

CHAPTER TWO

THE UNIVERSALITY OF GOD'S GRACE

AND IT'S RELATIONSHIP TO MAN'S FREEDOM

Divine Grace is the absolutely free Gift of Divine Love offered to all men by God Who wants them "...to be Saved..."¹ without any discrimination due to their moral condition. The universality of the offered Grace is in agreement with the Teachings of the Old Testament and has been proclaimed by the Prophets who spoke of the universality of Salvation. It is also in agreement with the Commandment given by Christ to His Holy Apostles to "...go and make disciples of all nations..."² by proclaiming the Word of the Gospel "...to all nations."³

Generally speaking, Holy Scripture proclaims that God does not desire the death of the ungodly⁴ and that Christ died for all,⁵ having been sent by His Father into the world, not to Judge it but to Save it.⁶ The Teachings of Holy Scripture are in agreement with those of the Orthodox Church, which from the first century proclaimed that Divine Grace does not deprive anyone of Salvation but that it is granted to all and calls everyone with equal honour. Another proclamation, especially by St John of Damascus, is that the Will of God has two aspects. The "first" or "former Will," which is called "Good Will" - for through it God wants all men to be Saved - and the "following Will" through which those who accept the Work of Grace are guided to Salvation while God consents to the Condemnation of those who oppose His Grace.

According to the Teachings of the Orthodox Church, God does not deprive anyone of the opportunity of receiving His Grace of Salvation, even those who oppose it, although being All-knowing, He foresees their stubborn sinfulness. God reveals His special Providence to His Elect and to those who accept His Grace. He sets out the conditions as well as the means through which His Grace might be accepted and bring forth its Fruits.⁷ This preference of Divine Providence is accomplished not by arbitrariness or partiality but with all Justice because it is based upon the Foreknowledge of God, Who foresees from all Eternity, the good will and ability to accept of those who are Predestined and Elect. This Predestination is not absolute, as St Augustine believed, but relative. It is based upon the infallible Foreknowledge of God with regard to the good intentions of those who are Predestined. God foresees that the Work of Grace in them will not be in vain or fruitless. This Relative Predestination is taught by Holy Scripture and is in accordance with it as well as with that of all the Holy Fathers and Ecclesiastic Writers, especially Origen.

There is a difference between the Predestination of the Just, according to which God co-operates positively with them, to improve and to perfect them and the Predestination of those who renounce His Grace and with whom God does not cooperate. He simply allows them to continue according to their own wills. Nevertheless, under no circumstances is man's free will bound, forced or restricted, not even those who are Predestined. This is the

¹ John 3:17.

² Matth. 28:19.

³ Luke 24:47.

⁴ Ezek. 33:11.

⁵ Rom. 5:6.

⁶ John 3:16-19.

⁷ Cf. Frangopoulos, *Christian Faith*, pp. 163-166.

reason for and the condition of Divine Grace, although previously it appeared to act and bear Fruit such as in the cases of Judas Iscariot and Demas who then unexpectedly renounced it. It is obvious that those in Holy Scripture who were considered by God to be hardhearted, are completely responsible for the disastrous consequences due to their own perverse wills. Instead of being healed by Beneficial Grace, they were stubborn because of their own wicked obstinacy. When God uses these vessels for His own Plans but who cause their own destruction, He neither forces them nor ignores their own free will or consent. Not even for the Elect does Divine Grace act forcefully.

1. The Universality of Salvation According to Holy Scripture

In the Old Testament it is proclaimed that the universality of Salvation by the Prophets presupposes the Grace of Salvation offered by God not only to the Jews but to all nations. The Prophet Isaiah foretold that, through Israel, all nations would participate in the Salvation of God saying: *“...For in the last days the Mountain of the Lord shall be glorious, and the House of God shall be on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall come to it. And many nations shall go and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, and to the House of the God of Jacob; and He will tell us His Way, and we will walk in it: for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the Word of the Lord out of Jerusalem. And He shall Judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into sickles: and nation shall not take up sword against nation, neither shall they learn to war any more...”*⁸ *“...He shall bring forth Judgement to the Gentiles...”* *“...and in His Name shall the Gentiles trust...”*⁹ *“...Turn you to Me, and you shall be Saved, you that come from the end of the earth...”*¹⁰ *“Behold, I have made Him a Testimony among the Gentiles, a Prince and Commander to the Gentiles. Nations which know Thee not, shall call upon Thee, and peoples who are not acquainted with Thee, shall flee to Thee for refuge, for the sake of the Lord Thy God, the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified Thee...”*¹¹ *“...And kings shall walk in Thy Light, and nations in Thy brightness...”*¹² *“...I Am going to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see My glory...”*¹³ *“...And it shall be for a Sign to the Lord for ever in the land of Egypt: for they shall presently cry to the Lord by reason of them that afflict them, and He shall send a Man Who shall Save them; He shall Judge and Save them. And the Lord shall be known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians, shall know the Lord in that day: and they shall offer sacrifices, and shall vow Vows to the Lord, and pray them. And the Lord shall smite the Egyptians with a stroke, and shall completely heal them: and they shall return to the Lord, and He shall hear them, and thoroughly heal them. In that day there shall be a way from Egypt to the Assyrians, and the Assyrians shall enter into Egypt, and the Egyptians shall go to the Assyrians, and the Egyptians shall serve the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be third with the Egyptians and the Assyrians, Blessed in the land which the Lord of hosts has Blessed, saying ‘Blessed be My people that is in Egypt, and that is among the Assyrians, and Israel Mine inheritance...”*¹⁴ *“...And the Lord of Hosts shall make a Feast for all the nations: on this Mount they shall drink gladness, they shall drink wines: they shall Anoint*

⁸ Is. 2:2-4.

⁹ Is. 42, 1, 4.

¹⁰ Is. 45:22.

¹¹ Is. 55:4-5.

¹² Is. 60:3.

¹³ Is. 66:18.

¹⁴ Is. 19:20-25.

themselves with ointment in this **Mountain**. Impart you all these things to the nations; for this **is** God's **Counsel** upon all the nations. Death has prevailed and swallowed men up; but again the Lord God has taken away every tear from every face. He has taken away the reproach of His people from all the earth: for the **Mouth** of the Lord has spoken it. And in that day they shall say, 'Behold our God in **Whom** we have trusted, and He shall **Save** us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, and we have exulted and will rejoice in our Salvation."¹⁵

The Prophet Jeremiah foretold **the Salvation of Christ by pronouncing the words**: "...And I will cleanse them from all their iniquities, whereby they shall have sinned against Me, and will not remember their sins, whereby they have sinned against Me and revolted **against** Me. And it shall be for joy and praise, and for glory to all the people of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I will do: and they shall fear and be provoked for all the good things and for all the peace which I will bring upon them."¹⁶

The Prophet Ezekiel **declared**: " '...Therefore say to the **House** of Israel, 'Thus said the Lord; I do not this, O **House** of Israel, for your sakes, but because of My **Holy Name**, which you have profaned among the nations, among whom you went. And I will **Sanctify My Great Name**, which was profaned among the nations, which you profaned in the midst of them; and the nations shall know that I Am the Lord, when I Am **Sanctified** among you before their eyes. And I will take you out from the nations, and will gather you out of all the lands, and will bring you into your own land: and I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be purged from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols, and I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and will put a new spirit in you: and I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit in you, and will cause you to walk in Mine **Ordinances**, and to keep My **Judgements**, and do them. And you shall dwell upon the land which I gave to your fathers; and you shall be to Me a people, and I will be to you a God. And I will **Save** you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and multiply it, and will not bring famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the trees, and the produce of the field, that you may not bear the reproach of famine among the nations. And you shall remember your evil ways, and your practices that were not good, and you shall be hateful in your own sight for your transgressions and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this,' said the Lord God, 'as it is known to you: be you ashamed and confounded for your ways, O **House** of Israel.' Thus said the Lord God: 'In the day wherein I shall cleanse you from all your iniquities I will also cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be built upon: and the desolate land shall be cultivated, whereas it was desolated in the eyes of every one that passed by. And they shall say, "That desolated land is become like a garden of delight, and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are inhabited." And the nations, as many as shall have been left round about you, shall know that I, the Lord, have built the ruined cities and planted the waste lands: I, the Lord, have spoken and will do it."¹⁷ "...And the nations shall know that I Am the Lord that **Sanctifies** them, when My **Sanctuary** is in the midst of them for ever."¹⁸

The **Books of Psalms** proclaim that "...all nations whom **Thou hast** made shall come and worship before **Thee**, O Lord, and shall glorify **Thy Name**."¹⁹ "...The nations shall fear

¹⁵ Is. 25:6-9.

¹⁶ Jer. 40:8-9.

¹⁷ Ez. 36:22-36.

¹⁸ Ez. 37:28.

¹⁹ Psalm 85(86):9.

the *Name of the Lord*, and all kings of the earth *Thy* glory ... when the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord.”²⁰ “...For *Thy Mercy* reaches unto the *Heavens*, and *Thy Truth* unto the clouds. Be exalted, O God, above the *Heavens*; let *Thy Glory* be above all the earth.”²¹ “...Oh, give thanks to the Lord! Call upon His *Name*; make known His *Deeds* among the people!”²² “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!”²³

These words were preached among the people of Israel who believed that the true “*Goodwill*” of God and His Salvation was their exclusive inheritance. They supposed it to be a Prophetic Promise *whereby*, at the *appropriate* time, the Lord *would* manifest His Grace of Salvation among them. Then it *would* be offered to “...all men...” and “...for this reason...” “...the Only Begotten Son of God...” became Man “...in order to make *all men and rulers and servants* worthy of the *Salvation*.”²⁴

Truthfully, *although it appears at first that our* Lord Himself “...was sent ... to the lost sheep of the House of Israel...”²⁵ *He did emphasise the fact* that He had “...other sheep...” *who were* outside Judaism *but who were also exhorted to hear* His Voice *so that He could* gather them *as* “... one flock and one *Shepherd*.”²⁶ Hence after His glorious Resurrection, He sent the Apostles *out* to their God-given Mission *by instructing them* to “...make Disciples of all nations...”²⁷ *by* preaching the Gospel “...to every creature...”²⁸ even to the ends of the earth. *In* the midst of Israel *Christ* preached the Gospel of *Salvation despite His Foreknowledge of His Suffering and Death* in Jerusalem as *had* the *Holy Prophets* before Him.²⁹ Nevertheless, He continued to seek the Salvation of the ungrateful “...as a hen with many chicks and warm with love, looking after her children and giving up herself for their sake...”³⁰ “...and with much kindness He wanted once and twice and many times to Save them.”³¹ At the last moment when He was entering the city of Jerusalem, “He wept over her with great compassion, knowing that she will be crushed and showing what Compassion He had for the ungrateful Jews.”³²

Our Lord Jesus’ words and behaviour, in conjunction *with* His proclamation to St Nicodemus *that* “...God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be *Saved*,”³³ *clearly highlights* the Teachings of the Holy Apostles. “For, this is good and acceptable in the *Sight of God* our Saviour *Who desires all men to be Saved and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*...”³⁴ for God is not “...the God of the Jews only...” but *He is also* “...the God of the Gentiles...”³⁵ *and* the Master of both. For

²⁰ Psalm 101(102):15, 22.

²¹ Psalm 56(57):10-11.

²² Psalm 105(106):1.

²³ Psalm 116(117):1.

²⁴ Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To Titus* 2, 11, in Migne, *P.G.*, 82, 865.

²⁵ Matth. 15:24.

²⁶ John 10:16.

²⁷ Matth. 28:19.

²⁸ Mark 16:15.

²⁹ Matth. 23:37. Luke 13:34.

³⁰ Origen, *To Matthew* 23:37, in *B*, v. 14, p. 363.

³¹ St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew* 23:37, in Migne, *P.G.*, 58, 682.

³² Zigabinos, *To Luke* 19:41, in Migne, *P.G.*, 129, 1065.

³³ John 3:17.

³⁴ 1 Tim. 2:3-4.

³⁵ Rom. 4:29.

One is the Creator of all **Who provides for and Who saves all** through faith in Him³⁶ “...for ‘whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be Saved.’”³⁷ Proclaiming the commonality of **Divine** Grace, St Paul concluded: “...for there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.”³⁸ St Peter **presented** God **as** taking up His fearful Coming because **He is** “...longsuffering **towards** us...” and “... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance...”³⁹ According to the **Prophet** Ezekiel, the Lord said: “As I live, I desire not the death of the ungodly **but** that the ungodly should turn from **their ways** and live.”⁴⁰ This indicates that God provides the means of **Salvation** to the ungodly since He desires **their** Salvation. It is a fundamental Teaching of the Holy Gospel that Christ “...died for all...”⁴¹ and that “...He Himself is the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”⁴²

2. The Universality of Salvation According to the Holy Fathers

According to the above Teachings of Holy Scripture, the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church proclaimed that **because** “...the Blood of Christ...” was “...poured out for our Salvation, it won for the whole world the Grace of **Repentance**...” for “...from generation to generation the Master has given an opportunity for **Repentance** to those who desire to turn to Him...” and **by** “...repenting of their sins, made atonement to God by their prayers and received **Salvation**, even though they were alienated from God.”⁴³ “The Ministers of the Grace of God spoke **of** Repentance through the Holy Spirit; indeed, the Master of the Universe Himself spoke **of** repentance with an oath saying: ‘As I live, I desire not the death of the sinner,’⁴⁴ so much as his Repentance.”⁴⁵

St Irenaeos compared “...the preaching of the Truth...” to the sun and commented that “...as the sun in the entire world is one and the same, likewise and the preaching of the Truth shines everywhere and Enlightens all men who will to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.” The Lord assured us that He, **by** “...becoming **Man** for us, sent to the whole world the Grace of the Holy Spirit.” Elsewhere he observed that when the Son of Man came to earth, eating and drinking and dwelling with **men**, the Life-giving **Seed** - in other words the Spirit of Forgiveness of sins through Whom we become alive - was **bestowed** upon the human race.⁴⁶

Tertullian **pronounced** the universality of the Gospel and **assured us that the Kingdom** and the Name of Christ is spread everywhere, is believed by all and is worshipped by all nations.⁴⁷

³⁶ St. John Chrysostom, *To Romans* 3, 30, and 7, § 4, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 446.

³⁷ Rom. 10:13.

³⁸ Rom. 10:12.

³⁹ 2 Peter 3:9.

⁴⁰ Ezek. 33:11.

⁴¹ 2 Corinth. 5:15.

⁴² 1 John 2:2.

⁴³ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 7, 4, 5 and 7, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ Ezek. 33:11.

⁴⁵ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 8,2, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book I, ch. 10, § 2 and book III, ch. 11, § 8, in *B*, v. 7, pp. 116 and 146. Ibid, book IV, ch. 31, § 2, in Migne, *P.G.*, 7, 1069. Cf. Ibid, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 65, 211-213, 328.

⁴⁷ Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 37, in migne, *P.L.*, 1, 524. Ibid, *Adversus Judaicorum*, &, in migne, *P.L.* 2, 651.

St Gregory of Nazianzos **stated** that through the Sufferings of Christ “...we were Regenerated...”**including** “...everyone who participated in Adam...” because “...when (Christ) appeared (He) simply Saved everyone.”⁴⁸

St John Chrysostom, **interpreting** John 1:9 asked: “If He Enlightens all men **by** coming to the world, how can so many remain in darkness?” **He continued:** “He Enlightens all men who come to Him...” **because the Redeeming and Enlightening radiance of the Sun of Righteousness falls upon all and** if some “...by their own will keep their eyes ill...” they cannot receive “...the radiance of this Light...” for blindness and darkness comes upon them “...not because of the Light’s Nature, but because of the evilness of those who, by their own will, deprive themselves of the Grace. The Grace is outpoured to all...” **without** “...depriving...” anyone **at all**, “...not Jew, nor Greek, not Barbarian, nor Scythes, nor free, nor slave, nor man, nor woman, nor elder, nor young; it comes to all equally and with the same honour invites everyone.” If there are some who do not wish “...to enjoy this Grace...” they should **argue** with themselves for **causing** their own “hardness.” Commenting **on** the case of Pharaoh,⁴⁹ **St John Chrysostom certified** that “...God did not miss out the means of his correction.” **The Lord** “...presented much longsuffering, wanting to bring him to Repentance.” **Nevertheless,** the Pharaoh “...enjoying the abundance of His Mercy, did not become better but remained incorrigible, lighting the Wrath of God because of his hardness.”⁵⁰ **He refused** to use the Divine Longsuffering for **his** Repentance **and** for this reason God “...used him for the correction of others, making **others better** through his punishment.”⁵¹

St Clement of Rome **remarked** that the “...Pharaoh and his army and all the rulers of Egypt, ‘the chariots and their riders,’ were plunged into the Red Sea and perished, for no other reason than that their foolish hearts were hardened after the **Signs** and the **Wonders** had been accomplished in the land of Egypt by Moses, the servant of God.”⁵²

St Cyril of Alexandria **believed** that “...no one was left out of the things of the earth...” **when they** “... approached the richness and abundance and plentiful Grace of Him **Who offered...**” To **accentuate this point** he referred to the Prophecy of Prophet Joel, according to **whom the Lord said:** “...I will pour out from My Spirit upon all flesh.”⁵³ If everyone **does not receive** this Grace, it is **merely** because “...everyone within himself becomes the reason either to receive the God-giving Good or not.”⁵⁴

St John of Damascus used the differentiation between **the** “former Will” and “later Will” of God. The “first” or “former Will,” is **called** “Goodwill” for through it God wants all men to be Saved **because He** did not create us to be Condemned but to partake of His Kindness. **However, man too** must desire his **own Salvation**. The “later will” **is that** through which those who accept the Work of Grace are guided to Salvation **while** God consents to the Condemnation of those who oppose **or refuse** His Grace.⁵⁵

⁴⁸ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Homily 33*, §§ 9, 45 and 24, in Migne, *P.G.*, 36, 225, 657.

⁴⁹ Ex. 3:19.

⁵⁰ Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:12, 35; 10:20; 11:10; 14:4, 8, 17.

⁵¹ St. John Chrysostom, *Homily to John*, 8, § 1, in Migne, *P.G.*, 59, 65. *Ibid*, *To Romans*, 16, § 8, in Migne, *P.G.*, 60, 560.

⁵² St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 51, 5, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 57.

⁵³ Joel 2:28-32. Acts 2:17-21.

⁵⁴ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To John*, book IX, *to John* 14, 19, in Migne, *P.G.*, 74, 264.

⁵⁵ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About foreknowledge and destination*, II, 44, 29, in Migne, *P.G.*, 94, 969.

St Augustine, although at first **having** accepted the universality of Salvation of God's Will, in his later writings **he** restricted the Will of God concerning Salvation only to those who are absolutely Predestined.⁵⁶ His teachings **of Predestination** at the time of choosing the Elect **are unacceptable** because he supported the idea that Predestination occurs ("*ante praevisa merita*"), in other words, before God Foresees the things **that** make those who are Predestined, worthy.⁵⁷

3. Predestination is Relative and Based on God's Divine Foreknowledge

The catholic nature of **Divine Grace** concerning **Predestination**, does not contradict the **Teachings of Holy Scripture** and the **Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church**. One must not forget that the **Grace of God**, which is offered to **us**, **has** an unconditional prerequisite **of either accepting or renouncing it**. Consequently, God predestined **Salvation or Condemnation** according to His **Foreknowledge that He has of each and every human being**.⁵⁸ St Paul stressed that God "*foreknew*" and "*predestined*" them accordingly. **Furthermore, those** "... whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the Image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren."⁵⁹ **Predestination** is not restricted only to the **Foreknowledge** and preparation of God's **Beneficences** through which **we have** the assurance of **Salvation** of those who **would** be Saved⁶⁰ but **it also** includes the will of those who are being **Saved**, who are predestinated for **Salvation** based on the **Foreknowledge of God and whether they would** accept the **Grace** offered to them **and remain** in it.

The **Predestination** of those who **would** be **Saved** or the **stubborn disobedience** of those who shall perish is not the absolute decision or Will of God. This discrimination is found not only in the Will of God but also in the **Goodwill** of those who were predestined by the **Foreknowledge** of God.

God foresaw **their** **Goodwill** and their ability to accept His **Grace of Salvation** and according to His **Foreknowledge**, He predestined them. If **Divine Providence has pre-determined** whatever concerns this life on earth in such a way that **every one of our hairs** is numbered, it would be inconceivable that man's **Eternal Condition would be** of secondary importance. He who accepts the **Providence of God** contradicts himself if he refuses to accept the **Predestinated Salvation** of mankind. ⁶¹ "... He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be Holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His Will."⁶²

⁵⁶ St. Augustine, *De spiritu et litt.*, XXXIII, 58, in migne, *P.L.*, 44, 238. Ibid, *De dono perserentiae* VIII, 16, in migne, *P.L.*, 45, 1002. Ibid, *De anima et ejus origine*, IV, 11, 16, in migne, *P.L.*, 44, 533. Ibid, *In Johannis evangelium. Tractatus* XLVII, 4, 6; CVII, 7; CXI, 5, in migne, *P.L.*, 35, 1742, 1743, 1914, 1929. Ibid, *Enchiridion*, 103, in migne. *P.L.*, 40, 230. Ibid, *Contra Julianum*, IV, 8, 44, in migne, *P.L.*, 44, 766. Ibid, *Epist.* 217, 6, 9, in migne, *P.L.*, 33, 936.

⁵⁷ Tixeront, *Histoire*, v. II, p. 501.

⁵⁸ St. Symeon, *Euriskomena*, Homily XXVI, pp. 137-141.

⁵⁹ Rom. 8:29.

⁶⁰ St. Augustine, *De dono perserentiae*, XIV, 35, in migne, *P.L.*, 45, 1014.

⁶¹ Theophilactus of Bulgaria, *To Romans* 8:27-30, in Migne, *P.G.*, 124, 454.

⁶² Ephes. 1:4-5.

4. The Teachings of Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers of Relative Predestination

Holy Scripture speaks of the choosing “...before the foundation of the world...” and of Predestination “...of adoption as sons...” of all those who are Saved in Christ. They proclaim that **those** whom God “...Predestined, ... He also Called; whom He Called, these He also Justified; and whom He Justified, these He also Glorified.”⁶³ **In addition, the Church proclaims, interprets and clarifies the Truth that the Scriptures proclaim, through the Teachings of the holy Fathers.**

St Clement of Rome wrote: “Let us, therefore, approach Him in Holiness of soul, lifting up to Him pure and undefiled hands, loving our gentle and compassionate Father Who made us His chosen portion.” And elsewhere he continued: “...This declaration of Blessedness was pronounced upon those who have been chosen by God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”⁶⁴

St Ignatios of Antioch, **greeted** the Church of God “...at Ephesos in Asia, Blessed with greatness through the fullness of God the Father, Predestined before the ages ... lasting and unchangeable forever.”⁶⁵

St Justin the Philosopher and Martyr stressed that God “...Foreknows some of those who through Repentance will be Aaved and some who will not ever be born.” He rebuked **the concept** that events **occur due to** fate for God “...Foreknows what each and every man will do in the future” **and that** God “...Foreknows the number of those who will become good and virtuous in Him.”⁶⁶

St Irenaeos based Predestination on the Foreknowledge of God, **commenting** that **He** Who Foreknows everything, prepared both proper dwellings. For those who seek the **Light of Imperishability He grants** with **favour** the **Light that** they desire **while** to others who scorn and flee from it, He has prepared the **Darkness**. So **to all** those who avoid **submission** to Him, He delivers a fitting sentence.⁶⁷

Clement the Alexandrian proclaimed that the Lord knew “...before the Creation of the world and the ends of the events which shall take place ... the existence of each and every man...” “...and others He predestined to become Just, knowing this before the Creation of the world.”⁶⁸

Origen, referring to Romans 8:29, **remarked** that God “... Foreseeing the line of events and understanding the tendency which is upon us, others having the tendency towards piety, upon it after the tendency” He predestines.⁶⁹ Theophylactos of Bulgaria added that God “... Foreknow, those who are worthy of the Calling, and thus He predestines.”⁷⁰ **Interpreting** Romans 7:16 Origen **likened** God to a housemaster **Who treats** His servants with Wisdom and Justice, according to their abilities. He observed **that God certainly does** not only know each

⁶³ Rom. 8:30.

⁶⁴ St. Clement of Rome, *1st Corinthians*, 29, 1 and 50, 7, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 44, 56.

⁶⁵ St. Ignatius, *To Ephesians*, Introduction, in Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, p. 86.

⁶⁶ St. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, *1 Apology*, 28, 2; 44, 11 and 45, 1, in **B**, v. 3, p. 175, 184 and 185.

⁶⁷ St. Irenaeus, *Heresies*, book IV, ch. 39, § 4, in Hadjephraimides, pp. 355.

⁶⁸ Clement the Alexandrian, *Stromata*, I, 17, in **B**, v. 7, p.268. Ibid, *Stromata*, VII, 17, in **B**, v. 8, p. 298.

⁶⁹ Origen, *To Romans* 8:29, in Migne, *P.G.*, 14, 84.

⁷⁰ Theophylactus of Bulgaria, *Epistle to Romans*, in Migne, *P.G.*, 124, 452.

one's intention and will but He also foreknows them. Knowing and foreknowing, being an absolutely Good and Just Administrator, He uses each one's Calling and intention to achieve those things that the soul and the will of each one desires.⁷¹ In the Epistle to the Romans⁷² and in the Book of Exodus,⁷³ the reference to the hardness of the heart of Pharaoh, especially the verse "...(*God*) has Mercy on whom He Wills, and whom He Wills He hardens..."⁷⁴ there are many examples that prove the Truth that "...*God, with one action, has Mercy on whom He Wills, and whom He hardens, not that He Wills to harden, but because of the intention...*" of wickedness that hardens man's heart. Just as due to the rain, for example, "...the cultivated earth brings forth fruit, whereas the neglected and wild (earth) brings forth thorns..." similarly "...the things of God..." bring forth different and contrary results⁷⁵ because "...the intentions are different."⁷⁶ Another example is that of the sun's radiance, which although coming "...from one warmth..." can either melt the wax or dry the clay. "Likewise the action, which took place through Moses..." had different effects on Pharaoh and on "...those who went out with the Hebrews." While it caused "hardness" of heart with Pharaoh, it became a means of "persuasion"⁷⁷ to others. When St Paul wrote: "So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God Who shows Mercy..."⁷⁸ he observed that this was clarified by the Psalmist who wrote: "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain."⁷⁹ These words of Holy Scripture are not intended to discourage us "...from building, nor do they teach not to stay awake and to guard our city..." but instead they emphasise the Truth that "...without God the things which are built and those which are not under His Protection are built and watched in vain." Likewise, "...our perfection... is not achieved without our action..." but together with God Who contributes the most by offering far more than us.⁸⁰ The verse in 2 Timothy refers to the Church as a "Great House" in which "...there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour."⁸¹ St Paul taught that the one who cleans himself becomes a vessel "...for honour..." whereas others who keep themselves unclean remain "...for dishonour..." so therefore it is obvious that under no circumstances is God the cause. It is true that "...God makes vessels for honour and vessels for dishonour..." However, "...this was not right from the beginning according to the Foreknowledge because before it He neither pre-judges nor pre-justifies." He Foresees and Predestines "...but they become vessels of honour, those who cleansed themselves, and they become vessels of dishonour, they who remain in uncleanness." Furthermore, "...the potter has the authority to do whatever he wishes with the same clay..." Consequently, we must never forget that "... without the assistance of God..." we will not succeed "...nor can the assistance of God force us to progress, if we do not cooperate for good." Hence, God does not create "...someone for honour or dishonour if our intention was not different, inclining to the higher or to the worse."⁸² Based on the words of Christ concerning Tyre and Sidon, that "...they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes..." "...if the mighty Works which

⁷¹ Origen, *To Romans 7:16*, in Migne, P.G., 14, 1145.

⁷² Rom. 9:17.

⁷³ Ex. 4:21.

⁷⁴ Rom. 9:18.

⁷⁵ Rom. 9:20, 21.

⁷⁶ Origen, *About Principals*, III, 1, 9, in Migne, P.G., 11, 265.

⁷⁷ Ibid, *About Principals*, III, § 11, in Migne, P.G., 11, 268.

⁷⁸ Rom. 9:16.

⁷⁹ Psalm 126(127):1.

⁸⁰ Origen, *About Principals*, III, §18, in Migne, P.G., 11, 289 and 292.

⁸¹ 2 Tim. 2:20.

⁸² Origen, *About Principals*, III, § 20, in Migne, P.G., 11, 296 – 297 and 301..

were done in you had been done in...” them,⁸³ Origen considered the reason why God postpones or **completely** avoids visiting some **who are in a similar condition to those in Tyre and Sidon** for their Enlightenment and Salvation **and whom** He “...Foreknew ... would have repented?” He observed that the Eternal God knows **all** secrets and **about** everything **even** before they **happen**. According to His Kindness, **He postpones** “...*the quick help to them...*” **for their benefit** and consequently, **although** for a time it seems that God is not helping them, **in reality He is**. God “...Who foreknows the future...” **allows one to remain in a state of sin so that that the evil within might be revealed, thus making it possible to definitely eradicate it so as to** “... be cleansed...” “...reconstructed...” and “...Regenerated.” As a farmer does not plant “...*the seeds quickly on rocky earth...*” judging that it will be **more feasible later**, “...*likewise the Great Farmer of all nature postpones the Good Work in order not to become frivolous...*” **so that** it becomes fruitless and vain in the end.⁸⁴

St Gregory of Nazianzos proclaimed that it is “...*good for everything to be ruled and to be brought to an end...*” by God. Elsewhere he stated that “...His extreme **Kindness...**” is expressed in that “...*the good was made possible for us, not only spreading to our nature, but ... cultivated by our free will in both...*” good and evil **according to the inclination and action of** “...*our free will.*” **Interpreting the Biblical phrase** “...*to whom it has been given...*”⁸⁵ he observed that: “When you hear ‘...*to whom it has been given...*’ you must add **(that)** it has been given to those who are Called and **(who)** responded. **For when you hear** ‘...*so then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God Who shows Mercy...*’⁸⁶ **I advise** you to take **into** consideration the same as above.” For **many are** proud and **puffed up with** their **presumed virtues and achievements. They then** “...*give the credit to themselves and nothing to the Maker and Giver of Wisdom and Giver of Good...*” **even though** “... *the Word teaches ... that even to want something good, it is necessary to have help from God; for even to desire something Divine is a Gift from God’s Philanthropia.*” It is essential for us to offer ourselves but “...*to want is also from God...*” Therefore “...*naturally* everything is from God; and no matter how much you run, no matter how much you struggle, you need **Him Who gives the Crown.**” Referring to the **quotation**: “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain...”⁸⁷ he concluded that “...*I see that the Path is not empty, neither the war to the strong, nor the victory to those who fight, nor the ports to those who sail well, but it is God Who works out the victory, and saves the ship in the ports.*” He concluded: “...*And ‘...to whom it has been given...*’ add the **words**: ‘...*to those who are worthy; who did not receive this from the Father, but gave it to themselves.*’” Finally, the Holy Father, addressing **the Baptised, gave** them the following advice: “The forgiveness which you received, preserve it well, in order that the ‘...*to be forgiven...*’ is from God, but the ‘...*to be preserved...*’ is from you.”⁸⁸

St John Chrysostom, **interpreting** the phrase “...*for it is God Who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure...*”⁸⁹ **commented** that “...*if then He works, we must offer the intention composed for all, firm and undiffused.*” “If you want God to act the ‘...*to want...*’ **do not be afraid and do not do anything for He gives us the willingness and the**

⁸³ Matth. 11:21.

⁸⁴ Origen, *About Principals*, III, §§ 17 and 13-14, in Migne, P.G., 11, 284, 285, 273 and 276.

⁸⁵ Matth. 19:11.

⁸⁶ Rom. 9:16.

⁸⁷ Psalm 126(127):1.

⁸⁸ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, in Migne, P.G., 35, 737 and 428. Ibid, *To Matthew 19:1-12*, §§ 13 and 15, in Migne, P.G., 36, 297 and 300. Ibid, *Homily 40 to holy Baptism*, § 34, in Migne, P.G., 36, 408.

⁸⁹ Phil. 2:13.

work. When we want, He increases our want.” Then He “...**tells the ‘...to want..’ to act within us.** He does not **obstruct** our free will but shows that from the ‘...to achieve...’ to the ‘...to want...,’ we **require** much willingness.” Interpreting the “ ‘...It is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs...’ He does not take away the authority but shows that it is not everything of **him** who wants and who runs but it is required **by** the Grace from Above. For we must ... want and ... run, believing that they are not (due to) our hard work but (achieved) through God’s Philanthropia.” “For **man’s willingness** is not enough, if it does not enjoy **Power** from Above; and again we do not **acquire** anything from the **Power** from Above, if we do not have willingness. And these both Judas and **St Peter** showed.” Although Judas enjoyed the help of the Saviour, “...he did not benefit **at all** because he did not want to...” whereas **St Peter** showed much willingness and “...because he did not **enjoy** any help, he fell. And from these both...” the human willingness and the help from Above **as well as** Divine Grace, “...Virtue is weaved.” “God does not wait, as men do, to see the good or evil from the results of the events.” He foreknows **long** “...before who is evil, who is good. And He **Who** knows the secrets of the mind...” knows very well “...who are worthy of the Crowns and who are worthy of Condemnation.” “He knows those who are worthy...” **unlike any man who may think** “... that he knows very well.” “This is the Foreknowledge, which chooses them from their hard work; in order that the choosing is from God, which is done according to the willingness and foreknowledge. For from the first **day** the good and evil He knew and proclaimed.”⁹⁰

Referring to the words of Christ: “Come, you Blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...”⁹¹ St John Chrysostom **commented** that “...come and inherit...” **means it is** “... our own ... from **our** Father ...” **having been provided for us** from Above. “For even before they are realised, it is said, that these were prepared beforehand for you because He knew that you **would** become...” **Blessed.** Interpreting the words of St Paul in Ephesians **he remarked:** “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be Holy and without blame before Him in Love, having predestined us **for** adoption as sons by Jesus Christ Himself, according to the good pleasure of His Will.”⁹² He **emphasised** that **Christ** predestined us “...in Love...” and “...not because of our struggle or achievements...” **We were predestined to become the Blessed of God** “... because of Love...” and “...because of kindness alone; for the Grace is kindness.” **Furthermore,** “...not because of Love alone, but because of our virtue...” **as well because** if **our** predestination depended only on the Love of God “...everyone should **have** been Saved...” **for Grace** and Salvation is offered by God to all **mankind**, whereas if it depended only **upon** our virtue, Christ’s presence would have been unnecessary as **would have** “... all that which He achieved.”⁹³

Distinguishing the two Wills of God in **relation** to the predestination of men, he stressed **our predestined** Adoption “...according to His good Will, which is through **the fervent desire.**” He calls the “good Will” of God “...the former Will...” “...the first Will, the strong Will, the obstinacy...” which is **His need or wish** “...not to lose the sinners.” In other words God “...strongly desires our Salvation.” Besides this first Will there is in God “...a second

⁹⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *To Philippians*, Homily 8, § 1-2, in Migne, P.G., 62, 240. Ibid, *To Romans*, Homily 16, § 9, in Migne, P.G., 60, 561. Ibid, *To Matthew*, Homily 82, § 4, in Migne, P.G., 58, 742. Ibid, *Romans 9:13*, Homily to Romans 16, § 6, in Migne, P.G., 60, 556-557.

⁹¹ Matth. 25:34.

⁹² Ephes. 1:4-5.

⁹³ St. John Chrysostom, *To Matthew*, Homily 79, § 2; 69, § 2, in Migne, P.G., 58, 719, 650. Ibid, *To Ephesians*, Homily 1, § 2, in Migne, P.G., 62, 12.

Will...” which is “...to condemn the evil ones. For it is not necessary to punish the bad, **although** it is the Will...” of God. **Therefore God, according to** “...His admirable Foreknowledge, knows all before they take place...” and by “...choosing us, He dedicated **us** to Himself...” before all ages. **Moreover** “...He dedicated us to believe and He Sealed us to inherit the future things to come” and “He saw us having inherited before it happened.” **Once He had chosen and dedicated us “not acting anything after these, for He has formulated everything from above”⁹⁴.**

St Cyril of Alexandria, referring to the choosing of Jacob instead of Esau in the Epistle of Romans: “...as it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated...’⁹⁵ **commented** that **when** God **chose** Jacob “...He **threw** out Esau...” **However He did not reject Esau when He called Jacob to His Service** “...for God is not unjust...”⁹⁶ and His **choice** of Jacob **was because** “...God foreknew the things **that would** take place by both [men] and even their ways...” and “... He demanded Love from the Holiest...” of the two. In the case of the Blessed Jeremiah, God **said**: “...Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you; and before you came forth from the womb, I Sanctified you; I appointed you a Prophet to the nations.”⁹⁷ God foreknew that “...he **would** become a Prophet...” **who would be worthy of** “...being sent on the Mission...” of God. Likewise in the case of the choosing of Jacob, **who**, according to Divine Foreknowledge, was honoured with Love **while** Esau was justly **despised**. “Likewise we who have been Justified in the Faith...” **have been Sanctified by God** according to predestination.⁹⁸ According to St Paul **all humanity** “...whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the Image of His Son...” and **those** “...whom He Predestined, ... He also Called; whom He Called, these He also Justified; and whom He Justified, these He also Glorified.”⁹⁹

Speaking of “...those who are the Called according to His Purpose...”¹⁰⁰ he **proclaimed** that “...all our struggle to bring us our Justification was made through God the Father.” He **believed** that “...they became Called...” **due to their own** “...willingness and of Him Who Called them ...” for “...they alone are honoured...” to be Called. **Thus** “...all those who were predestined as being conformed to Christ’s Life and His imitators according to the capability of human nature...” **become His Elect**. He also **noted** that **before infants are able to do** anything good or right, are chosen; and this is **due to God’s** infallible Foreknowledge. God made everything and “...saw that it was good...”¹⁰¹ **Therefore**, under no circumstances should we ever think it is possible for God to become “...the creator of evil...” **since those who** “...become evil ... are pleased to do evil...” **and** although it is possible for them to chose to be good in God, they become **willing** “...vessels for dishonor.”^{102 103}

Theodoretos of Cyros exalts the Foreknowledge of God as being the prerequisite of the Calling and of the Predestination. He observed that “...He does not simply Call...” **us** but He Calls “...those who have good intentions...” **and** “...He has not simply Predestined but

⁹⁴ St. John Chrysostom, *To Ephesians*, Homily 1, § 2, in Migne, P.G., 62, 12. Ibid, *To Ephesians*, Homily 1, § 2, in Montfaucon, v. 11, p. 12.

⁹⁵ Rom. 9:13. Mal. 1:2-3.

⁹⁶ Rom. 3:5.

⁹⁷ Jer. 1:5.

⁹⁸ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Malachi*, v. I, ch. 1, 3, in Migne, P.G., 72, 281 and 284.

⁹⁹ Rom. 8:29, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Rom. 8:28.

¹⁰¹ Gen. 1:4, 8, 12, 18, 21, 25.

¹⁰² Rom. 9:21.

¹⁰³ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Romans* 8:28 and 29 and 9:14-24, fragments, in Migne, P.G., 74, 836-840.

foreknowing, He Predestined.” Furthermore “...for those whose *intentions* He foreknows, He *Predestines* from Above...” and having Predestined them, “... He Called them...” “...for God foreknows everything and those which will take place, He promotes as God.” In the case of Jacob and Esau “...He does not wait for the events but even...” when they were in the belly, “He, foreknowing, proclaimed the difference of their intention. For the choosing is not unjust, but it occurs because of men’s intention.”¹⁰⁴

Finally, St John of Damascus emphasised the Foreknowledge of God according to which He “...justly works together *with* those who will the good according to His Foreknowledge...” while “...He *justly* abandons the evil, again according to His Foreknowledge.” He also makes the same differentiation as St John Chrysostom concerning the two Wills of God. In other words His “first” or “former Will,” which is called His “Good Will,” wants all men to be Saved and to partake of His Heavenly Kingdom, while His “following Will,” being Just, consents to the condemnation of those who sin and oppose His Grace. God “...beforehand wants and has Good Will...” towards our good deeds and virtuous life, while “...for the evil and really bad, [He] neither wanted before nor will He ever want...” although “... He consents because of the free will of man.” For God does not want the evil that is done by man’s own free will and neither does He force goodness and virtue upon mankind. Consequently, St John of Damascus accepted the term “Predestination” but excluded the choice of Salvation of man because absolute Predestination restricts and removes man’s free will.

5. Predestination in Relation to Those who Would be Condemned

It is obvious that as God foreknows the capability of acceptance and good intention of men, He predestines them for Salvation and inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom. Likewise, foreknowing the hardness of heart and the unrepentance of those who *spitefully reject Divine* Grace that is offered to them, God condemns them to Eternal Death. Between the Predestination of those who will be Saved and those who will be Condemned, there exists a great difference. For those who are predestined for Eternal Life, God “works together” with them through His Grace for their progress and perfection in the Life of Virtue, whereas those who will be Condemned, He simply permits them to continue according to their corrupted hearts and wills. He disapproves of and turns away from their evil deeds. God foresees their consequent Eternal Punishment and Condemnation but He certainly never Predestinated them to commit wickedness and sin. Undoubtedly, God wants their Salvation as well and for this reason He patiently tolerates them, “...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”¹⁰⁵ Since the “ungodly men” alone and by their own stubborn wills alienate themselves from the Grace of Salvation by remaining in wickedness, their punishment was “...long ago...” “...marked out for this Condemnation.”¹⁰⁶ It is understandable why Holy Scripture does not often refer to the Predestination of sinners as this term is used for the Just.¹⁰⁷ Our Lord Jesus Christ, Calls the Just to “...inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world...”¹⁰⁸ whereas sinners are

¹⁰⁴ Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To Romans* 8:28-30 and 9:10-13, in Migne, P.G., 82, 141. Theodorus of Mopsuestias, *Fragments to Romans*, in Migne, P.G., 66, 832 and 841.

¹⁰⁵ 2 Peter 3:9.

¹⁰⁶ Jude 4.

¹⁰⁷ St. John of Damascus, *Exposition. About foreknowledge and destination*, II, 29 and 30, in Migne, P.G., 94, 968-969 and 972. Ibid, *Dialogue against Manichaeans*, §§ 78 and 79, in Migne, P.G., 94, 1577.

¹⁰⁸ Matth. 25:34.

admonished to "...depart from Him, you cursed, into the Everlasting Fire prepared for the devil and his angels."¹⁰⁹

6. Despite Predestination Man's Free Will Always Remains Uncommitted

Under the influence of Divine Grace, the human will remains free, even when man either submits to the Holy Spirit or when he rejects this Grace. The sinner who becomes hardhearted is completely responsible for the destruction caused within him, for this is due to his own corrupted will. Instead of being softened and healed as a result of the outpouring of Divine Grace upon him, the unrepentant sinner's spiritual state becomes more cynical and more degraded. This is evident from our Lord's words when He criticised the hardness of Jerusalem, saying: "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the Prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!*"¹¹⁰ It is also confirmed by St Stephen the Archdeacon and Protomartyr (First Holy Martyr) when he addressed the members of the Sanhedrin (the High Court of the Temple). He accused them of being "...stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears..." for they "...always resist the Holy Spirit..." as their "...fathers did."¹¹¹ If God, before all ages, foreseeing their stubborn disobedience, allowed them to be Condemned, it occurred for no other reason except due to their own free will because God's Foreknowledge did not create them as sinners. Just as a doctor foreknows the resulting mortality of serious illness but his knowledge is not the cause of death, likewise Divine Foreknowledge is not the cause of man's Condemnation or Salvation. God foreknows because He is Almighty and time (past, present and future) is always present before Him. "*Moreover, whom He Predestined, these He also Called; whom He Called, these He also Justified; and whom He Justified, and these He also Glorified.*"¹¹²

Holy Scripture presents God as telling Pharaoh: "...for this Purpose have you been preserved, that I might display in you My Strength, and that My Name might be published in all the earth..."¹¹³ It is worthy of note that Pharaoh was a "...vessel of wrath prepared for destruction..." whom God "...endured with much longsuffering..."¹¹⁴ while awaiting his repentance and correction. Just as doctors do not create venomous snakes but they can take the venom from them in order to produce an anti-venom that will cure those who have been poisoned by snakebite, similarly "...the Work of Divine Wisdom and Virtue and Power is not only to do good..." but furthermore to lead others towards a good end by delivering sinners from their evil deeds and their "...corrupted intentions."¹¹⁵

God not only shows His Mercy and Kindness even to the "...vessels of wrath prepared for destruction..." but also by the outpouring of His Enlightening Grace in His good pleasure, which attracts man to Salvation. This Divine Grace, if it is not refused, works out the Life-giving Act while those who reject it suffer the consequences according to the examples of

¹⁰⁹ Matth. 25:41.

¹¹⁰ Matth. 23:37.

¹¹¹ Acts 7:51.

¹¹² Rom. 8:30.

¹¹³ Ex. 9:16.

¹¹⁴ Rom. 9:22.

¹¹⁵ St. Ecumenius, *To Romans*, in Migne, P.G., 118, 517. St. John Chrysostom, *To Romans*, in Migne, P.G., 60, 560. Theodoretus of Cyrus, *To Romans*, in Migne, P.G., 82, 157. Clement the Alexandrian, *Stromata*, I, 17, in B, v. 7, p. 269.

Judas and Demas. Judas Iscariot was Chosen by Christ Himself and was included among the Twelve Disciples. He enjoyed not only all the Divine Grace that the others received but also the special favour of our Lord when, at the last moment, Christ tried to prevent him from falling off the catastrophic precipice that he, by his own will, had prepared for himself. When Judas rejected the opportunity to repent, he became a “...vessel of wrath prepared for destruction.” Besides the corruption of a “...vessel of wrath...” God also used these people for the achievement of the Salvation of the world and the fulfillment of His Eternal Plan such as in the case of Demas, who was co-worker of St Paul during the Apostle’s first imprisonment in Rome. Later, during St Paul’s second imprisonment when the situation had become far more dangerous and the threats against the Apostle’s life increased, Demas renounced the Saint, thereby revealing that he “...loved this present world...”¹¹⁶ rather than the Eternal Kingdom of God. In both circumstances, the Work of God’s Grace at first appears to have been accepted by these men who progressed in their faith until they willingly renounced it for their own selfish reasons. Their downfall was caused by their own free will and certainly not because of God.

It is therefore obvious that those who are Chosen and Predestined for Salvation do not have the Grace of God forced upon them because all the Work of Salvation is only possible through the Action of Divine Grace, “...to will and to do for His good pleasure...”¹¹⁷ but never without their consent and co-operation. The desire for Salvation and the Power to achieve it is the Work of Divine Grace, which is prepared and perfected in man in such a spiritual way that he does not become passive, participating or offering anything. Faith and man’s return to God’s Grace are Divine Gifts of Grace, which compel man to move by his own free will towards Repentance and the acceptance of our Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour and King. The Justification, the growth and the Perfection in the newness of Life is the Work of Grace and through the Power and Strength of this Grace, man is cleansed and perfected in Moral and Spiritual Life.

The flesh and the “carnally minded”¹¹⁸ resist God’s action of Regeneration. Man often expresses rebellious and wild intentions, which make the “Calling” more difficult. Therefore Divine Grace (according to the Parable of the Great Supper)¹¹⁹ to “...compel them to come in, that My House may be filled...”¹²⁰ is necessary to co-ordinate and to strengthen man in order for him to look up to God and to distance himself from the sinful path of the ancient deceit. Hence “...although it is optional to all to believe and this is acceptable to God...” concerning the Gentiles who were “...bonded under an unbearable greed and the devil’s yoke...” it was essential for this co-ordinated Calling.¹²¹ Again, through trials, other pedagogic measures or redeeming obstacles that are used by Divine Grace to “compel” us, it aims at convincing those who are compelled, to accept the Work of Divine Grace by their own freewill, co-operating with it and developing the hidden seeds of their good intentions which God, Who “...searches the minds and hearts...”¹²² of everyone, discerned. Those who are compelled but who for a brief moment resist the Work of Grace, when the elements of acceptance and goodwill within them develop, will glorify the All-merciful God for the Victory that they

¹¹⁶ 2 Tim. 4:10.

¹¹⁷ Phil. 2:13.

¹¹⁸ Rom. 8:6. See also: Rom. 7:14-24

¹¹⁹ Luke 14:16-24.

¹²⁰ Luke 14:23.

¹²¹ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *To Luke 14:23*, in Migne, P.G., 72, 792.

¹²² Rev. 2:23. Jer. 11:20; 17:10.

gained over the resistance **that** they themselves had developed against the Saving Work of Grace.

From the beginning to the end, in the Work of the Return and Sanctification of man, Divine Grace and human will are **continuously** joined and **connected** to one another. **Although they coincide** to perfect the Work of Salvation of Predestined man, **under** no circumstances does this Work of Divine Grace **ever** abolish human will **or** vice versa. When this **Work reaches** completion, God is the One Who Regenerates man. **Subsequently Regenerated** man is glorified because he also willingly struggled and cooperated with Divine Grace to put **the old man within him** to death **as well as** to reform him “...in the image...” of God Who created him.

7. Falling from Grace is a Constant Danger

Predestination according to the above is relative and the Salvation of man depends upon two factors: the synergy of man’s weak will **and Divine Grace**. Holy **Scripture addresses** many admonitions to man in order that he may be attentive **and** not to fall from God’s Grace. The examples of Judas Iscariot and Demas convince us that no matter how much the Work of Salvation **is able to** progress within us, there is always the danger **of completely** falling from Grace. It is possible “...for those who were once Enlightened, and have tasted the Heavenly Gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the Powers of the age to come...” to fall away **making it** impossible even “...to renew them again to Repentance.”¹²³ For this St Paul the Apostle wrote: “Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.”¹²⁴ He also urged all Christians to “...work out their own Salvation with fear and trembling...” being **constantly** watchful of all the traps of the enemies and the threats of the devil, for he who thinks that he stands must “...take heed lest he fall.”¹²⁵ Elsewhere he wrote: “...Having been Justified by Faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom also we have access by Faith into this Grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the Love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who was given to us.”¹²⁶

¹²³ Heb. 6:4-6.

¹²⁴ 1 Corinth. 9:26-27.

¹²⁵ 1 Corinth. 10:12.

¹²⁶ Rom. 5:1-5.