

**The Early Aquinas on the Question of Universal Salvation,  
or: How a Knight May Choose Not to Ride His Horse**

Franklin T. Harkins  
Durham University

One of the most vexing questions of Christian theology throughout the centuries has been how to reconcile, or at least hold in tension, God’s benevolent will that all humans should be saved with the teaching—witnessed perhaps most starkly in Rom. 9 and Augustine’s doctrine of predestination—that all humans will not, in fact, actually attain to final salvation. As Peter Lombard asks in Book I distinction 46 of his *Sentences*, is the will of God in this case thwarted? And, if so, how can it be that the will and actions of humans—created and contingent—can render the eternal, divine will null and void? Here we will consider how Thomas Aquinas answers—or at least intelligently grapples with—these perennial questions by examining his exegeses of 1 Tim. 2:4, *God wills that all humans should be saved*, in two of his earliest works: the *Scriptum on the Sentences* and the sixth *Disputed Question on Truth*, both dated to the period 1252-57.

In his *Scriptum* on Bk. I d. 40 of the *Sentences*, Thomas Aquinas makes use of scriptural authority with surprising infrequency, especially in comparison to his teacher, Albertus Magnus, on this distinction, even as he asks and answers very similar questions.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of many references to Aristotle, Thomas does invoke 1 Tim. 2:4 twice in commenting on d. 40 and once more on d. 46. The first of these comes in q. 1 a. 2 on d. 40, where it is asked “whether predestination pertains to knowledge”. In the solution, Thomas explains that included in predestination is providence as it pertains particularly to humans. As such, “predestination

---

<sup>1</sup> For Albert’s commentary on d. 40 of Bk. I, see *B. Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, vol. 26, ed. Augustus Borgnet (Paris, 1893), pp. 303-336.

brings in providence according to what has been ordained for the execution of the work [of God's plan] by means of the will".<sup>2</sup> Predestination includes, then, not only God's foreknowledge of the plan, but His volitional preparations to carry it out. Here Thomas quotes and comments on 1 Tim. 2:4: "*God wills that all humans should be saved*, although all are not saved; not according to the order of predestination. For predestination is called the divine intention concerning the salvation of those [who will be saved] together with His foreknowledge that they will be saved. And therefore it is said that it [i.e., predestination] is foreknowledge and preparation".<sup>3</sup> Like his teacher, Thomas does not take 1 Tim. 2:4 to mean that every human being will be saved; quite to the contrary, after quoting this text, he states matter-of-factly that not all are saved according to divine predestination, which includes God's will to prepare only certain individuals for salvation.

---

<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sententiarum* d. 40 q. 1 a. 2 sol., ed. R. P. Mandonnet, O.P., vol. 1 (Paris, 1929), p. 945: . . . *praedestinatio importat providentiam, secundum quod est ordinata ad executionem operis per voluntatem*. All subsequent references to Thomas's *Scriptum* on Bk. I will be to the Mandonnet edition and cited according to page number(s) in vol. 1. All translations will be my own.

<sup>3</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 40 q. 1 a. 2 sol., p. 945: . . . . *Deus vult omnes homines salvos fieri, licet non omnes salventur: non autem ab ordine praedestinationis. Dicit enim praedestinatio intentionem divinam de salute istius cum praescientia ejus quod salvabitur; et ideo dicitur, quod est praescientia et praeparatio.*

Unlike Albert, Thomas does not use the antecedent/consequent will distinction here in elucidating 1 Tim. 2:4.<sup>4</sup>

He does, however, invoke this distinction in treating this text in the *Disputed Question on Predestination* (q. 6 of his *Disputed Questions On Truth*), likely produced during the initial year of his first Paris regency, 1256-57, immediately after he completed his *Sentences* lectures.<sup>5</sup> We will return to Thomas's consideration of 1 Tim. 2:4 in a. 2 of this question. For now, let us look at the opening article of q. 6, which again asks "whether predestination pertains to knowledge or will," where Thomas further distinguishes between providence and predestination vis-à-vis God's will. Providence and predestination, he explains, differ in two ways. First, providence is the universally applicable name for ordering to an end, and so it extends to all things that God orders to some end, whether they are rational or irrational, good or evil. Predestination, by contrast, looks only to that end which is primary for the rational creature, namely, glory; and so it pertains only to humans, and more specifically to those humans who "tend toward" or "seek" (*spectant*) salvation.<sup>6</sup> Second, providence and predestination differ in light of another distinction, which obtains wherever there is ordination to an end, namely, that between the order

---

<sup>4</sup> For Albert, see his treatment of the question "whether all humans are predestined, or only certain ones" in *Commentarium in I Sententiarum* (hereafter: *Comm. in I Sent.*) d. 40 a. 8 obj. 1 and ad 1, in *B. Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, vol. 26, pp. 315-16.

<sup>5</sup> On the dating and chronology of the disputed questions, see *Questiones Disputatae*, vol. 1: De veritate, ed. Raymund Spiazzi, OP (Turin: Marietti, 1948), pp. xiii-xvi. On the date and context of the *Sentences* lectures, see James A. Weisheipl, O.P., *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Works* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 53-92.

<sup>6</sup> Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 1 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 113).

or ordering itself (*ipsum ordinem*) and the conclusion or result of the order (*exitum vel eventum ordinis*). Providence concerns only the order itself toward an end; hence, by His providence God orders all humans to beatitude. But predestination pertains also to the conclusion or result of the order; hence, it concerns only those who actually attain to glory. Thomas's distinction between providence concerning humans and predestination corresponds, then, to that between God's antecedent and consequent will. Thomas makes clear that those who are predestined and thus reach their beatific end do so "not principally by their own powers, but by the help of grace divinely given".<sup>7</sup>

It is here that divine election and God's unequal love of humans enters the equation. Thomas may well have 1 Tim. 2:4 in mind when he explains, still in a. 1 of disputed question 6, that the end toward which predestination ordains is not considered universally, but rather only in relation to the one who reaches this end, who ought to be distinguished in the mind of the one directing him [namely, God] from those who do not reach that end.<sup>8</sup> "And so," Thomas teaches, "predestination presupposes love, by means of which God wills the salvation of some particular person" (*per quam Deus vult salutem alicuius*).<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 1 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 113): *Sicut igitur se habet providentia ad impositionem ordinis, ita se habet praedestinatio ad ordinis exitum vel eventum: quod enim aliqui finem gloriae consequuntur, non est principaliter ex propriis viribus, sed ex auxilio gratiae divinitus datae.* Cf. *ST I-II.109.5c* and *6c*.

<sup>8</sup> Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 1 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 114).

<sup>9</sup> Aquinas, *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 1 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 114).

In commenting on Bk. III d. 32 of the *Sentences* and again in q. 20 of the Prima Pars of the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas specifically asks “whether God loves all things equally”.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, in both cases his opening objection maintains that God seems to love all things equally in that His *providence*, by which He cares for all things, is an effect of His love.<sup>11</sup> In the *Scriptum*, Thomas answers the question by noting that although God inclines His will toward all things with an equal efficacy, He wills a greater good for some things than for others; and so, according to the objects loved, it can be said that God loves unequally.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in the *Summa*, Thomas distinguishes between the act of the will itself and the good which the lover wills to be loved; whereas God loves all things with a single and simple act of His will, and thus equally, He does will a greater good for some things than others. Indeed, since the love of God is the cause of the goodness of things, one thing would not be better than any other if God did not will a greater good for it than for another.<sup>13</sup> Thomas replies to the first objection in the *Scriptum* by observing that, although God has equal concern for all things from the perspective of his solicitude itself, different creatures are provided for differently.<sup>14</sup> In the *Summa*, he clarifies that God is said to have equal care for all things not because He manages equal goods with the same concern, but because He administers all things with an equal wisdom and goodness.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> *Scriptum in Sent.* III d. 32 q. 1 a. 4; *ST* I.20.3.

<sup>11</sup> *Scriptum in Sent.* III d. 32 q. 1 a. 4 obj. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Scriptum in Sent.* III d. 32 q. 1 a. 4 c.

<sup>13</sup> *ST* I.20.3c; see also a. 4c.

<sup>14</sup> *Scriptum in Sent.* III d. 32 q. 1 a. 4 ad 1.

<sup>15</sup> *ST* I.20.3 ad 1.

Thomas drives home several of his major points concerning salvation—namely, that salvation presupposes predestination, that predestination presupposes election, that election presupposes love, and that election itself is eternal—when, in the *Scriptum* on Bk. III d. 32, he addresses the “little question” (*quaestiuncula*) of “whether God loves the just person who is foreknown [as damned] more than the predestined sinner”.<sup>16</sup> It seems that He does, the objections point out, because God loves the person who loves Him more than the one who does not, because the just person is a greater good than the sinner, and because the just person is a member of Christ.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Thomas notes in the *sed contras* that God’s love is the cause of election and God wills a greater good for the person who is predestined, so God must love the elect sinner more.<sup>18</sup> In order to answer the question, Thomas distinguishes between the eternal and the temporal and between God’s love and the object of that love. Whereas “presently” (*ut nunc*) God loves the just person who is damned more than the predestined sinner (as the objections indicate), the question ought to be determined based more on the love of God, which is eternal and immutable, than on the temporal object loved. And, because from eternity God has willed a greater good for the one who is predestined, it must be affirmed “simply” (*simpliciter*) that God loves the predestined sinner more than the damned just person.<sup>19</sup>

If we return to the *Scriptum* on Bk. I, we find that Thomas asks directly in q. 1 a. 1 of d. 46 “whether God wills that all humans should be saved”. It is noteworthy that Thomas asks this question, wherein appears his most extensive treatment of 1 Tim. 2:4 in the *Scriptum*, not in d.

---

<sup>16</sup> *Scriptum in Sent.* III d. 32 q. 1 a. 5 qc. 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Scriptum in Sent.* III d. 32 q. 1 a. 5 qc. 1 obj. 1, 2, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Scriptum in Sent.* III d. 32 q. 1 a. 5 qc. 1 sc 1, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Scriptum in Sent.* III d. 32 q. 1 a. 5 qc. 1 c.

40 or 41, as Albert had done, but in d. 46, where the Lombard himself asks, *inter alia*, whether the will of God can ever be made void and whether evil things are done by God's will or against it. It is also significant that Thomas explicitly frames the question with the words of 1 Tim. 2:4; indeed, the question asks, in effect, how this scriptural text should be understood. Thomas's question is doubtlessly formulated in this way on account of the fact that Peter Lombard opens his own discussion in d. 46 with a quotation from the *Enchiridion* wherein Augustine offers 1 Tim. 2:4 and asks whether the human will actually impedes the will of God since, although God wills that all should be saved, in fact many are damned.<sup>20</sup> It is first of all on account of the authority of the Apostle, Thomas maintains in his opening objection, that it seems as if God wills that all should be saved.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the fourth objection explains that because every agent intentionally wills that his work reach its end and because God has created the human for the end of eternal salvation, God wills that all humans should be saved.<sup>22</sup> The *sed contra* affirms very straightforwardly, in the manner of the Lombard's quotation of Augustine, that not all humans actually are predestined and therefore attain to salvation, so it must not be the case that God's saving will extends to all.<sup>23</sup>

In determining this question, Thomas invokes John Damascene's distinction, from *On the Orthodox Faith* II.29, between God's antecedent and consequent will. He makes clear, though, that this distinction does not reflect any diversity in the divine will itself, but rather simply "the

---

<sup>20</sup> Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV libris distinctae*, I d. 46 ch. 1, ed. Ignatius Brady (Rome, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 312-13.

<sup>21</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 obj. 1, p. 1050.

<sup>22</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 obj. 4, p. 1050.

<sup>23</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 *sed contra*, pp. 1050-51.

different conditions of those who are willed”.<sup>24</sup> Further, according to Thomas, in each human, as an object of the divine will, we can consider his nature and “other of his circumstances, such as that he wills and prepares himself for his salvation, or that he opposes and works contrary to it”.<sup>25</sup> God does not will to save the person who opposes salvation through divine grace, inasmuch as God considers him precisely under such negative circumstances that are ‘additional’ to his nature; rather, He wills to save only those who are willing to receive divine grace and act in accordance with it (*volens et consentiens*).<sup>26</sup> “And this is called [God’s] consequent will,” Thomas concludes, “because it presupposes foreknowledge of works not as a cause of the will (*causam voluntatis*) [of God], but as it were a reason in the one willed (*rationem voliti*).”<sup>27</sup>

Thomas replies to objection one by reminding his reader of the traditional interpretive scope of 1 Tim. 2:4: namely, he notes that whereas Damascene maintains that these scriptural words refer to God’s antecedent, but not His consequent, will, Augustine teaches that they speak of His consequent will and can be read accordingly in two ways. In the first way, according to Augustine, 1 Tim. 2:4 can be read according to “a fitting distribution” (*distributio accommoda*)

---

<sup>24</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 sol., p. 1051: . . . *et hoc contingit non ex aliqua diversitate voluntatis divinae, sed propter diversas conditiones ipsius voliti.*

<sup>25</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 sol., p. 1051: *Potest enim in unoquoque homine considerari natura ejus et aliae circumstantiae ipsius, ut quod est volens et praeparans se ad salutem suam, vel etiam repugnans et contrarie agens.*

<sup>26</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 sol., p. 1051.

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 sol., p. 1051: . . . *et hoc dicitur voluntas consequens, eo quod praesupponit praescientiam operum non tanquam causam voluntatis, sed quasi rationem voliti.*



as applying to God's consequent will for all humans who will, in fact, be saved. The second way is to affirm that "all" in the sacred text signifies not every individual human but every nation, race, or kind, "because He has predestined to life some belonging to every condition of humankind," Thomas observes.<sup>28</sup> In reply to the fourth objection, that God wills that every human should be saved because He has created the human to attain to the end of eternal salvation, Thomas intimates that God's consequent will for the salvation of only certain humans takes into account the other circumstances of each person beyond his or her human nature as created. By way of an architectural analogy, he explains:

A wise craftsman does not will that his work should reach its end unless according to the plan of the end (*secundum rationem finis*). For if there is some disposition [in the work] that is incompatible with the form which he intends to produce, he does not produce that form in it, unless perhaps that indisposition is removed. Just as a builder does not will to bring together stones to form the structure of a house if they remain unhewn, so too it is with God.<sup>29</sup>

Just as a stone's being unhewn represents a disorder in relation to the ordered structure of the house that the wise builder wills to erect, so too a human's opposing salvation and grace as a means to it disqualifies him for inclusion in the salvific edifice built by divine predestination.

---

<sup>28</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 ad 1, p. 1051.

<sup>29</sup> Aquinas, *Scriptum super I Sent.* d. 46 q. 1 a. 1 ad 4, p. 1052: *Ad quartum dicendum, quod sapiens artifex non vult quod opus suum finem attingat nisi secundum rationem finis; si enim aliquam habeat contrariam dispositionem ad formam quam inducere intendit, non inducit in eo formam, nisi forte illa indispositione remota; sicut aedificator non vult quod lapides convenient ad constitutionem domus ruditate in eis manente; et ita etiam est de Deo.*

This analogy clearly indicates how an indisposition in the object willed can be a reason for the object's rejection, though not a cause of willing on the part of the one who wills. The builder wills, for whatever reason, to build an ordered house; it is only in light of a particular stone's being unfit to contribute to that order that it is rejected.

Thomas continues and develops this line of thought in the second article of his sixth disputed question on truth, which asks "whether [God's] foreknowledge of merits is a cause of or reason for predestination".<sup>30</sup> At the heart of the second objection is 1 Tim. 2:4 interpreted according to the antecedent/consequent will distinction. It seems that divine foreknowledge of merits is a cause of predestination, the argument runs, because predestination necessarily includes both God's antecedent and consequent will, the latter of which is "determined by us, insofar as we direct ourselves in various ways to meriting salvation or damnation".<sup>31</sup> The objection explicitly points out that if the divine will for human salvation included *only* the antecedent will, according to which *God wills that all should be saved*, as 1 Tim. 2:4 says, then it would follow that all would be predestined. But Thomas has made clear in his opening article that not all are predestined, of course.

Thomas answers the question with great conceptual precision based on several nested distinctions. The first and most important of these is that between eternal predestination itself and its twofold temporal effect, namely, grace and glory. Only one of these effects, namely, glory, has meritorious human action as a cause, Thomas explains. A human act in the mode of

---

<sup>30</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2 obj. 2: *Sed voluntas consequens, ut dicit Damascenus [libro II Orthodoxae Fidei, cap. XXIX], est ex nostra causa, scilicet in quantum nos habemus vel damnationem.*

merit cannot be a *cause* of grace, of course, since grace is the principle of good action oriented toward salvation and so merit itself is the *effect* of cooperating grace.<sup>32</sup> Although “a certain natural disposition” (*dispositio naturalis quaedam*) prepares the human for receiving and making use of grace, “it does not follow from this,” Thomas maintains, “that our actions, whether preceding or following grace, are a cause of predestination itself”.<sup>33</sup> On the cause of predestination itself, Thomas engages in a detailed discussion of the various ways that a certain will can be moved: either *according to the mode of debt or duty* (i.e., what one is obligated to do), or *according to the mode of merit* (i.e., what one deserves). According to the mode of duty, a will is moved either *absolutely* (i.e., according to the ultimate end itself, which is the object of the will) or *from something presupposed* (i.e., when something requires some necessity in order to be the particular thing willed). An example of one willing absolutely according to the mode of duty is a human who wills to be happy; no human is able not to will his own happiness, which is his duty or destiny *qua* human. Thomas’s example of one who wills from something presupposed according to the mode of duty is a generous king who wishes to make a certain man a knight; because being a knight presupposes having a horse, the king is obliged to give a horse to the one whom he wills to knight.<sup>34</sup> An instance of this kind of cause of willing in the case of God is His creation of a human being: because being a human presupposes having reason, when

---

<sup>32</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 117); *ST I-II.114*, esp. a. 5; cf. *ST I-II.109*.

<sup>33</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 117): *sed gratiae causa non potest esse actus humanus per modum meriti, sed dispositio naturalis quaedam, inquantum per actus praeparantur ad gratiae susceptionem. Sed ex hoc non sequitur quod actus nostri, sive gratiam praecedant, sive sequantur, sint ipsius praedestinationis causa.*

<sup>34</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 117).

God wills to make a human He is obliged to give him a rational soul.<sup>35</sup> Strictly speaking, of course, God is never obliged to create any humans (just as the most generous king is never obliged to knight anyone), but once He freely wills to do so He is then ‘bound’ to will what being human presupposes. Thomas is quick to point out that the perfection of grace and glory, which God wills for the predestined, is *not* a case of willing according to duty from something presupposed precisely because a human nature can be a human nature without this twofold perfection; indeed, such perfection is the *supernatural* end of the human, which by definition exceeds the limits of his natural powers. Hence, for Thomas, “that God wills to give grace and glory to some particular [human] proceeds from [His] pure generosity”.<sup>36</sup> And the cause of God’s willing things that proceed from His pure generosity alone is nothing other than “the superabundant love of the one willing toward the end, after which the perfection of goodness itself strives. Hence the cause of predestination is nothing other than the goodness of God Himself.”<sup>37</sup>

In this light, Thomas replies to the second objection by conceding that predestination does, in fact, include God’s consequent will, which in some way considers our part as humans.

---

<sup>35</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 117).

<sup>36</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 117): *Perfectio autem gratiae et gloriae sunt huiusmodi bona quod sine eis natura esse potest, excedunt enim naturalis virtutis limites; unde quod Deus velit alicui dare gratiam et gloriam, hoc ex mera liberalitate procedit.*

<sup>37</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2 c (ed. Spiazzi, p. 117): *In his autem quae ex liberalitate procedunt tantum, causa volendi est ipsa superabundans affectio volentis ad finem, in quo attenditur perfectio bonitatis ipsius. Unde causa praedestinationis nihil est aliud quam bonitas ipsius Dei.*

It looks to our part, however, not as inclining the divine will toward willing, but rather in that toward the production of which the divine will ordains grace: simply stated, it considers our role in meriting glory.<sup>38</sup> And meritorious human action, as we have seen, may be said to be a cause of glory.

Our foregoing analysis has revealed how theologically sophisticated and carefully nuanced the early Aquinas was in reading 1 Tim. 2:4, particularly in light of the exegetical tradition he had received, stretching from the scriptural witness itself to Augustine and John Damascene through to Peter Lombard and Thomas's own master, Albert the Great. What Damascene's influential distinction between antecedent and consequent will aims to capture is what Albert makes explicit when he affirms that predestination is an eternal, divine reality that has a relation to temporal, human realities: that is, it is the *bimodal* relation of God's will to the human who will accept and make good use of grace, on the one hand, and to the human who will not, on the other. Whereas God wills antecedently (in a unimodal way) that all humans should be saved, He wills consequently in a bimodal way based on foreknown merits.<sup>39</sup> Aquinas makes clear, however, that foreknown merits are not a cause of eternal predestination itself, but rather merely of one of its temporal effects, namely, glory. For Thomas, just as grace perfects nature, so too does nature cooperate with grace to merit the beatific end of God's loving election. God saves the human, but not without or in spite of the human himself, in Thomas's view. Glory is, after all, the *human's* end, however super-natural it may be. To return to Thomas's example of the king who wishes to knight a man, but must—according to duty from something

---

<sup>38</sup> *Quaest. disp. de ver.*, q. 6 a. 2 ad 2 (ed. Spiazzi, p. 117).

<sup>39</sup> For Albert's explanation, see his *Comm. in I Sent.* d. 40 a. 8, esp. ad 1 and ad 2, in *B. Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, vol. 26, pp. 315-16.

presupposed—give him a horse in order to do so: even here, where the king is obligated to give what he gives in order to make what he wills, the knight is free to choose (at particular times, and even ultimately) not to ride the horse he has been given. If he makes such a choice, he may not remain a knight, in Thomas’s view, but he does remain a human, with a will that may cooperate—or not—with what the king wills in knighting him. Indeed, that he, by not riding his horse into battle, could choose to be once again simply a man rather than a proper knight demonstrates as much.

In conclusion, we might wonder what the young Aquinas’s reading of 1 Tim. 2:4 might contribute to modern Catholic discussions of the nature of salvation and the role of the human person in attaining to this end. What role, if any, might his understanding play in helping us—particularly in light of von Balthasar’s daring hope for universal salvation—to think through what it could mean that *God wills that all should be saved*? In Thomas’s view, reading this verse as a statement indicating what God has done eternally—namely, predestine or save every individual human—would seem to undermine the freedom of the human in a way that renders him or her, as the object of salvation, neither an active participant in the process nor therefore truly human.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, universal salvation would not be *human* salvation in any real sense. It may seem ironic to us, but in Thomas’s view predestination, far from rendering us automatons, actually safeguards the human *qua* human and ensures that salvation is both an eternal, divine reality *and* a temporal, human one. It guarantees not only that God does, in fact,

---

<sup>40</sup> For one contemporary consideration of these issues, see Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), ch. 6, esp. Wainwright’s critique of von Balthasar’s position in n. 24 on pp. 265-66.

will that all humans should be saved, but also that God's will allows humans the freedom to will otherwise for themselves.