

Lion and Lamb Apologetics'

Aquinas and Calvin on Predestination: Is There Any Common Ground?

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I. INTRODUCTION

While Catholics and Protestants have long disputed the primary authority of Scripture, the doctrine of justification, and the nature of the sacraments, a comparison of viewpoints on the doctrine of predestination has received little attention in contemporary studies.¹ Although no uniform position on predestination exists among Catholic theologians, Thomas Aquinas's discussion in his *Summa Theologiae*, *Summa contra Gentiles*, and New Testament commentaries provides a framework for exploring this doctrine from a Catholic perspective.² It is unfortunate that conservative Protestants have essentially dismissed Thomas and seemingly everyone else associated with Medieval Catholicism, failing to appreciate the theologians whom, to varying degrees, embraced an Augustinian interpretation of Paul and his emphasis on grace (e.g., Gottschalk, Thomas Bardwardine, Gregory of Rimini). Since Thomas holds such a prominent place in Catholic theology it is crucial his position on predestination and its soteric implications be clearly understood. Who determines our ultimate destiny? Is election unconditional? Those in the Reformed tradition may find that Thomas offers some surprising answers.

¹ Taking Thomas as a benchmark for comparative studies on this subject, Steven C. Boguslawski observes: "...apart from R. Garrigou-Lagrange's work on predestination fifty years ago, little has been written on the topic of predestination and election in Aquinas in contemporary studies." *Thomas Aquinas on the Jews: Insights into His Commentary on Romans 9-11* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2008), 73, n. 1.

² Catholic thought is far from homogeneous. There are significant differences between Dominicans, Franciscans, and Suarezians. Nevertheless, Thomas holds an esteemed place in Catholicism. In his 1879 encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, Pope Leo XIII underscored the need for a Thomistic Renaissance and encouraged the reintroduction of Thomism into Catholic educational institutions. He did not direct bishops to elevate one school of thought above another, but did stress the fact that, "ecumenical councils...have always been careful to hold Thomas Aquinas in singular honor." 22. Writing a century later, Pope John Paul II reaffirmed "Saint Thomas as...a model of the right way to do theology" and celebrated the global rise of Thomism which he attributed in large part to the encyclical of Leo XIII. See John Paul II, encyclical, *Fides et Ratio* 43, 58.

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The purpose of this paper is to offer a manageable exposition of Thomas's teaching on predestination followed by a comparison of views with John Calvin, the Reformer principally associated with this doctrine.³ Although Calvinism is a minority report within Protestantism, it is far closer to a Thomistic view of predestination than alternative Protestant conceptions and consequently provides greater opportunity to discuss areas of commonality between Catholics and Protestants on this controversial but critical doctrine. Such comparative studies are worthwhile as Thomism and scholasticism continue to yield academic interest. Some have suggested that the resurgence of interest in scholasticism, especially in Reformed scholasticism, has in turn reformed our views of scholasticism.⁴ One need not embrace the natural theology or sacerdotalism of Thomas to appreciate his influence on Vermigli, Zanchi, Perkins, Owen, Turretin, Mastricht and others. With some anti-scholastic bias now removed due to the collective study of Protestant Orthodoxy, it is worth giving Thomas a closer look, particularly on dogmas where he has received less attention. This essay endeavors to bring clarity to Thomas's teaching as a mainstream Augustinian on the doctrines of providence, predestination,

³ Although he is generally perceived as the father of Reformed theology, John Calvin was only one in a nexus of theologians whose thought led to the formation of Reformed Protestantism – these included first generation Reformers Ulrich Zwingli, Johannes Oecolampadius, and Martin Bucer, and second generation codifiers Heinrich Bullinger, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and Wolfgang Musculus. See Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 39. Frank A. James III, "Neglected Sources of the Reformed Doctrine of Predestination: Ulrich Zwingli and Peter Martyr Vermigli," *Modern Reformation* 7, no. 6 (1998): 18.

⁴ Maarten Wisse and Marcel Sarot, "Introduction. Reforming Views of Reformed Scholasticism," in *Scholasticism Reformed: Essays in Honour of Willem J. van Asselt*, eds. Maarten Wisse, Marcel Sarot and Willemien Otten (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1-27. Abundant evidence has demonstrated the influence of the scholastic method upon the early Reformers and their successors, a method employed equally by Reformed, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic theologians. Reformed Orthodox theologians chose to incorporate the dialectical and rhetorical features of scholasticism to help structure their biblical formulations, refine their argumentation, and identify fallacies in rival systems. They incorporated Aristotelian categories, not to detract from a biblically rooted faith, but to utilize philosophical concepts and language in the service of precise theological explication and debate. See Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 2nd ed. 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003); *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, eds. *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006); Willem J. van Asselt, T. Theo J. Pleizier, Pieter L. Rouwendal, and Maarten Wisse, *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

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election, reprobation, and double predestination.⁵ His views will then be compared and contrasted with Calvin's position.⁶

II. AQUINAS'S DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION

1. Providence and Predestination

Since Thomas considers predestination a subset of providence, one must have a basic grasp of his doctrine of providence before delving into the particulars of predestination.⁷ For Thomas, the providence of God provides the conceptual framework to understand his activity in the world and the reason why things are ordained to their end.⁸ He distinguishes between providence as the rationale for an orderly end and government as the execution of that order.⁹ The former is eternal, the latter temporal.¹⁰ The *finis ultimus* is determined according to the counsel of God's will implying certainty and deliberate action.¹¹ That which is conceived in his intellect he infallibly wills to be done. We may differentiate between these two faculties but "in God will and intellect are the same."¹² Because God is the first efficient cause of every contingent being Thomas asserts: "we are bound to profess that divine Providence rules all things."¹³ If one thing is caused by

⁵ For an exploration of ways Thomas was indebted or stood in relation to Augustine see *Aquinas the Augustinian*, eds. Michael Dauphinas, Barry David and Mathew Levering (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2007).

⁶ Some modern studies comparing the views of Aquinas and Calvin on predestination include Charles Partee, "Predestination in Aquinas and Calvin," *Reformed Review*, 32, no. 1 (Fall 1978): 14-22; Caspar Friethoff, *Die Prædestinationslehre bei Thomas von Aquin und Calvin* (Freiburg: St. Paulus, 1926); A.D.R. Polman, *De prædestinatieleer van Augustinus, Thomas van Aquino en Calvijn. Een dogmahistorische studie* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1936); Joseph Thang Nguyen, *Predestination: its earliest Augustinian expression and the later doctrine of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin* (M.A. thesis, Graduate Theological Union, 1983).

⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter *ST*), vol. 5., ed. and trans. Thomas Gilby (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967) Ia, 23. 1. Yearley comments on the significance of the doctrines of providence and predestination: "The idea is closely connected with almost all Christian doctrines and also has wide philosophic implications. In fact, in the sense that providence / predestination specifies the relation of God to the world, the concept becomes the most crucial and far-ranging human idea or question about the nature of God. In its simplest form, the question providence / predestination raises is: 'Does God control the actual happenings of the world?'" Lee H. Yearley, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Providence and Predestination," *Anglican Theological Review* 49 (1967): 409.

⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 22. 1. Thomas treats the subject of divine providence extensively in his commentary on Job, most likely written contemporaneously with Book III of his *Summa contra Gentiles*. See Eleonore Stump, "Biblical commentary and philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 253, 260-265.

⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 22. 3; *ST*, Ia, 22. 1.

¹⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 22. 1.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 22. 2.

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another particular thing, nothing can avoid being determined by a universal cause.¹⁴ Since even man's free will has its cause in God, "whatever men freely do on their own falls under God's providence."¹⁵ The invincible power of Deity does rule out secondary causes, for they are the means of carrying out his eternal purpose.¹⁶ Divine providence does not impose necessity on all things. Events in time and space may happen contingently or through necessity, but either way they happen inevitably.¹⁷ Although God is not the sole cause of all that occurs, he is the supreme cause and by his providence and government our destiny and the end of all creation is realized.

Thomas addresses the whole question of predestination in the *ST* only after having established the doctrine of providence and principle of predilection (i.e., to regard one thing better than another because God wills it to be a greater good).¹⁸ Since God determines the end of all things and bestows more favor on some, predestination follows quite naturally. These two concepts, providence and predilection, are integrated into his concept of predestination. He defines predestination as, "The planned sending of a rational creature to the end which is eternal life."¹⁹ Because God governs all things and operates in all his creatures one must conclude that if any are to enjoy eternal life it is because God has predestined them from eternity.²⁰ Hence, predestination is considered a subset of providence for two reasons: "because direction to an end...pertains to providence, and because providence...includes a relation to the future."²¹ One might say predestination is "providence for men and women in the order of grace."²² In his love, God elects some individuals to freely receive eternal life and foreordains them to this glorious end. Thomas reasons as follows:

...predestination, as we have said, is part of Providence, which is like prudence, as we have noticed, and is the plan existing in the mind of the one who rules things for a purpose. Things are so ordained only in virtue of a preceding intention for that end. The predestination of some to salvation means that God wills their salvation. This is where special and chosen loving comes in.²³

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 22. 3.

¹⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 22. 4.

¹⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 20. 3.

¹⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 1.

²⁰ Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 168.

²¹ Aquinas, *De veritate*, 6.

²² Thomas F. O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas, Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1997), 104.

²³ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 4.

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The teaching of Aquinas on predestination follows along Augustinian lines.²⁴ The rejection and damnation of the wicked is addressed, but the focus remains on the salvation and glorious end of the righteous. Both Augustine and Aquinas stress the primacy of grace in their treatment of predestination. The destiny of the elect is a certainty within the scope of God's immutable will, but the predestined require the gift of perseverance to remain faithful until the end.²⁵ One particular variation worth noting is their starting point. Whereas the fall and the depravity of man governs Augustine's discussion of predestination, Thomas works out his doctrine by way of causality from the nature and will of God. They arrive at similar conclusions but adopt different emphases and methodologies. Thomas's doctrine of predestination can be explored under four main headings: its explanation (cause), effect, extent, and end.

The explanation or cause of predestination is the sovereign will of God alone. This is a recurring theme in this portion of the *ST* and his *Commentary on Ephesians*.²⁶ Thomas maintains, "Predestination is not anything in the predestined, but only in him who predestines."²⁷ The reason anything is foreordained to its end lies in God.²⁸ From all eternity God has preconceived the idea of ordaining some to salvation.²⁹ In the *Summa contra Gentiles*, he contends predestination has no cause in human merit but precedes all merit.³⁰ The ground of predestination does not depend on merit resulting from its effect.

²⁴ Davies, *Thomas Aquinas*, 167. Thomas's remarks on predestination have been subject to various interpretations, most notably in the *De Auxiliis* controversy at the end of the sixteenth century. During this time a heated debate emerged between two rival parties: the Dominicans led by Domingo Banez and the Jesuits / Molinists led by Luis de Molina. Banez argued for the idea of physical premotion (*praemotio physica*), maintaining that God's eternal decrees concur efficaciously with the operations of man even when he acts freely. Molina believed this notion denied human freedom. After twenty years of private and public debates between Dominicans and Jesuits, many in the presence of popes, the dispute was officially left undecided allowing both views to coexist in the Catholic Church. See Harm Goris, "Divine Foreknowledge, Providence, Predestination, and Human Freedom," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Rick Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 99-100. For an extended discussion on physical premotion and its corollaries see Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination: The Meaning of Predestination in Scripture and the Church* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1998), 240-323.

²⁵ Cf. Augustine, *De corruptione et gratia*, viii, 17,18. For Augustine, not all the regenerate are granted the gift of perseverance. Only those predestined are blessed with perseverance since none of the elect can perish.

²⁶ See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, trans. Matthew L. Lamb (Albany: Magi Books, 1966), 1. lect. 1, 4.

²⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 2: "Dicendum quod praedestinatio non est aliquid in praedestinitis sed in praedestinate tantum."

²⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 1.

²⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 2.

³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Of God and His Creatures: An Annotated Translation of the Summa Contra Gentiles of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (hereafter CG), trans. Joseph Rickaby (London: Burns and Oates, 1905), III. 164.

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God does not confer grace on individuals he knows will use it well. Even these effects are due to grace and it is obvious that an effect cannot simultaneously be the reason for its cause.³¹ The Scriptures do speak of divine foreknowledge, but when Paul says, “the ones he foreknew he also predestined” (Rom. 8:29), we are to understand that God cannot predestine them unless he foreknows them, not that all the ones foreknown are predestined.³² As he explains in his *Commentary on Romans*: “to claim that some merit on our part is presupposed, the foreknowledge of which is the reason for predestination, is nothing less than to claim that grace is given because of our merits.”³³ God saves us in the same manner he predestines us: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy...” (Titus 3:5). Therefore, the foreknowledge of human merit cannot be the motive of predestination.³⁴ The will of God is the efficient cause of predestination and his will has no outside (human) cause, “but is the first cause of everything else.”³⁵

The effects of divine predestination are grace and glory.³⁶ Logically, there is an order in God’s decree as we apprehend it. God appoints the end before he appoints the means. Accordingly, Thomas posits predestination to glory prior to predestination to grace.³⁷ God not only wills the end, but the grace to bring the elect to this end. Reflecting the influence of Aristotle, predestination is portrayed as a series of causes and effects with God as the first cause and eternal life as the final effect.³⁸ God ordains a particular effect as meritorious of another, so that virtuous acts performed under grace culminate in eternal life. Even though Thomas insists that merit has no part in God’s choice of elect, it does have a role in the implementation of his plan: “God pre-ordains that he will give glory because of merit, and also pre-ordains that he will give grace to a person in order to merit glory.”³⁹ In other words, “The elect are given grace to earn glory.”⁴⁰ Commenting on Thomas’s system Wawrykow writes: “...while insisting that the entire salvific process, including its end in God, is the gift of God and the mark of God’s special love, it also

³¹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 5.

³² Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, eds. John Mortensen and Enrique Alarcon, trans. Fabian R. Larcher (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 8. *lect.* 6, 705.

³³ Aquinas, *Romans*, 8. *lect.* 6, 703.

³⁴ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 5.

³⁵ Aquinas, *Ephesians*, 1. *lect.* 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 3.

³⁸ Frank A. James III, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 119.

³⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 5: “*Sicut si diamus quod Deus praeordinavit se daturum alicui gloriam ex meritis, et quod praeordinavit se daturum alicui gratiam ut mereretur gloriam.*”

⁴⁰ Partee, “Predestination in Aquinas and Calvin,” 20.

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allows room for merit. The elect, by God's grace, earn through their good acts done in the state of grace the end of eternal life."⁴¹ For Thomas, even human merit itself is the result of God's grace.⁴² In O'Meara's judgment, "What predestination announces, a world of grace, is the great theme of the *ST*."⁴³

For Thomas, the elect are not passive bystanders but active participants in the working out of their salvation. They are to be diligent in prayer and good deeds for in this way the effect of predestination is fulfilled.⁴⁴ This is not achieved through self-effort. The one infused with grace needs additional grace to live rightly.⁴⁵ Even after one is justified by grace the recipient must ask God for the gift of perseverance to persist in good until the end. As Thomas says, "For there are many to whom grace is given, to whom it is not given to persevere in grace."⁴⁶ This is not to suggest that individuals actually predestined can perish. God's "...particular elective decree could never be fully thwarted by contingent secondary causality as could his providential one."⁴⁷ Man's free choice, as a proximate cause of salvation, can fail but God's will as the first cause cannot. Nothing can resist the divine will, so whether things happen necessarily or contingently, they happen the way God intends.⁴⁸ The ordinance of predestination does not exclude freedom of choice, but since God's will is infallibly efficacious, he works so as to fulfill his eternal decree while still persevering one's free will.⁴⁹

The extent of predestination is twofold. First, it applies to rational creatures who alone are capable of enjoying a loving relationship with God (i.e., humans and angels).⁵⁰ Second, it is a fixed number that can neither be increased nor decreased.⁵¹ It is not a merely a sum of a billion unspecified members. Rather, the predestined are certain individuals especially ordained to be saved by God's "own defining decision and choice."⁵² In one place Thomas suggests that number of the elect is equivalent to the quantity of angels who fell from heaven to compensate for their loss.⁵³ Elsewhere, he is

⁴¹ Joseph Wawrykow, "Grace," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, 204.

⁴² Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 5.

⁴³ O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas*, 104.

⁴⁴ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 8.

⁴⁵ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia IIae, 109. 9.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia IIae, 109. 10. Cited in *Aquinas: Nature and Grace*, ed. A.M. Fairweather (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954).

⁴⁷ Yearley, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Providence and Predestination," 418.

⁴⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 19. 8.

⁴⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 6; Yearley, "St. Thomas Aquinas on Providence and Predestination," 418.

⁵⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 1.

⁵¹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 7.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 6. "Accordingly, human beings took the place of the fallen angels, and Gentiles that of Jews."

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ambiguous and considers it best that the question be left undecided for only God knows the exact number. Whatever the sum total, it represents the minority of the human race. The majority fall short of eternal life.⁵⁴

According to Thomas, predestination has both a human and divine end. Humanly speaking it is the vision of God in heaven, otherwise known as the beatific vision. The end ordained for the elect is eternal life forever beholding the face of God. This is the glorious hope of the believer. It should be noted that predestination has little or no *practical end* for the Christian in Thomas's view. He does not regard a personal knowledge of predestination as a source of comfort or assurance in this life. This is only granted to some by special dispensation. If it were revealed to all, the non-elect would fall into despair and the elect would tend toward negligence.⁵⁵ If experiencing God's glory is the human end, extolling God's glory is the divine end.⁵⁶ Commenting on Ephesians 1:6a Thomas writes, "*Unto the praise of the glory of his grace* specifies the final cause which is that we may praise and know the goodness of God."⁵⁷ It is his pleasure that we know his goodness and then out of this knowledge to praise him for it.⁵⁸ God does all things for the sake of his goodness that his goodness might be reflected in things.⁵⁹ The All-Sufficient One needs nothing but is worthy of everything. Since predestination has no cause but in God alone, "the only motive for God's predestinating will is to communicate the divine goodness to others," and consequently to receive endless glory.⁶⁰

2. Election

For Thomas, election is distinguished from predestination. The former refers to God's gracious choice, the latter to man's appointed end ordained from eternity. Predestination presupposes election and election, love.⁶¹ This is evident from the very nature of predestination, for something cannot be ordained to an end unless the end has already been determined. Consequently, the fact some are predestined to eternal life means that

⁵⁴ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 7: "*Sed melius dicitur quod soli Deo est cognitus numerus electorum in superna felicitate locandus, ut habet collecta pro vivis et defunctis.*"

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 1.

⁵⁶ In his commentary on Ephesians 1:5-6, Thomas sketches out six characteristics of predestination: "First, it is an eternal act, he hath predestinated; secondly, it has a temporal object, us; thirdly, it offers a present privilege, the adoption of children through Jesus Christ; fourthly, the result is future, unto himself; fifthly, its manner [of being realized] is gratuitous, according to the purpose of his will; sixthly, it has a fitting effect [end], unto the praise of the glory of his grace." *Ephesians*, 1. lect. 1.

⁵⁷ Aquinas, *Ephesians*, 1. lect. 1.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 5.

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *Ephesians*, 1. lect. 1.

⁶¹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 4.

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God had previously willed their salvation. This involves election since God wills this good for some and not for others.⁶² Unlike the universal goodness of God expressed toward the entire human race, election is the particular bestowal of grace and glory to certain individuals. While it is true that God wills that all men be saved antecedently, he does not will this consequentially.⁶³ As Paul testifies in Romans 9:22-23, reprobation and election serve to vindicate God's justice and manifest his goodness.⁶⁴ But this is only part of the answer. Like Paul and Augustine, Thomas does not attempt to explain what lies behind God's choice.

God wills to manifest his goodness in men, in those whom he predestines in the manner of mercy by sparing them, in those whom he reprobates in the manner of justice by punishing them. This provides a key to the problem why God chooses some and rejects others...Why does he choose some to glory while others he rejects? His so willing is the sole ground. Augustine says, *Wherefore he draws this one and not that one, seek not to decide if you wish not to err.*⁶⁵

In his annotations on Ephesians 1:4, Thomas lists four advantages of this blessed election: it is free, eternal, fruitful, and gratuitous.⁶⁶ It is *free* because the spiritual blessings we experience in Christ come as a result of God's choosing us, quoting John 15:16: "You have not chosen me; but I have chosen you." God "freely foreordained us" in him. This choice is *eternal* because it occurred before the foundation of the world.⁶⁷ Election is *fruitful* in

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid. Thomas comments on this distinction when dealing with the question, "Is God's will always fulfilled?" If his will is always accomplished how does one explain Paul's statement, "God wills all men to be saved." (I Tim 2:4)? Thomas offers three possible explanations. First, the words are restricted to believers; none are saved whom God does not will to be saved. Second, the passage is not speaking about every individual but every class of persons (e.g., men and women, Jews and Gentiles). Third, it refers to God's antecedent not consequent will. According to Thomas Gilby, the editor and translator of this section of the *Summa*, Thomas is not suggesting God's will is contingent on our co-operation: "St. Thomas hinges the distinction on that between what we downrightly will to do, *voluntarium simpliciter*, and what we would like to do in other circumstances, *voluntarium secundum quid.*" *ST*, Ia, 19.6, n. d. In contrast to God's consequent will, what is willed antecedently is not absolute but may be considered in Thomas's words, "more a wishing than a sheer willing." To suggest God loves all his creatures and yet brings only a portion to glory is not unreasonable for "...we can speak of a justice that antecedently wishes every man to live, but consequently pronounces the capital sentence. So by analogy God antecedently wills all men to be saved, yet consequently wills some to be condemned as his justice requires." Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 19.6.

⁶⁴ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 5.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Aquinas, *Ephesians*, 1. lect. 1. Ephesians 1:4 (Lamb's translation): "As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight in charity."

⁶⁷ Thomas cites Romans 9:11: "For when the children were not yet born, nor had done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand."

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that it produces the fruit of holiness. God chose us not because we were holy, but in order that “we should be holy in virtues and unspotted by vices.”⁶⁸ Holiness is the fruit not the root of election. Divine election is *gratuitous* since we were chosen to be “holy and unspotted in his sight in charity.”⁶⁹

Divine love or charity is the wellspring of election. God chooses to will eternal life for some in preference to others because he wills this good out of his love.⁷⁰ It should be understood that election and dilection do not operate the same way in God as they do in us. We love for the good we find in someone. In our case; “our choice precedes our loving” and does not cause the object of our affections to be good. With God the opposite is true. When he wills good to those he loves he produces good in them. “Clearly, then,” Thomas concludes, “God’s special loving logically precedes that of his choosing.”⁷¹ For Thomas, to love is essentially to will a person good. Nevertheless, there are degrees of love.⁷² In one sense God loves all his creatures “insofar as they exist, for their existing is his love in operation.”⁷³ Divine charity extends to all men, “in that he wills some good for every one of them. But he does not will every good for everyone.”⁷⁴ Thomas would concur with Packer’s turn of phrase: “God loves all in some ways and he loves some in all ways.”⁷⁵ He does not love all equally. Members of his only begotten Son are loved more fully, not necessarily with greater intensity, but by the fact that God wills them the greater good of eternal life.⁷⁶ This differentiation is not unjust. As Thomas notes, “we cannot complain of unfairness if God prepares unequal lots for equals...He who grants by grace can give freely as he wills, be it more be it less, without prejudice to justice, provided he deprives no one of what is owing.”⁷⁷ If every sinner received his due all would be condemned. God is under no obligation to extend grace to anyone. The Lord is “merciful to those whom he delivers, just to those whom he does not deliver, but unjust to none.”⁷⁸ Therefore, it is his divine prerogative to bestow mercy on whomever he chooses. Since

⁶⁸ Aquinas, *Ephesians*, 1. lect. 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 4.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 20. 1.

⁷³ Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 151; *ST*, Ia, 20. 2.

⁷⁴ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 3.

⁷⁵ J.I. Packer, “The Love of God: Universal and Particular,” in *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, eds. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2000), 283.

⁷⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 3.

⁷⁷ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 5.

⁷⁸ Aquinas, *Romans*, 9. lect. 3, 773.

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God's elective grace is undeserved it is unconditional, for nothing freely given can simultaneously be earned or based on foreseen merit.⁷⁹

3. *Reprobation and Damnation*

Reprobation, like predestination, is a part of providence since by God's providence men are guided to their final destination.⁸⁰ For Thomas, reprobation is God's "will to permit someone to fall into fault and to inflict the penalty of damnation in consequence."⁸¹ *Reprobatio* includes the idea of *damnatio*. As a result of God's dereliction people are left to themselves and eternally punished for their demerits. Those deprived of saving grace are said to be hated by God. In support of this assertion Thomas cites Malachi 1:2 both in the *ST* and the *CG*, "I loved Jacob, but hated Esau."⁸² Some are guided to their last end with the aid of grace, while others deprived of this grace fall from their last end.⁸³ According to Thomas, this distinction has been ordained by God from eternity.⁸⁴ We should not inquire as to the reason why God permits some men to go their own way, for ultimately this depends on his "sheer will." It is similar to God's acts in creation. When by divine fiat he made all things *ex nihilo* he created some with greater dignity. As the

⁷⁹ Aquinas, *CG*, III. 164.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*; *ST*, Ia, 23. 3.

⁸¹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 3. All who assume this position are forced to deal with those scriptural passages which either state or imply that God desires all to be saved or that Christ died for all. Thomas's annotations on Hebrews 2:9 offer an example of how he deals with this challenge. The text reads, "But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one." Thomas says the terms *for every one* or *for all* can be interpreted in two ways: "Either so that it may be an accommodated distribution, namely for all the predestined, for it is for these only that it has efficacy. Or absolutely for all as to sufficiency. For so far as concerns itself, it is sufficient for all. I Tim 4:10: *Who is the Saviour of all men, especially the faithful.*" Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. Chrysostom Baer (Sound Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2006), 2. *lect.* 3, 125. Thomas has no trouble affirming what has been generally accepted by Calvinists, namely, that Christ's death is sufficient for all but efficient only for the elect (see *Canons of Dort*, Head of Doctrine II, articles 3, 8). Thomas makes this explicit in his annotations on 1 Timothy 2:6, *Who gave Himself a redemption for all*: "1 Jn. 2:2: *And He is the propitiation for our sin*, for some efficaciously, but for all sufficiently, since the price of His blood is sufficient for the salvation of all. But it does not have efficacy except in the elect on account of an impediment." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. Chrysostom Baer (Sound Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), 1 Timothy, 2. *lect.* 1, 64.

⁸² Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 7; *CG*, III. 164.

⁸³ Thomas refers to the "last end" as the proper goal of humanity, namely, the beatific vision which the reprobate do not enjoy.

⁸⁴ Aquinas, *CG*, III. 164.

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apostle declares, this is his right: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, to make of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?" (Rom. 9:21).⁸⁵

While God's rejection permits individuals to fall, the non-elect are fully responsible for their sin. Thomas is adamant that God is not the cause of iniquity; the guilt lies with man. Whereas predestination is the cause of both future glory and present grace for the predestined, reprobation is not the cause of sin which proceeds from the reprobate.⁸⁶ Reprobation, therefore, is not symmetrical with predestination. Everything related to man's salvation, both the end and the means, "is entirely comprised in predestination as a total effect."⁸⁷ Whereas God wills the final end of the reprobate, he does not cause their sin which secures their perdition. The defect lies with the proximate agent, not the prime agent. One limps because of a defect in his bone or tendon, not on account of the power of mobility. Likewise, the proximate agent of sin is the human will. This defect is not from God who as the prime agent and source of all good can never be the cause of evil.⁸⁸ "Hence although one whom God reprobates cannot gain grace, nevertheless the fact that he flounders in this or that sin happens of his own responsibility."⁸⁹

Thomas recognizes that there are passages in Scripture that *seem* to suggest God causes some men to sin.⁹⁰ For instance in Exodus 10:1 God says, "I have hardened the heart of Pharaoh and his servants." Then in Romans 1:28 Paul writes, "God delivered them over to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not seemly." What these passages mean for Thomas is that "God does not bestow on some the help for avoiding sin which He bestows on others."⁹¹ This help includes the infusion of grace, providential safeguards from occasions of sin, and the natural light of reason. When God withdraws these aids, warranted by the evil acts of men, it may be said that he hardens or blinds them.⁹² Sin does not originate with God. Indeed, it is impossible for God to cause anyone to sin.⁹³ In the case of Pharaoh, "God orders the malice, but does not cause it."⁹⁴ Just as the sun illumines all bodies, but leaves them in darkness if encountered by an obstacle, so the reprobate are the cause of their own darkness by creating an obstacle to the illumination

⁸⁵ Aquinas, CG, III. 162.

⁸⁶ Aquinas, ST, Ia, 23. 3.

⁸⁷ Aquinas, ST, Ia, 23. 5.

⁸⁸ Aquinas, CG, III. 163. He adds, "it is impossible for God's action to avert any from their ultimate end in God."

⁸⁹ Aquinas, ST, Ia, 23. 3.

⁹⁰ Aquinas, CG, III. 163.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² According to Thomas, blindness and hardheartedness do not make a man worse; they are punishments for sin.

⁹³ Aquinas, CG, III. 162.

⁹⁴ Aquinas, Romans, 9. lect. 3, 782.

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of God in the soul. Commenting on Romans 9:18 "...he hardens whom he wills," Thomas reiterates that God does not harden "by inserting malice, but by not affording grace."⁹⁵

Why God chooses one and not the other can only be attributed to the divine will and thus remains a mystery. Even so, Thomas attempts to provide some justification for reprobation. He believes it is necessary to maintain balance in the created order. He writes, "Thus for the completeness of the universe diverse grades of beings are required, some of high degree and some of humble."⁹⁶ God created diverse creatures to manifest his nature in diverse ways.⁹⁷ And yet he never spells out why the balance of the universe requires that the majority of humanity fall short of salvation.⁹⁸ Although it may be true that "many good things would be lacking in the world" without the entrance of evil, Thomas works from the presupposition that these moral gradations are essential to creation.⁹⁹ As James observes, "...taken to its logical conclusion, the moral matrix of the universe seemingly has ultimate priority."¹⁰⁰ Thomas offers a more fitting explanation based on Romans 9:22-23: God chooses some and rejects others to make his mercy appear in the elect and his justice in the reprobate.¹⁰¹ In order to manifest both of these attributes "he mercifully delivers some, but not all."¹⁰² He does not permit men to fall into sin because he takes pleasure in damning the wicked, but for the manifestation of his perfect justice.¹⁰³ It is against the backdrop of God's wrath that the value and efficacy of divine grace is displayed.¹⁰⁴

4. Double Predestination

Whereas single predestination affirms God's special election of some while the rest are passed over, double predestination holds that reprobation is a positive decree of God. God determines, without respect to demerit, to reject some and damn them for their sins to demonstrate his justice. Whether Thomas embraced *gemina praedestinatio* is subject to

⁹⁵ Aquinas, *Romans*, 9. lect. 3, 784.

⁹⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 5.

⁹⁷ Aquinas, *Romans*. 9. lect. 4, 792.

⁹⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 7.

⁹⁹ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 2. Thomas's claim that God cannot prevent all evil without destroying some good has been challenged in contemporary discussions. See Partee, "Predestination in Aquinas and Calvin," 20.

¹⁰⁰ James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination*, 122.

¹⁰¹ Aquinas, *CG*, III. 162.

¹⁰² Aquinas, *Romans*. 9. lect. 4, 792.

¹⁰³ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 207.

¹⁰⁴ "And it is significant that he [Paul] says that he might show the riches of his glory, because the very condemnation and reprobation of the wicked, carried out in accord with God's justice, makes known and highlights the glory of the saints who were freed from such misery as this." Aquinas, *Romans*, 9. lect. 4, 794.

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debate, but there is a degree of tension in his view. On the one hand, he suggests man is at fault for presenting an obstacle to grace.

For God on His part is ready to give grace to all men: *He wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. ii, 4). But they alone are deprived of grace, who in themselves raise an obstacle to grace. So when the sun lights up the world, any evil that comes to a man who shuts his eyes is counted his own fault, although he could not see unless the sunlight first came in upon him.¹⁰⁵

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On the other hand, Thomas claims the distinction between human beings lies ultimately with God's eternal foreordination.

Since it has been shown that by the action of God some are guided to their last end with the aid of grace, while others, bereft of that same aid of grace, fall away from their last end; and at the same time all things that are done by God are from eternity foreseen and ordained by His wisdom, as has also been shown, it needs must be that the aforesaid distinction of men has been from eternity ordained of God... But those to whom from eternity He has arranged not to give grace, He is said to have 'reprobated,' or 'hated,' according to the text: *I have loved Jacob, and hated Esau* (Malach. i, 2).¹⁰⁶

God's decision to withhold grace from eternity suggests the choice is made irrespective of the reprobate's refusal of grace. Elsewhere Thomas writes, "It should not be supposed this rejection is temporal, because nothing in the divine will is temporal; rather, it is eternal."¹⁰⁷ The reason God is merciful to some is assigned to his absolute will.¹⁰⁸ The reason he hardens others exceeds our comprehension.¹⁰⁹ The resolution appears to lie in Thomas's belief that God makes his eternal choice toward a fallen humanity. Thus, all deserve wrath and only some are afforded grace. God makes, "from the same spoiled matter of the human race" vessels unto honor and others unto dishonor.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, sinners are culpable for their present corruption which ends in judgment. Reprobation does not cause this condition, but it is "why we are left without God."¹¹¹ Thomas insists, "The fault starts from the free decision of the one who abandoned grace and is rejected,

¹⁰⁵ Aquinas, CG, III. 160.

¹⁰⁶ Aquinas, CG, III. 164.

¹⁰⁷ Aquinas, *Romans*. 9. lect. 2, 764.

¹⁰⁸ Aquinas, *Romans*. 9. lect. 4, 788.

¹⁰⁹ Aquinas, *Romans*. 9. lect. 4, 789.

¹¹⁰ Aquinas, *Romans*. 9. lect. 4, 791.

¹¹¹ Aquinas, *ST Ia*. 23. 3: "*Reprobatio vero non est causa ejus quod est in praesenti, scilicet culpa, sed est causa derelictionis a Deo.*"

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so bringing the prophecy to pass, *Your loss is from yourself, O Israel.*¹¹² Throughout his corpus Thomas lays stress on the reprobate's refusal of grace, thereby removing any possible blame on God's part for their miserable end.

III. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES WITH CALVIN ON PREDESTINATION

1. Providence and Predestination

In the writings of Aquinas and Calvin the doctrines of providence and predestination are closely related but approached differently. Thomas examines predestination under providence while Calvin, in his early writings, treats providence from predestination.¹¹³ In the first edition of Calvin's *Institutes* (1536), providence is expounded in connection with belief in God the Father, whereas predestination is not discussed as an independent doctrine.¹¹⁴ Calvin included a separate chapter *On the Predestination and Providence of God* (*De praedestinatione and providentia Dei*) in the 1539 edition. This was written in conjunction with Calvin's preparation of his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*.¹¹⁵ In this expanded version, an exposition of predestination precedes providence. Predestination pertains to our appointed end and providence to the divine ordering of things past, present, and future.¹¹⁶ In a sermon on Job he writes: "Let us note that God has decreed for us what he means to make of us in regard to the eternal salvation of our souls, and then he has decreed it also in respect of this present life."¹¹⁷ Like Thomas, Calvin believed everything is encompassed in the divine will; nothing takes place outside God's deliberation.¹¹⁸

In the definitive edition of the *Institutes* (1559), Calvin returns providence to its location under the doctrine of God in Book I and places predestination in Book III as part of

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Partee, "Predestination in Aquinas and Calvin," 17.

¹¹⁴ The 1536 edition of the *Institutes* is essentially an expanded catechism comprised of a mere six chapters. In this edition the subject of predestination is addressed in connection with ecclesiology.

¹¹⁵ Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 122. In Muller's judgment it is "reasonable to trace the major interest in predestination to his work on the [Romans] commentary" 24. Most agree that Calvin's exposition of Romans had a significant impact on his theological development, including his understanding of predestination. His commentary on Romans marks the commencement of his exegetical endeavors and substantial developments in later editions of the *Institutes*.

¹¹⁶ John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J.K.S. Reid (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1961), 162, 167-168.

¹¹⁷ Cited in Francois Wendall, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (Durham: Labyrinth Press, 1987), 268.

¹¹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.xvi.3.

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soteriology.¹¹⁹ Logically, predestination should precede a study of the application of grace for it is the ground of salvation, but Calvin treats it after the doctrines of justification and sanctification. By placing it in this context Calvin calls attention to its relation to redemption in Christ.¹²⁰ According to McGrath, “The context relates to the efficacy of the gospel proclamation...The primary function of the doctrine of predestination is to explain why some individuals respond to the gospel, and others do not.”¹²¹ This represents a different emphasis than Aquinas: “Thomas’s view of providence and predestination is an exposition of the rational understanding of God’s causality and Calvin’s is an exposition of man’s experience of God’s care.”¹²² It is often claimed that Calvin’s doctrine of predestination is the center of his theology, but this is hard to reconcile with the fact that the final edition of the *Institutes* only contains four chapters out of eighty related to election. Muller offers a more balanced perspective: “Rather than call predestination the central dogma of Calvin’s system, we recognize its importance within a larger complex of soteriological motifs. Within that complex it functioned as the keystone of a doctrinal arch, having a unitive significance within the structure of Calvin’s thought.”¹²³

The similarities between Aquinas and Calvin on the doctrine of predestination far outweigh their differences. Both affirm the absolute freedom and sovereignty of God’s will. According to Thomas, God’s will has no outside cause “but is the first cause of everything else.”¹²⁴ Similarly, it is unimaginable for Calvin that anything should precede the will of God as if he were bound to external factors, for we are to seek no cause outside his will.¹²⁵ This does not rule out secondary causes in the execution of the divine decree, but the ordained purpose of God “excludes... the contingency that depends upon men’s will.”¹²⁶ It is confusing to suggest God elects and rejects according to his foresight of men’s choices, for God foresees what he has determined.¹²⁷ Calvin finds the explanation for predestination in the divine will alone.¹²⁸ He defines predestination as “God’s eternal

¹¹⁹ Partee notes, “If God’s particular providence for the believer is not identical with predestination, the doctrines are at least complementary since God is both Creator and Redeemer.” Charles Partee, “Calvin on Universal and Particular Providence,” in *Readings in Calvin’s Theology*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 83.

¹²⁰ Paul Jacobs comments: “That the doctrine of predestination does not appear...before the doctrine of creation...follows from the fact that it cannot be properly considered except from a Christocentric point of view.” Cited by Wendall in *Calvin*, 268 n.

¹²¹ Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 167.

¹²² Partee, “Predestination in Aquinas and Calvin,” 17.

¹²³ Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 22.

¹²⁴ Aquinas, *Ephesians*. 1. lect. 1.

¹²⁵ Calvin, *Institutes* III.xxiii.2; II.xxii.11.

¹²⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.xvi.8.

¹²⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxxiii.6.

¹²⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.2.

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decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather, eternal life is foreordained for some, eternal damnation for others. Therefore, as any man has been created to one or the other of these ends, we speak of him as predestined to life or death.”¹²⁹ Just as the Lord distinguished Israel from other nations, he makes a distinction between men by predestinating some.¹³⁰ Calvin frequently appeals to Jacob and Esau as an example of God’s differentiating grace. As twins they were equal but God’s judgment was different.¹³¹ Thus, “we are to look for no higher cause than the goodness of God [in the salvation of the elect] and no higher cause in the destruction of the reprobate than His just severity.”¹³²

Like Thomas, Calvin believes foreknowledge ought to be distinguished from predestination. Those who claim God foresees from our conduct who is worthy or unworthy abjure “the first principle of theology” which recognizes that there is nothing in sinners to induce God to bestow his favor.¹³³ Since the entire race of Adam is “accursed...and altogether rotten” there is no goodness in man to foresee.¹³⁴ Foreknowledge refers to God’s knowledge of all things as if they were perpetually before his face, but predestination is his eternal decree by which he decided what would become of each man.¹³⁵ This distinction is vital if we are to safeguard the gratuitous nature of election.¹³⁶

Calvin’s exclusion of merit in God willing us glory is paralleled by an exclusion of merit in attaining glory. God does not give the elect grace in order to merit glory. Good works flow from a regenerate heart but are not meritorious in any way.¹³⁷ All is ascribed to God

¹²⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.5. Calvin calls predestination a *decretum horribile* (III.xxii.7) which many have understood as *horrible decree*. As McGrath points out, this is a crude translation and should be rendered an *awe-inspiring* decree. See *A Life of Calvin*, 167.

¹³⁰ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and Thessalonians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. Ross Mackenzie (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 200.

¹³¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxii.5.

¹³² Calvin, *Romans*, 199.

¹³³ Calvin, *Romans*, 200.

¹³⁴ John Calvin, *Sermons on Election and Reprobation* (Audubon NJ: Old Path Publications, 1996), 39.

Calvin’s assessment of prescience is unambiguous: “The doctrine that God either elects or reprobates as He foresees each to be worthy or unworthy of His favour, is false...and contrary to the Word of God.” *Romans*, 201.

¹³⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.5.

¹³⁶ Wendall, *Calvin*, 272.

¹³⁷ Calvin affirms the promise of eternal rewards for the believer but denies the promise is based on merit of any kind: “Nothing is clearer than that a reward is promised for good works to relieve the weakness of our flesh by some comfort but not to puff up our hearts with vainglory. Whoever, then, deduces merit of works from this, or weighs works and reward together, wanders very far from God’s own plan.” *Institutes*, III.xviii.4. Commenting on Psalm 18:20 “*Jehovah rewarded me according to my righteousness*;

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and nothing is left to the industry of man.¹³⁸ Calvin could not avoid the fact that Augustine and Bernard of Clairvaux, both of whom he deeply admired and quoted extensively, taught that the reception of grace leads to the acquisition of merit essential for salvation.¹³⁹ There was no argument about the absence of human merit preceding the gift of justifying grace. Here Calvin could say: "...on the beginning of justification there is no quarrel between us and the sounder Schoolmen."¹⁴⁰ At issue was merit following grace. Since Bernard, following Augustine, claimed all our merits are derived from grace and ultimately point back to the divine Giver, Calvin extended some margin to Bernard: "...the fact that he uses the term 'merits' freely for good works, we must excuse as the custom of the time."¹⁴¹ Aquinas held a similar position as an Augustinian: "good merits themselves are from God and are the effects of predestination."¹⁴² Even so, he was not treated with the same charitable spirit. Calvin is critical of Thomas and names him specifically:

We do not even tarry over the subtlety of Thomas, that foreknowledge of merits is not the cause of predestination on the side of the predestinator's act but that on our side it may in a way be so called: namely, according to the particular estimate of predestination, as when God is said to predestine glory for man on account of merits, because he has decreed to bestow upon him grace by which to merit glory.¹⁴³

Contrary to the view that God predetermines to give the elect grace by which they merit glory, Calvin maintains grace is predestined to those to whom glory was previously

he recompensed me according to the cleanness of my hands", Calvin writes: "When the Scripture uses the word *reward* or *recompense*, it is not to show that God owes us any thing, and it is therefore a groundless and false conclusion to infer from this that there is any merit of worth in works. But God, as a just judge, rewards every man according to his works, but he does it in such a manner, as to show that all men are indebted to him, while he himself is under obligation to no one. The reason is not only that which St. Augustine has assigned, namely, that God finds no righteousness in us to recompense, except what he himself has freely given us, but also because, forgiving the blemishes and imperfections which cleave to our works, he imputes to us for righteousness that which he might justly reject. If, therefore, none of our works please God, unless the sin which mingles with them is pardoned, it follows, that the recompense which he bestows on account of them proceeds not from our merit, but from his free and undeserved grace." *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1., trans. James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), 280.

¹³⁸ Calvin, *Romans*, 205-206.

¹³⁹ B. A. Gerrish, "The Place of Calvin in Christian Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 295.

¹⁴⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xiv.11.

¹⁴¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xii.3.

¹⁴² Aquinas, *Romans*, 9. lect. 3, 771.

¹⁴³ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxii.9.

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assigned. Consequently, “predestination to glory is the cause of predestination to grace, rather than the converse.”¹⁴⁴

On the matter of perseverance, Calvin believes all the elect inevitably endure to the end. The reprobate may have signs of a call similar to the elect, but they do not have the sure hope of those who cling to the promises of the gospel.¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, “call and faith are of little account unless perseverance be added; and this does not happen to all.”¹⁴⁶ Our confidence in overcoming all the obstacles to our faith “must be grounded upon the gift of perseverance.”¹⁴⁷ Thomas would agree that the gift of perseverance ensures one will abide in goodness until the end of one’s life, but this entails a predestination to final salvation distinguished from an initial work of grace. Aquinas speaks of being “justified by grace” yet still requiring the gift of perseverance, as if it were possible to have one without the other.¹⁴⁸ For Calvin, predestination necessarily includes perseverance. Our salvation “stands by God’s election, and cannot waver or fail any more than his eternal providence can.”¹⁴⁹ Calvin’s distinction between the general election of Israel and God’s election of particular individuals is not analogous to Thomas’s claim that some can be justified by grace initially and yet fall away potentially. Calvin did not deny that the people of Israel were said to be chosen by God, but clearly all did not receive justifying grace. Theirs was a general election and not always effectual whereas the election of a person predestined by God is always efficacious.¹⁵⁰

Unlike Thomas, Calvin sees great practical value in this doctrine for the Church. If God has been pleased to hold before our eyes the riches of his electing grace, these truths are not too lofty to contemplate or appreciate. The Holy Spirit has revealed nothing except what is useful for us to know.¹⁵¹ We are responsible to open our minds and ears to every utterance of God.¹⁵² To ignore any doctrine God has brought out into the open is evidence of excessive ingratitude.¹⁵³ We ought not to inquire into the sacred precincts of divine wisdom, which are hidden from us, but ignorance of predestination “detracts from God’s glory” and “takes away from true humility.”¹⁵⁴ It is easy to consider this doctrine in the abstract, but Calvin commences his discussion of predestination in the *Institutes* from a

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiv.7.

¹⁴⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiv.6.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia IIae, 109. 10.

¹⁴⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.i.3.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Calvin, *Romans*, 203.

¹⁵² Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.3

¹⁵³ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.4.

¹⁵⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.1.

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pastoral perspective. Why does the preaching of the gospel gain acceptance with some and not with others when they hear the same message? The answer lies in God's predestination.¹⁵⁵ This doctrine is also critical to genuine piety: "For neither will anything else suffice to make us humble as we ought to be nor shall we otherwise sincerely feel how much we are obliged to God. And as Christ teaches, here is our only ground for firmness and confidence..."¹⁵⁶ Through the Holy Spirit, God seals the certitude of his grace in the hearts of the elect.¹⁵⁷ The final end of predestination, as in all things, is the glory of God. The glorious praise of God's abundant grace displayed in his people is "the highest and last purpose" of election.¹⁵⁸ Through the elect he manifests his mercy; through the reprobate his just severity.

2. Election

In his *Institutes*, commentaries, and treatises Calvin consistently maintains that God's predestination refers to specific individuals, such as Jacob and Esau.¹⁵⁹ Since God's disposition toward them is said to have been determined "before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad," all must be attributed to God's free election.¹⁶⁰ "The very inequality of his grace proves that it is free."¹⁶¹ For Calvin no human decision, not even a foreseen response of faith by grace, can influence God's predestinating purpose. He considers nothing in us when deciding our destiny. To suggest that election anticipates faith is to make election "ineffectual until confirmed by faith."¹⁶² Works prior to grace fail to accomplish any spiritual good. Scripture teaches that our election is attributed entirely to divine kindness.¹⁶³ In a noteworthy passage he writes: "We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illumines God's grace by this contrast: that he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others."¹⁶⁴ This is perfectly consonant with Thomas's position.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.ii.11.

¹⁵⁸ John Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 127.

¹⁵⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.7. Thomas employs this example from Malachi chapter 1 for the purpose of demonstrating that some are rejected by God. See Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 3.

¹⁶⁰ Calvin, *Romans*, 199.

¹⁶¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.6.

¹⁶² Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiv.3.

¹⁶³ Calvin, *Romans*, 205.

¹⁶⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxi.1

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Union with Christ plays a vital role in Calvin's view of election. Thomas affirms the elect's foreordination *in Christ* when commenting on Ephesians 1, but never develops this idea so pivotal to Calvin's theology.¹⁶⁵ In his introduction to the *Summa*, Hislop claims that Thomas, "recognizes the Christocentric character of election. Chosen before the foundation of the world, Christ is the elect one in whom God's will for men is accomplished and through his grace is seen."¹⁶⁶ On the contrary, Thomas's discussion of election in the *Summa* is not explicitly Christocentric. Hislop imports a more Barthian notion absent from Thomas's treatment (i.e., stressing Christ as the Elect). Calvin places Christ at the center of his doctrine of predestination because he is the focal point of redemption. If we are to seek God's fatherly mercy and goodness as well as obtain life and immortality we must take refuge in Christ, for he alone is the anchor of our salvation.¹⁶⁷ For Calvin, Christ is the mirror wherein we contemplate our election, for we find no assurance in ourselves but only as we are found in him.¹⁶⁸ Unless one is loved by God in Christ he cannot inherit the kingdom,¹⁶⁹ but "where His love is found there is life."¹⁷⁰ In Calvin's theology only the elect are contemplated and loved by God *in Christ*. Thus, it is understandable why many conclude Calvin held to limited atonement although never stated in such terms. Whether the Reformer advocated a theory of limited atonement akin to his successors has been subject to debate but this much is clear: the benefits of Christ's redemption are efficacious only for the elect.¹⁷¹

3. Reprobation and Damnation

Like Augustine and Aquinas before him, Calvin is more inclined to speak about election than reprobation, but he deals with the latter at much greater length. Calvin recognizes that men recoil from the idea that God sovereignly appoints the destiny of every individual, but God must be taken at his word when Scripture says he freely determines the salvation and destruction of men.¹⁷² The immediate cause of reprobation is the curse we inherit from Adam, but the efficient cause of both election and reprobation is God's will alone.¹⁷³ This is confirmed by Paul's statement: "That the purpose of God according to election might stand" (Rom. 9:11). If God *prepares* vessels of wrath it cannot be said that men make themselves objects of destruction by their transgressions. People are

¹⁶⁵ Aquinas, *Ephesians 1. lect. 1.*

¹⁶⁶ Ian Hislop, introduction to *ST*, xix.

¹⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiv.5.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Calvin, *Romans*, 202.

¹⁷¹ For a helpful discussion of this subject see Roger Nicole, "John Calvin's View of the Extent of the Atonement," *Westminster Theological Journal* 47, no. 2 (1985): 197-225.

¹⁷² Calvin, *Romans*, 203.

¹⁷³ Calvin, *Romans*, 200-201.

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condemned for their sins (*damnatio*), but previously rejected by God apart from sin (*reprobatio*). In Calvin's theology, "permission and volition are one in the mind of an...utterly sovereign God."¹⁷⁴ Therefore, reprobation cannot be a passive act of the Almighty. Thomas prefers to speak of God's permitting the reprobate to fall away. Naturally without divine permission this would never happen and Thomas admits that we cannot know fully why God chooses one and not the other. Nevertheless, sinners are at fault for their own defection. In support of this position he quotes Hosea 13:9: "*Your loss is from yourself, O Israel.*"¹⁷⁵ Calvin interprets this passage differently. Hosea is describing the destruction Israel experienced as a result of her covenant infidelity, not as paradigmatic of the non-elect.¹⁷⁶

For Calvin reprobation is not by bare permission. It is the result of God's deliberate action amenable to his will. In his *Commentary on Romans*, Calvin makes a statement even some Calvinists are uncomfortable with: "Solomon also teaches us that not only was the destruction of the ungodly foreknown, but the ungodly themselves have been created for the specific purpose of perishing (Prov. 16:4)."¹⁷⁷ Many flinch at such a remark and either ignore it or try minimize its force by limiting Calvin's position on reprobation to God withholding grace and leaving the non-elect to themselves. Calvin does indeed speak of God "choosing some and passing others by" but his doctrine of predestination is broader than this.¹⁷⁸ Calvin's statement above is entirely in keeping with his view that God's determination to reject some is made *irrespective of sin* for the ultimate purpose of magnifying his justice. Man cannot dispute with God if he purposes to broadcast his name by means of the reprobate.¹⁷⁹ The munificence of his favor or the severity of his judgment is dispensed as he pleases. For reasons unknown to us, it seemed good to him to enlighten some and blind others.¹⁸⁰ This does not diminish the responsibility of men for their damnation: "...man falls accordingly as God's providence ordains, but he falls by his own fault."¹⁸¹ Calvin holds both truths in tension as he believes Scripture does. This paradox is only reconcilable in the inscrutable counsel of God. Even the ungodly recognize all things must be subjugated to the omnipotent will of God, but they resent his power: "What does He achieve by destroying us, except to inflict punishment upon his own workmanship in us?"¹⁸² The reason men object to this doctrine is because God is

¹⁷⁴ Muller, *Christ and the Decree*, 24-25.

¹⁷⁵ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Aquinas, *Hosea 13. lect.* 35.

¹⁷⁷ Calvin, *Romans*, 207, 208.

¹⁷⁸ Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 120.

¹⁷⁹ Calvin, *Romans*, 207.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.8.

¹⁸² Calvin, *Romans*, 208.

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said to be supreme in their salvation and destruction.¹⁸³ Since the resolutions of God's secret counsel are a mystery, Paul does not attempt to offer an explanation why the destinies of men have been so ordained.¹⁸⁴ God's ways exceed our rational capacities and therefore we must submit ourselves to his boundless wisdom.¹⁸⁵ The Almighty does not temper the excellence of his works to our ignorance.¹⁸⁶ Citing Augustine, Calvin insists it is perverse to measure divine justice by human justice.¹⁸⁷ Rather than provoke derision, this profound mystery ought to generate reverence and wonder.¹⁸⁸

4. Double Predestination

For Calvin, election and reprobation stand in a symmetrical relationship since they both proceed from the one will of God. This is not to suggest that election and reprobation are symmetrical in every way; only that the destinies of the elect and reprobate are determined by God's will apart from merit or demerit. McGrath writes, "For Calvin, logical rigor demands that God actively chooses to redeem or to damn. God cannot be thought of doing something by default: he is active and sovereign in his actions."¹⁸⁹ Since some are appointed to life, it necessarily follows that others are purposely excluded from God's mercy. In fact, the concept of election could not stand except over against reprobation.¹⁹⁰ Thomas, following Augustine, teaches the reprobate are abandoned (or passed over) by God and left to the ruin due their sins, but Calvin insists the reprobate are rejected for no other reason than God willed it.¹⁹¹ In his annotations on Romans 9, Calvin affirms both election (*electio*) and reprobation (*reprobatio*) as positive decrees of God. Men are deliberately rejected and actively hardened. The ungodly are responsible for their own iniquity, but God ordains their resistance and ruin nonetheless. Calvin argues that if the ultimate cause of reprobation were not the will of God, Paul could have easily satisfied his interlocutors by appealing to man's volition to determine his own destiny.¹⁹² The fact that the apostle rests his argument on God's sovereign right to make creatures either for noble or ignoble purposes demonstrates that neither election nor reprobation is based on foreseen faith or lack thereof. The reprobate will be justly charged

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Calvin, *Romans*, 209.

¹⁸⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, I.xviii.4.

¹⁸⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.5.

¹⁸⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiv.17.

¹⁸⁸ Calvin, *Romans*, 209; *Institutes*, III.xxi.1; III.xxiii.5. Calvin aptly cites Augustine, "Reason, thou: I will marvel. Dispute, thou; I will believe."

¹⁸⁹ Calvin, *Romans*, 209; *Institutes*, III.xxi.1; III.xxiii.5. Calvin aptly cites Augustine, "Reason, thou: I will marvel. Dispute, thou; I will believe."

¹⁹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.1

¹⁹¹ Wendel, *Calvin*, 280.

¹⁹² Calvin, *Romans*, 208.

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for the depravity of their own hearts, “provided it be added at the same time that they have been given over to this depravity because they have been raised up by the just inscrutable judgment of God to show forth his glory in their condemnation.”¹⁹³

Even if the reason is concealed from us, Scripture insists God’s will is just: “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’ Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?” (Rom. 9:20-21). This is a fitting metaphor borrowed from the Old Testament to depict our human condition in relationship to God. The Creator is perfectly free to do whatever he wishes with his creatures.¹⁹⁴ Earthen vessels cannot strive against their heavenly maker, for God is simply exercising his own rights.¹⁹⁵ If God is not permitted to act as the final arbiter of life and death he is deprived of his honor and inherent authority.¹⁹⁶ The divine potter does in fact create “vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction” (v. 22), as well as “vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared for glory” (v.23). No explanation is given why God bestows mercy on some and rejects others. He has reasons sufficient to himself but hidden from us.¹⁹⁷ If one should ask for the cause of this differentiation, we can only reply because God willed it.¹⁹⁸ The Dutch Catholic theologian Albert Pighius, suggested God would be cruel to ordain any human being to destruction.¹⁹⁹ But for the Reformer, God’s predestination, which eludes our comprehension, manifests itself in perfect righteousness.²⁰⁰ He prepares vessels of wrath to display the severity of his decree, striking terror in the hearts of men.²⁰¹ Consequently, his mercy toward the elect is brought into sharp relief.²⁰² Since the elect differ from the reprobate by no merit of their own, they bring forth increasing praise for the immeasurable mercy of God as they contemplate the destiny of the wicked. In the outworking of God’s inexplicable decree, his righteousness is revealed which “is worthy

¹⁹³ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiv.14.

¹⁹⁴ Calvin, *Romans*, 209-210.

¹⁹⁵ Calvin, *Romans*, 209. Calvin makes the following distinction: “The word *right* does not mean the maker has the power or strength to do what he pleases, but that this power to act rightly belongs to him. Paul does not want to claim for God an inordinate power, but the power which He should rightly be given.”

¹⁹⁶ Calvin, *Romans*, 210.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.2. “...let us not be ashamed to say with Augustine: ‘God could,’ he says, ‘Turn the will of evil men to good because he is almighty. Obviously he could. Why, then, does he not? Because he wills otherwise. Why he wills otherwise rests with him.’” III.xxiv.13.

¹⁹⁹ Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, 112.

²⁰⁰ Calvin, *Romans*, 210-211. “We...who are believers are for very good reasons called *the vessels of mercy*, for the Lord uses us as instruments for the exhibition of His mercy.”

²⁰¹ Calvin, *Romans*, 211-212. Calvin points out that if the objects of wrath had not been prepared in the secret counsel of God, Paul would have said, “the reprobate...cast themselves into destruction. Now, however, he means that their lot is already assigned to them before their birth.”

²⁰² Calvin, *Romans*, 201.

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of our worship rather than our scrutiny.”²⁰³ Ultimately, we must yield our thoughts regarding this high and lofty doctrine to the Judge of all the earth who can do no wrong.²⁰⁴

IV. CONCLUSION

The conclusion reached in this paper is that there are more similarities than disparities between Aquinas and Calvin on the doctrine of predestination. Some degree of continuity ought to be expected given that both men interpret the Apostle Paul’s teaching on predestination through the lens of Augustine to one degree or another. In some respects, Thomas reflects a more faithful reading of Augustine than Calvin since he recognizes the role of merit in the soteric process and leans in the direction of a single predestinarian view.²⁰⁵ However, Calvin does more justice to Augustine’s emphasis on human depravity and the necessity of saving grace to rescue man from destruction. As it pertains to this doctrine, the theology of Thomas stands squarely in the Augustinian tradition upholding the sovereignty of God and the gratuity of grace. It would be a serious misrepresentation to classify his position as Semi-Pelagian. Unlike the Semi-Pelagians, Thomas believed in unconditional election and continually stressed the priority of divine grace in his treatment of predestination.²⁰⁶ Though the Catholic Church holds Thomas in high esteem,

²⁰³ Calvin, *Romans*, 211.

²⁰⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, III.xxiii.4.

²⁰⁵ According to Augustine the just have merits but “no merits by which they were made just” *Epistola* 194, 3, 6. McGrath notes, “... it is clearly wrong to suggest that Augustine excludes or denies merit; while merit *before* justification is indeed denied, its reality and necessity *after* justification are equally strongly affirmed. It must be noted, however, that Augustine understands merit as a gift from God to the justified sinner...Eternal life is indeed the reward for merit – but is itself a gift from God so that the whole process must be seen as having its origin in the divine liberality, rather than in human works. If God is under any obligation to humans on account of their merit, it is an obligation which God has imposed upon himself, rather than one which is imposed from outside, or is inherent in the nature of things.” Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei, A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). 43-44.

²⁰⁶ Whereas the Semi-Pelagians maintained that grace was unnecessary for the beginning of faith, Thomas stressed the primacy of grace in both our eternal election and effectual calling. He makes a clear delineation between the external call and the internal call. The internal call “is nothing less than an impulse of the mind whereby a man’s heart is moved by God to assent to the things of faith or of virtue...This call is necessary, because our heart would not turn itself to God, unless God himself drew us to him: *no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him* (John 6:44).” Aquinas, *Romans*, 8. *lect.* 6, 707. The letters of Prosper of Aquitaine and Hilary of Arles to Augustine indicate that the Semi-Pelagians, particularly John Cassian, Faustus of Riez, and others centered in Marseilles, taught that man does not need grace for the beginning of faith. The *initium fidei* depends entirely upon the freedom of the will. They viewed predestination as identical to God’s foreknowledge of a person’s faith and merit as one perseveres in good works without supernatural assistance. As Garrigou-Lagrange observed, “Such an interpretation eliminates the element of mystery in predestination spoken of by St. Paul. God is not the author but merely the spectator of that which distinguishes the elect from the rest of mankind. The elect

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it has not been consistently Thomist in its official doctrinal formulations. Consequently, while a Thomist schema of predestination may not warrant the charge of Semi-Pelagianism, the same could not be said of the magisterial statements of Rome. For instance, the recent edition of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reads: “To God, all moments of time are present in their immediacy. When therefore he establishes his eternal plan of ‘predestination,’ he includes in it each person’s free response to his grace.”²⁰⁷ This position is not new but represents a significant departure from Thomas who unequivocally maintained that, “Predestination is not anything in the predestined, but only in him who predestines.”²⁰⁸

A comparison of views between these theological titans reveals several notable areas of incongruity. First, Thomas sees predestination as a part of God’s providence and focuses on causality while Calvin posits predestination, not providence, as determinative of our final end and approaches it soteriologically. Second, Thomas follows Augustine and argues that the attainment of glory is realized in conjunction with acquired merit through grace and the gift of perseverance. Calvin, on the other hand, is irreconcilably opposed to the role of human merit both prior to and subsequent to justification. Third, our election in Christ is vital for Calvin while Thomas hardly speaks to this at all. Fourth, Thomas by and large embraces a doctrine of negative or passive reprobation whereby God permits the reprobate to fall away leading to damnation. Calvin advocates double predestination, arguing that God actively wills the destruction of the reprobate irrespective of works. Fifth, while Thomas identifies no practical end for this doctrine, it serves as a ground of assurance in Calvin’s theology.

While these differences are not inconsequential, areas of agreement should be given greater weight. Both share the same outlook on the cause, extent, and end of election, namely, God’s unmerited favor toward a select number of individuals freely chosen for eternal life for the purpose of manifesting his goodness in their redemption. Thomas and Calvin mutually affirm the total inability of man to please God without special grace,

are not loved and helped more by God.” *Predestination*, 8-9; Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought: From Augustine to the Eve of the Reformation*, vol. 2. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 56-63. The Second Council of Orange (529) steered clear of Semi-Pelagianism without endorsing a full-fledged Augustinianism. The council affirmed the necessity of grace for any supernatural good work and ruled that the efficacy of grace does not depend on the foreseen consent of man, though this last point is debated. Canon 172 appears to uphold the intrinsic efficacy of divine grace. The council censures anyone who “says that God waits for us to will that we may be cleansed from sin, and who does not confess that even our wish to be cleansed from sin is the effect of the infusion and operation of the Holy Spirit...” See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 50-51.

²⁰⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Strathfield, NSW: St Pauls, 2000), n. 600.

²⁰⁸ Aquinas, *ST*, Ia, 23. 2. Similarly, “neither can predestination find any reason on the part of the creature but only on the part of God.” *Ephesians*, 1. lect. 1.

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unconditional election, the limited efficacy of Christ's atonement, efficacious grace, and the perseverance of the elect.²⁰⁹ One might deduce from these propositions a Thomistic version of TULIP.²¹⁰ In the final analysis, Thomas and Calvin locate the source and means of salvation squarely in God's sovereign grace. Man can neither initiate his salvation nor realize its consummation apart from grace. Individuals possess eternal life only because God has foreordained them to this end according to his good pleasure.

An honest appraisal of the views of Thomas and Calvin finds more harmony than one might suspect. Disputes that arose within the Catholic Church on questions concerning predestination and grace suggest a measure of correspondence. Writing to the Grand Inquisitor of Spain in 1748, Pope Benedict XIV emphasized the liberty of theological schools to hold to differing opinions on these matters. What is significant is the way in which he described the alleged charges against the Thomists: "The Thomists are defamed as destroyers of human liberty and as followers not only of Jansen but of Calvin."²¹¹ Benedict saw no need to censure the Thomists since they had admirably answered the objections posed against them and had never been condemned by the Apostolic See. Nevertheless, the comparison made by their critics is telling. The Molinists, largely Jesuits, recognized the theological parallels between Thomism and Calvinism on the question of predestination and dispassionate scholarship leads us to a similar conclusion. While the views of Catholics and Protestants on scriptural authority, justification, and the sacraments remain incompatible, Thomists and Calvinists do share much in common with regard to predestination. With respect to this subject, the Catholic scholar Ian Hislop observed, "there is not much in the Scriptural Commentaries [of Thomas] that Calvin could object to."²¹² This may be overstated, but what Hislop claims of Calvin cannot be said of Protestants outside the Reformed Faith since all other Protestant traditions adopt some form of conditional election. While the doctrine of predestination has historically been a hotbed of controversy, perhaps it can serve a constructive purpose for sober-

²⁰⁹ Admittedly, the "L" in TULIP specifies not the *effect* but the *intent* of the atonement (i.e., the eternal *purpose* of the Father to effectually save a subset of humanity given to and purchased by the Son). Prior to the Reformation, the Schoolmen were less precise regarding the extent of the atonement. Nevertheless, it is safe to conclude that limited rather than unlimited atonement fits better into the total pattern of the teaching of Aquinas and Calvin.

²¹⁰ John Salza, *The Mystery of Predestination According to Scripture, the Church, and St. Thomas Aquinas* (Charlotte, NC: Tan Books, 2010), 201. While granting that a Thomist version of TULIP is plausible, I take issue with the author's construction.

²¹¹ Benedict XIV, "Dum praeterito," in *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations of Matters of Faith and Morals*, eds. Heinrich Denzinger, Peter Hunermann, Helmut Hoping, Robert Fastiggi, and Anne Englund Nash, 43rd ed. (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2012), 2564.

²¹² Hislop, introduction, xx.

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