

## QUESTION 24

### Christ's Predestination

Next we have to consider Christ's predestination. And on this topic there are four questions: (1) Was Christ predestined? (2) Was He predestined as a man? (3) Is His predestination an exemplar of our predestination? (4) Is His predestination a cause of our predestination?

#### Article 1

##### Is it fitting for Christ to have been predestined?

It seems that it is not fitting for Christ to have been predestined (*Christo non conveniat praedestinatum esse*):

**Objection 1:** The terminus of predestination seems to be the adoption of children (*adoptio filiorum*)—this according to Ephesians 1:5 (“He predestined us to the adoption of children”). But as has been explained (q. 23, a. 4), it does not befit Christ to be an adopted son. Therefore, it is not fitting for Christ to have been predestined.

**Objection 2:** In Christ there are two things to consider, viz., the human nature and the person. But it cannot be claimed that Christ was predestined by reason of His human nature, since *The human nature is the Son of God* is false. Similarly, neither can it be claimed that Christ was predestined by reason of His person, since that person has the status of being the Son of God by nature and not by grace. But as was established in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 23, aa. 2 and 5), predestination has to do with what comes from grace. Therefore, Christ was not predestined to be the Son of God.

**Objection 3:** Just as what has been made did not always exist, so, too, with what has been predestined, since predestination implies something previous (*praedestinatio antecessionem quandam importat*). But since Christ was always God and always the Son of God, it is not properly said that a man was made the Son of God. Therefore, by parity of reasoning, it should not be said that Christ was predestined to be the Son of God.

**But contrary to this:** In Romans 1:4 the Apostle, speaking of Christ, says, “... who was predestined the Son of God by an act of power ...”

**I respond:** As is clear from what was said in the First Part (*ST* 1, q. 23, a. 2), predestination, properly understood, is a sort of divine preordination from eternity concerning those things that are going to be done in time through God's grace. But one of the things done in time by God through the grace of union is that a man is God and that God is a man. Nor can one claim that God did not preordain from eternity that He would do this in time, since it would follow that something accrued to the divine mind *de novo*. And so\* it is necessary to say that the very union of natures in the person of Christ falls under God's eternal predestination. And by reason of this Christ is said to have been predestined.

**Reply to objection 1:** In this passage the Apostle is speaking of the predestination by which we ourselves are predestined to be adopted children. But just as Christ is in a singular manner, before others, the natural Son of God, so He was predestined in a certain singular manner.

**Reply to objection 2:** As a Gloss on Romans 1:4 explains, some have claimed that the predestination in question should be understood as having to do with the nature and not with the person—more specifically, because the grace in question was made for the human nature, in order that it might be united to the Son of God in a oneness of person.

But on this view the Apostle's way of speaking is improper, and this for two reasons:

First, for a general reason. For we say that it is a *person* who is predestined and not anyone's *nature*, since to be predestined is to be directed toward salvation, and this belongs to an acting

suppositum for the sake of the terminus of beatitude.

Second, for a specific reason. For to be the Son of God does not belong to a human nature, since *A human nature is the Son of God* is false—unless, perhaps, someone wanted, by a twisted exposition, to expound “... who was predestined the Son of God by an act of power ...” as “It was predestined that a human nature would be united to the Son of God in His person.”

Therefore, it follows that predestination is being attributed to the person of Christ—not, to be sure, in His own right (*non secundum se*) or insofar as He subsists in the divine nature, but insofar as He subsists in a human nature. Hence, after the Apostle had previously said, “... who was made to Him of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Romans 1:3), he went on to say, “... who was predestined Son of God by an act of power,” in order to give us to understand that insofar as He was from the seed of David according to the flesh, He was predestined Son of God in an act of power.” And yet this is not natural to Him according to His human nature, but belongs to Him with respect to His human nature through the grace of union.

**Reply to objection 3:** In *Super Epistolam ad Romanos*, Origen claims that the Apostles words are these: “... who was destined (*destinatus*) the Son of God in an act of power,” with the result that nothing previous is implied (*ita quod non designetur aliqua antecessio*). And on this reading there is no difficulty.

By contrast, others refer the something previous (*referunt antecessionem*) implied by the participle ‘predestined’ (*praedestinatus*) not to the *being* of the Son of God, but to His *manifestation*, so that the meaning is that Christ was predestined to be manifested as the Son of God. But on this reading predestination is not being properly understood. For an individual is said to be predestined, properly speaking, insofar as he is directed toward the end of beatitude. But Christ’s beatitude does not depend on our cognition.

And so it is better to say that the something previous which the participle ‘predestined’ implies is referred to the person not in His own right, but by reason of His human nature, since even if that person was the Son of God from eternity, it was nonetheless not always true that the [person] subsisting in [this] human nature is the Son of God. Hence, in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* Augustine says, “Jesus was predestined in the sense that He who was going to be the son of David according to the flesh would nonetheless be the Son of God in power.”

What’s more, notice that even though the participle ‘predestined’ implies something previous, just as the participle ‘made’ does, they do it in different ways. For *to be made* applies to a thing itself in accord with what it is in itself, whereas *to be predestined* applies to someone insofar as he exists in the apprehension of the individual who is doing the preordaining. Now that which exists under a form or nature in reality can be apprehended either under that form or else absolutely speaking. And since, absolutely speaking, it does not belong to the person of Christ that He began to be the Son of God, whereas this does belong to Him insofar as He is understood or apprehended as existing in a human nature—for at some time it began to be the case that someone existing in a human nature is the Son of God—it follows that *Christ was predestined the Son of God* is true rather than *Christ was made the Son of God*.

## Article 2

### Is *Christ as a man was predestined to be the Son of God* true?

It seems that *Christ as a man was predestined to be the Son of God* is false:

**Objection 1:** Each individual is at some time what he was predestined to be, because God’s

predestination does not fail. Therefore, if Christ as a man was predestined [to be] the Son of God, it seems to follow that He is the Son of God as a man. But this [consequent] is false. Therefore, the antecedent (*primum*) is false as well.

**Objection 2:** What belongs to Christ as a man belongs to every man, because He is of the same species as other men. Therefore, if Christ as a man had been predestined to be the Son of God, it would follow that this belongs to every man. But this [consequent] is false. Therefore, the antecedent (*primum*) is false as well.

**Objection 3:** What is predestined from eternity is what is going to be done at some time. But *The Son of God was made man* is true, rather than *A man was made the Son of God*. Therefore, it is *Christ as the Son of God was predestined to be a man* that is true, and not the converse, *Christ as a man was predestined to be the Son of God*.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* Augustine says, “Insofar as a man was made the Son of God, we say that the Lord of glory Himself was predestined.”

**I respond:** In the case of predestination there are two elements that can be thought about. One is on the part of the predestination itself as *eternal*, and on this score predestination involves something previous to that which falls under the predestination (*antecepcionem quandam respectu eius quod sub praedestinatione cadit*). Second, predestination can be thought of with respect to *its temporal effect*, which is some gratuitous gift of God’s.

Therefore, one should reply that with respect to both of these elements predestination is attributed to Christ by reason of His human nature alone. For it was not always the case that a human nature is united to the Word and, again, it was granted to a human nature by grace to be united to the Son of God in a person. And this is why predestination belongs to Christ solely by reason of His human nature. Hence, in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* Augustine says, “This elevation of the human nature was predestined to be so lofty and so great that there was no higher elevation by which it might be raised.”

And so one should reply that Christ as a man was predestined to be the Son of God.

**Reply to objection 1:** When one says, *Christ as a man was predestined to be the Son of God*, there are two ways in which the determination ‘*as a man*’ can be related to the act signified by the participle [‘predestined’]:

In one way, on the part of what falls under the predestination *materially*. And on this reading [the proposition] is false. For its meaning is that it was predestined that Christ as a man is the Son of God. And it is on this reading that the objection goes through.

In the second way, [the determination] can be related to the *proper character of the act*, viz., insofar as predestination involves by its nature something previous plus a gratuitous effect. And as has been explained, on this reading predestination belongs to Christ by reason of His human nature. And it is in this sense that He is said to have been predestined as a man.

**Reply to objection 2:** There are two ways in which something can belong to an individual man by reason of his human nature:

First, in such a way that human nature is a cause of the thing in question, in the way that being risible belongs to Socrates by reason of his human nature, the principles of which [risibility] is caused by. And this is not the sense in which predestination belongs either to Christ or to any other man by reason of his human nature. And it is on this reading that the objection goes through.

Second, something is said to belong to an individual by reason of his human nature when a human nature is able take on that thing. And this is the sense in which we say that Christ was predestined by reason of His human nature. For as has been explained, the predestination has to do with the exaltation of the human nature in Him.

**Reply to objection 3:** As Augustine says in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, “That singular

assumption (*susceptio singularis*) of a man was ineffably effected by God the Word, so that, at one and the same time, He may truly and properly be called both the Son of Man, because of the assumed man, and the Son of God, because of the assuming only-begotten Son of God.” And so because that assumption (*illa susceptio*) fell under predestination as gratuitous, both things can be said: that (a) the Son of God was predestined to be a man, and that (b) the Son of Man was predestined to be the Son of God.

However, since the grace was given not to the Son of God in order for Him to be a man, but to the human nature in order for it to be united to the Son of God, it is more proper to say *Christ as a man was predestined to be the Son of God* than to say *Christ as the Son of God was predestined to be a man*.

### Article 3

#### Is Christ’s predestination an exemplar of our predestination?

It seems that Christ’s predestination is not an exemplar of our predestination:

**Objection 1:** An exemplar preexists what it is an exemplar of. But nothing preexists what is eternal. Therefore, since our predestination is eternal, it seems that Christ’s predestination is not an exemplar of our predestination.

**Objection 2:** An exemplar leads to cognition of what it is an exemplar of. But it was not necessary for God to be led to cognition of our predestination by anything else, since Romans 8:29 says, “... whom He foreknew, He predestined.” Therefore, Christ’s predestination is not an exemplar of our predestination.

**Objection 3:** An exemplar is conformed to what it is an exemplar of. But Christ’s predestination seems to have a different character from our predestination, since we are predestined to be adopted children, whereas Christ was predestined to be “the Son of God in power,” as Romans 1:4 puts it. Therefore, His predestination is not an exemplar of our predestination.

**But contrary to this:** In *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum* Augustine says, “The Savior Himself, the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, is the most resplendent light of predestination and of grace.” But He is called the light of predestination and of grace insofar as our predestination is made clear by His predestination and grace—something that seems to involve the character of an exemplar. Therefore, Christ’s predestination is an exemplar of our predestination.

**I respond:** Predestination can be thought of in two ways:

First, as *the very act of the one who predestines*. And on this score Christ’s predestination cannot be called an exemplar of our predestination, since God predestined both Christ and us in one way and by the same act.

Second, predestination can be thought of *as regards what an individual is predestined to*, i.e., as regards the terminus and effect of predestination. And on this score Christ’s predestination is an exemplar of our predestination, and this in two ways:

(a) *with respect to the good to which we are predestined*. For He Himself was predestined to being the *natural* Son of God, whereas we are predestined to the filiation of *adoption*, which is a participated likeness of natural filiation. That is why Romans 8:29 says, “... whom He foreknew He predestined to be shaped in conformity to the image of His Son.”

(b) *with respect to the manner of attaining this good*, which is through grace. This is clearest in the case of Christ, since the human nature in Him, without any preceding merits, was united to the Son of God. And, as John 1:16 says, “Of the fullness of His grace we have all received.”

**Reply to objection 1:** This argument goes through on the part of the act of the one who predestines.

**Reply to objection 2:** The same thing holds for the second objection.

**Reply to objection 3:** What the exemplar is an exemplar of does not have to be conformed to the exemplar in every respect; instead, it is sufficient for it to imitate its exemplar in some respect (*sufficit quod aliquantulum exemplatum imitetur suum exemplar*).

#### Article 4

##### Is Christ's predestination a cause of our predestination?

It seems that Christ's predestination is not a cause of our predestination:

**Objection 1:** What is eternal does not have a cause. But our predestination is eternal. Therefore, Christ's predestination is not a cause of our predestination.

**Objection 2:** What is dependent on God's simple act of will does not have a cause other than God's will. But our predestination is dependent on God's simple act of will; for Ephesians 1:11 says, "... being predestined according to the purpose of Him who does all things according to the counsel of His own will." Therefore, Christ's predestination is not a cause of our predestination.

**Objection 3:** If a cause is removed, its effect is removed. But if Christ's predestination is removed, our predestination is not removed, since, as Augustine explains in *De Trinitate*, even if the Son of God had not been not incarnated, there was some other possible way for us to be saved. Therefore, Christ's predestination is not a cause of our predestination.

**But contrary to this:** Ephesians 1:5 says, "He predestined us to adoption as children through Jesus Christ."

**I respond:** If predestination is thought of as regards the *act* of predestining itself (*secundum ipsum praedestinationis actum*), then Christ's predestination is not a cause of our predestination, since by one and the same act God predestined both us and Christ.

On the other hand, if predestination is thought of as regards the *terminus* of the act of predestining (*secundum terminum praedestinationis*), then in this sense Christ's predestination is a cause of our predestination, since God predestined our salvation by predestining from eternity that our salvation would be brought to completion through Jesus Christ. For what falls under eternal predestination is not only that which is to be done in time, but also the manner and ordering according to which it is to be brought to completion over time.

**Reply to objection 1 and objection 2:** The first and second arguments go through for predestination with respect to the *act* of predestining.

**Reply to objection 3:** If it had been the case that Christ was not going to be incarnated, then God would have pre-arranged for men to be saved through some other cause. But because He preordained Christ's incarnation, along with this He predestined that He would be a cause of our salvation.