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AQUINAS
& CALVIN
on ROMANS

*God's Justification and
Our Participation*

CHARLES RAITH II

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
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First Edition published in 2014

Impression: 1

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013954860

ISBN 978-0-19-870825-4

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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*To Mindy
apart from whom none of the following would have
mattered to me*

Preface

Underlying the following study is the conviction that historical theology can serve ecumenical dialogue. While the historical theologian strives to understand theologians and theological texts within the contexts and thought patterns of their particular periods of history, the fruit of the analysis is by no means confined to better understanding that time period, just as the divisions arising in times past between ecclesial communities are still with us today. The results of historical analysis aid contemporary dialogue by unearthing the theological judgments underlying these divisions, thus bringing clarity to our present situation, while also purging us of false assumptions about and hagiographical retellings of times past. In the process, we also discover resources for enriching our theologies, sometimes in ways we once thought inimical to our confessional identities.

One area of historical theology in need of clarification is the relationship between the theologies of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin. By the time of the sixteenth century, one could have legitimately asked: "Will the real Aquinas stand up?" Not only were there differing interpretations of Aquinas among the Thomists, but Aquinas also appeared in the Occamist school of thought. And it is unclear how much of Aquinas's thought Calvin had in mind when he criticised the "scholastics," as Calvin was not one to name his opponents. Thus, only a close reading of the texts will help clarify the relation between Calvin's theology and the thought of Aquinas.

The results of this study, then, will both help clear up the past and contribute to a fruitful ecumenical future. As Catholic theologian and ecumenist Gustav Weigel noted years ago, "The Catholic theologian, whether he knows it or not, has in his thought elements which are shared by Calvin. We must for ecumenical reasons produce a Calvinistic-Catholic dialogue. It should be very fruitful, if we can forget ancient shibboleths and consider Calvin and the Catholic divines, Aquinas above all others, with a scientific study of the texts."

The present work is the result of numerous influences that have shaped the historical and ecumenical sensibilities embodied in what follows. Two guiding lights must be set apart for special mention: Hans

Boersma and Matthew Levering. Many thanks to you both for your patience and friendship and the many ways you contributed to making this work possible. I also want to thank those who read previous versions of the chapters of the book and contributed to its quality: Todd Billings, Holly Taylor Coolman, Edgardo C3lon-Emeric, Marc Guerra, Fr. Matthew Lamb, Steven A. Long, Fr. Thomas Joseph White, Roland Barnes, and Jeff Reimer. A special thanks to Timothy George, who placed in me as an MDiv student a desire for both historical theology and ecumenical engagement, and to David Steinmetz and Richard Muller, neither of whom I have met personally but whose work has guided me immensely in my understanding of the sixteenth century.

Last and most importantly I want to thank my wife, Ansley. Words cannot capture the contributions you have made to this book and to my life. Thank you.

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List of Abbreviations

ST	<i>Summa theologiae</i>
CWE	The Collected Works of Erasmus
IJST	<i>International Journal of Systematic Theology</i>
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
LXX	Septuaginta, ed. A. Rahlfs
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>Institutes</i>
CO	<i>Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia</i> , Corpus Reformatorum, ed. W. Baum <i>et al.</i> , 59 vols.
CTS	Calvin Translation Society translation of <i>Calvin's Commentaries</i> , 45 vols.
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers series
PL	Patrologia Latina
CPG	J. Todd Billings, <i>Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>

Unless otherwise noted, English translations of the final edition of the *Institutes* are from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1559, ed. J. T. McNeill and F. L. Battles, 2 vols., and of the *Summa theologiae* are from the English Dominican Province translation, 5 vols.

Introduction

In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul makes the intriguing and somewhat perplexing claim that Christians are to “work out” their own salvation, while at the same time God is working out that very same salvation. He writes: “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”¹ Naturally, we might wonder: Well, which is it, Paul? Do Christians work out their own salvation, or does God work out their salvation? Rather than positing divine and human activity in these “either/or” terms, Paul conveys the idea of what we might describe as a cooperative relationship between God’s work and human working, in which Christian activity is at the same time understood as God’s activity. Indeed, Pauline passages such as this one led Augustine to famously comment: “The God who made us without us will not justify us without us.”² Clearly Augustine believes that God is to be credited with the justification of sinners and that God’s work of justifying sinners somehow occurs “with us.” Christians not only receive the results of Christ’s work but in some way they are also taken up into and *participate* in Christ’s work itself.³

¹ Philippians 2:12–13 (English Standard Version).

² Augustine, *Sermones*, clxix, 13 (PL 38.923): *Qui ergo fecit te sine te, non te iustificat sine te*. For the reception of this phrase in the Middle Ages, see Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 92–117.

³ Michael Root, “Freedom, Authority, and the Priesthood of All Believers,” in *Critical Issues in Ecclesiology: Essays in Honor of Carl E. Braaten*, eds. Alberto L. García and Susan K. Wood (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 93. I am not concerned in this study with Aquinas’s and Calvin’s accounts of created participation, that is, how the created order and its history participate in God’s providence and activity, but rather more strictly with his account of soteriological participation, that is, how Christians participate in God’s activity of saving his elect and bringing them into beatitude. Both forms of participation are at work in Matthew Levering’s *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), noticed especially when he speaks of our “ongoing participation in God’s active providence, both metaphysically and Christologically-pneumatologically” (1).

CALVIN AND PARTICIPATION

John Calvin's theology of our participation in Christ has received renewed attention in recent years, with the topic appearing either as a locus of discussion in itself or as embedded in discussions of union with Christ, the *duplex gratia*, mysticism, the spiritual life, or deification (*theosis*).⁴ These studies have arisen for a variety of reasons, from responding to criticisms of Calvin's theology on the topic of participation especially from "gift" theologians such as John Milbank,⁵ to correcting inaccurate portraits of Calvin's thinking,⁶ to seeing Calvin as a resource for articulating a robust vision for Christian participation in God's work of salvation for today. The groundbreaking work of Todd Billings is of particular significance.⁷ The "burden" of Billings's work is "not only to clarify the meaning of participation in Calvin's theology, but to show that it is a weighty concept in his thought."⁸ Billings has the critiques of Radical Orthodoxy primarily in his sights. He demonstrates that Milbank, Ward, and Oliver fail to take Calvin's participatory thought seriously enough and that their comparisons between Calvin and Aquinas erroneously evaluate Calvin's thought with foreign concepts and categories.⁹ In response, Billings asserts

⁴ See, for example, Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology*, Studies in Christian History and Thought (Colorado Spring, CO: Paternoster, 2008); Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

⁵ John Milbank, "Alternative Protestantism," in *Creation, Covenant and Participation: Radical Orthodoxy and the Reformed Tradition*, ed. James K. A. Smith and James H. Olthius (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 25–41; Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 156–7; Graham Ward, "The Church as the Erotic Community," in *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, ed. L. Boeve and L. Leijssen (Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 167–204.

⁶ One common position countered by those emphasizing participation in Calvin is that Calvin radically opposes the divine and human by creating a sharp separation between the two; for an overview of accounts positing this separation, see Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 29–31; Philip Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), Ch. 1.

⁷ J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); abbreviated CPG throughout.

⁸ CPG, 19.

⁹ For Billings, Calvin's approach to participation reflects a subtle combination of discontinuity and continuity with the earlier tradition (CPG, 15). Billings states: "While

that Calvin's theology of participation "emerges from a soteriology which affirms a differentiated union of God and humanity in creation and redemption."¹⁰ The term "differentiated union," explains Billings, captures the twin claims that Creator and creature are always distinguished, while nonetheless humans are united to God before the Fall and believers are united to God in an eschatologically conditioned way.¹¹ "In the eschaton," writes Billings, "believers will regain their primal participation in God, yet in an even more profound way of participation, since they have been made one with Christ through the Spirit."¹² Calvin's vision of participation is deeply patristic and medieval, claims Billings, while his sixteenth-century debates about the significance of the language of "participation" with thinkers such as Osiander led him to carve out his unique position on the topic.¹³ It is in contrast to Osiander's "infusing" of the divine in the believer that Calvin sets forth his differentiated union; yet Calvin's desire to retain a deep sense of Christ's indwelling through the Spirit led others to charge him with being "Osiandrian."¹⁴ Billings makes clear that, contra Osiander, justification is "irreducibly forensic" in Calvin and always distinguished from sanctification, while at the same time Calvin holds the two together through his teaching on union with Christ.¹⁵

Billings explores the theme of Calvin and participation through numerous theological *loci*, such as his language of "union with Christ" and his teaching on prayer, the sacraments, and the law. Significant for our study, Billings locates the development of Calvin's thinking on participation in his interaction with Romans. Billings highlights Romans 6:1–14 and Romans 8 as having profound implications for a variety of *loci* related to participation as they are developed in Calvin's *Institutes*.¹⁶ Billings canvasses Calvin's commentaries and explains that the frequent appearance of the images of adoption, engrafting,

there is no church father with whom Calvin claims complete agreement, he does make impressive, if eclectic, developments in engagement with patristic texts" (CPG, 66).

¹⁰ CPG, 16.

¹¹ CPG, 16 n. 57. Billings explains that "union" does not imply fusion in which divine attributes "overwhelm" human attributes. Human identity is maintained in the union.

¹² CPG, 16.

¹³ CPG, 15; 56.

¹⁴ CPG, 57.

¹⁵ CPG, 58–9.

¹⁶ CPG, 79.

and participation in places unwarranted by the biblical text demonstrates the impact of Calvin's engagement with Romans and in particular his commentary on Romans 6 for his participatory vision of the Christian faith.¹⁷

While Billings's work has demonstrated the robust place of participation in Calvin's teaching and has once again moved participation to the center of Protestant reflection,¹⁸ in this book I will argue that Calvin's vision of soteriological participation has its limitations, with implications for soteriological topics such as justification, sanctification, and merit.¹⁹ It is not enough to highlight particular locations in Calvin's commentary on Romans where Calvin seems to embrace a robust participatory vision. A more accurate picture results when Calvin's engagement with Romans is considered more broadly.²⁰ Billings rightly recognizes, for example, that Romans 6 deeply impacts Calvin's understanding of our participation in Christ through

¹⁷ CPG, 94; see 93 n. 81 for a list of places where these clusters of images appear.

¹⁸ Due to increased attention to participation in Calvin, Peter Leithart has recently spoken of a "new perspective on Calvin" that parallels the new perspective on Luther among Finnish Lutherans. Peter Leithart, "New Perspective on Calvin," *Credenda agenda*, <<http://www.credenda.org>>, accessed 28 November 2011. On the notion of a "New Perspective on Calvin" as it relates to emphasizing the role of *unio Christi* in Calvin's soteriology, which is directly related to the topic of participation, see the discussion between Thomas L. Wenger and Marcus Johnson; Thomas L. Wenger, "The New Perspective on Calvin: Responding to Recent Calvin Interpretations," *JETS* 50 (2007): 311–28; Marcus Johnson, "New or Nuanced Perspective on Calvin? A Reply to Thomas Wenger," *JETS* 51 (2008): 543–58; Thomas Wenger, "Theological Spectacles and a Paradigm of Centrality: A Reply to Marcus Johnson," *JETS* 51 (2008): 573–90.

¹⁹ I note that it is important that focus be given to the thought of a particular reformer rather than attempt to speak about "the" Reformation doctrine of soteriological participation, given that any sort of uniformity over the doctrine of justification, for example, developed slowly over a period of roughly thirty years; see David C. Fink, "Divided by Faith: The Protestant Doctrine of Justification and the Confessionalization of Biblical Exegesis," (PhD diss., Duke University, 2010). Even within Reformed theology, Calvin's view is not always representative; see Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition: On the Work of Christ and the Order of Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012).

²⁰ N. T. Wright notes of Romans: "It is no good picking out a few favorite lines from Romans and hoping from them to understand the whole book...we must follow the sequence of thought, the inner logic, of the whole work" ("The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, ed. Leander E. Keck, vol. 10 [Nashville: Abingdon, 2002], 396–7). I believe this advice applies by implication to understanding Aquinas's and Calvin's commentaries: in order to understand interpretive judgments made at a particular juncture of Romans, it is necessary to understand their interpretation of other parts of Romans and their vision of Romans as a whole.

the Spirit. But Calvin's interpretation of Romans 6 appears within a broader interpretive trajectory that necessitates that we wait until this chapter of Romans—in which, for Calvin, Paul *turns* from addressing justification to addressing sanctification—before we begin to see robust signs of participation. Such postponement is not present, as we shall see, in Aquinas's interpretation of Romans. This is due in large part to Aquinas's doctrine of justification as transformation rather than Calvin's extrinsic-imputational understanding of justification. We discover that Calvin's understanding of justification, combined with the *way* Calvin distinguishes justification from sanctification, mutes his participatory understanding of our salvation. Billings rightly celebrates the way Calvin “held together biblical images of salvation that are legal and forensic with those that are transformational, in a way that is non-reductive... Calvin's exegetically derived, composite model of the double grace in union with Christ can offer suggestive possibilities toward a ‘both/and.’”²¹ I do not deny *that* Calvin held together biblical images of a legal and transformational nature. But it is the *way* Calvin held them together that displays the limitations of participation in his account of salvation. I agree with Billings's defense of Calvin on participation in the face of criticisms from “gift” theologians when he emphasizes that the forensic aspect of justification as the imputation of Christ's justice is linked with his doctrine of union with Christ—believers come to “possess” Christ and his righteousness.²² Yet Calvin's interpretive judgments lead me to ask: What are the implications for participatory union with Christ when “possessing” Christ leaves the possessor still damnable *in se*, and this in *distinction* from one's standing *in Christo*? What is the nature of our participation in God's activity of saving us if Calvin declares all our works condemnable *in se* even if pardoned and rewarded *in Christo*?

Calvin's sharp turn *away* from the topic of Romans 6 when we reach Romans 8—Calvin believes that Paul returns his focus to justification and away from sanctification—illustrates how short-lived the participatory vision of Romans 6 is within Calvin's broader interpretation. I find Calvin's claim that Paul “returns” to the topic of justification at Romans 8, the way Calvin distinguishes justification and sanctification *within* Romans 8, and Calvin's relegation of good works to mere

²¹ Billings, “John Calvin's Soteriology: On the Multifaceted ‘Sum’ of the Gospel,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11 (2009): 442.

²² CPG, 15.

“signs” of receiving Christ’s imputed justice—all interpretive judgments in conflict with Aquinas’s interpretation—to reflect his limited participatory vision of our *unio Christi*. Mark Garcia explains Calvin’s desire to hold together the role of good works/co-suffering with Christ in obtaining eternal life with his rejection of merit at 8:17 (as well as 2:6, 2:13, and 6:7) by noting Calvin’s use of the *ordo* of “justify,” “sanctify,” and “glorify” at 8:29–30.²³ Although Calvin no doubt has the *ordo* in mind when addressing the believer’s good works in Romans 8, Garcia’s account under-appreciates the centrality of Romans 6–7, and especially 7:14–25, for Calvin’s rejection of merit. It is here that Calvin demonstrates that a believer’s works are still condemnable *in se* but pardoned and rewarded *in Christo*—a point, I argue, reflecting the limits of participation in Calvin. When consideration is given to the way Calvin’s commentary unfolds over the course of Romans 1–8, we find that Calvin consistently interprets Christ’s salvific work principally in less participatory terms of what Christ does *for* and *to* us rather than, as with Aquinas, what Christ does *in* and *through* us. These nonparticipatory dimensions of Calvin’s interpretation not only situate the believer’s relationship to Christ’s work of salvation in more extrinsic terms than Aquinas’s interpretation, but they also create difficulties for Calvin in his interpretation of Paul’s teaching in Romans that are simply not found in Aquinas’s interpretation.

HISTORICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMPARING AQUINAS AND CALVIN ON ROMANS

Calvin was well aware that successful scriptural interpretation only occurs within the community of the Christian faithful. In the dedicatory letter to his commentary on Romans—his most important and well-known scriptural commentary²⁴—Calvin situates his reading of Romans within a community of readers, citing the work of Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer, and his interpretation manifests clear indebtedness to these interpreters. Calvin expresses an even higher regard for the “ancient commentators, whose godliness,

²³ Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 108–10.

²⁴ See below.

learning, sanctity and age have secured them such great authority that we should not despise anything which they have produced" (2.41–43).²⁵ Throughout his commentary, we find Calvin engaging and resourcing various church fathers, such as Augustine, Chrysostom, and Origen.²⁶ Recent scholarship on Calvin has helped further illuminate the catholic character of Calvin's reforming project.²⁷ Calvin clearly understood his engagement with Scripture as occurring within the Great Tradition, and he understands his own interpretation as being "for the Church of God" (1.25).²⁸

It should come as no surprise, however, that Calvin applauds only the "ancient commentators" in his dedicatory letter and leaves the "schoolmen" for criticism throughout the commentary. It is well known that Calvin had few positive things to say about the schoolmen of medieval scholasticism. In Calvin's perspective, the theology of the schoolmen had only progressed from bad to worse with their fruitless distinctions and degraded theology. Particularly problematic for Calvin was the presence of a rampant Pelagianism present in the schoolmen's theology.²⁹ This fact is important in relation to this study, given that many of the controversies surrounding Pelagianism or semi-Pelagianism pertain to issues of human participation in divine salvific activity. To be sure, Calvin is able to distinguish between

²⁵ Iohannis Calvini, *Commentarius in Epistolarum Pauli ad Romanos*, ed., T. H. L. Parker (Leiden: Brill, 1981); abbreviated *Romanos* throughout. All citations, which will commonly occur in the body of the text, refer to page and line number. For the English, I consult John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and to the Thessalonians*, trans. Ross Mackenzie, vol. 8 of *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960).

²⁶ For more on Calvin and the Church Fathers, see A. N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999); J. van Oort, "John Calvin and the Church Fathers," in *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West: From the Carolingians to the Maurists*, ed. Irene Backus, 661–700 (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

²⁷ J. Todd Billings, "The Catholic Calvin," *Pro Ecclesia* 20 (2011): 120–34; David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

²⁸ For my use of the phrase "Great Tradition," see Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

²⁹ *Inst.* 3.11.15; 3.25.11. In his commentary on Romans, explicit attacks against the "schoolmen" occur eight times, although the number of attacks against scholastic theology increases if the theology upheld by the "Papists" is considered. Calvin's criticisms of scholastic theology is part of a larger challenge posed to scholasticism by sixteenth-century humanist-oriented Christians. For Erasmus, see Allan K. Jenkins and Patrick Preston, *Biblical Scholarship and the Church: A Sixteenth-Century Crisis of Authority* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007); for Luther, see Erika Rummel, *The Humanist-Scholastic Debate in the Renaissance & Reformation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

different schoolmen, as does Martin Bucer, mentioning also the existence of more “sound” or “profound” schoolmen.³⁰ Yet neither of these theologians mentions any particular examples, and these acknowledgements are sparse. The general thrust of Calvin’s critique is clear: by the time of the medieval scholastic period, Christian thinking had declined significantly from the teaching of the Scriptures, and the Reformers searched the Scriptures to correct these theological corruptions.³¹

Who, exactly, does Calvin have in mind when he criticizes the schoolmen? Calvin rarely provides names, but recent scholarship has begun to clarify the relationship between the Reformers and their medieval predecessors. Richard Muller is frequently noted in this regard. Muller has argued that due to the theological polemics of the sixteenth century, the positive relationship between Calvin and his “genuine” medieval forerunners became “obscured.”³² For Muller, Calvin’s attacks on the *scholastici* are often in actuality attacks aimed at his French contemporaries—the *théologiens Sorboniques*—and their extreme nominalist views, rather than such “luminaries” as Thomas Aquinas.³³ Given the numerous theological developments that transpired between Aquinas’s time and the time of the Reformation

³⁰ See Calvin, *Inst.* 3.14.11; Martin Bucer, *De Vera Reconciliatione*, 165(r), cited in Brian Lugioyo, *Martin Bucer’s Doctrine of Justification: Reformation Theology and Early Modern Irenicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193. References are only made to theological judgments, with no explicit names being provided.

³¹ In their appeal to Scripture for reform of the church, the Reformers benefited from the broader intellectual and methodological shifts of the Renaissance. Michael C. Legaspi remarks: “There was a clear affinity between the [Renaissance] humanist program, captured in the slogan *ad fontes* (‘to the sources’), and the *sola scriptura* principle of the Reformers. Humanists and reformers placed the study of ancient texts in their original languages at the center of their programs... In this, both groups were opposed to scholasticism” (*The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2010], 11); cf. Euan Cameron, *The European Reformation* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1991], 136–44.

³² Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 41. In terms of Calvin’s broader engagement with the medieval tradition, Ganoczy argues, contra Torrance and Reuter, for the rather late development of Calvin’s knowledge of medieval theology (*The Young Calvin*, trans. David Foxgrover and Wade Provo [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987], 173–8). Muller affirms Ganoczy, concluding: “Calvin’s theology must be read in its development in dialogue with the past and with his contemporaries” (*The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 13).

³³ Richard A. Muller, “Scholasticism in Calvin: Relation and Disjunction,” in *Calvinus Sincerioris Religionis Vindex: Calvin as Protector of the Purer Religion*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser and Brian G. Armstrong (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1997), 264.

era,³⁴ scholarship has increasingly recognized Calvin's lack of knowledge of and genuine engagement with the interpretation and theology of Aquinas.³⁵ Calvin only mentions Aquinas by name twice, and on one occasion Calvin (tellingly) misinterprets Aquinas's thought; his engagement with Aquinas on merit reflects the judgments of Calvin's more immediate opponents rather than Aquinas himself.³⁶ When Aquinas's and Calvin's commentaries on Romans are read together, we discover that most if not all of Calvin's warnings in his commentary about the theology of the schoolmen do not apply to Aquinas's positions, while Calvin's principal positive affirmations are embraced by Aquinas as well.³⁷ Moreover, the numerous identical interpretations contained within Aquinas's and Calvin's commentaries—not only broadly in how

³⁴ Russell L. Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Steven Ozment, *The Age of Reform 1250–1550: An Intellectual and Religious History of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). See also the still deeply valuable Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963; repr. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

³⁵ See Heiko Oberman, "Initia Calvini: The Matrix of Calvin's Reformation," in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 124 n. 34. Hiltrud Stadtland-Neumann claimed in his analysis of Calvin's understanding of the sermon on the mount that Aquinas exerted a profound influence on Calvin's thought (*Evangelische Radikalismen in der Sicht Calvins. Sein Verständnis der Bergpredigt und der Aussendungsrede (Matt. 10)*). Beiträge zur Geschichte und Lehre der Reformierten Kirche, Band 24 (Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag des Erziehungsvereins, 1966), 64, 68. Oberman points out, however, that Stadtland-Neumann made his claim of Calvin's direct dependence on Aquinas without consulting Peter Lombard's commentaries on canon law or Duns Scotus's treatment of the issue ("Initia Calvini," 118–19). See also Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, ch. 10; Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 40–1; Paul Helm, *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 150, who claims that since Calvin mentions Aquinas by name—although only twice—it cannot be argued that "he knew nothing of him," but he agrees that the general intellectual relation between Calvin and Aquinas "is a puzzling one."

³⁶ See Charles Raith II, "Calvin's Critique of Merit, and Why Aquinas (Mostly) Agrees," *Pro Ecclesia* 20 (2011): 156–8. We must avoid reading too much into the fact that Calvin mentions Aquinas by name only twice, given Calvin's propensity of avoiding naming his opponents when disagreeing with their thought. Cf. David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 13–16. More important is the fact that Calvin misreads Aquinas in one of the few places Calvin feels compelled to mention the Angelic Doctor.

³⁷ E. H. Harbison noted some time ago that because of Calvin's humanist environment, traditional scholasticism was less immediately present for rejection, and thus Calvin retained much of its value in a way that Erasmus or Luther, who reacted more violently against scholasticism, could not; there is, therefore, "more continuity

they interpret a particular section but also in the identical wording chosen to expound the text and in the identical cross-references engaged at the same junctures in Romans—illustrate that Calvin interprets Romans within a broad tradition of thought that includes Aquinas. The similarities should come as no surprise given Aquinas's and Calvin's shared appreciation for Augustine, but the they cannot always be traced back to Augustine. Such data strengthens the hypothesis for an exegetical link between Calvin and Aquinas, possibly through the work of Nicholas of Lyra.³⁸

At the same time, the fact that numerous theological developments transpired between Aquinas's time and the time of Calvin alerts us to the presence in Calvin's day of accounts of the divine–human causal relationship that differed, sometimes significantly, from Aquinas's participatory vision. Between Aquinas and Calvin stand two theologians frequently cited as setting forth a diminished version of participation than found in Aquinas's theology: Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. In his recent book, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Reformation Secularized Society*, Brad Gregory emphasizes the impact of Scotus and Ockham on Reformation-era theology as part of mapping out a trajectory of Western secularization that in many ways he roots in the nonparticipatory dimensions of the God–human relationship embraced by the Reformers. “The Western world today,” claims Gregory, “is an extraordinarily complex, tangled product of rejections, retentions, and transformations of medieval Western Christianity, in which the Reformation era constitutes the critical watershed.”³⁹ For Gregory, Scotus marks a turn in medieval theology in his conceptualization of God and creation in metaphysically univocal terms. In contrast to Aquinas, “Scotus argued that at least *one* predicate was and had to be common to and shared *in the*

between Aquinas and Calvin than between Aquinas and either Erasmus or Luther” (*The Christian Scholar in the Age of Reformation* [New York: Scribner's, 1956], 145).

³⁸ In terms of Aquinas's influence on Calvin's scriptural interpretation, see Muller, “Scholasticism in Calvin,” 263, who notes Calvin's use of the commentaries of Nicholas of Lyra, which contained the thought of Thomas Aquinas; T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1971), 96–8, whose historical retelling of scriptural interpretation up to Calvin is suggestive when he goes from Aquinas, to Lyra, and then to Calvin's own day; Susan Schreiner, “‘Through a Mirror Dimly’: Calvin's Sermons on Job,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986): 175–93, who addresses Calvin's reception of a Thomistic literal trajectory in medieval exegesis.

³⁹ Brad Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 2.

same sense by God and creatures.”⁴⁰ Ockham only radicalized Scotus’s univocal conception of “being,” with the result that at the outset of the sixteenth century “the dominant scholastic view of God was not *esse* [as with Aquinas] but *ens*—not the incomprehensible act of to-be, but a highest being among other beings.”⁴¹ To be sure, the Protestant Reformers were not the only ones affected by this conception of God and creation. Gregory notes that “even the Thomism of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish scholasticism, following on that of Cajetan and including Suárez, had departed in important respects from the traditional conception of God: ‘Since [Suárez] had redefined analogy to put it closer to univocity, he remained substantively on Scotus’s side against Aquinas.’”⁴² Such a univocal conception of the God–human relationship gave rise to a competitive-causal understanding of divine and human causality in which the relationship between divine and human action is couched in “either/or” terms (or in terms of “sharing”).

Gregory is certainly not alone in pinpointing Scotus as the fountainhead of a gradual slip toward a nonparticipatory understanding of the divine–human relationship. A similar trajectory forms a crucial part of Matthew Levering’s narrative describing the move away from a participatory approach to biblical exegesis that gave rise to modern biblical exegesis.⁴³ Levering acknowledges that participation remains in Scotus yet “in a deracinated form.” Rather than the participatory (Platonic) and teleological (Aristotelian) nature of human activity upheld by Aquinas, the result of Scotus’s univocity is that “human freedom may submit to the divine will, but thereafter on the grounds of God’s obligating power rather than on participatory-teleological grounds.”⁴⁴ Tellingly in the years following Scotus, Thomas Bradwardine comments regarding his days as a student: “In the philosophical faculty I seldom heard a reference to grace... What I heard day in and day out was that we are masters of our own free acts, that

⁴⁰ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation*, 36.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 53. Gregory is citing William Carl Placher, *The Domestication of Transcendence: How Modern Thinking About God Went Wrong* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 75.

⁴³ Matthew Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis: A Theology of Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008), 18–25.

⁴⁴ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 19; see Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. From 3rd edn. by Mary Thomas Noble, OP (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of American Press, 1995), 242.

ours is the choice to act well or badly.”⁴⁵ For Levering, Scotus’s position has implications for interpreting Scripture; given that “certain metaphysical presuppositions are inadequate to Christian biblical interpretation,” Scotus’s move away from the patristic-medieval understanding of “participated-in perfections” negatively affected how scripture was approached and interpreted.⁴⁶

As broad intellectual trajectories, the accounts of Gregory and Levering are indeed valuable. But a danger arises when one applies a broad trajectory too simplistically to categorize the thought of any one theologian. At times Calvin is too uncritically swept up into an overarching meta-narrative of participatory decline that leaves Aquinas and Calvin seemingly more at odds than is actually the case; any simple historical trajectory that too easily links Calvin’s thought with Scotus’s is problematic.⁴⁷ It is here that Billings’s work on Calvin and his critique of Radical Orthodoxy is of importance given the tendency of Radical Orthodox theologians to exhibit such a simple historical trajectory in their criticisms of Calvin. Calvin, like many of the Reformers, did not feel overly obligated to any one school of thought, whether Dominican, Franciscan, or Augustinian, nor to any particular school of philosophy, whether Platonic, Aristotelian, or Stoic, nor to any particular theologian, whether Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, or Chrysostom. One must not approach Calvin’s theology through the a priori lens of Platonism or Scotism or Thomism and then read Calvin through that particular lens. Rather, one must first engage Calvin’s theology and only then discern points of contact that exist between different strains of thought. As Billings observes, Calvin’s ad hoc use of philosophy and his lack of clarity about his sources necessitate that “assessment of Calvin’s theological metaphysics must be based on a case-by-case evaluation of the particular doctrine in question.”⁴⁸ What we discover in the present study is that there exists a substantial amount of harmony between Calvin and Aquinas on a number of points pertaining to the topic of participation. Aquinas upholds many fundamental insights that Calvin would later also obtain in his reading of Romans, such as

⁴⁵ Cited in Heiko A. Obermann, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1967), 135.

⁴⁶ Levering, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis*, 18–19.

⁴⁷ As an example, see Robert Barron, “Biblical Interpretation and Theology: Irenaeus, Modernity, and Vatican II,” *Letter & Spirit* 5 (2009): 180–1.

⁴⁸ CPG, 30.

justification *sola fide non merito*, the centrality of Christ for salvation, the ongoing imperfection of the sanctified life, the work of the Spirit guiding the believer along the path of sanctification, and the assurance of salvation that one obtains through the indwelling of the Spirit, to name only a few. Unfortunately, the genuine theological harmony between Calvin and Aquinas is largely lost in the McNeill–Battles volume of Calvin’s *Institutes*, which is the most widely read and cited English edition of the *Institutes*. On numerous occasions, Battles cites Aquinas as the target of Calvin’s criticism when in fact the theology attacked by Calvin is at odds with Aquinas’s theology as well.⁴⁹ Admittedly, assessing the relationship between Aquinas’s and Calvin’s theology is an arduous process due in part to the way Calvin uses terms and phrases that are found in Aquinas’s theology but with the underlying meaning of those terms and phrases being tweaked enough either by Calvin or by his opponents to lose Aquinas’s meaning. The complexity of the situation can easily lead the evaluator to assume that there is discontinuity between Calvin and Aquinas when there is not. Nevertheless, the result of Battles’s footnotes has been to convey to decades of unsuspecting readers a level of conflict between Aquinas’s and Calvin’s theology that simply does not exist.

But all is not harmony between Aquinas and Calvin. Gregory’s observations regarding Scotus’s influence on the Reformers—and the problems this influence has for scriptural interpretation—are not without justification. Although Aquinas and Calvin are in deeper agreement than has historically been appreciated, Calvin’s interpretation of Romans evidences a theology that moves away from Aquinas’s participatory reading by embracing elements in harmony with Scotus’s univocal framework for understanding the divine–human causal relationship. While Calvin recognized many of the theological problems resulting from a competitive-causal relationship between God’s activity and human activity—problems that led to understanding human action in autonomous terms, resulting in deeply problematic claims surrounding justification, sanctification, and merit—Calvin was not immune to elements of the nonparticipatory theology of his day. And these nonparticipatory elements cause Calvin difficulties in reading

⁴⁹ A few of the examples directly related to this study can be found at *Inst.* 3.2.8 (515 n. 17; 552 n. 19) on “formed” and “unformed” faith; *Inst.* 3.14.11 (779 n. 16) on justification; *Inst.* 3.22.2 (935 n. 8) on foreknowledge and merit.

Romans that are not present in Aquinas's interpretation due to his participatory understanding of divine-human causality. The problems for Calvin's interpretation become particularly poignant at Romans 8, the very place that Calvin is often cited as being the most robustly participatory.

WHY PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS?

Several reasons inform why Aquinas's and Calvin's commentaries on Paul's letter to the Romans are chosen for study. First, scholarship surrounding Aquinas's and Calvin's biblical interpretations has significantly advanced over the past few decades, making a penetrating study into their exegetical labors possible. Matthew Levering has explored Aquinas's exegesis through his exposition of Aquinas's use of metaphysics in exegesis, his appropriation of Aquinas's participatory understanding of history that underlies exegesis, and his sustained engagement with contemporary exegesis in dialogue with Aquinas's exegesis, never ceasing to draw upon Aquinas's actual exegetical practice.⁵⁰ Levering's work has been characterized by Tracey Rowland as a leading voice in the new approach to Aquinas called "Biblical Thomism," which she characterizes by stating, "It is not a 'Thomism of the strict observance,' since the study of scripture and the early Church Fathers sets the tone rather than a straight repetition of Aquinas's ordering."⁵¹ While Aquinas's commentaries are still in many ways the "forgotten corpus of the Angelic Doctor,"⁵² Christopher Baglow notes: "Contemporary scholarship could not be more poised

⁵⁰ See especially Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); idem, *Participatory Biblical Exegesis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

⁵¹ Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27. Rowland continues her description of Biblical Thomism, stating: "It does not try to synthesize Aquinas with Kant, Locke, Hegel, Heidegger, or Adam Smith, and it involves an insistent critique of the nominalist shift in Scotus and Ockham." Drawing on the work of John Berkman, Rowland roots the origins of Biblical Thomism in the work of Servais Pinckaers, OP, noting that a key element to Pinckaers's moral teaching was a focus on the *telos* of the human person in light of the believer's response to the call of the Triune God as revealed in the Scriptures and tradition (26–7).

⁵² "Preface," in *Aquinas on Scripture*, ix.

for undertaking a thorough examination of them.”⁵³ Calvin’s commentaries, for various reasons, have received more attention than Aquinas’s.⁵⁴ Yet Calvin scholars as of late have placed significant emphasis on Calvin’s commentaries as a major source for understanding his theology than is possible through reading the *Institutes* alone, which is too often the one-stop shop for engaging Calvin’s thought. As David Steinmetz argues, “Calvin regarded his primary theological work, the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, as a handbook or introduction for beginners to study *Scripture*.”⁵⁵ At the same time, much of Calvin scholarship has remained at the level of Calvin’s general exegetical methods and hermeneutic principles⁵⁶ rather than detailed, sustained attention given to Calvin’s actual exegetical practice.⁵⁷ But the groundwork has been laid for such an analysis.

Second, Paul’s letter to the Romans works as a constraint to Aquinas’s and Calvin’s theological reflections and forces them into a shared conversation around a common theological authority. Given

⁵³ Baglow, *Modus et Forma*, 7.

⁵⁴ See T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1971); Donald McKim, ed. *Calvin and the Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ *Calvin in Context*, 64; idem., “John Calvin as an Interpreter of Scripture,” in McKim, *Calvin and the Bible*, 291; Holder, “Calvin as a Commentator on the Pauline Epistles,” in *Calvin and the Bible*, 234–5. On the link between the *Institutes* and the commentaries, see also Elsie Anne McKee, “Exegesis, Theology, and Development,” 154–72; Parker, *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries*, 89. Muller also notes that the *Institutes* should be understood as a “gathering of loci,” and the loci themselves should be understood “primarily exegetical both in origin and in their continuing frame of reference” (*The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], 112).

⁵⁶ Cf. T. F. Torrance, *The Hermeneutics of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1988); Klaas Runia, “The Hermeneutics of the Reformers,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 19 (1984): 137–49; Myung Jun Ahn, “The Ideal of Brevitas et Facilitas: The Theological Hermeneutics of John Calvin,” *Skriften kerk* 20 (1999): 270–81; R. Ward Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); James Brashlet, “From Erasmus to Calvin: Exploring the Roots of Reformed Hermeneutics,” *Interpretation* 63 (2009): 154–66.

⁵⁷ One exception pertinent to Calvin’s Romans commentary is Benoit Girard, *Rhétorique et Théologie: Calvin, Le Commentaire de L’Épître aux Romains* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979). Other analyses focus on only sections of a particular Pauline commentary; see Steinmetz, “Abraham and Romans 4,” in *Calvin in Context*; Hubert Goudineau, “Luther et Calvin commentateurs de l’épître aux Romains: Une comparaison,” *Postitions Luthériennes* 44 (1996): 16–52; Elsie Anne McKee, “Calvin’s Exegesis of Romans 12:8—Social, Accidental, or Theological,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (1988): 6–18; Mark Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin’s Theology* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press, 2008).

the number of theological developments that occur between Aquinas and Calvin, and given the way similar terms are used by Aquinas and Calvin but with subtle shifts in meaning, only a detailed comparison of Calvin's exegesis with Aquinas's, as Muller notes, will be able to "clarify fully the relation and disjunction between Calvin's theology and the thought of the medieval doctors."⁵⁸ A common underlying text upon which both Aquinas and Calvin are commenting greatly assists in sorting through genuine similarities and differences between Aquinas's and Calvin's biblical theology.

Third, Paul's letter to the Romans is of particular importance within Reformation era polemics. In many ways the sixteenth century revolves around Romans. The letter was, in R. Ward Holder's words, "the central battlefield for many of the crucial polemics between Catholic and Protestant theologians."⁵⁹ According to Calvin, "If anyone has gained true understanding [*verum intelligentiam*] of this letter, he has open doors to the most profound [*ad reconditissimos*] treasures of Scripture"⁶⁰—presumably treasures that supported the Reformation cause. Calvin's commentary on Romans was his first scriptural commentary, and it thrust Calvin onto the Reformation scene like no other work. Even some of Calvin's Catholic despisers acknowledged that Calvin's fame was brought about, at least in part, by his commentary on Romans.⁶¹ The fact that Calvin's citations to Romans increase almost fourfold from the 1536 edition of the *Institutio* to the 1559 edition attests to the centrality of Romans throughout Calvin's reforming career.⁶² What is less appreciated is

⁵⁸ Muller, "Scholasticism in Calvin," 265.

⁵⁹ R. Ward Holder, "Romans in the Light of Reformation Receptions," in *Reformation Readings of Romans*, eds. Kathy Ehrensperger and R. Ward Holder (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 1.

⁶⁰ John Calvin, *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, ed., T. H. L. Parker (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 5.9–11; all citations include page and line number. See below for more on this passage.

⁶¹ Irene Backus, "Roman Catholic Lives of Calvin from Bolsec to Richelieu," in *John Calvin and Roman Catholicism: Critique and Engagement, Then and Now*, ed. Randall C. Zachmann (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 42.

⁶² David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 65; cf. Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Chs. 7 and 8, who demonstrates the profound influence of Romans on the development of the *Institutes*, particularly in the development of Calvin's theological loci; R. Ward Holder, "Calvin as a Commentator on the Pauline Epistles," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 224; Nicole Kuropka, "Calvins Römerbriefwidmung und der Consensus Piorum," in *Calvin im Kontext der*

the central role that Romans plays in Aquinas's theology. Jean-Pierre Torrell identifies the greatest of Aquinas's Pauline commentaries as the one on the Epistle to the Romans; it is "the most fully finished and most profound that he has left us."⁶³ Aquinas himself singles out the Pauline corpus as containing "nearly the whole teaching of theology [*fere tota theologiae doctrina*],"⁶⁴ and the particular significance of Romans is evidenced by the fact that only the Gospels of Matthew and John surpass Romans as the most frequently cited biblical text in his *Summa theologiae*. When engaging topics that would become of central importance to Reformation debates, such as grace, justification, and merit, Aquinas cites the book of Romans more than any other biblical text. Romans is therefore a fundamental source for both Calvin's and Aquinas's soteriology.

PLAN OF THE WORK

I separate this book into two parts for pedagogical purposes and not because these parts reflect divisions within the commentaries of Aquinas and Calvin. The first part addresses Romans 1–5 and focuses our attention on Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of Christ's work of justifying sinners. The second part addresses Romans 6–8 and focuses our attention on their interpretations of the Christian's life in the Spirit. As will become clear, these chapters are mutually informing.

Chapter 1 engages Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of justification in Romans 1–3. For both Aquinas and Calvin, the topic of justification is central to Romans, and therefore Chapter 1 lays an important foundation for what follows. A central point of continuity between Aquinas and Calvin is the unmerited reception of justification. Aquinas's interpretation is in agreement with what Calvin

Schweizer Reformation: Historische und theologische Beiträge zur Calvinforschung, ed. Peter Opitz (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 2003), 154.

⁶³ J. P. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1996), 200. See also Eleonore Stump, "(Aquinas') Biblical Commentary and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Elenore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 260.

⁶⁴ Aquinas, *Super Epistolas S. Pauli Lectura*, Prologus (Rome: Marietti, 1953), §6.

calls the “main and cardinal point” of the first part of Romans: “we are justified by faith through the mercy of God alone.” Yet Aquinas affirms, while Calvin denies, transformative dimensions to justification, and this impacts the role of participation in their reading of Romans 1–3: since for Calvin justification is strictly what God does *for* us, rather than also what God does *in* and *through* us (as with Aquinas), key sections of his commentary on Romans 1–3 highlight Calvin’s limited participatory vision. Their respective views of justification also have implications for how they understand the relationship of Romans 4–8 to Romans 1–3. Calvin consistently looks back to Romans 1–3 as providing the foundation for much of what follows, while Aquinas reads the whole of Romans 1–8 in terms of the unpacking of the work of Christ’s grace in salvation. Reading Aquinas’s commentary is like watching a drama—there is a continuous unfolding of the work of grace on the soul that leads the believer through the “life of justice” to the “life of glory”—while reading Calvin’s commentary is like looking at a painting—Romans 1–3 paints the portrait, and we continue to look at the picture from different angles as the commentary unfolds.

Chapter 2 brings us to Romans 4. Here I highlight the implications of Aquinas’s and Calvin’s readings of Romans 1–3 for their respective interpretations of father Abraham. Important for their interpretations of Romans 4 is whether justification enables the believer to participate in Christ’s justice according to the believer’s own mode of existence (Aquinas), or whether God’s forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness should be contrasted with the possession of the quality of justness (Calvin). The difference between these two interpretive moves means that Calvin draws a strong contrast between justification by faith and merit, as well as between justification by faith and by works, while Aquinas affirms justification by faith without drawing the contrast with merit and works. Informing Calvin’s criticisms against merit is his interpretation of meritorious acts in competitive-causal terms, with human willing occurring in autonomous terms, separate from God’s causal activity. Few of Calvin’s arguments against merit actually address how Aquinas understands the harmonious, noncompetitive-causal relationship between divine and human willing. The result leaves them envisioning the role of the law either more deeply participatory (Aquinas) or less deeply participatory (Calvin).

In Chapter 3, we see the implications for Aquinas’s and Calvin’s doctrines of justification manifested in their interpretations of

Romans 5. I address Paul's teaching on our peace with God, hope of eternal life, and the Adam–Christ typology. Since Aquinas believes that justification makes the believer a just person, peace with God is made possible on account of the new life the believer lives in grace. For Calvin, however, given that the believer is still condemnable *in se*, peace becomes a matter of the believer's conscience—a “serene conscience”—that results from contemplating Christ's work on his or her behalf. Hope in future eternal life is not rooted in the life lived by the believer, as it is with Aquinas, but rather on having received Christ's imputed justice *extra nos*. When Aquinas and Calvin turn to the Adam–Christ typology, Aquinas focuses on how Christ restores in the believer what was distorted by original sin; Calvin focuses on God's judgment and contrasts it with God's gift of Christ. Calvin is clear that while Adam's sin made human beings sinners, Christ's justice does not make sinners just; Christ's justice is received according to a different “mode.” This dichotomy is not present in Aquinas's account, since for Aquinas Christ's grace creates justice within the believer.

A central difference between Aquinas's and Calvin's accounts of Romans 5 pertains to how they understand the transformation wrought in the believer through the indwelling of the Spirit. Chapters 4 and 5 on Romans 6 and Romans 7:14–25 explore the issue of the Spirit's indwelling. In Chapter 4, we meet Calvin's highly participatory theology of sanctification. I analyze the transformation caused by the Spirit's indwelling in connection with being united with Christ's death in baptism. For Aquinas, the transformation enables the believer to avoid mortal sin in the future and perform meritorious works in the present while the believer continues to struggle with the remaining disorder of the flesh. Calvin, too, presents his version of the “Christian struggle,” but he asserts that the believer and his or her works are condemnable *in se* while being accepted *in Christo*. This contributes to Calvin's rejection of merit and leads to a different reading of 6:23 (“the grace of God, eternal life”) than that of Aquinas, who upholds eternal life both as a gift and an object of merit. I argue that while Calvin's account of the spiritual life is indeed participatory, he does not go as far as Aquinas in affirming the worth of human activity when it participates in the activity of God. This is evident from Calvin's appropriation of the Scotistic notion of “acceptance” and the unnecessary dichotomies between God's gift and human merit. Part of what hinders Calvin's participatory soteriology is his account of the

law in its connection with “justification by works,” which he sets in opposition to grace and “justification by faith.” For Aquinas, however, grace provides the point of connection between justification by faith and works; to be justified by works is to participate in God’s grace working itself out in the life of the believer.

Chapter 5 on Romans 7:14–25 continues the discussion of Chapter 4, focusing on the believer’s life in grace. Both Aquinas and Calvin interpret the “I” of 7:14–25 as the graced Apostle Paul, but they provide different accounts of Paul’s struggle. I analyze Aquinas’s and Calvin’s descriptions of the Apostle Paul’s “flesh” and “spirit,” paying particular attention to the negative effects of sin and to the healing effects of grace, and then unfold the portraits of Paul’s moral life that emerge from their commentaries on 7:14–25 in light of their judgments regarding “flesh” and “spirit.” Aquinas’s account supports his belief that justification transforms a believer into a just person even while the just believer continues to struggle with the flesh. Calvin’s account demonstrates why he is convinced that both believers and their works remain condemnable *in se*. To stand before God as just, then, requires for Calvin a justice *extra nos*.

The previous chapters culminate in Chapter 6 on Romans 8. The hinge upon which Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations turn lies in Paul’s claim “There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus” (8:1). Because Calvin’s teaching on transformation maintains that the believer is still condemnable *in se*, Paul’s claim of the believer having no condemnation cannot be due to the Spirit’s sanctification—the topic of Romans 6–7. Therefore, Paul must be *turning back* at 8:1 to the topic of justification, which for Calvin is something altogether distinct from transformation. Paul’s emphasis on transformation in Romans 8 and his exhortation to “walk by the Spirit” are relegated to mere “signs” indicating that one has Christ’s imputed justification. “Suffering with Christ” becomes a necessary but extrinsic principle for obtaining the inheritance as sons in the Son: God has ordained that the path to the inheritance comes by way of suffering with Christ (i.e. sanctification), but we receive the inheritance based upon the imputed justice of Christ as *extra nos*. In Calvin’s account, the just requirements of the law are no longer fulfilled “in us” (8:4) but rather “for us” by Christ. Aquinas, on the other hand, interprets Romans 8:1 as speaking of two “conditions” for having no condemnation: being in Christ and walking by the Spirit. The justified believer is transformed so as to possess nothing damnable, and

is enabled by the Spirit to live a life in avoidance of damnable activity. The believer's life in the Spirit plays an intrinsic role in obtaining the inheritance as sons in the Son.

Given the role that Aquinas's and Calvin's theology has played (and continues to play) in shaping various ecclesial traditions, the present study will necessarily have implications for contemporary ecumenical dialogue. In the conclusion, I suggest some of these implications by rereading Calvin's engagement with the sixth session of the Council of Trent—where we find many of the same soteriological issues being engaged that appeared throughout Calvin's and Aquinas's commentaries on Romans, such as competitive causality, justification and merit, and imputation versus transformation—in light of the findings of this study. While the focus will necessarily shift more exclusively to Calvin, Aquinas is still present in the teachings of the Council, and anyone interested in soteriological participation and ecumenical engagement will benefit from the interaction between Calvin's comments, Trent's teachings, and the suggestions I offer. I conclude with some observations on understanding the present book as a work of ecumenical *ressourcement*, and how this form of ecumenical engagement leads to a fruitful ecumenical future.

Part I

Participation in Christ's Justification

1

Justification

Romans 1:16b–17; 2:13; 3:21–26

Calvin famously claims in his *Institutes* that the doctrine of justification is “the main hinge on which religion turns.”¹ For this reason, readers of Calvin’s commentary on Romans have been predisposed to thinking that justification in and of itself is the key concept of Romans, especially since Calvin claims at the beginning of his commentary that the principle *questio* of the entire epistle is: “We are justified by faith” (5.19).² On this reading, the central disputation of Romans is couched in terms of the proper formulation of justification: imputation versus infusion or declarative versus transformative or juridical versus covenantal. A close reading of Calvin’s commentary reveals, however, that the emphasis is not on justification per se. Rather, it is on justification *by faith*. Disputes about the proper formulation of justification hinge on and are subordinate to the actual principal disputation of letter, which is the topic of faith, and principally the role of faith in obtaining justification as opposed to other means, i.e. merits. This explains why Calvin frequently employs the phrase “the justice of faith” in contrast to the “the justice of works.” The concern is not so much a theory of justification as it is emphasizing the role of faith for obtaining a just standing before God rather than merit. In fact, as we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, the doctrine of imputation is not principally the result of Calvin’s teaching on justification by faith but rather is an implication from his teaching on sanctification; only by imputation can a person stand just before God, since

¹ *Inst.* 3.11.1; Battle’s translation.

² E.g. Wenger, “The New Perspective on Calvin,” 322.

the transformation wrought by the Spirit still leaves the believer condemnable *in se* (although the believer is just *in Christo*). This is not to suggest that Calvin does not place an *emphasis* on faith's relation to justification, and in Chapters 1 and 2 we will focus on that relationship. But it is to say that faith and not justification *per se* forms the more central topic of Calvin's concern in Romans.³ Calvin is able to turn from justification to address sanctification in Romans 6 since sanctification is a gift simultaneously received along with justification in a person's union with Christ through *faith*. Sanctification is thus not, as Garcia rightly observes, the consequence of justification, as if Romans 6 addresses the "effects" of justification; rather, sanctification is an effect received through union with Christ in faith *simultaneously* accompanying the effect of justification received through the same faith.⁴ And for Calvin, if it is by faith, it is therefore not by merit. This forms the central dichotomy of Calvin's commentary.⁵ Calvin is therefore less concerned with a particular formulation of justification as he is with positing a formulation that guards against problematic teachings surrounding the relationship of merit to justification. This point will become particularly important when we analyze Aquinas's teaching on justification in light of Calvin's teaching.

³ It is also to say that faith and not *unio Christi*, contra Garcia, is the guiding interpretive principle for Calvin's approach to Romans; see Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 93–4.

⁴ There has been some debate surrounding the relationship of Calvin's thinking to Lutheran thought on the topic of the relationship between justification and sanctification. A. N. S. Lane claims that Luther "tended to see sanctification as the fruit of justification rather than seeing them both as flowing from union with Christ" (*Justification by Faith*, 24; cf. J. H. Rainbow, "Double Grace: John Calvin's View of the Relationship of Justification and Sanctification," *Ex Auditu* 5 [1989]: 99–105); for an alternative account, see J. Todd Billings, "John Calvin's Soteriology: On the Multifaceted 'Sum' of the Gospel," *IJST* 11 (2009): 444–7. For further exploration on Calvin's teaching regarding union with Christ, see D. E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St Bernard* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

⁵ Calvin's *Antidote* to the Faculty of Paris, in the brief section addressing "Justification by Works," contains no less than nine references to Romans (Calvin, *Articles by the Theological Faculty of Paris*, in *Tracts Relating to the Reformation*, trans. Henry Beveridge [Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844], 1:80–2). Lane observes that in all but one case—twelve in all—Calvin places *sola fide* as the alternative to works (*Justification by Faith*, 186 n. 191). See Brain Lugioyo, *Martin Bucer's Doctrine of Justification: Reformation Theology and Early Modern Irenicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5, 39. Bucer comments in his *Romans Commentary*, "The principal religious disagreements in the whole world have arisen and been sustained from the fact that very few indeed have yet paid attention to the status that should be accorded to our works and why it is they have the nature of merits and earn the wages of eternal life" (39).

Aquinas places the topic of justification front and center to his reading of Romans as well. But he does so for different reasons—reasons that I argue reflect a deeper participatory soteriology. For Aquinas, Christ's *grace* and its ability to bring salvation to sinners are the principal topic of Romans. Salvation culminates in the final obtainment of eternal life with God in heaven, which occurs after the present pilgrim life on earth. If Christ's grace enables one to obtain salvation, it must therefore provide for all that is relevant to its obtainment. For Aquinas, this includes: (1) forgiveness of sins (the "word of the Gospel"), (2) sanctifying grace, which comes through the Gospel, and (3) guidance or instruction on the path to eternal life itself (§99). These Gospel gifts comprise the present "life of grace" that culminates in the "life of glory."⁶ The topic of justification pertains to all of these elements, since it is the means by which salvation (i.e. eternal life with God in heaven) is obtained, and therefore Aquinas's interpretation of justification in Romans, as well as his interpretation of Romans as a whole, reflects a dynamic movement from the transformation of initial justification, which removes original and actual sin (i.e. forgiveness of sins), through the ongoing transforming "life of justice" consisting of partaking in the sanctifying gifts (i.e. sanctifying grace), leading to and culminating in the beatific vision of God (i.e. guidance to eternal life).⁷ For Aquinas, Paul addresses the necessity of Christ's grace for salvation in 1:18–4:24; 5:1–10 addresses the goods we obtain through grace; 5:12–7:25 unfolds the evils from which we are liberated by grace, such as original sin and actual sins; and 8:1–39 reveals how the work of Christ's grace enables liberation from all damnation. The dynamic movement of Aquinas's reading serves to illuminate the nonparticipatory structure of Calvin's approach. For Calvin, Romans 1–3 sets forth what in many ways will be the teaching Paul continues to refer *back* to as the letter progresses.⁸ Romans 4 provides Abraham as an example of

⁶ The theme of the "life of grace" is pervasive throughout Aquinas's commentary; cf. §104, 108, 486, 495, 605, 629, 633.

⁷ A. N. Williams captures this "seamless" movement when commenting on Aquinas's teaching on charity: "The notion of perpetual growth [in charity] inherently suggests the seamless continuity of grace and glory, for it claims that there is a single development in the human person, which has a terminus quo but no terminus ad quem. Each human being thus possesses one life, which is nothing other than a never-ending process of growth towards God" (*The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* [New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 79).

⁸ As an indication of my overall argument, Calvin's desire to constantly look back to Romans 1–3 while commenting on later chapters has significant consequences for his

what has been said in Romans 1–3, Romans 5 “amplifies” what has been said in Romans 1–3, Romans 6 describes the sanctified life in light of and within the context of Romans 1–3, Romans 7 further illustrates the sanctified life and why justification can only be by faith, and Romans 8 returns to the teaching of Romans 1–3 to “console” believers. As will become clear, the structures of these readings are directly impacted by judgments related to the topic of soteriological participation.

PAUL’S THESIS FOR ROMANS: 1:16b–17

While Aquinas and Calvin agree that Paul conveys his thesis for the letter in 1:16b–17, their different approaches to Romans result in different emphases within 1:16b–17. This impacts not only their reading of 1:16b–17 but the letter as a whole. Aquinas believes the guiding concept of Romans is *grace*. Aquinas situates 1:16b–17 at the beginning of Paul’s broader discourse on the “power” of Christ’s grace that covers 1:16–8:39.⁹ The key verse for Aquinas is found at 1:16b: “For it [the Gospel of grace] is the *power* of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (§97). The topic of justice, which first surfaces in the following statement at 1:17a, “For the justice of God is revealed in it [i.e. the Gospel of grace] from faith unto faith,” serves the key concept of the power of Christ’s grace. The justice of God is the means by which the power of Christ’s grace works unto salvation (§101–2). The chapters that follow unfold the manifold way the power of Christ’s grace brings about salvation through justification.

Calvin, on the other hand, emphasizes the topic of justification by faith in Romans. For Calvin, 1:16b does not present a principal point for any of Paul’s discourse that follows but merely sets up the principal point, which is expressed in 1:17. Calvin latches on to Paul’s use of “faith” in connection with the justice of God in 1:17 as key. For

interpretation of Romans 8, which I argue to be the chapter that forms the high point of conflict between Calvin’s and Aquinas’s readings of Romans.

⁹ Aquinas divides Paul’s teaching on grace into three major sections: 1:16–8:39, which contains his teaching on the “power [*virtus*]” of Christ’s grace; 9:1–11:39, which contains his teaching on the “origin” of Christ’s grace; and 12:1–16:27, which contains his teaching on the “use [*usus*]” of Christ’s grace in the moral life. These are not strict divisions, since elements of one are often found in the other, but the divisions broadly reflect what Aquinas considers to be Paul’s emphasis within these sections.

Calvin, Paul's commendation of the power of the Gospel for salvation at 1:16b necessarily involves a "disputation [*disputationem*]" on faith (5.17). The topic to which this disputation on faith is applied is found in 1:17, "The justice of God [*iustitia Dei*]." 1:17 becomes an *explicatio* and *confirmatio* of the Gospel's power for salvation by connecting faith and the *iustitia Dei*. The chapters that follow demonstrate how it is that justification occurs by faith and not by merit.

THE *IUSTITIA DEI*

Calvin explains while commenting on 1:17 that if we desire salvation, that is, if we desire "life with God [*vita apud Deum*]," which is a life that consists in God's benevolence, it is necessary that we first be just, since God loves justice and hates injustice (26.14–15).¹⁰ Calvin interprets the "justice of God" of 1:17 as corresponding to "that which is approved before God's tribunal."¹¹ This is in contrast to the "justice of men," which consists in those things judged to be just by human beings, whose standard is, when compared to God's standard, far too low.¹² Calvin grants that the "justice of God" might also refer to "what is given to us by God," since God not only discloses what he considers just through the Gospel but also justifies us by that very same Gospel.¹³ The Gospel, which offers to us Christ himself, is the only

¹⁰ It is worth noting that Calvin does not think that emotional changes occur in God, so that at one moment he is angry and another at peace. Our experience of God's "hatred" or "anger" "implies no emotion in God, but has reference only to the feelings of the sinner who is punished" (30.57).

¹¹ Calvin explains in *Inst.* 3.2.2 that "to be justified" before God is a *result* of God's judgment before His tribunal; one is "justified" when God has judged that person to be just according to His standard of justice. For Calvin, Scripture teaches that one's "justification" can occur in two ways: either by perfectly keeping the law or by faith. The former brings one's own justice before God's tribunal for judgment, while the latter brings Christ's justice before God's tribunal for judgment.

¹² Calvin calls those things considered just by human beings "so much smoke [*fumus tantum*]" in light of God's standard of justice. For a similar idea regarding the contrast between self-knowledge apart from God and knowledge of self in light of God, see *Inst.* 1.1.1–3.

¹³ Calvin's distinction, which emphasizes on the one hand the character of God and on the other the justifying work of God, reflects Aquinas's twofold interpretation of the *iustitia Dei*, although Aquinas's first interpretation, i.e. the justice by which God is just is not as present in Calvin's commentary on this section, and Aquinas more than Calvin is concerned with God's faithfulness to his promises.

source from which justice can be obtained for salvation: "God has nowhere else disclosed [*patefacit*] to us His justice, which alone delivers us from death" (26.18–19). Through the Gospel, and only through the Gospel, is God's justice "communicated [*communicatio*]" to us.¹⁴

Calvin sides with the former interpretation of the *iustitia Dei*—that which is approved before God's tribunal—since he believes that Paul is alluding here to the many Old Testament "Spirit-led" prophecies that set forth what God judges to be just in the future kingdom of Christ. But Calvin feels it necessary to clarify that if the *iustitia Dei* were interpreted as "what is given to us by God" for justification, it is necessary to exclude from any explanation of "what is given to us" for justification the grace of regeneration (26.31–32). Regeneration, explains Calvin, does not form the basis for our peace with God; rather "we are restored to life because God freely reconciles us to Himself" (26.32–33). Justification consists not in being transformed so as to possess justness *but rather* in the "free remission of sins" (26.31–32). Calvin's exclusion of transformation in his teaching on justification is important both in terms of the history of Christian theological reflection and as a key interpretive judgment within his commentary on Romans.¹⁵ It should be noted that Calvin does not at this point indicate that anything in the text of Romans demands this kind of distinction between justification and transformation. The demand for this distinction, as we shall see, is an implication of Calvin's reading of Romans 6–7, in which he claims that the sanctified believer remains condemnable *in se*. The only way the believer can stand just before God's tribunal, then, must be a result of Christ's justice set in opposition to our justice. We stand before God just *in Christo* although

¹⁴ Calvin describes the preaching of the Gospel as the formal cause "through which [*per*] the goodness of God overflows to us" (*Commentarius in Epostlam Pauli ad Ephesios*, 1:8 [CO 29.150]).

¹⁵ The distinction between justification and regeneration (or sanctification) is, as has been observed by others, an important development in Reformation thought, having been labeled by Alister McGrath as Calvin's "act of genius" (*Justification by Faith* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988], 57; cf. William M. Thompson, "Viewing Justification Through Calvin's Eyes: An Ecumenical Experiment," *Theological Studies* 57.3 [Sept 1996]: 448); Mark A. Garcia, "Imputation and the Christology of Union with Christ: Calvin, Osiander and the Contemporary Quest for a Reformed Model," *WTJ* 68 (2006): 219–51; Julie Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander and Participation in God," *IJST* 6 (2004): 173. Justification and regeneration are so closely linked, however, that Calvin describes their relationship by employing a common trinitarian analogy of the sun, its light and its heat; they are two distinct but inseparable graces of God (*Inst.* 3.11.6).

we are condemnable *in se*. God forgives our sin and imputes to us Christ's justice. The only part the sinner plays in this dynamic corresponds to the necessity of faith for "grasping" or "acquiring" Christ, through whom our sins are forgiven. It is not that forgiveness of sins *alone* equates to being just before God's tribunal but only free from the guilt of sin. Given the ongoing disorder still remaining in the sinner, Christ's justice as imputed is also needed to stand just before the tribunal. These comments point once again to Calvin's interpretation of Romans 6–8. While the implications for a participatory soteriological framework will be spelled out in the following chapters, it should be said that for the recent emphasis on Calvin's "participatory" soteriology—that by the Spirit we participate in Christ through faith, or that the Spirit "reduplicates" in the believer what is true of Christ himself—requires serious qualifications. Questions necessarily surface about Calvin and participation due to his understanding of the remaining sinfulness of the justified sinner and the necessity for Christ's justice as "clothing" in order to be justified before God.

The claim that justification is rooted in God's forgiveness of sins brings us to the disputation on faith mentioned above. The disputation centers on *how* human beings obtain the justice that God judges to be just before his tribunal. Calvin claims that one "gains [*percipiens*]" that which God considers just before his tribunal "from faith" (1:17b): "Justice is offered through the Gospel, and it is received by faith" (26.35). Calvin also notes that it increases "unto faith" (1:17b) in that believers daily advance in their faith and progress in knowledge of God's mercy; when this occurs, God's justice "increases in us [*augetur in nobis*]," and its possession is in a certain measure "confirmed [*quodammodo sancitur*]." Calvin is not speaking of the quality of justice within the believer increasing. Rather, he is addressing knowledge increasing, specifically knowledge of true religion which enables the believer to perceive God's grace more clearly and more familiarly (26.41). This is not to deny that Calvin emphasizes the need for subjective transformation for salvation; he makes this clear in his commentary on Romans 6. But here, Calvin is concerned with addressing justification proper and its relation to faith. Calvin then turns to Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4 "the just one shall live by [*ex*] his faith," and explains what it means that we live a life of faith. Calvin takes "live" to mean living in the presence of God (*coram Deo*). Calvin does not interpret "live" in terms of the sanctified life of the believer since the believer's life is itself unworthy to stand in God's presence. The

believer can stand in God's presence due to being *in Christo*, however, since he or she is just through the imputation of Christ's justice. But if it is true that only by faith can we be just, there is, then, no source of life before God other than "the faith that leads us to God and makes our life depend on him." This dependence grants "firmness" to those who "rest on God in faith" (27.53). Here we find two of Calvin's central concerns in Romans, namely, that one must not trust in oneself for justification (i.e. merit) but in God's mercy, and the corresponding assurance of one's standing before God (i.e. peace of conscience) because it rests solely on his mercy.¹⁶

Calvin concludes the section declaring that the "main and cardinal point" regarding the disputation on faith has now been set: "we are justified by faith through the mercy of God alone [*sola Dei misericordia, per fidem nos iustificari*]" (27.64–66). It is of note that the *sola* is not on faith but rather on the mercy of God. This is not to deny Calvin's use of *sola fide* on other occasions, but it does highlight the fact that Calvin sees the central issue surrounding the disputation on faith in Romans to be the relationship between God's strict and lofty just judgment and God's forgiving and accepting mercy. If justification comes by *faith*, then justification rests solely in God's mercy and not in the merit of works. Calvin admits elsewhere that the phrase "faith alone" is nowhere to be found in Scripture, but he argues that if justification depends neither on the law nor on ourselves, it must rely on God's mercy alone, and if mercy alone then for Calvin faith alone (69.1–5). For justification to be by works, however, a person's works would need to meet God's lofty just judgment. For Calvin, this is impossible for sinners and saints alike.¹⁷ But the Gospel teaches that believers can rest in God's mercy, having their consciences assured that they are at peace with God knowing that Christ's justice has met the high and lofty justice of God on our behalf, and his justice is granted to us when we become united to him by faith. To unfold the cards for the argument of this chapter, I note that if Calvin believes that the "main and cardinal point" in Romans is that we are justified by faith through the mercy of God alone, then there is profound

¹⁶ Barbara Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Can See: Calvin's Doctrine of Faith in Its Exegetical Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 49. The implication for a participatory soteriology resulting from the strict opposition between faith and merit will be spelled out in subsequent chapters.

¹⁷ See Chapters 3 and 4 on Romans 6–7.

agreement between Calvin's and Aquinas's readings of Romans. But this agreement also challenges Calvin's nonparticipatory reading of this section of Romans—justification in opposition to transformation, mercy in opposition to merit—as well as other parts of the letter, especially Romans 8. First, we turn to Aquinas's interpretation of 1:16b–17.

Aquinas's focus is on the *power* of the Gospel of grace (1:16b), and he believes the *iustitia Dei* of 1:17 serves to explicate the power of grace by setting forth the means by which the power of Christ's grace works unto salvation (§101–2). Aquinas approaches the *iustitia Dei* similarly to Calvin by noting two viable interpretations, although unlike for Calvin the two options are equally plausible: (a) it is the justice by which God is just (*iustitia qua Deus iustus est*), which, Aquinas notes, is set forth in Psalms 11:7, "The Lord is just and has loved justice"; (b) it is the justice by which God justifies human beings (*iustitia qua Deus homines iustificat*) (§102). Here, we begin to see Aquinas and Calvin parting ways in interpretation. They agree that the *iustitia Dei* refers, on the one hand, to something about God himself, and, on the other hand, to God's justification of sinners. But instead of the *iustitia Dei* referring to God's just *judgment*, Aquinas interprets the *iustitia Dei* as corresponding to God's salvific *promise keeping*. This is not to say that Aquinas does not recognize, like Calvin, that only those things God judges to be just are truly just. Aquinas comments at length regarding God's just judgment at Romans 2:6, "God, Who will render to every man according to his works" (§190–4). But Aquinas's desire to read the *iustitia Dei* as promise keeping rather than just judging reflects distinct emphases in Aquinas's and Calvin's broader readings of Romans.

For Aquinas, God is just by fulfilling his promise to send the Christ (§102; cf. §258; 352–3).¹⁸ It would be an unjust thing if God's words were not fulfilled.¹⁹ This promise-keeping justice, states Aquinas, is

¹⁸ In *ST* I, q. 21, a. 3, arg. 2, Aquinas indicates from a gloss on 2 Timothy 2:13, "If we believe not, He continues to be faithful: He cannot deny Himself," that God would "deny Himself" if He should deny His word. It is worth noting that Aquinas is concerned with God denying *Himself* and not necessarily human beings. Aquinas explains (*ST* I, q. 21, a. 1, ad. 3) that God's justice consists in the conformity of His works to His Eternal Law. God does not obey a law as if it is given to Him from some higher power, as it is with human beings; rather God is a "law unto Himself" (*ST* I, q. 21, a. 1, ad. 2). God's actions are in accordance with the rule of His wisdom, which is, as it were, His law of justice (i.e. the "Eternal Law") (*ST* I, q. 21, a. 1, ad. 2).

¹⁹ It is worth noting that since Aquinas focuses on the justice of God in keeping His promises, this justice especially refers to the salvation of the Jews; *ST* I, q. 21, a. 4, ad. 2. The Gentiles are "grafted in" to the promise made to the Jews.

revealed “in it [*in eo*]” from faith to faith (1:17). The “it” refers not to the Gospel per se but rather to the one who believes the Gospel, since the person who believes that God has sent Christ reveals through his belief that God has fulfilled his promises. Christ’s being sent is “from faith,” i.e. the faithfulness of God, “to faith,” i.e. the faith of the one who believes.²⁰

Aquinas contrasts the *iustitia Dei* as God’s justification of sinners with the “justice of men,” as Calvin does. But for Aquinas, the justice of men does not represent human *judgment* about what is just (which Calvin then opposes to God’s lofty *judgment*) but rather refers to human attempts at self-justification by means of one’s own power.²¹ The *iustitia Dei* refers to the justification that comes from God and is received by faith (§103). This is supported, states Aquinas, by Paul’s quotation of Habakkuk 2:4, “My just one lives by faith.”²² “My just one” refers to the one justified by God and reputed just before God (*apud Deum reputatus iustus*).²³ This justified individual “lives by faith,” understood not in terms of a person standing just by faith before God’s tribunal (Calvin) but in terms of living the “life of grace,” which is the life Paul mentions in Galatians 2:20, “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God” (§104). Aquinas’s connection between the life of faith and the life of grace sets the stage for his exposition of the nature of justification as a grace within the believer working itself out in the context of the *whole* of one’s life.²⁴ This reflects, as will become clearer below, a genuine difference not only between Aquinas’s and Calvin’s conceptions of justification but

²⁰ Without undervaluing the contributions made by the “New Perspective” on Paul, it is worth highlighting that Aquinas long ago anticipated understanding the *iustitia Dei* of Romans 1:16b–17 in terms of God’s faithfulness to his promises.

²¹ As we shall see below, for Aquinas there is a twofold reason why human beings cannot justify themselves by their own power: the presence of sin and the proportionate natural limitations of human nature in relation to the supernatural end of justification.

²² Aquinas acknowledges that Paul quotes from the LXX, since the Hebrew text—what Aquinas calls the “Hebrew truth”—states, “The just man lives by his faith [*iustus ex fide sua vivit*].”

²³ Aquinas takes the term *reputatus* from Romans 4:2: “Abraham believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice [*credidit Abraham Deo, et reputatum est ei ad iustitiam*].” See below for Aquinas’s threefold distinction of *iustificari*, one of which includes the notion of *reputatus*.

²⁴ At this point, Aquinas proceeds through a fairly thorough exposition of the doctrine of faith (§105–8), which to analyze here would take us beyond the scope of this chapter.

more broadly between their participatory soteriology. Calvin consistently keeps God's just judgment before us, which fits well with his desire to emphasize our inability to fulfill the law (i.e. merit), even in the Spirit, and the juxtaposition of our own justness with Christ's justness. These are limitations on a participatory soteriology. Since Aquinas believes we can fulfill the law in the Spirit, and that justification consists of forgiving our sin and making us just persons, Aquinas says little about God's judgment and emphasizes God's promise keeping in bringing about our salvation through our participation in his salvific work: believers live lives that can stand in the presence of God.

DOERS OF THE LAW

Aquinas's teaching on justification becomes clearer in his commentary on 2:13, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are just before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified." Aquinas engages 2:13 as part of Paul's larger discussion regarding the necessity of grace for salvation (1:18–4:25),²⁵ and at 2:13 Paul demonstrates that the Jews could not procure their salvation apart from Christ's grace. Aquinas, like Calvin, believes that the Jews falsely believed that they were justified by merely hearing or possessing the law (§213). But Paul states at 2:13, "For it is not the hearers of the law who are just before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified," revealing that justification does not come by merely hearing or possessing the law but rather by performing the law. As Aquinas sees it, the importance of keeping the law is a theme that runs throughout Scripture: "A good understanding have all those who practice it" (Psalms 111:10), "Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man" (Matthew 7:24), and "Be doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22) (§213). Aquinas recognizes, however, like Calvin, that to assert that justification comes through keeping the law creates

²⁵ Aquinas divides his treatment of the power of grace for salvation (1:16b–8:39) into two subsections: (a) the necessity of grace for salvation, which covers 1:18–4:25, and (b) "extolling" the power of grace for salvation, which covers 5:1–8:39. This includes the gifts that are acquired through Christ's grace (5:1–11), and the ability of grace to liberate one from original sin (5:12–21), future sin (6:1–23), the Law (7:1–25), and condemnation (8:1–39).

a potential conflict with Paul's later statement at 3:20, "No one will be justified in His sight by the works of the law."²⁶ But rather than explaining the relationship between the two verses by turning Paul's claim at 2:13 into a hypothetical truth that never becomes actually embodied in practice, as we shall see with Calvin, Aquinas uses 2:13 as an opportunity to distinguish three ways that Scripture uses the term *iustificari* (to be justified).²⁷

First, *iustificari* can refer to one's "reputation [*reputatio*]," so that a person is "justified" when a person is "reputed [*reputatur*]" to be just.²⁸ In this sense, "the doers of the law are justified" (2:13) means that those who do the law are considered to be or have a reputation (*reputabuntur*) of being just, either in the eyes of God or before human beings or both (§212). In his *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas states in regard to keeping the moral precepts of the Old Law, "The fulfillment of the commandments of the law, even of those which are about the acts of the other virtues, has the *character* of justification, inasmuch as it is just that man should obey God; or again, inasmuch as it is just that all that belongs to man should be subject to reason."²⁹ Aquinas finds this first principle of justice in Ezekiel 16:51, "You have justified your sisters" (§212).³⁰

Second, Aquinas claims that *iustificari* can refer to "executing works of justice [*opera iustitiae exequentur*]."³¹ For Aquinas, this use

²⁶ Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 100–1, highlights that for many during the sixteenth century the tension lied in relating 2:13 to 3:20.

²⁷ See Donal O'Conner, "St. Thomas' Commentary on Romans," *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 34 (1967): 335.

²⁸ For more on Aquinas and the notion that Abraham's faith was "reputed as justice," see Chapter 2.

²⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 100, a. 2, ad. 1.

³⁰ It is worth noting how Calvin takes the opportunity in his commentary on Ezekiel 16:51 to criticize the "papists" for thinking that to be justified was in reality to possess the quality of justness. Instead, "to be justified" usually means "to absolve," so that "to be justified by faith signifies nothing but to be absolved, though we are not just in ourselves" (*Viginti Prima Ezechielis Prophetiae captia Praelectiones* [Geneva, 1564], 304). Calvin's comments become even more interesting when we realize that none of them has to do with the passage itself, since, as Calvin claims, "to be justified" in Ezekiel 16:51 is being used in a comparative sense, namely, that Sodom and the kingdom of Israel were just "in comparison" with the Jews. Calvin's comments thus further illustrate how he is interpreting Scripture within an exegetical tradition that includes (even if implicitly) Aquinas.

³¹ Aquinas explains in *ST* I-II, q. 100, a. 12 that when one speaks of justification "properly so called," it can be considered either "as in the habit or as in the act." The latter, which understands justification as "the execution of justice," is the topic of the present consideration of "to be justified," while the former, which understands

of *iustificari* appears in the case of the publican in Luke 18:14, “This man went down to his home justified.” The publican went away justified because “he performed a work of justice by confessing his sin” (§212).³² Aquinas claims that the precepts of the law, albeit in different ways corresponding to the different kinds of law (ceremonial, judicial, or moral) contain what is just,³³ so that the doers of the law “will be justified” in that they execute the justice of the law (§212). And, subsequently, they will be considered just in the first way by having a reputation for being just.

The first two explanations of *iustificari* correspond to scriptural passages that emphasize the importance of obedience to the law. But the third explanation of *iustificari* corresponds to passages that deny the ability of works to justify.

The third use of *iustificari* refers to the *cause* of justification. For Aquinas, the cause of justification is that by which a person “newly receives justice [*iustitiam de novo accipit*]” and is rendered “at peace with God” (Romans 5:1). This newly received justice corresponds to the justice by which God justifies a person (see 1:17 above). For Aquinas, this form of *iustificari* cannot apply to the phrase, “the doers of the law will be justified,” since no one can acquire the justice by which they are just before God through works of the law, neither through ceremonial works, since they do not confer “justifying grace,”³⁴ nor through moral works, since these works do not *cause* the possession of justice but rather are performed *on account of* the possession of

justification as the possession of the habit of justice, will be addressed below as the third consideration of “to be justified.” These two are intricately related, however, in that performing acts of justice disposes one to participating in the habit of justice to a greater degree.

³² Calvin’s interpretation of Luke 18:14 is worth noting. Calvin’s principal concern is to establish the basis for why the publican is said to be justified. First, Calvin sets forth the “proper” meaning of “to be justified”: “to stand before God, as if we are just [*stare coram Deo, ac si iusti essemus*].” The publican was “justified” in that he was “accepted [*gratum*]” by God. Second, Calvin uses this claim to explicitly deny that the publican acquired the *quality* of justice through repentance. *Instead*, the publican was justified in that “his guilt was blotted out and his sins were washed away.” Lastly, Calvin concludes that the publican therefore obtained justice not by the *merit of works* but rather “*sola veniae deprecatione* [by prayer for pardon alone]”; his justification rests solely on God’s mercy to pardon (and thus not because “we deserve” to be accepted) (CO 45.421). Calvin does not address the actual act of asking for pardon, such as whether it is a work of justice as Aquinas suggests.

³³ ST I-II, q. 100, a. 12. The law also both foreshadowed and guided one to the grace of justification in Christ through its precepts and its promises (I-II, q. 107, a. 2, co.).

³⁴ See below for more on the relationship between justice and grace.

“the infused habit of justice” (§212).³⁵ When Aquinas comments on 2:14, “The Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires,” he states that “by nature” should be taken to mean “nature reformed by grace,” since “Paul is speaking of Gentiles converted to the faith, who began to obey the moral precepts of the law by the help of Christ’s grace” (§216).³⁶ For Aquinas, then, Paul’s argument consistently demonstrates that human beings cannot cause their own justification before God—it is not by works—since it is caused only by God’s grace. The phrase “the doers of the law shall be justified,” then, must refer either to one’s reputation of being just or to the execution of the just precepts of the law. It is important to note that throughout Romans 1–3, Aquinas interprets Paul’s statements about justice “apart from works of the law” or “without works” (3:28; 4:6) to exclude the necessity of works *prior to* but not following the causation of justice, since, according to Aquinas, “as is stated in James (2:26), ‘Faith without works,’ i.e. subsequent works, ‘is dead,’ and, consequently, cannot justify” (§317; cf. §333). Aquinas’s concern regarding works subsequent to the causation of justice pertains primarily to the presence and increase of charity in one’s increasing charitable union with the Triune God, which is consummated in the beatific vision. Charity is the source of the livelihood of faith (as opposed to dead faith). But even here, as we shall see in greater detail below, works are not the *per se* cause of the increase in charity; works dispose an individual

³⁵ Aquinas believes that “every law is to make men righteous and virtuous...and consequently the end of the Old law was the justification of men” (*ST I-II*, q. 107, a. 2). See §602, where Aquinas comments on 8:2, “the law of the Spirit of life,” by noting Aristotle’s teaching in *Nicomachean Ethics* II that “the intention of the lawgiver is to make citizens good.” Aquinas believes, however, the Old Testament was *not* able to justify. There are at least two reasons why the law is unable to justify a person before God: sin and the limitations of human nature in light of its supernatural end.

³⁶ Cf. *ST I-II*, q. 109, a. 4, ad. 1, where Aquinas draws upon Augustine (*De Spir. et Lit.*, 27) and states that the Spirit of grace enables the Gentiles to keep the law, “in order to restore to us the image of God, after which we were naturally made.” It is important to note that in these texts, Aquinas is highlighting not so much the elevating effects of grace on nature but grace’s remedial effects on nature’s natural *motio* toward its proportionate end. The Fall for Aquinas not only completely eradicates the original justice in which human beings were created but also disfigures or disorders its original natural moral integrity as well (see *ST I-II*, q. 85, a. 1). The effects of grace strengthen and heal human nature’s natural *motio* toward its proportionate end within the broader graced *motio* toward supernatural beatitude. I am indebted to Steven A. Long for his keen insight on this point.

to receiving more grace. It is grace that causes the increase in charity. In this regard, salvation is indeed for Aquinas *sola gratia*.

Turning to Calvin, we find little substantial engagement with Paul's assertion at 2:13, "it is not the hearers of the law who are just before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified." Calvin simply dismisses this statement as a claim true in and of itself but never actually embodied in practice.³⁷ Calvin situates 2:13 under the broad "thesis" that "the sole justice of men is the mercy of God in Christ. While offered through the Gospel it is apprehended by faith" (5.21–22). Here again we see the dichotomy between faith and mercy and merit and human effort for obtaining justice before God. The reason for Paul's statement at 2:13 is that, according to Calvin, the Jews "gloried" in possessing "unique knowledge [*notitia*]" of the law (44.53). Paul argues, however, that performing works of the law is necessary to be justified rather than merely having knowledge of the law. According to Calvin, to be justified by the law necessitates performing works of the law, as is stated in Leviticus 18:5, "He that doeth them shall live in them" (44.55). But it requires not merely performing works; it requires the "perfection" of works: "the justice of the law consists in the perfection of works" (44.57–58). Calvin maintains that the law as a whole prescribes "absolute justice [*absoluta iustitia*]," so that by a "full [*plena*]" and "complete [*integra*]" observance of the law, one procures a just standing before God (117.15–16).

The notion of perfect and absolute obedience to the law pervades Calvin's commentary on Romans. Against the claims of the "sophists" regarding "partial" or "half" justice, namely, that we are justified in part by works and in part by grace—a claim flowing out of a competitive-causal framework that is nowhere espoused by Aquinas—Calvin stresses that there is "no justice except that which is perfect and absolute" (71.76–72.77).³⁸ The justice before the "tribunal

³⁷ For situating Calvin's exegesis of Romans 2 amongst the exegesis of other sixteenth-century reformers, see Fink, "Divided by Faith," 109–59. Fink claims that Calvin draws from both Melancthon's and Bucer's exegeses, with the former setting forth a strong law–Gospel dichotomy and the latter incorporating a place for works in God's rewarding (in contrast to human meriting) of eternal life.

³⁸ See also Calvin, *Articles by the Theological Faculty of Paris*, in *Tracts Relating to the Reformation*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844), 1:80. The justice before the "tribunal of God" only comes through works by "perfect and absolute obedience" to the law (70.39). As will become clearer in Chapter 5, Calvin demands a level of perfection *in via* for fulfilling the law that Aquinas believes is only possible in heaven; Aquinas advocates for an "imperfect" obedience to the law that accounts for the wayfarer's ability to truly fulfill the law without necessitating

of God” only comes through works by “perfect and absolute obedience” (70.39). Elsewhere, Calvin describes the justice that comes through the law as “a heavenly [*caelestis*] and angelic [*angelica*] justice, in which no blemish [*naevus*] appears and which requires no addition to its cleanness [*munditiam*]” (147.60–63). This “full” and “complete” obedience includes the entirety of one’s life. In *Inst.* 3.14.10, Calvin speaks of “unceasing obedience,” claiming that if one sin is committed, it “wipes out and extinguishes every memory of that previous righteousness.” No one for Calvin, however, actually lives up to this standard. Everyone is convicted of transgressing the law, so that justice must be sought elsewhere than through performing works of the law.³⁹ Calvin thus explicitly dismisses all attempts at interpreting this passage in a way that “builds up justification by works” (i.e. justification by keeping the law in its entirety) and he rejects “lengthy discussions on justification” that support such an interpretation.⁴⁰ Rather, “if those only who fulfill the law are justified by the law, it follows that no one is justified, because no one can be found who is able to boast of having completed [*complementum*] the law” (44.68–69).

Calvin’s insistence on the impure nature of human works, whether in the justified state or not,⁴¹ coalesces with his focus on God’s just judgment at 1:16b–17. For Calvin, one’s works must constantly fall short of fulfilling the law; otherwise, fulfillment of the law would establish one justified before God *rather than* justification by faith. Calvin’s claim that perfect obedience to the law *constitutes* one just before God is a major difference from Aquinas’s understanding of the law. As will become clearer in what follows, Aquinas asserts that even with perfect obedience grace is necessary for salvation due to

the perfect obedience that will occur in heaven, when all disordered concupiscence is removed.

³⁹ See *Inst.* 3.17.13, where Calvin summarizes Paul’s argument: “the righteousness of the law lies in perfection of works; no one can boast that he has fulfilled the law through works; consequently, there is no righteousness arising from the law”; cf. *Inst.* 2.7.3. In his dispute with the schoolmen and Papists at *Inst.* 3.11.14 on the relationship between justification and works *after* regeneration, namely that a person is justified by faith *and* works if the works are understood as gifts of Christ and the fruit of regeneration, Calvin does not engage Aquinas’s particular position on this subject. Rather, Calvin works from the perspective that sees justification by works as perfect obedience to the law’s standard.

⁴⁰ See T. H. L. Parker, *Commentaries on Romans 1532–1542* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 126–41, and Mark Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 100–8, for accounts of Calvin’s interpretation of 2:13 among sixteenth-century interpretations.

⁴¹ This point will become clearer when we look at Romans 6–8.

the relationship between the natural powers of human nature and humanity's supernatural end in God. Calvin's interpretation, however, once again imposes important limitations on a participatory soteriology: while Christ fulfilled the law, human beings do not, whether inside or outside union with Christ. In this respect, the Spirit does not in fact replicate what is true of Christ in human beings.

Calvin reconciles the two seemingly competing claims in Scripture regarding justification and the law (justification is not by works—justification is by works) not by employing different uses of the term *iustificari*, as does Aquinas, thus upholding both that works are part of justification and works cannot cause justification. Rather, Calvin describes those verses claiming a justification by works as merely “circumstances [*conditio*],” that is, statements that are true in themselves but that are never found actually fulfilled (287.95). The result, as we shall see in later chapters, is that the law becomes understood in more extrinsic, nonparticipatory terms for Calvin, constantly judging and condemning. This is true even when one is in Christ and the law functions according to its principal purpose of leading the believer in a life pleasing to God. The believer simply cannot live up to the law's standard, and thus the believer must fall back upon the nonparticipatory distinction between being just *in Christo* as opposed to being just *in se*. Calvin accounts for the scriptural exhortations to holiness of life without that holiness being itself intrinsic to justification through his distinction between justification and sanctification.

GOD AS JUST AND JUSTIFIER

Our analysis of 1:16b–17 and 2:13 sets the stage for engaging 3:21–26, which is a central passage for Paul's teaching on justification in Romans. Calvin has emphasized faith rather than works, God's mercy rather than human merit, and our inability to stand before God's just judgment apart from God's forgiveness of sin and gift of justice in Christ. Calvin's constant reminder that humans are unable to fulfill the law surfaces again at 3:21. For Calvin, Paul turns directly to the Jews in 3:19–20 and refutes their belief that God's *covenant* was itself “sufficient holiness” to provide them an exemption from the common condition of humanity (65.52–55). Instead, Paul demonstrates that they did not surpass the Gentiles in any respect due to their failure

to keep the law. In continuity with his previous denials of law-based justification, Calvin claims that Paul's principal point is "the memorable truth of first importance that no one can obtain justice by keeping the law" (67.20–21). This leads to Paul's assertion at 3:21, "But now apart from the law the justice of God has been manifested." The *iustitia Dei* has been manifested "apart from the law" (3:21) in the sense of "without the aid of the law," not in the sense that the law did not aid our justification by "witnessing" to the free justice of faith—something Calvin affirms⁴²—but rather in the sense that *meritorious works* of the law did not aid our justification. For Calvin, Paul's claim at 3:21 excludes all works of the law as contributing to one's justification, not only in terms of the initial reception of justification but even those that "the Lord produces in his people." Calvin notes that Abraham, for example, was both regenerated and led by God's spirit at a time in which Paul denies that he had been justified by works (68.65–67). Calvin stresses that justification apart from works is not confined to the "initiation [*initium*]" of justification; Abraham even thirty years after his call still had no works in which to glory before God (68.66). His reception of the promises was through his faith alone. The cause of our justification, then, is "solely the remission of sins [*sola peccatorum remissio*]" (68.71).⁴³

Paul repeats the phrase *iustitia Dei* at 3:22, and Calvin takes this repetition as indicating that God is not only the approver of what is just but is also the author. Calvin recognizes a substantial amount of repetition throughout 3:21–26: the justice of God is repeated in vv. 21 and 22, as well as in vv. 25 and 26; belief/faith in vv. 22 and 24; and grace/freely in v. 24. For Calvin, this repetition is a rhetorical device that serves to press upon the reader Paul's central message, namely, that our justification rests on God's mercy alone. Calvin uses the repetition of *iustitia Dei* at 3:22 to set forth "the order to be followed" when discussing justification. Using the fourfold Aristotelian division of causality, Calvin claims that the efficient cause is the mercy of God, the material cause is Christ "with His blood," the formal and/or

⁴² As noted above, Aquinas makes a similar claim for the law, stating that since the law was not able itself to justify, "it bore witness to that justice that was to be sought elsewhere" (§301).

⁴³ As noted above, there is for Calvin technically a twofold aspect to justification: the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness (*Inst.* 3.211.2). Remission of sins alone does not result in being considered just by God's judgment; for this, we must also be imputed with Christ's justice.

instrumental cause is faith, and the final cause is God's glory in light of His justice and divine goodness (70.44–71.46).⁴⁴ Clearly no place exists for meritorious works as a causal basis of justification. Faith is said to justify simply by being the instrument through which we receive Christ himself, in whom we are made partakers through faith. Only after being in Christ are our works considered just before God. To be sure, our works are still imperfect in themselves. Yet they are purified through the blood of Christ, so that “God rewards our works as perfect, because their defects are covered by free pardon” (71.51–52). As we shall see, the ongoing imperfection of our works will be a key theme in Calvin's interpretation of Romans 7. For Calvin, the regenerated Paul acknowledges that he regards no work that he does as being free from “fault,” so that even Paul's “best work” is “always corrupted by some mark of sin, so that no reward can be hoped for, except insofar as God pardons them” (151.23–25).⁴⁵ Calvin's position leaves God acting over and against (i.e. extrinsically to) his *own* activity of producing good works in believers if rewards are indeed to come to believers: God first acts to produce partially good works in Christians, and then he acts once again to “cover” the defects of those works he produced in order that the Christian receives reward. This, as will become even clearer in subsequent chapters, is a serious limitation for a participatory soteriology.

Calvin elaborates on the “material cause” of our justification at 3:24, “through redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Christ satisfied the judgment (*iudicio*) of the Father by his obedience, and he liberated us from the tyranny and captivity of death by taking to himself our plight (*vices nostras subeundo*). Our guilt (*reatus*) is taken away by the expiation of the sacrifice he offered. This is why Christ is called a propitiation (3:25), explains Calvin, or to use an allusion to an “older

⁴⁴ See *Inst.* 3.14.17. Compare Calvin's causal schema to the Council of Trent, sixth session, chapter VIII: the efficient cause is the mercy of God, the meritorious cause is Christ, the instrumental cause is baptism (“the sacrament of faith”), and formal cause is “the righteousness of God, not that by which he himself is righteous, but that by which he makes us righteous.” It should be noted that it is not as significant as some have alleged that Calvin makes faith rather than baptism the instrumental cause, given that Calvin elsewhere affirms baptism as an instrument of receiving justification (*Comm. Acta* 22:16). But it is significant that Calvin does not make the formal cause the *iustitia Dei* indwelling a person; see Christopher J. Malloy, *Engrafted Into Christ: A Critique of the Joint Declaration* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 59–124.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Inst.* 3.14.9; see also John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster–John Knox Press, 1989), 95–106.

figure,” a mercy seat (*propitiatorium*), since he reconciles us to the Father “by his blood” (3:25). Calvin notes that the phrase “by his blood” is used to incorporate all the parts of redemption; Paul mentions blood in particular to indicate how we are “washed” (73.40). We are in need of washing, since our “uncleanness” has “extinguished the light of God’s image” in us, which results in God’s anger toward us. But by faith in Christ we are lovingly embraced as “God’s own pure workmanship.” Calvin is clear that God does not “hate” us in terms of our being created as living beings, but God hates our uncleanness (73.30–31).

When Calvin turns to 3:25b, “This was to manifest his justice, because [*propter*] of the passing over of sins previously existing,” he stresses the imputed nature of receiving Christ’s justifying work. Calvin interprets the *propter* in 3:25b as being the equivalent to “for the sake of remission [*remissionem ergo*]” or “for this end, that he might wipe out sin [*in hunc finem ut peccata deleat*]” (74.44–45). For Calvin, Paul is once again emphasizing that no meritorious contribution is made to one’s justification. Justification is “beyond ourselves” and occurs not because we are actually just (*re ipsa tales sint*) (74.47) but by imputation. The terms “imputation” and “remission of sin,” notes Calvin, are different expressions that convey the same fundamental point, namely, that our justification occurs apart from the contribution of our merit. In *Inst.* 3.11.2, Calvin links these phrases together by stating, “Justification... consists in the remission of sin and the imputation of Christ’s justice.”

What especially concerns Calvin in 3:25 is that the passage seems to restrict remission to past sins only. Calvin’s concern is not without context, since, as he explains, there were some in his day who in order to avoid “absurdity” restricted this passage to remittance of former sins “lest permission for later sins might be seen to be given” (74.58–59). In his commentary on 1 John, Calvin makes explicit that his concern pertains to the “Papist” teaching on “satisfactions” for sin, which *accompany* Christ’s sacrificial work in order to bring about remission: “To propitiate God to us by expiating sins is a *perpetual* benefit from Christ. This the Papists also *in part* concede; but afterwards they extenuate and almost annihilate this grace, by introducing their fictitious satisfactions. For if men redeem *themselves* by *their* works, Christ cannot be the only true propitiation.”⁴⁶ In response,

⁴⁶ *Comm. Ep. John* 4:10 (CO 55.354); italics added. The nonparticipatory dimensions of Calvin’s opponents are clear: “themselves” and “their works” are being understood in autonomous terms from God’s causal activity of salvation.

Calvin first contextualizes the passage within the older Jewish covenantal practices, in which “legal expiations” were made by cultic sacrifices.⁴⁷ Although these sacrifices were a testimony of a future satisfaction, in themselves they “could by no means placate God” (74.54–55). Expiation therefore only occurs through Christ. Calvin draws from Hebrews 9:15 as indicating that redemption for previous transgressions of the old covenant occurred in Christ. The notion of expiation in Christ for previously committed sins explains Paul’s statement regarding God’s “forebearance [*tolerantia*].” For Calvin this is the same as speaking of God’s “gentleness [*mansuetudo*],” since God restrained His judgment and prevented a sinner’s destruction until receiving the sinner in Christ. The very tolerance of God for sin sets forth an “implied anticipation” of the grace of Christ, in both the old covenant and the new. The satisfaction obtained in Christ, notes Calvin, continues to be our propitiation for our “daily guilt.” Calvin admits that pardon does not exist except for sins actually committed, not because “the fruit of redemption” is “cut off [*excidere*]” or “ruined [*perire*]” if we later lapse, therefore necessitating our need to receive pardon (74.66),⁴⁸ but rather on account of the “dispensation of the Gospel”: God’s judgment and anger are set before the one actually sinning, but his mercy—his pardon—is set before the one who has sinned (74.68–69).

Turning to 3:26b, “that he might himself be just and the justifier,” Calvin claims that Paul here provides a definition of the justice that has been revealed in Christ and made known in the Gospel. It consists in two parts: the first is that God is just. For Calvin, this refers to an attribute that God alone possesses. Calvin states: “God is just, not indeed as one among many, but as the one who alone contains the whole plenitude of justice in Himself” (75.91–93).⁴⁹ The whole human race, however, is “condemned of injustice.” The second part is that he is the justifier. This refers to God’s communication of his justice via imputation to unjust sinners, revealing, “God does not by any means keep back His riches within Himself but pours them out on humanity” (75.96–97). Calvin concludes, stating: “Everyone was

⁴⁷ Calvin admits that this passage has been explained in different ways, but states, “I think it is probable” that Paul was thinking of legal expiations.

⁴⁸ This, claims Calvin, is the position of Novatus.

⁴⁹ *Deum esse iustum, non quidem ut unum ex multis: sed qui solus in se omnem iustitiae plenitudinem contineat.*

unjust in themselves and lost, until a remedy from heaven was offered to them" (75.100–101).⁵⁰ This remedy has come through the sacrificial work of Christ.

Turning to Aquinas, I have already indicated points of continuity between Calvin and Aquinas through Aquinas's interpretation of 2:13. The continuity becomes even clearer through Aquinas's interpretation of 3:21–26. Aquinas situates 3:21–26 as part of the second stage of Paul's argument demonstrating (a) both Jews and Gentiles are equally under the guilt of sin (1:18–3:20) and (b) they are equal with regard to the state of grace (§299). Paul argues for their equality by discussing the relationship between the *iustitia Dei* and the law (§300). Paul states at 3:21: "But the justice of God is now manifest without the law." Continuing his twofold distinction of *iustitia Dei*,⁵¹ Aquinas states that the law cannot establish the justice by which God is just because God *himself* fulfills his promises of salvation.⁵² The law also cannot establish the justice by which humans are justified for the reasons given above. Paul therefore argues that the justice of God is "manifested now," that is, in the time of *grace*, "apart from the law," that is, without the law establishing either of the two justices. The justice by which God is justified is manifested through Christ's teachings and miracles, and the justice by which God justifies a person is manifested by the fact that many have been "divinely" made just (§300). Paul unfolds the basis of the twofold *iustitia Dei* at 3:22, "the justice of God through the faith of Jesus Christ [*per fidem Iesu Christi*] to all who believe." In terms of the justice by which God is just, which occurs through keeping his promises of our salvation, Christ, who is the "author of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), delivered (*tradidit*) the faith to us, which establishes our salvation.⁵³ In terms of the justice by

⁵⁰ Cf. *Inst.* 3.11.3.

⁵¹ Mary Daley's analysis unfortunately almost entirely misses the twofold movement of the *iustitia Dei* through Aquinas's commentary on 3:21–26; Daley, "The Notion of Justification in the Commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas on the Epistle to the Romans" (PhD diss., Marquette University, 1971), 53–76.

⁵² Aquinas quotes Rom 15:8, "Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs."

⁵³ Cf. *ST* III, q. 1, a. 2, where Aquinas claims that faith is made more certain by believing God himself Who speaks, quoting Augustine (*De Civ. Dei* 11.2), "The Truth itself, the Son of God, having assumed human nature, established and founded faith"; see *ST* III, q. 11, a. 6, ad. 2, where Aquinas claims that since our faith rests upon the "First Truth," our faith is derived (*derviat*) from Christ's *divine* knowledge (*divina scientia*) and not his human knowledge.

which God justifies people, justice is caused, i.e. we acquire it, through faith, i.e. that which is held (*habetur*) concerning Christ (§302).⁵⁴

While Aquinas's comments are in harmony with Calvin's interpretation, important dimensions of Aquinas's participatory soteriology begin to appear that separate his account from Calvin's. Aquinas does not waver from his position that faith does not merit our justification, "as if faith is from ourselves and through it we merit God's justice." Rather, faith itself is caused in us by God's grace. Our acquisition of the justice by which we are justified is through the grace of faith and not through the merit of works, as Paul states at 3:24a, "being justified freely [*gratis*]," that is, "without the merit of previous works" (§306). But the faith caused in us by God's grace is God's justification of the sinner. Faith is part of God's transformation of the sinner into a just person when the sinner is forgiven his or her sin. "In the very justification by which we are justified by God," states Aquinas, "the first motion of the mind toward God is through faith...hence faith, as the first part of justice, is given to us by God" (§302). Aquinas states elsewhere regarding Abraham's faith (§331), "the believing itself is the first act of the justice God works in him. For from the fact that he believes in God justifying, he submits himself to his justification and thus receives its effect [*ipsum credere est primus actus iustitiae quam Deus in eo operatur. Ex eo enim quod credit in Deum iustificantem, iustificationi eius subiicit se, et sic recipit eius effectum*]." In his commentary on Galatians, Aquinas clarifies that justice consists in paying a debt. The debt that humans have incurred with God is rooted in the creature–Creator relationship: "whatever is in man is from God, namely, intellect and will and the body itself." The highest form of justice is thus to render to God what is God's. Since what is God's is our

⁵⁴ See Aquinas, *Boet. De Trn.* 3, 1, ad. 4 (*Faith, Reason, and Theology* [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987], 69): faith comes from God both in terms of what is proposed for our belief and the interior light necessary to assent to these realities proposed. Elsewhere, Aquinas states that the effect of Christ's redeeming work "reaches us" by faith (§309); cf. *ST* III, q. 48, a. 6, ad. 2, on the "spiritual effect" of Christ's passion in us through faith. When the topic of faith arises, however, Aquinas, being compelled by James 2:26, often distinguishes between what he calls "unformed" faith (i.e. the faith of James 2:26) from "formed" faith. As stated earlier, faith is formed by charity, as Aquinas believes is taught by Paul in Galatians 5:6, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love." Aquinas affirms that Christ dwells in us through faith, but this does not occur without love, since, "He who abides in love abides in God and God in him" (1 John 4:16) (§302).

intellect, will, and body, we should render these things to God. How do we render to God our intellect? "This is done by faith." Aquinas cites 2 Corinthians 10:5, "Bringing into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ."⁵⁵ Since "the highest thing in man is his mind," faith is called the "first element" of justice. For Aquinas, then, faith is not merely the instrument by which we "take hold" of Christ and receive his justice as "clothing," as Calvin proposes. Rather, faith itself is the mind's participation in the justice of Christ. We see how Aquinas is seeking to uphold the Augustinian principle that God does not justify us without us. In our justification, God incorporates the movement of the intellect and the will as a participation in God's work of justification—when God infuses the virtues of faith, hope, and love, the intellect and will move, being moved by God, in faith, hope, and love, resulting in one's justification.⁵⁶ For Aquinas, although one can conceptually distinguish between justification and sanctification, with the latter being the setting apart of a person through consecration "by virtue of the blood of Christ," and the former being the actual state of justice,⁵⁷ there is no distinction between justification and transformation. God's justification of the sinner incorporates the sinner in his or her justification.

Aquinas then discusses the *cause* of our justification at 3:24b, "through redemption." Starting with a quote from John 8:34, "Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin," Aquinas explains: "From this slavery (of sin) a man is redeemed, if he makes satisfaction for sin" (§307). Using "debt" imagery, Aquinas illustrates that redemption occurs when someone pays the fine of the debt of another; the former redeems the latter by the payment. The redemption spoken of at 3:24b, however, explains Aquinas, involves not merely the debt

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *S. Ep. ad Gal.* §130.

⁵⁶ See *ST I-II*, q. 111, a. 2, ad. 2; q. 113, aa. 3, 8. Aquinas maintains that this movement of the intellect and will is *not* a cooperative work, but rather the result of *operative* grace, and therefore this movement does not merit. Garrigou-Lagrange calls this pre-meritorious movement occurring in justification "consent"—Aquinas himself describes it as *per motum liberi arbitrii, Dei iustitiae consentimus* (*ST I-II*, q. 111, a. 2, ad. 2)—but numerous questions are left unresolved in Garrigou-Lagrange's account, such as whether the operative grace of justification can be rejected and the relation of his account to the commentary tradition on Aquinas (*Grace; commentary on the Summa theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae*, q. 109–14, trans. Dominican Nuns, Corpus Christi Monastery [St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book, 1952], 170–6). I want to thank Fr Thomas Joseph White, OP for his suggestions on this point.

⁵⁷ See Aquinas's commentary on I Corinthians 6:11; *S. Primam Ep. ad Cor.* §287.

of each individual person but the debt of the whole human race. This debt was incurred through the “infection” caused by the sin of the first parent (§307).⁵⁸ Due to the universality of the infection, humanity needed a special help, a sinless person, in order to make satisfaction. This was Christ, “who was immune from all sin” (§307).

What is the debt caused by the sin of the first parent that Christ repaid on behalf of the human race? It was the penalty of death, which is indicated, according to Aquinas, by the phrase at 3:25, “in his blood.” The death endured by the sinless Christ satisfied the debt owed by sinful humanity and obtained pardon for sins. God put Christ forward (3:25b) to make satisfaction for the human race (§308). Aquinas explains that Christ’s satisfactory work is twofold: “he redeems us from the debt of sin [*noxā peccati*]” and “he obtains pardon for our sins,” which is why Christ is called the *propitiation* for humanity (§308; cf. Psalms 79:9).⁵⁹ It was “fitting,” states Aquinas, that Christ undergo death for satisfaction, since the human race has incurred death by its sin, as stated in Genesis 2:17, “In the day that you eat of it you shall die.”⁶⁰ Hence, claims Aquinas, 1 Peter 3:18 states, “For Christ also died for sin once for all” (§309). For Aquinas, as he elsewhere explains, on account of the nature of the Incarnation, in that Christ’s humanity was the “organ” of his divinity, “all acts and sufferings of Christ’s human nature were salutary for us, considering that they flowed from the power of his divinity.” Christ’s death, then, by which “moral life was extinguished in him,” is also the cause of “extinguishing our sins.” Christ’s resurrection, moreover, by which he “returns to a new life of glory,” is the cause of our justification in that “we return to the new life of justice” (§380). This payment that is Christ’s death, as stated earlier, reaches us “by faith” (3:25), through which we are justified before God, since “even among men payment made by one man does not

⁵⁸ For more on Aquinas’s understanding of original sin, see Chapter 5 on 5:12.

⁵⁹ See also *ST* III, q. 22, a. 3, where Aquinas explains the satisfaction made by Christ in terms of His office as priest. Christ is a unique priest, claims Aquinas, in that as man, he is both priest *and* victim (*hostia*). Moreover, although it is true that Christ is priest as man and not as God, and only God can forgive sins, Christ is unique in that in Christ one and the same *hypostasis* was united with both the divine and human natures. From this, Aquinas goes on to claim, “Insofar as His human nature operated by virtue of the Divine [see *ST* III, q. 19], that sacrifice [i.e. Christ offering himself] was most efficacious for the blotting out of sins”; see also *ST* III, q. 49, aa. 1, 3.

⁶⁰ “It is a fitting way of satisfying for another to submit oneself to the penalty deserved by that other” (*ST* III, q. 50, a. 1); cf. *ST* III, q. 46, a. 3; on the effects of Christ’s death for salvation, see *ST* III, q. 50, a. 6.

benefit another, unless the other considers it valid" (§309). Aquinas elaborates in *ST* III q. 49, a. 1, ad. 3 and *ST* III, q. 50, a. 6 that by his passion and death Christ delivered us from our sins causally; he "set up the cause of our deliverance, from which all sins whatsoever, past, present or to come, could be forgiven." This established causality is likened to a medicine prepared by a doctor that can be used to heal both present and future ailments. But it is through faith that this causality reaches *this* particular person; the effect of Christ's propitiatory work "reaches us" by faith (§309). Aquinas therefore demonstrates the connection between Christ's redeeming work as the causal principle of justification and grace as the causal principle of justification within the believer, showing how the grace that justifies a sinner is at all times rooted in the salvific sacrificial work of Christ on behalf of humanity that enables sinners to be forgiven of sins and restored to righteousness.⁶¹

Lastly, while commenting on 3:25b–26a, Aquinas reflects on the relationship between Christ's propitiation, the manifestation of God's justice, and *former* sins. Following the twofold *iustitia Dei*, Aquinas gives two interpretations to the phrase "for the manifestation of his justice because of the remission of former sins" (3:25b). In terms of the justice by which God is just, God manifests his justice by remitting the sins of those who preceded Christ as he promised (see Micah 7:19) (§310). In terms of the justice by which God justifies people, all sinners, whether before, during, or after the passion of Christ, are forgiven of their sins *solely* through the blood of Christ and not through works or human powers. Christ's blood not only remits past sins but also, as Aquinas states, present ones, and this occurs through faith (§310).⁶² Aquinas concludes his twofold interpretation of the *iustitia Dei* at 3:26b, "that he himself may be just and the justifier of him who is of the faith of Jesus Christ." Aquinas has demonstrated the veracity of this claim throughout 1:16b–3:26. He can confidently conclude that God is indeed just *in se* in remitting sins, since "He remitted sins

⁶¹ Although Aquinas affirms that the justified sinner possess justice (understood as a participation in Christ's justice), Aquinas's emphasis on justification as the forgiveness of sins through the cross of Christ places his account in greater continuity with Calvin's than Osiander's account of justification as the infusion of justice, an account which fails to uphold the important forensic elements of justification; see Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 57–8.

⁶² Aquinas here quotes his favorite passage (2 Corinthians 14:13) to demonstrate continuity of faith of those before Christ's passion and those during and after.

as He had promised and because it belongs to God's justice to destroy sins by leading men back to his justice" (cf. Psalms 11:7) (§312).⁶³ It is also true that *God* justifies sinners rather than the law or human power, and this occurs through the grace of Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that Aquinas would have little trouble affirming Calvin's "main and cardinal point" in Romans: "we are justified by faith through the mercy of God alone." Aquinas is clear on the unmeritorious reception of grace: "the primary source of grace is mentioned, namely, God's love: 'He loved his people, all those consecrated to him were in his hand' (Deuteronomy 33:3); 'Not that we loved God first, but that he first loved us' (1 John 4:10). For God's love is not called forth by any goodness in a creature, as human love is; rather, He causes the creature's goodness, because to love is to will goodness to the beloved. But God's love is the cause of things: 'Whatever the Lord pleases, he makes' (Psalms 135:6)" (§67). Calvin admits in *Inst.* 3.14.11 that he has no quarrel with the "sounder schoolmen" regarding the beginning of justification, who claim that sinners are freely delivered from condemnation and obtain justification by the forgiveness of sins and not due to meritorious works of the law. Calvin's emphasis on justification as forgiveness of sins is itself unproblematic for Aquinas, since he, too, defines justification principally in terms of forgiveness of sins. Calvin's assertion that the sinner receives an alien justice is also unproblematic for Aquinas. The justice granted to the sinner is always understood as originating from without the sinner. It is also clear that Calvin and Aquinas set forth Christ's sacrificial work front and center as the basis for a sinner's justification, and they both affirm that sinners receive the pardoning work of Christ *sola gratia* and *sola fide non merito*. Although Aquinas maintains that salvific faith is never alone—it is always faith animated by charity—justification

⁶³ Although here Aquinas speaks of the nature of God's justice as leading people to justice, Aquinas in *ST* III, q. 46, aa.1–2 connects God's justice to the contingent necessity (necessity of supposition) of Christ's passion for the satisfaction of sin, and God's mercy to the fact that humanity could not satisfy for themselves and therefore God freely gave His son on their behalf.

occurs by salvific faith alone and not by merit. This becomes even clearer in Aquinas's commentary on 8:23–30 when he addresses the topic of predestination and election: for both Aquinas and Calvin, no works are considered by God in his eternal decision to justify this sinner rather than another. It is due solely to God's hidden will.⁶⁴ Also, Calvin's understanding of the "Papist" teaching in which works of satisfaction *accompany* Christ's sacrificial work finds no place in Aquinas's account. For Aquinas, believers appropriate the blood of Christ by faith (§310), and this not solely at the moment of initial justification but rather for ongoing offenses and deeper conformity to the Son as an adopted son.

By being in substantial agreement on Paul's teaching on faith and justification, the issue between Aquinas and Calvin shifts from debates about "works righteousness" or "meriting forgiveness of sin" to the underlying judgments that lead Aquinas and Calvin to their different conceptions of justification (I advance this point in the following chapter on Romans 4 and Abraham). The real question centers on what happens when God forgives our sins and transforms the sinner through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Both Aquinas and Calvin affirm that justification consists of God's forgiving our sins and the reception of an "alien" justice.⁶⁵ But for Aquinas, the reception of the alien justice has the effect of transforming the sinner into a just person through the soul's participation in Christ's justice. For Calvin, on the other hand, the sinner's sins are forgiven and Christ's justice is imputed to the sinner, but the sinner, although transformed by the Spirit understood as a second grace (sanctification), remains a sinner insofar as the sinner is unable to stand just before God on

⁶⁴ Consider Aquinas's position (and Calvin's critiques) in light of the position of Erasmus on justification, according to Nicolette Mout: "If an individual makes good use of the gifts with which God endowed him at the Creation, God *may* have mercy upon him and save him. But He mercifully points out the way to salvation also to the sinner who has no merits to show, and whoever follows this road *has a chance* to receive grace and thus becomes a *candidate* for salvation" (Nicolette Mout, "Pia Curiositas: Erasmus and Oberman," in *The Work of Heiko A. Oberman: Papers from the Symposium on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Thomas A. Brady, Jr., et al. [Leiden: Brill, 2003], 155; italics added).

⁶⁵ For an account of Aquinas's account demonstrating continuities with Reformation thought, see Bruce Marshall, "Beatus vir: Aquinas, Romans 4, and the Role of 'Reckoning' in Justification," in *Reading Romans with St. Thomas Aquinas: Ecumenical Explorations*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 216–37.

account of the justice residing within the soul of the sinner. We find that Calvin's conception of justification affirms justification by faith and the forgiveness of sins *rather than* being transformed into a just person, while Aquinas believes that one is justified by faith and by the forgiveness of sins *and therefore* possesses the quality of justness. The key point here is that in Aquinas's account the "juridical" view of justification (i.e. God's declaration of one's sins forgiven) and the "transformative" view of justification (i.e. God making a sinner just) are *intrinsically* connected while in Calvin's account they are distinguished in the believer as two graces, even if they are connected by the single reality of being in Christ. Reasons for Calvin's unwillingness to uphold the transformative dimensions of justification must lie elsewhere than simply wanting to emphasize a juridical notion of justification, since, as we see from Aquinas's account, the juridical and transformative dimensions are not *a priori* at odds.

While Calvin affirms that God alone possesses "the whole plenitude of justice in Himself" and that God communicates his justice to sinners, the participatory dimensions of Calvin's thought begin to unravel when Calvin denies justification as the sinner's participation in God's justice through union with Christ; even after union with Christ in faith, Calvin denies that sinners are actually just. Justification is "beyond ourselves" and occurs not because we are actually just (*re ipsa tales sint*) but by imputation. The voluntarist underpinnings of Calvin's conception of justification become evident when Calvin discusses the Scotistic notion of "accepting grace" in *Inst.* 3.14.12. According to Calvin, the notion of "accepting grace" was used to affirm the role of works in obtaining righteousness before God. Although the works themselves are acknowledged as lacking the worth to obtain righteousness, God nevertheless "accepts" those works and through God's "accepting grace" individuals obtain righteousness. Although Calvin rejects this use of "accepting grace," he uses the concept of "accepting grace" to explain how we are justified before God. He claims that "accepting grace" means "nothing else than God's free goodness, with which the Father embraces us in Christ when he clothes us with the innocence of Christ and accepts *it* as ours that by the benefit of *it* he may hold us as holy, pure, and innocent" (*Inst.* 3.14.12). We are justified because God *accepts* Christ's justice on our behalf, while we remain, as did the unworthy works in the former understanding of accepting grace, unworthy of salvation in ourselves. For Calvin, the life of faith (Hebrews 2:4) becomes the

ongoing dependence on the imputed righteousness of Christ to stand in the presence of God's just judgment.

For Aquinas, on the other hand, God is both just and the justifier (3:26) by both possessing justice in Himself and by enabling individuals to have a real participation in that justice through grace. According to Aquinas, faith itself is the justification of the mind through grace that enables the individual to participate in Christ's justice according to the believer's own mode of existence. Aquinas would agree with Calvin that God alone possesses the whole plenitude of justice in Himself, but where Aquinas would differ is that through grace we become real partakers in that justice. The "life of faith" of Habakkuk 2:4 is a life of ongoing conformity—transformation—into Christ through grace. Works of the law play a part in one's ongoing justification understood as more intensely participating in the virtues of faith, hope, and love. The result of Aquinas's participatory view of justification and Calvin's more voluntarist view leads to different overall emphases in Romans: Aquinas depicts Christ's work as occurring *in* and *through* the sinner, while Calvin depicts Christ's work as occurring *for* and *to* the sinner.

Yet as I indicated above, their different conceptions of justification are heavily impacted by how they understand Paul's teaching on the transformation of the Spirit in Romans 6–8; the topic of justification simply cannot be abstracted from a broader consideration of Aquinas's and Calvin's Pauline teaching. One implication of this claim is that if we find substantial agreement on reading Romans 6–8, there is nothing preventing even more substantial agreement on justification in Romans, and more broadly substantial agreement on understanding the Christian life as a whole. But my argument is not principally concerned about getting Aquinas and Calvin to agree (although ecumenically I see real potential here). I also believe that a more participatory view of justification does more justice to Paul's teaching in Romans, as becomes especially clear when we arrive at Romans 8. Calvin simply cannot make as much sense of this passage as does Aquinas due to his views on the Spirit's transformation of the sinner and subsequent willingness to draw a distinction between justification and transformation.

But before moving ahead, a remaining point needs mentioning that surfaces in their interpretations of Romans 2:13 and is important for understanding Calvin's and Aquinas's different approaches to Romans 6–8, as well as the next chapter on Romans 4 and Abraham.

The question may be asked: Is there such a thing as a “legal righteousness” that can be set in contrast to “gospel righteousness”? Or stated another way: is there *both* a justification by works *and* a justification by grace? Calvin’s interpretation of *iustitia Dei* emphasizes God’s just judgment, and this emphasis coalesces with his insistence on the impure nature of human works, whether in the justified state or not. For Calvin, justification before God can, in theory, be acquired through obedience to the law. “Doers of the law” (2:13) are those who fulfill the totality of the law understood as meeting its lofty standard of justice. But since Paul teaches that justification is by faith through grace and not by works, Calvin finds no real manifestation of 2:13 in the world; and the reason must be that one’s works constantly fall short in the face of God’s just judgment. If this were not true, one could be justified by works *rather than by* or *alongside* faith. Calvin reconciles the two seemingly competing claims in Scripture regarding justification and the law *not* by employing different uses of the term *iustificari*, as does Aquinas. Rather, Calvin couches those verses indicating justification by works as merely “circumstances [*conditio*],” as Calvin describes them elsewhere (287.95), which are claims that are true in themselves but are never found actually fulfilled. Calvin’s distinction between justification and sanctification allows him to account for the scriptural exhortations to holiness of life without that holiness being itself intrinsic to justification itself.

Aquinas’s threefold explanation of *iustificari* at 2:13, on the other hand, allows him to affirm that the justice of the law can be upheld while denying that obedience to the law is the cause of justification; rather, the cause is rooted in the grace of God. For Aquinas, there is no “legal” righteousness set in opposition to a “Gospel” righteousness, for there is no sense that obedience to the law itself established a person justified before God. Grace establishes a person justified before God; works of the law, if they pertain to justification at all, are understood *always* within the life of grace, which means they are always understood within a life *already* at peace with God through grace.⁶⁶ We do not find in Aquinas a “justification by works” that occurs when

⁶⁶ It is inaccurate to limit the idea of justification in Aquinas to a *process* of becoming a just person (e.g. Fink, “Divided by Faith,” 40 n. 70). Rather, justification is both a state that is constituted at the beginning of the Christian life, and a process of moving deeper into more fully realizing this state. Key here is that the process occurs within the state of having “peace with God” and is not conceived as our attempt to obtain peace with God.

one satisfies the demands of the law as a monolithic whole requiring full, complete, and never-ceasing obedience; even perfectly keeping the law, if it is done outside elevating grace (and after the Fall, healing grace), does not bring salvation. The role of works in justification is understood always within a participatory graced relationship to God in which meritorious works are part of the believer's ever-increasing conformity to Christ.⁶⁷ We will continue to see how Aquinas's and Calvin's different conceptions of participation in relation to justification impact and are impacted by other sections of Romans.

⁶⁷ The nuances necessary for a full explanation of my claim that Aquinas denies "justification by works" but affirms that works play a role in justification—which also takes us to the topic of merit—goes beyond the scope of this chapter. I address these issues at length in Charles Raith II, "Calvin's Critique of Merit, and Why Aquinas (Mostly) Agrees," *Pro Ecclesia* XX (2011): 135–66. In that article, I highlight three central critiques of merit in Calvin's writings, one of which pertains to the relationship between justification and merit. Suffice to say that the present chapter focuses principally on what may be called "initial justification" in Aquinas, and as it pertains to initial justification Aquinas rejects any meritorious basis for its reception, just as he does with the grace of perseverance (*ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 9).

2

Abraham

Romans 4:1–25

Romans 4 is not without its place in Reformation era polemics.¹ For Calvin, Paul's teaching in Romans 4 directly contradicts the teachings of the Council of Trent regarding the role of human works in justification.² While Trent emphasizes what may be called "transformational righteousness" and sees a place for works in justification, Paul teaches instead, according to Calvin, what may be called a "forensic" or "dispositional" justification that comes *sola fide* and thus without the consideration of any works.³ These teachings are particularly evident in Paul's "example" of Abraham and the "reckoning" aspects of Abraham's justification by faith (4:3, 8–9, 22). But what does Aquinas do with these passages, given that Aquinas holds to the "transformational" position of justification? In the previous chapter, we discovered that Aquinas, too, removes all consideration of works as the cause of God's justification of the sinner. Aquinas's teaching on justification harmonizes with Calvin's emphasis on God's unmerited forgiveness of sins and imputation of Christ's alien righteousness, even while locating justification in participatory terms as the transformation of the sinner into a just person. God's forgiveness of sins, which occurs *sola*

¹ David Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 67–74. Romans 4:8 was a particular importance verse in many of the early Protestant confessional statements on justification; Fink, "Divided by Faith," 46–60.

² John Calvin, *Acts of the Council of Trent, with the Antidote*, in *Calvin's Tracts and Treatises*, ed. and trans. Henry Beveridge, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 115, 126, 146, 152–4, 156.

³ Marshall, "*Beatus vir*: Aquinas, Romans 4, and the Role of 'Reckoning' in Justification".

gratia and *sola fide non merito*, brings the believer into a participatory relationship with Christ's own justice. Faith is not the "grasping" of a justice that always remains in a sense alien to the believer, but rather faith is the justification of the mind through grace that enables the individual to participate in Christ's justice according to the believer's own mode of existence. These latter judgments are indeed contrary to Calvin's position, which contrasts God's forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness with the possession of the quality of justness. Not only does justification occur by faith rather than by merit, but also justification is by imputation *rather than* by transformation, and the works produced by the justified are not fully righteous and worthy of a reward. For Calvin, then, we cannot say that the believer is taken up into his or her own justification; rather, the believer grasps Christ through faith, and Christ's justice "clothes" the believer. The believer, however, is still condemnably *in se* even if accepted by God *in Christo*. Clearly the work of Christ *for* and *to* the believer takes precedence over the work of Christ *in* and *through* the believer, and this places Calvin's "replication principle," as Garcia expresses it, on shaky ground: in what sense, then, is it true that for Calvin the Spirit replicates *in* the believer what is true of Christ?

In what follows, I work out the implications of these judgments through Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of Romans 4. I do so while keeping in mind that Aquinas would have no issue with Calvin's main and cardinal point, "we are justified by faith through the mercy of God alone," but while maintaining a participatory view of justification as transformation and affirming the believer's ability to perform truly meritorious works. While the topic of merit will surface again when we consider Romans 7:14–25, important groundwork is laid in this chapter for considering Calvin's critiques of merit, which largely miss Aquinas as a target, and why his position on merit and rewards reveals the nonparticipatory dimensions of his thinking, especially his refusal to affirm that our works in any way have a worth corresponding to the reward that is given.

ABRAHAM AND WORKS OF THE LAW

The centrality of justification by faith is clear in Calvin's approach to Romans 4. For Calvin, Abraham's life exhibits "a mirror or pattern

of righteousness, which belongs in common to the whole Church" (80.9–14). Calvin claims that Paul addresses father Abraham in order to set forth an "example" and "proof" of his argument given in Romans 1–3, which maintains that there is "only one way [*ratio*], and not many ways, by which all may attain justice," namely, by faith (80.10–11).⁴ Calvin upholds a strict dichotomy between "justification by faith" and "justification by works" and places this dichotomy at the heart of Romans 4. He prepared us for this in his prologue (the *Argumentum in Epistolam*), where he referred to Romans 4 and concluded, "The justice of works disappears [*evanescere*] when we give place to the justification of faith" (6.73). While Calvin acknowledges that Paul's argument has particular implications for the Jews, the Jews quickly fade from the picture as Calvin unpacks the distinction between justification by works and justification by faith.

It is worth noting how already Calvin's approach to Abraham differs from Aquinas's. Aquinas situates Romans 4 within Paul's larger argument against the Jews' "glorying" over the Gentiles due to their possession of the law (Romans 2), ancestry (Romans 3), and now *circumcision* (Romans 4); they (mis)understood these things as giving them a "preference" over the Gentiles (§322). The issue as Aquinas sees it is not so much the Jews attempting to merit favor with God through circumcision, but rather the Jews improperly boasting in their possession of circumcision. For Aquinas, Paul excludes the Jews' glorying over possessing circumcision by calling on the father of circumcision, Abraham, and demonstrating the centrality of grace and faith rather than "outward observances" for justification.⁵ And if justification comes by grace and faith and not outward observances, the Gentiles, who also possess grace and faith, have an equal status with the Jews.

⁴ See Barbara Pitkin's article, "Imitation of David: David as a Paradigm for Faith in Calvin's Exegesis of the Psalms," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 24 (1993): 843–63, although addressing Calvin's depiction of David as an exemplar of faith rather than Abraham, provides good insight into Calvin's use of Old Testament figures as examples for Christian believers that is rooted, according to Pitkin, in Calvin's understanding of the continuity of the Old and New Covenants.

⁵ Aquinas situates circumcision under the category of "bodily observances" as one of the many obediencial acts of the ceremonial precepts of the law (§323). More specifically, Aquinas considers circumcision to be a "sacrament" of the Old Covenant (cf. *ST I-II*, q. 102, a. 5).

For Aquinas, then, when Paul asks at 4:1 what Abraham “found,” he is addressing the value of bodily observances like circumcision.⁶ The “works of the law” in 4:2 correspond to these outward bodily observances. As he makes clear in his commentary on Galatians, the phrase “works of the law” should be largely restricted to the ceremonial precepts because, Aquinas argues, the moral laws cannot “properly” be called “works of the law” on account of the presence of the moral laws in the fabric of human nature. “Man is induced to them [the moral laws] by natural instinct and by the natural law.”⁷ The moral laws are not so much extrinsic principles of divine command as they are intrinsic principles of human nature understood as a participation in God’s nature (i.e. the Eternal Law). Only the ceremonial precepts are therefore “properly” termed “works of the law.”⁸ These outward bodily observances are contrasted with the “inward” aspects of Judaism, in particular the presence of faith. Aquinas calls Judaism as a nation an “outward appearance,” which he distinguishes from the “inward Judaism” that encompasses all peoples (§245). The praise given to Abraham in Romans 4 is due to his inward Judaism, which corresponds to his faith, and not his external Judaism, which corresponds to *circumcision*.

It is worth noting that Calvin repeatedly refutes the claim that Paul’s attention to circumcision at 4:9 limits the scope of “works” in Romans 4 to the ceremonial precepts alone. Rather for Calvin, “works” encompasses all acts of obedience to the law, whether ceremonial, judicial, or moral. Calvin explains that we should consider “the class of people with whom Paul is arguing” (i.e. the Jews) who “had a particular reason of their own for their estrangement from a true and genuine righteousness by a gross abuse [*crasso abusu*] of the law” (86.7–9). Although circumcision may have held pride of place among the Jews, they failed to boast in circumcision as a symbol of the grace of God and instead boasted in their *meritorious* observance of the law (a boasting applicable to moral precepts as well) (86.17–18),

⁶ For Aquinas, circumcision cannot be useless (*non utilitas*) or else it would not be fitting to God’s interaction with humans, as stated in Is 48:17, “I am the Lord, your God, who teaches you useful things [*utilia*]” (§322).

⁷ *S. Ep. ad Gal.* §94.

⁸ Aquinas does speak at times of the “works of the law” more broadly to include the moral precepts (*S. Ep. ad Gal.* §112) since no works, even works corresponding to the moral law, are able to justify a person apart from faith in Christ (*S. Ep. ad Rom.* §212; 500).

therefore failing to imitate the faith of Abraham. The issue for Calvin, once again, is the dichotomy between justification by faith and justification by works.

But since Aquinas distinguishes between “inward” Judaism corresponding to faith and “outward” Judaism corresponding to circumcision, he interprets Paul’s claim at 4:2 that if Abraham were justified by works of the law, “he has glory, but not before God,”⁹ as distinguishing a glory corresponding to “outward works,” which gives one glory before other people, from a glory corresponding to the inward “secrets” of the heart, which are seen before God only (§324–5).¹⁰ For Aquinas, Abraham did indeed have glory before God, but this glory was due to his faith and not outward observances like circumcision, for it was his faith that was “reputed” as justice (§327).¹¹

AN ISSUE OF MERIT

Calvin’s contrast between faith and works (as a whole) fits well with his desire to dichotomize forgiveness of sins and Christ’s imputed justice on the one hand and the sinner’s possession of justness (or lack thereof) on the other, while Aquinas’s emphasis on “inward” rather than “outward” fits well with his belief that justification consists not in performing outward observance but in God transforming the sinner into a just person (understood as a participation in Christ’s justice). Lest we get the wrong impression about Calvin’s point, I note that Calvin does not intend to devalue the importance of good works

⁹ See n. 17 below for the textual difference between Aquinas and Calvin on 4:2b.

¹⁰ Aquinas supports this juxtaposition with three biblical citations: 1 Samuel 16:7, “The Lord looks on the heart”; 1 Corinthians 3:21, “So let no one boast in men”; and John 12:43, “They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” The contrast between “inward” faith before God and “outward” works before human beings parallels Origen’s commentary on this section. “Works” are those things that are exterior, approved by other people, and find a boast before others. “Faith” is something secret, of the heart, and before God alone, finding a boast only before Him (Origen, *Romans*, I.237–39).

¹¹ To be sure, both the “interior” and “exterior” are integrated in being directed to God. The interior acts of faith, hope, and love, as well as the exterior acts of divine worship, whereby one “makes profession” of his or her subjection to God, direct a person along the order to God (ST I-II, q. 99, a. 3).

simpliciter, much less place works at odds with faith.¹² Calvin's emphasis on the "third" use of the law—which is its principal use—is well known, namely, that the law guides believers in righteous living. Calvin goes so far as to grant a causal role to works in obtaining salvation.¹³ Rather than works per se, Calvin's principal concern pertains to the notion of *merit* and its import as a cause of one's justification. To give but one example, when Calvin comments on 4:4, "[N]ow to him that works, the reward is due, but to him that believes..." he claims that Paul is denying the ability of *meritorious* works to contribute to justification and immediately adds: "Paul does not mean the man who is given to good works, a pursuit which ought to be zealously followed by all children of God" (82.90–91). For Calvin, Paul is addressing the *ratio* of justification and not what follows upon justification. Paul is concerned with "how God regards human beings [*quo loco Deus ipsos censeat*]" and not "what they are in themselves [*quales sint in se homines*]" (82.81–82). For Calvin, this distinction can be found in the way Abraham appears differently in the epistle to the Romans than in the epistle of James (where Abraham's good works are emphasized). Taken together, Calvin affirms, the two examples demonstrate that "purity of conscience and integrity of life" cannot be "separated" from the "free favor of God" (82.83).¹⁴ Yet since merit entails "what one is in himself or herself" or "what one brings of their own"—phrases, I note, reflecting a competitive-causal relationship between God and human action—Paul demonstrates that merit contributes nothing to one's justification.

To counter the role of merit in justification, Calvin makes the notion of "boasting" (4:2) a central component to his argument, since Calvin believes boasting or bragging is precisely where merit leads. Earlier, commenting on Romans 3:27, "Where then is the glorying? It is excluded," Calvin states. "If merit is a matter of boasting, whether it is termed 'congruous merit' or 'condign merit,' by which a man may conciliate [*conciliat*] God to himself, we see that both of these are here destroyed" (76.11–13).¹⁵ Abraham, being justified by faith, boasted

¹² See Calvin's comments on Romans 3:31, "Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid: we establish the law" (78.94–79.24).

¹³ Raith, "Calvin's Critique of Merit," 138–9.

¹⁴ Cf. *Inst.* 3.17.11–12. They—justification and sanctification—are simultaneously given as a twofold gift through union with Christ. But significant here is Calvin's ability to distinguish "how God regards us" from "what we are in ourselves."

¹⁵ To be sure, the notion of "conciliating" God to oneself is also not in line with Aquinas, either with regard to congruous or condign merit. See Joseph Wawrykow,

“not before God” (4:2b). He had no “ground for glorying” and thus there is no place for merit.

There is a textual difference between Aquinas and Calvin at 4:2 that couches Abraham’s situation differently and impacts the character of their commentaries. Aquinas’s text at 4:2b reads, “If Abraham was justified by works, he has glory but not before God [*habet gloriam sed non apud Deum*].” Calvin’s text, however, following Erasmus, states, “If Abraham was justified by works, he had something by which he *may* glory but not before God [*habet quo gloriatur, non apud Deum*]” (Erasmus’s text only differs by having *quod* for Calvin’s *quo* [CWE 56:106]). The small textual difference creates a substantial interpretive difference. According to Aquinas’s text, there is no *potentiality* to Abraham’s boasting or glorying in works. The text simply asserts that Abraham indeed had a kind of glory but not one “before God.” Aquinas differentiates the “glory” before other people through outward works, which in itself is not a problem, from the “glory” one has before God through inward faith. The issue according to Aquinas’s interpretation is that he did not have glory before God *for the same reason* that he had it otherwise.

For Calvin, however, Abraham only *potentially* “gloried” in his works, which, if he had actually done so, would have been reprehensible. Once again Calvin is not addressing good works in general in his interpretation of Abraham but particularly merit. Thus he states, commenting on 4:2, that Paul’s argument is “incomplete” and should read in full as follows: “If Abraham was justified by works, he is able to boast *in his merit*” (80.35–36; italics added), to which Calvin concludes: “Which of us will claim for himself the least particle of merit, when it is not granted to Abraham?” (80.41–42).¹⁶ Thus, rather than boasting in merit, Calvin stresses the “inability to bring anything of *one’s own* except the acknowledgement of his misery” (81.56; italics added). Human beings must “feel in themselves that they are ungodly” (83.18–19); they must “completely die to oneself” (94.80–81) and “forget oneself” (95.22–23). This is a fundamental principle of what Calvin calls “Christian philosophy”; it exists only with those “who have learned well to be earnestly dissatisfied with themselves, and

“John Calvin and Condign Merit,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 (1992): 73–90; idem., *God’s Grace & Human Merit: ‘Merit’ In the Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Cf. *Inst.* 3.11.13.

to be confounded with shame at their wretchedness" (135.14–16).¹⁷ Abraham's example in Romans 4 demonstrates, "when the cause of why God loves us and His acknowledgement [*agnoscat*] of us as just [*pro iustis*] is questioned, it is necessary that Christ is put forth" (as opposed to what we are in ourselves). The corollary to Calvin's rejection of Abraham's merit is his emphasis on the imputation of Christ's justice and our obtainment (*impetrare*; 83.15–16) or apprehension (*apprehendere*; 81.54) of that justice through faith alone. In believing, Abraham "embraces" nothing but the grace of God offered, "trusts" in the goodness of God, and "seizes" the kindness of God as the only ground for his justification (81.67–69).¹⁸ Since, as Calvin claims, "for Paul justice is nothing other than the remission of sins" (83.36–37),¹⁹ the word "remission" itself indicates that it is "imputed without works" (83.37–39).²⁰ Rather than possessing justness, God considers Abraham just because Christ "clothes [*induat*]" him with his justice (82.84–85). This brings us back once again to Calvin's willingness to dichotomize forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ's justice with the possession of the quality of justness when discussing justification (*contra* Aquinas).

Aquinas agrees with Calvin's assertion regarding Abraham's unmeritorious reception of justification.²¹ Abraham's glory before God was due not to his circumcision but rather to his faith in God.²² And faith

¹⁷ On Calvin's "Christian philosophy" in its relation to exegesis, see Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006), 6–7, esp. 7 n. 19.

¹⁸ Calvin's argument includes an engagement with and refutation of an interpretation similar to that of Origen; see Origen, *Romans*, I.241; cf. Erasmus, *Paraphrase on Romans* [CWE 42.27; 30], who speaks of Abraham's "merit of trust," "meriting the promise," and the "credit" received on account of his faith.

¹⁹ The relationship between forgiveness of sins and Christ's imputed justice was more clearly formalized in the later years of the early Reformation era and become embodied in many second-generation Reformation confessions; see Fink, "Divided by Faith," 37–43. Although Calvin states here that justification is "nothing other" than the forgiveness of sins, the "nothing other" is not to exclude Christ's imputed justice but rather merit.

²⁰ Cf. *Inst.* 2.17.5.

²¹ As I demonstrate below, however, Calvin's conception of merit differs from Aquinas's as well.

²² Aquinas digresses at §327 into a lengthy discussion on the difference between *credere Deum*, *Deo*, and *in Deum*, which is also discussed at *ST* II-II, q. 2, a. 2. Aquinas claims the proper act of faith, in which faith receives its *species*, is to believe God (*Deo*), which is the faith of Abraham in 4:2. This is to believe something "for the reason that it was said by God" (§327).

does not merit sanctifying grace but is the *result* of the infusion of sanctifying grace. Aquinas explicitly rejects the notion that “by faith we merit justification, as if faith exists from ourselves and through it we merit God’s justice, as the Pelagians assert” (§302). For Aquinas, faith is the first movement of the mind in subjection to God (cf. §302; 331). To be justified is to be rightly ordered, and this consists in the intellect’s subjection to God, the will’s subjection to the intellect, and all the lower powers’ subjection to the intellect and will. Faith is the initial movement of rectified reason that occurs from receiving the justifying grace of Christ.²³ Justification occurs, then, not when circumcision is performed but when what is highest in an individual becomes subject to God.²⁴ When Abraham believed God, and God “reputed [*reputatus est*]” his faith as justice (4:3),²⁵ the lesson, according to Aquinas, is that God regards the inward ascent of faith rather than an outward work like circumcision to be the expression of an individual’s justification (§327). God “reputing” the movement of faith as justice is in effect God’s recognition of his own creation of justice within a person. Aquinas asserts that the reckoning of justice *gratis* “would have no place, if justice were from works, but it only has a place according to which it is from faith [*solum habet locum secundum quod est ex fide*]” (§331).²⁶ This is confirmed by the example of David in 4:6–8, in which Paul demonstrates through the blessings David pronounces that God “gives [*dare*]” justice *gratis*, that is, “without preceding works,” as is also affirmed in Titus 3:5, “Not because of works of justice which we do” (§333). Aquinas therefore concludes that it is impossible that one could receive initial justice as a due; Abraham receives justice *gratis*, that is, “as if” he had merited justice through works (§331).

²³ Cf. ST I-II, q. 113, a. 4.

²⁴ See S. Ep. ad Gal., §130.

²⁵ Aquinas’s text reads *reputatus est*, while Calvin’s text reads *imputatus est*. For the significance, or, better, lack of significance, in the change between the two terms, see Lowell C. Green, “The Influence of Erasmus upon Melancthon, Luther and the Formula of Concord in the Doctrine of Justification,” *Church History* 43 (1974): 185–6; see also Malloy, *Engrafted*, p. 56 n. 64.

²⁶ See ST I-II, q. 114, a. 5, where Aquinas uses Romans 4:4 to argue that no one is able to merit the first grace of justification.

THE CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
DIVINE NATURE AND HUMAN NATURE
IN MERIT

Aquinas thus fully affirms with Calvin that Abraham's justification occurred by faith apart from merit. But Aquinas's interpretation of justification in transformational terms and Calvin's denial of this participatory framework impacts how they unfold this affirmation. Calvin consistently shifts our attention away from "what we are in ourselves" and onto the relation of faith to Christ's imputed justice, while Aquinas intertwines his discussion on Abraham's faith with Abraham's inward transformation. Yet more is at work in Calvin's desire to shift our attention from "ourselves" and onto Christ than simply working out the implication of our remaining sinfulness even after receiving justification—a topic of discussion throughout Romans 6–7. Underlying Aquinas's and Calvin's respective articulations of the relationship between grace and merit is a difference in how they understand the causal relationship between the divine will and human willing. This brings us to a key point in their participatory soteriologies.

Especially noteworthy is Calvin's frequent reference to, and rejection of, the phrase "one's own." Calvin seeks to reject the notion that human beings contribute "of themselves" to their justification. As Calvin states of Abraham at 4:3, "Abraham brings [*affert*] nothing of his except the acknowledgement [*agnitionem*] of his own misery which seeks for mercy." Calvin's sharp dichotomy between what is "of one's own" and what is granted by God informs his dichotomy between grace and merit. Calvin portrays the relation of grace and merit in terms more akin to competitive causality between human willing and divine willing than Aquinas's noncompetitive causality.²⁷ Calvin comments that Paul "forbids them [i.e. his Christian audience] from being mercenary-minded by demanding something from God as their right [*iure*]" (82.93–95). This comment only makes sense if "their right" is understood as something distinct from God's gift. Otherwise, the one meriting would realize that they have already received something

²⁷ See the introduction for the development of the competitive-causal schema between divine and human activity from Aquinas to the Reformation era.

from God if they were able to merit; the one meriting always at the same time remains a debtor to God.²⁸ Elsewhere, Calvin's rejection of the notion that one "merits something by his own achievements" (82.93) reflects an understanding of "his own achievements" as something separate from divine healing, elevation, and motion. In his commentary on I John 3:8, the competitive-causal schema is clearly at work with regard to merit: "The Sorbons, it is true, confess that the will of man, unless assisted by God's Spirit, cannot desire what is right. But they imagine such a motion of the Spirit as leaves to us the free choice of good and evil. Hence they draw forth merits, because we willingly obey the influence of the Spirit, which it is in our power to resist. In short, they desire the grace of the Spirit to be only this, that we are thereby enabled to choose right if we will."²⁹ When Calvin rebukes those who "teach pitiable folks to procure salvation for themselves by works," it is clear that he understands this "procuring" and "for themselves" as occurring either by human effort alone or in such a way that God and human beings each bring something to the table that somehow results in justification.³⁰

Little of Calvin's arguments against merit actually address how Aquinas understands the harmonious, noncompetitive-causal relationship between the divine and human will.³¹ Aquinas agrees that there can be no concept of "one's own" or "of oneself" if this implies something apart from divine causality. Cooperation in Aquinas, unlike in Calvin's opponents, is not understood as the human agent acting in practically autonomous terms from the direct causal movement of the divine will; there is no sense of God contributing his part

²⁸ See Aquinas's commentary on Romans 13:8, "Owe nothing, except love" (§1046).

²⁹ *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. and ed. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), <<http://www.ccel.org>>, accessed 14 January 2012.

³⁰ In his *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will* (BLW), Calvin ridicules Ockham's statement, "God does not deny his grace to one who does what he can" (234; cf. *Inst.* 2.3.10). A. N. S. Lane points out in a footnote on this quote that the statement most likely came from Biel, *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*, bk. 2, d. 27, a. 3, dubium 4 (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1973–84), 2:523–4. But it would be inaccurate to pin Calvin's attack against conclusions resulting from a competitive causal paradigm against the Nominalists alone. In *Inst.* 2.2.4, Calvin chastises Chrysostom and Jerome for making claims quite similar to Ockham's.

³¹ For more on this, see Raith II, "Calvin's Critique of Merit," 135–66. It is interesting to note that in the midst of criticizing the claims over Chrysostom and Jerome for "exceeding the due bounds in extolling the powers of human will," Calvin singles out Augustine as the sole case to the contrary (*Inst.* 2.2.4).

and *then* the human beings acting meritoriously. In the meritorious work, Aquinas considers the *same act* as having causal roots in both grace and human will.³² Even Abraham's "acknowledgement of misery" would need to be rooted in divine causality, since Aquinas attributed all "preparation" of grace to the *auxilium Dei*.³³ Individuals acknowledge their misery while being moved by God to acknowledge it, just as individuals have faith being moved by grace to have it, and individuals do meritorious works while God is moving them in grace to do them. In fact, Aquinas maintains that God's grace is the "principal" cause and human willing the "subsequent cause." The principal agent in the meritorious act is God's grace, and this means for Aquinas that the action is attributed "more" to God than to human free will.³⁴ Aquinas acknowledges that although it is true that the act in a sense "depends on man's will or exertion," it is "offensive to pious ears" to speak of the act in this way. Rather, the act should be considered according to the words of the Apostle at Romans 9:16, "It does not depend on the one who will or the one who runs, but on God who has mercy."³⁵ We find no room in Aquinas for "boasting" in one's meritorious work due to the centrality of God's grace as the principal cause of all meritorious activity. There is therefore never the sense of "one's own" as it relates to preparation for grace, faith, justification, or merit, if "one's own" means apart from divine causality.

One implication of Aquinas's position as it pertains to his commentary on Romans 4 is that Aquinas does not feel the need to deny truly meritorious works in order to uphold Abraham's "non-boasting" before God. A participatory understanding of meritorious works can affirm a truly good work being performed by Abraham *and* that Abraham has no room to boast, other than boasting in God's work of allowing him to participate in God's causal activity. Aquinas agrees with Calvin that the cause of justification can in no way be attributed to our works, as if we merit God's forgiveness of sins. But there is no need for Aquinas to deny the truly meritorious nature of a believer's good works in order to assert the centrality of grace for salvation. Through grace, God brings the believer into participation in his salvific activity in such a way that the believer performs truly meritorious

³² Warkow, *God's Grace & Human Action*, 51; see also 176.

³³ Cf. *ST I-II*, q. 109, a.6.

³⁴ *S. Ep. ad Rom.*, §778.

³⁵ *S. Ep. ad Rom.*, §778.

works that receive a reward as a just due without granting space for the believer to “boast” in his or her own efforts.³⁶

JUSTIFICATION AND THE LAW

Aquinas’s affirmation and Calvin’s rejection of Abraham’s ability to fulfill the law brings us to the relation of justification and the law. For Calvin, a person is justified before God by means of works of the law (the justification of the law) through perfect and complete obedience to the law in its entirety and with unwavering consistency.³⁷ Ultimately for Calvin, the failure of the Jews is a failure of perfect obedience, which would have rendered them justified before God. In contrast, Christ was perfectly obedient to the law and possessed the quality of justness. Through faith Abraham obtained Christ’s justness imputed, while Abraham himself, because he continues to imperfectly keep the law, remains unjust *in se*. Works, then, do not have a place in Abraham’s justification, since in justification one receives the perfect obedience of Christ imputed. What need is there to add to Christ’s perfect obedience? None, and therefore Calvin concludes works have no part in our justification.³⁸ But Calvin goes further than simply denying that our works add to Christ’s perfect obedience. He also wants to deny that our works ever meet the law’s standard, flowing as they do from a person who is still inherently condemnable. If they were not tainted and fulfilled the law, there would exist according to Calvin’s soteriology a justification by works alongside a justification by faith. To avoid this, Calvin keeps Abraham’s ongoing sinfulness front and center and posits the distinction between “how God regards human beings [*quo loco Deus ipsos censeat*],” on the one hand, and “what they are in themselves [*quales sint in se homines*]”

³⁶ See Charles Raith II, “Aquinas and Calvin on Merit, Part II: Condignity and Participation,” *Pro Ecclesia* XXI (2012): 195–210.

³⁷ In *Inst.* 3.14.10, Calvin uses the notion of “unceasing obedience,” claiming that if one sin is committed, it “wipes out and extinguishes every memory of that previous righteousness.” But unceasing obedience is impossible. We therefore always need God’s mercy to unceasingly forgive our sin; cf. *Inst.* 3.17.9.

³⁸ I refer here to the sinner’s just standing before God’s tribunal, and not to the cultivation of justness within the believer that occurs throughout the life of sanctification, which does include a role for works.

on the other. In Calvin's account, God reckons individuals to be something they are inherently not (i.e. *in se*), namely, just. Moreover, God regards an individual's works to be something they are inherently not, namely, rewardable. Works that flow from tainted human beings are themselves tainted. The only way for works to receive reward is first to receive "pardon" and be "accepted" by God, and only then does God reward and only out of his gratuity. Commenting on Paul's description of David in Romans 4:6–8, Calvin states, "The spots and blemishes of the works [of the justified] are covered by the purity of Christ, lest they should come into judgment, and being unpolluted by any defilements, thereby considered righteous. It is quite clear that apart from such forbearances no human work at all can please God" (85.73–76). For Calvin, believers have God "favorably disposed" toward them due to justification, and in this state of justification God "accepts" the ever-tainted works of believers by pardoning them in Christ and then rewarding them. These nonparticipatory readings of Abraham's justification—the dialectic between how God "regards" him and what he is *in se*—and his works—the dialectic between being tainted and unpleasing *in se* yet pardoned and accepted *in Christo*—are directly related to Calvin's interpretation of law-based justification.

Aquinas's engagement with Romans 4 demonstrates the effects of *not* presupposing a "covenant of works." Perfect obedience to the law would not in and of itself establish one just before God. For starters, Aquinas makes obedience to the law intrinsically connected to grace, since only by grace can we have the proper charity for God that truly fulfills the law. This is true regardless of the presence or absence (i.e. pre-Fall garden) of sin. God must have already imparted grace if true fulfillment of the law occurs. And as we have seen, grace and not works causes justification. Therefore, Aquinas understands obedience to the law not as a means of justification but rather something only possible by a person already just.³⁹ To be sure, works indeed affect one's relationship to God, both positively and negatively, and Aquinas even recognizes a potential problem with claiming that outward works do not justify, a problem that arises due to Aristotle's teaching on acts and habits. Given that (simply speaking) acts of justice produce the inward habit of justice, it would seem that if Abraham performed

³⁹ There are some obvious parallels between Aquinas's position and N. T. Wright's articulation of Paul's soteriology; see N. T. Wright, *What Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Founder of Christianity?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 119–20.

“outward” works of the law, and the law contained what was just, he should have been justified by obtaining the “inward” habit of justice.⁴⁰ But Paul is denying that works of the law justified Abraham. Was, then, the problem a shortcoming of the law, in that the law did not fully command what was just? Not at all, claims Aquinas. So was it that Abraham failed to keep the law due to his sinful nature? This is Calvin’s claim rooted in his understanding of justification by works. But Aquinas takes a different direction. Aquinas explains the inability of the law to justify by distinguishing between two ends to human nature: natural and supernatural.⁴¹ Corresponding to these two ends are two kinds (not degrees) of justice. It is true, states Aquinas, that if Abraham performed the works of the law, he would *acquire* justice. There is therefore no deficiency in the law as it relates to justice. But this *acquired* justice does not correspond to the justice that obtains glory before God, for this justice is “human justice” and is ordained to the “human good.” The justice that corresponds to human nature’s supernatural end *exceeds* human ability, and therefore this justice, which is ordained to the “divine good” of future glory, can only be obtained by God’s *infusion* of justice through the sanctifying gift of grace. A guiding metaphysical principle for Aquinas is the following: “Acts conducing to an end must be proportioned to the end. But no act exceeds the proportion of its active principle.”⁴² For an act to correspond to the end of divine glory, the principle of the act must be supernatural, and that principle is God’s grace. Grace is the human soul’s accidental participation in the divine, which both elevates and heals human nature. Therefore, it is only after receiving supernatural justice that human beings can perform works that correspond to divine glory, i.e. are meritorious. This means that even if Abraham were to have performed the law in its totality, he still would not have obtained future glory apart from the presence of supernatural grace.⁴³

⁴⁰ This is not a problem in Calvin’s reading, of course, since justification is distinct from transformation.

⁴¹ The relationship between the natural and supernatural in Aquinas’s thought is an ongoing matter of discussion and debate. For a summary of the position of *nouvelle théologie*, see Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); for an alternative account, see Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

⁴² ST I-II, q. 109, a. 5.

⁴³ Cf. ST I-II, q. 109, a. 5. As one might suspect, there is no covenant of works for Aquinas in the classic Reformed sense.

On this account, Aquinas has no need to appeal to Abraham's sinfulness or inability to perform works of the law in order to counter Jewish glorying in the law or in circumcision.⁴⁴ The central point is instead the need for the supernatural presence of grace and faith. And by bringing the discussion to the centrality of grace and faith, Paul undermines all attempts of Jewish glorying over the Gentiles on account of their taking part in circumcision, or performing any aspect of the law, since grace and faith are "inward" and pertain to all of humanity (§362). When God "reputes" Abraham's faith as justice, it is God's recognition of the justice that God has worked *in Abraham*. What God reputes exists in the one reputed. God transforms the mind through faith, and the will through love, which justifies—makes just—the graced individual.

INITIAL JUSTIFICATION AND ONGOING JUSTIFICATION

Aquinas is in complete agreement with Calvin when Calvin contrasts merit with justification by faith as it pertains to initial justification, which is in fact Aquinas's principal concern in Romans 4. Both Aquinas and Calvin reject any importation of merit into God's decision to justify Abraham. And in almost identical language, both Aquinas and Calvin assert that although the law commands what is right, it does not supply what is needed for its performance. For both Aquinas and Calvin, Abraham must initially receive an alien justice that comes *sola fide non merito* and *sola gratia*. But since Aquinas interprets justification in participatory terms as the forgiveness of sins and *creation* of justice within the individual through the infusion of the virtues of faith, hope, and love (understood as a participation in Christ's justice), Aquinas is able to uphold both that justification is unmerited and that there is a place for works in justification itself. Since virtues are able to increase, so does justification increase—the

⁴⁴ This is not to say that Aquinas believes that a person can maintain God's commandments apart from the *healing* work of grace. In *ST I-II*, q. 109, a. 4, Aquinas provides a nuanced answer that amounts to denying the ability of human beings to keep the commandments apart from grace due to the Fall. He further argues that human beings apart from grace and after the Fall will necessarily commit mortal sin (a. 8).

virtues of faith, hope, and love are intensified—in Abraham through works performed in grace.⁴⁵ Calvin also acknowledges that inherent righteousness can be said to increase in the justified believer throughout the Christian life, for the transformative dimensions of righteousness are a “condition” (not basis) for forgiveness (*Inst.* 3.3.20), and works are “inferior causes” of salvation (3.14.21).⁴⁶ But in whatever sense inherent justice increases in the believer through the sanctified life, this does not pertain to the justice by which a person is justified, which is the perfect justice of Christ imputed to the believer.⁴⁷

Aquinas’s interpretation of Romans 4 flows from his vision of the “life of grace,” which begins with initial justification and culminates in the beatific vision. “Justification by works,” which extends throughout one’s life, is understood not merely in terms of meeting the law’s standard—the substance of the law can indeed be performed in grace⁴⁸—but rather as an individual’s participatory transformation and elevation that occurs through the ongoing work of grace on the soul.⁴⁹ Aquinas points out by quoting 1 Maccabees 2:52, “Was not Abraham found *faithful* when tested?” that Abraham must be understood ultimately in terms of his faithfulness of life.⁵⁰ A faithful life is the ongoing “giving over” of ourselves to God’s work of justification within us⁵¹ and our cooperation with grace in faith through

⁴⁵ See *ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 8, where Aquinas articulates how a person can condignly merit increase in grace.

⁴⁶ At 3.17.18, Calvin refers to Romans 4:22 in saying that our good works are “accounted” righteous after we have been justified by faith alone.

⁴⁷ I want to thank Hans Boersma for his comments on this point.

⁴⁸ Cf. *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 4.

⁴⁹ Tellingly in a discussion of Aquinas’s and Calvin’s teachings on natural law, David VanDrunen observes: “While Calvin thought natural law reflects the divine character, he never explained this in the sort of neo-Platonic participatory framework that Aquinas did” (“Medieval Natural Law and the Reformation: A Comparison of Aquinas and Calvin,” *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 80 [2006]: 91). Aquinas’s framework and Calvin’s lack thereof have implications for the role of the divine law, as well.

⁵⁰ It is interesting that Orthodox Archbishop Dmitri Royster (*St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: A Pastoral Commentary* [Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008], 103), points to 1 Maccabees 2:52 as evidence that “the Jewish rabbinical tradition concerning Abraham would have held—in opposition to St. Paul’s argument in favor of his faith—that his gaining God’s favor was a consequence of all his works which were carried out in faith” (*italics added*).

⁵¹ We recall that Calvin’s concern is to not see Abraham’s faith as a righteous and honorable act that subsequently receives God’s favor (81.60–62). If Calvin is speaking of meriting initial justification, Aquinas avoids Calvin’s criticism. But if Calvin is saying that’s Abraham’s faith is itself not a just and honorable act, Aquinas would disagree.

meritorious works of justice.⁵² But because of the increase of justification as the individual progresses in being transformed more fully into the likeness of Christ, Aquinas can agree with Calvin regarding David's recognition of his misery after worshipping God for some time without necessarily excluding the place of justification through works. Aquinas affirms a perfection that is not reached until glory.⁵³ But true justice indwells a believer through the soul's supernatural participation in the divine nature by grace. For Aquinas, there is a seamless understanding of initial justification and ongoing justification that occurs within a life of participation in God's grace. Unlike Calvin, then, Aquinas does not find justification by works opposed to justification by faith (and therefore does not find faith opposed to merit), although like Calvin, he holds that good works flow from justification by faith.

Calvin, however, seeks to rid merit altogether in the context of justification. For Calvin, justification by faith is the forgiveness of sins and the reception of Christ's justice, understood not in terms of one's transformation into the likeness of Christ—this comes under a distinct (although never separate) heading of sanctification—but rather as “clothing” that covers our still condemnable nature. Romans 4 addresses the *ratio* of justification *rather than* our newness of life. Calvin claims, in a way Aquinas never would, that works contribute nothing to justification. He states at 4:13, “For not through the law was the promise to Abraham,” that there is “the fallacy of those who falsely imagine that the justice of faith is merely an initial act, and that afterwards believers retain by their works the possession of that justice which they had attained without any merits” (84.60–63). Because of Calvin's dichotomy of faith and works, he feels compelled to address certain scriptural texts that indicate one's work being imputed as justice, such as Psalms 106:30 (Phinehas) and James 2:22–23 (Abraham) in order to reconcile these texts with his notion of justification by

⁵² For this reason, Aquinas, unlike Calvin, is unconcerned to address passages that affirm the reckoning of justice as a result of works, such as Phinehas in Psalms 106:30–31. There is no tension between what is said of Abraham in Genesis 15:6 and Phinehas in Psalms 106:31, if Phinehas is understood to have acted out of God's grace. Taken together, the passages affirm that our justice consists in faith apart from works and works cooperating with grace.

⁵³ I will discuss Aquinas and Calvin on perfection when addressing Romans 7. For a thorough engagement with Aquinas's doctrine of perfection, see Edgardo A. Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009).

faith alone. Rather than a seamlessness between initial justification as wholly apart from merit and ongoing justification that includes merit, understood as the life of the believer participating in Christ's justice, Calvin creates a sharp contrast between the justice of faith and the justice of works, between imputation and transformation, and between grace and merit.⁵⁴ These sharp dichotomies, as we see in light of Aquinas's account, reflect Calvin's limited participatory vision of salvation. Calvin clearly envisions salvation principally in terms of what Christ has done *for* us and what he has given *to* us rather than how Christ's work of salvation occurs *in* us and *through* our human activities.

As indicated above, the topic of circumcision is central to Aquinas's interpretation of Romans 4, and Aquinas spends a considerable amount of time refuting the notion that justification is rooted in circumcision rather than in faith—a claim in continuity with Calvin's interpretation. Aquinas refutes the notion in two ways. First, Aquinas counters the claim that justification is tied directly to practicing circumcision by noting that throughout 4:9–12 Paul demonstrates “from the reported sequence of events” in Scripture (Genesis 15:6 to 17:23) that faith was reckoned to Abraham as justice before he received circumcision. The implication for the justification of the Gentiles is that “the justice of faith, through which sins are forgiven *gratis*, occurs not only in circumcision [i.e. among the Jews] but also in uncircumcision [i.e. among the Gentiles]” (§339). This is affirmed, states Aquinas, by Romans 10:12: “The same Lord bestows his riches upon all who call upon him.” Second, Aquinas counters the claim that justification is tied to circumcision “in virtue of a divine promise” (§351), namely, that although Abraham's faith was reckoned to *him* as justice apart from circumcision, God has promised that subsequent reception of justification (i.e. the reception of the promise) would come by means of circumcision. For Aquinas, Paul refutes this interpretation by addressing God's promise to Abraham (4:13) and its fulfillment in Abraham's “seed” (4:16–17). While Aquinas's commentary is quite lengthy on this point, I note that the sum of Aquinas's interpretation is that if the promise came solely through the law, “it would be fulfilled not in all the descendants but only in the bodily ones” (i.e. the Jews) (§362). Instead, it comes to “all the seed” (4:16b), that is, the

⁵⁴ Cf. *Inst.* 3.11.2.

“spiritual descendants” of Abraham who receive the grace of Christ and imitate the faith of Abraham (§352; 362). The promise cannot be fulfilled through the law, for the law kills, and therefore the promise would be made void (§357). Instead, the fulfillment of the promise comes through faith, which, Aquinas claims, is reflected in the words of 1 John 5:4, “This is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith” (§360).⁵⁵

Calvin is less concerned to address circumcision directly and instead broadens the focus of Paul’s argument to address the Jews’ attempt to justify themselves through works. For Calvin, Abraham’s fatherhood “according to the flesh” is not a reference to circumcision but rather is an “epithet” that highlights the dignity of the natural and carnal race of the Jewish people (80.26). Paul honors the Jewish race, however, in order to press upon Jewish people—and Christians generally—that they should imitate the faith of Abraham and not trust in works for salvation. Calvin moves away from connecting the “seed” of Abraham or his inheritance of the world (4:13) to a discussion around circumcision. Rather, Calvin consistently brings the discussion back to the grace of free adoption. Calvin admits that the promise of a future seed is mentioned in Genesis 15:6, but Abraham’s faith is not connected to “any particular expression” such as the particular promise that God would multiply his seed or inherit the world. Calvin generalizes the object of Abraham’s faith to be “the whole covenant of salvation and the grace of adoption” (81.53). This hermeneutical move enables Calvin to include eternal life within the promises given Abraham, which is important for Calvin in order to undermine any direct connection between works and obtaining eternal life.⁵⁶ Since eternal life is coextensive with justification, and justification is received apart from performing any works of the law, then there is no causal connection between receiving eternal life and performing works of the law. Eternal life is a gift apart from works just as justification is a gift apart from works. For Calvin, if receiving the promise depended on works, that is, on earning (*merere*) the promise, none could have confidence (*confidere*) that the promise of adoption

⁵⁵ Aquinas further claims that the promise “remains solid,” as stated in 4:16a, since the promise is fulfilled through faith. If it is of faith, it is of grace, and grace is of God. Thus, “the promise remains solid in virtue of the power of divine grace justifying man through faith” (§360). Human action can fall short, but grace is “infallible” (§360).

⁵⁶ Calvin does hold that there is a place of works in relation to entering into eternal life, but this relationship is sequential and not causal; see Chapter 5.

pertained to them (90.53–54). Commenting on 4:15, “The law works wrath,” Calvin asserts that the law only points the way to “virtue and integrity,” but it fails to supply the power to accomplish it (91.83–85).⁵⁷

Dismissing circumcision from Abraham’s justification leads naturally to a question that both Aquinas and Calvin address: what then is the “usefulness [*utilitas*]” (Aquinas, §346) or “use [*usum*]” (Calvin, 86.35) of circumcision? With this question, we approach a topic rarely discussed in both Aquinas’s and Calvin’s commentaries on Romans: the sacraments. But it is here that we begin to see further differences in Aquinas’s and Calvin’s participatory soteriology. Aquinas’s broader interpretive trajectory of Romans leads him to see a direct connection between Paul’s discussion of circumcision in 4:11–12 and the question Paul posed at 3:1: “What is the use [*utilitas*] of circumcision?” In 4:11–12, Paul provides the answer, and Aquinas inserts in his commentary a lengthy digression on circumcision that covers why it was instituted (§347–8), what power it had (§349), and why it was changed after the coming of Christ (§350). For our purposes, I will highlight what is directly pertinent to comparing Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations. While it seems that Abraham was circumcised without cause (*sine causa*) and in vain (*frustra*) given that fulfilling the promise is not connected to circumcision (§341), the key to understanding the usefulness of circumcision lies in the term “seal [*signaculum*]” found in 4:11, “He received the sign of circumcision, the seal of the justice of faith which is in uncircumcision.” Aquinas explains that circumcision was a seal (not the cause) of the justice that comes through faith—faith that Abraham had while uncircumcised (§341–2). Aquinas gives two ways “seal” may be understood. First, it is a visible sign (*expressum signum*) that has a similitude to the thing it signifies. Circumcision has a similitude to Abraham’s faith both in regard to what he believed and to the effect of his belief.⁵⁸ What he believed was that his seed would be multiplied, and thus circumcision, which is on the organ of reproduction, bears a similitude to this belief. The effect of his belief was that his guilt (*culpa*) was removed (i.e. he was justified), and thus the removal of “superfluous” flesh bears a similitude to this effect. Second, we can understand

⁵⁷ This is precisely Aquinas’s understanding of the Old Law, in that it pointed the way to virtue but failed to provide the grace to accomplish it.

⁵⁸ Aquinas will add later that circumcision was instituted as a ceremonial precept as a sign not only of Abraham’s faith but his obedience as well (§347).

“seal” as a sign “hiding something [*aliquid occultans*]” that is revealed to friends.⁵⁹ Aquinas elucidates the meaning of *signaculum*, which can mean the signet impressing a seal, by pointing to a *sigillo*, which is the seal impressed by the signet.⁶⁰ The secret under the seal of circumcision was the Incarnation of Christ, who came from the seed of Abraham (§343), and it is revealed to Christ’s “friends.” In these ways, the sign of circumcision was useful.⁶¹

Calvin’s approach to the usefulness of circumcision has both similarities to and differences from Aquinas. The similarity occurs in Calvin’s emphasis on the signifying quality of circumcision. The sign of circumcision corresponds to a “twofold” grace: the first is God’s promise to Abraham that he would have a blessed seed, which for Calvin is ultimately a testimony to God’s bestowal of newness of life on those who have faith. The second is Abraham’s reconciliation to God, which occurred through circumcising the “inward corruption of the flesh.”⁶² This is a testimony to God’s forgiveness of sins, which occurs through faith (87.50–59).⁶³ Calvin differs from Aquinas, first, as we see above, in what circumcision signifies. For Aquinas, circumcision signified Abraham’s future seed, and thus circumcision is connected to the organ of reproduction; and under this signification was “hidden” the future Incarnation of Christ, which came from Abraham’s seed. Calvin, however, claims that circumcision signified the twofold salvific grace of God: (a) God’s forgiveness of sin (i.e. justification), and (b) God’s bestowal of newness of life on those who have faith (i.e. sanctification). Calvin’s interpretation fits with his broader interpretation of Romans 4, in which he contrasts justification by faith with justification by works and makes the object of Abraham’s faith the whole covenant of

⁵⁹ On the notion of revealing secrets to friends, see Aquinas, *Super Ioan*. Prologue, no. 11 (Weisheipl, part 1, 27). Also Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 43; Guy Mansini, OSB, “*Similitudo, Communicatio*, and the Friendship of Charity in Aquinas,” *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, Supplementa 1: Thomistica, ed. E. Manning (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 1–26; Fergus Kerr, OP, “Charity as Friendship,” in *Language, Meaning and God*, ed. Brian Davies, OP (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), 1–23.

⁶⁰ Many thanks to Jeremy Holmes for his contribution to this explanation.

⁶¹ For more on the purpose of circumcision, see *ST* I-II, q. 102, a. 5, ad. 1. For more on how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament, see I-II, q. 107, a.2.

⁶² Calvin draws upon Deut 10:16, “Circumcise your hearts,” and Deut 30:6, “The Lord will circumcise your heart”; this is distinct from Aquinas, who cites Jeremiah 4:4.

⁶³ For more on Calvin’s position on circumcision, see *Inst.* 4.14.24.

salvation. Second, Calvin grants circumcision a causal efficacy that differs from Aquinas. For Calvin, through the sign of circumcision “the promises of God are in a manner imprinted on our hearts and the certainty of grace confirmed” (87.41–43). Circumcision has “the office of sealing [*obsignare*] and as it were ratifying [*ratam facere*] the justice of faith” (86.35–37). Calvin is clear that the sacrament of circumcision was given *following upon* remission of sins by faith, so that circumcision did not function in any way in relation to forgiving sin. Instead, Abraham having received forgiveness of sins, circumcision functioned to “initiate the Jewish people into obedience to God” (86.13–14). We find then that Calvin connects the efficacy of circumcision with sanctification and not with justification, and this moves the sacrament away from having a direct causal role in establishing the sinner’s peace with God.⁶⁴ The efficacy of circumcision is rooted in the effect on faith that results from one’s receiving circumcision. The sacrament of circumcision served Abraham’s faith by assuring him of the two graces from God.

Aquinas agrees with Calvin on the centrality of faith for granting circumcision any causal efficacy. The causal relationship between justification, circumcision, and faith was such that “faith was the first cause from which circumcision and the other sacraments of the law proceeded; thus, faith justified the Jews as a primary cause through intermediate causes” (e.g. circumcision) (§320). Yet “through faith in Christ, of which circumcision was a sign, it removed original sin and conferred the help of grace to act righteously” (§349). For Aquinas, then, the efficacy of circumcision is directly related to the dynamics of justification. Aquinas does not separate faith and justification from circumcision and sanctification, so that while Abraham’s faith is the reason for circumcision’s having any sacramental efficacy, the sacrament of circumcision pertains directly to the effects of justification.

The flip side to Calvin’s articulation of circumcision and its efficacy is his desire to establish uniformity between the Old and New Testament sacraments whereby his will deny the role of baptism in

⁶⁴ My argument in the following chapters emphasizes the *way* Calvin distinguishes justification and sanctification in our union with Christ as reflecting a more nonparticipatory soteriology than Aquinas posits. By connecting the sacraments to sanctification, the sacraments likewise find a less participatory role in soteriology than Aquinas posits.

justification. This brings us to a significant difference in Aquinas's and Calvin's views of soteriological participation in its relation to the sacraments and in particular the sacramental elements. While discussing the "power" of circumcision, Aquinas distinguishes the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision from the New Testament sacrament of baptism by claiming, "*ex opere operato* circumcision did not have effective power either to remove guilt or produce justice. It was merely a sign of justice" (§349). But due to the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ, the New Testament sacraments have this effective power to remove guilt and produce justice.⁶⁵ The sacraments play a direct causal role in God's activity of bringing about salvation of sinners. God enables the elements themselves to participate in his salvific work; the efficacy of the New Testament sacraments does not hinge on the individual's faith but in God's decision to enable these elements to convey to sinners Christ's grace. Calvin, however, directly rejects such a view. He cites the "scholastic dogma" that distinguishes the Old and New Testament sacraments by assigning the power of justifying to the New, while denying it to the Old.⁶⁶ Instead, Calvin assigns the same efficacy to both, which is the efficacy noted above.⁶⁷ The immediate implication, as Calvin sees it, pertains to baptism; Calvin reasons that the relation between Abraham's faith and circumcision holds true for baptism as well.⁶⁸ Calvin therefore denies that people are justified by baptism, "since they are justified by the same faith as that of

⁶⁵ For a further discussion on the differences between the Old Testament sacraments and the New Testament sacraments, particularly as pertaining to being a causation of grace, see Matthew Levering, *Christ's Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 121–4.

⁶⁶ See *Inst.* 4.14.23.

⁶⁷ In his response to the Council of Trent, Calvin addresses Trent's rejection of the claim that sacraments of the New Law do not differ from the sacraments of the Old Law except that the ceremonies and outward rites are different; see *Antidote*, 172–3.

⁶⁸ Calvin states that baptism follows the twofold grace represented by circumcision, namely, newness of life and forgiveness of sins. In the final version of his Romans commentary (1556), with an eye toward his Anabaptist interlocutors who reject paedobaptism, Calvin highlights the fact that although Abraham's justification preceded circumcision, this is *not* the case for Isaac and his posterity. God's *ratio* for the example of Abraham was to illustrate "once at the beginning" that salvation is not limited to outward signs (87.67–70).

Abraham" (88.100–89.4).⁶⁹ Baptism serves our faith in the same manner that circumcision served Abraham's faith.⁷⁰

Calvin's insistence that the total efficacy of baptism is rooted in the faith of the believer presents a less participatory theology of the sacramental elements than is found in Aquinas's theology. Calvin asserts: "the sacrament is so separated from the reality by the unworthiness of the partaker that *nothing remains* but an empty and useless figure."⁷¹ Here we find that the totality of sacramental efficacy resides *within* the believer and not within the sacramental elements themselves.⁷² There is, for Calvin, no "latent virtue in the sacraments by which they, in themselves, confer the gifts of the Holy Spirit."⁷³ The faith of the believer makes the sacraments sacramental *for this person*.⁷⁴ The only change in the water from the faucet to the baptismal is in the mind of the beholder: the one baptized now sees the water as a seal of God's promises.⁷⁵ Calvin

⁶⁹ This is not to say that baptism is *unnecessary* for salvation. Calvin agrees that baptism is necessary for salvation, since it is "the ordinary instrument of God in washing and renewing us; in short, in communication to us salvation" (*Canons and Decrees*, 180). For more on the development of Calvin's understanding of baptism in light of his ongoing engagement with Roman Catholics, see Randall C. Zachmann, "Revising the Reform: What Calvin Learned from Dialogue with the Roman Catholics," in *John Calvin and Roman Catholicism: Critique and Engagement, Then and Now*, ed. Randall C. Zachmann (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 169–72.

⁷⁰ Steinmetz comments that Calvin thought of the transition from the Old to the New "more as a gentle slope than a sharp disjuncture," which had implications for his teaching on Old and New Testament sacraments ("John Calvin as an Interpreter of the Bible," in *Calvin and the Bible*, ed. Donald K. McKim [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], 286). See Holder, *John Calvin and the Grounding of Interpretation*, 50–8, for Calvin's interpretive principle regarding the unity of the Old and New Testaments, which includes sacramental continuity. Holder comments that difference between Old and New "is always and only in the manner of dispensation, never in the substance" (56).

⁷¹ *Inst.* 4.14.15.

⁷² For Calvin, of course, God is the principal reason the sacraments have any efficacy. But the elements have no sacramental efficacy apart from the faith of the believer.

⁷³ *Inst.* 4.14.17.

⁷⁴ It is true that for Calvin the sacraments function as God has designed them to function despite the faith or unbelief of the participant, that is, as exhibiting the promises of God (see *Inst.* 4.14.16). The "force and truth" of the sacrament do not depend on the faith of the recipient. As he states in his commentary on Titus 3:5, "Although by baptism wicked men are neither washed nor renewed, yet it retains that power, as far as relates to God, because, although they reject the grace of God, still it is offered to them" (Comm. Titus 3:5; CTS; CO 52.431). Nevertheless, apart from faith, the sacraments are no longer sacramental *to the recipient*. Even in infant baptisms, Calvin speaks of the "seed of faith" in those infants elected by God (*Inst.* 4.16.20; Calvin had spoken in 1536 of infants actually possessing faith; see Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 124). For those without the seed of faith, however, infant baptism has no efficacy.

⁷⁵ While addressing Calvin's sacramental theology, Billings uses the term "transformation" in connection with the sacramental elements, stating that "the 'elements'

notes: "The reality of baptism consists not in external ablution but in the testimony of a good conscience."⁷⁶ The corporeal elements are only "analogies" pointing to the spiritual realities.⁷⁷ Elsewhere, Calvin uses the term "infer" to describe the relationship between the elements and the reality: one "infers from the exhibition of the symbol that the thing itself is exhibited."⁷⁸ Calvin is clear, to be sure, that the Spirit is working to ensure that the sacraments are not "fruitless and vain."⁷⁹ In baptism, God "does not feed our eyes with mere appearance only, but leads us to the present reality and effectively performs what it symbolizes."⁸⁰ But the nature of Calvin's appeal to the Spirit demonstrates that it is the Spirit, *as opposed to* the elements themselves, that is the "channel" that unites us to Christ.⁸¹

Aquinas's desire to connect the sacraments to justification and Calvin's desire to connect them with sanctification are significant when assessing the role of participation in their sacramental theology. As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, the way Calvin distinguishes justification and sanctification evidences nonparticipatory elements in his theology. Therefore, by his situating the sacraments under sanctification, the sacraments also take on similar nonparticipatory elements of his thinking. In terms of the actual sacramental elements, Aquinas grants the elements a causal efficacy absent in Calvin's account. For Aquinas, the faith of the individual does not make the elements sacramental for that individual; the elements are sacramental and obtain a sacramental efficacy due to God's design

are transformed, in a sense, into 'gifts' from the generous God" (*Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 121). The rub of the issue is the qualification "in a sense," for in no sense are the elements themselves transformed, and using the term "transformation" in connection with something becoming a gift in no way necessitates sacramental presence in and through the elements themselves. A shirt on the hanger in the clothing store is "transformed" into a gift when I purchase it, wrap it, and give it to my wife at Christmas. But this represents an extrinsic rather than intrinsic "transformation" of the shirt.

⁷⁶ *Inst.* 4.14.24.

⁷⁷ *Inst.* 4.17.3.

⁷⁸ *Inst.* 4.17.10. Billings emphasizes Calvin's use of "union" to describe the relationship between the *signum* and *substantia* of the sacraments (*Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 119). But as Billings's account unfolds, we recognize that this union is *extrinsic*, with no participatory relationship between *signum* and *substantia*: the *signum* does not cause our participation in the *substantia* but rather point to the *substantia*.

⁷⁹ *Inst.* 4.14.17.

⁸⁰ *Inst.* 4.15.14.

⁸¹ *Inst.* 4.17.12.

for the sacraments. Even if an unbeliever takes the elements, an effect on the partaker still takes place. For Calvin, however, the faith of the believer rather than the elements forms the location of sacramental efficacy. The elements are nothing but common elements apart from the faith of the receiver. This presents a less participatory role for the concrete elements in enabling participation in grace, especially given that Calvin draws a hard break between the “internal grace of the Spirit” and the “external ministration” of the elements and believes that we can enjoy all the benefits of Christ without the sacramental elements.⁸² This results in a more extrinsic relationship between God’s activity of saving a sinner and a sinner’s participation in the sacramental elements than is found in Aquinas’s theology.

CONCLUSION

By looking at Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations of father Abraham in Romans 4, we continue to witness the implications of their participatory and nonparticipatory conceptions of justification explored in the previous chapter. Aquinas and Calvin agree, importantly, on Abraham’s non-meritorious reception of justification. Yet we see in Aquinas’s interpretation that Abraham’s non-meritorious reception of justification does not necessitate positing a dichotomy between forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ’s justice, on the hand, and God’s transformation of the sinner into a just person, on the other. To move away from this dichotomy, moreover, I believe, is to move deeper into a participatory soteriology. In the end, although Calvin would adamantly assert that Christ’s justice is “ours” when imputed to us, it remains unclear how this claim is substantiated in a way that is genuine to our human existence. If one says that another person possesses truth, the assumption is that truth resides in that person’s mind. If it is said the person possesses love, love resides in that person’s affections. But when Calvin says someone possesses Christ’s justice, he simultaneously asserts that the same person is unjust and condemnable *in se*. The justness of Christ remains alien, and the life of the believer, either good or bad, has no impact on the

⁸² *Inst.* 4.14.14.

justice by which one stands just before God. While Calvin claims that faith “grabs hold” of Christ’s justice, justice is a quality—as Calvin fully acknowledges—and not an object, and therefore the “grasping” metaphor only takes us so far. In the end, what does it mean for a human being to *possess* the quality of Christ’s justness if not to be just in himself or herself?

Since Aquinas believes Christ’s alien justice imputed becomes Christ’s residential justice possessed, Aquinas sees a harmony between rejecting the role of works in establishing one just before God and including the role of works in a process of justification understood as an ever-increasing participation in faith, hope, and love (and the increase of the acquired virtues as well).⁸³ Fulfilling the law is not in competition with salvation by grace alone, and merit is made possible not in order to obtain justification but because one has been justified; it is understood not in terms of trying to obtain peace with God but as our peaceful participation in God’s act of saving us. The reality of merit ultimately becomes an expression of how profoundly God enables sinners to participate in his work of salvation.⁸⁴

The nonparticipatory elements of Calvin’s soteriological vision witnessed in Romans 1–4 will profoundly shape subsequent Protestant reflection and find themselves codified in Reformed confessional statements.⁸⁵ We must not underestimate the impact of Calvin’s teaching on justification in creating a nonparticipatory Protestant soteriological imagination. If the pressing question motivating much of the protesting efforts of the sixteenth century surrounded human salvation, and the answer given posited a justice *extra nos* and asserted that the believer and his or her works are condemnable *in se* and personal transformation plays no part in having peace with God, no amount of emphasis on the participatory elements of sanctification, even if given simultaneously through union with Christ, can overcome the nonparticipatory influence on Protestant soteriological reflection. A pressing question for the Christian will always be: How am I at peace with God? The answer: Through a justice *extra nos*. What about

⁸³ Again, this is not to deny Calvin’s emphasis on the role of good works in the Christian life. But Calvin consistently places this emphasis under “sanctification” and not “justification,” and this has implications for his interpretation of Paul’s teaching on justification in places such as in Romans 4.

⁸⁴ Raith II, “Aquinas and Calvin on Merit, Part II,” 205–6.

⁸⁵ Fink, “Divided by Faith,” 66–71. This is not to say that other Reformers did not hold similar nonparticipatory positions, especially Melancthon.

the life I now live in Christ? The answer: Your life has no import into your standing with God.⁸⁶ Such a view naturally leads to an emphasis on Christ's work *for* and *to* us rather than *in* and *through* us, as we find in Calvin's exegesis, and this view is unable to incorporate fully the human person and its manifold dynamics into God's work of salvation.

Much of what underlies Aquinas's and Calvin's approaches to Romans 1–4 hinges on their interpretations of Romans 6–7, where they reflect on the transformation caused by the indwelling of the Spirit. The issue, again, is not whether Aquinas or Calvin upholds justification *sola gratia* and *sola fide non merito*; it is not whether Christ is central to salvation; and it is not whether justification consists of the forgiveness of sins and reception of Christ's righteousness. But if Aquinas seeks to uphold justification as transformation, and Calvin seeks to reject justification as transformation, they must account for Paul's teaching in Romans 6–7 in a manner that reflects these positions. As I have already indicated, I believe Calvin's account of Romans 6–7 leads to shortcomings in his interpretation of Romans 8, which further brings into question the nonparticipatory dimensions of his account of Romans 1–4.

⁸⁶ Calvin asserts as much in *Inst.* 3.14.11.

Peace with God, the Hope of Salvation, and the Adam–Christ Typology

Romans 5:1–11; 12–19

The present chapter naturally builds upon and extends the previous chapters on justification. Paul begins the fifth chapter of Romans looking back to his teaching in Romans 1–4, declaring, “Being therefore justified by faith.” Aquinas and Calvin agree that Paul’s teaching following this declaration, which covers our peace with God, hope of eternal life, and the work of Christ in the face of original sin, intrinsically relates to sinners being justified by faith in Christ. But it is not enough that Aquinas and Calvin agree that Paul’s teaching is rooted in justification by faith. The nature of this justification plays a determining role in how Aquinas and Calvin understand Paul’s teaching in Romans 5. Aquinas’s belief that justification consists of the forgiveness of sins and the transformation of the sinner into a just person leads Aquinas to incorporate the believer’s actual life and moral status into Paul’s teaching in a way not found in Calvin’s account. Aquinas believes that Christ has so transformed the believer that the believer has and can maintain “peace with God” due to this transformation. The believer performs no actions that would render him or her at odds with God, and the hope of future salvation is made possible due to the graces God provides that enable the believer to remain faithful.

Since Calvin understands justification as the forgiveness of sins and Christ’s justice imputed *extra nos*, Calvin reads Romans 5 with an eye towards Christ and his work *in distinction from* the believer’s own life and moral status. Calvin believes that peace with God occurs as the believer contemplates Christ’s work of salvation on his or her

behalf. Peace consists not in a life that is lived worthy of peace but in the “serene conscience” within the believer resulting from possessing Christ’s justice as something distinct from the believer’s own moral condition. For Calvin, the believer’s hope in eternal life is in no way dependent on the believer’s work of justice but *instead* rests on God’s grace and Christ’s expiation of sins; faith rather than the life of the believer is key to the certainty of obtaining “future life.” Calvin’s ability to appeal to Christ’s justice as something *extra nos* leads to a reading of the Adam–Christ typology that focuses on Christ’s work *on behalf* of the believer rather than, as with Aquinas, Christ’s work *within* the believer. For Calvin, while Adam’s sin made us sinners, Christ’s justice does not make us just; instead, we receive Christ’s justice according to a different “mode” than we receive Adam’s sin. Since these dichotomies are not present in Aquinas’s account, he is able to incorporate the believer into Christ’s work of salvation in a deeper manner than is possible in Calvin’s account. Once again, we find Calvin focusing on Christ’s work for and to sinners, while Aquinas emphasizes Christ’s work in and through sinners.

THE PEACE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Aquinas reads Romans 5 as a continuation of the unfolding of the drama of grace. For Aquinas, Paul has been depicting the *necessity* of Christ’s grace up to Romans 5 and refers back to this necessity in the first half of 5:1: “Being therefore justified by faith.” Throughout Romans 1–4, Paul has shown that justification comes neither through the wisdom of the Gentiles nor through the circumcision, ancestry, or law of the Jews; rather, it comes through Christ’s grace. Starting at 5:1b, Paul turns to “extol [*commendare*]” the power of Christ’s grace (§351). Two aspects of grace are extolled: (1) the “goods” that are acquired through grace (5:1–11), and (2) the liberation from “evils [*mala*]” enabled by grace (5:12–8:39).¹ Aquinas’s emphasis on grace rather than simply faith, as will be the case with Calvin, couches

¹ For Aquinas, 5:12–19 addressed freedom from original sin, 5:20–21 addresses freedom from the sin that increased when the Law came, Romans 6 addresses freedom from the evil of future sin, Romans 7 freedom from the evil of slavery to the Law, and Romans 8 freedom from the evil of condemnation (§406).

5:1–11 as well as 5:12–19 within a broader framework of the “life of grace” that begins with initial justification, which transforms a sinner into a just person, and proceeds to final glory, where the process of justification is completed—all understood as an ever-increasing participation in Christ’s justice through the Spirit. Aquinas therefore makes the life of the believer *intrinsic* to the peace of 5:1. Paul is exhorting Christians at 5:1 to have peace with God by means of the “right use [*usus*] of grace” (§381), which includes “submitting to and obeying God” (§382). Through the right use of grace, believers obtain the goods that advance them in justification, that is, in the ongoing cultivation of justness in the soul that culminates in eternal life.

Key to Aquinas’s engagement with Romans 5, then, is his transformational interpretation of justification presented throughout Romans 1–4. God has justified sinners through Christ’s grace, and this results in forgiveness of sins and the transformation of the sinner into a just person. We therefore have “peace with God” (5:1) and the hope of final salvation (5:2–11) because of Christ’s justice, indeed, but this is not understood in opposition both to the believer’s justice and the life of the believer lived in grace. Aquinas is clear that the Christian life is not to be understood as an attempt to *establish* peace with God. Peace is established through justification by faith. But this justification has transformed the life of the Christian and enabled the Christian to maintain that peaceful relationship with God. Our “peace with God” is both an already accomplished reality having occurred through Christ’s work of salvation and obtained by faith (i.e. the forgiveness of sins) *and* an ongoing reality rooted in living the kind of life that sustains peace with God.² When we turn to the topic of “hope” in the next section, we will see that Aquinas’s ability to account for the believer’s life as itself sustaining peace with God results in the absence of dichotomies between hope made possible due to Christ’s justice or hope made possible due to our justice, and hope certain due to Christ’s life or hope certain due to our own life.

We receive a very different account of “peace with God” from Calvin, with such dichotomies noted above being pervasive. For

² In the following two chapters (4 and 5), I will illustrate how Aquinas accounts for the Spirit’s transformation of a sinner so as to enable the sinner to live a life free from condemnation. This is not the case for Calvin, who interprets the Spirit’s transformation in such a way as to leave the believer still condemnable *in se* although justified *in Christo*.

Calvin, Romans 5 presents the still-frame portrait of justification by faith in yet another light, thereby enabling us to obtain a different perspective on the “justice of faith.” Paul now “illustrates” and “amplifies” his doctrine of justification by faith by addressing the “effects” that flow from it (102.6–7).³ We recall that for Calvin justification is the forgiveness of sins and imputation of Christ’s justice, with this justice remaining *extra nos* to the believer. The *extra nos* dimension of justification leads Calvin to read Romans 5 as focusing on Christ’s justice *in distinction from* the believer’s justice and his or her life lived in grace. What Christ does *for* and *to* the believer in overcoming Adam’s sin *rather than* the believer’s life lived in and through Christ’s work takes center stage. The hope of obtaining final salvation is founded solely on Christ’s perfect justice *rather than* it being realized in and through the believer’s life.

Calvin connects the peace with God of 5:1 not with the transformed life of the believer that sustains the peace wrought by justification but rather to the existential state of the believer’s conscience resulting from pondering justification. Because of Christ’s work of justification on behalf of the believer, the believer can have a “serene conscience [*conscientia serenitas*]” knowing that he or she is now reconciled with God (102.18). Calvin’s emphasis on a “serene conscience” is rooted in his dichotomy between the justice of faith and the justice of works. Calvin holds that those who seek justice by works will fall into one of two traps: (1) either they will possess constant inner turmoil due to a troubled conscience as they recognize their ongoing sinfulness before God’s holy presence; or (2) they will be “lulled asleep” to their sin by failing to keep before them the judgment of God (102.13–18).⁴ But for Calvin, neither the turmoil resulting from pondering one’s ongoing sinfulness nor the illusion of peace resulting from failing to ponder God’s judgment corresponds to having “peace before God.”

³ For a comparison of Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin on Romans 5, see G. Sujiin Pak, “Luther, Melancthon & Calvin on Romans 5 & 13,” in *Reformation Readings of Romans*, eds. Kathy Ehrensperger and R. Ward Holder (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 122–30.

⁴ It is important to keep in mind that underlying Calvin’s critique of “justification by works” is the competitive-causal schema of divine and human activity in which human activity is understood as the person bringing before God works *of his or her own* causation (i.e. as an autonomous causal agent) that God *then* judges and determines whether or not the human can be judged to be just. Thus Calvin consistently judges the worth of a work solely according to the human principle of activity; this is true even for those in Christ; see Raith, “Aquinas and Calvin on Merit, Part II,” 206–7.

How is this peace established, then? Peace before God is made possible solely by the justice of faith, that is, solely by something we possess *extra nos*. Only through knowledge that one is forgiven of his or her sin and has Christ's justice as "clothing" can that person possess a "serene conscience." It is important to highlight that Calvin's interpretation of "peace with God" presupposes that the believer does not actually live a life that is itself at peace with God. For Calvin, the justified believer and the believer's works remain condemnable *in se* although pardoned and accepted *in Christo*.⁵ Therefore Calvin must appeal to Christ's justice *in distinction from* the believer's own life (i.e. in nonparticipatory terms) in order to account for Paul's teaching on peace and hope. The believer's peace with God is therefore not *intrinsic* to the believer's union with Christ. The believer, if judged according to his or her justice, would not stand at peace with God. Thus, the believer's peace with God is a *benefit* derived from having union with Christ; the believer has peace with God due to the benefit of having received Christ's justice imputed.

THE HOPE OF SALVATION

Turning to Paul's statement at 5:2, "Let us glory in the hope of the glory of God," both Calvin and Aquinas make the object of hope "future life" (i.e. eternal life), and so the question at hand pertains to the relationship between present peace with God and future obtainment of eternal life; or more broadly, life here on earth and life in the world to come. For Calvin, the reason for the hope of obtaining future eternal life—and the reason for Paul's exaltation of it—is due to the fact that it rests on the grace of God "as in a firm foundation" (103.54–55). It "does not put to shame" (5:5), because it "considers the end of salvation most certain [*certissimum*]" (105.20).⁶ Believers can therefore "cherish their future inheritance with tranquillity in their

⁵ See Chapters 4 and 5.

⁶ For more on Calvin's teaching on "certainty" in light of Luther's and Zwingli's teaching, see Susan Schreiner, "The Spiritual Man Judges All Things': Calvin and the Exegetical Debates about Certainty in the Reformation," in *Biblical Interpretation in the Era of the Reformation: Essays Presented to David C. Steinmetz in Honor of His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Richard A. Muller and John L. Thompson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 189–215.

heart” (103.56–57).⁷ This tranquillity of heart is in fact intrinsic to the peace of a “serene conscience” noted above.⁸ There should be no uncertainty regarding either one’s present condition or “final perseverance” (103.59–61). For Calvin, “two most troublesome doctrines of the sophists” are (1) moral conjecture, which undermines “certain knowledge [*certa intelligentia*]” of one’s present condition, and (2) the uncertainty of final perseverance, which undermines “the firm and minimally uncertain persuasion [*constans et minime dubia persuasio*]” of future things (103.57–60).

Calvin is aware that salvation is in a sense a progressive reality understood as ongoing conformity to Christ. In fact, Calvin claims that the entire pericope of 5:2–5 addresses the way God “promotes” and “advances” the believer’s salvation through tribulation. Since the life of sanctification is part of obtaining the final end of salvation, it would seem, then, that the confidence of “future life” cannot be rooted simply in justification by faith—simply in Christ’s justice *extra nos*—but must include the life of the believer as well. But this is not the case for Calvin. Calvin claims that if the future inheritance depends in any way on the “instability” of the justice of works, present peace is illusory, especially given the ongoing imperfection remaining in the believer. The confidence that the believer will obtain “future life” rests in the firm foundation of God’s grace *rather than*, as Calvin makes clear, in the believer’s works. In the passages that follow (5:15–19), Calvin highlights Paul’s use of “much more” and concludes that because of the nature and extent of God’s gratuitousness, the one who obtains His grace may enjoy “full security [*plena securitate*]” before God, a security that becomes the source of gratitude (115.47–48).⁹ Works are necessary for obtaining eternal life, to be sure, just

⁷ See Chapter 6 regarding the Spirit’s “special effect” in believers that enables them to have knowledge that they are indeed sons of God, “and if sons, heirs” of eternal life. As Calvin states, “All who are led by the Spirit of God ought to feel assured of eternal life” (168.100–101).

⁸ In his response to the Council of Trent, the tenth chapter on “The Vain Confidence of Heretics,” Calvin argues, “[The vain confidence] consists, according to their definition, in our holding it as certain that our sins are forgiven, and resting in this certainty. If such certainty makes heretics... where will be the peace of which Paul discourses in the fifth chapter to the Romans, if we rest in anything but the goodwill of God?” Calvin continues: “They acknowledge that sins are never forgiven for Christ’s sake, except freely, but leaving it in suspense to whom and when they are forgiven, they rob all consciences of calm placid confidence” (*Antidote*, 3.125).

⁹ Calvin connects security of salvation to predestination in his commentary on 8:28–30, where he refutes those who claim that predestination is only known to

as sanctification necessarily accompanies justification as the second of the twofold gift given by God.¹⁰ But assurance rests on justification—forgiveness of sins and Christ’s justice *extra nos*—and this *in spite of* the life lived by the believer. Commenting on 5:9, “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God,” Calvin emphasizes that Christ will “protect” those he has justified from destruction by maintaining the believer’s salvation “safe and secure to the end” through Christ’s “expiation of sins” (109.54–55), which is ongoing and enables the believer to enter into eternal life.¹¹

Aquinas also recognizes that Paul indicates a high level of confidence when he states at 5:5, “And hope does not confound [*non confundit*].”¹² For hope to “confound,” states Aquinas, would be the equivalent of hope to “fail [*deficiat*].” Therefore, since Paul teaches that hope does not fail, Aquinas argues for hope’s “certainty [*certitudo*]” (§391). Like Calvin, Aquinas roots the certainty of hope not in human faithfulness to God but rather in God’s faithfulness to humans. But unlike Calvin, Aquinas accounts for future salvation by *including* the believer’s life being lived in a manner *worthy* of future salvation. It is not, therefore, Christ’s grace *as opposed to* the ongoing sinful life lived by the believer, as Calvin asserts. Commenting on 5:5b, “For the love of God has been poured out into our hearts,” Aquinas takes the phrase “the love of God” both objectively (the love God has for believers) and subjectively (the love believers have for God) and concludes that hope is certain because God never denies those whom he loves, and those who love God will receive the “eternal goods” God has prepared for them (§393). I note Aquinas’s use of 5:8, “God commends

a special few, like Paul; this is Aquinas’s position (§734; cf. *ST* I, q. 23, a. 2, ad. 4). For Calvin, this would make the doctrine “not only lacking warmth, but completely lifeless.”

¹⁰ See Chapter 5 for Calvin’s understanding of works as “inferior causes” of obtaining eternal life.

¹¹ In *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, Calvin addresses perseverance under the free election of God, claiming that grace can no more be lost by slackness or rejection or lack of constancy than was initial obtained by the human will. Calvin draws heavily on Augustine, *Rebuke and Grace* 12.38 [NPNF 5:487]; *The Gift of Perseverance* 7.14; 13.33 [NPNF 5:530, 538] (*BLW*, 154; 244).

¹² There is a textual difference between Aquinas and Calvin at 5:5. While Aquinas’s text uses *non confundit*, Calvin’s text uses *non pudefacit*. The meaning changes little, however, in terms of the confidence conveyed by the text regarding one’s future salvation.

His charity toward us, for when we were sinners Christ died for us,” in *ST* III, q. 46, a. 3, where Aquinas addresses Christ’s passion. Aquinas speaks of the “suitability” of Christ’s passion and claims that Christ’s passion enables human beings to know how much God loves them, which “stirs” individuals to love Him in return. Notice the exhortative character of Aquinas’s use of 5:8. For Aquinas, it is not simply that God demonstrates His love for us; Aquinas also asserts that this demonstration is for the further purpose of inspiring love in human beings, for love for God “is the perfection of human salvation.”¹³

The result of including the believer’s life in his account of hope’s assurance means that Aquinas must necessarily qualify his claim to hope’s certainty: “hope does not fail, unless man fails it” (§390); or stated another way, hope does not confound unless “a person is confounded in his hope when he falls away” (§390). Hope is “certain” not in terms of the believer being certain of not falling away but in terms of hope not coming up empty if the believer maintains hope. And God will be faithful in providing all that is necessary for its maintenance.

On the surface, Aquinas’s position seems to inject a level of instability into our “certainty” of future hope, since he qualifies this certainty by highlighting the need of human fidelity to God, while Calvin’s position, which roots certainty away from the believer’s life and onto Christ’s forgiveness of sins and justice *extra nos*, seems to present a stronger case for certainty. We must recall, however, that for Calvin the reception of Christ’s forgiveness of sins and imputation of justice only occurs through faith. By requiring faith in order to possess Christ, Calvin must include, like Aquinas, the believer’s life—at minimum the act of faith—as an intrinsic component to accounting for future assurance. But what if a believer no longer has faith at a time in the future? Would not the believer then be cut off from forgiveness of sins and Christ’s imputed justice? At its root, isn’t this the same issue raised by Aquinas, namely, hope is extinguished by a person not living a faithful life in the future? Calvin is aware of this difficulty, and he undermines such potential uncertainty by claiming that faith is never eradicated in the believer once enkindled by God’s Spirit. For Calvin, the believer simply will not stop having faith in the future. In his *Acts of the Council of Trent, with the Antidote*, Calvin acknowledges when

¹³ Calvin, on the other hand, denies that Paul is attempting to incite believers to action, but rather Paul emphasizes God’s love in Christ in order to confirm the soul’s “assurance and security” (107.96–98).

responding to canon 28 of Trent that a Christian can fall away in grievous lapses. But even then “some seed of Faith remains, though in a smothered state.”¹⁴ In this smothered state, faith can seem “as if” it were dead, and the believer indeed needs to repent to be restored. But true, salvific faith is always present.¹⁵

Calvin’s appeal to the permanency of faith is not without its medieval roots. In fact, Aquinas himself acknowledges that once faith is present it always remains.¹⁶ But Aquinas’s claim comes within a broader medieval discussion surrounding the distinction between “formed” and “unformed” faith.¹⁷ Formed faith is salvific faith; it is “active” due to the presence of love in the will.¹⁸ When someone commits mortal sin, however, charity is destroyed, and faith is therefore no longer active. It is still present in the mind as a habit, to be sure, but it is no longer salvific; it no longer unites the believer to Christ. Calvin, however, rejects this central distinction between formed and unformed faith. He maintains instead that all faith, if it is in fact faith, is salvific faith. Calvin seems troubled by the distinction between unformed and formed faith for two different reasons. First, Calvin understands the “schoolmen” to teach through the doctrine of “unformed faith” that a person can possess all the pertinent *knowledge* for salvation without fear of God or piety. For Calvin, however, the gift of faith given by the Spirit is never separated from the qualities of fear of God and piety. Second, Calvin senses that the teaching on “formed faith” by the “Sorbonne” slips good works into the definition of faith. This, claims Calvin, makes the notion of faith “a mockery.”¹⁹ Thus, while Aquinas affirms the permanency of faith but maintains that a

¹⁴ Calvin, *Antidote*, 3.159; cf. 140, 144.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 140, 144, 159. See Paul Helm, *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 115–18, for a discussion on Calvin’s teaching on faith, where Helm demonstrates that faith for Calvin can include doubts; the notion that faith is a “firm and certain knowledge of God’s benevolence toward us” is the ideal, not necessarily what actually occurs in the heart of a believer, who must strive to have this sort of surety. But if this is the case, I note, it seems that the believer will understandably be *uncertain* at times whether he or she has salvific faith.

¹⁶ *ST II-II*, q. 4, a.4, ad.4.

¹⁷ Aquinas’s position is closer to Calvin’s than other medieval theologians’ like William of Auxerre (*Summa Aurea*, III, q. 3, a. 15) and Alexander of Hales (*Summa Theologiae* III, no. 64) in that Aquinas does not make living and dead faith two separate habits but claims that the same habit of faith pertains to both and is never eradicated once present (*ST II-II*, q.4, a.4, co.).

¹⁸ *ST II-II*, q.4, a.3, co.

¹⁹ See *Inst* 3.2.8; 3.15.7, 41–43; *Antidote*, 118–19; 159.

sinful life renders faith non-salvific, Calvin affirms the permanency of faith but denies that it can ever be non-salvific. The result is that the believer is simply disabled from removing himself or herself from a salvific relationship to God. For Calvin, then, the certainty of hope rests not so much on God's faithfulness to provide the grace necessary for the believer to live a life worthy of heaven. Rather, it rests on God's act of removing the believer's ability to reject God. The believer can rest assured that God will prevent the believer from ever falling away from salvific faith. The result is that Aquinas roots future assurance in God providing all the graces needed for the believer to live a life free from mortal sin, growing in virtue and obtaining the final life of glory; while Calvin roots future assurance in God sustaining the believer's faith. The life of the believer, his or her works and virtue, are not part of Calvin's account of future assurance. It rests solely on Christ's work *for* the believer.

CHRIST OVERTURNS ADAM

Aquinas's and Calvin's positive appropriation of Augustine and common desire to refute Pelagianism keep their interpretations of 5:12 fairly close, particularly regarding the mode of contracting original sin (propagation rather than imitation) and its culpability. Aquinas situates 5:12 within the entire canon of Scripture, and thus 5:12 must be informed by other verses such as 1 Corinthians 15:22, "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive," Ephesians 2:3, "We were by nature children of wrath," and Psalms 51:5, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity" (§407).²⁰ These texts indicate for Aquinas that sin is present from the beginning of one's existence and has roots in Adam's sin. Aquinas calls this sin present at birth "original sin." Since it is present from the beginning of one's existence, Aquinas concludes that it must be passed along by propagation (*propagatio*) rather than imitation (*imitatio*).²¹ With Aquinas, Calvin aligns his teaching against

²⁰ See Calvin, *Inst.* 2.1.5, where Calvin situates his teaching on original sin within a canonical perspective, noting passages such as Psalms 51:5, 1 Corinthians 15:22, and Ephesians 2:3.

²¹ Calvin believes the teaching of imitation is the "fatal error" of Origen and, worse, Erasmus, who attempted to reject 5:12 as a verse that repudiates Pelagius (CWE 56:144–149). Origen, states Calvin, disputed "philosophically and profanely

the Pelagians and with the Church's tradition by arguing that original sin was diffused through "propagation" and is therefore "innate [*ingentam*]" and "hereditary" (110.79, 95–96).²²

The presence of original sin innate in every person and its ability to bring condemnation set up the Adam–Christ typology, in which Paul illustrates how Christ overcomes the sin of Adam. Aquinas and Calvin agree that in 5:14–19 Paul teaches that the "power" of Christ overthrows the effects of Adam, that all salvific transformation flows from Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and that Christ's grace is able to bring one to the eternal abode of heaven. Commenting on 5:15, "the gift is not like the trespass [*delictum*]," Aquinas contrasts Adam's trespass with Christ's grace and explains that metaphysically Adam's sin cannot possess the same "efficacy" as Christ's grace due to the inequality of natures from which each proceeds. Sin proceeds from the "weakness of the human will," while grace proceeds from "the immensity of the divine goodness, which excels human will, especially its weakness." Since Christ's grace is from God and Adam's sin is from human nature, "the power of grace exceeds every sin" (§431).²³ Calvin also speaks of the "power" of Christ over Adam, stating that Adam is the causal principle of sin with the effect that we are "lost [*perditi*]" and deserve death, while Christ is the causal principle of justice with the effect that we are "restored" and obtain life (112.63–64). Calvin concludes that Christ is "by far more powerful to save" than Adam is "to destroy" (113.93–94).

For both Aquinas and Calvin, the key contrast of the Adam–Christ typology is between death brought by sin and life brought by justice, and 5:15–19 is designed to nuance how Christ overcomes Adam to produce life in the face of death. How they interpret the work of Christ overcoming the effects of Adam is, however, deeply impacted by prior judgments regarding the doctrine of justification and the nature of the soul's transformation by God's grace.²⁴ Throughout 5:15–19, Aquinas

[*philosophice profaneque disputate*]" about the corruption of the human race, which led him not only to weaken (*enervare*) the grace of Christ but almost totally to destroy it. Erasmus is to be less excused since he labors excessively to excuse Origen's position.

²² In *Inst.* 2.1.5, Calvin cites "orthodoxy" and Augustine to counter the Pelagian teaching on imitation.

²³ Aquinas's argument also implies that the effect of grace extends more abundantly than death, since, according to Aquinas, "the more potent something is, the more it can extend to a great number" (§432). Since grace from Divinity is stronger (*fortior*) than sin from humanity, "much more" (5:15b) has the grace of God and the gift of grace in comparison to the sin and death from Adam's trespass.

²⁴ The transforming effects of grace will be further discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

continues to incorporate the believer's "life of grace" as an intrinsic part of Paul's teaching, while Calvin incorporates the believer's life only secondarily; Christ's life *rather than* the believer's life takes center stage. These emphases are consistent with Calvin's belief that the Spirit's transformation is such that the believer is still condemnable *in se*, producing works condemnable *in se*, although the believer and his or her works are pardoned and received *in Christo*. The emphasis always lies on Christ's justice *extra nos*. For Aquinas, however, the Spirit transforms the soul so as to be actually just and produce works worthy of eternal life. Aquinas need not appeal to Christ *extra nos* nor draw dichotomies between Christ's life and the believer's life when accounting for Paul's teaching. The impact of these judgments on their interpretations of 5:15–19 will be illustrated in what follows.

THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE GIFT OF GOD

A key interpretive judgment for understanding Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of 5:15–19 lies in their approach to 5:15, "If by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God [*gratia Dei*], and the gift of God [*donum Dei*], which is of the one man Christ, abound to the many." What is "the grace of God" and "the gift in grace"? Are they distinct realities or the same thing described in two ways? Aquinas offers two possible interpretations, the second of which is especially noteworthy since it reflects Aquinas's broader vision for the effects of Christ's salvific work on fallen human nature. The first interpretation takes the "and" as explicative, so that the latter phrase, "the gift in grace" merely advances the meaning of the former, "the grace of God," without indicating a distinct reality. The second interpretation, however, which Aquinas favors, posits two different objects corresponding to "grace" and "gift." "Grace" refers to initial justifying grace that removes original and actual sin, returning an individual to a state of justice (i.e. a state of grace) as set forth in Romans 3:24, "Justified by his grace" (§437).²⁵ "Gift," however, refers

²⁵ To support his understanding of justification as "complete cleansing," Aquinas quotes 1 Corinthians 6:11, "As such were some of you; but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified." This verse appears regularly during Aquinas's discussions of justification; see §58, 69, 483, 717, 808.

to blessings that are given by God over and above the remission of sins; these blessings correspond to Psalms 67:19, "The Lord gave gifts to men."²⁶ For Aquinas, the "gifts" enable one to progress from one's initial justification to final beatitude as one partakes in these gifts through living the "life of grace." This movement also corresponds to the general movement of the letter of Romans as Aquinas sees it. Paul moves from the necessity of Christ's grace for justification (Romans 1–4) to its sufficiency for original sin (Romans 5), sufficiency for future sin (Romans 6) and on to its use in the present life (Romans 12–16). Taken together, then, Aquinas's interpretation of "grace" and "gifts" frames Paul's Adam–Christ typology as addressing the whole of life from initial justification to glory rather than solely the moment of removing original and actual sin at one's initial justification.²⁷

Calvin, however, interprets "grace" as the "pure goodness of God, or His unmerited love," of which God has demonstrated a "specimen [*specimen*]" in Christ (114.9–10). Grace for Calvin is "properly in God," while the "effects of grace" are "in/to us [*in nobis*]" (114.15). It will be left to determine the subjective nature of these "effects," which will determine whether *in nobis* should be rendered "in us" or "to us." Is it merely that the effects are "to us" in terms of *applying* to us, or is it more participatory, so that the individual is subjectively transformed by these effects, i.e. "in us"? For now, I note that Calvin's definition of grace as being "properly in God" and the "effects" *in nobis* is an explicit rejection of the "uninformed" teaching of the "scholastics," who define grace, according to Calvin, as "nothing other than an infused quality in the heart of men [*nihil aliud quam qualitatem hominum cordibus infusam*]" (114.14). The key here is that by situating

²⁶ *Dedit dominus dona hominibus*. Textually, it should be noted that Psalms 67:19 in the *Vulgata* states: *accepisti dona in hominibus*. The Septuagint supports this reading. Although Aquinas cites the psalm the way he does, he states when quoting the psalm, *secundum aliam litteram*. As is well known, Paul uses this psalm in Ephesians 4:8 but renders it in a manner that corresponds to Aquinas's text. It seems Aquinas has intentionally opted for a Pauline use of the psalm over the original text, and this reading supports his understanding of gift in Romans 5:15. For more on Psalms 67:19 (68:18) with reference to its use in Ephesians, see R. A. Taylor, "The Use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 in Light of Ancient Versions," *BSac* 148 (1991): 319–36; P. T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 288–93.

²⁷ It is interesting to note that based on the Greek text, Erasmus claims that the gift is itself justice, and, explicitly rejecting Aquinas's reading, states: "There is no need for that distinction of Thomas, who explains the difference in grace, gift, and justice" (CWE 56:171). Erasmus's reading coalesces with Calvin's, as we shall see.

grace as something “properly” in God, that is, as something objective to the human subject, Calvin’s interpretation of the Adam–Christ typology naturally follows with an objective emphasis on the work of Christ on behalf of the sinner more so than the subjective effects that result from Christ’s work. This is not to say Calvin excludes the subjective “effects” from his account. The term “gift” in 5:15 corresponds to these “effects”—what Calvin calls “the fruit of God’s mercy”—which consists of reconciliation, justice, newness of life, “and every other similar blessing” (114.11–13). But it is to say that Calvin focuses his interpretation regarding the contrast between sin and grace principally in terms of Adam’s fall and Christ’s own work of establishing restoration, rather than Christ’s work refashioning the human soul.

Calvin’s polemic against the “scholastic” definition of grace as “nothing other than an infused quality in the heart of men” needs further exploration. Clearly, the “scholastic” definition places the emphasis of “grace” within the human subject, and Calvin’s own definition shifts the emphasis away from the human subject and onto God himself. Aquinas’s definition of “grace” as the soul’s accidental participation in the divine nature seems to clearly situate him closer to the “scholastics” than to Calvin. But this is not the only definition Aquinas gives to grace, and upon further exploration we find surprisingly less similarity between Aquinas and the “scholastic” definition, left as it is, than between Aquinas and Calvin.

The phrase “nothing other than” in Calvin’s “scholastic” definition raises red flags when compared to Aquinas. Judging from what little Calvin says about the definition, as well as what Calvin sets forth as an alternative to it, Calvin is clearly concerned that the “scholastic” interpretation of grace has disconnected grace from God himself. It has become nothing more than a thing infused in the soul from which the graced individual lives in almost autonomous terms from the direct influence of the divine being. Once again we see Calvin’s polemic directed against what amounts to a competitive-causal schema between divine and human willing, with human willing understood in autonomous terms from divine causality.²⁸ But if this is the case, the nonparticipatory “scholastic” definition rejected by Calvin is also

²⁸ This polemic of Calvin’s is pervasive throughout his corpus; see *BLW*, 152, 175, 234; *Antidote*, 3.111, 151; *Articles by the Theological Faculty of Paris*, in *Tracts Relating to the Reformation*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844), 75–6.

outside the definition given by Aquinas. For Aquinas, grace is indeed in the soul, but it enables the soul to have an accidental participation in the divine being. The emphasis on grace for Aquinas is principally an emphasis on God. A. N. Williams states: "Although Thomas himself does not equate grace and God, he does not use the term *grace* so as to distinguish it from divine being itself, shared with creatures."²⁹ Aquinas's account therefore agrees with Calvin's God-centered focus on grace and, if properly understood, Calvin's claim that the "effect" of grace is in believers.³⁰ In *ST* III, q. 1, a. 10, Aquinas provides a twofold definition of grace: "grace is taken in two ways: first, as the will of God gratuitously bestowing something; secondly, as the free gift of God."³¹ The first part emphasizes God's love toward us. This love causes something, that is, it has an effect in the one loved, and this is the second part. But Aquinas understands even this effect in a God-centered way in terms of the soul's created participation in the divine nature. Both Aquinas and Calvin, then, seek to keep God as a direct and ongoing causal being in the context of grace, and they both assert subjective effects as a result of God's causal presence in the soul.

But does this mean that Calvin and Aquinas agree regarding the participatory effects of grace? Looking ahead to Chapter 4, I note that Calvin claims in his commentary on Romans 6:17, "You became obedient from the heart," that one of the "effects" of God's grace includes the soul's transformation by the Spirit's activity on the soul (i.e. sanctification). Calvin states in his commentary on 6:17 that under the term "grace" is included "the Spirit of regeneration" (132.15–16). The "effects" of God's grace are brought to us directly by the work of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, commenting on 6:14, Calvin states: "We should understand under the name 'grace' both parts of redemption: that is, remission of sin by which (*qua*) God imputes justice to us, and the sanctification of the Spirit, through whom (*per quam*) He remakes us (*nos refingit*) for good works" (130.50–53). Calvin also claims at 5:17 that through faith individuals are "engrafted [*inserere*]" into Christ and have a "participation [*participatio*]" in Christ's grace (116.72–73).

²⁹ Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 84.

³⁰ Williams says as much for Aquinas while highlighting Aquinas's analogical use of "grace": "What grace is, most truly and fundamentally, is *gratia increata*, the Holy Spirit, God *ipse*. The effects of grace in human persons are analogous to this essential grace, and as *inchoate* glory (II-II.24, 3 ad 2) reflect, in the *viator*, the *viator's* nature, which is finite and created" (*The Ground of Union*, 89).

³¹ *ST* III, q. 2, a. 10; I-II, q. 110, a. 1.

We gain the most insight into Calvin's stance on graced participation when we compare the three editions of Calvin's commentary on 5:15 at the very place where he asserts his rebuttal to the "scholastic" definition. Judging from the three redactions of his Romans commentary (1540, 1551, and 1556), Calvin originally (1540) claims that "grace" is the goodness of God and the "gift [*donum*]" is "what came to us," which is similar to the last edition (1556). But in the first edition he also connects the gift given to us with "an infused quality of the heart." This interpretation does not change in the 1551 edition. In both the 1540 and 1551 editions, the key statement reads: *Donum qui ad nos pervenit: qualitatem hominum cordibus infusam* ("The gift that comes to us is a quality infused into the heart of man"). It is only in the 1556 edition that we detect a change. But the change, importantly, is twofold. First, Calvin takes the phrase *qualitatem hominum cordibus infusam* and places it into the mouths of the scholastics. Second, Calvin inserts the phrase *nihil aliud* ("nothing other"). The final edition reads, *Unde perspicimus quam inscite gratiam definiat Scholastici, dum nihil aliud esse volunt quam qualitatem hominum cordibus infusam* ("From whence we observe that uninformed definition of grace from the scholastics that it is nothing other than a quality infused into the heart of man"). Clearly, Calvin was at one time quite sympathetic to the participatory understanding of grace as a quality in the soul, and this sympathy, I argue, never left, although Calvin felt compelled to define grace itself as being "properly" in God in light of the "scholastic" account that it is *nihil aliud* than a quality in human beings.³² As Calvin saw it, this way of putting things went too far in leaving out direct divine causality from the picture of grace.

We find then that Aquinas and Calvin are not so far apart in the participatory understanding of grace after all. I will argue as much also in the next chapter on Romans 6. To be sure, their different emphases on grace, with Aquinas focusing on grace in the soul and Calvin focusing

³² This is not an attempt to avoid the fact that Calvin agreed with Luther—and both with similarities to Lombard—in rejecting the Thomistic idea of the infused "habits" of grace; see Billings, *CPG*, 34; 49 n. 105. But it is to say that the distinction between Calvin and Aquinas is not as radical as it may seem on the surface. Calvin does in fact use the term *habit* in connection with grace in *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, although, again, in slightly different ways than Aquinas. Calvin asserts that there are three parts to the act of willing: the faculty of willing, the power itself of willing, and "habit," which is "between" the two and is a quality that tends the will toward willing badly or goodly (*BLW*, 209); God's renewal through grace takes place not in the substance but in the habit (*BLW*, 210).

on God's own goodness, impact how they approach 5:15–19. Aquinas understands Paul's discussion on original sin, as well as the Adam–Christ typology, in terms of the power of grace liberating the soul from evils. Calvin, on the other hand, interprets these discussions with a focus on God's own kindness and the work of Christ on behalf of the sinner. The transformative effects of God's grace and his gifts do not begin to substantially surface until Romans 6, when, according to Calvin, Paul begins addressing the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. But these different emphases do not necessarily result in conflicting interpretations. What *does* make their interpretations truly at odds, however, and leads to Aquinas's deeper participatory reading of Romans 5:15–19 than Calvin's, pertains to how they understand the transforming effects of grace on the soul. This brings us back to the point made earlier in the chapter that for Aquinas grace transforms the believer into a just person, while for Calvin the believer is always condemnable *in se* although justified *in Christo*. Aquinas reads 5:15–19 believing that Christ's grace makes the believer just and enables the believer to avoid mortal sin and produce works meritorious of eternal life. Calvin reads 5:15–19 believing that God's grace and Christ's own justice must be posited in contrast to the believer's life; God's grace *rather than* a believer's works, and Christ's life *instead of* the believer's life take center stage.

Aquinas's approach to Paul's contrast in 5:16 between “condemnation” and “justification” follows his emphasis on transformation; the contrast is between the effects of Adam's sin and Christ's grace on the soul. While Adam's sin made us worthy of condemnation, Christ's grace transforms the soul—the soul is justified from sin and is enabled to avoid mortal sin in the future and obtain eternal life. Consistent with this interpretation, Aquinas takes the phrase “reign in life” in 5:17 to correspond to future eternal life. Aquinas supports his interpretation of “life” as eternal life with a cross-reference to John 10:10, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly,”³³ and he supports the futurity of the phrase “reign in life” by a cross-reference to Revelation 20:4, which states that there will be those who will reign with Christ in heaven a thousand years, “that is, eternally” (§441). Understanding “reign in life” as future eternal life coalesces with what Aquinas said above about “gifts,” namely that they are blessings given

³³ “Life,” here, is also understood as eternal life, while the term “abundantly” corresponds to the term “reign” in our present verse.

by God to advance one within the life of grace culminating in the life of glory, i.e. eternal life. Aquinas's focus on human transformation in obtaining future eternal life impacts his interpretation of "grace," "gifts," and "justice" in 5:17b, which Aquinas interprets as necessary realities imparted to wayfarers for the purpose of meriting eternal life (§441).³⁴ "Grace" corresponds to the remission of sin and refers not only to the infused quality in the soul mentioned above but also to God's eternal love, which forgives sin without any prior merit (i.e. not from works).³⁵ "Gifts" corresponds to God's gifts that enable the wayfarer to "advance in goods [*promovetur in bona*]"³⁶ along the path to obtaining eternal life.³⁷ "Justice" corresponds to "upright actions [*rectitudo operum*],"³⁸ not in terms of the believer's own just actions, which to be sure are part of obtaining eternal life. But at 5:17b Aquinas makes the "upright actions" Christ's actions. Quoting I Corinthians 1:30, "Whom God made our justice," Aquinas asserts that the justification that we receive by grace through faith (Romans 3:22) is rooted in Christ's own justice;³⁹ hence, Paul uses *accipio* ("receive") in connection with *iustitia* in 5:17b. Throughout 5:15–19, Aquinas

³⁴ Textually, "gift" and "justice" are separated according to Aquinas's text, but for Calvin it reads "gift of justice."

³⁵ In *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 1, Aquinas distinguishes three ways that the term "grace" is used in common speech: 1. For anyone's love (*pro dilectione alicuius*), 2. For any gift freely bestowed (*pro aliquo dono gratis dato*), 3. For the recompense of a gift given graciously (*pro recompensatione beneficii gratis dati*), such as when we are said to be grateful for benefits.

³⁶ *In bona* is undefined here, and so can incorporate all the goods we obtain as part of our advancement to eternal life (e.g. deeper love, stronger virtue, etc.).

³⁷ Sherwin demonstrates how Aquinas incorporates not only the theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) as necessary components for obtaining beatitude but the gifts of the Spirit and the cardinal virtues as well, stating: "Although the theological virtues order us sufficiently in relation to our supernatural end, on their own they do not sufficiently order us in relation to the good works [i.e. merits] that are the means to that end" (*By Knowledge and By Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005], 171).

³⁸ See Chapter 1 for more on Aquinas's threefold interpretation of justification, one of which includes works of justice.

³⁹ In his commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:30, Aquinas states that God supplies for the deficiencies of his preachers by means of Christ, so that "Christ is said to have been made justice for us, inasmuch as we are made just by his faith" (*per eius fidem iustificamur*) (§71). Aquinas quotes Romans 3:22, "For the justice of God through the faith of Christ Jesus" (*iustitia Dei per fidem Christi lesu*). For more on the relationship between Christ's merit, grace, and our salvation, see *ST* III, q. 19, a. 4; q. 48, aa. 1, 2, 6; q. 49, aa. 1, 2; q. 62, a. 5.

demonstrates how Christ's grace reforms the believer, correcting the effects of Adam's sin on the soul and enabling the believer to advance through the life of grace to obtain the life of glory.

Calvin, on the other hand, approaches 5:16 and the contrast between "condemnation" and "justification" not by addressing the transforming effects of Adam's sin and Christ's grace on the human soul. Rather, Calvin focuses on the contrast between God's "judgment" and God's "gift." From Adam's trespass "guilt [*reatus*]" prevailed to our condemnation, while "grace, or better the gratuitous gift" is "effective [*efficax*]" for the justification from many sins (114.22–24).⁴⁰ The contrast is between the "rigidity" of God's judgment, resulting in damnation, and God's "free pardon [*gratuita venia*]" resulting in absolution (115.33–35). Calvin claims: "If God deals with us according to justice, we are all lost, but He justifies us freely [*gratis*] in Christ" (115.35–36). There were some who taught, however, notes Calvin, that nothing else is "recuperated" by being in Christ other than being freed from original sin or the corruption contracted from Adam. Although it is unclear from Calvin's commentary exactly what was being taught, Calvin is clear that he thinks this teaching undermines Christ's ongoing cleansing work for "new guilt contracted daily" (115.31). By being "in Christ," states Calvin, Christ "helps" us "by continual grace [*continuo gratia*]" (115.32–33).⁴¹ Calvin's comments on 5:17 and the phrases "the gift of justice" and "reign in life" address the present life of the believer and not future eternal life. The present life of believer is restored through God's absolution of the individual's sin (i.e. justification) (117.98–100). The inseparability of justification and present life's restoration underscores Calvin's teaching on the inseparability of justification and sanctification. As Calvin states in his opening words on Romans 6, "The apostle maintains that those who imagine that Christ bestows

⁴⁰ Calvin's text at 5:15 reads, *donum autem ex multis delictis in iustificationem*, while Aquinas's reads, *gratia autem ex multis delictis in iustificationem*. Each text fits well with the trajectory of the commentator's interpretation. For Aquinas, grace is more directly linked with justification, which fits well Aquinas's vision for grace removing original and actual sin. For Calvin, gift is more directly linked with justification, which fits well with his perspective that grace is properly in God and the effects of God's grace are his gifts, such as justification.

⁴¹ See Aquinas, §433 for a similar conclusion to Calvin's, although admittedly for Aquinas the emphasis in this section is on the initial cleansing of both original and actual sin at the moment of faith (§437). The work of Christ's grace after the initial grace of justification is attributed to the "gifts" mentioned in this verse.

[*donari*] gratuitous justification from himself [*ab ipso*] to us without newness of life shamefully tear apart [*discerpere*] Christ” (119.4–6).⁴² There is a conceptual distinction between justification as the absolution of sin and sanctification as the subjective transformation of the one absolved, but there is neither a chronological distinction, nor, which would be worse, a separation.

Nevertheless, the conceptual distinction between justification as forgiveness and sanctification as transformation impacts Calvin’s interpretation of the Adam–Christ typology. The distinction leads Calvin to go so far as to add a “qualification” to the typological comparison that he believes Paul fails to mention. Paul omits this qualification, explains Calvin, not because it is of no importance, but because it is unrelated to Paul’s present argument (115.56–57). But it is significant that Calvin is willing to go beyond the direct “intention of the author” by including a theological position unique to the Reformers. The Adam–Christ typology should be further qualified, claims Calvin, according to the nature of one’s possession either of the guilt of Adam or of the justice of Christ. Adam’s guilt, we recall, resides in the nature of each person from birth; “we have all sinned,” claims Calvin, by personally possessing “natural corruption,” which is itself wicked and perverse in the sight of God, rendering all guilty (110.89; 115.61–116.61). Each individual punished for Adam’s guilt, then, is not punished for an “alien sin [*alienum peccatum*]” but for his or her own sin. In contrast, Christ’s justice “restores” individuals to salvation “in another mode” (116.61–62).⁴³ Although God punishes individuals because they are themselves sinful, God does not accept individuals because justice is “within [*intra*]” them. Rather, through faith individuals “possess Christ himself with all his blessings,” given to them “by the Father’s bounty” (116.62–64). The *donum iustitiae* (“gift of justice”) is not a “quality” with which God “endows [*imbuat*]” individuals, but it signifies the “gratuitous imputation of justice” (116.64–66). Understanding the *donum* in this way

⁴² For more on the inseparability of justification and sanctification, see Chapter 1. Billings puts it this way: “The gift of salvation is received from outside oneself. Yet, this gift is also one of relationship, of God seeking out the fallen so that their primal communion with God is restored” (CPG, 188); cf. Paul Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 207–15.

⁴³ Calvin’s qualification regarding the different “modes” by which individuals possess the sin of Adam and the justice of Christ provides a good example of the way Calvin makes distinctions where the text does not demand it (much like the “schoolmen”), since Paul himself uses the same term: “to make [*constituere*].”

helps clarify an earlier question regarding the nature of the effects of grace, that is, whether *in nobis* should be rendered “in us” or “to us.” For Calvin, it seems the effects are better understood as being “to us” rather than “in us”: Christ’s justice to us rather than in us. This is not to deny that a true transformation takes place “in us” in connection with Christ’s justice to us. But this subjective transformation is connected to receiving the gift of imputed justice and is not the gift itself. The focus of Calvin’s interpretation becomes once again Christ’s justice *extra nos* rather than or in contrast with the believer’s own transformed condition.

CHRIST AND THE LAW

In the previous chapter, I explored the impact of Aquinas’s and Calvin’s theology of the law on their interpretations of Romans 4. Aquinas’s approach to Romans 4 reflects the absence of a “covenant of works,” which leads Aquinas away from the strong dichotomy between justification by faith and justification by works found in Calvin, who believes that fulfilling the law would constitute an alternative means of salvation alongside or in place of salvation by grace. Calvin thus stresses the inability of believers to fulfill the law, which necessitates their constant dependence on Christ’s justice graciously imputed. Their theology of the law also impacts their interpretation of the Adam–Christ typology, particularly Paul’s teaching at 5:19, “As through the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so through the obedience of one, many were made just.” Calvin focuses on Christ’s obedience in terms of fulfilling the law and “satisfying” God through that fulfillment.⁴⁴ Calvin comments that a person can be said to possess justice as a quality—understood as the justice that renders one justified before God—if that person maintains perfect obedience to God. This is termed “justification by works.” For Calvin, the justice established through “works” consists of “full and complete” obedience to the law “in every respect [*absolutam*]” (117.15–16, 22),

⁴⁴ See *Inst.* 2.16.5, where Calvin argues that the whole of Christ’s life is included in Christ’s obedience, although foremost is His death. Even in His death, however, “the important thing” is His willing obedience, since “a sacrifice not offered voluntarily would not have furthered justice.”

for only such obedience “satisfies God’s justice.”⁴⁵ It consists of a complete life of obedience, since “if a just man has fallen, none of his former justice is remembered” (117.16–17). To be sure, there is a way in which Aquinas would agree with Calvin’s assertion. If a person in a state of justice commits a mortal sin, the merits established before the mortal sin cannot of themselves procure salvation. The sinner must be restored through repentance, but restoration is itself an *unmerited* gift.⁴⁶ But Calvin’s purpose in asserting the “full and complete” life of obedience is to assert that no one is obedient to God in this way due to their fallen nature from Adam.⁴⁷ This is true both before receiving the regenerative work of grace and importantly after. Paul Helm correctly highlights the rarity of Calvin’s use of the term “justice” or “righteousness” in a subjective sense in connection with sanctification. Even when Calvin alludes to righteousness in this sense, “The stress is one integrity, on the aspiration *for* righteousness, which is never achieved in this life.”⁴⁸ Calvin’s concern is to deny that a person is able to acquire justice from keeping the law, which would equate to a person perfectly keeping the law in all respects. For Calvin, this is not possible even for the believer; the believer is always subject to the judgment of death in regard to their subjective purity.⁴⁹ Therefore, Christ and only Christ is obedience to the law in the way noted above, and thus Christ alone possesses justice as a quality and satisfies the justice of the Father. Since individuals are unable to obtain justification by works, they must obtain justification through faith, in which what is proper to Christ, i.e. justification by works, is “received [*acceptum*]” by believers, thus establishing them justified before God (117.11–12). In *Inst.* 2.17.3, Calvin states, “If Christ paid the penalty owed by us, if he appeased God by his obedience, in short, if as a just man he suffered for unjust men, then he acquired salvation for us by his justice, which is tantamount to deserving it.” Through being untied with

⁴⁵ On the relation of Christ’s obedience to meriting grace for sinners, see *Inst.* 2.17.1–3. True worship, claims Calvin, only comes by following what God has commanded; only then do we “render obedience to His Word.”

⁴⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 7.

⁴⁷ This point becomes central to Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations of Romans 7:14–25; see Chapter 5. In a shot toward Rome, Calvin reminds his readers that the only obedience acceptable to God comes through following what He has commanded and not following “self-conceived schemes” derived from one’s “own invention,” by which individuals falsely claim to satisfy God’s justice (117.18–20, 24).

⁴⁸ Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 212.

⁴⁹ *Inst.* 3.11.11; see Chapter 5 on Romans 7:14–25.

Christ, “[God] causes us to receive the benefit of the promises of the law as if we had fulfilled their condition” (*Inst.* 2.7.4).⁵⁰

Aquinas no less believes that Christ possesses the quality of justice that corresponds to being obedient to the law. But unlike Calvin, Aquinas does not speak of Christ’s obedience “satisfying” the Father in terms of perfectly meeting the law’s demands. Aquinas emphasizes instead the participatory function of the law within justification in terms of maintaining and increasing one’s virtue through obedience.⁵¹ Aquinas focuses on the *ratio* of Christ’s obedience as reflecting his justness and the justness established in the believer through Christ’s grace. Central to Aquinas’s interpretation of 5:19 is the metaphysical principle of causality in which the effect of a cause bears a resemblance to its cause. At 5:19 Aquinas makes disobedience and obedience causal principles, and these principles bear the *ratio* of injustice and justice. As Aquinas notes, “legal justice [*iustitia legalis*]”⁵² consists in the inner acquisition of all virtue and is recognizable in the observance of the precepts of a law,⁵³ while legal injustice consists of all wickedness (*malitia*) and is recognizable in transgressing the precepts of a law. Since the effect of a cause bears a similarity to the cause, the effect of Adam’s disobedience was to make all who are born from his seed unjust, while the effect of Christ’s obedience makes all who receive his grace just (§445). Aquinas explains that out of love for the Father and for sinners, Christ was obedient to the Father’s command and accepted death for our salvation, as is stated in Philippians 2:8, “He became obedient unto death” (§446).⁵⁴ In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas clarifies the relationship between love and obedience by stating: “Christ suffered out of charity and out of obedience; because He

⁵⁰ On the nature of the reception of justification by the believer—imputed verses infused—see Chapter 1 on justification.

⁵¹ Calvin, too, has a place for the law in guiding believers within the sanctified life, but this role of the law corresponds to his reflections on sanctification and not justification.

⁵² For more on the notion of legal justice, see *ST* II-II, q. 58, a. 5, where Aquinas explains legal justice as a “general” virtue through which an individual is obedient to the law in a movement toward the “common good”; this in distinction from “charity,” through which an individual pursues the divine good.

⁵³ *ST* II-II, q. 58, a. 6, where Aquinas clarifies that legal justice is essentially the same as all virtue insofar as all the other virtues are directed to the common good by legal justice, which itself is a special virtue having the common good as its object but is “virtually” a general virtue by directing all the other virtues to its end.

⁵⁴ *ST* III, q. 47, a. 2, ad. 3.

fulfilled even the precepts of charity out of obedience only; and was obedient, out of love, to the Father's command." Through his obedience in suffering the passion, Christ not only delivered man from sin by satisfying for sin, but he also merited justifying grace and the glory of bliss.⁵⁵ Christ was obedient through love and all those who participate in Christ's grace through faith receive the effect of justice (§447).

It is important to bear in mind that Aquinas is not speaking here of obedience and disobedience under the rubric of a works-based covenant of salvation. Aquinas is clearly less concerned with Christ's fulfillment of the law *per se* (a point that does not even surface in the commentary on 5:19) than with Christ's obedience understood in terms of inner virtue (§447). Believers become justified, according to Aquinas, not through Christ reestablishing a works covenant that human beings broke, and which needs to be restored in order for individuals to be justified before God. Obedience to the law, even perfect obedience as we recall from Chapter 1, does not equate to salvation; elevating grace is needed even if the law is perfectly kept. Christ's obedience is therefore not understood as "satisfying" the Father in terms of perfectly keeping the law, but rather Christ's sacrificial obedience in all its various facets, including its fulfillment of the moral, ceremonial, and judicial precepts of the law, bears the *ratio* of justice, and the effect, which is in the believer through grace being bestowed in the soul, bears a resemblance to the cause and thus creates justness in the soul of the believer.

In sum, for Aquinas the emphasis is on the graced soul and not the standard of the law *per se*; for Calvin, it is on the standard of the law *per se*, and only then on the need of grace. Calvin's perspective emphasizes that individuals need transformation in the soul to cultivate obedience to the law; Aquinas's emphasizes that individuals need obedience to the law to cultivate the transformation in the soul.

CONCLUSION

Aquinas's and Calvin's distinct interpretations of justification continue to surface in their approach to our peace with God, our hope

⁵⁵ *ST* III, q. 46, a. 3.

of eternal life, and the way that Christ overturns the negative effects of Adam's sin. Calvin frequently appeals to Christ's justice *extra nos*, and his account for our peace with God and hope for eternal life only secondarily includes the actual life of the believer. Primary to Calvin's account is faith, which enables the believer to "grasp" the justice of Christ and possess this justice as "clothing." The only role that the life of the believer plays in accounting for our future hope of eternal life is the believer's faith, which, Calvin claims, is always present once begun and is always salvific. While for Calvin sanctification always accompanies justification, it is conceptually distinct, and therefore Calvin walks through the Adam–Christ typology emphasizing Christ's work for and to the believer rather than, as with Aquinas, Christ's work in and through the believer. For Aquinas, however, Christ's grace has transformed the believer so as to possess justness and enabled the believer to avoid mortal sin and perform truly meritorious works. There is no distinction between justification and transformation for Aquinas, and therefore he does not appeal to something *extra nos* when accounting for the basis of our peace with God and hope for eternal life. Hope is secure because Christ provides the graces needed for the believer to advance through the life of grace to the life of glory. If the believer fails to take advantage of God's graces, however, hope falls short because the believer has fallen short of hope. Aquinas's emphasis on transformation leads him to interpret the Adam–Christ typology with an eye toward how Christ's work of salvation reconstitutes justness in the believer and frees the believer from the effects of original sin. Christ's obedience is not understood as reconstituting a covenant of works broken by Adam, but rather Christ's obedience carries the *ratio* of justness, and all those who participate in Christ through grace possess this justness.

A significant difference in Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of the Adam–Christ typology is not whether the idea of participation is present or not. Aquinas and Calvin agree that believers obtain for themselves the work of Christ over Adam's disobedience through being "engrafted" into Christ. "God's grace" and "the gift of grace" are understood in highly participatory terms for both Calvin and Aquinas. The key difference rests on how they understand the transformation that occurs through the indwelling of God's grace. Aquinas believes that Christ's grace transforms the believer so as to possess justness and perform works worthy of eternal life, while Calvin believes that Christ's grace transforms the believer but leaves the

believer condemnable *in se* and his or her works condemnable *in se* although pardoned *in Christo*. The result of these judgments, I argue, enables Aquinas to interpret Romans in more profound participatory terms than Calvin. The next two chapters will look more closely at how Aquinas and Calvin understand Paul's teaching on the transformation wrought by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Part II

Participation in the Spirit's Transformation

The Spirit's Work of Transformation: Part 1

Romans 6:1–23

In 1541 Gasparo Contarini, appointed papal legate of the Roman Catholic Church, gathered together at the Diet of Regensburg theologians representing both Catholic and Protestant positions in order to discuss, among other things, the doctrine of justification. In his analysis of Article 5 of the Regensburg Colloquy, Anthony Lane makes the point on numerous occasions that the crux of the issue concerned the basis of one's acceptance before God: Is it due to imputed righteousness alone or also to inherent righteousness?¹ Lane explains that the Reformers insisted on imputed righteousness alone (in opposition to inherent or transformational righteousness) because "both our own inherent righteousness and the righteousness of our works remain imperfect and it is not the basis we can stand before God."² Whatever notion of participation in Christ the Reformers affirmed, it was not conceived in a way that led to affirming the inherent justness of the believer before God. Christ's justness as the basis of justification was therefore understood in external or extrinsic terms in relation to the

¹ Anthony N. S. Lane, "Twofold Righteousness: A Key to the Doctrine of Justification? Reflections on Article 5 of the Regensburg Colloquy (1541)," in *Justification: What's at Stake in the Current Debates?*, ed. Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Trier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 215; idem., *Justification by Faith*, 158–67.

² Lane, "Twofold Righteousness," 217. Mark A. Garcia suggests that the "heart" of the disagreement between Calvin and Trent is not different interpretation of *iustitia* but rather "different estimations of the abilities of the fallen sinner, and...different conceptions of union with Christ and its implications for justification" (*Life in Christ*, 115); see Craig B. Carpenter, "A Question of Union with Christ? Calvin and Trent on Justification," *Westminster Theological Journal* 64 (2002): 363–86.

believer. It was not something indwelling the soul but rather “covering” the sinner.³ As I have demonstrated up to this point, there seems to be nothing intrinsic to Paul’s teaching on justification that *requires* Calvin’s dichotomy between an alien imputed righteousness occurring through the forgiveness of sins wrought by the salvific work of Christ and the sinner becoming just through possession of justness understood as a participation in the justness of Christ. Aquinas, as we have seen, holds both positions, and this without compromising what I consider to be important points in Calvin’s interpretation regarding the unmerited nature of justification and the alien origins of the justice that renders one just before God. I have also indicated, and as Lane argues, Calvin’s dichotomy between Christ’s justice imputed *extra nos* and our possession of justness arises not necessarily due to his reflection on justification per se but rather due to his conception of our transformation in the Spirit. Calvin conceives of the transformed soul in such a way that he denies the justness of the justified sinner and denies the fully just nature of the works that follow. Aquinas, however, is able to conceive of the transformed soul in such a way that he can affirm the sinner’s possession of justness and affirms the justness of the works that follow. In this chapter and the next, we get to the heart of the issue by looking at the transforming dimensions of redemption.

HOW SHARP IS THE TURN IN PAUL’S DISCOURSE?

The first item to address is how Aquinas and Calvin situate Romans 6 within the flow of the letter. Aquinas and Calvin agree that 6:1 marks a new stage in Paul’s overall discourse, with focused consideration now being given to the Christian’s “life in the Spirit.” Yet they differ in how they situate Romans 6 within the letter due in large part to the participatory or nonparticipatory dimensions of their teachings on justification. Calvin’s understanding of justification leads him to posit a sharp turn in Paul’s teaching at Romans 6. In Romans 1–5, Paul addressed “free justification,” that is, justification that comes through

³ Christopher Malloy draws out this important distinction while criticizing the document *Joint Declaration of the Doctrine of Justification* for failing to do likewise; Malloy, *Engrafted Into Christ*, esp. 59–124.

faith and not through merit. This teaching, however, claims Calvin, could be used for “self-indulgence” in the hand of the “flesh”—an abuse, I note, particularly relevant to a doctrine of justification that is not intrinsically transformational. Calvin claims that Satan himself “devises all kinds of slander by which to discredit the doctrine of grace” (119.9–10). But Paul demonstrates in Romans 6 that “those who imagine that Christ gives free justice [*gratuitam iustitiam*] to us without [*absque*] newness of life tear apart Christ” (119.4–6). Romans 6 thus begins Paul’s teaching on the *second* of the twofold gifts simultaneously given to those united to Christ through faith, namely, sanctification, which is the believer’s “death to sin.” The shift from Romans 1–5 to Romans 6 is therefore as substantial as is the depth of Calvin’s differentiation between justification and sanctification.⁴ While for Calvin the two are never separated, grave error occurs whenever they are confused and our transformation is made the basis for our justification. Sanctification is *united* to justification but *extrinsic* to justification itself. The teachings of Romans 6 will therefore always appear with the teachings of Romans 1–5, but the teachings are united *extrinsically* to one another.

For Aquinas, however, Romans 6 marks Paul’s transition from addressing the believer’s liberation from previous sins through justification to addressing the believer’s “ability [*facultas*]” to resist future sins and thereby *further* his or her justified state. Justification for Aquinas consists in the sinner being transformed into a just person, and the life of avoiding sin and acting rightly works to *deepen* the believer’s justness. Both the liberation from previous sins and the ability to resist future sin is rooted in the believer’s participation in the grace of Christ (§468). There is no sense in Aquinas that the ongoing deepening of our justness through resisting sin occurs autonomously from the direct causal activity of God’s immediate presence. But since to be liberated from previous sin (i.e. to be justified) is itself a work of transformation, there is no sharp turn away from “justification” in Romans 1–5 to “sanctification” in Romans 6. Paul simply

⁴ See Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 120–33 for a brief comparison of Calvin’s reading of Romans 6 with Erasmus, Lefèvre, and Melancthon, although as I noted in the Introduction, Garcia underappreciates the way Romans 6 relates to Romans 1–5, which causes him to miss how justification by faith is the principal issue in Calvin’s reading of Romans; see also Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 291, for examples of those who divide Romans at Chapter 6 similarly to Calvin.

turns in Romans 6 to consider the forward-moving dimensions of justification. Paul is also clarifying aspects of his previous teaching on justification. We recall that Calvin also claims that in Romans 6 Paul seeks to counter misinterpretations of his teaching on justification. But for Aquinas Paul is not countering a potential abuse of his teaching on “free justice” (i.e. imputed justice) as presented over the course of Romans 1–5; again, Aquinas does not set Romans 1–5 in sharp distinction from Romans 6 as with Calvin. Rather, Paul counters a potential misinterpretation of his more immediate claim at 5:20, “Where sin increases, grace abounded all the more.” For Aquinas, this statement seems to posit a direct *causal* link between the increase of sin and the increase of grace, as if grace increases *through* sin increasing. Thus Paul begins Romans 6 with a question: “Shall we continue to sin so that grace might abound?” since 5:20 seems to suggest that we should sin given that where sin increases, grace abounds all the more. To refute this misinterpretation, Paul spends the rest of Romans 6 addressing the nature of the Christian’s life in the Spirit. Paul argues that a life in the Spirit, that is, a life lived participating in God’s grace, is one that resists sin and lives obediently to God, culminating in the life of glory in heaven. It is a life of *furthering* what has already taken place through Christ’s justification of the sinner.

We find then that a transformation account or non-transformation account of justification deeply impacts how Aquinas and Calvin present the flow of Paul’s argument. Aquinas’s account of justification allows for a smoother transition from Romans 5 to Romans 6 than Calvin’s. Aquinas does not present the transformation resulting from our ongoing life in the Spirit as a second gift placed alongside the gift of justification as with Calvin. Justification and the indwelling of the Spirit through grace are two sides of the same coin, and this indwelling only increases as the believer further cultivates virtue through his or her ongoing participation in grace. Notwithstanding these differences, Aquinas and Calvin agree that Paul in Romans 6 focuses on the believer’s life in the Spirit, and in what follows I explore Calvin’s and Aquinas’s interpretations of his teaching. To do so, I address Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations of 6:1–23 under four topics: (1) the believer’s “death to sin” through union with Christ’s own death that occurs in baptism; (2) the connection between Christ’s resurrection and the believer’s newness of life—a life free from sin’s “reign”; (3) the particularities of the death of the “old man”; and (4) eternal life as a “grace” or “gift.”

DEATH TO SIN THROUGH BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

Paul claims at 6:3: "Those who are baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into his death." Calvin and Aquinas provide robust participatory accounts of the believer's death to sin as the effect of being united with Christ's death in baptism, thus placing their accounts of the Christian moral life on common ground. This is no small point. Although Calvin's account of Paul's theology in Romans lacks the participatory depth of Aquinas's account, clearly Calvin does not lack a participatory vision *simpliciter*. To push Calvin's reading in a more participatory direction would not be the introduction of a foreign element in Calvin's theology but the deepening of one that already exists. We see Calvin's participatory vision when he connects the believer's "death to sin" to the "fellowship of death [*mortis societas*]" established in baptism. This fellowship is in fact the "chief consideration" of baptism (121.57–58) and forms the basis for why a believer should not continue in sin. Commenting on 6:9, "Death no more has dominion over him," Calvin asserts that Christ voluntarily subjected himself to the "power" of death (i.e. its "dominion"), but he did so in order that he might destroy death forever through his resurrection. For Calvin, the "final cause" of Christ's death is the destruction of sin (125.11–12). Calvin claims that the sacrament of baptism initiates the baptized into Christ's death. The baptized become "one with him [*unum cum ipso*]" (121.55).⁵ The baptized "grow up into the body of Christ" (121.56), "are admitted into participation in grace" (121.78–79), and obtain a "secret union [*arcanam coniunctionem*]" with Christ through which the baptized are "grafted" into Christ (122.7–8; 123.31–38) and "grow together with Him [*cum ipso coalere*]" (112.5). Paul is not merely exhorting believers to imitate the death of Christ, as if Christ were simply an example to be followed, but rather Paul is communicating something "higher," namely that the baptized actually participate in the death of Christ through baptism (121.72–74). This participation

⁵ For more on Calvin's doctrine of baptism, see *Inst.* 4.15.1–22. It is worth noting that the meaning and efficacy of baptism are closely linked with Calvin's distinction-without-separation of justification and regeneration. Baptism provides, on the one hand, "increasing assurance" and a deeper "confirmation" of that which has been received in justification through faith (4.15.1–2, 15); it also produces, on the other hand, the effect of participation in Christ's death, which falls under regeneration (4.15.5–6, 9).

produces the mortification of the “old man,” that is, it “destroys and overthrows the depravity of the flesh” (121.76–77). Those who are regenerated by the Spirit—who are granted a “common likeness [*mutual similitudo*]” between themselves and Christ (126.19)—die to sin, in that sin dies in them. Sin is renounced and progress is made in ceasing from sinning.⁶

Aquinas uses language *identical* to Calvin’s by speaking of baptism as the “engrafting” into Christ of the one baptized, “as a branch is grafted into a tree” (§477). Aquinas focuses on the notion of “conformity” to explain the effects of this engrafting (§473). He finds this notion reflected in Galatians 3:27, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on [*induistis*] Christ.”⁷ The specific conformity occurring in baptism, as indicated by 6:3, “Those who are baptized into Christ Jesus are baptized into his death,” pertains to one’s conformity to Christ’s death, which results in “death to sin” in the one baptized.⁸ What does it mean to be conformed to Christ’s death? Aquinas provides two possible interpretations. One is that being configured into the likeness of Christ’s death means that the baptized “re-present” the death of Christ in their own lives, which is similarly taught in 2 Corinthians 4:10, “Always carrying the death of Jesus Christ in our bodies” and Galatians 6:17, “I bear the marks [*stigmata*] of Christ in my body.” Another interpretation sees the death of Christ as the causal source by which the baptismal waters obtain their sacramental efficacy in order to effect death to sin in the one

⁶ For more on the flesh/spirit distinction in Calvin, see Margaret Miles, “Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body in Calvin’s ‘Institutes of the Christian Religion,’” *The Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981): 303–23.

⁷ For an analysis of Aquinas’s interpretation of 6:3–5 that traces the import of his exegesis throughout his *Summa theologiae*, see Bernard Blankenhorn, OP, “The Place of Romans 6 in Aquinas’s Doctrine of Sacramental Causality: A Balance of History and Metaphysics,” in *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life: Essays in Honor of Romanus Cessario*, OP, ed. Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America, 2010), 136–49.

⁸ A question arises for Aquinas when reasoning through the nature of Christ’s own death and its relation to the believer’s “death to sin”: if Christ did not die because he had sin—1 Peter 2:22 states that he had no sin—what is the connection between his death and the believer’s “death to sin”? Aquinas states that Christ died with respect to his mortal life not because there was actual sin present but rather because of a *similitudo* to the presence of sin (§473). Commenting on 6:10, “he died to sin,” Aquinas explains that Christ possessed a *similitudo carnis peccati* (“a likeness of sinful flesh”) in that he suffered and was mortal (§489). For a lengthier reflection on Christ’s *similitudo carnis peccati*, see Aquinas’s commentary on Romans 8:3 (§608).

baptized. Either way, Aquinas asserts that baptism into Christ Jesus affects within the baptized a form of death, which Paul further proves at 6:4, "We were buried together with him by baptism into death."⁹ Through the sacramental waters of baptism, the baptized receive "into themselves" the sign of Christ's death that produces an inward death to sin (§475).

It should not go without notice that with Aquinas's claim that Christ's death causes the baptismal waters to have their sacramental power, we encounter a potential difference in Aquinas's and Calvin's sacramental theology of baptism. Although unstated, Calvin's engagement with baptism in Romans 6:4 clearly has two interlocutors in mind. First, Calvin seeks to contradict the teaching of the "Papists" who grant sacramental efficacy to the baptismal waters themselves *rather than* rooting the efficacy of baptism in the faith of the one baptized. In the "Papist" view, the baptismal waters take on a power to save in a manner unrelated to the personal faith of the baptized. Calvin grants that at 6:4 Paul employs his "usual manner" of speaking and "connects the reality [*substantiam*] and effects with the outward sign." But one must consider Paul's audience, which is comprised of believers (122.82–83). The efficacy of the sacrament, emphasizes Calvin, rests in faith. Calvin states: "Whatever the Lord offers by the visible symbol is confirmed [*sancire*] and reckoned [*reri*] by their faith" (122.83–84). Paul's baptismal teaching is only maintained where "the institution of the Lord and the faith of believers correspond" (122.87–88). Does Calvin's critique of the "Papists" find a target in Aquinas's position? In the *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas addresses the issue of whether faith is required on the part of the one baptized. Aquinas employs the distinction between baptism's "character" and baptism's "grace." Aquinas grants that baptism still produces its character in the unbeliever while rejecting that the unbeliever receives its grace.¹⁰ In other words, baptism does *not* in and of itself bring the one baptized into a state of grace. Faith is necessary for baptism to enable the sinner to have "peace with God" (Romans 5:1). At the same time, Aquinas does not want to reduce the efficacy of baptism to the faith of the one baptized; rather, he believes that the waters themselves participate in the

⁹ Aquinas enters into a minor digression on the ritual character of baptism in order to demonstrate how the whole liturgical rite of baptism reflects Christ's burial (§474); see *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 1, ad. 2.

¹⁰ Aquinas, *ST* III, q. 68, a. 8.

causal activity of God purifying the one baptized. Aquinas is aware that if baptism reflects burial, baptism should be understood to *follow* “death to sin” rather than causing that death. Yet the New Testament sacraments not only signify a reality but also “bring about [*efficit*]” what they signify. Thus, although it is true that in the natural order death precedes burial, “in the spiritual order the burial of baptism *causes* the death of sin” (§475). The sign of baptism, which signifies a death burial, causes ontologically the very death in the person baptized that it signifies.

Second, Calvin’s engagement with Romans 6:4 targets the Anabaptists who empty the efficacy of baptism by reducing it to a “naked” symbol.¹¹ Calvin emphasizes that when faith is indeed present, the reality is present with the sign. For Calvin, Paul teaches that the sacrament of baptism brings believers into a real participation in Christ, so that in the sacrament sign and reality are conjoined. Therefore, “we never have naked [*nuda*] and empty [*inania*] symbols” (122.88). The weight Calvin places on the role of sacraments for participating in Christ’s work of salvation is often lost on theologians who shift Calvin’s application of *sola fide* away from addressing merit as the basis for justification and instead direct it toward baptism, thus placing a deeper wedge between justification by faith and the role of the sacraments in justification not found in Calvin himself.¹² While the waters of baptism have a less participatory role to play in God’s work of salvation than found in Aquinas, they have a greater participatory role than in many later followers of Calvin’s thought.

PROGRESS IN DEATH TO SIN THROUGH LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

We find, then, that for both Aquinas and Calvin baptismal “death to sin” forms the foundation of the Christian’s life in the Spirit by

¹¹ For more on Calvin’s engagement with the Anabaptists and their teaching on baptism, see Calvin, *Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines*, trans. and ed. Benjamin Wirt Farley (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1982), 44–55.

¹² See R. C. Sproul, *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 75, 122f. Lane rightly notes that the phrase *sola fide* was directed against works and not against baptism (*Justification by Faith*, 186).

bringing one into a participatory relationship with Christ through the Spirit. Aquinas and Calvin agree that this participatory relationship to Christ through the Spirit continues throughout the believer's life as he or she makes progress in growing into the likeness of Christ. But when we turn to consider the ongoing dimensions of life in the Spirit, noticeable differences arise in their commentaries. Once again, many of these differences reflect Calvin's emphasis on Christ's work *for* and *to* the sinner, while Aquinas emphasizes Christ's work *in* and *through* the sinner.

For Calvin, while the believer "puts on" Christ in baptism and has his or her sins "washed away," participation in Christ continues, and only continues, stresses Calvin, "when Christ's death produces its fruit in us" (121.56–57). Calvin connects the "fruit" produced in the Christian life to the "second principle" of Paul's teaching in 6:1–23, namely, that believers "grow up into the body of Christ [*in Christi corpus vere coalescere*]." Commenting on 6:4b, "As Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in newness of life," Calvin states that Christ's resurrection "restores our justice and makes us new creatures" (121.68). Commenting on 6:5b, "We shall participate in the likeness of his resurrection,"¹³ Calvin explains that believers progress in putting to death the old man—they progress in sanctification—through their ongoing participation ("spiritual engrafting" [123.31]) in Christ. This spiritual grafting is not like the grafting of trees, since in grafting trees the graft draws from the root into which it is grafted but the graft itself and its fruit retain their own "natural quality [*nativa proprietas*]" (123.32–33). In spiritual grafting, however, the believer not only draws life's "strength and sap" from Christ, but the believer "migrates [*demigrare*]" from his or her nature into Christ's nature (123.33–35).¹⁴ Participation in Christ's resurrection renews in the believer the "better nature of the Spirit [*meliores spiritus naturam*]" (123.37–38).¹⁵

¹³ Calvin's text has *resurrectionis participes erimus*, while Aquinas's text is void of *participes*.

¹⁴ Commenting on 6:11, "We live unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord [*in Christo Jesu Domino nostro*]," Calvin emphasizes the participatory nature of our union with Christ to the extent of refuting Erasmus's rendering of 6:11 as *per Christum* rather than *in Christo*. Calvin believes *per Christum* doesn't go far enough in asserting the engrafting by which "we are made one with Christ" (127.58–60).

¹⁵ There has been considerable debate surrounding the meaning and role of "divinization" or "deification" in Calvin's theology. For a positive assessment, see Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*, 236–7; Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Naples, FL: Sapientia Press, 2007), 15, 37, 119. For a negative assessment, see Fraçois Wendel,

The above comments seem deeply participatory, and indeed they are. Again, I have argued that Calvin is not void of a participatory soteriology, and as Billings rightly observes, Calvin puts his vision for soteriological participation on display in Romans 6. At the same time, a careful reading of Calvin's comments on 6:4 and 6:5 reveals how Calvin subtly emphasizes *solely* the work of Christ *upon* the soul of the believer rather than incorporating the believer's works as a cooperation with God's work of sanctification. Note how Calvin interprets the above passages in terms of what Christ does *to* us. For Calvin, Christ's resurrection "restores our justice and makes us new creatures" (121.68). Conformity to Christ's resurrection occurs through Christ's "reviving us by His Spirit and transferring His power in us" (122.5–6). Christ's resurrection has the effect of renewing in the believer the "better nature of the Spirit" (123.37–38). In Calvin's reading, absent is the notion that the believer's actual activity of leading a blameless life is an *intrinsic* aspect to—rather than merely an effect of—God's work of transforming the soul. For Calvin, good works are understood as the *effect* of God's prior work of transforming the soul rather than good works as an intrinsic part of that transformation. I am not claiming that Calvin has a deeply competitive-causal understanding of the relationship between divine and human willing. For Calvin, it is not that God acts and then human beings act *autonomously* from God's causal activity, or that whenever human beings are acting God is not somehow simultaneously acting.¹⁶ Nevertheless, when addressing the relationship between sanctification and human activity, Calvin displays his tendencies toward a univocal conception of divine and human activity by couching God's work of sanctification as being prior (both in time and effect) to the actual execution of a good work, resulting in an interpretation of Romans 6 that emphasizes Christ's work for and to the believer but does not incorporate the believer's actual activity of performing good works as intrinsic to what it means for God to "sanctify" the soul.

Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), 235; Charles Partee, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 177–8; Jonathan Slater, "Salvation as Participation in the Humanity of the Mediator in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*: a Reply to Carl Mosser," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005): 39–58. For a mediating position, see Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 54–61.

¹⁶ See Raith, "Calvin's Critique of Merit," 141–4.

Aquinas, however, by employing an analogical understanding of divine and human activity, is able to distinguish two ways a *single* act can be considered in terms of its “source.” I will address this point at greater length in this chapter when addressing Romans 6:23. Suffice it is say for now that Aquinas maintains that God is indeed the “first” cause of our good works, while we are “subsequent” causes. But with an analogical (rather than univocal) understanding of divine and human activity, God being “first” cause and humans being “subsequent” causes does not equate to claiming that the effect of God’s work is *first* the soul’s transformation that *then* leads to human beings performing good works. Rather, God’s work of transforming the soul is manifest in time and space *as* human beings performing good works. Aquinas, then, while commenting on 6:4b, “so also we might walk in newness of life,” and 6:5b, “we shall be in the likeness of his resurrection,” makes human activity *intrinsic* to what it means for God to sanctify the soul. Aquinas claims that there is a *similitudo* between “walking in newness of life” and Christ’s resurrection, a *similitudo* rooted in the concept of “restoration” (§476). Aquinas explains that the life of sin carries with it “weakness” and “dissolution.” But the life without sin—the life in *similitudo* to Christ’s restored, resurrected life—carries newness and restoration. While conformity to Christ’s death occurred through baptism, conformity to Christ’s resurrection occurs “*through* blamelessness of life [*per innocentiam vitae*]” (§477). It occurs when the believer “advances in the spiritual life *through* good works” (§476). Part of what informs Aquinas’s connection between “blamelessness of life” and “advancing in the spiritual life through good works” is the relationship between acts and habits. For Aquinas, not only do good works flow from one’s inner transformation, but good works also deepen one’s inner transformation. Believer’s become conformed to Christ and progress in “restoration” through the actual practice of good works (§476).¹⁷

Aquinas, as we see, interprets 6:4–5 with an eye toward the believer’s participation in and cooperative contribution to God’s transformation of their soul. The claim here is not that Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations are *de facto* in conflict. But they do reflect different

¹⁷ It must be added, however, that with regard to the theological virtues, growth in virtue occurs not by performing a graced work but rather by God’s gift of further grace; the performance of a graced work only disposes the individual for receiving further grace. See Wawrykow, *God’s Grace & Human Action*, 225.

theological perspectives brought by each interpreter to the task of unpacking Paul's discourse on the Spirit's transformation of the soul. For Calvin, God sanctifies the soul and therefore we live upright lives. For Aquinas, God sanctifies the soul through our living upright lives. Their different interpretations will have important consequences for their understanding of the place of merit in the Christian life, as we shall soon see.

ANALYZING TRANSFORMATION: THE OLD MAN AND THE BODY OF SIN

To understand further the effects of being engrafted into the death of Christ and the Christian life resulting from it, I turn to Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of the descriptions "old man" (6:6), "body of sin" (6:6), "mortal body" (6:12), and sin's "reign" (6:12).¹⁸ For Aquinas, the description of "old" denotes the effects of sin on human nature insofar as the goodness of human nature has been corrupted by sin (§479).¹⁹ The term "old" properly describes human nature, claims Aquinas, since human nature's subjection to sin is the "principal" character of human beings (§479). What does Aquinas mean that human nature is *subjected* to sin? Aquinas explains subjection using four categories: (1) the debt (*reatus*) of punishment;²⁰ (2) the stain (*macula*) of actual sins, including original sin;²¹ (3) the habit (*consuetudo*) of sinning, which causes a certain "necessity" to commit sin;²² and (4) the *fomes*, which correspond to disordered inclinations of the lower appetites (§480).²³ When these realities are present,

¹⁸ What follows in this chapter sets the stage for a more thorough treatment of these topics in the following chapter.

¹⁹ For more on the effects of sin on human nature, see *ST* I-II, q. 85, a. 1.

²⁰ See *ST* I-II, q. 87, a. 1.

²¹ See *ST* I-II, q. 86, a. 1, where Aquinas metaphorically likens the stain of sin to the loss of "splendor [*nitor*]" of the soul that results from the soul's "contact" with things that are against the light of reason and of the divine law. This contact occurs on account of the soul's "cleaving [*inhaerere*]" to these objects.

²² Aquinas explains in *ST* I-II, q. 85, a. 1 that human nature is "by nature" inclined to virtue, but sin diminishes this inclination by drawing nature away and inclining it toward the contrary, that is, to evil, although sin never totally eradicates the natural inclination to virtue (*ST* I-II, q. 85, a. 2, ad. 3).

²³ Aquinas claims in *ST* I-II, q. 75, a. 2 that external objects proposed to the sensible appetites move the sensible appetites but not necessarily, "except perhaps it be

human nature lives in subjection to sin, constituting the person as “old” and necessitating a life lived toward dissolution. Those baptized, however, claims Aquinas, have received the benefit of having their “old man” put to death, since the baptized have been “crucified with him” (6:6a) through baptism.²⁴ Aquinas navigates through the above fourfold schema in an attempt to account for both the real change that has occurred through baptism and the remaining effects of sin that have yet to be healed. Here we begin to see Aquinas’s interpretation of the “Christian struggle.” According to Aquinas, being “crucified with Christ” results in certain aspects of the old nature being entirely removed while other aspects have their “power diminished” (§480). The two aspects that have been entirely removed are the debt and stain of sin; the two that have had their power diminished are the habit of sinning and the *fomes*.²⁵ For Aquinas, the “body of sin” (6:6b) denotes the “accumulation” of evil deeds. Aquinas draws a parallel between the natural body, which is made of the “accumulation” of members, and the “body of sin,” which is made of the “accumulation” of evil deeds.²⁶ This “body of sin” is “destroyed.” That is, the baptized person is “justified from sin” (6:7) in terms of having sin forgiven and receiving transformation that places the sinner in a state of justness, thus being no longer enslaved to sin. Aquinas supports

disposed thereto in a certain way.” The *fomes* dispose the lower appetites to seek external objects in a disordered way, ultimately resulting in a sinful action if reason does not propose the due rule to the will in order to prevent the will from following the disorder desires. See Karlfried Froehlich, “Justification Language and Grace: The Change of Pelagianism in the Middle Ages,” in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. Elsie Anne McKee and Brian Armstrong (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1989), 26, who claims the origin of *fomes peccati* goes back at least to Rufinus’s translation of Origen’s *Homilies on the Book of Numbers*, while similar combinations such as *fomes peccandi* or *libidinis fomes* occur even earlier in Cyprian, Ambrose, and Ambrosiaster.

²⁴ Aquinas connects the efficacy of the cross of Christ and the efficacy of baptism through the fundamental belief that the entire efficacy of the sacraments of the New Law is derived from the passion of Christ (see ST III, q. 64, a. 5).

²⁵ In the following chapter on 7:14–25, I will address in greater detail the effect of having the “stain” of sin removed and the habit of sinning and *fomes* reduced in power. The result of the healing work of grace on the soul, as we shall see, enables the believer, who still struggles with the *fomes*, to perform an act that is intrinsically and fully good, albeit not perfect.

²⁶ Recognizing he has provided an interpretive definition of the theological phrase “body of sin” in 6:6 using a description of the natural body, Aquinas, as is his custom in these situations, points to another scriptural passage—Job 41:6, “His body is like molten shields...” (*corpus eius quasi scuta fusilia*, etc.)—to support his description (§481).

this explanation with 1 Corinthians 6:11, “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified” (§483). The baptized no longer obey the remaining attraction to sin that arises due to the habit of sinning and *fomes*. Rather, believers “beware” future sin (§481) and avoid committing it.²⁷

On account of one’s justification (as Aquinas understands it), Paul can claim that sin no longer “reigns” in the baptized believer’s “mortal body” (6:12). The transforming reality of justification has freed the sinner from being enslaved to sin. Aquinas’s interpretation of the notion of “reign” focuses on the relationship between the internal corrupt desires that arise from the *fomes* and the corresponding reaction of the baptized Christian to these desires. Sin “reigns” when either (a) the individual gives the internal consent of the mind to the *fomes*, or, worse, (b) the individual actually performs an act corresponding to the corrupt desires of the *fomes* (§494).²⁸ The baptized Christian, however, is able to keep both the mind from consenting to these desires and the “members” (6:13b) from committing outward acts that result from yielding to these desires. Aquinas’s use of the acts–habits paradigm underlies his interpretation. Instead of committing acts of sin, i.e. yielding one’s “members” as “instruments of wickedness” (6:13a), which produces the habit of sin, the baptized Christian performs good works, i.e. yields his or her “members” as “instruments of justice” (6:13b), which furthers the habit of justice. In doing good works, the baptized Christian is no longer led to death (6:16b) but rather to justice (6:13b). The notion that good works “lead to justice” brings us to the heart of Aquinas’s understanding of Christian sanctification. As Aquinas states, “Through the habit of obeying, the mind is inclined more and more to obeying and as a result achieves holiness” (§501). Good works not only result from being justified, but they also contribute to our increase in justification, that is, our increase in becoming holy people.

Due to the transformation that is “to be justified from sin” (6:7), sin “will no longer have dominion” over the baptized Christian (6:14a), since through justification he or she can “resist sin and yield to God” (§496). This is possible because the baptized Christian lives the “life

²⁷ Technically, they are able to avoid mortal sin but not all venial sin. This crucial distinction will surface prominently in the next chapter.

²⁸ Aquinas’s equation of consent and action to slavery to sin is taken from John 8:34, “Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin” (§481).

of grace," having been freed by Christ from sin's dominion (§495). It is important to note that Aquinas holds out the possibility that the justified Christian may "fall" from the freedom obtained in Christ that leads to eternal glory and once again come under the "slavery of sin" (6:16) that leads to eternal damnation (§501). Thus for Aquinas, Paul's response (6:16–18) to his question at 6:15, "Are we to continue to sin?" is not merely a discourse on the objective facts of our baptized transformation in Christ that simply describes the truth that the one justified will not come under the slavery of sin again. Instead, for Aquinas, Paul's response demonstrates that the justified Christian may indeed be removed from the inheritance of eternal glory if he or she obeys the desires of the flesh.

When we turn to Calvin, we discover a much different interpretation rooted in a different conception of justification and a different understanding of the Spirit's transformation on the baptized believer. A noticeable difference in Calvin's interpretation when compared to Aquinas's is that Calvin uses sweeping generalizations to describe the effects of sin on human nature and the healing work of the Spirit. Calvin states that the "old man" includes "the whole nature which we bring from the womb" (123.40–124.43). Human beings are called a "body of sin" in that human nature is a "mass of sin" (124.50–51). When Paul speaks of the "mortal body," Calvin asserts that the phrase refers to "the whole body of man's existence" that "extends also to the soul" (128.72–75). For Calvin, the "sin" of 6:12, "Do not let sin reign," is the original depravity of the soul (*animus*), which "impels [*impellit*]" a person to sin, and from which all evil and wickedness flow (128.86–87); the soul uses the "inordinate desires" (*concupiscentiae*) as its edicts and commands (128.89). The "members" merely serve as potential instruments of the soul for accomplishing injustice. Commenting on 6:13, "Nor present your members to sin as instruments of injustice," Calvin highlights the role of the soul in sinning and states that when sin occupies dominion (*regnum*) in the soul, all the other parts follow suit and serve sin (128.90–92). Calvin goes further and describes the individual in bondage to sin as "nothing but earthly" (128.78), that "in our present state our souls are fixed to the earth, and so enslaved [*addicatas*] to our bodies that they have fallen from their excellence" (128.81–82). Human nature is now rightly termed "bodily" (i.e. "mortal body" [6:12]) since it has been "deprived of heavenly grace" and has become "only a kind of deceptive shadow or image [*fallax tantum umbra, vel imago*]" (128.83–84).²⁹

²⁹ See Miles, "Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body," 312–13, on the various uses of "nature" in Calvin.

Paul states in contrast to the “natural” state of humanity that believers have been “justified from sin” (6:7). With this verse, Calvin begins to make some interesting exegetical moves. The verse seems to appear within the context of the believer’s *transformation*; Paul explains the life freed from the servitude of sin by noting the fact that believers have been “justified.” As we have seen in previous chapters, however, Calvin understands justification as a distinct reality from transformation (i.e. sanctification); justification is itself non-transforming. How does Calvin address 6:7, then? Calvin’s key interpretive move is to generalize the term “justified” to refer simply to being “freed and vindicated from servitude” (124.70). Paul is therefore not referring to justification proper—the topic he has been addressing up to Romans 6, as Calvin affirms. Here at 6:7, to be “justified from sin” simply means to be freed of sin’s servitude. How is one freed from sin’s bondage? For Calvin, this occurs through the gift of *sanctification* that comes via union with the death of Christ. Paul’s description of being “justified from sin” and its effects thus falls under the distinct category of sanctification *and not* justification.

Be that as it may, what does it mean to be “freed” from the bondage of sin? On the one hand, Calvin believes that no one is fully “justified from sin,” since every human being continues to wrestle with the flesh; release from sin’s bondage is gradual (124.73–76) and only death itself releases one fully from its bondage. On the other hand, Calvin wants to affirm the real transformation that has taken place in the soul of the believer on account of his or her union with Christ. Here we find Calvin’s understanding of the “Christian struggle.” For Calvin, the one who has been engrafted into Christ “migrates” from his or her nature into Christ’s (123.34–35). Calvin puts a heavy emphasis on the progressive nature of the engrafted believer’s delivery from the “old man”; nothing is “entirely” taken away, but all things are progressively moving toward full conformity to Christ. He explains that it is not as if the individuals “at once cease to sin altogether” (124.54–55), but rather the mortification of the old man “progresses gradually, and by daily increments gradually proceeds to the end” (124.76–78). There remain “traces of the flesh” that still exist in those united to Christ. But alongside these traces exists the realm of the soul that has been “taken control of” by the Holy Spirit (125.82–83).³⁰ The believer’s “spiritual newness, which is divine,” will continue to increase and last

³⁰ Calvin’s view of the divine–human relationship in human willing is spelled out further throughout his *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will*. For a comparison

perpetually (i.e. “alive unto God in Christ Jesus” [6:11]) (127.48–49). The result is that the baptized individual lives as a divided self, experiencing the “Christian struggle” between the renewed, divinized part of the soul and the part still earthly, human, and fallen. The believer still sins, but sin no longer has “dominion” (6:12) over the believer. Sin no longer “reigns.” Calvin does not engage the notion of “reign” in terms of the dynamic between the mind and the *fomes* but rather more generally (and therefore less precisely) in terms of sin’s “power” in the soul and the overall direction of an individual’s life, whether away from sin or toward sin. The baptized believer is progressively moving away from sin since Christ has “annihilated” sin’s “power and authority,” although “traces of the flesh” remain in the believer (126.15–16). Interestingly, Calvin does state that because the “former life has been destroyed” through baptism, the believer “restrains” the mind and heart from being led by the “cupidity of the flesh” (129.5–6), which sounds strikingly similar to Aquinas’s mind-*fomes* dynamic.³¹ The general point for Calvin, however, is that the “power of sanctification” is greater than whatever remaining power exists of sin.

What we find, then, is that Aquinas fully agrees with Calvin that apart from grace human nature is totally corrupted, if by that one means that all parts of human nature—reason, will, and sense appetites—are the subject of sin and need the healing work of God’s grace.³² The difference between Aquinas and Calvin lies in their articulation of the healing work of Christ’s grace on the old man. Aquinas believes that both the debt and “stain [*macula*]” of sin are totally removed through union with Christ, while Calvin argues for the removal of the debt but only the partial and ongoing removal of the *macula*.³³ For Aquinas, the removal of the debt in justification is itself simultaneous with the transformation of the individual into a state of justness; the total remission of sin’s debt and the total removal of sin’s *macula* occur in tandem. One cannot be justified without being just, and being just means removing sin in the soul (“justified from sin” [6:7]).

between Aquinas and Calvin on this point, see Raith II, “Calvin’s Critique of Merit,” 135–66.

³¹ I take up this point in the next chapter.

³² See ST I-II, q. 74.

³³ While Calvin does not use the language of *macula*, his argument for the partial and ever-increasing healing of the Spirit on the soul corresponds to the notion of remaining stain. Calvin does use the term *macula* in this connection at 7:19b (151.23–25).

For Calvin, on the other hand, justification is the forgiveness of sins and imputation of Christ's justice. Calvin can conceive of the believer having the debt of sin totally removed, as with Aquinas, without also claiming that the believer has been transformed into a state of justice, having the *macula* removed. Calvin therefore maintains a partial transformation occurring through union with Christ; the Spirit takes control of a part of the soul. The result is that the believer is still not just *in se* and his or her works are still condemnable *in se* but sin no longer "reigns."

OBEDIENCE LEADS TO JUSTICE?

After establishing that believers are no longer "slaves" of sin, we turn to Paul's claim that believers are instead "slaves to obedience leading to justice" (6:16). We can anticipate that the connection between being obedient and obtaining justice might create problems for Calvin. On the one hand, if "justice" is taken as a reference to justification proper, we have seen that Calvin rejects any import of works into justification, given that justification is separate from transformation and consists of Christ's perfect justice imputed as "covering." Obedience, then, cannot in any sense be seen as leading to justification. On the other hand, if "justice" refers to the transformation occurring through the second of the twofold gifts (i.e. sanctification),³⁴ we have seen that Calvin's model of sanctification posits that the transformation by the Spirit *precedes* the doing of good works rather than the performance of good works *participating* in the transformation process itself. This model of sanctification makes it difficult to see how obedience could *lead* to justice. And indeed, Calvin's interpretative maneuvering reflects the difficulties he faces with this verse.

First, Calvin employs a rhetorical critique of the passage and claims that Paul spoke "improperly" (131.91–92). This is not the equivalent of speaking erroneously—that Paul taught something that is not true. Rather, to speak "improperly" is a critique of the way something is

³⁴ The would be the second justice in Calvin's "double justification" theory; see Cornelius P. Venema, *Accepted and Renewed in Christ: The "Twofold Grace of God" and the Interpretation of Calvin's Theology* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 163–70.

expressed; Paul did not speak as precisely as he could when he spoke of “obedience leading to justice.” Calvin then provides the “proper” statement. Rather than contrasting “sin unto death” with “obedience unto justice,” as Paul had done, the proper contrast, according to Calvin, is between “sin unto death” and “justice unto life.” The difference is that while Paul connects obedience to justice, Calvin’s gloss connects justice to “life.” The proper contrast becomes: The presence of sin results in death, but the presence of justice, that is, the imputed justice of Christ, results in life. Calvin thus removes the role of obedience from the contrast. Lastly, after setting forth the “proper” contrast, Calvin reintroduces obedience but only as a “proof” that a person is justified rather than as a causal principle of creating justice.³⁵ This fits Calvin’s general theology that while justification is never without sanctification, justification is not sanctification—wholly absent from justification is the believer’s life of obedience—with sanctification being a form of confirmation of one’s justification.

Aquinas, on the other hand, has little trouble with the verse, since justification is a transforming reality in which works enable the just person to increase in his or her justice. When commenting on 6:16, Aquinas states, “Through the habit of obeying, the mind is inclined more and more to obeying and as a result achieves holiness” (§501). Virtuous acts not only flow from the virtues but also work to deepen one’s participation in those virtues; as a person in faith acts on their faith, his or her reason, when grace is received, increases in its participation in faith, thus enabling the believer to act in even more faithful ways. Since justification is a transforming reality, Aquinas affirms that a believer advances in justification through good works, i.e. advances in conformity to Christ.³⁶

THE ONGOING STATE OF IMPERFECTION

Much of what drives Calvin’s interpretation of Romans 6 is the desire to make room for the ongoing and ever-increasing nature of one’s

³⁵ The notion of obedience as merely a “proof” of justification will deeply hinder, I argue, Calvin’s engagement with Romans 8.

³⁶ Aquinas posits his position without suggesting that good works are a causal principle of possessing the justice that justifies before God, or that the believer is striving to establish peace with God; see Chapter 1.

conformity to Christ. As he bluntly states, “We do not stop sinning all at once.” Calvin is sensitive to the “Christian struggle” and believes that in order to make sense of it, one must maintain a partial healing resulting from the sanctifying work of the Spirit.³⁷ To provide some context, Calvin’s emphasis on the partial healing of sanctification does not have the “Papists” primarily in mind but rather the “spiritualists” or “Libertines” who posit a form of perfectionism in this life. Calvin’s issue with the Roman Church, as we shall see in the next chapter, is not that it failed to recognize the ongoing imperfection of the believer but that it did not take the imperfection seriously enough.³⁸ But Aquinas is as desirous as Calvin to do justice to the partial healing that occurs in this life. Where their accounts part ways is in how they describe the remaining imperfection: Calvin splits the believer into two parts, healed and not healed, which results in the believer still being condemnable *in se*, producing works condemnable *in se* but pardoned and accepted *in Christo*, while Aquinas affirms both a total *and* a progressive interpretation of Christian healing that does not require the dichotomy between *in se* and *in Christo* found in Calvin. By distinguishing between the sense appetites and the mind, Aquinas affirms both the total removal of the *macula* of sin on the soul through the gifts of faith, hope, and love while maintaining the presence (although lessened in power) of the habit of sin and the *fomes* in the sense appetites. The virtues of faith, hope, and love are themselves truly and fully present in the baptized believer, but the baptized believer must progress in giving himself or herself over to these virtues as he or she struggles with the remaining flesh. This is part of the ongoing “life of grace” through which the believer is strengthened in virtue. The believer can produce a work that is truly, meritoriously good, even while noting the presence of their disordered appetites in the flesh and affirming that baptized believers in the justified state still sin. In order to understand more fully how Calvin’s account of sanctification and Aquinas’s account of transformation lead to different judgments regarding the state of the believer *in se* and the status of his or her works, attention must be given to Aquinas’s division between venial and mortal sin (and Calvin’s rejection of this division), the effects of

³⁷ Because the healing is only partial, however, the works that follow are only partially good (a point I will address in greater length in the next chapter).

³⁸ H. J. Selderhuis, Henry J. Baron, and Judith J. Guder, eds., *The Calvin Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 158–9.

the presence of concupiscence on the goodness of the “good work,” and the notion of “perfection,” all issues which I address in the following chapter.

THE “GRACE” OF ETERNAL LIFE AND THE PLACE OF MERIT

Paul’s claim at 6:23, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life,”³⁹ brings us to one of the central concerns of Calvin’s commentary: merit. Since both Calvin and Aquinas interpret 6:23 as having implications for the topic of merit, this is a fitting place to discuss the topic at greater length. To understand Calvin’s interpretation of 6:23, it is helpful to turn briefly to Calvin’s comments on 6:22b, “Having our fruit in sanctification; the end [*finis*], eternal life.” Calvin reads this passage as addressing the “end” of justification. For Calvin, Paul sets forth a twofold end to Christ’s imputed justice. First, justification occurs so that “present fruit” may be gathered, that is, that sanctification may take place. Calvin’s claim that sanctification is an “end” of justification should not pass without comment. When consideration is given to the whole of Calvin’s works, one discovers that Calvin clearly desires to lay stress not on justification and its various conceptions (e.g. juridical, imputed), as important as those topics may be. Rather, Calvin’s emphasis is on sanctification. Here he calls sanctification the “end” of justification; elsewhere sanctification is called the “goal [*scopum*]” of God’s calling.⁴⁰ Calvin believes that the *purpose* of the Gospel is “to make us sooner or later like [*conformes*] God; indeed it is, so to speak, a kind of deification [*quasi deificari*].”⁴¹ While the phrase *simul iustus et peccator* has received the most attention in historical studies on the Reformation era, the reality of *simul iustificatus et sanctificatus* is equally if not more important for

³⁹ There is a textual difference between Aquinas and Calvin at 6:23. Aquinas’s text reads, *Gratia autem Dei, vita aeterna in Christo Iesu Domino nostro*, while Calvin’s text reads, *Donum vero Dei, vita aeterna, in Christo Iesu Domino nostro*. However, the substance of the text, namely, that eternal life is a gift, remains the same for both.

⁴⁰ CO 50.308.

⁴¹ CO 55.446, cited in Carl Mosser, “The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55 (2002): 41.

Calvin.⁴² Appreciating Calvin's emphasis on sanctification serves two functions for accurately understanding Calvin's theology: first, it corrects common misperceptions that the doctrine of justification drives Calvin's reflections. While the doctrine indeed receives abundant attention from Calvin—and this due primarily to Reformation-era polemics—Calvin's vision for the Christian religion does not rest on the external imputation of Christ's justice but rather on the believer's progressive conformity to Christ through the indwelling of the Spirit. Second, because of the importance of transformation in Calvin's thought, Calvin's broader theological vision is deeply participatory, even though, as I argue, he limits his participatory vision at crucial moments in his scriptural reflection. But pushing Calvin in a deeper participatory direction is neither a revision of Calvin's thinking nor the addition of a foreign concept to his theology.

While the first "end" of justification is sanctification, the second "end" of justification is that believers hope for eternal life in the future (135.23–24). Believers look forward to the final judgment with hope, being certain that Christ's grace will enable them to enter into God's eternal dwelling. With these "ends" of justification in mind, a question naturally arises: What is the relationship between the two ends, that is, between gathering present fruit in sanctification and obtaining eternal life in the future? Does the obtainment of eternal life depend in any way on the gathering of present fruit? Asked another way: Do believers *merit* eternal life? This brings us to 6:23, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Calvin's interpretation of 6:23 emphasizes the discontinuity between the two phrases "wages of sin" and "gift of God." He claims that although death is rightly "paid out" for sin—death is a "sufficiently adequate recompense" for the wicked (135.35–36)—eternal life is not called a "tribute [*tributum*]" but a "gift" (135.29). Properly speaking for Calvin, the "gift of God" in 6:23 is not eternal life itself. Rather, the "gift of God" is what "brings [*afferat*]" the believer the beatitude of eternal life (136.43–44). What gift brings the believer to eternal life? It is the *duplex gratia* of justification and sanctification. But if sanctification is part of what brings the believer

⁴² A. N. S. Lane comments: "Justification by faith has never received in the Reformed tradition the same exclusive prominence that it has often had within Lutheranism. Reformed theology has always been keener to stress sanctification than Lutheran theology" (*Justification by Faith*, 142; cf. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 2:39). On this account, Lane elsewhere notes: "It is perhaps significant, therefore, that Calvin never used the formula [*simul iustus et peccator*]" (171 n. 139).

to eternal life, does this not mean that works are necessary for obtaining eternal life? For Calvin, the answer is yes and no.

The key to understanding Calvin's engagement with 6:23 is to recall that Calvin's polemics against the schoolmen are not directed at the place of good works per se in the Christian life but rather at the notion of merit. Thus, Calvin's engagement with 6:23 focuses on the *unmerited* nature of eternal life; he does not advocate that works have no role to play in obtaining eternal life. Calvin connects the unmerited reception of the twofold gift of justification and sanctification—these are received by faith and not by merit—with eternal life to argue that it, too, is an unmerited gift. Since eternal life is “restored [*resituit*]” through the gift of justice (136.44–46), eternal life must be as much an unmerited reality as are the gifts of justification and sanctification. Lest his reader miss the point, Calvin continues by noting that Paul could have balanced 6:23a, “The wages of sin is death,” with the statement “The wages of justice is eternal life.” But Paul did not. Instead, Paul contrasts the wages of sin with the *donum Dei*, and for Calvin, if eternal life is obtained through the *donum* of God, it is therefore obtained *non meritum nostrum* (“not by our merit”) (136.49–50). Paul adds the phrase “in Christ Jesus” (6:23b) so that believers might be “called away” from a consideration of *their own* dignity (136.53–54).⁴³ Since Calvin's concern is merit and not works per se, Calvin simultaneously holds a place for good works in obtaining eternal life. Calvin claims elsewhere that the promises set forth in the law—promises given to the “obedient”—are “paid [*rependere*]” to believers for their works.⁴⁴

But Calvin makes an important qualification of the claim that believers are “paid” for their works: they are paid only after their taint-*edness* is pardoned and God “raises” those works to a place of honor.⁴⁵ Here we find yet a third issue Calvin takes with the notion of merit, alongside merit being a causal basis of justification and merit being understood within a competitive-causal schema of human action. The third issue pertains to the *worth* of the believer's work. Although Calvin upholds a participatory noncompetitive-causal schema

⁴³ The notion of the believer's own dignity takes us back to the issue of competitive causality addressed in Chapter 2; see also Calvin, *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, 152, where Calvin makes clear that if merit is understood as the worth of the act itself, then our works are not meritorious. The believer's works must always have their imperfection pardoned in order to be worthy of reward.

⁴⁴ *Inst.* 3.17.3.

⁴⁵ *Inst.* 3.17.3.

between divine and human willing, such that “we will as he guides our heart, we endeavor as he rouses us, we succeed in our endeavor as he gives us strength, so that we are animate and living tools, while he is the leader and the finisher of the work,”⁴⁶ he maintains that the good work produced by the believer is still unworthy of the reward. Calvin’s dichotomy above between “gift” and “merit” hinges in large part on his desire to remove any notion of “justice” or “due” as it relates to our works and God’s rewards. When Calvin seeks to turn his readers’ eyes away from “their own dignity,” he is underscoring the unworthiness of our works for receiving a reward. The believer’s work is tainted and thereby does not truly fulfill the law, and therefore God must pardon the work before extending his rewards. The relationship between good works and obtaining eternal life is therefore best understood, claims Calvin, as being “more sequential than causal.”⁴⁷ In *Inst.* 3.18.1, Calvin states that God “leads believers into possession of eternal life through the grace of good works in order to fulfill his own work in them according to the order that he has laid down.” Works obtain salvation as “inferior causes.”⁴⁸ For Calvin, Romans 6:23 demonstrates God’s “order” of bringing believer’s into eternal life rather than a direct causal relationship between sanctification and obtaining eternal life. Within the order of God’s dispensation, good works are analogous to the steps taken to walk the path that leads home. Home is not your home because of the steps you take, but you cannot reach home without those steps. Because works play no direct causal role in obtaining eternal life, eternal life is a gift *rather than* an object of merit; it is given as a result of Christ’s work on behalf of sinners *rather than* as a result of the good works of believers. Calvin wants the causal basis of obtaining eternal life to rest in Christ’s work *rather than* in human action, in what Christ does for and to the believer *rather than* in what Christ does in and through the believer.

Turning to Aquinas, we find that Aquinas’s approach to 6:23 contains both similarities with and differences from Calvin’s account. Like Calvin, Aquinas maintains that eternal life is a gift of God. Unlike Calvin, Aquinas claims that eternal life is also an object of merit. The question is: How can eternal life be both a gift and an object of

⁴⁶ *BLW*, 3.318 (125).

⁴⁷ *Inst.* 3.18.1; see E. Disley, “Degrees of Glory: Protestant Doctrine and the Concept of Rewards Hereafter,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991): 99–100.

⁴⁸ *Inst.* 3.14.21.

merit—something Calvin denies is possible? Romans 6:23 appears prolifically in Aquinas's larger corpus, particularly when refuting the possibility of a purely natural attainment of beatitude, that is, obtaining beatitude apart from supernatural grace.⁴⁹ Aquinas uses the verse to argue that human beings need grace to fulfill God's commandments "in their due way," that is, the meritorious way of love.⁵⁰ For Aquinas, the law is fulfilled through charity, but this charity does not arise from human origins, nor can the law impart it; rather, charity is obtainable only by God's grace.⁵¹ Apart from grace, one is not only unable to obtain eternal life, but one cannot obtain merit whatsoever.⁵² Eternal life is a gift in that without God's merciful and unmerited gift of grace, eternal life would be unattainable.

Does this not mean, then, that eternal life is a free gift *and not* something earned through merit? Aquinas is aware of this difficulty. He in fact uses 6:23 in an objection to the assertion that eternal life an object of merit (ST I-II, q. 114, a. 3, obj. 2). The objection states: Romans 6:23 seems to teach that eternal life is not only unattainable apart from God's grace, but by the very fact that it is called a "gift" and not a "wage [*stipendium*]," it is not an object of merit whatsoever. Rather, it is obtained on account of God's mercy, and if it is by God's mercy, it is not something *condignly* received from merit.⁵³ This is strikingly similar to Calvin's argument.

Aquinas's response gets to the heart of his participatory vision of salvation. Aquinas distinguishes two ways a *single act* can be considered in terms of its "source": either as proceeding from the human free will or as proceeding from God's grace. By using this distinction, Aquinas affirms that eternal life is both an object of condign merit and a gift from God.⁵⁴ The notion of eternal life being an object of

⁴⁹ See ST I, q. 12, a. 4; I-II, q. 109, a. 5; q. 114, a. 2.

⁵⁰ ST I-II, q. 109, a. 5, ad. 2.

⁵¹ ST I-II, q. 98, a. 1; II-II, q. 24, a. 2.

⁵² Aquinas is clear that grace is needed not only for elevating human nature but also for forgiveness of one's sin. "No one existing in a state of mortal sin can merit eternal life unless first reconciled to God, through his sin being forgiven, which is brought about by grace" (ST I-II, q. 114, a. 2).

⁵³ Aquinas, rather than the scriptural gloss from which the objection is taken, invokes the notion of "condign" merit. This takes the objection in a more focused direction than the gloss, which merely states, "God leads us to life everlasting of His own mercy and not by our merits." This change reflects a development in how the topic of merit was understood and addressed from patristic to medieval eras.

⁵⁴ To be sure, the claim that good works are both meritorious and gifts seems unintelligible to some theologians; see D. Lange, *Outmoded Condemnations? Antithesis*

merit is for Aquinas a principle found in Scripture and held by subsequent commentators on Scripture. In the *Summa theologiae*, after asserting that eternal life is something owed as a debt, Aquinas quotes Romans 8:14 and 17, "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God... and if sons, then heirs."⁵⁵ In his Romans commentary, when asserting that eternal life is a reward for something due rather than merely a gift, Aquinas appeals to Isaiah 40:10, "Behold his reward is with him," and Matthew 20:2, "Did you not agree with me for a denarius?" (§329). For Aquinas, insofar as eternal life is obtained through acts proceeding from human free will, it is an object of human merit. But if a work proceeds *solely* from free will, that is, if the human will does not participate in the divine nature through God's grace, the work is not meritorious.⁵⁶ Eternal life is therefore a gift inasmuch as God's grace is necessary for obtaining it.

To be sure, God's grace and human willing are not equal causal participants. God's mercy, claims Aquinas, is the "first cause" of obtaining eternal life, while merit is the "subsequent cause."⁵⁷ It is truly the work of the one meriting, because the individual uses his or her own will in the act. But this meritorious movement occurs on account of God's movement in grace. In fact, the primacy of God's grace over human effort is such that Aquinas acknowledges that although it is true that the meritorious act in a sense "depends on man's will or exertion," it is "offensive to pious ears" to speak of the act in this way. Rather, the act should be considered according to the words of the Apostle at Romans 9:16, "It does not depend on the one who will or the one who runs, but on God who has mercy" (§778). Aquinas therefore concludes in his commentary on 6:23: "The very fact that we do what is good and that our works are worthy of eternal life is the result of God's grace: 'He bestows grace and glory' (Psalms 84:11)" (§517).⁵⁸ This means that for Aquinas all merit from God, whether condign or congruous, falls under the category of "gift" when viewed in its relation

Between the Council of Trent and the Reformation on Justification, the Sacrament and the Ministry – Then and Now (Fort Wayne, IN: Luther Academy, 1992), 34.

⁵⁵ ST I-II, q. 114, a. 3; see also *Super Epistolam ad Hebraeos*, §127.

⁵⁶ Before the entrance of sin, human nature only needed the elevating work of grace to merit eternal life. On account of sin, human beings need both reconciliation and elevation; see ST I-II, q. 51, a. 4.

⁵⁷ ST I-II, q. 114, a. 3, ad. 2.

⁵⁸ Wawarykow notes that due to Reformation polemics, we are prone to think of Aquinas's use of Romans 6:23 in the context of merit as "unfortunate and indeed as

to human nature. In other words, God is never put in the creature's "debt," and the creature as creature can never *demand* eternal life as a "right" from God. Even if the law were perfectly kept, human action as human, just as Calvin observes, would never receive the reward as a due.⁵⁹ Rather, in condign merit God only owes himself.⁶⁰

The issue between Aquinas and Calvin is therefore not whether eternal life is a gift; it is not whether it is obtained according to God's wisdom and order; it is not whether good works have a role in obtaining eternal life; and it is not whether God's grace is the fundamental reason for the obtainment of eternal life (i.e. "grace for grace"). The question comes down to whether or not the work of the Christian in grace can be said to be *deserving* of the corresponding reward, that is, in Aquinas's language, whether Christians merit condignly. This is also to ask whether human activity has a direct causal place in obtaining eternal life. Calvin clearly has no place for works deserving reward, and his rejection of the causal basis for works in receiving eternal life corresponds to his belief that all human works, whether from the believer or unbeliever, are imperfect, tainted, and in need of purification. The believer's works are indeed rewarded, but it is "grace for grace" because of the inherent unworthiness of their action. The act must be "pardoned" before receiving a reward. This also means for Calvin that the believer must turn away from "their own dignity" and look *instead* to the mercy of God. Aquinas believes, however, that the works of believers are inherently worthy of receiving the corresponding reward. Eternal life is *justly* given to the believer as a due for

ultimately destructive of a teaching on merit" (*God's Grace & Human Freedom*, 203). But "the use of Romans 6:23 has the value of recalling to us that while merit and reward are governed by justice, this justice is itself located in the broader context of God's gracious action toward people" (ibid.). Aquinas's explanation regarding receiving eternal blessedness through good works is not according to necessity but rather "Divine wisdom."

⁵⁹ Aquinas is able to depict human obedience to God, as with Calvin, through the Lukean parable in which those who did all that is commanded said, "We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." In *ST* II-II q. 58, a. 3, ad. 1, Aquinas explains that when one does what one ought to do, no "gain" accrues to whom he does what he ought. But it does accrue gain to the one who does it, "insofar as he does what he ought, spontaneously and readily, and this is to act virtuously." Similarly, God does not "gain" anything from meritorious human obedience, but the ones who are obedient advance in virtue and thus ultimately advance in partaking in the true reward that is God himself.

⁶⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 114, a.2, ad. 3.

the good work, since the work has as its principal cause God's grace. Eternal life is indeed a gift, but it is also an object of human merit.

The divergence between Aquinas's and Calvin's positions takes us to the heart of the topic of participation. Calvin argues that believers receive eternal life on account of God's grace and our participation in Christ *rather than* because our works have a worth that renders eternal life a "due."⁶¹ God's grace is demonstrated in that he "accepts" our works *even though* they are not deserving of the reward; he "considers" them pleasing and returns reward.⁶² One must be "called away" from considering one's own "dignity" and *instead* look to the grace of God and the work of Christ for obtaining eternal life (136.53–54). We discover that Calvin's critiques against the worth of works stems from his own nonparticipatory view of "merit"—a perspective wholly absent from Aquinas's account. Although Calvin upholds a *similar* (but not equivalent) noncompetitive-causal understanding of divine and human willing as that of Aquinas in which God "assists, increases, and strengthens that power which he has granted us, both for the completion of each particular work and for final perseverance through life,"⁶³ Calvin judges the worth of the work *solely* in terms of the human actor. In Calvin's account of merit, one does not find that the work can truly be ours *and at the same time* be judged according to the divine principle. This is clear when he claims that even the works of Jesus himself, when viewed in terms of his humanity, are not meritorious.⁶⁴ Human works fail to merit not only because they are tainted but also because they are strictly human. Calvin speaks hypothetically at *Inst.* 3.15.3 by positing a situation in which there is

⁶¹ *Inst.* 3.18.5.

⁶² Calvin, *Comm. Ep. Tim. II*, 4:8 (CO 52. 390).

⁶³ Calvin, *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, 3.317 (123). Charles Partee in *The Theology of John Calvin* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), although rightly noting that for Calvin "God's action within human action is simultaneously that person's action" (213), misinterprets Calvin's disagreement with Lombard on operating and cooperating grace (2.2.6) and erroneously concludes, based on the notion of "irresistibility," that for Calvin "we do not cooperate with God's assisting grace" (216). Calvin's issue with Lombard's cooperating grace, however, clearly reflects this grace in *competitive-causal* terms; if the divine–human relationship is understood in noncompetitive terms, Calvin affirms cooperation; see Raith, "Calvin's Critique of Merit," 143–4, for Calvin's clear affirmation of cooperation if understood in properly noncompetitive terms.

⁶⁴ *Inst.* 2.17.1. See also Jon Balserak, *Divinity Compromised: A Study of Divine Accommodation in the Thought of John Calvin* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2006), 74.

perfect obedience to the law—the possibility of which he quickly calls into question. Even then, merit would still not be based on the worth of the work. Calvin's key text is Luke 17:10, which states, "When you shall have done those things which were commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants: we have done what we were bound to do.'" How does Calvin understand being "unprofitable servants"? It means that when the commandments are kept, individuals have given to the Lord nothing "unrequired [*gratuitum*]." Rather, they have only given what is "owed [*debitis*]," and therefore "no thanks are due [*non est habenda gratia*]."

In order to account for the believer's reception of rewards from God, Calvin moves away from participation, at least as conceived by Aquinas, and appropriates the Scotistic conception of the divine *acceptatio*.⁶⁵ Scotus grounds merit in God's free binding of Himself to treat certain acts done in a given circumstance as meritorious. To uphold God's freedom, God's acceptance of an act as meritorious becomes extrinsic to the intrinsic order and quality of the act itself. Instead, God binds himself by God's will to grant merit to these particular acts.⁶⁶ In a similar manner, Calvin claims that believers accrue merit because God "accepts" their works if done in Christ as meritorious.⁶⁷ God accepts these works not because a reward is "due" to them—not because of their "worth"—but because he has "deigned" to accept them.⁶⁸ As Calvin states in *Inst.* 3.15.3, "Good works... receive by way of reward [*remunerationis*] the most ample benefits of God, not because they so deserve them but because God's kindness has of itself set this value on them."⁶⁹ A lack of participation results in the dichotomy, rather than harmony, between the *donum* of God and *meritum nostrum*.

⁶⁵ Whether knowingly or unknowingly; debates surround the exact influences on Calvin's thought on these topics. For more on the divine *acceptatio*, see Wawrykow, *God's Grace & Human Action*, 19 n. 41; 28; 182; 189; Richard Cross, *Duns Scotus*, 103–12. For more on Calvin's use of the Scotistic concept of *acceptatio*, see Raith, "Calvin's Critique of Merit," 144–8.

⁶⁶ Wawrykow, *God's Grace & Human Action*, 19 n. 41; 28; 182; 189.

⁶⁷ *BLW*, 4.337 (152); Cf. *Inst.* 3.15.2–3.

⁶⁸ *BLW*, 4.337 (152).

⁶⁹ Alister McGrath connects Calvin's teaching to late medieval teachings on the merits of Christ. In later Franciscan schools, as well as with the *via moderna* and *schola Augustiniana moderna*, the *ratio meriti* resided with the divine good pleasure, so that nothing was meritorious unless God choose to accept it as such. This included even the merits of Christ. McGrath points to *Inst.* 2.17.1–5, and particularly Calvin's

Since Calvin does not conceive of the same participatory vision of human action as Aquinas, he cannot approach the evaluation of “merit” in the way Aquinas does, for whom the human act can be understood as having a worth that corresponds to a just reward due to one’s participation in the divine life.⁷⁰ It is worth noting that for Calvin a “raising” of the believer’s works occurs, as it does in Aquinas, only *after* the work is performed; believers are paid only after the taintedness of their work is pardoned and God “raises” those works to a place of honor. Aquinas also asserts that a “raising” is needed, but it is due to the infinite difference between the natural and the supernatural. This raising occurs, moreover, through the soul’s participation in the divine nature by grace, such that acts performed in grace are raised *intrinsically*. The raising is less rooted in God’s sheer will to raise an act after the act is performed, as with Calvin, than in the soul’s participation in the divine nature through grace. For Aquinas, then, merit is principally God rewarding himself and our participation in that rewarding. In *ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 1, Aquinas first addresses the natural situation of merit between humans, which is governed by “justice,” in which “equality” is affirmed between merit and reward (i.e. the reward must be equal in value to the meritorious act) and between the persons involved in the meritorious exchange. Aquinas further includes the dynamic of need in human-to-human merit; in meriting a reward, the one meriting helps the rewarder in some way, meeting some deficiency or need. Aquinas then acknowledges that human beings cannot merit from God *simpliciter*—there

claim that Christ’s merits are due to “God’s good pleasure.” He is meritorious *pro nobis* due to God’s ordination; see McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd edn. (Cambridge, 2005), 149–50.

⁷⁰ This is why, contra Wawrykow, Calvin does not “link up” or “come close” to Aquinas’s teaching on condign merit (“John Calvin and Condign Merit,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 [1992], 81). Gary Anderson is led astray by Wawrykow’s analysis and therefore erroneously asserts: “Calvin and Thomas are on the same page regarding the *value* of human merits in the scheme of human salvation.” Gary Anderson, *Sin: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 226; italics added. Anderson is right to detect similarities between Aquinas and Calvin on divine and human agency, but simply understanding works as “the result of the infusion of the Holy Spirit” does not, as Anderson assumes, cause the objections Protestants raise regarding merit to “dissipate rather quickly.” George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 299 n. 33, also erroneously asserts that Calvin’s language is “surprisingly” close to a classically Augustinian–Thomistic conception of “something like” condign merit. The reason pertains to the lack of participation in Calvin’s account of human action.

is no absolute equality between humans and God, and God has no needs. Merit only occurs *secundum quid*, which introduces the *divina ordinatio*. It is only on account of the *divina ordinatio* that merit creates any sort of debt.⁷¹ But “the debt involved here is not that of God to the person who does good... Rather, in rewarding merit, God is simply being faithful to the divine ordination which lies at the basis of merit. To the extent that we may speak of a debt in merit, then, the debt is only that of God to God.”⁷² Merit for Aquinas is therefore not principally about human worth but rather divine wisdom; it is not principally about human effort but rather divine goodness.⁷³ When humans use their free will according to the divine ordination, they are not putting God in their debt but are participating in God fulfilling his will for the salvation of his created beings. They participate in God disclosing his goodness *in* and *through* the proper use of one’s free will. This means that God has not ordained that humans perform certain actions in an autonomous manner, apart from God’s causality, thus couching merit as bringing before God one’s actions that God then looks upon and rewards. It also means that God has not merely willed that certain acts we perform would receive certain rewards. Rather, God fulfills his own wise ordination to disclose his goodness through the meritorious operation of human free will. The fact that the *human being* receives the merited reward of eternal life is due neither to the substance of the work, which is never condignly meritorious, nor to the worth of the human will, which of itself never merits condignly. Rather, the fact that a person receives eternal life as a *just* reward is a testimony to God’s own gracious action in and through the human person, bringing the person into his salvation through their participation—the reward is indeed given to *us*—in his activity.⁷⁴ That a believer receives eternal life as a just due testifies to the

⁷¹ Human actions are meritorious due to divine ordination, that is, human beings obtain as a reward for their operation what God gave them the power of operation for (ST I-II, q. 114, a.1). Wawrykow situates divine ordination within God’s wisdom; the notion of God setting the “mode and measure” of things (ST I-II, q. 114, a. 1) reflects God’s creative wisdom (cf. III q. 7, a. 12 on God’s measure in relation to his wisdom) (*God’s Grace & Human Action*, 28, 182). This leads to seeing the interconnectedness of merit with Aquinas’s discussion on providence and predestination.

⁷² Wawrykow, *God’s Grace & Human Action*, 181.

⁷³ ST I-II, q. 114, a. 1, ad. 2.

⁷⁴ There is for Aquinas, then, no dichotomy between condign merit and God’s free gift, contra Disley, whose account of “Protestant” teachings on rewards reflects the improper assumption of such a dichotomy, stating: “The Scriptural notion of reward

depth of God's goodness in enabling his created beings to participate in his divine life.⁷⁵

For Aquinas, then, affirming merit is not the undermining of the primacy of God's grace, nor is it the displacement of Christ's cross, nor is it the celebration of human capability and worth. Rather, by claiming eternal life is a due given in justice, Aquinas seeks to uphold the depth of God's graciousness in enabling his people to *participate* in his goodness.⁷⁶ This becomes all the more clear when we realize that God himself is the "reward" for human merit (§647). Merit is ultimately rooted in the process by which the believer comes to participate more deeply in God, culminating in the vision of God, that is, eternal life.

CONCLUSION

Aquinas's and Calvin's commentaries on Romans 6 provide the first step toward a fuller portrait of their understanding of the life in the Spirit. The topic of life in the Spirit continues in the next chapter, and both Romans 6 and Romans 7 culminate in Paul's teaching in Romans 8. As indicated in earlier chapters, how they understand the sanctifying work of the Spirit has consequences for justification, and now we see how it has consequences for merit as well. Aquinas's account

does not apply to condign merit; it refers, *rather*, to God's free gift" (Disley, "Degrees of Glory," 79; 105); cf. Norman Geisler and Ralph MacKenzie, *Roman Catholics and Evangelicals: Agreements and Disagreements* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 230, who state that "if... we are 'rewarded' for our work by salvation or eternal life, then it is not truly and solely God's grace, despite Catholic protests to the contrary"; see also D. Lange, *Outmoded Condemnations?* 34. These objections largely lack the participatory vision of human activity maintained by Aquinas.

⁷⁵ Alister McGrath's descriptions of condign and congruous merit, which he claims were "generally agreed by the time of Aquinas," could not be further from Aquinas's own vision: "Condign merit is a merit which is justified on the *basis* of the moral actions of the individual in question; congruous merit is based upon the liberality of God" (*Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 3rd. edn. [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2001], 453).

⁷⁶ Wawrykow concludes his study with a similar sentiment, claiming that both Aquinas and the Apostle Paul "speak of reward for good action in such a way that their statements testify, not to the greatness of the human person or to human 'religious possibilities,' but to the greater glory of God" (*God's Grace & Human Action*, 284).

of the Spirit's transformation enables him to affirm that justification is the transformation of the believer through forgiveness of sins into being a just person (understood as a participation in Christ's justice) that results in the believer being able to condignly merit eternal life. Calvin, on the other hand, desires to make justification the forgiveness of sins and imputation of Christ's justice as "clothing," leaving the believer still worthy of damnation *in se* but not *in Christo*. On this account, works flowing from the believer are unworthy of merit, although God wills to accept the works by pardoning their taintedness. I have indicated that although both Calvin and Aquinas root the life in the Spirit in highly participatory terms, their visions of participation differ, as becomes clear in how they account for the ongoing transformation occurring as one lives the life in the Spirit, as well as how they account for the relationship of the believer's works to receiving reward. We find that once again Calvin stresses what Christ does for and to the believer, while Aquinas stresses what Christ does in and through the believer. In the next chapter, we unpack further how Aquinas and Calvin conceive of the Christian's life in the Spirit.

The Spirit's Work of Transformation: Part 2

Romans 7:14–25

Paul teaches that in the life of every Christian believer there exists a tension between the gracious work of God in correcting the effects of sin on the soul and the remaining disorder that is in need of correction. Since Augustine, this tension has often been described as the “Christian struggle” that occurs between the “old man” and the “new life.”¹ We gained a glimpse into Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations of the Christian struggle in Chapter 4 through their expositions on the believer’s baptism into Christ’s death. The present chapter unfolds the sanctifying work of the Spirit to a greater extent by exploring Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations of Romans 7:14–25.² As James Dunn has observed, Romans 7:14–25 “will in large measure determine our understanding of Paul’s theology as a whole, particularly his anthropology and soteriology.”³ Since both Aquinas and Calvin provide an interpretation of the *ego* of 7:14 as the graced Apostle Paul,⁴ their

¹ See Augustine, *De agone christiano* (PL 40: 284–310).

² Romans 7:14–25 was in fact a central location for Reformers’ confrontation with the Roman Church; see J. I. Packer, “The ‘Wretched Man’ Revisited: Another Look at Romans 7:14–25,” in *Romans and the People of God*, edited by Sven K. Soderlund and N. T. Wright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 71–2. According to Packer, many of the Reformers used Romans 7:14–25 to show that “there is sin in the best Christians’ best works.”

³ James Dunn, “Romans 7:14–25 in the Theology of Paul,” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 31 [1975]: 257.

⁴ I will leave aside for now contemporary arguments—and the validity of those arguments—against interpreting the *ego* of 7:14 as portraying human experience, whether Christian or otherwise. See, for example, N. T. Wright, who believes his own interpretive framework renders the notion of the “Christian struggle” in Romans 7:14–25 “beside the point” (“The Letter to the Romans,” in *The New Interpreters’ Bible*, vol. 10, 552 [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002]). Mark Reasoner is even more

commentaries on the struggle presented in 7:14–25 provide a resource for understanding how they envision the Christian moral life, in terms of both the effects of sin and the restoring work of grace on human nature. Their explanation of the Christian struggle directly relates to how they conceive of inherent righteousness and the status of the believer's good work, and it is here that we find one of the pivotal locations in Romans that differentiates Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations. Particularly important is how they understand the nature of the sinfulness of remaining "concupiscence," the ability or inability of the believer to fulfill the law, the nature of the "good work" produced by the pilgrim Christian, the notion of "reward" that accompanies the performance of good works, and the concept of "perfection." These judgments come to a head in Romans 8, which begins with Paul's declaration: "There is *therefore* now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus."

It is worth noting that both Aquinas and Calvin explicitly appropriate Augustine's take on the *ego* of Romans 7:14–25. But they do so in different ways. Calvin appropriates Augustine's interpretive change from understanding the *ego* as pre-converted Paul to converted Paul as a signal to wholly reject a reading of Romans 7:14–25 in terms of the non-Christian. Aquinas, however, merely references Augustine's change of position (§558) and proceeds as if the two options are equally worthy of attention. These different appropriations reflect different emphases of the interpreters. While Calvin acknowledges that Paul argues for the goodness of the law in Romans 7, more is at stake for Calvin: Romans 7:14–25 provides Calvin the opportunity to set forth a description of the regenerate Christian in the face of his contemporary opponents on issues of justification, law and grace, and (especially) merit. Given that the status of the *ego* will determine how one understands Paul's teaching on these topics, there can be no ambiguity regarding the *ego*'s status for Calvin.⁵ Aquinas, however, sees the principal point to be a demonstration of the goodness of the law and places both *egos* in the service

insistent on the rejection, claiming: "The various appeals to human experience that have haunted the exegesis of this locus since Augustine must be resisted as far as is possible" (*Romans in Full Circle: A History of Interpretation* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005], 82).

⁵ For a discussion regarding Calvin's choice of the regenerated Paul, see R. Ward Holder, "Calvin's Hermeneutic and Tradition: An Augustinian Reception of Romans 7," in *Reformation Readings of Romans*, ed. Kathy Ehrensperger and R. Ward Holder, 98–199 (New York: T & T Clark, 2008); Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 111. Richard Muller observes: "Calvin nowhere denies that Paul speaks in the first person with a view toward using his own experience as an example, but Calvin also evidences no

of demonstrating this principle. As the commentary unfolds, Aquinas feels forced by the text to conclude that the text is understood “better” (*melior*) (§558; 570) if the *ego* is the Apostle Paul in a state of grace. But either state suffices to support the principal point of highlighting the law’s goodness.⁶ For comparison purposes to Calvin’s interpretation, I will focus on Aquinas’s interpretation with the *ego* as Paul in a state of grace.

The present chapter unfolds somewhat differently than the previous chapters in order to capture Aquinas’s and Calvin’s visions for the sanctified Christian. I will first analyze Aquinas’s and Calvin’s descriptions of the Apostle Paul’s “flesh” and “spirit” in 7:14–25, paying particular attention to the negative effects of sin and healing effects of grace. I will then unfold the portraits of Paul’s moral life that emerge from their commentaries on 7:14–25 in light of their judgments regarding “flesh” and “spirit.” Last, I will draw out some implications of their interpretations that highlight similarities and differences, particularly surrounding their anthropological and soteriological judgments.

UNDERSTANDING THE TERMS “FLESH” AND “SPIRIT”

Paul describes his “flesh” in Romans 7:14–25 as the part of himself where “nothing good dwells” (7:18) and which serves the “law of sin” and is in conflict with the “mind” and its service to the “law of God” (7:25). For Aquinas, Paul’s pejorative claims about his flesh are essentially descriptions of the *fomes peccati* (“inclination of sin”). Recall in Chapter 4 Aquinas’s fourfold schema regarding the effects of sin: (1) the debt of sin; (2) the stain of sin; (3) the habit of

interest in arguing the case for an autobiographical passage” (“Scimus Enim Quod Lex Spiritualis Est” 230); cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975–9), I.344–5, who argues that Calvin emphasizes the aspect of “general Christian experience” over an autobiographical portrait of Paul’s mature Christian experience. Whether Calvin intends Paul in particular or the Christian in general, Calvin’s interpretation of Romans 7:14–25 provides his account of the transforming work of the Spirit.

⁶ Reasoner therefore overstates the case when he claims that Aquinas is “focused” on identifying who the *ego* is in Romans 7:7–25 (*Romans in Full Circle*, 74). Rather, Aquinas is focused on upholding the goodness of the Law (§532, 556).

sinning; (4) the *fomes* of sin. Through baptism into Christ's death, the debt and stain of sin are removed, while the habit and *fomes* are lessened in power. For Aquinas, the presence of the *fomes* is part of the punishment (*poena*) resulting from the sin of the first parent (§561, 587). Aquinas attributes a twofold cause to the *fomes* in relation to their being a punishment for sin. The first cause is sin itself; the second cause is God, who imposed the punishment of the *fomes* on "sinful man" (§587). This punishment is termed a "law" in 7:23, according to Aquinas, because "it was introduced by the law of divine justice, just as the sentence of a just judge has the force of law" (§587). The *fomes* dwell in one's lower powers of the sensitive appetite and give rise to disordered "desires" (*concupiscentiae*). The adjective "disordered" conveys the fact that for Aquinas concupiscence is per se part of the human composition but negatively affected by the "sin of the first parent."⁷ Importantly, these desires arise separately from the judgment of the intellect and because they are disordered incline a person to that which is contrary to the good and thus contrary to the law (§563; 573; 587).⁸ Thus, when Paul states in 7:18, "sin dwells in my flesh," "sin" is understood by Aquinas as the *fomes*, and "flesh" as the sensitive powers (§573; §555).⁹

On the other hand, there is the "spirit" or "mind" (*mens*), which is in opposition to the sin of the flesh. Aquinas interprets these terms as referring to Paul's reason. When Paul states in 7:14, "I am carnal," the "I" for Aquinas stands for reason, which is the "chief thing in man" (*principalis in homine*) (§559; §585). Reason also corresponds to the "inner man" of 7:22 (§585).¹⁰ A key claim of Aquinas's that shapes his interpretation of Romans 7:14–25 is that a person

⁷ ST I-II, q. 85, a. 3. For Calvin, however, original sin *creates* the presence of concupiscence (*Inst.* 2.1.8–9).

⁸ It is these same interpretive moves, argues Steinmetz, that is, the distinction between lower and higher faculties, the emphasis on concupiscence as punishment for sin rather than sinful, and the distinction between perfection in this life and the life to come (see below) that enabled sixteenth-century Catholic commentators to read Romans 7:14–25 as the graced person "without falling into self-contradiction on the one hand or Lutheranism on the other" (*Calvin in Context*, 304).

⁹ Aquinas does grant when interpreting 7:23, "I see a law in my members," that the *fomes* in a way "spread over (*diffusive*) all members which play a role (*deserviunt*) for concupiscent desire in sinning" (§588); see ST I-II, q. 90, a. 1, ad. 1.

¹⁰ Aquinas clarifies that he is not speaking in the Platonic way of a human being as merely a soul using a body, or in Tertullian's way of the soul being fashioned according to man's figure (§585); ST I, q. 75, a. 4.

is according to his or her reason (*homo est id quod est secundum rationem*) (§570). Paul can therefore say in 7:17, “it is no longer I that do it but sin which dwells in me.” For Aquinas, Paul’s reason—the *ego*—as we shall see does not consent to the *fomes* (§570). Merely desiring evil according to the sensitive appetites does not make a person evil, since these disordered desires arise from the *fomes* and not from reason.¹¹

Whether a person is in a state of grace or not, present within every person are “flesh” and “spirit.” What does it mean for Aquinas, then, that the Paul of 7:14–25 is the *graced* Paul? How does Aquinas understand the effects of grace in relation to the “flesh” and “spirit”? For Aquinas, the effects of grace occur principally in relation to the human reason. Aquinas claims that the justifying grace of Christ does not reside in the flesh, that is, in the sensible appetites where concupiscence resides, but in the mind, that is, in one’s rational capacity (§573). It is critical for Aquinas that Paul states in 7:18a that no good dwells “in the flesh,” since for Aquinas the good of grace *does* dwell in the mind (*mens*) (§574). Aquinas derives his assertion regarding grace residing in the mind but not the flesh from Romans 8:10, “If Christ is in us, the body is indeed dead because of sin, but the spirit lives because of justice” (§573; §629). If grace resided in the flesh as well, argues Aquinas, one would not only will the good with mind but also accomplish the very good one wills without the hindrance of concupiscence (§580).¹² But this is not the case; the hindrance of concupiscence remains.

Nevertheless, grace does indeed heal the mind. The healing of the mind by grace enables a person to judge the good not only in general, which is possible for the person not in grace—although this judgment may not result in a good deed—but also to judge and will the *particular* good. As Aquinas states, the healed mind allows for “a complete act of willing which lasts through the act of choosing a particular deed” (§565).¹³ The person not in grace may have a correct judgment about the good in general, but “a bad habit or a perverse passion” results in the will going astray, so that in a particular case, that person does not

¹¹ Aquinas further explains the relationship between reason and the *fomes* in *ST* I-II, q. 91, a. 6.

¹² In actuality, however, a person in grace is unable to do the good so as to exclude concupiscence entirely; see *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 8.

¹³ For more on human action in Aquinas, see Joseph Pilsner, *The Specification of Human Actions in St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

judge rightly about the good (§565).¹⁴ The same is true with avoiding evil: an ungraced person can have a general hatred of evil, but this general hatred is “frustrated in a particular choice by the inclination of a habit or passion” (§566).¹⁵ In Aquinas’s account, then, the flesh still gives rise to inclinations that are contrary to reason, since grace does not heal the flesh, and thus Paul can state in 7:23 that he is still “captive” to the law of sin in the members (i.e. movements of concupiscence [*motus concupiscentia*]) (§588). But reason is healed to know what the good is and enabled so as not to submit itself to the inordinate desires.¹⁶ Commenting on the phrase “Wretched man that I am” (7:25), Aquinas states that wretchedness dwells in man “either in flesh only, as in the just man, or also in the mind, as in the sinner” (§590). It is helpful to note Aquinas’s comments on Romans 7:8, “Through the commandment, sin worked in me all concupiscence (*omnem concupiscentiam*).” Aquinas explains that even with the coming of Christ’s grace, the effects of original sin remain in terms of the *fomes peccati* or “habitual concupiscence” (*concupiscentia habitual*), as noted above, which works all actual concupiscence in a person. Aquinas differentiates concupiscence both in terms of kinds of concupiscence (e.g. the covetousness in stealing, the covetousness in adultery) and in terms of the degrees (*gradus*) of concupiscence, which are thought (*cogitatio*), pleasure (*delectatio*), consent (*consensus*), and deed (*opus*) (§542). The healing work of grace as depicted in Romans 7:14–25 prevents the degrees of concupiscence from reaching the stage of consent and deed, which is the result of reason giving itself over to the thoughts and pleasures of concupiscence. The soteriological effects of justifying grace, then, leave the graced person in a “war” in which reason puts

¹⁴ See also *ST* II-II, q. 77, a. 2.

¹⁵ This is not to say that the ungraced person can *never* will a particular good proportionate to their nature, as Aquinas affirms in *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, recalling things like “building dwellings, plating vineyards, and the like.” Rather the ungraced person is unable, so it seems, to cultivate perfect natural *virtue* apart from grace; the ungraced person does not pursue the proportionate natural good “so as to fall short in nothing.” And without the natural virtues, the ungraced person lacks the regularity, reliability, and totality in willing the particular good; see *ST* I-II, q. 65, a. 2; q. 109, aa. 2, 8; Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love*, 124.

¹⁶ For a further explanation of the relationship between the rational and sensible powers described in terms of “political” and “despotic” rule, see *ST* I, q. 81, a. 3; I-II, q. 17, a. 7; q. 109, a. 9. It is essential for Aquinas that the sensitive appetites, in which the *fomes* dwell, have a certain independence from the intellectual appetites. This independence, as we shall see, allows Aquinas to dismiss the actual rise of disordered concupiscence as *sin per se*.

up a resistance—a successful resistance—to the disordered concupiscence of the flesh (§588).

Before moving to Calvin's interpretation of "flesh" and "spirit," I note that Aquinas's distinction between the general and particular in moral activity has a firm place in Calvin's theology of human action. In *Inst.* 2.2.22–23, Calvin dialogues with Plato, Themistius, and Aristotle to put forth his theory of how the natural law works itself out in practice.¹⁷ After engaging Plato's theory of the role of ignorance in immoral activity, Calvin affirms that Themistius teaches "more truly" about the intellect when he posits a distinction between "universals" and "particulars." According to Calvin, Themistius believed that "the intellect rarely fails in the definition of universals, or the essences of things [*rei essentia*]. When it proceeds further, it is delusionary [*esse hallucinationem*]; certainly when it descends to a hypothesis [*ad hypothesin descendit*]" (*Inst.* 2.2.23). Themistius's distinction between the intellect's more accurate knowledge of generalities like definitions and essences and the intellect's more fragile knowledge of a particular case (*hypothesis*) demonstrates for Calvin how someone can condemn in general a practice like murder yet is able to "consider [*deliberat*]" his particular plot to kill his enemy as a good thing. Calvin claims that the universal-particular distinction allows for a type of ignorance that occurs from "forgetting [*oblivisci*]" the proposition (*thesis*) when approaching a particular case (*hypothesis*). How could an individual "forget" the universal premise when engaging a particular case? Calvin explains by drawing upon Aristotle's "very shrewd distinction" between "incontinence" and "intemperance." Incontinence, explains Calvin, results when a particular notion (*particularis notia*) is pulled away (*eripi*) from the mind through a disturbed affection (*affectus perturbatus*) or passion (*pathos*), with the result that the incontinent person does not observe the evil nature of his or her action. In this way, an individual can be said to forget the general precept when engaging the particular situation.

But when we turn to Calvin's interpretation of Romans 7:14–25, we find none of the nuanced distinctions observed above. Calvin is less focused on the particular faculties of human nature (e.g. intellect, will, passions) and instead subsumes all the faculties under the

¹⁷ For an extended treatment of what follows, see Charles Raith II, "Calvin's Theological Appropriation of his Philosophical Sources: A Note on Natural Law and *Inst.* 2.2.22–23," *Calvin Theological Journal* 47 (2012): 32–49.

one description of “flesh” when speaking of the unregenerate, “flesh” and “spirit” when speaking of the regenerate. The move to generalization was also characteristic of his commentary on Romans 6. While the lack of nuance in the commentary partially reflects Calvin’s division of labor between the “brevity” of the commentary and the more elaborate *Institutes*, the move to generalization also serves Calvin’s polemical purposes in his arguments surrounding justification, sanctification, and merit. It allows Calvin to present a seemingly clear case against justification as including transformation and the inability to merit anything from God due to the remaining imperfection of the sanctified Christian. The actual similarities and differences between Aquinas’s and Calvin’s accounts, however, can only be accurately observed if one keeps in mind the polemical context of Calvin’s commentary on Romans 6 and 7 and the more detailed reflections on human action he provides in the *Institutes*.

For Calvin, the “flesh” in 7:14 and 7:18 and its synonym “members” in 7:23 encompass “*all* the endowments [*dotes*] of human nature, and *everything* that is in man, except the sanctification of the Spirit” (151.101–103; italics added). Calvin calls the “flesh” the “natural character” (*ingenium*) of a person at birth (147.56), or more pointedly one’s “nature” (151.7).¹⁸ To be sure, God originally endowed human beings with a spiritual soul that enabled humans to surpass the brute animals in dignity. Yet by departing from the “law of his creation,” humans have become “carnal and earthly.” Although humans still surpass brute animals, the soul is deprived of its spiritual excellence and has degenerated. Calvin therefore interprets Paul’s statement in 7:24, “the body of death,” as a description of the degenerated state of human nature. Calvin’s interpretation is reflective of his comments in Romans 6. Commenting on “mortal body” in Romans 6:12, Calvin states that in the present “degenerate state” the soul is “fixed to earth, and so enslaved to our bodies” that the soul has “fallen from its proper

¹⁸ Calvin is clear to distinguish between nature as created by God and nature as the derangement caused by sin. Calvin explains, “We call it ‘natural’ in order that no man may think that anyone obtains it through bad conduct, since it holds all men fast by hereditary right” (*Inst.* 2.1.11; see *BLW*, 40). One finds this distinction in Augustine’s *On Free Choice of the Will*: “We also use ‘human nature’ in two senses. In the strict sense, we mean the nature with which human beings were first created, a nature blameless after its kind. But we can also mean the nature of those of us who are born under the penalty of that [original] sin: mortal, ignorant, and enslaved to the flesh” (translated by Thomas Williams [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993], 108).

excellence"; human beings are indeed "corporeal," because they have been deprived of heavenly grace (*privatus coelesti gratia*), and are merely a "kind of false shadow or image" (*fallax tantum umbra vel imago*) (128.83).¹⁹

On the other side is the "spirit," which is the renewed part of the corrupt nature, the newness that is a gift of the Holy Spirit and thus called "spirit" (147.59). It is the part of the soul "purified from evil" and "refashioned" so that the image of God shines through (151.3–5). Elsewhere Calvin calls this renewal "divine" with the result that the image of God is restored in us, at least partially (128.83). Important for Calvin is the fact that the regenerated person is a divided creature, "in a way twofold" (*quodammodo duplex est*), in that part of his mind, affections, and will is renewed and part is not. In *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, Calvin recalls that one of the critiques of Catholic polemicist Albert Pighius (1490–1542) against him is his division of the believer's soul into two parts. Calvin argues from Romans 7, where Paul "bemoans the common bondage of the faithful in his own person," that Paul's teaching on the contrary desires of the will, combined with Paul's teaching on the "old man" and our need to renew the heart and mind into the image of God, demonstrate that in Paul, there is will against will, desire against desire, and mind against mind, so that Paul is a divided man.²⁰ For Calvin, the renewed part of the human person is called the "mind" in 7:25, "I serve the law of God with my mind," which, Calvin explains, is not a reference to the "rational part of the soul honored by philosophers" but that part of human nature "illuminated" by the Spirit of God in order that it might understand and will rightly (155.39). This spiritually regenerated part of the soul corresponds to the "inward man" of 7:22 and is called inward par excellence, because it possesses the heart and "hidden affections" (*reconditos affectus*) (153.73–75).²¹ It is contrasted with the "appetites of the flesh," which wander "as it were outside man" (*quasi extra hominem*) (153.74–75).

¹⁹ For more on Calvin's doctrine of the soul, see Irene Backus, *Historical Method and Confessional Identity in the Era of the Reformation (1378–1615)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 86–101; Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157–83.

²⁰ BWL, 179–80.

²¹ Calvin recognizes the phrase "inward man" of 2 Corinthians 4:16 but claims the phrase is used differently in Romans 7. The context of Romans 7 "requires" a different interpretation (153.71–75).

The idea of the “hidden affections” brings us to a key aspect of Calvin’s anthropology and soteriology in Romans 7:14–25: his emphasis on the *affectus*. The sanctification of the Spirit produces “affections” that lead one to obedience to God. The phrases “want” and “do not want” in 7:15 correspond to these affections, and the phrase “law of the mind” in 7:23 is “an affection rightly ordered” (*affectum rite compositum*) (153.79). Like Aquinas’s *fomes*, these affections arise prior to the intellect, although Calvin speaks of them not in terms of “lower” but rather “deeper.”²² The most pronounced dichotomy within the regenerated person for Calvin, then, is the “disagreement by the flesh from the affection of the spirit” (150.79).

PORTRAITS OF PAUL: UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRIT’S TRANSFORMING WORK

With their perspectives on “flesh,” “spirit,” and the healing work of grace in place, we now turn to consider the portraits of Paul conveyed by Aquinas and Calvin. When Paul laments in 7:14, “I am carnal, sold under sin,” Aquinas claims that Paul’s reason (the “I”) is carnal by being “under attack from the flesh” (§560). He is “sold under sin” in that the *fomes* exist in his flesh and create a “rebellion” of his desires against his reason (§561). Similarly, when Paul says in 7:25b, “with my flesh, I serve the law of sin,” Aquinas claims that Paul “serves” sin inasmuch as his flesh is moved to concupiscent desire (*movetur concupiscendum*) against his reason (§594). But key to Aquinas’s portrait of Paul in 7:14–25—the portrait of the one renewed by Christ’s grace—is that these disordered desires do not come to fruition in an actual act of sin. When Paul states in 7:15, “For what I do, I do not understand,” Aquinas interprets the “doing” as Paul’s “desiring,” in that Paul desires (*concupiscentia*) evil through a passion in the sensitive appetite (§563). But this desire, which precedes reason, is subsequently

²² To be sure, Aquinas draws attention to the role of the affections proper, as well. Just to give one example, Aquinas states in his commentary on Galatians that to “walk by the Spirit” is for the Holy Spirit to “stir up” (*instigare*) and “incline” (*inclinare*) the affection for right willing (Marietti edition, vol. 1 [1959], §308). It is to say that Calvin places upon them an emphasis, especially in relation to reason, that goes beyond that of Aquinas.

impeded by reason. Commenting on 7:15b, Aquinas states: “‘I do’ refers to an incomplete action which has gone no further than the sense appetite and has not reached the stage of consent” (§565). This is why it is significant for Aquinas that Paul states at 7:15: “I do not understand” (*non intelligo*) rather than: “I understand it is not to be done” (*intelligo non esse faciendum*), since the latter conveys that a deed is performed, while the former merely reflects the anthropological principle that desire arises prior to reason’s judgment but, because of grace, is subsequently impeded by reason. For Paul to commit an act of sin, it would require his “performing a deed or consenting with the mind” (§563). In what way, then, does Paul “not do the good I want” (7:15b)? The good Paul wants is to “preserve his mind from wicked desires,” but since even in performance of a good act there are still disorderly movements of desire that arise from the sensitive appetites, Paul claims to be unable to accomplish this good (§565). This is the reason for Paul’s exclamation in 7:25a, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Paul longs for the resurrection, through which the *fomes peccati* will be completely eradicated (§592).

In light of what is to come in Calvin’s exposition, a question of Aquinas’s interpretation naturally arises: is there *any* sin Paul admits to committing in Romans 7:14–25? According to Aquinas, there is: it is a “sin of omission.” While Paul does not commit a sinful deed through the mind’s consent to the *fomes*, he does sin by failing to *prevent* the influence of these “perverse desires” (*pravae concupiscentiae*) on his mind. When introducing 7:15b, Aquinas states: “In regard to the omission of the good [i.e. the sin of omission (§564)] therefore, Paul says, ‘For I do not do the good I want’” (§565). The fact that Paul desires things he should not desire renders Paul sinful insofar as he falls short of doing the good of preventing these desires. In *ST* I-II, q. 74, aa. 2–3, Aquinas explains that all the powers that the will can move or restrain in their acts are the subjects of sin, which include the sensitive appetite, since the sensitive appetite is naturally inclined to be moved by the will. Yet the rise of disordered concupiscence, since it does not occur from the deliberation of reason, is called a “venial sin,” which, Aquinas explains, is a sin not in the proper sense but rather “something imperfect in the genus of sin” (*quiddam imperfectum in genere peccat*).

Yet again, by not consenting to these desires with the mind, Paul speaks truthfully in 7:17 and 7:20, “it is no longer I [namely,

reason] that do it but sin which dwells in me" (§569).²³ There are therefore no sins of *commission*. Even more, the *fomes* do not prevent Paul from doing truly good deeds. When Paul states in 7:18b, "I can will what is right," Aquinas claims that by grace Paul can fully will and, Aquinas adds, actually perform "some good" (*aliquid boni facio*) by resisting concupiscence and acting against it. When Paul immediately adds, "But I cannot do it," Aquinas interprets this to mean he "cannot do" this good "so as to exclude concupiscence altogether" (§580), as Aquinas previously argued (see §565).²⁴ Paul, then, remains in a struggle with his disordered desires in the sensitive appetite, although through his healed reason he can resist consenting to these desires and is furthermore enabled to actually perform the good.

It is helpful for understanding Aquinas's Pauline portrait to highlight why Aquinas favors the *ego* in a state of grace over the non-Christian *ego*. Two verses are of particular importance. The first is 7:17: "it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells [*habitat*] in me." For Aquinas, one of the central differences between someone who is ungraced and someone who is graced is whether or not reason consents (*consentire*) to the desires of the flesh (*fomes peccati*). Although sinful desires may rise within the person in a state of grace, that person's reason, as noted above, having been healed and assisted by grace, will not consent to those desires. Aquinas thus claims at 7:17 that if the "I" (i.e. reason) is no longer the agent of the sinful act as the verse claims—"it is no longer I that do it"—then the *ego* "cannot be properly understood of a man in sin" (§570). This is because for the ungraced person reason consents to the sinful desires and commits the sin.²⁵ Although Aquinas is still willing to give an interpretation of 7:17 in terms of the ungraced person—doing so by an appeal to an action's "principal agent acting in virtue of its proper characteristics," which refers to the

²³ As Aquinas explains in *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 3, when both the reason and will remain "free" (i.e. "not entirely engrossed by the passion"), "there is no movement of the will in that man, and the passion alone holds its sway; or if there be a movement of the will, it does not necessarily follow the passion."

²⁴ See *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 3, ad. 1, where Aquinas states: "Although the will cannot prevent the movement of concupiscence from arising... it is in the power of the will not to will to desire, or not to consent to concupiscence."

²⁵ Aquinas is guided by Augustine on this point, quoting Augustine from a gloss in Lombard's *Collectanea* (col. 1429): "Greatly deceived is the man who has consented to the desires of the flesh and decides to do what they desire and then thinks he can say to himself: 'It is not I doing this'" (§570).

flesh and not reason—Aquinas admits up front that this interpretation is “forced” (§571).

The second verse is 7:18a: “For I know that good does not dwell in me, that is, in my flesh.” The qualifier, “that is, in my flesh,” is a critical insertion for understanding the presence of both the sinful flesh and the remaining good indwelling a person. According to Aquinas, grace, which is the “good” of 7:18a, dwells in the rational part of a person and not in the lower parts, where corrupt concupiscence is found (i.e. the flesh). Paul’s assertion that “good” dwells in him means he has received Christ’s grace in his mind (§573) but not “in my flesh.” This qualifier would be superfluous, claims Aquinas, if Paul had been speaking in terms of the ungraced person, since “in a sinner the good of grace does not dwell either in regard to the flesh or the mind” (§576). Again, Aquinas offers a “forced” explanation for the ungraced person, but the interpretation is even less robust than the previous one. The overall point is clear: as a person in the state of grace, Paul’s sinful desires still arise but they fail to obtain the consent of reason; no sinful act is therefore committed, although Paul commits venial sins of omission due to the presence of the sinful desires.

Calvin, however, explains Paul’s claim at 7:14, “I am carnal, sold into sin,” as Paul speaking of his “nature.” Paul demonstrates that all his parts—his mind, heart, and all his actions—are inclined toward sin, being driven by sin, although not in terms of compulsion but by his own free will (147.74–76).²⁶ Paul in 7:15a “does what he knows not” in that he does not *acknowledge* his imperfect works as his own (*non agnoscere ut sua*) because of his regeneration; instead, he hates them with the *affectus* wrought in him by the Spirit (149.39–40). Calvin acknowledges that this is not to say that Paul is always incapable of doing good altogether, since by stating in 7:17, “it is no more I that do it but sin which dwells in me,” Paul denies that he is “wholly possessed by sin” (*totum a peccato occupari*) and “exempts himself from bondage to it” (150.84–85). But when he says in 7:15b that he “does what he does not will,” Paul shows that he is unable to pursue the good with “due alacrity” (*deceat alacritate*) and “right exertion” (*iusta strenuitate*),

²⁶ Calvin is clear that he has no place for coercion, compulsion, or force as it pertains to human choice; see *BLW*, 204; *Inst.* 2.3.5, 2.4.1, 2.5.1. But Calvin also wants to maintain that apart from grace, human beings cannot choose what is good in the sight of God. The complexities of this argument, particularly Calvin’s use of Aristotle in differentiating necessity from coercion, take us beyond the scope of this chapter.

and thus fails in doing the good he wished by “stumbling through the weakness of the flesh” (149.55–150.57). Because of the regeneration of the Spirit, Paul can say in 7:19 that “to will is present,” which Calvin interprets as the “readiness of faith,” or in 7:22, “I delight in the law of God,” since Paul is “judging and estimating” himself by the regenerated part of his soul (153.59–60). This readiness or delight is formed in Paul by the Spirit and enables Paul to “consent to the law seriously and with most eager desire of his heart” (150.75–76). Yet by immediately claiming in 7:19b “but to do that which is good is not [present],” Paul acknowledges that he regards no work that he does as being free from “fault,” so that even Paul’s “best work” is “always corrupted by some mark of sin [*macula*]” (151.23).

The key conclusion that Calvin seeks to draw from Paul’s condition is that even in the regenerate state “no reward [*merces*] can be hoped for, except insofar as God pardons them [Paul’s works]” (151.23–25). We recall that Calvin claimed when commenting on Romans 3:22 that although works are *considered* just before God upon one’s being in Christ through faith, the works are still imperfect in themselves. They are purified through the blood of Christ, so that “God rewards our works as perfect, because their defects are covered by free pardon” (71.51–52). The gratuitous justification received through faith puts one in a propitious relationship toward God. In this relationship, God enables the justified person’s works to be reward-worthy by “covering” the work’s defilement with the purity of Christ; the works themselves must be justified, pardoned of their imperfection and impurity.²⁷ The conclusion: “Since only works uninfected with defilement (*sordibus*) are counted just, it is quite evident that no human work whatever can please God, except through a favor (*indulgentia*) of this kind” (84.74–76).²⁸

For Calvin, Paul is aware that “even the most perfect are subject to misery” (154.9–10), since when they “examine themselves thoroughly, they find nothing in their own nature but wretchedness” (154.10–11). Note that even with the indwelling of the Spirit, Calvin distinguishes “one’s own *nature*” from whatever part of a person participates in the Spirit. Given that the term “nature” for Calvin incorporates the entirety of the human composition—intellect, will,

²⁷ See Calvin, *Antidote*, 3:145.

²⁸ See *Inst.* 3.14.9; see also John H. Leith, *John Calvin’s Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 95–106.

and affections—in a real sense, then, the believer only *partially* participates in Christ. To be sure, out of God's sheer will God considers believers as full participants in Christ. Yet the identity of the believer is partially *in Christo* and partially *in se*, partially just and partially sinner. For Aquinas, in contrast, while the *fomes* are still disordered, the identity of the believer is fully *in Christo*, since the believer's reason—the seat of a person's identity—has been healed by grace. But since for Calvin Paul recognizes that only part of his nature participates in the Spirit, Paul gives his "anxious cry of distress" in 7:24: "Who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" Instead of being led to despair or murmuring against God, however, Paul demonstrates the proper attitude in one's present miserable situation, claims Calvin, by immediately stating in 7:25a, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Calvin's text reads: *Gratias ago Deo, per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum*. Compare this text with Aquinas's text: *Gratia Dei per Iesum Christum Dominum nostrum*. While Aquinas's Paul is highlighting the work of God's grace (*gratia Dei*) in 7:25—a grace that has enabled the believer to be transformed into a just person, resisting the *fomes* and performing truly good works—Calvin's Paul is "giving thanks" to God on account of God covering the believer's remaining sinfulness and rewarding the believer's works even though those works are undeserving of (i.e. do not merit) a reward. For Calvin, even as Paul examines his defects he does not forget what he has received and thus "rests in the grace of God" (155.28). All is summarized for Calvin in 7:25b, "I with the mind serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." Paul teaches that on account of the ongoing remaining flesh, believers "never reach the goal of righteousness" and are always "defiled with much corruption." Yet because of the sanctification of the Spirit, they are also able to "understand and will aright" and thus serve the law of God with an "earnest desire of the heart" (155.35–42).

EXPLORING THE PORTRAITS: THE NATURE OF SIN, PERFECTION, AND (AGAIN) MERIT

The Nature of Sin

Aquinas focuses on the dynamic relationship between the mind and the *fomes*: although the *fomes* give rise to disordered desires that lead

the believer away from the good, the mind, having been healed by the grace of Christ, is able to put up a successful resistance to the *fomes* and instead choose the good. Calvin, on the other hand, is broader in his description, situating the struggle between the whole of the individual as “natural” and the whole of the individual as “taken over” by the Spirit, that is, sanctified. The believer is “as it were a twofold man.” Calvin grants that one can “understand and will aright” on account of grace, and that the Spirit creates “holy affections” that enable one to resist the flesh; he states clearly that Paul is not denying that he does some good. Yet the emphasis of Calvin’s interpretation is on the manner in which the effects of the flesh inhibit Paul’s ability to do the *perfect* good.²⁹ Aquinas, too, addresses Paul’s ability to do the perfect good, and like Calvin he denies a certain perfection of Paul.³⁰ Aquinas and Calvin agree that Paul continues to sin, and full healing does not occur until after death. As Aquinas demonstrates, as long as Paul remains in the flesh he remains a sinner in his struggle with his disordered desires. It is impossible to rid oneself entirely of the *fomes* in this life.

Yet Aquinas goes on to affirm that Paul performs truly good works that are meritorious, and that although Paul sins he remains justified on account of his intrinsic or transformative justice. Calvin, on the other hand, denies the meritorious nature of Paul’s works, as well as the notion that Paul has been transformed to the extent of having his justice as the grounds for justification. Even while being indwelt with the Spirit, Calvin distinguishes between the part of the believer’s nature that participates in the Spirit and the believer’s nature *in se*, which is sinful and thus removes any consideration of one’s possession of justice as the grounds for justification. Given the agreements between Aquinas and Calvin above, how do they come to such different judgments? One of the keys pertains to their understanding of perfection, which I address in the next section. Presently, I address another key to their differing interpretations: their judgments regarding the nature of Paul’s sin.

For Aquinas, grace has brought healing to Paul’s reason and to such an extent that Paul does not consent to the sinful desires of concupiscence. The *fomes peccati* are still indeed present, and due to their presence Paul commits the *venial* sin of omission by failing to prevent

²⁹ On this point, see Muller, “Scimus Enim Quod Lex Spiritualis Est,” 234–5.

³⁰ See below for more on perfection.

the rise of his disordered desires.³¹ But it is important that the sin is only venial, as can be seen from *ST I-II*, q. 74, a. 4, where Aquinas asks whether sin (generally speaking) is compatible with virtue. Aquinas argues that there is a way that sin is compatible with virtue, such that one can both be justified (i.e. possess the virtues of faith, hope, and love) and commit sin. But this is where the distinction between mortal and venial sin is crucial. The sin compatible with charity is venial sin but not mortal sin. Mortal sin puts one in a state of damnation by being contrary to charity; if charity is extinguished by one act of mortal sin, the other virtues disappear as virtues. In *ST I-II*, q. 87, a. 3, Aquinas expounds upon his reason for rooting eternal punishment in an act against charity. Charity is the principle by which a person adheres to the last end of the divine order, that end being God. Aquinas then asserts that if the principle by which a person takes part in a particular order is destroyed, there is a debt of punishment corresponding to the disturbance of the order. Mortal sin destroys the principle of charity in the divine order and thus incurs the corresponding debt of eternal punishment, which is the proportionate punishment to the severity of destroying charity. Venial sin does not do this, since a person may be too much or too little intent on a particular thing in the order, but he or she does not have preference for these things above the last end.³² Venial sin, then, is not contrary to charity, and thus venial sin does not remove one from a state of justification. Aquinas can thus affirm that Paul both commits (venial) sins and remains in a justified state before God on account of the possession of justice.³³

Calvin, on the other hand, differs from Aquinas on the nature of Paul's sin in two primary ways. First, although Calvin maintains that

³¹ In *ST I-II*, q. 77, a. 8, Aquinas gives three ways in which a sin may be considered venial. First, from its cause (*ex causa*), that is, if the sin has a cause that should receive pardon (*venia*) (e.g. ignorance, weakness); second, from its issue (*ex eventu*), that is, all sins become venial through repentance (i.e. they receive pardon [*venia*]); third, from its genre (*ex genere*) (e.g. an idle word). It is possible, however, that if a venial sin is committed regularly, it can destroy charity by forming a contrary vice.

³² *ST I-II*, q. 87, a. 5.

³³ From this account, it becomes clearer what the effects would be if one rejected the venial/mortal distinction and instead maintained that all sins are mortal. On Aquinas's account, one would be unable to stand in a state of justification in this life. But this is untenable, since people are justified and reach salvation. Therefore, the justice by which one stands at peace with God must be something "alien" to that person, something that is imputed to a person in such a way that our (mortal) sins do not render it void. This is exactly the move that Calvin makes.

Paul's healing is partial, even if ever increasing, Calvin claims that the very presence of the sinful desires damns the believer, which is not the case for Aquinas.³⁴ For Calvin, disordered or depraved affections are sinful "however much we may withhold consent" (142.4–6). He explicitly argues against the "Papists" who "fiercely maintain that [concupiscence] in the regenerate is not sin" (142.12). Commenting in his *Antidote* to the Council of Trent, Calvin points to 7:14–25 as a demonstration that "sin" does not stand merely for the cause or punishment of sin, since Paul calls it a "law" and "evil." Instead, Paul is demonstrating that "repugnance to the law of God is truly sin," and therefore concupiscence "of its own nature is sin."³⁵ In his commentary on 7:7, where Paul references the commandment "Thou shall not covet," Calvin makes the object of the commandment not a particular action but the covetous desires themselves. For Calvin, the commandments go deeper (or "higher") in their requirements for uprightness than can be found in either civic laws or in the philosophy. Although civic laws punish "intention [*consilia*]" and philosophers "with greater refinement" locate vice and virtue in the "mind [*animus*]," God penetrates deeper into one's nature and declares concupiscence, which is "more concealed than the will," to be sin.³⁶ For Calvin, then, Romans 7 ends the controversy surrounding whether believers are able to truly keep the commandments of the law. The answer is no on account of the ongoing presence of disordered desires. Thus for Calvin, believers are unable to stand just before God based on their transformation.³⁷

Calvin's position on concupiscence raises the question of his relationship to the inherited Augustinian position on the topic. Barbara

³⁴ In his commentary on Romans 8:1, Aquinas engages the thought of "some" (Aquinas may be thinking of Anselm [see *ST I-II*, q. 89, a. 5]) who hold that the movements of concupiscence are damnable in unbelievers, although not in believers by virtue of being "in Christ Jesus." But according to Aquinas, these movements are not damnable in unbelievers either, since the desire has not reached the consent of reason, which is a requirement of a damnable sin (i.e. a mortal sin) (see *ST I-II*, q. 79, a. 4). Therefore, the movements of concupiscence are damnable for neither unbelievers nor believers (§597–98; see *ST I-II*, q. 89, a. 5).

³⁵ Calvin, *Antidote*, 87.

³⁶ In *Inst.* 2.8.49 Calvin, while commenting on the Tenth Commandment, distinguishes between "intention [*consilium*]" and "coveting [*concupiscentia*]," the former being the "deliberate consent of will where lust subjects the heart [*deliberata voluntatis consensio, ubi animum libido subiugavit*]," while the latter, which is that which is prohibited by the Tenth Commandment, can exist without such deliberation or consent of the mind.

³⁷ Calvin, *Antidote*, 134.

Pitkin argues that one of the “most significant” departures of the Reformers from the dominant consensus on sin was Luther’s claim, followed by Calvin, that postbaptismal concupiscence was sin. Pitkin states: “Though Luther appealed to Augustine to support his view that the concupiscence that remains after baptism is still sin, Augustine’s own position is more likely that postbaptismal concupiscence is *vitium* but not sin.”³⁸ At least for sixteenth-century Catholic commentators, one of the principal departures of the “heretics” from the Augustinian tradition, argues Steinmetz, “especially Lutheran heretics,” is that “they regard any stirring of concupiscence as sinful in itself apart from the will’s consent.”³⁹ Christopher Allen argues, however, that it is *Trent* that departed from earlier Catholic teaching by denying sin in the justified.⁴⁰

First, in terms of how Calvin himself viewed his position in relation to Augustine, Calvin cites numerous passages from Augustine in his *Antidote*, with the most prominent one taken from Augustine’s fifth book against Julian, and concludes that Augustine held that “the concupiscence of the flesh, which the Good Spirit resists, is also sin, because there is disobedience in it against the dominion of the mind, and the punishment of sin because inflicted on the demerits of the disobedient, and the cause of sin from defect of will or corruption of nature.”⁴¹ Calvin is a little less certain about the continuity of his position with Augustine’s in *Inst.* 3.3.10, however. Calvin agrees that Augustine at times seems to deny that remaining concupiscence is sin: “There is this difference apparently between Augustine and us, that while he admits that believers, so long as they are in the body, are so liable to concupiscence that they cannot but feel it, he does not venture to give this disease the name of sin. He is contented with giving it the name of infirmity, and says, that it only becomes sin when either external act or consent is added to conception or apprehension; that is, when the will yields to the first desire.” But Calvin also acknowledges: “Augustine himself does not always refrain from using the name sin.” We find that at least in Calvin’s mind Augustine was

³⁸ Barbara Pitkin, “Nothing but Concupiscence: Calvin’s Understanding of Sin and the *Via Augustini*,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 34 (1999): 367.

³⁹ Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 305.

⁴⁰ Allen, “The Pastoral and Political Implications of Trent on Justification: A Response to the ARCIC Agreed Statement *Salvation and the Church*,” *Churchman* 103 (1989): 15–31; cited in Lane, *Justification by Faith*, 170.

⁴¹ Calvin, *Antidote*, 88.

a bit ambiguous on the issue, and therefore certain passages from Augustine could be brought to Calvin's defense while others seemed to highlight that Calvin had gone beyond Augustine in his pronouncements on the sinfulness of concupiscence.

For Aquinas, I note, such tension in Augustine's language contributes to the need to distinguish between types of sin such as mortal and venial. The venial-mortal distinction brings us to one of the weaknesses in the accounts of Pitkin, Steinmetz, and Allen, who do not sufficiently engage the distinction (and its implications).⁴² Calvin approvingly acknowledges that there are those who hold "desire without deliberate consent" to be sin. The problem, however, is that they call it *venial* and they limit sin proper (i.e. mortal) to a *direct* transgression of the Tenth Commandment.⁴³ Calvin sought to universalize the sin of concupiscence by rooting it in something prior to the deliberate act, that is, in the powers of the soul itself (*Inst.* 2.8.58), and he established this sin as a mortal sin (*Inst.* 2.8.59). In fact, for Calvin there is only mortal sin. This brings us to the second major interpretive difference between Calvin and Aquinas on the nature of sin in Romans 7:14-25. Underlying Calvin's articulation of sinful concupiscence is Calvin's rejection of the distinction between venial and mortal sin. Calvin explicitly rejects the distinction between mortal and venial sin at *Inst.* 2.8.58-59, claiming that all sin "is a violation of the law, upon which God's judgment is pronounced without exception." For Calvin, all sin is mortal sin, and thus all of Paul's works by being tainted by these *affectus* are mortally sinful before the judgment of God and deserve shame and death rather than reward. Although Calvin admits in his *Institutes* that the stain on the works of the saints is "slight," Calvin claims that Paul

⁴² It is quite surprising that in A. N. S. Lane's otherwise excellent work *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue* that, when addressing the topic of "Does Sin Remain in the Christian" (167-76), Lane says nothing about the mortal-venial distinction, which is crucial for understanding the Catholic position on remaining sin in the justified.

⁴³ For Calvin, Augustine is right, if rightly understood, in claiming that the whole law is included in the Tenth Commandment, since this commandment straightforwardly condemns the concupiscence (the "hidden disease") from which stem the evil actions addressed by the other commandments; since there is a "great difference between a deliberate purpose and the appetites by which we are provoked" (*multum inter deliberatam voluntatem interest, et appetites quibus titillamur* [142.103-104]), this last commandment clearly demonstrates that even the "appetites" and "corrupt lusts" (*vitiosa cupiditas*) that move to evil are condemned, "however much we withhold our consent" (*utcumque non accedat consensus* [142.105-106]).

continues to commit mortal sin by breaking the Tenth Commandment, "You shall not covet." In light of the Tenth Commandment, Calvin addresses those who teach that venial sin is "desire without deliberate assent, which does not long remain in the heart."⁴⁴ Calvin refutes the notion that this desire does not break the Tenth Commandment. For Calvin, the desire itself would not surface did not the individual "lack those things required in the law."⁴⁵ Since the command is to love God with the whole heart, mind, and soul, "unless all the powers of the soul are intent on loving God, we have already abandoned obedience to the law."⁴⁶ The comfort for the believer, however, is that although of its own nature concupiscence is mortal sin, for the justified "it is not imputed and the guilt is abolished by the grace of Christ."⁴⁷

Perfection

Much of Aquinas's and Calvin's different assessments of sin and the ability (or inability) to obey the law center on different understandings of *perfection*. For Calvin, obedience to the law consists in obedience that flows from "perfect love," so that "in the judgment of God nothing is genuine and good, save what flows from perfect love to Him."⁴⁸ If a person has perfect love for God, however, Calvin believes, there would not arise the disordered desires of the flesh, nor would there arise any thoughts at all contrary to love.⁴⁹ Perfect love consists in the whole of one's being fully participating in obedience to God without the presence of any perverse desire. Calvin claims in *Inst.* 2.8.50 that he learned from Augustine, "God commands a strong and ardent love, which is not to be impeded by any portion, however minute, of concupiscence." The very

⁴⁴ *Inst.* 2.8.58.

⁴⁵ Calvin's position reflects what Aquinas would call a despotic rather than political relationship between the soul and the lower appetites. Calvin conveys the idea that if the soul did not lack "those things of the law" (i.e. love for God and neighbor), disordered desires would not arise. See Margaret Miles, "Theology, Anthropology, and the Human Body in Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*," 310.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Antidote*, 87. Calvin agrees with Trent that God hates nothing in the justified, but only because "God pardons what he might justly hate" (86).

⁴⁸ Calvin, *Antidote*, 130, 156–8. At *Inst.* 2.8.51, Calvin claims that "nothing more is required" for perfection than obedience to the Ten Commandments through charity.

⁴⁹ See *Inst.* 2.8.50: "Were your mind wholly imbued with charity, no portion of it would remain for the entrance of such thoughts [that are hurtful to your brother]. Insofar, therefore, as the mind is devoid of charity, it must be under the influence of concupiscence."

presence of disordered desires thus demonstrates an individual's imperfect love and therefore the corresponding imperfect obedience in keeping God's commandments.⁵⁰ In *Inst.* 2.7.5, Calvin again notes Augustine, this time on imperfection of our love for God in this life, and states, "The law cannot be fulfilled in this life of the flesh, if we observe the weakness of our own nature." Calvin concludes on perfection: "We never attain to [the perfection of charity] unless we fulfill all the parts of charity; and will thence infer, that as all are most remote from such fulfillment, the hope of perfection is excluded."⁵¹ Disordered desires are not removed in this life, and therefore it is impossible for any person in this life to obey the law with perfect charity. Since no work of the believer is perfect, no work of the believer is meritorious, but rather the work must be first "justified" before God receives it and grants rewards for it. This occurs for believers due to being united to Christ through faith.

Aquinas, however, also admits, like Calvin, that Paul does not have the perfect love for God that will occur only in beatitude. He agrees that there are disordered desires in Paul that will be removed only through the resurrection. But Aquinas still maintains that Paul commits condignly meritorious works and thus truly fulfills the law. How can Aquinas hold this position? One reason pertains to Aquinas's understanding of virtue, and the other to Aquinas's anthropology. First, Aquinas can affirm that charity, as a virtue, truly exists in Paul, as well as faith, while maintaining that Paul will have perfect charity and the clearest intellectual vision of God only in beatitude.⁵² Aquinas distinguishes between the possession of the virtue of charity and possessing the most intense participation in the virtue of charity.⁵³ When God infuses charity into the

⁵⁰ Calvin, *Antidote*, 160–1. Because Calvin believes that Trent interprets concupiscence as "a mere whetstone to sharpen virtue" (87), Calvin derides the Fathers of Trent for making "the foulest lust praiseworthy trials of virtue" (161).

⁵¹ *Inst.* 3.18.8.

⁵² One of the best contemporary accounts of Aquinas's teaching on perfection, from which my analysis draws substantially, is Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*. Most pertinent to my analysis is Chapter 4, "Aquinas on the Way to Christian Perfection."

⁵³ Aquinas looks at fulfilling the commandments of the law in two ways: in terms of the *substance* of the work, and in terms of the *mode*. For example, a person can give money to the poor (i.e. the substance of the work), seeking to gain the praise of his friends (i.e. the mode); or a person can give money to the poor (i.e. the substance) out of love for God (i.e. the mode). The right mode for obedience is charity for God. It is noteworthy that Aquinas removes the mode of keeping the law from the punishment of the law (*ST* I-II, q. 100, a. 9). Thus, individuals avoid punishment because they fulfilled its substance, even if from the wrong principle (*ST* I-II, q. 100, a. 10). To be

soul, the individual obtains a perfection in charity that consists not in loving God as much as is humanly possible but rather in removing all obstacles contrary to the love of God.⁵⁴ It is a perfection in that the person's movement of love for God rests in God as the person's supernatural end. This love manifests itself in joyful obedience to the law of love and avoidance of willing sin and succumbing to concupiscence. For Aquinas, then, individuals can possess love for God by possessing the virtue of charity while also declaring that they do not love God to the extent they hope to in the future. In *ST* I-II, q. 67, a. 6, Aquinas agrees that "the charity of the wayfarer cannot attain to the perfection of the charity of heaven." But he roots the less perfect nature of wayfarer charity not in the virtue of charity itself, as if the charity of the wayfarer were of a different kind than the charity of heaven ("Charity is not done away by the perfection of glory but remains identically the same") but rather in the cause of charity, which is one's knowledge of God; as that knowledge becomes perfect in heaven, so does one's charity reach the highest perfection.⁵⁵ Because of the different degrees of perfection of charity, Aquinas can agree with Calvin that Paul's works are not done out of perfect charity, if by this Calvin means the highest perfection of knowledge and charity that occurs in heaven. The fact that Paul commits the venial sin of omission for failing to avoid the rise of the disordered desires further demonstrates that Paul has a greater perfection yet to attain.⁵⁶ Since in the present life a person can possess the virtue of charity in a greater or lesser way, Aquinas can affirm that the same work can be done out of more or less charity, so that the same *condignly* meritorious work could be performed with even greater love!⁵⁷ But the

sure, such an act would still not be considered a meritoriously just act before God, since such acts require God's grace and are performed in charity (*ST* I-II, q. 100, a. 12).

⁵⁴ Colón-Emeric, *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection*, 109. Colón-Emeric makes three distinctions regarding perfect charity. Considered on the part of the beloved, perfect charity consists in loving God as much as God is lovable, which no creature can do in this life or in the next. Considered on the part of the lover, perfect charity can be considered in two ways. The first sense consists of the lover loving as much as is humanly possible, thus loving God at all times in every act. This occurs only in glory. The second sense consists in removing obstacles contrary to the love of God. This is the perfection of charity possible in the present life.

⁵⁵ On the relationship between knowledge and love in Aquinas, see Michael Sherwin, *By Knowledge & by Love: Charity and Knowledge in the Moral Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011).

⁵⁶ See *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 8, ad. 2.

⁵⁷ Aquinas's use of virtue ethics undergirds his vision for the whole of justification as both complete and progressive. Justification is fully given at one's initial justification,

fact that the works of the believer are done as a participation in the divine elevation and movement, that is, out of charity, however intense charity may be, these works therefore truly fulfill the law, because faith and love are truly present within the believer due to God's grace, even if not present in their highest intensity.⁵⁸

What about the presence of the disordered desires? Why for Aquinas do they not render all works as "tainted" and therefore unable to truly fulfill the law? The answer is due in part to Aquinas's understanding of the relationship between human reason and the carnal appetites from which stem the disordered desires. Aquinas, drawing from Aristotle, likens the relationship between reason and the carnal appetites in political terms, describing the rule of reason over the carnal appetites as a "royal and political sovereignty" rather than a "despotic sovereignty."⁵⁹ What this means for Aquinas is that the carnal appetites, although ruled by reason, have a certain independence from reason and therefore can act without the command of reason and at times counter to the command of reason. With the coming of grace, the virtues of faith and charity now reside in the rational part of the human—the intellect and will—from which come works that fulfill the law; but the carnal appetites have yet to be healed.⁶⁰ The result is a dynamic in which carnal desires arise that do not stem from reason's command and are contrary to reason's command but are subsequently checked by reason from reaching the place of consent. The graced individual can therefore avoid mortal sin by not consenting to the desires and instead fulfill the commandments of the law through charity while struggling with the carnal desires and even committing

that is, the individual is truly made just through grace and declared at peace with God. Nevertheless, the individual is able to increase in his or her participation in the virtues of faith, hope, and love, and therefore increase in justification inasmuch as the individual participates more deeply in the virtues of faith, hope, and love as those virtues intensify within the believer.

⁵⁸ It must be kept in mind that Aquinas's claim that people can possess perfect charity as wayfarers is not the equivalent of claiming wayfarers have perfect conformity to Christ: "The adoption as sons of God is through a certain conformity of the image of the nature son of God. Now this takes place in two ways: first, by the grace of the wayfarer, which is imperfect conformity; secondly, by glory, which is perfection conformity" (*ST* III, q. 45, a. 1). Possessing a form of perfect charity as a wayfarer still leaves the wayfarer imperfectly conformed to Christ.

⁵⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 9, a. 2, ad. 3; I-II, q. 17, a. 7.

⁶⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 8.

venial sin. As noted above, the habit of charity and venial sins are able to coexist.⁶¹

It is interesting to note that both Aquinas and Calvin employ Augustine to arrive at different conclusions regarding the perfection of charity. Aquinas uses Augustine as his authoritative text for *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 8 to argue *for* the presence of a perfect charity in this life and therefore the ability to fulfill the law even with the presence of remaining “flesh,” while Calvin uses Augustine in *Inst.* 2.7.5 and *Inst.* 2.8.50 to argue *against* the presence of perfect charity in this life and therefore the inability to fulfill the law due to the presence of remaining “flesh.” Aquinas does recognize in *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 8 that Augustine at times sounds contrary to his position, quoting Augustine as saying, “Whatever kindles charity quenches cupidity, but where charity is perfect, cupidity is done away altogether,” which sounds strikingly similar to the point Calvin makes regarding perfect charity. Aquinas, however, once again employs the crucial distinction between venial and mortal sins in order to claim that in the term “cupidity” Augustine is addressing venial sins, which are, again, compatible with the habit of charity, so that from Aquinas’s perspective although Augustine is right as it pertains to the perfection of charity in glory, where all cupidity will be removed, his comment does not detract from claiming a certain perfection of charity in the wayfarer that fulfills the law, as mentioned above. Calvin cites Augustine against perfect charity as stating: “Love so follows knowledge that no one can love God perfectly who does not first fully know his goodness. While we wander upon the earth, ‘we see in a mirror dimly.’ Therefore, it follows that our love is imperfect” (*Inst.* 2.7.5). Calvin concludes: “It is impossible, then, in this flesh to fulfill the law, if we observe the weakness of our nature.” Aquinas would understand Augustine’s statement as addressing the perfection of charity that corresponds to loving God as much as is humanly possible, which occurs only in glory, where God is beheld “face to face.” For Aquinas, this does not negate the presence of charity in this life that enables a fulfillment of the law corresponding to the wayfarer perfection.

It seems that from Aquinas’s perspective, Calvin correctly points to the lack of love that humans have for God in this wayfarer life; believers do not love God as much as is humanly possible. He is correct to

⁶¹ *ST* II-II, q. 24, a. 8.

note the presence of the flesh as a sign of not having a most perfect love for God and the dimness of one's present vision of God as hindering Christians from this most perfect love. Believers do not presently fulfill the law of love in the highest way and must await glory to do so. But for Aquinas, Calvin uses heavenly standards to judge (and condemn) the wayfarer life, thereby not providing enough space for the presence of disordered desires as compatible with a form of charity that fulfills the law. Ultimately, Calvin fails to appreciate the participatory nature of the believer's works understood as the fruit of union with Christ. Calvin, although upholding a form of partial participation in the Spirit, sets before the believer an *extrinsic* standard—the standard of heavenly perfection or the standard of the law⁶²—by which the believer is then judged to be sinful. Calvin does not consider the intrinsic nature of a believer's actions as being meritorious by virtue of their participation in the divine movement, in that the acts of love of the believer reach their supernatural end in God through the believer's participation in the divine activity. Aquinas affirms a form of love for God possible in this present life that does fulfill the law, albeit not in the most perfect way. By being moved by God through these virtues instilled in the believer by grace, the believer is able to perform con-dignly meritorious works that truly fulfill the law even while struggling with the flesh and hoping for greater love in the future.

Merit

From our reflection on the nature of sin and perfection, we can see why Calvin rejects the meritorious nature of the believer's works. Calvin is well aware that his portrait of Paul in Romans 7:14–25, particularly his claim that even Paul's best works are accepted by God only by being first pardoned of their sin in Christ (151.23–25),⁶³

⁶² See Chapter 2.

⁶³ Calvin makes a similar argument in his commentary on Romans 4, where he states: "The spots and blemishes of the works (of the justified) are covered by the purity of Christ, lest they should come into judgment, and being unpolluted by any defilements, thereby considered righteous. It is quite clear that apart from such forbearances no human work at all can please God" (85.73–76). These observations support Packer's claim that the Reformers used Romans 7:14–25 to show that "there is sin in the best Christians' best works" ("The 'Wretched Man' Revisited," 71). Richard Muller, in his introduction to Dewey J. Hoitenga, Jr., *John Calvin and the Will: A Critique and Corrective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1997), 8, reminds those who study Calvin's understanding of the will to keep in mind "the context of debate in which

undermines the doctrine of merit being taught by his opponents, who assert, according to Calvin: "A man once for all reconciled to God through faith in Christ may be reckoned righteous before God by good works and be accepted by the merit of them."⁶⁴ For Calvin, as he makes clear throughout his Romans commentary, the works of even the saintliest of saints are always tainted and therefore cannot be considered meritorious. "The spots and blemishes of the works (of the justified) are covered by the purity of Christ, lest they should come into judgment, and being unpolluted by any defilements, thereby considered righteous. It is quite clear that apart from such forbearances no human work at all can please God" (85.73–76). Given the imperfection of the believer's work, no merit is due to them.

For Aquinas, however, Paul's good works that occur through the supernaturally infused gift of charity truly fulfill the law and in such a way as to be condignly meritorious. The presence of disordered concupiscence does not de facto negate the condignly meritorious nature of a good work; Paul is able to possess charity without charity existing as it will in the future state of highest perfection (i.e. beatitude). The good work performed in Paul's imperfect state does not necessitate the claim that the good work is "tainted," but rather Paul looks forward to the day that his obedience will be unhindered, that is, without the presence of the *fomes*.⁶⁵ The fact that Paul is not yet perfected but performs a meritorious work reveals that for Aquinas a condignly meritorious work is not the equivalent of a work done in the state of perfection. The same work considered condignly meritorious could be done out of greater charity, in greater faith, and with greater hope; the work's condignity refers not to a work of highest perfection but to the fact that it truly participates in the divine healing, elevation, and movement through grace, and thereby fulfills the substance of God's command in the proper way.

Calvin lived and worked and his assumption of the non-meritorious nature of any and all good works."

⁶⁴ *Inst.* 3.14.11. This is far from Aquinas's position on merit; see Chapter 6.

⁶⁵ For a more thorough discussion of Aquinas's doctrine of merit, see Joseph Wawrykow, *God's Grace and Human Action: 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Michael Root, "Aquinas, Merit, and Reformation Theology After the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*," *Modern Theology* 20 (2004): 5–22.

CONCLUSION

In order to fully assess Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of Romans 7:14–25, it is crucial to see how their respective interpretations play out in Romans 8. Their vision of the Spirit's transformation of the believer's soul deeply impacts how they understand Paul's claim that there is now no condemnation for the believer and how they understand the life in the Spirit described by Paul. Nevertheless, a few comments are in order. Once again we find Aquinas's view of participation and Calvin's chastened participatory vision embodied in their discourse on Romans 7:14–25. Aquinas sees the transformation of soul enacted by the Spirit in terms of the soul's participation in the divine life. Although the presence of disorder remains in the believer, the believer lives the divine life through acting on faith, hope, and love, and insofar as they act on faith, hope, and love, their actions are not mortally sinful. In fact, they are meritorious, because acting on faith, hope, and love is simultaneously the act of God drawing the believer to the beatific vision. These actions do not reflect the highest level of perfection, but they are not sinful on that account. Calvin, on the other hand, consistently sets before the believer the extrinsic standard of perfection reflected in the law by which he pronounces all the believer's activity sinful and worthy of damnation *in se* but pardoned and accepted *in Christo*. The actions of the believer are therefore not intrinsically meritorious by virtue of their participation in the divine movement. Although Calvin seems to search at times for something akin to the venial–mortal distinction, he finally judges all sin to be morally sinful, and therefore the believer cannot stand before God just on account of his or her justness. The question arises: Does Calvin's less participatory portrait enable him to do justice to Romans 8? I argue that it does not. Between his shortcomings in reading Romans 8 and his difficulty interpreting key passages in Romans 6 (e.g. those relating obedience to justification), aspects of his interpretation of the Spirit's transforming work on the believer is brought into question—aspects that I believe are addressed by Aquinas's stronger participatory reading of Romans.

6

Life in the Spirit

Romans 8:1–18

The tension throughout 7:14–25 is quite palpable. Paul is clearly setting before the reader a struggle of sorts, and the reader is likely waiting for some form of resolution. But the resolution does not really come in Romans 7. There is a bit of a reprieve when Paul declares, “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord” at 7:25a, but then at 7:25b he quickly reasserts the presence of the struggle. The reader is finally provided some perspective when Paul declares at 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.” But even here questions abound. What is the relationship between 8:1 and Paul’s teaching in 7:14–25? Upon what basis is a person said to have no condemnation? Further on we begin to wonder: What is the “law of the spirit of life,” and how has it set one free from “the law of sin and death”? What is the relationship between being set free from the law of sin and death and having no condemnation?

The answers provided by Aquinas and Calvin incorporate all that has been discussed up to this point. Paul’s teaching in Romans 8 forces to the surface the consequences of Aquinas’s and Calvin’s participatory views of God’s salvific economy. Whether justification transforms the sinner into a just person, whether there is a difference between being just *in se* and *in Christo*, whether there is a role for works in justification, whether the believer can perform truly good works, and whether the believer’s actions are intrinsic to God’s sanctifying activity are all topics that impact their interpretations of Romans 8. In sum, Aquinas roots the cause of “no damnation” (8:1) in the transformative work of Christ’s grace on the human soul—there is nothing left in the believer, and nothing should arise in the future, that is damnable,

although the believer remains weak and subject to the *fomes* of sin—and Aquinas’s commentary on Romans 8 follows the transformative emphasis. Calvin, on the other hand, judges that believers are still condemnable *in se* due to the imperfect nature of sanctification, so that the declaration of “no condemnation” (8:1) must be Paul’s *return* to justification—our status *in Christo*—in order to “comfort” believers who recognize their ongoing (and damn-worthy) imperfection. In Calvin’s account, the transformative dimensions of Romans 8 are no longer *intrinsic* to Paul’s message of “comfort” but rather are relegated to “signs” indicating one’s possession of Christ’s imputed justice. Rather than seeing Calvin’s commentary on Romans 8 as a reflecting of his deep participatory soteriology, as others have argued, I argue that careful attention to Calvin’s exegetical judgments in Romans 8 illuminates the nonparticipatory elements in his soteriology. This becomes especially clear in the light of Aquinas’s interpretation.

WHY IS THERE NO DAMNATION/ CONDEMNATION?¹

Central to Aquinas’s and Calvin’s interpretations of Romans 8 is how they connect 8:1 and 7:14–25. Aquinas sees a continuous unfolding of Paul’s discourse from Romans 6–7 to Romans 8, such that Paul now discusses another dimension of the effects of Christ’s grace, namely, freedom from damnation (§595). Paul had previously demonstrated that Christ’s grace provided freedom from the servitude of sin (§406) and servitude to the law (§518). Now he describes how the Spirit’s transforming work establishes freedom from damnation. Aquinas’s interpretation of our freedom from damnation flows directly from his engagement with Romans 6 and 7, which itself follows from his interpretation of Romans 1–4. Aquinas argued in Romans 6 that Christ’s grace removes the *culpa* (“debt”) and *macula* (“stain”) of sin while lessening the effects of the habit of sin and *fomes*. Aquinas further explained in 7:14–25 that on account of the grace of Christ, a Christian may still experience the *motus concupiscentiae* (“movement

¹ Aquinas’s text reads “damnation,” while Calvin’s text reads “condemnation.” The underlying meaning is largely the same, namely, the idea of being rejected by God due to sin.

of inordinate desire”), but a graced Christian does not consent and act upon those desires in a manner that destroys charity through mortal sin (§588). The graced person is “free from the body of death,” in that at the present time the corruption of the body is unable to draw the soul into sinning; in the future resurrection, sin and death will be completely expelled from the body (§593). For Aquinas, then, freedom from damnation is rooted in the Spirit’s transformation of the soul and consists of both the removal of prior sins and the prevention of future mortal sins.²

These two foci—the past liberation from sin and the future prevention from sinning—inform his understanding of 8:1, which states: “There is therefore no damnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh.” Aquinas divides 8:1 into two parts reflecting the two “conditions” for receiving the promise of no damnation: (a) being “in Christ Jesus,” and (b) not walking “according to the flesh.” I will discuss the second condition in the next section below.³ The first condition, being in Christ, consists of one being “incorporated [*incorporatus*]” into Christ. For Aquinas, incorporation into Christ occurs not merely through faith but through faith, love, and the sacrament of faith (§596). The inclusion of love as a central component for incorporation into Christ reflects Aquinas’s doctrine of justification, which consists not in “grasping” Christ’s justice as extrinsic through an act of faith, as with Calvin, but rather in the Spirit justifying the soul, enabling a person to participate in Christ’s justice through the indwelling of grace and infusion of the virtues of faith, hope, and love. Aquinas also highlights both faith and love in connection with being in Christ due to his distinction between “formed” faith as faith working through love and “unformed” faith as faith apart from love.⁴ In terms of the “sacrament of faith,” that is, baptism, Aquinas refers to a frequently used verse for the sacramental efficacy of baptism, namely Galatians 3:27, “As many of you as were

² For a discussion on Aquinas’s interpretation of 8:1, see Bertrand de Margerie, SJ, “Mort sacrificielle du Christ et peine de mort chez saint Thomas d’Aquin, commentateur de saint Paul,” *Revue Thomiste* 83 (1983): 394–417.

³ The analysis does not therefore follow Aquinas’s textual division between freedom from *culpa* (8:2–9) and freedom from *poena* (8:10–17). I have chosen instead to address the qualifications of being in Christ (8:2–4a) and walking according to the Spirit (8:4b–6), both of which fall under the broader division of freedom from *culpa*. These themes provide the best material for an engagement with Calvin’s commentary.

⁴ See Chapter 1; cf. ST III, q. 49, a. 1, ad. 5.

baptized into Christ have put on Christ,” as well as John 15:6, “If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers.”⁵ The result of being incorporated into the sacrificial work of Christ is that both the *culpa* and *poena* of sin are removed (§596).⁶ With the *culpa* and *poena* removed, the believer is no longer under the bondage of damnation, for the graced believer possesses nothing damnable.⁷

For Calvin, on the other hand, we recall that the Christian is wholly divided between the sanctified part of his or her nature, which is ongoing and ever increasing, and the remaining unsanctified part. The Christian along with his or her works is thus always divided, being tainted and always worthy of condemnation but pardoned and accepted in Christ. Paul’s assertion that believers have “no condemnation” cannot, then, be the consequence of the Spirit’s transformation of the soul. Rather, Calvin claims that the declaration of no condemnation marks Paul’s *return* to justification in order to “console” the Christian faithful, who may have “trembling consciences” when they recognize that they are still “beset by sin” (156.11–12). Paul offers “consolation” to believers by addressing the mercy of God in pardoning and forgiving the ongoing imperfection of the believer (156.15–16).⁸ Calvin’s assertion that Paul returns to the topic of justification is only possible due to the already established division between justification and transformation, with the latter under the distinct category of “sanctification.” Yet Paul’s supposed return to justification leaves Calvin’s commentary unfolding somewhat disjointedly. Romans 1–5

⁵ The connection between John 15 with Romans 8 becomes clearer by noting Aquinas’s commentary on John 15:4 (*S. Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura*, §1992), where Aquinas claims that the “bearing fruit” of John 15:4 is manifest in avoiding sin and performing good works, both of which are themes in Romans 8; cf. *ST* III, q. 48, a. 6, ad. 2; q. 49, a. 3, ad. 1.

⁶ In his *Expositio in orationem dominum*, art. 5, Aquinas explains that there are two aspects to sin: *culpa*, which offends God, and *poena*, which is what is owed (*debetur*) for *culpa*. In contrition, *culpa* is remitted, and eternal *poena* is converted (*communicatur*) to temporal *poena*, for which we are then obligated to satisfy (<<http://www.corpusthomicum.org>>, accessed 13 July 2009); cf. *ST* III, q. 49, a. 3, ad. 2.

⁷ I note that the second reason for no damnation, avoiding sin in the future, is rooted in and dependent upon the first, namely being in Christ. To avoid sin in the future is to maintain and deepen what has been established through the believer’s union with Christ *sola fide non merito* and *sola gratia*.

⁸ For a helpful comparison of Calvin’s exegesis of 8:1–11 with Ambrosiaster’s and Chrysostom’s, focusing on the meaning of law, anthropological terminology, Christology, and ethics and redemption, see David Steinmetz, “Calvin and Patristic Exegesis,” in *Calvin in Context*, 122–40.

addresses the free gift of justification. Romans 6 marks a sharp turn to sanctification (which continues into Romans 7) in order to clarify possible abuses of Paul's teaching on justification. Now, in the midst of discussing sanctification, Paul returns to the doctrine of justification at Romans 8, although he makes no mention of justification and seems to connect the sanctification of Romans 7 with having no condemnation expressed in Romans 8. The "return" is necessary, however, since for Calvin sanctification leaves the Christian still damnable *in se*. The notion of no condemnation therefore must be found elsewhere, and this elsewhere is justification understood as Christ's justice imputed. Since justification is not transforming, the transformation addressed in Romans 8, as we shall see, is relegated to being merely "signs" that demonstrate Romans 1–5 does in fact apply to the struggling believer.

How does Calvin unfold Paul's "return" to justification? Calvin highlights three interconnected ideas at work throughout 8:1–17: (1) Christian imperfection (see Romans 6–7); (2) God's mercy in pardoning and forgiving that imperfection (i.e. justification); (3) the regeneration of the Spirit (i.e. sanctification) (156.15–17). It is important to note, as Billings and others have done, that the transforming regenerating work of the Spirit plays an important role in 8:1–17. Calvin states in a similar vein to Aquinas that one obtains the promises of 8:1 "provided they live not in the flesh but in the Spirit." The believer's life in the Spirit is particularly important for Calvin as it relates to assurance, as I will discuss below. At the same time, the nonparticipatory elements are even more present and play a greater role in shaping Calvin's commentary on Romans 8. Calvin connects the absence of condemnation with the objective work of Christ and the pardon from the "guilt of death" that results from his justice being imputed to the sinner (i.e. God's mercy in pardoning and forgiving Christian imperfection). While the transformative work of the Spirit is always connected with the justifying work of Christ, the transformative work is not intrinsic to the *ratio* of having no condemnation. The grace of justification *rather than* sanctification enables one to have "no condemnation," leaving imputation *rather than* transformation doing the work in Romans 8. Through the "unmerited absolution" that results from justification, the believer can have "undisturbed peace with God [*tranquillam nobis cum Deo pacem*]" (157.56–57) and know that they are "beyond every danger of condemnation" (156.22). Since, according to Calvin, "the grace of regeneration is never disjoined [*disiungi*]

from the imputation of justice" (157.50–51), Calvin makes room for Paul's qualification at the end of 8:1, "who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit," by claiming that such walking is a necessary *qualification* accompanying justification that demarcates those who actually possess justification. But this makes regeneration play the similar subordinate role to justification as it does in Romans 6, namely, serving to counter the erroneous judgment that one may indulge in sin on account of God's forgiveness (i.e. justification). Paul's reference to regeneration in Romans 8 simply ensures that freedom from the curse does not permit the indulgence of the flesh (156.18–19), that free remission of sin is accompanied by repentance (157.68–69), that the mercy of God is not misused for indulging the flesh (157.70–71), and that Christ is not understood to be a minister of sin (160.61–62).⁹ This is clearly in contrast to Aquinas, for whom walking not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit is an *intrinsic* part of having no condemnation. Living life in Spirit is not only inseparable from having no damnation but is intrinsic to what it means to have no damnation. Calvin's nonparticipatory moves away from transformation as the basis for no condemnation, which rests in Christ's justice *extra nos*, coupled with his relegation of transformation to mere "signs," creates difficulties for his interpretation of the rest of Romans 8, especially at 8:4, "The justice of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit," as we shall see.

THE JUSTICE OF THE LAW AND THE LAWS OF THE SPIRIT AND OF SIN AND DEATH

Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of 8:2–4 are directly related to the basis for no damnation/condemnation. Aquinas continues his focus on the transforming work of the Spirit as intrinsic to Paul's claims, while Calvin is guided by the distinction between justification and transformation and the belief that believers are condemnable *in se* and unable to fulfill the law. Calvin's positions create difficulties for

⁹ For Calvin, the consolation of conscience brought by justification is only applicable "provided [*modo*] one does not live in the flesh but in the spirit" (156.14–15).

him when he arrives at 8:4, as noted above, but before arriving at 8:4 we must first understand how Aquinas and Calvin understand the “law of the spirit” and the “law of sin and death,” and how the law of the spirit “sets one free” from the law of sin and death.

Aquinas takes the *lex spiritus* at 8:2 as either the Holy Spirit himself, who “liberates” one from the law of sin and death by illuminating the intellect as to what should be done, as well as inclining the affections to act rightly (§602; see John 14:26); or the “proper effect” of the Holy Spirit—how the Spirit illuminates and inclines—which corresponds to “faith working through love”: faith illuminates the intellect as to what should be done and love inclines the affections to act rightly (§603). Aquinas’s distinction between, on the one hand, the Holy Spirit himself and, on the other hand, the effects of faith and love reflects his belief that the Holy Spirit enables the soul to have a created participation in the divine nature through grace. Aquinas’s distinction touches on a hotly debated topic throughout the medieval period rooted in Lombard’s *Sentences*, 1.17.6 (PL 192:566). The issue surrounded whether love is the Holy Spirit himself in the human soul, or whether love was a habit in the soul created by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰ Aquinas chooses to distinguish between the Spirit and love as something created in the soul, and this distinction pervades his commentary on Romans 8.¹¹ To give a few examples, Aquinas comments on 8:9, “If the Spirit of God dwells in you,” by adding “through love,” which is the result of grace in the soul; commenting on 8:10, “But if Christ is in you,” Aquinas adds: “through the grace of Christ or through the Holy Spirit,” not as if these are two different things but rather the latter (i.e. the Spirit’s indwelling) occurs in the mode of the former (i.e. grace). When Aquinas interprets the *lex spiritus* as the “new law” (*lex nova*), as noted, he does so in terms of either the Holy Spirit himself or that which the Spirit produces in the heart (§603). Thus for Aquinas faith working through love principally reflects the activity of the Spirit on the soul but in the mode of a person’s created nature and in a manner in which the human mind and will are secondary causal principles.¹²

¹⁰ For the development of this debate, see A. Vanneste, “Nature et grace dans la théologie du douzième siècle,” *ETL* 50 (1974): 181–214.

¹¹ See Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, lib. 1, d. 17, <<http://www.corpusthomisticum.org>>, accessed 12 August 2009.

¹² For a full account of the Spirit’s activity on the soul, one must include the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are dispositions instilled within the soul that render the person “receptive” to the Spirit’s action, enabling the Spirit to move the person “in a way that respects our *liberum arbitrium*” (Sherwin, *By Knowledge & By Love*, 165–6).

To live by grace and to be led by the Holy Spirit are equivalent realities viewed under different modes.¹³

It is noteworthy that Aquinas in no way hesitates at Paul's use of the term "law" when he speaks of the *lex spiritus*. This is not the case either in Calvin's commentary or in many Protestant commentaries contemporary with Calvin. Most dismiss the use of "law" through a rhetorical critique of the passage. Calvin claims that Paul has spoken "improperly" by calling the Spirit a law, while Melancton calls Paul's use of law a "figure of speech."¹⁴ Many contemporary interpretations follow suit. Luke Timothy Johnson, for example, claims that Paul "can't seem to restrain himself from using law in a punning fashion," concluding that Paul simply means by the law of the Spirit "the human experience of freedom."¹⁵ Ben Witherington III quotes directly from Johnson with approval.¹⁶ With these statements, all reflection on the term "law" in relation to the Spirit is rendered superfluous. But Aquinas sees things differently. To call the Spirit a "law" in 8:2 coalesces with Aquinas's general theory of law, which is taken from Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2, where Aristotle states that the intention of a lawgiver is to make citizens good (§602; 456). For Aquinas, a law is not given merely to indicate what is right and wrong—it is not merely a standard of comparison by which a person is judged to be just—but rather it is principally given with the intention of making a person just.¹⁷ This was, as I noted of Aquinas in Chapter 1, the purpose of God giving the Mosaic law, namely to make people just.¹⁸ But for Aquinas, the justice that renders one justified before God and at peace with God is unable to be obtained through obedience to precepts of the law but only through faith in Christ, who

¹³ See A. N. Williams, *The Ground of Union*, 79–80, who comments, "Contra Lombard, Aquinas argues that charity is something created in the soul, not the Holy Spirit *ipse* dwelling in the mind. Thomas' reason for rejecting Lombard's position springs not from any desire to diminish the reality of creaturely participation in the divine but rather to ensure the full and real agency of the human person" (79); see 87–9 for a discussion on Aquinas and the notion of "created grace."

¹⁴ Melancton, *Commentary on Romans*, 164.

¹⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 127.

¹⁶ Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 211.

¹⁷ See Chapter 3 and my comments on Aquinas's understanding of the relationship between acts and habits, in which acts not only flow from habits but also further one's participation in those habits.

¹⁸ See Chapter 1; *ST I-II*, q. 107, a. 2.

fulfills or perfects the Old Law. The Spirit himself is called a law in 8:2—the *lex nova* (“new law”) according to Aquinas—since the Spirit makes people just by enabling them to participate in Christ’s justice through the gifts of faith, hope, and charity.¹⁹ The Spirit therefore goes beyond a political law, which only indicates what ought to be done, and instead works interiorly to both illuminate the mind as to right and wrong (i.e. faith) and incline the affections to perform what is right (i.e. charity) (§602).

Aquinas then sets the *lex spiritus* in contrast to the “law of sin and death.” Paul claims that the law of the spirit “has liberated”²⁰ him from the law of sin and death. For Aquinas, the “law of sin and death” corresponds to the effects of sin, which include the effect of original sin in “the law of the *fomes*,” and the effect of one’s previous actual sins, which “holds people bound according to the mode of a law [*per modum legis*]” (§605).²¹ Both of these laws of sin produce spiritual and bodily death.²² On account of the Holy Spirit, however, these sins (i.e. original sin and actual sins) are “remitted,” as stated in John 20:22, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.”²³ The one forgiven receives spiritual life (i.e. the law of the spirit of “life” [8:2], or equivalently the “life of grace”²⁴), as well as bodily life in terms of the resurrection (8:11 [§605]).²⁵ The law of the spirit does not, as we saw in the previous two chapters, remove the presence of the *fomes* altogether. But it does transform a person so as

¹⁹ Aquinas equates the *lex spiritus* with the *lex nova* and summarizes the “four laws” mentioned by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans: (1) the law of Moses; (2) the law of the *fomes*; (3) the natural law; (4) the New Law (§604).

²⁰ Aquinas’s text has *liberavit*, while Calvin’s text has *liberum reddidit*. The underlying meaning is the same, although how they understand the nature of this freedom differs.

²¹ See ST III, q. 48, a. 4.

²² The two are intimately connected for Aquinas, since Aquinas believes that although the body itself was not disposed to incorruptability, the soul of graced pre-Fall Adam possessed the power to preserve the body from corruption (ST I, q. 97, a. 1; q. 102, a. 2).

²³ Cf. *Summa contra Gentiles* IV.21, n. 3582, where Aquinas roots the Spirit’s remission of sins in the Spirit’s establishing “friendship” between sinners and God; in friendship “every offense that might bring the friend harm is discarded” (J. P. Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Spiritual Master*, vol. 2, trans. Robert Royal [Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2003], 169).

²⁴ Aquinas draws an analogy between the natural spirit that gives life to nature and the Holy Spirit that “makes” (*facit*) the life of grace (§605).

²⁵ The effect of the Spirit on our spiritual life will be further unpacked when Aquinas addresses the second qualification of having no damnation: walking in the Spirit.

to be free from giving in to the *fomes* and committing future (mortal) sins, thus enabling a person to live a life free from damnation.

Paul then “manifests” his teaching on living free from damnation at 8:3: “What was impossible through the law . . . God, sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin, damned sin in the flesh.” For Aquinas—and this point will become more meaningful when we turn to Calvin—the central teaching of 8:3 is not the law *per se* but rather Christ’s Incarnation. Aquinas divides the verse into three parts pertaining to the Incarnation: the need for the Incarnation (“what was impossible through the law”), the mode of the Incarnation (“God, sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”), and the fruit of the Incarnation (“God damned sin in the flesh”) (§606). I will highlight the aspects of Aquinas’s commentary on 8:3 most pertinent to our comparison with Calvin.²⁶

Aquinas’s engagement with 8:3 anticipates Paul’s claim at 8:4: “The justice of the law might be fulfilled in us.” The “justice of the law,” according to Aquinas, is “the justice that the law promised and that some hoped to obtain from the law itself” (§610). For Aquinas, what was “impossible for the law” (8:3) was its ability to establish this justice. Aquinas notes that this is not because of a shortcoming of the law (§611)—not that perfectly keeping the commandments of the law would have established one justified, since this is only possible through God’s grace.²⁷ Rather, the role of the law in relation to justification was to “dispose men to the justifying grace of Christ” and to signify that grace.²⁸ The law performed this role with no shortcoming. Aquinas is clear that all those justified under the law were justified due to faith in Christ, again, not because they failed to obtain

²⁶ It is worth noting that Aquinas’s commentary on 8:3 reflects his profound adherence to both Nicean-Constantinopolitan Trinitarian theology and Chalcedonian Christology. Paul’s mention of “God’s Son” leads Aquinas to speak of Christ’s pre-existence, consubstantiality, and coeternality. The statement that God “sent” allows Aquinas to speak of the different “modes” and not “locations” of Christ’s presence, while “in the likeness of sinful flesh” gives rise to a Trinitarian explanation of Christ’s Incarnation, along with a Chalcedonian explanation of Christ’s redeeming work in the flesh (§607–609).

²⁷ Aquinas would disagree with Calvin’s claim, “If someone were to satisfy wholly [*in solidum*] the law of God, he would be just before God [*coram Deo*]” (158.96–97), since Aquinas maintains that fulfilling the law requires that one is already just before God.

²⁸ See *ST* I-II, q. 100, a. 12.

justification due to not perfectly keeping the precepts of the law,²⁹ but rather because they were properly disposed by the law for Christ. In his commentary on Galatians 2:21, “For if justice be by the law, Christ died in vain,” Aquinas notes that if justice came by means of works of the law, Christ died in vain. But this is not the case, since only through Christ come justifying grace and truth. Aquinas concludes: “If any were justified before the passion of Christ, this too was through the faith of Christ to come, in Whom they believed and in Whose faith they were saved.”³⁰ Why, then, did the law not justify those who were under the law? Not because of a weakness in the law but because of the weakness of the flesh due to the *fomes*.³¹ In spite of the law, individuals were overcome by *concupiscentia* and thus did not follow the law to Christ (§611).³²

God sent his son, however, in order that sins might be forgiven and the justice of the law “might be fulfilled in us,” that is, “perfected [*perficeretur*]” in those who are in Christ Jesus (§610).³³ The justice contained in the commandments of the law is unable to render one justified before God; rather, though participation in Christ’s justice, which is a “perfection” of the justice of the law, one is justified before God and lives a life of obedience to the law understood as an ever-increasing participation in Christ’s justice through the Spirit. How Christ perfects the justice of the law “in us” is reflected in 8:3b, “in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin condemned sin in the flesh.”³⁴ Aquinas divides this verse into cause and effect. First, Aquinas states that through the “passion of his death”—Aquinas’s interpretation of *de peccato* in 8:3b—Christ made satisfaction for our sins (§608).³⁵ On

²⁹ This is not to suggest that individuals under the law kept the precepts of the law apart from faith in Christ. The point being made above is that Aquinas does not interpret the law in terms of a “covenant of works” as we find in Calvin. The law was never given with the intention that if one perfectly kept the law, he or she could *then* stand just before God based on fulfilling his or her obligation in the covenant.

³⁰ Aquinas, *Super Epist. ad Galatians Lectura* §112.

³¹ See Chapter 1.

³² Aquinas quotes Matthew 26:41, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,” which reflects Aquinas’s anthropological belief that there is in the soul of the sinner a tendency toward the good that is, however, unable to be realized on account of the fallen dimensions of the flesh, which entangle the whole of a person (reason, will, and passions) in sin.

³³ See ST III, q. 1, a. 2. Because of Aquinas’s understanding of justification as transformation, Aquinas feels no need to explain Paul’s connection in 8:3 between Christ’s establishment of the justification of the law and the phrase “in us.”

³⁴ *In similitudinem carnis peccati et de peccato damnabit peccatum in carne.*

³⁵ See ST III, q. 48, a. 6, ad. 3; q. 49, a. 3.

account of Christ's satisfaction, he "condemned sin in the flesh," not in terms of his own flesh but rather in the flesh of those "set free" (8:2) by the Spirit. Christ removed the *culpa* and *poena* of sin and "weakened" the *fomes* through the power of his passion and death, so that one is liberated from consenting to the *lex fomitis* (§609). The believer is enabled, as described in Chapter 4, to live the life of grace in obedience to God and free from damnation. Justice is thus "fulfilled" or "perfected" within a person through the presence of grace in the soul, and the life of grace, which includes operative and cooperative graces, enables a person to "walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit" (8:4b) in order to avoid damnation in the future and progress in one's conformity to Christ, culminating in the life of glory. As we see, Aquinas continues to emphasize the work of Christ in and through the believer, which makes Paul's comments on walking in the Spirit not merely a sign of having no condemnation but intrinsic to having no condemnation.

Returning to 8:2 we observe Calvin's take on the matter. Calvin's understanding of how the law of the Spirit has set one "free" from the law of sin and death presupposes that believers continue to struggle with an imperfection that renders the believer worthy of condemnation *in se*. For Calvin, to be truly "free" from the flesh would mean to obtain "heavenly perfection."³⁶ It would mean the *complete* removal of "the feelings of the flesh (*sensus carnis*)" (156.24–25). But this is not the case for believers. Therefore for Calvin, the "law of sin" cannot refer simply to the "lust of the flesh [*carnis concupiscentia*]," since Paul has not "conquered" the lust of the flesh (157.55–56).³⁷ Instead, Calvin interprets the "the law of sin" in sweeping terms—an interpretive move consistent with what we noted in Chapters 4 and 5—as simply "the dominion of the flesh [*imperium carnis*]," and the "law of death" as the power of death that follows from sin's dominion (157.36–37).³⁸

³⁶ See Chapter 4.

³⁷ Here Aquinas agrees with Calvin, in that Christ's grace has not totally removed the disordered desires of the flesh. Perfect freedom from the flesh only occurs in the life of glory to come. But this does not mean, *contra* Calvin, that believers are *per se* damnable due to lacking heavenly perfection.

³⁸ See Chapter 4 for Calvin's sweeping claims regarding the effects of sin on the human person. Calvin acknowledges that those who interpret the phrase "the law of sin and death" as a description for the law itself (cf. Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, 164) fail to recognize that this would be too harsh a description for Paul to apply to the law (157.51–52).

What, then, is the “law of the spirit” that has set one free from the “dominion of the flesh”? As noted above, Calvin believes that Paul has spoken “improperly” by calling the Spirit a law. For Calvin, Paul addresses only one law, the Mosaic law, and two relationships to the law, in the flesh or in the Spirit. For those in the flesh, the law holds them under bondage to sin and the guilt of death. Those in the Spirit, however, have been “freed” from the bondage of sin and death. The Spirit, who “sprinkles our souls with the blood of Christ,” produces a twofold effect of freedom in the believer: (1) believers receive the free pardon of justification (*iustificari gratuita venia*) (157.48), which sets one free from the “guilt of death” (157.43–44); (2) the Spirit transforms the believer so that the believer is free from sin’s dominion and can “diligently labor” to subdue and mortify the flesh, thus exhibiting a “zeal for religion” (156.26–27). The twofold effect reflects Calvin’s distinction-without-separation between justification and sanctification. The first effect “vindicates” the sinner from the guilt of death, while the second effect “corrects” the “inordinate cupidity of the flesh” (157.42–44). In terms of the first effect, it is important to note that the “freedom” brought by the law of the Spirit is not to such an extent, however, that the believer’s work fulfills the law. Rather, the believer’s work remains tainted and unmeritorious apart from a distinct act of God forgiving and accepting the work. In one sense, then, the believer is not actually set free from sin’s dominion, since the believer and his or her works remain condemnable. The freedom brought by the Spirit thus resides primarily *extra nos*, in that we no longer stand under the judgment of God and penalty of death due to Christ’s justice *extra nos*. For Calvin, while we are transformed by the indwelling of the Spirit and can exhibit zeal for religion, God has not brought us into a participation in the life of the Spirit in such a way that we are transformed into just people and fulfill the law, understood as a participation in the divine activity. In terms of the second effect, Calvin’s distinction between justification and regeneration leads him to digress into a clarification regarding his statement that the Spirit both corrects inordinate desires (i.e. regeneration) and removes the guilt of death (i.e. justification). Calvin is concerned that his comments may improperly be interpreted as making “pardon” (removal of guilt, i.e. justification) somehow dependent upon regeneration. Calvin clarifies that Paul is not speaking of the “cause” (*causa*) of the removal of guilt (i.e. justification) but only the “manner” (*modus*) that it comes to be, namely, that justification is always accompanied by regeneration (157.54–56).

For Calvin, then, rather than the “law of the spirit” being a reality created within the believer, the “law” is situated external to the believer, “in the middle” between the “Spirit of life” and the sinful flesh. The law simply teaches justice but without being able to impart that justice. The law functions as a guide for the believer by disclosing works that God considers just, but it does not impart what is necessary for fulfilling its demands.³⁹ When Paul claims at 8:3, “For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh,” Calvin interprets “what the law could not do” through the lens of a “justification by works”: fallen individuals could not fulfill the law and therefore be justified (158.88–90).

In opposition to being justified by works, Calvin claims, “the Lord has justified us in Christ by his free mercy” (157.61–62), which brings us to Paul’s claims about Christ at 8:3b. But to understand Calvin’s interpretation of 8:3b, we must jump ahead to 8:4, since this is precisely the move Calvin takes in order to justify his interpretation of 8:3b. Calvin is aware that his teaching that believers remain condemnable *in se* while being just *in Christo* presents potential difficulties with Paul’s claim that the “justification of the law” is “fulfilled in us [*in nobis*]” (8:4). Does this not suggest notions of the soul’s transformation, that the justice of the law now resides within believers, thereby enabling believers to stand just before God based on this transformation, which would render the need for an imputation *extra nos* superfluous? Tellingly, Calvin’s commentary on 8:3b–4 begins with a lengthy digression arguing why the topic at hand is free pardon and faith (i.e. justification) and not transformation and works. Calvin’s interpretation rests on an implication he draws from Paul’s final statement at 8:4b: “who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.” From this phrase, Calvin reasons that the addition of this qualifying statement at the end of the argument in 8:3–4 demonstrates that Paul is dealing with “free justification” throughout 8:3–4 rather than transformation. Calvin states: “If Paul had been instructing us to overcome sin by the Spirit of regeneration, why would he have added this phrase?” (157.67–68).⁴⁰ In other words, Calvin makes 8:4b

³⁹ Calvin later comments: “The inward power of the Spirit gives life to the law (*Legem animans*)” (164.82–165.83).

⁴⁰ The entire argument for the centrality of justification in 8:3–4, as well as a textual discussion regarding the “defect” or “inability” of the law is found only in the 1556 edition. Both the 1540 and 1551 editions are significantly different, being void of this argument and instead merely stating: “from the law, neither justification nor salvation is able to come [*provenire*] to us... The law suffices for our justification, insofar

function in the same manner as he made function a similar phrase at 8:1 and will make function 8:9—and is in fact the function Calvin grants to Romans 6 as a whole—namely, that Paul is “confining his doctrine to those who *join repentance to faith* [i.e. who demonstrate sanctification with their justification] and do not misuse the mercy of God” (157.69–70; italics added). The signs of regeneration are like badges identifying those to whom Paul’s teaching on justification applies. The phrase at 8:4b conveys the sign or “mark” that indicates that one has Christ’s justice *extra nos*.

Since Calvin believes that Paul is emphasizing the justifying work of Christ *on behalf of* sinners and not the transformation that occurs *in* sinners, Calvin interprets 8:3b, “condemned sin in the flesh,” not as addressing the transformative effects on the sinner that flow from Christ’s expiatory work;⁴¹ rather “in the flesh” for Calvin refers to *Christ’s* flesh. Through his Incarnation, Christ “abolished guilt” and restored justice to believers. God subsequently “regards” believers as just (159.16–18). How, then, does Calvin handle the phrase at 8:4a, “that the justice of the law might be fulfilled in us [*in nobis*]”? Calvin has already prepared the way for dismissing this verse as a reference to the Spirit’s regenerative effect on the soul, which might otherwise imply that the Spirit has transformed the believer into a just person and enabled the believer to fulfill the law. Calvin explicitly states that such a notion “introduces a misrepresentation that is completely foreign to Paul’s meaning” (160.54–55). The phrase “the justice of the law might be fulfilled in us” must therefore for Calvin refer to the justice of *Christ* that is subsequently *imputed* to believers. The justice of the law is not fulfilled *in* the believer, as Paul suggests, but rather Christ fulfills the law *on behalf of* the believer (160.57–58).⁴² To be sure, Calvin makes clear commenting on 8:10, “the Spirit is life on account of justice [*propter iustitiam*],” that the Spirit is renewing justice within the believer “by His power” (166.25–27). But this justice comes under the separate heading of “sanctification” and is interpreted within the flow of Paul’s argument as the “mark” that shows who are justified in the proper sense of the term. Calvin therefore creates an extrinsic connection between the

as it relates to doctrine, because it contains the perfect rule of justice. But our flesh is unable to gain [*assequi*] that justice.”

⁴¹ Which is the case with Aquinas, as well as Augustine.

⁴² Cf. *Inst.* 3.11.23.

law being fulfilled “in us” and our “walking not after the flesh but after the spirit”: walking after the spirit is the “sign” that assures us that Christ’s fulfillment of the law *for us* has indeed been given *to us*. At this point, we are far from Aquinas’s participatory reading that emphasizes Christ’s work *in us* and *through us* to walk in the ways of God’s commandments.

LIVING IN THE SPIRIT

The central point of difference at 8:4 between Aquinas and Calvin—whether the believer is transformed into being a just person or whether Christ’s justice remains *extra nos* with the believer remaining condemnable *in se*—informs how the entirety of 8:5–17 unfolds. Throughout 8:5–17 Calvin continues interpreting Paul’s teaching on living the life of the Spirit in terms extrinsic to having no condemnation, relegating these passages, as he did 8:4b, merely to “signs” of the presence of Christ’s imputed justice. Calvin claims, commenting on 8:5: “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit,” that Paul is “confirming” his point that striving against the flesh is a “sign” of the saving grace of God, so that if this striving against the flesh is present, believers can be “consoled” that their ongoing sinfulness is met with the imputed justice of Christ (161.72–81). When Calvin comments on 8:13, “If by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the body, you will live,” rather than the believer obtaining life *through* the mortification of the deeds of the body, Calvin claims that life is promised to believers “provided [*modo*]” believers strive to mortify the flesh (168.91). At 8:14, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God,” rather than the transformed life being *intrinsic* to what it means to be “sons of God,” the transformed life is the “mark [*nota*]” that one is a son of God (via justification). While it is true that Calvin constantly keeps justification and sanctification tightly linked—all those who are sons of God are “set apart” as sons through sanctification (168.5–6)—sanctification holds no causal basis for being sons of God; rather, the basis for being sons of God is solely justification, that is, Christ’s justice *extra nos*.

For Aquinas, however, obtaining “no damnation” occurs through Christ’s transformation of the soul and the life lived out of this

transformation in avoidance of mortal sin. Paul's teaching at 8:5 therefore pertains directly to living the life of grace (i.e. the life of justice) that is enabled by Christ fulfilling the justice of the law "in us" through the presence of grace in the soul. Being transformed and living the transformed life are intrinsic to what it means to be sons of God. Paul connects being "led by the Spirit of God" to being "sons of God" (8:14) not because sanctification always accompanies justification and is the sign of justification but because the transformation occurring through the justification of the soul by the Spirit is analogous to the birth of natural children from the seed of the father: "the spiritual seed proceeding from the Father is the Holy Spirit. Therefore, through this seed some men are born as sons of God: 'No one born of God commits sin, because the seed of God abides in him' (1 John 3:9)" (§636). Notice the connection Aquinas draws between being sons and not committing (mortal) sin: being sons in the Son rests in transformation. If a person is "in the spirit" (8:9),⁴³ he or she is free from the vices of the flesh and instead possesses the virtues constituted by the Spirit (§626). The spiritual person plans, judges, and commands according to God's law. For Aquinas, that a person is enabled to live an undamnable life is further demonstrated at 8:10b: "The spirit lives because of justification." It is noteworthy that Aquinas's text reads *spiritus vero vivit propter iustificationem* ("the spirit lives because of justification"), while Calvin's reads *Spiritus autem vita est propter iustitiam* ("the Spirit is life because of justice"). Calvin's interpretation emphasizes what the Spirit does *to* and *for* believers: the Spirit is called "life" in 8:10 because the Spirit "quickens" individuals by his power and "destroys" the dominion of mortal flesh (166.26–27). Calvin is noticeably silent, however, regarding how the Spirit is life *propter iustitiam* ("because of justice"); he only asserts that the Spirit is life by quickening the flesh. Aquinas's interpretation emphasizes what the Spirit does *in* and *through* believers: the justification of the soul established through Christ's grace, that is, the making just of the soul through the virtues of faith, hope, and love "recalls" the soul from sin and enables it to live for God in the "life of grace" (§629).⁴⁴ At 8:13, "if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of

⁴³ It is important to note that Aquinas takes the "if" of 8:9, "If the Spirit of God dwells in you," as a literal statement of contingency. Although Paul's audience received the Holy Spirit in baptism, it is possible that "through a later sin they might have lost the Holy Spirit." Aquinas appeals to Wisdom 1:5, "[the Holy Spirit] will not abide when iniquity comes" (§626).

⁴⁴ Aquinas refers to two verses that highlight the life of faith: Galatians 2:20 and Romans 1:17. Faith is the first movement of the mind in justice (§629).

the flesh, you will live,” Aquinas does not make our mortification of the flesh an extrinsic provision for obtaining life, as does Calvin, but rather mortification of the flesh is an *intrinsic* activity of living the present “life of grace” that culminates in the future “life of glory” (§633).

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Much more is at stake in Calvin’s emphasis on the Spirit’s regenerative work being a “sign” of justification than merely unpacking the natural consequences of the justification–sanctification distinction. For Calvin, Romans 8 is a central battleground for refuting the “Papist” teaching regarding the indwelling, or lack thereof, of the Spirit. Earlier, while commenting on 8:9, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ,” Calvin refutes the “philosophy of the Papists” that has “departed from the Word of the Lord” by maintaining that Christians are without the Spirit (165.1–5). It is not entirely clear exactly who or what is the target of Calvin’s attack. He may be thinking of the scholastic teaching that the Spirit “indwells” an individual not directly but through “created grace.” But given Calvin’s comments, it is unlikely that Calvin is targeting the form of teaching regarding created grace articulated by Aquinas but rather how the term “created grace” began to be understood in later scholastic thought. David Steinmetz speculates that Calvin’s target is probably Catholic controversialists like Latomus or Cochlaeus, pointing to the footnote to *Inst.* 3.2.39 in the McNeil–Battles translation of the 1559 *Institutes*.⁴⁵ In *Inst.* 3.2.39, Calvin is concerned to refute those who dismiss that one can “sense” the Spirit’s indwelling, who claim that it is a matter of “modesty and humility” not to be sure of it.

In any case, whoever may be the exact target of Calvin’s attacks, ultimately at stake for Calvin is the believer’s ability (or inability) to have assurance of salvation. While commenting on 8:14–16, Calvin uses the terms “confidence [*securus*],” “certain” or “certainty [*certitudo*],” and “assurance [*securitas*]” at least seventeen times. Although assurance of salvation is a theme found throughout his commentary on Romans, Calvin lays special emphasis on this topic in Romans

⁴⁵ Steinmetz, “Calvin and Patristic Exegesis,” 132.

8. Tellingly, when arguing in *Inst.* 3.2.39 against those who deny that an individual can know the divine will, particularly as it pertains to the indwelling of the Spirit, Calvin employs Romans 8:9, 11, 14, and 16 in support of his argument. What I hope to demonstrate in this section is that Calvin's criticisms of the "Papists" miss Aquinas as a target and that Aquinas is no less adamant about assurance than Calvin *even though* he roots justification in transformation and not *extra nos*—while for Calvin, the fact that Christ's justice is *extra nos* is precisely what grants believers assurance. Also, we find that Calvin is forced to rely on the same sort of "data" for discerning the presence of the Spirit as Aquinas, thereby placing Calvin's and Aquinas's positions in closer proximity than may seem on the surface. The result of the evidence found below is that one need not claim, as does Calvin, that assurance is only made possible through a nonparticipatory interpretation of justification.

Calvin claims that the testimony of the Spirit within the believer "arouses" believers to "undoubted confidence in their salvation" (168.98). Commenting on 8:16, "The Spirit himself testifies to our spirit that we are sons of God," Calvin notes that in the Greek we find that Paul uses a compound verb to denote something beyond simply saying that the Spirit is a witness (*testem*). Rather, the Spirit "renders such a testimony [*testimonium*], that with Him as Guide and Teacher [*eo duce et magistro*] our spirit is assured of being adopted of God" (171.99–101).⁴⁶ Calvin contrasts the fear corresponding to the "spirit of bondage" that is in those who are void of the Spirit with the "gladness" and "pacification" of the soul corresponding to the "Spirit of adoption" under the Gospel.⁴⁷ Calvin has in his sights the "Sophist" teaching regarding "moral conjecture," which, according to Calvin, teaches that one can only "discern" (rather than having true knowledge of) the presence of the grace of God by judging the works produced by the believer. Because Calvin believes that all works of even the saintliest of individuals are tainted with sin, he responds: "If we should have

⁴⁶ The inward teaching of the Spirit, as opposed to merely the external words of Christ, also distinguishes "literal disciples of the Law" from believers (169.48–50). Calvin notes Hebrews 12:18ff and its use of Mount Sinai and Mount Zion as teaching a similar contrast between the "spirit of bondage" and the "spirit of adoption."

⁴⁷ Calvin clarifies that the "Spirit of adoption" existed in those who preceded the coming of Christ; not everyone who received the law were slaves, since some had the "Spirit of faith." Paul is contrasting the "outward dispensation" of the law with that of the Gospel (169.40–41).

to judge from our works how the Lord feels toward us, for my part, I grant that we can in no way attain it by conjecture.”⁴⁸ The Sophists are right that believers cannot have assurance of salvation *if* assurance is being sought by discerning the quality of works. But assurance comes not through discerning the quality of works but through the inward testimony of the Spirit. Calvin also agrees with the “Sophists” that an individual cannot be assured of the will of God apart from God’s making it known. But this is precisely the work of the Spirit in the soul of the believer (171.16–18). From the “special effect” of the Spirit’s testimony on the soul, which produces “tranquillity” in the mind and “stirs” the believer to call on God with “confidence and freedom” (168.17–19), one obtains “knowledge” of our adoption as sons.⁴⁹ And since 8:17 states, “If sons, then heirs,” that is, for Calvin, heirs of “eternal life,” Calvin concludes: “All who are led by the Spirit of God ought to feel assured of eternal life” (168.100–1).

We discover, however, that Calvin’s criticisms once again fail to find Aquinas as a target. To understand Aquinas’s position, we first turn to his interpretation of being “led by the Spirit of God” (8:14). For Aquinas, the one led by the Spirit “does not act on his own” but “is also moved by the Spirit” (§635). Aquinas describes the Spirit’s leading in terms of a “higher instinct [*superiori instinctus*].” Drawing an analogy to animals, which do not act on their own but are led by their natural instinct, Aquinas states that the one led by the Spirit follows not the movement of his or her own will “principally” but rather is led by the “prompting of the Holy Spirit” (§635).⁵⁰ The term “principally” is important. Although the Holy Spirit is the principal mover in the life of grace, Aquinas no less affirms that a person acts through free will. For Aquinas, the two are not opposed, since “the Holy Spirit

⁴⁸ *Inst.* 3.2.38. For more on Calvin and moral conjecture, see Pitkin, *What Pure Eyes Could See*, 49–57; Heribert von Schützeichel, *Die Galubenstheologie Calvins* (München: Max Herber, 1972), 101–12.

⁴⁹ Calvin refers to I John 5:19–20, where John uses the term “knowledge [*scientia*]” to denote the “certainty” of the believer’s awareness of being a son of God (171.20–22).

⁵⁰ Aquinas cites Isaiah 59:19 and Luke 4:1. In *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 2, Aquinas explains that if an individual possesses a virtue perfectly, that individual is able “of itself” to work according to that virtue. But graced human beings do not possess the theological virtues perfectly but only imperfectly and thus must be “moved by another.” Aquinas concludes: “In matters directed to the supernatural end, to which man’s reason moves him, according as it is in a manner and imperfectly informed by the theological virtues, the motion of reason does not suffice, unless it receive in addition the prompting or motion of the Holy Ghost.”

causes the very movement of the will and of free choice,” as reflected in Philippians 2:13, “God is at work in you both to will and to work” (§635).

But given the fact that the Holy Spirit acts as an “instinct” and works through the natural means of human free will and choice, is it possible for the one indwelt by the Spirit to know that the Spirit is present? For Aquinas, it all depends on the kind of knowledge in question.⁵¹ One kind of knowledge corresponds to the kind of certitude that comes through judging a thing by its “proper principle.” Aquinas describes this certitude as knowledge obtained through demonstrable conclusions drawn from indemonstrable universal principles. In the case of knowing whether or not the Spirit is present, the indemonstrable universal principle of knowledge needed for obtaining certain knowledge that one possesses the Spirit is the knowledge of God himself, that is, his essence. But “by reason of His very excellence” God is “unknown to us” in this way, and thus we are unable to obtain certitude of the Spirit’s presence through this mode of knowing.

A second kind of knowledge corresponds to the same kind of *certainty* of the first, but the knowledge is obtained in a different *mode*: it is obtained by divine revelation. For Aquinas, God has provided such certainty of the Spirit’s presence “at times to some,” such as in the case of the Apostle Paul. But it is not provided to everyone.⁵²

The third type of knowledge is unlike the first two types of knowledge. While the first two types of knowledge are “perfect” knowledge, Aquinas calls the third type of knowledge “imperfect.” It is “conjectural” knowledge obtained from the observation of “signs.” At first glance, Aquinas’s third position, which reflects the knowledge obtainable by all believers, is akin to the very position that Calvin criticizes. But upon further reflection, important differences arise. First, Aquinas does not reduce the “signs” merely to judging the quality of a person’s work, as is the case with Calvin’s opponents. Rather, the “signs” also consist of being conscious of delighting in God, of experiencing a “certain sweetness” of knowledge of God, despising worldly things, and not being conscious of mortal sin—characteristics quite similar to Calvin’s description of certainty. And if these are present,

⁵¹ The following explanation is taken from *ST I-II*, q. 112, a. 2, which asks whether a person can know that he or she has grace.

⁵² The notion of God’s unique revelation to the Apostle Paul regarding his salvation surfaces again in 8:28–30, when Aquinas and Calvin address “predestination.”

Aquinas believes that one may draw the “imperfect” conclusion that one possesses the Spirit. The similarities between Aquinas’s and Calvin’s accounts grow even stronger when we consider that Calvin concedes a place to works for supporting confidence in one’s adoption: “We do not deny that newness of life, because it is the effect of divine adoption, serves to confirm confidence, but secondarily, as a prop [*adminiculum*], so to speak.”⁵³ Also, for Aquinas the term “imperfect” should not be equated to “feeble” or “shaky” or any term that may denote a lack of confidence in one’s relationship to God, as Calvin indicates of his opponents’ position. Aquinas states when commenting on the role of charity in establishing friendship with God: “Wherefore just as friendship with a person would be impossible, if one disbelieved in, or despaired of, the possibility of their fellowship or familiar colloquy; so too, friendship with God, which is charity, is impossible without faith, so as to believe in this fellowship and colloquy with God and hope to attain to this fellowship.”⁵⁴ The use of the term “imperfect” is simply the result of Aquinas’s prior definition of “certainty” and “perfect knowledge” with its requisite parameters. Aquinas claims that one cannot have this sort of knowledge of grace apart from a special revelation from God, thus giving rise to the claim that knowledge from signs is imperfect. But there is no indication from Aquinas that one cannot have confidence in one’s divine sonship through these signs, nor that these signs are something other than the work of the Spirit on the soul. Aquinas states explicitly while commenting on 2 Corinthians 5:5, “He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee [*pignus*],” that the Spirit is a pledge of future heavenly glory, whom by possessing we have a “certainty” of obtaining the glory to follow (§161).

Returning to Romans, Aquinas asserts that it is the third form of knowledge—conjecture from effects—that Paul addresses in 8:14–17. Aquinas highlights the two “effects” produced by the Holy Spirit that “prove” who have received the Spirit of God and are sons of God: fear and love (§638).⁵⁵ The cry “Abba, Father” at 8:15b reflects an “intention of the heart” that comes from “the feeling of filial fear which the

⁵³ Calvin, *Comm. Ep. John* 4:17 (CO 55.357–358).

⁵⁴ ST I-II, q. 65, a. 5; ST I-II, q. 40, a. 7; Servais Pinckaers, *La vie selon l’Esprit: essai de théologie spirituelle selon saint Paul et saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Luxembourg: Editions Saint-Paul, 1996), 160–3.

⁵⁵ Aquinas digresses into a lengthy account of how fear and love can coexist (§638–641).

Spirit produces within us" (§644). The "testimony" that the Spirit gives to our spirit (8:16) manifests itself not through "external words that reach one's ears" but through "the effect of filial love" (§645). Through the effects of fear and love, one may gain imperfect knowledge that one is a son of God. And those who actually are sons of God, Aquinas explains, obtain the "inheritance," which is God Himself, as reflected in Psalms 16:5, "The Lord is my chosen portion" (§647). For those still living the present life of grace, however, the inheritance has been delayed and believers suffer while awaiting its obtainment. Commenting on 8:17a, "If we suffer with Him," Aquinas explains in almost identical language to Calvin's that as Christ obtained glory through suffering (Luke 24:26), so "we must not expect to obtain the inheritance by an easier way" (§651). Sons of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, then, must "patiently endure the tribulations of this word" in order to obtain the inheritance of glory.⁵⁶

SUFFERING AND THE OBTAINMENT OF ETERNAL LIFE

Aquinas and Calvin agree that the path that leads to glory follows the same path that Christ trod, that is, the path of suffering. Yet Calvin and Aquinas understand the relationship between present suffering and future eternal life differently in ways that bring us back to the topic of participation. While Aquinas and Calvin agree that all those who are sons of God are those led by the Spirit of God, and all those who are sons of God obtain the inheritance of eternal life, Calvin believes, reflecting his nonparticipatory soteriology, that our life in the Spirit has no *intrinsic* relationship to obtaining eternal life. On the surface, Calvin's language seems to suggest otherwise, and this has led some Calvin scholars to overemphasize the role of participation in Calvin's reading of Romans 8 and in his soteriology more generally. We recall that Calvin noted while commenting on 8:6, "The mind of the spirit is life and peace," that "although God begins our salvation, and finally completes it by renewing us after His image, the only cause of our salvation is His good pleasure [*beneplacitum*], by which

⁵⁶ Cf. *ST* III, q. 49, a. 3, ad. 3.

He makes us partakers [*consortes*] of Christ" (162.17–18). The notion of being "partakers" of Christ sounds like participatory language, as does including the role of "renewal" in connection with the "beginning" and "completion" of salvation. And indeed it is. But Calvin's principal point is that Christ's imputed justice, which exists *extra nos*, forms the sole basis for our obtainment of eternal life and *not* our sanctified life in the Spirit, i.e. *not* our suffering with Christ. At 8:17, "If children, then heirs . . . if we suffer with him, in order that we might also be glorified with him," Calvin affirms, as noted above, that since Christ went to glory through the cross, "we therefore must also go to it in the same way" (172.41). But he quickly qualifies his affirmation and states that Paul is not ascribing the "cause" of obtaining eternal glory to "our labors" (172.42). Calvin admits that this way of speaking is "usual" in Scripture. But Calvin claims that Paul is merely setting forth the "order" which God follows in bringing us to salvation and is not addressing a causal basis for obtaining it (172.44–46). The issue at hand for Calvin is once again to the topic of merit: to include our life in the Spirit as intrinsic cause to obtaining eternal life would for Calvin undermine the centrality of God's grace for salvation by including human works as a causal basis for obtaining eternal life. As we have seen, Calvin's interpretation of Paul consistently sets forth the mercy of God *against* the merit of works (172.46–47). For Calvin, if it is of grace, it cannot be of merit.⁵⁷ Paul therefore does not make our life in the Spirit a "source" of obtaining eternal life. Rather, his exhortations to a holy life merely reflect the "manner in which God governs His people" (172.45–48). God's will is that the path to eternal life includes the suffering of his people. God's will also is that these sufferings play no causal role in obtaining it; obtaining eternal life is rooted solely in forgiveness of sins and Christ's justice *extra nos*. In his *Institutes*, Calvin seems to go a bit further in affirming the role of good works in obtaining eternal life by labeling good works "inferior causes" (*Inst.* 3.14.21). But importantly (and consistent with his Romans commentary) they are "causes" within the order of God's dispensation in leading believers to eternal life (*Inst.* 3.14.21). In *Inst.* 3.18.1, Calvin states that God "leads believers into possession of eternal life through the grace of good works in order to fulfill his own

⁵⁷ In his *Antidote* to the Council of Trent, Calvin acknowledges that he is in fact separating merit and grace, and the Fathers of Trent will likely "bawl out . . . we are wickedly lacerating what is truly one" (162).

work in them according to the order that he has laid down”; these works “prepare” believers to receive the crown of immortality. But Calvin is clear that the relationship between good works and eternal life is, as it is in his Romans commentary, “more sequential than causal” (*Inst.* 3.18.1).⁵⁸ The intrinsic causes of salvation are, once again, the love of God the Father as the efficient cause; the obedience of the Son as the material cause; faith as the formal or instrumental cause; and the praise of God’s goodness as the final cause.⁵⁹ Therefore, concludes Calvin, no causal grounds are given to the merit of works for salvation. Merit has no causal ground to play alongside or along with God’s mercy, God’s glory, Christ’s sacrificial work, and faith for obtaining salvation with God.

What about the “if” in the statement “if we suffer with him” (8:17)? Does this not suggest a more intrinsic role for our suffering in obtaining eternal life? No, states Calvin. Rather, the phrase functions much like the phrase “who walk according to the Spirit” did above, as well as all of Romans 6 within the overarching flow of Paul’s argument, namely, our suffering is a “sign” demarcating those who have received justification. For Calvin, the reason Paul says that we obtain eternal life “if” we suffer with him is because sanctification is always present with justification. If sanctification is not present, neither is justification. But it is justice *extra nos* rather than transformation that forms the basis of our adopted status as sons of God (172.38–39). We obtain the inheritance due to Christ’s work *for* us and given *to* us *rather than* Christ’s work *in* us and *through* us. The latter merely indicates the former.

For Aquinas, however, living the transformed life in the Spirit is intrinsic to obtaining eternal life. There is no appeal to something *extra nos* as the basis for obtaining eternal life. At 8:6, “the prudence of the spirit is life and peace,” Aquinas describes the life lived in the Spirit as the “cause of grace and glory,” citing Galatians 6:8, “He who sows in the spirit will from the spirit reap eternal life” (§618). Commenting on 8:13, “If by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you will live,” Aquinas makes putting to death the deeds of the flesh an intrinsic quality of living the life of grace presently and living the life of glory in the future (§633). For Aquinas, there is continuity between the transformation received upon initial justification, the ongoing transformation that occurs as the justified live the life of grace

⁵⁸ See Chapter 3.

⁵⁹ 70.43–71.45, 72.94–95; *Inst.* 3.14.17, 21.

in the Spirit, and the life of glory with God in heaven that consists of the perfected state of transformation. Since there is no *extra nos* and un-transformational basis for justification, and since the transformation of the present life is intrinsically connected with the transformation of the life to come, Aquinas finds that our present life of suffering has an important causal role to play in obtaining eternal life. This brings us to the topic of merit, since the explanatory category by which Aquinas articulates the relationship between human activity in the Spirit and obtaining the reward of eternal life is merit.

Fundamental for understanding Aquinas's articulation of merit in Romans 8 requires giving attention first not to the worthiness of human works but rather the opposite: we must first grasp Paul's claim that human sufferings are *not* "worthy [*condignae*]" of the future glory to be revealed (8:18).⁶⁰ Aquinas explains that Paul is addressing the situation in which someone may complain that the future inheritance is a "burden" due to the necessity of enduring suffering in the present life. In order to counter this complaint, Paul teaches at 8:18 that future glory is "superior over the suffering of the present life" (§652).⁶¹ Due to the excellence of future glory, concludes Aquinas, the sufferings of this present life, "if they are considered *in themselves*, are slight in comparison to the quantity of this glory" (§655). Tellingly, Romans 8:18 appears in Aquinas's treatment of merit in the *Summa theologiae* (I-II, q. 114, a. 3) as part of an objection to our ability to merit eternal life condignly. If even the *sufferings* of the saints are not "worthy [*condignae*]" of the glory to come—in fact, they are *slight* in comparison to future glory—it would seem that no work possesses a worth that would render eternal life a "due." To merit eternal life condignly would render eternal life a due in justice on account of the "value [*valor*]" and "worth [*pretium*]" of the meritorious act.⁶² But Paul

⁶⁰ When commenting on 8:18, "The sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed," Calvin acknowledges that this verse has been used by the "schoolmen" to distinguish between congruous and condign merit. Instead, Calvin highlights the rhetorical dimensions of Paul's statement and claims that Paul is merely "lightening the weight of the cross by comparing it with the greatness of glory" (173.58–59). For Aquinas, the verse functions similarly to Calvin's, but this does not negate for Aquinas further reflection on Paul's comparison between human suffering and future glory.

⁶¹ Aquinas explains that Paul demonstrates the excellence of our future glory in 8:18 by highlighting four of its characteristics: (a) its eternity; (b) its splendor; (c) its manifestation; and (d) its truth (§654).

⁶² On Aquinas's notion of "justice" in the *Summa* as "communicative justice," in which there is a "quantitative" equality between merit and reward, see Wawrykow, *God's Grace & Human Action*, 5–6.

denies such worthiness to human suffering, and therefore it is impossible to merit eternal life. At this point, Calvin wholeheartedly agrees. As we have already seen, Calvin argues that believers receive eternal life on account of God's grace and our participation in Christ *rather than* because our works have a worth that renders eternal life a "due."⁶³ God's grace is demonstrated in that he "accepts" our works *even though* they are not deserving of the reward; he "considers" them pleasing and returns reward.⁶⁴ For Calvin, "Good works... receive by way of reward [*remunerationis*] the most ample benefits of God, not because they so deserve them but because God's *kindness* has of itself set this value on them."⁶⁵

But for Aquinas, we can view these sufferings not only *in themselves* but also as being voluntarily endured out of love for God. If the sufferings occur out of love for God, Aquinas claims that the sufferer "merits eternal life *ex condigno* through them" (§655). But how can the sufferings be "slight" in comparison to future glory, lacking their own proper worth, on the one hand, and be condignly meritorious if endured out of love for God, on the other? The answer hinges on participation, in that for Aquinas the Holy Spirit within the sufferer produces the love out of which the believer suffers. Aquinas references John 4:14 and states, "For the Holy Spirit is a fountain whose waters, i.e. effects, well up to eternal life" (§655). For Aquinas, works have a value and worth as to render them condignly meritorious because of God, in that God gives the act "worth" by enabling human nature to participate in his divinity through grace and because he is the principal mover in the meritorious act, giving the act a "value" as a result of the Spirit's activity. Although the human being is a co-mover in the movement of the Spirit, human free will is not a coequal cause. Aquinas states that the Spirit is the "principal" mover, while the human will is a "subsequent mover" (§655). Aquinas thus relativizes the movement of the human soul in merit while fully accounting for its participation in the Spirit's movement through created grace. We find that because the Holy Spirit is the principle of our love for God and moves us to love God in our suffering, Christian suffering can be condignly meritorious and obtain eternal life as a just reward.

⁶³ Calvin, *Inst.* 3.18.5.

⁶⁴ Calvin, *Comm. Ep. Tim.* II 4:8 (CO 52. 390).

⁶⁵ Calvin, *Inst.* 3.15.3.

It is important for capturing Aquinas's vision of merit to emphasize that even in the state of grace the meritorious works *in themselves* still remain unworthy (*non sunt condignae*) of eternal life (§655). Turning to the *ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 3, Aquinas links the unworthiness of works as described in 8:18 to the "substance" of the sufferings. The substance of the work is what is actually done, the work that flows from the principle of free will (e.g. the act itself of giving alms or suffering for the name of Christ). Given that the operations of human free will are proper to *human* nature, no work when viewed in its substance is able to condignly merit eternal life; to perform a work whose *substance* condignly merits would require performing an act proper to the divine nature, such as creating *ex nihilo*.⁶⁶ What we discover is that the condignity of a human act clearly has little to do with the greatness of human effort or the intrinsic worthiness of the act since human acts that condignly merit eternal life are in themselves "slight" and "unworthy [*non sunt condignae*]" of eternal life. Even suffering for the name of Christ falls radically short of the greatness of future glory. Yet due to God's gracious enabling of human beings to participate in his nature and due to the Spirit's causal activity in the suffering, God enables these "slight" and "unworthy" actions *also* to be condignly meritorious and receive the reward of eternal life as a due in justice.⁶⁷ For Aquinas, claiming that eternal life is a just due for a believer's work serves to emphasize the grace of God, in that the worker receives a reward for his or her work that far surpasses inherent worth of the acts performed, and this on account of God's unmerited enabling of

⁶⁶ In *ST* I-II, q. 114, a. 3, Aquinas never suggests that the "substance" of the act merits condignly, even in grace; it at best only merits congruously. The human being always performs acts corresponding to his nature, but because of human nature's participation in the "value" of the power of the Holy Spirit and the "worth" of the dignity of grace, as noted above, these acts proceeding from human nature can be considered condignly meritorious. Wawrykow does not underscore this point, however, and instead emphasizes one's participation in the divine nature and the "godlike" actions that result, making it seem as if we perform acts that are in substance rather than in principle—the value and worth of the Spirit as "principal" cause of the act—worthy of supernatural beatitude (*God's Grace & Human Action*, 195–6).

⁶⁷ Drawing on images from the modern stock market, Gary Anderson makes a similar point while accounting for the biblical history of sin when he notes of "heavenly treasures" that "every dollar invested in yields grows by a hundredfold. The small amount deposited provides sufficient leverage to open the gates of immeasurable divine generosity" (*Sin: A History* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009], 159–60).

human beings to participate in his divine life.⁶⁸ Rather than Christian activity being *extrinsic* to obtaining the fullness of God himself, which would seem to devalue the nobility of suffering and displace its role in Christian identity, Aquinas accounts for human activity as a causal basis for obtaining eternal life understood as God's gracious enabling of his people to participate in his work of salvation.

CONCLUSION: TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE?

The consequences of Calvin's and Aquinas's interpretations of 6:1–23 and 7:14–25 are made concrete through their engagement with Romans 8:1–18. Because of Calvin's interpretation of Romans 6 and 7, in which believers are condemnable *in se* and their works are condemnable *in se*, Calvin is unable to account for “no condemnation” in terms of the Spirit's transformation of the believer and is unable to account for the believer's life as playing an *intrinsic* role in obtaining salvation. Calvin is left appealing back to justification—the topic of Romans 1–5—to account for no condemnation. His desire to make justification—a gift rooted in something *extra nos* to the believer—do the work of Romans 8:1–18 leaves him relegating the aspects of sanctification in Romans 8:1–18 to “signs” of justification. On occasion, where Paul indicates something being done “in us,” such as when he states that the law is fulfilled “in us,” Calvin shifts the attention away from the believer and onto Christ. Christ does not fulfill the law *in us* but rather *for us*; obtaining eternal life does not occur *through* living the life of the Spirit but *provided* such a life is lived. Christ has not worked *in us* to set us free from the law of sin and death, but rather because of Christ's work *for us* and given *to us* (i.e. justification), we are free. These nonparticipatory elements leave Calvin's account of Romans 8:1–18, while demonstrating elements of a participatory soteriology, ultimately struggling to adequately account for Paul's teaching. Even Calvin's placement of Romans 8 within the flow of Paul's argument is itself extrinsic—there is no intrinsic connection between

⁶⁸ As noted in Chapter 3, Calvin judges the worth of a human work solely in terms of its human component. This reflects a limitation in Calvin's participatory vision.

Romans 7 and 8 other than Romans 7 providing the existential crisis that paves the way for Romans 8, which is a return back to justification. With these observations, we must conclude that if Romans 8 is indeed a pinnacle expression of Calvin's participatory soteriology, the depth of participation in Calvin's thought is limited.

At the same time, I have demonstrated that Aquinas once again meets Calvin's principal concerns. But he does so without the extrinsicism of Calvin's account. There is a smoother transition from Romans 7 to Romans 8 in Aquinas's commentary, since for Aquinas Romans 8 continues to unfold Paul's teaching on the transforming dimensions of justification that Paul first broached in Romans 1. Throughout Romans 8, we find that Aquinas agrees that we continue to struggle with the flesh, but Christ's grace has transformed us so that there is nothing damnable within us and nothing should arise in the future (although it often does) that is damnable. We are set free from the law of sin and death by participating in the transforming work of God's grace. We do works that fulfill the law by participating in the Spirit's activity as the principal cause of all good works. We obtain eternal life through participating in Christ's sufferings as our own sufferings. Christ's work *in* and *through* us is front and center. More than any other chapter, Romans 8 illustrates the distance between Aquinas's and Calvin's positions as they relate to soteriological participation.

Conclusion

By giving focused attention to the topic of participation in Aquinas's and Calvin's interpretations of Romans, we discover, on the one hand, genuine harmony existing between Aquinas and Calvin on many issues traditionally thought to be points of conflict between the two, and, on the other hand, Calvin not quite living up to the emphasis in contemporary Calvin scholarship surrounding his participatory soteriology. Both Aquinas and Calvin envision a Christianity in which there exists a profound intimacy between God and his people. We do not worship a distant Christ but one who dwells near to us—through a mystical union of Head and members.¹ And for both theologians, that intimacy is rooted in the divine initiative—in God's grace—and not in human striving. Nothing human beings bring to the table merits God's turning to the sinner. Rather than God first seeing a human being as good and then loving that human being, God first loves the unworthy sinner and in doing so makes the sinner good. Through God's grace the believer is enabled to participate in the life of the Spirit that leads the believer to the final end of eternal glory. Both theologians reject any conception of the Christian life in autonomous terms from the Spirit's activity. We move while God moves us and act as God acts on us. And when we reach the end and come into the Lord's kingdom, neither theologian can see himself saying anything but "we are unprofitable servants; we have done only that which we ought to do."

At the same time, Aquinas's and Calvin's soteriology evidence different depths of participation in God's work of salvation. Aquinas portrays God's people as full participants in God saving them through Christ's grace working *in* and *through* them. Calvin, however, puts

¹ Calvin, *Inst.* 3.11.10.

in place judgments that limit soteriological participation and convey God's salvation more in terms of what Christ does *to* and *for* believers. While recent Calvin scholarship has rightly highlighted the genuine participatory elements in Calvin's thinking, serious limitations exist in his participatory soteriology that cause him difficulties when grappling with Paul's teaching in Romans. The topic of justification demonstrates how Calvin's overall vision for God's salvation of sinners is genuinely nonparticipatory. Calvin's doctrine of justification shapes the totality of the way he presents our relationship to Christ and has shaped Reformed theology ever since. For Calvin, justification forms the fundamental basis for our intimacy with God. By being justified in Christ, we are at peace with God and live lives of communion with Christ through the Spirit. Our Christian lives are lived under the umbrella of being justified in Christ, and we enter into the fullness of intimacy with God in heaven due to being justified in Christ. But if in justification God does not make *us* just—if *we* as human beings are not *actually* just—and instead the basic building block of our relationship to God rests on something *extra nos*—the intimacy, so it seems, is off to a rocky start. And if we are always considered worthy of condemnation *in se* and our works are always condemnable *in se*, even if pardoned and received *in Christo*, the intimacy does not seem to recover. In the end, *we* are not brought into the deep, intimate relationship with God that recent emphases on participation seek to recover. Those who follow Calvin's theology continue to evidence his nonparticipatory framework in their own thinking.²

² See, for example, Matthew Myer Boulton, *Life in God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 222, whose perspective is typical of those who follow Calvin's thinking. He states while addressing Calvin and Christian formation: "Calvin clearly rules out any practice of daily prayer, for example, that unfolds as an alleged exercise in self-justification, and to the extent that this principle functions as a critical check on the church's practices, Calvin's soteriology may help ground the proper performance of daily prayer and other ecclesial disciplines. That is, Calvin calls justification 'the main hinge on which religion turns,' and it turns not just apart from a disciple's good works, but also expressly *in spite of them*" (italics added). Such dichotomies between "self-justification" and God's work of justification, and claiming justification occurs in spite of our works rather than seeing our life in Christ as being incorporated into God's work of justification, reflect the nonparticipatory dimensions of Calvin's thought that are problematic for his reading of Romans. To be sure, if by "self-justification" one means autonomous justification or justification apart from God's *principal* activity of justifying, then Boulton's worries are shared by Aquinas as well.

Aquinas, however, presents us with a more transformative understanding of justification that seeks to uphold a deeper intimacy between God and believers in Christ. In justification, *we* become just, and *we* perform works that contribute to our sanctification and are truly, meritoriously good—and this without in any way conveying our activities as being autonomous from God’s causal work of salvation in the believer. As with Calvin, Aquinas believes that our justice certainly begins *extra nos*. But once Christ’s grace comes to the sinner, that which was alien now becomes residential. Importantly, Aquinas holds this participatory soteriology while avoiding Calvin’s fundamental criticisms of his opponents. The combination of the genuine participatory agreements between Calvin’s and Aquinas’s theology and Aquinas’s avoidance of Calvin’s principal theological concerns positions Aquinas’s soteriology as a rich resource for deepening the non-participatory elements in Calvin’s thinking. This is all the more true when we appreciate the fact that the theological formulations proposed by the Reformers cannot be abstracted from the underlying concerns that motivated their attacks on a degenerate late medieval theology that had gained a foothold in the Church. As A. N. S. Lane notes, “It is important to pay attention not just to the doctrines put forward by each side but also to the *concerns* that underlie these doctrines.”³ Throughout this work, I have paid special attention to the criticisms that Calvin leveled against his opponents and have consistently appreciated those criticisms and sought positive proposals that avoid those criticisms. To my knowledge, at no point in this work has Aquinas put forth a deeper participatory account that would warrant Calvin’s attacks, even though Aquinas’s positions are different from Calvin’s.

REFRAMING THE DIALOGUE; RE-ENGAGING THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

The proposals offered here will allow those who follow Calvin’s thinking to frame their engagement with communities not explicitly rooted in the Reformed tradition, such as the Catholic Church, in ways that differ

³ Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, 12. Lane goes on to note: “Unless one is willing to look beyond forms of words to the doctrines being expressed there is no point in dialogue” (14).

from traditional engagements. In order to unpack some of the ways the discussion might be reframed, I want to revisit Calvin's response to the Council of Trent, which itself bears Thomistic elements, in light of the proposals put forth in earlier chapters. To be clear, I am not offering a particular interpretation of Trent in what follows.⁴ Nor am I suggesting that appropriating Aquinas's thought necessarily leads to having a theology always in harmony with Trent, especially if, as Heiko Oberman has argued, Trent consists of a combination of Thomist, Scotist, and nominalist thought patterns.⁵ Rather, I undertake the less ambitious task of using Calvin's dialogue with Trent as an opportunity to illustrate how a discussion might be framed differently given the preceding proposals surrounding soteriological participation. I will focus my attention on Calvin's response to the sixth session of Trent, since this section addresses many of the issues engaged in the preceding chapters.⁶

When reading Calvin's response to the sixth session of Trent, we immediately encounter a concern that not only informs a great portion of Calvin's criticisms of Trent but also appears throughout his commentary on Romans, and it is one that Aquinas shares as well, namely, that the relationship between divine and human action not be conceived in competitive-causal terms. A competitive-causal schema of human action sees God as "priming the pump" of human wills, as it were, leaving human beings to act in whatever way they choose, with this action understood as autonomous from God's causal activity. This was certainly a position held by some scholastic theologians in the sixteenth century, as can be seen in the work of Luis de Molina, who understood human free action as lying outside divine governance and causality.⁷ Within this framework, "cooperation" is understood as

⁴ Christopher Malloy engages in such a project by offering an interpretation of Trent whereby he critiques the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* and Lutheran attempts of rapprochement on the doctrine of justification; Christopher Malloy, *Engrafted into Christ: A Critique of the Joint Declaration* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

⁵ Heiko Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Early Reformation Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 204–33.

⁶ Unless otherwise stated, the English translation of Calvin's *Acta Synodi Tridentinae cum Antidoto* (1547) is taken from *Selected Works of John Calvin: Tracts and Letters*, trans. and ed. Henry Beveridge, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983); cited throughout as *Antidote*.

⁷ Long, *Natura Pura*, 37–41. The seeds of this position had been cast many years before; see the comment from Thomas Bradwardine regarding his days as a student: "In the philosophical faculty I seldom heard a reference to grace... What I heard day in and day out was that we are masters of our own free acts, that ours is the choice to act well or badly" (cited in Obermann, *Forerunners of the Reformation*, 135).

human beings contributing their part in a manner wholly differentiated from that of God. Calvin claims against the “Neptune Fathers” of Trent that although they are careful to avoid downright Pelagianism, they develop a “middle way” that gives God’s grace “part” of the role in our justification and another “part” to our own works.⁸ They assert that our reception of grace “is not of God, inasmuch as it is by the free movement of our will we assent to God calling.”⁹ For Calvin, their principal error consists in “sharing the work between God and ourselves.”¹⁰ In response, Calvin’s guiding principle is that “God promises not to act so that we may be able to will well, but to make us will well.”¹¹ Whether it be our preparation for grace, our conversion to Christ, or the performance of good works in Christ, Calvin seeks to frame the Christian life within a noncompetitive-causal framework in which, as he states most clearly in *On the Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, “we will as he guides our heart, we endeavor as he rouses us, we succeed in our endeavor as he gives us strength, so that we are animate and living tools, while he is the leader and the finisher of the work.”¹² Calvin’s concern regarding competitive causality guided Aquinas’s approach as well, and this same concern should frame our discussions surrounding human participation in God’s work of salvation. Having a noncompetitive understanding of divine–human activity is the sole avenue for embracing a deep, participatory soteriology.

At the same time, within this general concern for a noncompetitive-causal framework we move into the first area of Calvin’s critique that would need reframing given the proposals in the previous chapters. Calvin criticizes the Tridentine Fathers’ understanding of justification on the point that “they deny that it is merely the forgiveness of sins, and insist that it includes both renovation and sanctification.”¹³ To be precise, even Calvin himself does not define justification *merely* as the forgiveness of sins. Rather, it also includes Christ’s imputed righteousness. Calvin’s central concern thus corresponds to the inclusion of the role of transformation in justification. Calvin denies that justification has anything to do with a “quality” within the believer and seeks to keep the justice by which we are just before God *extra nos*.¹⁴ Yet his response to Trent is telling

⁸ *Antidote*, 108 (CO 7.441–442).

⁹ *Antidote*, 111 (CO 7.445).

¹⁰ *Antidote*, 113 (CO 7.446).

¹¹ *Antidote*, 111 (CO 7.445).

¹² *BLW*, 3.318 (125).

¹³ *Antidote*, 114 (CO 7.446).

¹⁴ *Antidote*, 117 (CO 7.449).

in that Calvin cites numerous passages from Romans principally for the purpose of denying the role of *works* in justification. Very subtly, Calvin equates including transformation in justification with including works in justification. His response posits “justification by faith” against “justification by works”—a move we observed throughout his Romans commentary. We find that Calvin is not concerned simply to assert a crystallized formulation of justification that denies any role of transformation. Rather, he is reacting to an articulation of justification that includes the role of works within a larger framework that understands justification to be “partly” the forgiveness of sins and “partly” the renovation of the Spirit, with the latter being the place for works in justification; or, stated another way, “partly” of imputation and “partly” of quality.¹⁵ The partly-partly schema of justification means that having peace with God becomes a combination of having one’s sins forgiven and doing good works, with the latter occurring, once again, within a competitive-causal framework. The “quality” that partly contributes to justification is understood as coming alongside Christ’s justice; it is a combination of Christ’s justice and our justice. Calvin desires instead to see justification as *wholly* the forgiveness of sins and *wholly* Christ’s righteousness. Calvin claims: “The righteousness wanting in ourselves is borrowed elsewhere.”¹⁶ “Our” righteousness does not come alongside Christ’s righteousness in order for us to obtain justification. Rather, the righteousness that justifies before God is centered wholly on Christ’s righteousness.

At this point, Aquinas’s position has much in common with Calvin’s. Aquinas also maintains that justification is the forgiveness of sins. He also claims that we receive an alien justice when these sins are forgiven. Aquinas and Calvin differ, however, in that Christ’s alien justice becomes residential in Aquinas’s perspective, transforming the sinner into a just Christian, while it remains *extra nos* for Calvin. But unlike Calvin’s opponents, Aquinas does not consider “our” righteousness as anything but a participation in Christ’s righteousness, and good works do not contribute to establishing our peace with God but occur solely within a relationship of peace with God. The question, then, should be reframed away from whether justification includes a transformative dimension; I have demonstrated that Calvin’s attempt to remove all notions of transformation from justification fall short in

¹⁵ *Antidote*, 116 (CO 7.448).

¹⁶ *Antidote*, 117 (CO 7.449).

accounting for Paul's teaching. The reframed question seeks to ensure that justification is the forgiveness of sins and the gift of Christ's justice, which is received *sola fide non merito*. With Calvin, the discussion must be framed around a purely non-meritorious reception of justification. Good works are then conceived not in terms of obtaining peace with God but rather within a peaceful relationship with God. Good works are understood as God's work of bringing us into an ever-greater participation in Christ by furthering the justness created in the sinner.

A further reframing occurs in relation to Calvin's criticisms regarding the role of good works in justification. We noted above that only through participation in Christ's justice by grace is one justified before God. Affirming that believers are able to observe the commandments should not be translated into affirming that believers are saved by the law. In the participatory soteriology presented earlier, there is no covenant of works in competition with salvation by grace through faith in Christ, and therefore there is no per se dichotomy between justification by works, on the one hand, and justification by faith, on the other, as representing two forms of justification. I note that this proposal is not totally antithetical to Calvin's own position. While in the *Antidote* Calvin employs his notion of "perfection" (see Chapter 4) to deny our ability to fulfill the law,¹⁷ this denial stems from the underlying worry that believers falsely understand their salvation as being initially in terms of Christ's forgiveness and subsequently in terms of fulfilling the law. Again, Calvin's concern here is to reject a "partly-partly" schema of justification, which results in seeing justification by works as believers doing their part with the grace God has given them in order that they may obtain their salvation. My proposal does justice to this Calvinian concern. I have demonstrated via Aquinas that we are able to affirm our ability to keep the commandments while accounting for our ongoing struggles with the

¹⁷ *Antidote*, 156, 158 (CO 7.480, 482). In the latter passage, Calvin does not appeal to the Christian's experience of struggling with the remaining flesh but rather to the hidden judgment of God. He cites Proverbs 16:2, "The ways of a man seem right in his own eyes, but God weigheth the heart," in order to make a blanket statement about the sinfulness or taintedness of every human work, even for the Christian believer. Of course, one might respond to Calvin by asking how he knows that God's judgment—given that it is hidden—is not the contrary, namely, that the believer's works are truly good in God's sight due to God's own work of salvation. This seems to be a more robustly participatory understanding of works in the context of having union with Christ.

flesh, without in any way presenting salvation as being rooted in the law, if this is understood as something *added* to salvation in Christ. The general perspective on the law should be to see it as good, which Calvin does, and to regard keeping the law within the context of justification as an element of God enabling human beings to flourish in Christ. Obedience to the law is reframed away from a “partly-partly” schema and toward seeing obedience as a gift of God enabling his people to participate in his work of salvation—his work of making his people happy in him. Obedience within justification does not need be conceived as a human striving to *gain* God’s favor, but rather it should be understood *as* God’s favor—his favor toward sin-enslaved human beings, enabling them to be free in Christ’s grace.

Calvin’s criticisms of Trent’s understanding of good works in their relationship to justification are therefore valid (a) if “our” righteousness is understood as coming alongside Christ’s righteousness; (b) if good works are conceived as our “part” in justification understood as distinct from God’s grace; or (c) if good works are understood as establishing peace with God rather than flowing from having peace with God. But good works in relation to justification can also be understood within the participatory framework of justification outlined above, which avoids all three above conceptions of works-based justification. To be sure, Calvin himself has a place for an extended understanding of justification; he states that in Acts 15:11 Peter does not speak of justification in terms of a single day.¹⁸ But Calvin’s non-participatory soteriology raises its head when Calvin quickly seeks to ensure that the extended sense of justification is rooted in faith alone and not in works, in remission of sins and not in observing the law. But if justification consists of the forgiveness of sins and the participation in Christ’s justness through the reception of grace, justification understood in its extended sense may include works while still maintaining a purely gracious, non-meritorious reception of justice by faith, which serves the foundation of human salvation, with works only deepening one’s conformity to Christ within a peaceful relationship to God. Calvin’s critique of Trent sees the role of works in justification in terms of “depending” on good works for our justification. In response, Calvin cites Augustine (*De Civ. Dei*.xix, c.27), who states, “The righteousness of believers, while they live in the world, consists *more*

¹⁸ *Antidote*, 123 (CO 7.454).

in the forgiveness of sins than the perfection of virtues.”¹⁹ Although Calvin cites Augustine to deny good works in justification, Aquinas would also agree with Augustine while retaining a place for works in our justification. We recall Aquinas’s claim that although good works “depend on man’s will or exertion,” it is “offensive to pious ears” to speak of the act in this way. Rather, the act should be considered according to the words of the Apostle in Romans 9:16, “It does not depend on the one who wills or the one who runs, but on God who has mercy” (§778). Moreover, because of his understanding of habits, Aquinas can affirm the presence of justice in a believer while affirming that greater growth in justice is possible. It is important to note that Calvin’s criticisms occur once again within a competitive-causal framework. He couches Trent’s claim as follows: “[It is] as if God after justifying us once freely in a single moment *left us* to procure righteousness for ourselves by the observance of the law during the whole life.”²⁰ In this way believers must “depend” on works for salvation. This is far from the role of works understood within the participatory soteriology proposed in previous chapters. Yet by denying the ability of believers to perform the law and rooting justification in something *extra nos*, Calvin turns Augustine’s “more”—“the righteousness of believers . . . consists *more* in the forgiveness of sins than the perfection of virtues”—into a radical “only.”

At the same time, Calvin is correct to argue against Trent that when Christians fall short and sin they should not rely on penance as a “second plank” of salvation coming alongside the salvific work of Christ.²¹ Rather, they should draw daily on Christ for forgiveness and restoration as they daily pray “Father, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Christ then restores *his* righteousness in the sinner; the sinner is not attempting to bring a righteousness before God that is not first and foremost Christ’s righteousness. Understood in this way, Calvin is correct to say “The completion, not less the commencement of justification, must be ascribed to faith,”²² for the believer is always relying on God to unmeritoriously forgive sins and deepen the presence of Christ’s justice within the believer. Yet as we have seen with Aquinas, who would agree with Calvin’s sentiments, none of Calvin’s judgments requires the nonparticipatory

¹⁹ *Antidote*, 128 (CO 7.458).

²⁰ *Antidote*, 129 (CO 7.458).

²¹ *Antidote*, 138–41 (CO 7.466–468).

²² *Antidote*, 122 (CO 7.453).

elements within his soteriology that keeps justification *extra nos* and believers unable to fulfill the law.

The topic of faith brings us to an important element in Calvin's response to Trent. Calvin claims on numerous occasions that faith is the "cause" of our justification. In his Romans commentary (70.43–71.45) and in *Institutes* 3.14.21, Calvin is more precise and calls faith the "instrumental" cause of justification. Faith "grasps" or "grabs onto" Christ and his righteousness—a righteousness that always remains *extra nos*. To be sure, Calvin has a mystical strand in his thinking, as we saw in Chapter 4 dealing with Romans 6, and this mystical strand pushes him towards a deeper participatory soteriology than is conveyed by such "grasping." As Calvin states elsewhere, "That joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts—in short, that mystical union—are accorded by us the highest degree of importance... [W]e do not, therefore, contemplate him outside ourselves from afar in order that his righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into his body—in short, because he deigns to make us one with him."²³ Despite this recognition of Christ's indwelling, the nonparticipatory dimension in Calvin's view of our union with Christ prevents the believer from having an actual, real participation in Christ's justice. Due to Calvin's understanding of the Spirit's work of transformation, Christ's justice always remains *extra nos*, and only by appealing to God's *will* extrinsically imputing Christ's justice is Calvin able to account for how the still damnation-worthy believer can stand righteous in God's sight. At best, then, Calvin's account leaves the believer with only a partial participation in Christ through the Spirit, corresponding to the partial transformation caused by the Spirit's indwelling. Faith is therefore cast in nonparticipatory terms of "grasping" an extrinsic righteousness (rather than being part of God transforming the sinner intrinsically), and Calvin uses this framework in his reply to Trent. But rather than understanding faith and its relationship to Christ's justice in these extrinsic, nonparticipatory terms, the reframed perspective sees faith as itself a component of our participation in Christ's justice. Faith does not grasp Christ's justice as something *extra nos* but is the result of God justifying the mind

²³ *Inst.* 3.11.10.

and heart of the believer through grace, resulting in the believer participating in the justice of Christ. Faith is not the “cause” of our justification but the result of God causing our justification; it is a giving ourselves over to the Spirit justifying us. We participate in Christ’s justice in the very act of having faith.

An underlying concern of Calvin’s that informs his attack on Trent as it relates to faith and justification is our assurance of salvation. Calvin believes that by positing justification by faith *against* justification by works, he can secure assurance. But as demonstrated in Chapter 5, understanding justification in transformative terms (as long as this transformation is rightly understood as a participation in Christ’s justice) does not undermine assurance of salvation but only deepens the believer’s dependence wholly on Christ for salvation. Calvin correctly objects to any theology that removes a deep-seated confidence in salvation, and he spends much time responding to what he considers to be Tridentine theology that breeds doubts about salvation.²⁴ Based on the proposals in previous chapters, however, especially Chapter 5, the conversation surrounding assurance must be reframed, so that it does not imply justification as a non-transforming reality and does not deny works within the context of justification. A participatory soteriology still grounds assurance in Christ’s work of salvation, Christ’s righteousness, Christ’s grace, and Christ’s gift of perseverance; and these assertions must accompany any articulation of assurance. When our righteousness is understood as a participation in Christ’s righteousness, Calvin’s statement remains on target: “[Paul] declares the greatest saints can have no assurance of salvation, unless it repose on the grace of Christ. He therefore abolishes faith who does not retain his as the only righteousness, which exists even until death.”²⁵

But this form of participatory soteriology also incorporates the believer into his or her own perseverance. It is not simply that *God* remains faithful so that we persevere to the end. It is also that *we* actually and truly persevere and remain faithful to the end. The Spirit does not testify to our salvation *in spite of* us. Rather, the Spirit testifies to *our* spirit that we are sons of God. And the Spirit enacts the reality to which it testifies by enabling us to be sons in the Son. The eternal inheritance is therefore not ours *although* we are still condemnable *in*

²⁴ *Antidote*, 125–7 (CO 7.455–456).

²⁵ *Antidote*, 123 (CO 7.453).

se and worthy of damnation. It is not given *despite* the fact that our works are not truly good and are not meritorious. Rather, as sons in the Son, we participate in Christ's justness and are enabled by the Spirit to participate in God bringing about his salvation of sinners.²⁶ The inheritance does not become ours by the law, as Calvin rightly warns in quoting Romans 4:14.²⁷ But the issue gets reframed once we see that, having been made sons in the Son by faith through grace, our obedience in grace is *intrinsic* to obtaining the inheritance that is rightfully ours by being in Christ. Obedience refers to our activities in Christ, and it is we, in the completeness of our humanity, who are made sons. In other words, what we do cannot be separated from who we are, and a deeper sense of participation incorporates the whole human person in God's work of salvation. Our obedience, then, is intrinsic to obtaining the inheritance—it is intrinsic to being a son—and is not merely a “sign” that the inheritance is ours. Calvin is right to say that “the inheritance falls to us by no other right than that of free adoption.”²⁸ But to deny an intrinsic role of our obedience to obtaining eternal life is to undermine the depth of participation that occurs when God makes *us* sons in the Son. To be sure, Calvin's critiques of the role given by Trent to “suffering with Christ” in obtaining eternal life stems once again from a competitive-causal framework. He claims that the Tridentine Fathers make “part” of the righteousness that obtains eternal life suffering with Christ, so that “they do not depend entirely on the grace of God.”²⁹ The participatory framework proposed here founds “suffering with Christ” and its relationship to obtaining eternal life entirely upon the grace of God without displacing this suffering from its intrinsic role of obtaining the inheritance of eternal life. The participatory soteriology advanced in this work approaches our obediential life in the Spirit as forming our identity as participants in the righteousness of Christ. And in the end, I argue that it does more justice to Paul's teaching in Romans.

²⁶ For an argument that Aquinas's teaching on condign merit ultimately bespeaks our *participation* in God and his work of manifesting his goodness and glory—this in dialogue with Calvin on merit—see Charles Raith II, “Aquinas and Calvin on Merit, Part II: Condignity and Participation,” *Pro Ecclesia* 21 (2012): 195–210.

²⁷ *Antidote*, 126 (CO 7.456).

²⁸ *Antidote*, 145 (CO 7.471).

²⁹ *Antidote*, 133 (CO 7.462).

CONCLUSION: A WORK IN ECUMENICAL RESSOURCEMENT

While our explorations have contributed to the understanding of the relationship between Aquinas's and Calvin's thought, as well as to our understanding of the scriptural environment that formed their thought, the project also reflects what may be called a work in "ecumenical *ressourcement*." It seeks to retrieve and engage sources that have shaped different ecclesial communities in order to sustain a meaningful and potentially transforming dialogue. A recent work modeling ecumenical *ressourcement* is Edgardo Colón-Emeric's *Wesley, Aquinas and Perfection*. Importantly, Colón-Emeric allows each theologian his own distinctive voice. While listening, he takes the role of a moderator of sorts, attempting to sort out genuine differences, commonalities, and places of mutual edification. A moderator between Aquinas and Wesley is needed, as Colón-Emeric shows, given the fact that they approach the topic at hand—perfection—using different theological models. Such moderating work is important to ecumenism, since advancement in ecumenism occurs when "one clearly admits that different words often refer to the same content and, more importantly, that behind the same words there can be different concepts and even whole systems of categories."³⁰ As moderator, Colón-Emeric does not attempt to modernize the thought of the interlocutors by disengaging them from their own, foundational context, something that would disable the potential import of a *ressourcement* dialogue; instead, he builds the dialogue squarely on the basis of the way in which the topic of perfection functioned in Augustine and Wesley.³¹

³⁰ Otto Hermann Pesch, "Existential and Sapiential Theology—The Theological Confrontation between Luther and Aquinas," in *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther*, ed. Jared Wicks (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970), 64.

³¹ A. N. S. Lane makes an appropriate observation—one that I take as a warning—when he notes, commenting on what he sees as a shift in the centrality of justification in modern times from its pride of place in the sixteenth century: "This need not be regarded as a mark of decline. It is a simple fact of church history that in different generations different doctrines come to the fore and what seems like a crucial doctrine in one generation will in another generation be seen as just one doctrine among many" (*Justification By Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, 7). The warning is that we must not confuse the zeal of contemporary interest in a topic—or lack of zeal in another—as an indicator of the importance of that topic for our ecclesial relations. It also means that lack of attention to a particular theological locus does not mean that our ecclesial communities have been reconciled on that locus of theology.

Colón-Emeric's role of moderating between Aquinas and Wesley well captures my own approach. Sorting out genuine differences, similarities, and complementarities requires concentrated effort to hear what Aquinas and Calvin are saying. The purpose of this *resourcement* by way of moderating a dialogue is not merely to sort out the "seeds" of agreement between the interlocutors, a trap that Colón-Emeric also avoids. Rather, the dialogue enables *mutual* edification and understanding, so that each voice contributes to the discussion. In this regard Avery Dulles's proposal for ecumenical dialogue is significant. Rather than focusing the ecumenical project on merely seeking points of agreement, he proposes an "exchange of gifts" that allows participants to "draw on their own normative sources and does not constrain them to bracket or minimize what is specific to themselves . . . [E]ach partner should feel privileged to be able to contribute something positive that the others still lack."³² The goal of this project, as well as Dulles's ecumenical vision, is that such an exchange of gifts will result in a "process of growth through mutual attestation."³³

³² Avery Cardinal Dulles, "Saving Ecumenism from Itself," *First Things* (Dec. 2007), 26.

³³ *Ibid.*, 27.

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