I mean a man that will ultimately end up in heaven or hell, which the Church refers to as the elect and the reprobates:

Council of Valence, 855: “Canon 2. We faithfully hold that God foresees and eternally foresaw both the good which the righteous will perform and the evil which the wicked will do because we have that word of Scripture which says: ‘Eternal God, who are the witness of all things hidden, who knew all things before they are.’
(Dan. 13:42) We hold faithfully, and judge it should be held, that he foresaw that the righteous would certainly become righteous through his grace; and by the same

¹ RJMI’s Briefs are Long Commentaries contained in the end of *The Catholic Bible*, revised by RJMI.

grace, would obtain everlasting blessedness; and he foresaw that the wicked would be wicked through their own perverseness, and would be such as must be condemned by his justice to everlasting punishment, so that according to the Psalmist: 'Because power belongs to God and mercy to the Lord, so that he will render to each man according to his works' (Ps. 61:12), and as the Apostolic Doctrine hold: 'To them indeed, who according to patience in good work, seek glory and honour and incorruption, everlasting life. But to them that are contentious and who obey not the truth but give credit to iniquity, wrath and indignation. Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil.' (Rom. 2:7-9) In the same sense, this same one says elsewhere: 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of his power; In a flame of fire, giving vengeance to them who know not God and who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall suffer everlasting punishment in destruction, from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his power: When he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be made wonderful in all them who have believed; because our testimony was believed upon you in that day.' (2 Thess. 1:7-10) Nether do we believe that the prescience of God imposed upon any wicked man a necessity that he cannot be other than wicked; but, what he would become by his own free volition, God, as one who knows all things before they come to pass, foresaw, by his omnipotent and unchangeable majesty. Nor do we believe that any one is condemned by a previous judgment on the part of God but other than by reason of his own wickedness. Nor do the wicked perish because they could not become good but because they would not become good, and through their own fault remained in the mass of condemnation either by reason of their original and their actual sin."

Only God foreknows who will be of the elect and reprobates, unless he reveals it to creatures. Even though the Council of Trent is invalid and heretical, it teaches the truth in this regard.

Invalid and heretical *Council of Trent*, Session 6 (Decree on Justification), 1547: "Chapter 12 (Rash presumption of predestination is to be avoided) No one moreover, so long as he lives in this mortal state ought so far to presume concerning the secret mystery of divine predestination as to decide for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestined (can. 15), as if it were true that he who is justified either cannot sin any more (can. 23), or if he shall have sinned, that he ought to promise himself an assured reformation. For except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God has chosen for himself (can. 16)."²

God, speaking to the prophet Ezechiel, warned against this presumption: a just man believing that his salvation is secure so that he can do no evil that will send him to hell, and an evil man believing that his damnation is fixed so that he can do no good that would cause him to repent and be saved:

"Yea, if I shall say to the just that he shall surely live, and he, trusting in his justice, commit iniquity, all his justices shall be forgotten; and in his iniquity which he hath committed, in the same shall he die... For when the just shall depart from his justice, and commit iniquities, he shall die in them. And when the wicked shall depart from his wickedness, and shall do judgments, and justice: he shall live in them." (Ez. 33:13, 18-19)

Therefore, a man is judged according to what state he is in when he dies:

"If the tree fall... in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." (Eccl. 11:3)

Catholic Commentary on Eccl. 11:3: "**If the tree fall:** "The state of the soul is unchangeable when once it comes to heaven or hell: and a soul that departs this life in the state of grace shall never fall from grace: as on the other side, a soul that dies out of the state of grace shall never come to it."

² D. 805.

A man can be good willed for most of his life and become bad willed near the end of his life and go to hell. Conversely, a man can be bad willed most of his life and become good willed near the end of his life and be saved:

“The end of a man is the disclosing of his works.” (Eccus. 11:29)

“It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment:” (Heb. 9:27)

If a man is ultimately of good will, he will end up in heaven no matter how many moments in his life he was bad willed:

“I was a witty child and had received a good soul. And whereas I was more good, I came to a body undefiled.” (Wis. 8:19-20)

Dismas, the good thief, was ultimately of good will because he repented just before his death and came to a body undefiled.

If a man is ultimately of bad will, he will end up in hell no matter how many moments in his life he was of good will:

“Thou hast loved malice more than goodness and iniquity rather than to speak righteousness. ...Therefore will God destroy thee forever; he will pluck thee out and remove thee from thy dwelling place and thy root out of the land of the living.” (Ps. 51:5, 7)

“And if you be born, you shall be born in malediction: and if you die, in malediction shall be your portion. All things that are of the earth shall return into the earth, so the ungodly shall from malediction to destruction.” (Eccus. 41:12-13)

“For a wicked soul shall destroy him that hath it and maketh him to be a joy to his enemies and shall lead him into the lot of the wicked.” (Eccus. 6:4)

God knows which men are ultimately of good and bad will before they are created and promises to give all those who are of the elect (ultimately of good will) all the help they need to be saved:

"For whom he foreknew, he also predestinated... And whom he predestinated, them he also called. And whom he called, them he also justified. And whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8:29-30)

But what of those whom God does not call, justify, and glorify? Does not God will to save them also? Yes, he does! God's passive will, his objective, is for all men to be saved:

“God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1Tim. 2:3-4)

God created no man so that his destiny must be hell:

“Is it my will that a sinner should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should be converted from his ways and live?” (Ez. 18:23)

God created all souls loving them and wanting their everlasting happiness:

“But thou hast mercy upon all because thou canst do all things and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance. For thou lovest all things that are and hatest none of the things which thou hast made for thou didst not appoint or make any thing hating it. ...But thou sparest all because they are thine, O Lord, who lovest souls.” (Wis. 11:24-27)

In spite of God's passive will to save all men, God teaches most men will be damned to hell and thus only few will be saved:

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall grow lean. And it shall be as when one gathereth in

the harvest that which remaineth, and his arm shall gather the ears of corn: and it shall be as he that seeketh ears in the vale of Raphaim. And the fruit thereof that shall be left upon it, shall be as one cluster of grapes, and as the shaking of the olive tree, two or three berries in the top of a bough, or four or five upon the top of the tree, saith the Lord the God of Israel.” (Isa. 17:4-6)

“Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it. (Mt. 7:13-14)

“Many are called but few are chosen.” (Mt. 20:16)

Some may ask, “If God wills for all men to be saved, how come most men go to hell and few are saved?” Because men have freewill and must cooperate with God’s grace in order to be saved. God does not interfere with man’s freewill or it would not be free. God knew that most men’s destiny is hell because they would ultimately abuse their freewill and thus not cooperate with his grace. But God did not want them to go to hell. Rather, he knows they will go to hell because they will not ultimately cooperate with his grace and thus will ultimately abuse their freewill. Knowing this we can understand correctly what St. Paul means when he says,

“O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it: Why hast thou made me thus? Or hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, That he might shew the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he hath prepared unto glory?” (Rom. 9:20-23)

It is not that a bad vessel (man) cannot be good if it wanted to. It could! The bad vessel is bad because it does not ultimately want to be good and God knows this even before it is created. It is not that God created vessels to be destroyed but that he knew he would have to destroy them because of the ultimate abuse of their freewill and thus fits them ahead of time for destruction. Pharaoh, who opposed Moses, was one such bad vessel fit for destruction. God wanted Pharaoh to be saved and gave him many chances, more than he gives most men, but God also knew that Pharaoh would not ultimately cooperate with his grace and thus remain obstinate and so placed him in time to oppose Moses. The result was the manifestation of God’s power over the false gods of Egypt and the manifestation of God’s mercy towards his chosen people with a hope also to convert the Egyptians:

“Good is set against evil [Moses against Pharaoh], and life against death; so also is the sinner against a just man. And so look upon all the works of the most high. Two and two, and one against another.” (Eccus. 33:15)

Catholic commentary on Eccus. 33:15: “God will make the wicked subservient to his glory.”

“For the scripture saith to Pharaoh: To this purpose have I raised thee, that I may shew my power in thee and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore he hath mercy on whom he will; and whom he will, he hardeneth.” (Rom. 9:17-18)

Catholic Commentary on Rom. 9:17-18: “**To this purpose:** Not that God made him on purpose that he should sin and so be damned; but foreseeing his obstinacy in sin and the abuse of his own freewill, he raised him up to be a mighty king to make a more remarkable example of him; and that his power might be better known and his justice in punishing him published throughout the earth. **He hardeneth:** Not by

being the cause or author of his sin, but by withholding his grace and so leaving him in his sin, in punishment of his past demerits.”

“That seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” (Mk. 4:12)

Catholic Commentary, Mk. 4:12: “**That seeing they may see:** In punishment of their willfully shutting their eyes (St. Matt. 13. 15.), God justly withdrew those lights and graces which otherwise he would have given them for their effectual conversion.”

God has mercy on and gives grace to whom he wills. In this we see that God holds back his mercy and grace from some men because of his foreknowledge of their obstinacy:

“Grace is not given him from the Lord, for he is deprived of all wisdom.” (Eccus. 37:24)

Catholic Commentary on Eccus. 37:24: “**Grace is not given:** God withdraws further and further from a sinful soul in proportion as its vices increase. We can learn the deplorable condition into which this separation plunges the soul from God himself who exclaims by his prophet, ‘Woe to them, for they have departed from me. Woe to them when I shall depart from them’ (Osee 7:13 and 9:12).”

God eventually holds back his mercy and grace and hardens the hearts of ultimately bad willed souls. In his justice and mercy, God does not have to give ultimately bad willed souls grace or a chance in time to be saved because he knows that even if they were given grace and a chance to hear the word they would either not believe or believe and fall away before they die. God is not depriving this man of what he needs to be saved because God knows he will not ultimately cooperate with his grace even if given grace and a chance in time. Hell would be his fate either way because of his rebellious freewill that will not ultimately cooperate with God’s grace.

One may say, “If God holds back his mercy and grace from certain men, he would be contradicting his own words when he said that he ‘enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world.’ (Jn. 1:9)” The answer is that God does enlighteneth every man that comes into the world either in time or outside of time. Although God does not give certain bad willed men grace and a chance (enlightenment) in time, he does give them grace and a chance outside of time in his mind and foreknowledge.³ These bad-willed men are given grace and a chance (enlightenment), but not in time, rather outside of time in God’s mind. God knowing ahead of time that they will not ultimately cooperate with his grace if enlightened in time does not give them grace and a chance in time. Therefore, God’s justice is seen in his foreknowledge of future events that never came to pass in time, such as when he damns to hell unbaptized infants who are only guilty of original sin or pagans who never got a chance to hear his word and make a choice in time.

Knowing this we can now correctly understand this following verse in which God inflicts wrath on certain wicked souls without mercy:

“But as for the wicked, even to the end there came upon them wrath without mercy. For he knew before also what they would do.” (Wis. 19:1)

The key to understanding this verse is the last part, “For he knew before also what they would do.” God foreknows, even before they are created, the ultimately bad-willed men who would thus ultimately shun his mercy and grace and thus end up in hell.

³ It is as if these souls exist on a blue print in God’s mind, just as the blue print of a building that does not yet exist. But the blue print is an exact representation of what it will be. Hence King David says the Lord knows ahead of time the generations that will come, that shall be born, and it is as if they were already made: that is, in the mind of God on his blue print. “There shall be declared to the Lord a generation to come. And the heavens shall shew forth his justice to a people that shall be born, which the Lord hath made.” (Ps. 21:32) Hence King David refers to men who have not yet been made in the future and present tense: present in the mind of God but not present in reality until they will exist in the future.

“He hath seen the presumption of their heart that it is wicked, and hath known their end that it is evil.” (Eccus. 18:10)

God does not give some ultimately bad-willed men the grace and thus a chance to be good in time—“to them it is not given” (Mt. 13:11). God keeps them under his wrath until the end. Even though God did not offer them his mercy and grace in time, he offered it to them outside of time before they were created in his foreknowledge of the evil they would do even if given his mercy and grace.

But God does give some ultimately bad-willed men (such as Pharaoh) the grace and thus a chance to be good in time, but they nevertheless do not cooperate with God’s mercy and grace, proving to other men the obstinacy of ultimately bad-willed men. In this we see that there would be no injustice or lack of mercy in God if he never gave Pharaoh grace and a chance in time to be good. Either way, then, ultimately bad-willed men end up in hell whether they are given the grace and thus a chance to be good in time or not.

Therefore, the evil that men do proceeds from themselves in the sins they commit or would have committed if given a chance:

“And if he be hindered from sinning for want of power, if he shall find opportunity to do evil, he will do it.” (Eccus. 19:25)

Whereas, all the good thoughts and good deeds of men proceed from God, enabling them to do good if they so choose:

Pope Benedict III, *Council of Valence III*, 855: “On Predestination: Canon 3. ...Faithfully we confess the predestination of the elect to life, and predestination of the impious to death; in the election, moreover, of those who are to be saved, the mercy of God precedes the merited good. In the condemnation, however, of those who are to be lost, the evil which they have deserved precedes the just judgment of God... In regard to evil men, however, we believe that God foreknew their malice because it is from them but that he did not predestine it because it is not from him. (We believe) that God, who sees all things, foreknew and predestined that their evil deserved the punishment which followed because he is just, in whom, as St. Augustine says, there is concerning all things everywhere so fixed a decree as a certain predestination. To this indeed he applies the saying of Wisdom: ‘Judgments are prepared for scorners, and striking hammers for the bodies of fools’ (Prv. 19:29). Concerning this unchangeableness of the foreknowledge of the predestination of God, though which in him future things have already taken place.”⁴

To help understand predestination, take the following example. If you watched a movie from beginning to end and the next day brought a friend to watch the same movie, you would be able to tell the friend the fate of all the characters before the movie starts. You would not be able to alter the fate of the characters. If your friend did not know you already saw the movie, he would wonder how you could have known these facts. Well with God he sees the whole picture from beginning to end, along with his divine interventions in the lives of all men and societies, and the choices they will make before the world is created (before the movie even starts).

God knew the goodness of the prophet Jeremias before he was conceived:

“Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee and made thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5)

God’s grace did not force Jeremias to be good, it is that God knew Jeremias would ultimately use his freewill to cooperate with his grace ahead of time, before he was even conceived. Before the creation of the world, God called Ss. Paul and Timothy:

⁴ D. 322.

“[God] called us by his holy calling... according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the world.” (2Tim. 1:9)

St. Paul, speaking to faithful Catholics, says,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... he chose us in him before the foundation of the world... Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the purpose of his will.” (Eph. 1:3-5)

In God’s foreknowledge he judges evil infants while they are yet in the womb of their mothers as transgressors, wicked, and speakers of false things:

“For I know that transgressing thou wilt transgress, and I have called thee a transgressor from the womb.” (Isa. 48:8)

“The wicked are alienated from the womb; they have gone astray from the womb; they have spoken false things.” (Ps. 57:4)

In God’s eyes it is as if these evil infants had already committed these sins—“in him future things have already taken place.”⁵ The saints apply Isaiah 48:8 to Judas Iscariot. Before the world was created, God knew Judas was to be born a child of malediction and would forsake and betray him:

“Woe to you, ungodly men, who have forsaken the law of the most high Lord. And if you be born, you shall be born in malediction; and if you die, in malediction shall be your portion. All things that are of the earth, shall return into the earth; so the ungodly shall from malediction to destruction.” (Eccus. 41:11-13)

God knew Judas was a traitor when he was in his mother’s womb and before he was conceived and before the world was created. People who know not the ways of God would look at the infant Judas and think him innocent. Yet God looked at the infant Judas as ultimately evil. There would have been no injustice or lack of mercy in God if he killed Judas when he was an evil infant instead of killing him when he was an evil adult. It is not that God wanted Judas to be evil. Rather, God knew ahead of time that Judas would not cooperate with his grace and thus would use freewill to do evil and betray him:

“Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray him.” (Jn. 6:65)

“I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen. But that the scripture may be fulfilled: He that eateth bread with me, shall lift up his heel against me.” (Jn. 13:18)

“The Son of man indeed goeth, as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed. It were better for him, if that man had not been born. And Judas that betrayed him, answering, said: Is it I, Rabbi? He saith to him: Thou hast said it.” (Mt. 26:24-25)

“[Jesus said] those whom thou gavest me have I kept; and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scripture may be fulfilled.” (Jn. 17:12)

Judas could have been saved if he had ultimately used his freewill to cooperate with God’s grace. But he did not, and God knew this from all eternity:

Catholic Commentary on Jn. 17:12: “**And none of them hath perished, except the son of perdition:** The wretched Judas fall was foretold in the Scriptures (Psalm 108). He hath perished by his own fault. How did the devil enter into the heart of Judas? He could not have entered, had not he given him place. **That the Scripture may be fulfilled:** this does not any ways show that it was the will of God that Judas

⁵ Pope Benedict III, *Council of Valence III*, 855, On Predestination: Canon 3.

should be lost but only that what happened to Judas was conformable to the prophecies and not occasioned by them. Who will doubt, says St. Augustine (*On the Unity of the Church*, c. 9), but that Judas might, if he pleased, have abstained from betraying Christ. But God foretold it, because he foresaw clearly the future perversity of his disposition. See Jn. 6:65 and Jn. 13:18, two of the principal passages of Scripture relative to the treachery of Judas in which the traitor's crime had been predicted."

Council of Valence, 855: "Canon 2. We faithfully hold that God foresees and eternally foresaw both the good which the righteous will perform and the evil which the wicked will do because we have that word of Scripture which says: 'Eternal God, who are the witness of all things hidden, who knew all things before they are.' (Dan. 13:42)... Neither do we believe that the prescience of God imposed upon any wicked man a necessity that he cannot be other than wicked; but, what he would become by his own free volition, God, as one who knows all things before they come to pass, foresaw, by his omnipotent and unchangeable majesty. Nor do we believe that any one is condemned by a previous judgment on the part of God but other than by reason of his own wickedness. Nor do the wicked perish because they could not become good but because they would not become good, and through their own fault remained in the mass of condemnation either by reason of their original and their actual sin."⁶

God did not create Judas to be evil, and God wanted Judas to be saved and thus gave him all the graces he needed to be saved. Judas was evil because of the abuse of his own freewill. He could have chosen to be good if he wanted to. God's grace is sufficient; man's will is deficient. Even though the Council of Trent was invalid and heretical, it teaches the truth in this regard. It condemned anyone who believes that God is the author of evil or that he is not the author of all good things:

Invalid and heretical *Council of Trent*, 1547: "Canon 4. If anyone shall say that it is not in the power of man to make his ways evil, but God produces the evil as well as the good works, not only by permission, but also properly and of himself, so that the betrayal of Judas is no less his [God's] own proper work than the vocation of Paul: let him be anathema."⁷

God wants all men to be saved and gives them the grace to be saved, either in time or out of time. Hence when men are not saved, it is their own fault, because of the misuse of their freewill. When St. Paul was preaching to Jews in order to convert them, we read the following:

"And when they had appointed him a day, there came very many to him unto his lodgings; to whom he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, out of the law of Moses and the prophets, from morning until evening. And some believed the things that were said; but some believed not." (Acts 28:23-24)

Why did some believe and some did not? God loved all of them and thus wanted all of them to be saved and hence gave all of them the same grace. And they all heard the same words from St. Paul. The difference, then, was freewill, which God does not interfere with or else it would not be freewill. Those who believed cooperated with God's grace and used their freewill to make the right choice, and those who did not believe did not cooperate with God's grace and used their freewill to make the wrong choice. And in God's foreknowledge, he knew who would believe and not believe even before the world was created. Hence God knows those who are ultimately of good will and would believe and be saved even before the word is preached to them:

⁶ D. 321.

⁷ Sess. 6, Canons on Justification. D. 816.

“I have set thee to be the light of the Gentiles; that thou mayest be for salvation unto the utmost part of the earth. And the Gentiles hearing it, were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to life everlasting, believed.” (Acts 13:47-48)

God is always the first cause when a man thinks or does anything good by extending his mercy, grace, and aid before the merited good, as with the vocation of St. Paul. It is God who first knocked him off his horse, appeared to him, and gave him the grace to understand and believe, which Paul then cooperated with. However, God is not the first cause or any cause of the evil men do. The evil men do proceeds from Satan and themselves, from the abuse of their own freewill:

“Wisdom and discipline and the knowledge of the law are with God. Love and the ways of good things are with him. Error and darkness are created with sinners, and they that glory in evil things grow old in evil.” (Eccus. 11:15-16)

“He [God] hath commanded no man to do wickedly, and he hath given no man license to sin: For he desireth not a multitude of faithless and unprofitable children.” (Eccus. 15:21-22)

With the correct understanding of the Catholic doctrine of predestination, we can see God’s justice in damning to hell men who never got a chance in time to hear his word and believe. His justice is found in his foreknowledge of the ultimate disposition of these men, which affect their placement in time and place—when and where they are born and how long they will live:

“The works of God are done in judgment from the beginning, and from the making of them he distinguished their parts and their beginnings in their generations... With much knowledge the Lord hath divided them and diversified their ways. Some of them hath he blessed and exalted, and some of them hath he sanctified and set near himself, and some of them hath he cursed and brought low and turned them from their station. As the potter’s clay is in his hand to fashion and order it.” (Eccus. 16:26; 33:11-12)

“[God] hath made of one all mankind to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times and the limits of their habitation.” (Acts 17:26)

“He seeth from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before him. There is no saying: What is this, or what is that? for all things shall be sought in their time.” (Eccus. 39:25-26)

“He hath ordered all things in measure, number, and weight.” (Wis. 11:21)

God places some men spiritually near him and others he leaves far away. God places men on earth where and when he pleases, and they die only when God allows it:

“The Lord killeth, and maketh alive.” (1Ki. 2:6)

“He gave him the number of his days and time.” (Eccus. 17:3)

God’s foreknowledge and planning of the world before it was created takes into account all the ultimately good willed men and sees to it they get what they need to be saved before they die and go to judgment:

“For so much then as thou art just, thou orderest all things justly; thinking it not agreeable to thy power to condemn him who deserveth not to be punished.” (Wis. 12:15)

“The Lord preserveth the souls of his saints; he will deliver them out of the hand of the sinner.” (Ps. 96:10)

Jesus is the good shepherd. He knows his sheep before they know him, and sees to it that they will hear his voice and follow him and thus enter the one fold before they die:

“I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me... My sheep hear my voice. And I know them, and they follow me... And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring. And they shall hear my voice: And there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” (Jn. 10: 14, 27, 16)

God the Father draws all the good sheep [the elect] to Jesus, the good shepherd:

“No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him. ...All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me.” (Jn. 6:44, 37)

Jesus manifests his word to the elect:

“I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou hast given me out of the world. Thine they were and to me thou gavest them. And they have kept thy word.” (Jn. 17:6)

The Prophet Isaias speaks of how God will get the word to good willed Gentiles so that they would be saved:

“And I will set a sign among them, and I will send of them that shall be saved to the Gentiles into the sea, into Africa and Lydia them that draw the bow; into Italy, and Greece, to the islands afar off, to them that have not heard of me and have not seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory to the Gentiles.” (Isa. 66:19)

The good sheep are known when they hear God’s voice and keep his word. Jesus makes them members of His Catholic Church by bringing them into the fold. He then assigns them tasks to fulfill according to their station:

“But now God hath set the members, every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased him.” (1Cor. 12:18)

The just, holy, and wise man in thanksgiving to God says,

“Lord... thou hast understood my thoughts afar off; my path and my line thou hast searched out. And thou hast foreseen all my ways... Behold, O Lord, thou hast known all things, the last and those of old; thou hast formed me and hast laid thy hand upon me.” (Ps. 138:1-5)

On the other hand, many ultimately bad willed men, being “cursed and brought low,” are not even given a chance in time to make a choice because God knows ahead of time the evil they would do if given a chance. God knows their end is everlasting damnation before they commit their first actual sin:

“But as for the wicked, even to the end there came upon them wrath without mercy. For he knew before also what they would do.” (Wis. 19:1)

“He hath seen the presumption of their heart that it is wicked, and hath known their end that it is evil.” (Eccus. 18:10)

“And if you be born, you shall be born in malediction: and if you die, in malediction shall be your portion. All things that are of the earth shall return into the earth: so the ungodly shall from malediction to destruction.” (Eccus. 41:12-13)

With these sublime truths before your eyes, it is not us Catholics who teach that only those who believe in the Incarnation, Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Trinity, and the Holy Catholic Church can be in the way of salvation that make a mockery of God’s justice and mercy. It is the pagans, infidels, and heretics who believe that men who worship a false god or gods or no god or who practice and adhere to false religions or false churches can be in the way of salvation that make a mockery of God’s attributes—his wisdom, knowledge, power, justice, and mercy—and imply he is a liar. How so?

First: They imply God is ignorant and stupid:

“Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel: My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Knowest thou not, or hast thou not heard? the Lord is the everlasting God, who hath created the ends of the earth; he shall not faint, nor labour, neither is there any searching out of his wisdom.” (Isa. 40:27-28)

They believe God allowed an ultimately good-willed man to be conceived in the womb of a woman living in a remote location without the possibility of hearing the word of God before he dies. God seeing this would then have to say:

“What is this, or what is that? How ignorant or stupid was I to abandon this poor good-willed man in this remote location without the possibility of him hearing my word and getting baptized into the Catholic Church before he dies!”

So we see, God is portrayed as stupid by denying his foreknowledge. God did not know that this man was good-willed before his conception, and thus allowed him to be born in a remote location with no hope of getting what he needs to be saved. So the heretics make up for God’s weakness by offering this man salvation anyway without having to believe in Christ and His Catholic Church. The Holy Scriptures, indeed, condemns them because with God there is no “what is this or what is that”:

“For at his commandment favour is shewn, and there is no diminishing of his salvation. The works of all flesh are before him, and there is nothing hid from his eyes. He seeth from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before him. There is no saying: What is this, or what is that? for all things shall be sought in their time.” (Eccus. 39:23-26)

Second: They infer that God is powerless. They deny his omnipotence by implying that he could not physically get the gospel and baptism to an ultimately good willed man within his one lifetime. If faith can move mountains, God can see to it that the gospel and baptism reaches every good-willed man.

God knows ahead of time the ultimate dispositions of men. He places them where he pleases, and has the power to see to it that they hear his word and get baptized into the Catholic Church if they are ultimately of good will:

“The works of God are done in judgment from the beginning, and from the making of them he distinguished their parts, and their beginnings in their generations.” (Eccus. 16:26)

“[God] hath made of one, all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times, and the limits of their habitation.” (Acts 17:26)

It is those who deny the necessity of the Catholic faith and baptism for salvation who are limiting God’s knowledge and power, and question his justice and abuse his mercy. The potter has power over the vessel, to do as he pleases, one created to glory and another to destruction. The vessels of glory are due to their ultimate good will, and the vessels of destruction are due to their ultimate bad will. Who is man but dust and dirt (Gen. 3:19) that he judges a man worthy of heaven who lived and died in unbelief? If God allowed a man to die in unbelief, who is man to unjustly and falsely judge him as possibly worthy of heaven?

“For there is no other God but thou, who hast care of all that thou shouldst shew that thou dost not give judgment unjustly. Neither shall king, nor tyrant in thy sight inquire about them whom thou hast destroyed. For so much then as thou art just, thou orderest all things justly: thinking it not agreeable to thy power, to condemn him who deserveth not to be punished.” (Wis. 12:13-15)

Deeply ponder what follows to help you understand God’s justice when he damns souls to hell who never had a chance to hear the gospel, such as the pagan on the island or in the Americas

before the 15th century. If there is just one man in hell who had God's word preached to him, then it is certain that all who died without having God's word preached to them are also in hell. On the one hand we have a man who is born in a Catholic family, raised as a Catholic, but falls away in his adult life and is damned to hell upon his judgment day. On the other hand we have a pagan on a remote island that never got the opportunity to hear the gospel and learn of the Catholic Church and is damned to hell on his judgment day. Remember now, God knows all of this before these two men existed, before they were placed on earth (conceived in the wombs of their mothers). It is concluded then, that the pagan was ultimately bad willed just as the bad Catholic. Why? We answer first with a question. If the pagan was ultimately good-willed, and God knew this before he was conceived, why didn't God switch the conceptions of the good-willed pagan with that of the bad-willed Catholic? If God did this, then the good-willed pagan would instead be a good-willed baptized Catholic from his infancy, die faithful, and enter heaven. Whereas, the bad willed Catholic would instead be a bad willed pagan who never had the opportunity to have the gospel preached to him and end up in hell, the same fate that would have been his if he was born to the Catholic family and fell away, being he is ultimately bad willed:

Catholic Commentary: "On what ground should they go to hell who have never heard of hell? They might say to us: 'If you had threatened us with hell, and if we had only known, we would have lived better lives!' But perhaps also they might have lived as we are living who daily hear sermons about hell and live as though we had not heard them!"

All love, all praise, and all glory to our holy, just, and merciful God, to our all knowing, all-powerful God:

"Thou are just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right." (Ps. 118:137)

"Thou art just, O Lord, and all thy judgments are just, and all thy ways mercy, and truth, and judgment. (Tobias 3:2)

"For thou hast done things of old, and hast devised one thing after another, and what thou hast designed hath been done. For all thy ways are prepared, and in thy providence thou hast placed thy judgments. (Judith 9:4-5)

"O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom. 11:33-34)

For who is God but the Lord, or who is God but our God, the God of the Holy Catholic Church. I beg of thee, O Most Holy Trinity, take my will, my heart, my mind, my soul, my life, my entire being, and give me all the graces and other helps I need to be a vessel of honor and glory and not of dishonor and destruction. I pray that I may cooperate with your graces and other helps so that I may be saved. Please, oh please, all-powerful God, I pray that my name is found written in the book of life, among the elect.

Roman Missal: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to accept and order our days in Thy peace and bid us to be delivered from everlasting damnation and numbered among the flock of Thy elect. Through Christ our Lord, Amen."⁸

Dear reader, I now speak personally to you. You have freewill and thus God does not interfere with it. Hence you have a choice to make, do you not?

"If thou wilt keep the commandments and perform acceptable fidelity forever, they shall preserve thee. He hath set water and fire before thee: stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death, good and evil, that which he shall choose shall be given him:" (Eccus. 15:16-18)

⁸ The *Hanc Igitur* prayer of Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

We live in the earthly realm of time, making real choices that will determine our fate, which only God knows ahead of time. What does this mean to Catholics living in mortal sin and to non-Catholics (which includes nominal Catholics) who are reading this right now? It means God knew you would be reading this at this very moment! You are presented with a choice at this very moment! You can make a choice, can you not? Here is your opportunity. You may not get another:

“Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found; call upon him, while he is near.” (Isa. 55:6)

“Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2)

Harden not your heart, for there may not be another grace to beckon you:

“To day if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” (Ps. 94:8)

Make the right choice and choose everlasting life by becoming a good member of the Holy Catholic Church if you want to be in the way of salvation and be saved. Are you one of the elect? I hope so. Make your choice now, for tomorrow may be too late. It is that simple! God's assisting grace is working on you at this very moment, and he is calling you to be a faithful and good Catholic. Repent, convert, and abjure! If you do not it is your own fault not God's.

Roman Missal: “O God who alone knowest the number of the elect to be admitted to the happiness of heaven, grant, we beseech thee, that by the intercession of all thy saints, the names of all who have been commended to our prayers, as well as of all the faithful may be written in the book of blessed predestination. Through our Lord. Glory be to the Father.”⁹

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire.”
(Apocalypse 20:15)

For a deeper explanation on predestination, see RJMI audio *Predestination, Grace, and Freewill*.

For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men

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⁹ Additional Prayers for Lent, For the Living and the Dead, Secret Prayer.