

Love as the Law of the Gift: Reading Paul with John Barclay and Aquinas

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“Christmas is an irrational season.” This charming and poetic phrase has always struck me as profoundly wrong. Far from being irrational, Christmas is reason at its greatest height and depth: the manifestation of the Word, the divine reason, becoming flesh. Yet there is something understandable in the quote, since the gift of the incarnate Word in Bethlehem surely exceeds anything that human reason could have expected or deserved—and the incarnate Word is certainly opposed by fallen human reason. The actual quote is an excerpt from a poem by Madeleine L’Engle:

This is the irrational season
when love blooms bright and wild.
Had Mary been filled with reason
there’d have been no room for the child.¹

¹ Madeleine L’Engle, “After Annunciation,” in L’Engle and Luci Shaw, *WinterSong: Christmas Readings* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw, 1996), 69. In another Christmas poem, L’Engle writes: “But now is the hour // When I remember // An infant’s power // On a cold December. // Midnight is dawning // And the birth of wonder.” (“Birth of Wonder,” in *Wintersong*, 99–100). It is worth observing that, in her poetry, L’Engle describes Advent/Christmas as both the “irrational season” and the “birth of wonder.” In so doing, she may well be objecting only a certain kind of rationalism that has been pervasive in modern thought. On the topic of reason versus rationalism, consider John Henry Newman’s distinction between implicit reason and explicit reason and his criticism of British empiricism, in particular for reducing reason to explicit reason (see Sermon 13 in his *Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford between A.D. 1826 AND 1843*).

My interest here is not in L'Engle's theological views, but rather in considering the expression "the irrational season" as emblematic of a peculiarly modern way of thinking about God and his actions toward humanity. The typically modern way of considering gifts is to see them as opposed to reason. "Love blooms bright and wild" in the "irrational season," whereas a rational season in Mary would have shut the doors on the gift of love.² According to this typically modern view, the gift of the Christ child is neither self-interested nor calculated. Christ, according to this view, has entered the world to free us from the rational cycle of economic exchange and selfishness to enter a new world of gift, one in which human beings give freely to each other without any thought of return.

Yet we need to pause at this supposed dichotomy between reason and gift, between order and love. Such a dichotomy would undermine some of the most significant bonds within a society, particularly those of obligatory familial roles. For instance, a mother and father are obligated to love and provide for their children, an obligation discernable by reason; yet such loving support is also a gift given by loving parents, with those who give more in relationships often receiving more from such relationships. Moreover, gifts can be understood as gifts only to the extent that they possess an intelligibility open to human reason. Gifts have to participate somehow in the order of goodness and have to be recognized as such. A gift that purely does harm is no gift at all. The problem with opposing gift and order is that gifts both presuppose an order and establish new orders.

In his magisterial *Paul and the Gift*, John M. G. Barclay challenges many modern assumptions about the nature of the gift, assumptions that Barclay argues have clouded the interpretation of Paul and his teaching on redemption offered in Jesus Christ. Barclay draws on the anthropological investigations of the gift over the past several decades to remove some of our modern views of grace in order to allow us to see more clearly how Paul might have understood the climatic event of human history, the gift of Christ. The present article proceeds in two major parts. First, it will consider some themes from Barclay's book on the nature of the

² It is worth noting that the Catholic tradition has viewed Mary's "yes" to Gabriel as something rendered possible through her preservation from sin: Mary's "room for the child" requires more than the common "filled with reason." Hans Urs von Balthasar writes: "The Maria *fiat*, unequalled in its perfection, is the all-inclusive, protective and directive form of all ecclesial life. It is the interior form of *communio*, insofar as this is *an unlimited mutual acceptance*, far more than a human 'getting along together' or fraternization" (*The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, trans. Andr  e Emery, 2nd ed. [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007; emphasis added], 223).

gift and Paul's unique understanding of grace as both incongruous and transformative. Second, the article will examine similar ways of reflecting on the Christian life in light of Aquinas's theology, with particular attention given to his commentaries on Paul. I will argue that Aquinas both confirms many of Barclay's insights and deepens—and gently corrects—the understanding of the gift of Christ as perfective of the Torah and creative of the new order in the Church.

Barclay: Pauline Grace as a Uniquely Transformative Gift

The Modern Distortion of the Gift

The phenomenon of the gift is reminiscent of Augustine's comments on time. We think we know what time is until we try to speak about it. Gifts are similar in many ways. We exchange gifts commonly. We use the language of "self gift" in the areas of the moral life and sexuality. We speak about God's gift of his Son. May gifts be taken back by the giver? Refused by the receiver? Do gifts come with an expectation of reciprocation? Is there such a thing as a "pure gift," and is this the ideal of the gift? Is a gift with strings attached a gift at all? The theme of gift is complex among humans, and only more so when considered between God and creation.

Certain strands within modernity developed the idea of gift in ways that have left it largely unrecognizable in comparison with its ancient and more standard approach. Barclay suggests that the modern Western idealization of the "pure gift" extended themes within the nature of the gift that also created distortions, distortions that are problematic in general, but particularly so for the interpretation of Paul. Barclay suggests that the ideal of the "pure gift" as something given freely without any expectations of a return created two new ideologies: first, that of the purely disinterested gift (the perfection of nonreciprocity); and second, that of the purely interested exchange (the perfection of reciprocity).³ These two ideologies create the modern tensions surrounding the nature of the gift and have led to the postmodern tendency to unmask putative gifts in society as merely exchanges.

So, are reciprocal gifts really gifts? Post-Luther, the emphasis has fallen on the ideal of nonreciprocity to such a degree that a gift that demands reciprocity is seen as no gift at all.⁴ The nonreciprocity of the gift pervades

³ John Barclay, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2105), 55. For the remainder of the present article, Barclay's book will be cited parenthetically in text simply by page number.

⁴ Barclay identifies, and limits, the role of Martin Luther in the "distinctively

typical modern thinking. It can be seen in the common opposition between egoism and altruism and between *eros* and *agape*. If the nonreciprocal gift arose in the Christian theological imagination in Luther, it has survived in the post-Christian imagination of Jacques Derrida, in which no gifts are possible and all exchanges are violent impositions of powers standing in judgment of the impossible pure gift (61–63). Yet this elevation of the gift to nonreciprocity comes at a cost, insofar as the gift no longer exists within the temporal history of humanity. Since all gifts, according to this view, can be shown to have some layer of exchange or intended reciprocity, no true gifts exist. Barclay helpfully shows that this view of the gift is not shared by the ancient world or much of the non-Western modern world. Instead, gifts form significant parts of the bonds that sustain human communities. Gifts given do expect return. Reflection on common experience supports this view. Parents give life, support, and love to their children; children give back such love, support, and care to their parents. Of course, such expectations may be abused, but this does not take away their proper use.

Barclay identifies Luther's break with the Augustinian and medieval tradition in his development of "pure altruism" as a possible perfection of grace.⁵ Luther saw the "instrumental reciprocity" in the work of Gabriel Biel as Pelagianism. Luther worried that, if grace is "I give this in order to get that," human beings would be the main agents in their own salvation. Moreover, Barclay identifies Luther's rejection of Aristotelian understandings of natures and *habitus*. In this way, the medieval tradition read Paul's teaching about grace as a new *habitus* influencing the Christian. Barclay has a powerful insight here that the Aristotelianism of Aquinas allowed him to read Augustine in a manner that shows the Christian life as powerfully elevated through the new *habitus* of divine grace.⁶ Luther's rejection

modern ideal of the gift-without-return": "This latter may have roots in Lutheran theology, but was universalized in Kantian ethics with its resistance to externally imposed obligation. We have thus become wary of the protestations of Derrida and others that a gift is truly such only if it entails no reciprocity or return. That peculiarly modern presumption does *not* correspond to the assumptions of antiquity and should not be allowed to determine what Paul or his fellow Jews might have understood by the grace or gifts of God" (185).

⁵ For the purposes of this article, I am following Barclay's presentation of Luther as a particular interpreter of Paul, one who emphasizes the nonreciprocity of grace. Whether Luther's actual theology allows for a more transformational notion of grace is not considered.

⁶ Barclay, however, appears hesitant to endorse what he identifies as the "narrowing" of grace in Augustine. According to Barclay, Augustine narrows his understanding of grace to a tightly interwoven complex of grace's priority and superabundance

of Aristotelianism thus created a misreading of Augustine on the transformative power of the Christ gift (100–101). Luther dropped the perfection of the gift identified by Barclay as efficacy. Grace is no longer effective in transforming the ungodly into the godly, who are thus capable of merit. Luther shifted the view of grace in the Christian imagination and in much of the modern world by emphasizing the “permanent state of incongruity”.

Barclay highlights how this modern idealization of the gift as pure gift separates the recipient from the giver. Without real gifts in the existing world, social bonds among particular individuals fail to be created and nourished. The rise of the modern understanding of the individual as existing prior to familial and social bonds might be viewed as a logical corollary to the deconstruction of gifts and reciprocity. Unity becomes an ideal unreachable in the actual self interests that drive human interaction. Barclay rightly expresses concern over how a one-sided notion of grace undermines the missional characteristic of modern Christian communities. Instead, grace properly understood as incongruous and reciprocal allows for a rebirth of such communities: “It is the incongruous grace that Paul traces in the Christ-event and experiences in the Gentile mission that is the explosive force that demolishes old criteria of worth and clears space for innovative communities that inaugurate new patterns of social existence” (572).

Paul's Incongruous Grace

Barclay develops this anthropological background into a substantive contribution to the role of grace in Paul. Specifically, he distinguishes among six unique perfections within the larger concept of gift and grace. Barclay's notable contribution to the debates surrounding Paul and grace is to disentangle the following aspects of grace. First, grace almost always includes a *superabundance* in which God gives according to the extravagant scale and “excessive” scope of his greatness, not according to that of his human recipients (70). Second, grace can be erroneously understood to require *singularity*, in which the omnibenevolent God gives exclusively according to his “pure benevolence” in such a manner that problematizes

with its efficacy and incongruity (95–97). On the theme of the way in which Aquinas marshals Aristotle's understanding of nature and motion (*motus*) to articulate the dynamic power of grace, see Simon Francis Gaine, O.P., “Aristotle's Philosophy in Aquinas's Theology of Grace,” in *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, ed. Gilles Emery, O.P., and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 94–120.

“the punishment of evil” (70–71).⁷ Third, almost all accounts of grace entail *priority*, in which God’s gift always takes place “prior to the initiative of the recipient,” and is thus in no way obligated “by a previous gift” (71–72).⁸ Fourth, grace may be understood to be perfected in *incongruity* when God gives his gifts “without regard to the worth of the recipient” (72–73).⁹ Fifth, grace can be associated with *efficacy*, seen as perfect when it “fully achieves what it was designed to do” (73–74).¹⁰ Sixth, grace could be perfected—or perhaps distorted—in *noncircularity*, in which God’s gift is a “one-way, unilateral donation” without any expectation of a return, either because it is not desired or because it is not possible (74–75).¹¹ Having offered this classification of six distinct perfections within the broader concept of “gift,” and in particular divine gift, Barclay states, “to perfect one facet of gift-giving does not imply the perfection of any or all of the others” (75). This allows him to survey the historical tradition and contemporary world of Pauline interpretation and identify various threads by showing which cluster of perfections are grouped together or predominate.

Barclay’s contributions may be seen by considering the role of two of

⁷ Barclay here offers Marcion as the prototype of emphasizing this possibility within grace.

⁸ Barclay notes how this may be understood in various ways relating to predestination. His central point, however, is that the perfection of the priority of grace may be seen as common to all Second Temple Judaism, as in E. P. Sanders’s “covenantal nomism,” but also that the other perfections of grace are not commonly shared and are often held in tension.

⁹ A central achievement of Barclay’s book is to show that the perfection of incongruity is not necessary to the notion of grace. Many classical thinkers would have considered gifts perfected by congruity, when the best gifts are given to those worthy of them.

¹⁰ Barclay identifies this perfection above all with Augustine’s theology of grace, although he affirms that some amount of efficacy is entailed in all accounts of grace, “In some form or other, everyone can agree that God’s gifts are effective: the extent to which they are the sole and sufficient cause of the human response is the degree to which this facet of grace has been perfected” (74).

¹¹ Barclay identifies this perfection especially with Luther and the modern idealization of the “pure gift.” One of Barclay’s central insights could be summarized as showing that ancient cultures in general—and Paul in particular—did not perfect grace in this nonreciprocal manner. Barclay observes some of the negative consequences of such nonreciprocity: “The one-way gift establishes no relation, creates a permanent and potentially humiliating dependency, and frees the recipient of all responsibility. Nonetheless, its emergence in the modern era as a powerfully alluring perfection of grace, identified with ‘pure’ altruism or disinterest, makes this an important facet of the perfected gift to place alongside the others we have outlined” (75).

these perfections: incongruity and noncircularity. The notion of incongruity deals with the question of whether the recipient of the gift is worthy of the gift. Barclay helpfully shows that the common ancient understanding was that gifts typically did not share the perfection of incongruity. Instead, the more perfect the gift, the greater the congruity between the worth of the gift and the worthiness of the recipient. Consider Jesus's saying in Matthew when he speaks of not giving pearls to swine. A giver would be imperfect who gives good gifts to those unworthy. So to perfect incongruity within the gift is quite a distinct perfection within the ancient and biblical notion of the gift. The perfection of the noncircularity aspect addresses the question of whether the gift given expects a return. Notwithstanding the modern emphasis on the pure gift, the ancient understanding was that gifts received oblige the recipient to return something. This sense of reciprocity was not viewed negatively as giving a gift "with strings attached," but as assisting in the formation of the very fabric of a society and establishing varied roles, responsibilities, and mutual obligations.

By distinguishing between the aspect of congruity and circularity, Barclay ably disentangles a number of arguments about Paul. For instance, many interpreters have assumed that grace or gift always implies a lack of congruity or a lack of desert or worthiness on the part of the recipient. Here Barclay acknowledges the contribution of E. P. Sanders's recovery of grace in Second Temple Judaism, but also parts ways with his analysis. Sanders's "covenantal nomism" showed that the law was understood to be something given by God and not in any sense earned by Israel's keeping of the law. Thus, Torah observance did not get one into the covenant, but it was the condition for staying in the covenant. Thus, the Torah was broadly understood to be a prior grace or a gift from God, not something that was earned by human effort. Sanders's work and the broad "new perspective" movement it ushered in have demonstrated persuasively that Judaism was not a religion of works righteousness in which human beings became righteous through their own good works. Instead, Judaism was a religion of grace, especially emphasizing the priority of grace in terms of God's initiative in all covenant making.

Barclay observes that it is insufficient to show that the Second Temple authors agreed on the priority of grace (191). He shows that these authors do not agree on other facets of grace, with the result that they end up with diverse accounts of divine grace. Barclay faults Sanders for uncritically accepting the perfection of the incongruity of grace and, so, assuming that grace and desert are incompatible in the Second Temple period. Barclay employs the classification of grace-perfected-in-incongruity and grace-perfected-in-congruity to offer a more fine-grained analysis of the period to

show Paul's distinctive approach. Some texts and authors from this period, such as the book of Wisdom and Philo, present grace and desert as going hand in hand (for example, see 309–11). Thus, these authors emphasize the congruity of grace: God gives his good gifts to those who are deserving and worthy, the faithful Jews who suffer at the hands of the unrighteous. The gifts are not earned in any sense, since they come from the priority and superabundance of God's goodness and are not proportionate to human works, but nonetheless, God gives them to the worthy, not to sinners. This approach sees such congruity as a necessary implication of the overall order of the universe and the justice of God. What kind of king would give his greatest gifts to his evil subjects and give his greatest punishments to his good subjects? Barclay shows, however, that Second Temple Judaism does not always hold to congruous grace. Other texts from this period, such as Qumran's *Hodayot* and those of Paul, perfect grace along the lines of incongruity (for example, see 311 and 324).¹² God's goodness is given to the unworthy because all of humanity is seen as worthless, misaligned, or incapable of pleasing God.

Barclay deploys the distinction between reciprocity and congruity to address particular questions within the reading of Paul. For instance, he quotes James Harrison as arguing for the distinctiveness of Paul's understanding of grace in comparison to the rest of Second Temple Judaism: "only the grace of Christ . . . is unilateral, non-reciprocal," in contrast to ancient religious systems that were reciprocal (18).¹³ Barclay argues, however, that Harrison here confuses incongruity with noncircularity. Barclay makes the case that Paul does hold the incongruity of grace but does not hold its noncircularity. In short, this means that the Christ gift is given to the unworthy, and yet it is given to the unworthy to transform them into the worthy. Paul is not against works righteousness, but rather

¹² Barclay writes: "In comparison with Philo, what stands out is Paul's refusal to trace any line of congruence between God's mercy and its recipients, even if it risks making God seem arbitrary or unfair. . . . Paul's remarkable emphasis on the incongruity of God's grace, while shocking to Philo, would not have shocked the authors of the Qumran *Hodayot*" (324). The manner, however, is quite different in the Qumran versus Paul. Barclay sees the Qumran as a "cosmic plan, rooted in creation as part of its design," whereas "Paul's contemporary experience of the Christ-event and of the Gentile mission has convinced him that the central dynamic of God's plan is constituted not by nature, but by an event, not by primordial cosmic design, but by the enactment of God's 'glory' in the worldwide reach of the gospel (cf. Rom 10:14–21)" (325).

¹³ James R. Harrison, *Paul's Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 288.

Torah righteousness. The Christ gift is given to both the just and the unjust, yet it requires just acts, as did the gift of the Torah. Christ replaces the Torah for both Jews and Gentiles (544).

Reciprocal Grace and Eschatological Congruity

Gifts constitute new relationships and, thus, new obligations. As we have noted above, Paul perfects grace along the line of incongruity but not along the line of noncircularity. Barclay sums up this point by saying that the Christ gift is *unconditioned* but not *unconditional*.¹⁴ It is freely given to the unworthy, but it expects worthiness of life in return. Because Paul's theology of calling and theology of sin are founded on the incongruity of the Christ gift, he does not preclude a radical transformation in the new life opened up by the Christ gift (568–69). Christ offers a new life, a new *habitus*, a new standard of worth, judgment, and communal living.¹⁵ The gift, however, is always prior to the recipient's worth. Moreover, the gift is incongruous, meaning that it is given only to the unrighteous, to the unworthy. Barclay emphasizes that Paul discovered the incongruity of the gift in the context of his mission to the Gentiles.¹⁶ If the Gentiles, who were without the Torah, were called into God's covenant, then they could be called only in their very unrighteousness. The calling of the Gentiles also reinterprets the calling of Israel such that both Jews and Gentiles are seen to have been under sin. As Barclay summarizes his conclusion, the observance of the Torah, also known as "works of the law," ceases to be definitive for God's election; now the community is formed through "faith in Christ." The community of the new covenant is not meant to remain in sin, but to be redeemed and liberated from sin for righteousness.

The resurrection of Jesus opens up a new dimension in the moral life of believers. In a certain way, this means that grace moves partly from incon-

¹⁴ Barclay writes: "Thus, throughout this book, we have been suspicious of the modern (Western) ideal of the 'pure' gift, which is supposedly given without strings attached. We have been able to make sense of the fact that a gift can be *unconditioned* (free of prior conditions regarding the recipient) without also being *unconditional* (free of expectations that the recipient will offer some 'return')" (562). Elsewhere, he also states that "the grace of God in Christ is 'unconditioned' (without prior considerations of worth) but not non-circular or 'unconditional,' if that means without expectations of return" (446).

¹⁵ Barclay writes: "The new creation is evident precisely in (and not independently of) reordered patterns of social and personal behavior" (445).

¹⁶ Barclay writes: "Paul's Gentile mission reflects his reading of the Christ-event as God's fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises in the mode of incongruous grace" (491).

gruity to congruity. This mode of life needs to be properly distinguished from the manner of existence that is normally part of human existence. Barclay uses the language of an “eccentric” or “pneumatic” existence to distinguish it from a mere anthropological phenomenon.¹⁷ Grace is not merely part of human experience, but something that is given on a higher level. Barclay thus shifts the paradoxical character of the Christian life: no longer the Lutheran paradox of *simul iustus et peccator*, but a new paradox of *simul mortuus et vivens* (502). Barclay notes the transformation within the power of grace: “This permanent *incongruity* of new life in dying bodies is expressed in the *congruity* or fit between the new human obedience and the purpose or will of God” (503). The mystery of Christian existence thus is not the drama between sin and grace, but that between life and death, between the new life of grace communicated and present in the new ecclesial community and the ongoing realities of suffering and death.

Barclay emphasizes the way in which Paul comes to relativize the role of the Torah and Torah observance. The Christ gift alone comes in as the new criterion of worth that relativizes other criteria of worth, including both Gentile understandings and Jewish Torah observance. Barclay argues that this revaluation of all things in light of the Christ gift comes out of the radical newness of the Christ gift and the context of Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. Barclay grounds this argument in his treatment of the manner in which Paul steps behind the Law to the promises given to Abraham in Galatians and Romans. In doing so, Barclay deftly steps out of the paradox of Luther’s emphasis on the introspective self to the objective character of justification.

Barclay offers a helpful distinction between the Christ gift in history and the Christ gift at the end of time: in the present, the Christ gift is an incongruous gift, a gift given to the unworthy that opens up a future of transformation; at the eschaton, the Christ gift is a congruous gift, a gift given to those worthy (495). The eschatological dimension of gifts allows for a suitable resolution to the paradox of incongruous and congruous gifts. If the Christ gift were completely incongruous, then how would the God of cosmos be just? If the Christ gift were totally congruous, then why would it have been necessary for Christ to die on the Cross? Barclay argues that the gift is incongruous in its being given to the ungodly. Christ is the free gift of life—through his own death and resurrection—given to those who were unrighteous. Yet, ultimate rewards and punishments cannot be given indiscriminately. Thus, while Christ may offer righteousness to

¹⁷ Barclay writes: “[The new life in Christ] is an ‘eccentric’ phenomenon, drawing on the ‘life from the dead’ that was inaugurated by Jesus’ resurrection” (501).

the unrighteous, he cannot offer heaven to the unrighteous who remain unrighteous. Heaven and hell, eternal life and death, must be suitably given to congruous recipients. So, is the gift of Christ incongruous or congruous? Barclay solves this conundrum by distinguishing the incongruity of the Christ gift itself from the effect of the Christ gift. It is given freely by God to the undeserving, the ungodly, the unrighteous. As such, it must be received by faith in God's goodness and knowledge of one's own unworthiness; it must be received as the reception of an undeserved gift. In this way, the gift is a promise that the unworthy will receive worthiness, that the unrighteous will receive righteousness and, so, become righteous, performing works of righteousness.¹⁸ The gift parallels the promise made to Sarah and Abraham, who were barren and yet were guaranteed descendants in the midst of their barrenness. So also, the barren Jews and Gentiles who remain under death are promised eternal life in the final judgment and the resurrection of the dead.

The gift of life and death is thereby congruous. Eternal life is given to the worthy, to those who have received righteousness from the Christ gift, whereas to the unworthy is given death. Once this eschatological dimension of the two stages of the Christ gift is established, then the sheer unmerited, incongruity of the Christ gift remains, but also the transformative power of that gift to make the ungodly godly is recovered. As Barclay aptly summarizes in his treatment of Romans, "the purpose of the unfit-

¹⁸ Barclay repeatedly develops this interplay between initial incongruity and eventual congruity: "If there is reason to believe that Romans, like Galatians, is structured around the *incongruity* of grace, there is no reason to assume that it also perfects its *singularity* (which would rule out the just condemnation of sin) or its *non-circularity* (which would rule out the significance of the believers' works as the necessary response to grace)" (465); "If we can show that this eternal life is, for Paul, *both* an incongruous gift (6:23) *and* the fitting completion of a life of good works (2:6-7), we will have solved a conundrum that renders the early chapters of Romans the greatest stumbling blocks for interpreters of Paul" (466); and "This [divine] power is *incongruous* in its impact on sinful human material, but its transformative results are finally *congruous* with the just judgment of God" (467). Richard Hays offers a different approach that also attends to the question of God's righteousness and the need to move beyond certain categories of Protestant polemics of the sixteenth century: "The Reformation theme of justification by faith has so obsessed a generation of readers (Protestant readers, at least) that they have set Law and gospel in simplistic antithesis, ignoring the sign of coherence in Rom 3:1-26; consequently, they have failed to see that Paul's argument is primarily an argument about theodicy, not about soteriology" (*Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989], 53).

ting gift is to create a fit" (473),¹⁹ the unconditioned gift (congruous) that is not unconditional, since it calls for a response (circular). Barclay describes this as a new *habitus* of Christian living in response to the Christ gift.

This way of separating the incongruous and congruous aspects of God's actions removes the Lutheran trope that the justified remain ungodly. This allows for a retrieval of Augustine without Luther. Luther's Augustinianism removes the transformative aspect of the covenant. Aquinas's Augustinianism highlights the unconditioned character of the gift while also emphasizing its transformative character.²⁰ Interestingly, Barclay notes that Aquinas presents grace as a transformative *habitus* in a way similar to Paul, but he does not develop the connection. Yet, I would suggest that Aquinas presents a systematic manner of developing many of Barclay's readings of Paul. As we will see in the subsequent parts of the present article, Aquinas remains the Augustinian theologian who emphasizes both the undeserved and transformative aspects of the new law—the law of Christ (Gal 5) and the law of the Spirit (Rom 8).

Barclay argues for an objective genitive interpretation of *pistis Christou*. This allows him to avoid the emphasis on our religious subjectivity. "What matters now is not the subjectivity of belief, but the focus and basis of that faith: the unconditioned gift of God in Christ," (382) "faith in (what God has done in) Christ" (371). In Barclay's treatment of Galatians 2:11–21, the alternative to faith in Christ is "the practice of the Torah," *erga nomou*. Which gives value? The Christ event now sets the standard for all worth and upsets all other standards of worth, including both Gentile standards and the standard of Torah observance.²¹ Because of the Christ gift, God

¹⁹ Barclay writes in the same paragraph: "This is the crucial Pauline point—the basis for that fit, the foundation and frame of the patient good work that leads to eternal life, is an act of divine power, an incongruous gift to sinful humanity whose transformative effects will be evident at the judgment."

²⁰ Although Barclay acknowledges a difference between Augustine and Luther, he tends to summarize their approaches as a single approach held in common. Their difference is that Augustine thought that God made the ungodly godly whereas Luther thought that the ungodly remain ungodly. According to Barclay, their similarities are that they both misread Paul by taking him out of the context of his mission to the Gentiles and saw in Paul's language of justification a general warning against trusting in one's own strength as opposed to God. The alignment of Augustine and Luther should also be complemented, and corrected somewhat, by the alignment of Augustine and Aquinas. Aquinas opens another way of continuing the Augustinian line that emphasizes the transformative character of justification.

²¹ The contemporary theologian Gilles Mongeau employs the subjective genitive reading of *pistou Christou* to argue for a similar reevaluation of the standard of worth in Jesus Christ: "Faced with the insistence of the Judaizers that belonging

now considers righteous those who have received the gift of righteousness in Christ.²²

Yet we might ask whether Barclay attends sufficiently to the manner in which the Torah remains present as fulfilled even if not outwardly observed. The Torah remains, albeit transformed and fulfilled, within the Christ gift. The new life made possible by the Christ gift allows for the moral law of the Torah to be lived more fully. Circumcision is clearly set aside in Romans 3:30, but the moral law clearly remains, as in 13:8 (“Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law”) and 13:10 (“Love is the fulfilling of the law”). The same pattern of rejecting circumcision but retaining the moral law is in Galatians 5:6 (“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircum-

to Israel is necessary to salvation in Christ (belonging to the group as a measure of authenticity), for example, Paul exposes this demand as an overly ‘cosmos-centered’ stance in his Letter to the Galatians (it would be a return to the world of the principalities and powers) and proposes instead the human consciousness of Christ (saved by the faith of Christ) as the measure of authenticity” (*Embracing Wisdom: The Summa theologiae as Spiritual Pedagogy* [Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2015], 37–38). It is not clear, however, that Mongeau’s contrast of an objective view to a subjective view is adequate to Paul’s reevaluation of worth in Christ.

²² It is interesting to note some of the earlier pedigree of viewing Paul’s theology through the lens of gift. In the middle of the twentieth century, the French Catholic biblical theologian Lucien Cerfaux published *Christ in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1966), originally published as *Le Christ dans la Théologie de S. Paul* (1958). The second part of the work was simply entitled “The Gift of Christ,” and Cerfaux offers some of the following comments on the centrality of gift in understanding Paul’s theology of Christ. “This new status reveals itself first of all as an opposition to Judaism. Christ is our justice, and we are no longer justified by our works, but only through God’s gift. This gift is a reality, and the justification we receive far surpasses any juridical idea of ours. Second, there is an opposition to the Greek mind, in that God condemns human wisdom and grants us wisdom in the Spirit—wisdom of a higher order than our own, having Christ as its object” (362). “‘Christ our life’ is the most significant of all of the formulas used in connection with the gift of Christ. . . . The person of Christ is always basic to his thought in respect of Christ’s gift to Christians, and conversely, the gift unites us to the person of Christ” (362–63). “A Christian himself is a gift from Christ. God grants us the grace of being through Christ’s redemptive work, or since Christ’s person takes the place of this work more and more in Paul’s mind, we can say that our Christian being comes from Christ. Through Christ we achieve a new religious status, which is realized in fact both now and hereafter” (362). “All the gifts are for all Christians. It is the gifts that create the new race of men, forming the Church, which is at one and the same time a visible institution founded on Christ’s authority, and a spiritual body in which Christ’s gift is received” (363).

cision is of any avail, but faith working through love”) and 5:14 (“For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’”). So the moral law of the Torah remains.²³

Gift and Order: Wisdom and Paul

Barclay presents the book of Wisdom and the writings of Paul in opposition. Wisdom focuses on the cosmic order of righteousness and safeguards God’s ultimate justice and goodness in his ultimate congruous rewards and punishments to the righteous and the unrighteous. Paul, in contrast, views everything through the Christ event and his particular mission to the Gentiles, which together disclose the incongruous mercy of God.²⁴ Barclay ably summarizes the conclusion of his argument: “In place of Wisdom’s structured moral universe, Paul appears to hang every hope on a single thread, the mercy of God” (327). Yet, are Wisdom’s cosmic order and Paul’s Christ event truly in opposition to each other? I suggest that this opposition follows from some of the Lutheran dichotomies between order and event, between incongruity and congruity, that Barclay otherwise dispels in his interpretation of Paul. The ultimate harmonious character between Wisdom and Paul (or between order and event) can be seen in two main ways.

First, the cosmic order of Wisdom contains an eschatological horizon in which God’s actions are necessary for the restoration of justice. In this world, it is the unrighteous who will seek out and destroy the righteous. The ultimate reward of the just and punishment of the unjust requires God’s actions in the next life (Wis 3:1–4). God, who did not create human beings to die, restores the faithful to eternal life (Wis 1:13–16; 2:23–24). Of course, there is not yet the reference to Christ’s death and resurrection as in Paul, but there is a reference to the just man who will suffer at the hands of the unrighteous and yet will be vindicated (Wis 2:16–20; 5:1–5). So, Barclay is correct that Wisdom emphasizes the congruity of grace and

²³ Hays offers a distinct approach and yet argues for the complementarity of the Torah and Christ: “Paul agonized over the fact that his Jewish contemporaries failed to understand that Israel’s Law pointed to the righteousness of faith; now, Christians make the same tragic error when they fail to acknowledge that the Law and the Prophets bear witness to the righteousness of God and when they think that Torah and Christ are antithetical” (*Echoes of Scripture*, 77).

²⁴ Barclay writes: “Like *Wisdom*, Paul’s vision is universal and comprehensive, but on a very different basis. *Wisdom* appeals to the universal truth of a regulative cosmic order, a pre-existing reality to which all things conform. Paul appeals to an event—the resurrection of Jesus and his installation as ‘Lord’—that makes a claim on all (Rom 10:12)” (326).

not the incongruity of grace on the unrighteous, but this is not due to Wisdom's remaining in a vision of cosmic order that would deny eschatological divine action. Moreover, Wisdom's emphasis on cosmic restoration includes God's mercy on those who will be rewarded, since all need God's mercy.²⁵

Second, the centrality of the Christ event in Paul requires a cosmic order. Barclay summarizes Wisdom by saying that "the universe is fitly and morally ordered." In this way, Paul's articulation of the Christ event reveals a continuity and discontinuity with Wisdom. It is necessary for Paul that the cosmic order of creation and the goodness of the Creator remain. This order is necessary to make sense of exactly what the Christ gift has accomplished, and the Christ gift thus presupposes Wisdom's cosmic order. The new thing that God does in Christ is added to that order. The Christ gift opens up righteousness to all who enter into the new covenant.²⁶ Yet, as Barclay adroitly observes, even in Paul, the ultimate rewards of eternal life are congruous gifts: eternal life given to those who have received the righteousness of the Christ gift and eternal death given to those who have rejected that gift and, so, remain in unrighteousness of evil works. The meaningfulness of the Christ gift is intelligible to the extent that the cosmic order of Wisdom is maintained, even while it is expanded.

In Wisdom, the cosmic order also includes a cosmic history of disorder. The goodness of creation includes the history of sin and evil. Orders have histories. God is a good and wise Creator who made human beings for eternal life and communion with him. Human beings are free and moral agents who can act for good and for evil, who can become righteous and unrighteous. The existence and goodness of God can be known by reflecting on the order of the created world. Nonetheless, the devil has acted to create a cosmic disturbance: "Through the devil's envy, death entered the world" (Wis 2:24). Moreover, this rebellion has been joined by the unrighteous, "those who belong to his party," and those who seek to follow God's law will suffer at their hands. Finally, God will right these injustices and sufferings through the resurrection of the dead (Wis 4:7,16; 5:15–16).

Paul draws on this same cosmic order and cosmic history of disorder.

²⁵ On mercy needed even by the faithful, see Wisdom 12:22; on mercy to the wicked in terms of giving warnings before final punishments, see Wis 12:10–11.

²⁶ As typical of Barclay's contrast between cosmic order and event, he writes: "As Galatians has shown, his interpretation of this gift is *Christological* in focus, and therefore centered not on a general truth about divine benevolence but on an *event*—the death and resurrection of Christ—that has effected a transformation of reality. This divine gift is here coordinated neither with creation nor with Torah, but with a particular event endowed with universal significance" (445–46).

Human beings can know the existence of the invisible God through the created visible things (Rom 1:20; see also Wis 13:1). Human beings can know the law of right and wrong (Rom 2:14). God will judge human beings with justice according to their works (Rom 2:13). The death and resurrection of Christ disclose at least two new truths: first, that human beings cannot attain righteousness through following the law of the Gentiles or the Torah; and second, that human beings can attain righteousness through the gift of God in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:23–26). The incongruity of the gift of Christ renders possible the final congruity of the universe (Rom 8:18–23). The deeper harmony between Wisdom and Paul is theologically necessary, since it grounds a metaphysical dimension to God's saving actions in Jesus Christ. The Christ event both fulfills the old and establishes a new cosmic order.

Aquinas: Charity as the Law of Grace

Aquinas's New Law of Grace: Incongruous and Reciprocal

St. Thomas Aquinas's theology of charity and grace parallels—as well as develops—Barclay's thesis on the gift in Paul. Aquinas expresses grace as a new *habitus* that operates within human life. Aquinas's new law of grace balances the incongruity of the gift and the congruity of the response and final judgment. Aquinas presents Christ as the teacher of the new law. In Barclay's language, Christ is the giver of the new gift. Christ gives that which he alone can give, a divine gift that communicates a share in the very life of God. Aquinas contrasts the old law to the new law by drawing on the biblical motif that the old law was given through the mediation of angels. Instead, the new law is given by God himself in the incarnate Word. The gift of the new law, however, is not merely an affirmation of life. Instead, the new law must solve the problem of human sinfulness and death. Thus, Christ offers the forgiveness of sin and the resurrection from the dead. As the Apostles' Creed affirms, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting." In this way, Christ's followers are renewed via faith, hope, and charity. Aquinas summarizes this under the heading of the new law of grace.

The gift of the new law properly situates the treatment of grace and justification within the dramatic action of the life, death, and resurrection of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Aquinas refers to the new law as the new law of grace. How might this be illuminated by considering the interpretation of grace through the lens of gift as proffered by Barclay? Aquinas

speaks of Christ as the legislator and teacher of the new law.

Aquinas's treatment of grace should be viewed within his treatment of the dynamic between the old law and the new law. When grace is situated within its context of the new law of grace, then grace is always seen as a gift both incongruous and, yet, transformative. If grace were congruous, then the old law would have been enough, since it would have been the right path opened up to those worthy of receiving the divine law. Yet, the death of Christ manifests the incongruity of the gift by revealing the unworthiness and sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles.

In this way, Aquinas and Barclay share a view of grace as incongruous yet transformative, but Aquinas develops the understanding of grace and its sacramental character. The new law of grace is a new principle or *habitus* of human existence, one that transforms the moral life in the Church and is received from the sacramental life of the Church. For Aquinas, grace is a *habitus* in the essence of the soul giving us a participation in the divine nature and flowing into the powers of the soul.²⁷ Thus, this habit in the essence of the soul that gives us a participation is the divine nature and life perfects the powers of intellect and will by the infused virtues of faith (in the intellect) and hope and charity (in the will).²⁸ The ceremonial precepts of the old law, such as circumcision, yield to the ceremonial precepts of the new, such as baptism.²⁹ Aquinas treats the Christ gift as present in the sacraments of the new law with respect to Christ's Passion, Christ's grace in us, and the eternal life with Christ.³⁰ Christ establishes a new horizon of human existence made possible through his life, death, and resurrection. Christ thus replaces the Torah as the new standard of worth and meaning. Nonetheless, the gift of Christ is not a mere idea or a mere belief. Aquinas holds that the new covenant includes the new ceremonial precepts of the

²⁷ *Summa theologiae* [ST] I-II, q. 109, a. 1; q. 110, a. 2. All English translation from ST is taken from that done by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), in its 1981 reprint by Christian Classics (Westminster, MD).

²⁸ ST I-II, q. 62, a. 1, ad 1, in which Aquinas shows how the theological virtues make us sharers in the divine nature: "By participation, as kindled wood partakes of the nature of fire: and thus, after a fashion, man becomes a partaker of the Divine Nature, as stated above: so that these virtues are proportionate to man in respect of the Nature of which he is made a partaker."

²⁹ Note the role of baptism in conferring the gift of Christ in Rom 6:3–4.

³⁰ ST III, q. 60, a. 3: "A sacrament properly speaking is that which is ordained to signify our sanctification. In which three things may be considered; namely, the very cause of our sanctification, which is Christ's passion; the form of our sanctification, which is grace and the virtues; and the ultimate end of our sanctification, which is eternal life. And all these are signified by the sacraments."

sacraments in order to communicate the reception of this gift. In this way, Aquinas presents a more deeply sacramental view of the gift of Christ than does Barclay.³¹

The modern deformation of gift as unilateral and nonreciprocal creates a social dynamic and theological universe in which actual gifts are tarnished by participation in reciprocity and exchange. Consider how the giver's separation from the recipient would impact Christian theology: God gives a gift that could never be returned; God's gift would not establish communion; God's gift would remain a transcendental or eschatological ideal that equally condemns and forgives all human actions and efforts. In this extreme consideration, God's gift is never properly received. In fact, one might ask whether such a gift is ever truly given.

In contrast, an understanding of gifts as reciprocal opens up theological dimensions of communion. In Aquinas's presentation of the virtue of charity or *caritas*, *caritas* is human friendship with God. This divine-human friendship is established by the communication of God's goodness to his human creatures.³² The gift is unilateral insofar as it may be given only by God, but it is reciprocal insofar as it may be given back by human beings to God; the divinely revealed friendship of charity becomes exemplary and transformative of all other friendships.³³ Moreover, the Aristotelian language of grace as a motion (*motus*) shows how the gift is continually given by God to allow us to give ourselves back to God.³⁴

³¹ Wilhelmus Valkenburg writes: "In the *Summa*, the soteriological effects of the resurrection of Christ are discussed in the theology of Christ the Savior, between the soteriological effects of his passion, and the sacraments as signs of our sanctification through Christ" (*Words of the Living God: Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* [Leuven, BE: Peeters, 2000], 119).

³² *ST*, II-II, q. 23, a. 1.

³³ See Guy Mansini, OSB, "Aristotle and Aquinas's Theology of Charity in the *Summa theologiae*," in Emery and Levering, *Aristotle in Aquinas's Theology*, 121–38, at 130: "For St. Thomas, charity is not beyond friendship, but rather true friendship, even truest friendship: it is founded on the surest *communicatio* of the best foundation of what potentially unites God and the angels and men, the divine beatitude; its first act is an act of divine love, where God estimates us as worthy of himself, and so makes us to share his nature; and its answering act is our own love of God above all things, and in the power of the love proper to him, and so, supernaturally."

³⁴ See Gaine, "Aristotle's Philosophy in Aquinas's Theology of Grace," 101, where Gaine shows that the gift is both given and continually being given: "While Aquinas makes use of Aristotle's concept of nature to clarify his position on the purposes *for* which we need grace (elevation and healing), he makes use of the concept of *motus* to clarify what we need *from* grace. According to Aquinas, our need here is not only for some kind of stable 'gift' (*donum*) from God by which we

Aquinas presents the Trinitarian dimensions of this divine gift when he presents the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit through the Incarnation and Pentecost.³⁵ Thomistic charity thus may be viewed as an authentic development of Paul's understanding of grace.³⁶ Charity may be seen as the lens that allows us to understand the gift of Christ.

There is a kind of perfection to the new law that often catches the eye of the reader of Aquinas. Aquinas will state simply that the old law is imperfect, the new law perfect. The old law foreshadows the gift of Christ; the new law contains the gift of Christ.³⁷ Nonetheless, the new law itself foreshadows the new law of glory. In this way, the new law of grace is imperfect: only heavenly glory is perfect.³⁸ Aquinas employs this distinction when he presents the three stages of the *imago Dei* in human beings: the image according to nature, the image according to grace, and the image according to glory.³⁹ To say that the new law of grace prefigures the law of glory recalls the reality that the new law has an eschatological dimension.

are healed and elevated, but also for God himself to move us to act in relation to this gift" (citing, e.g., *Summa theologiae*, q. 109, a. 9).

³⁵ *ST* I, q. 43, a. 1.

³⁶ Interestingly, Augustine describes holiness as this same charity in his *Catechizing the Uninstructed*.

³⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 106, a. 4: "No state of the present life can be more perfect than that of the New Law, since the nearer a thing is to the last end the more perfect it is."

³⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 106, a. 4, ad 1: "As Dionysius says (*Ecll. Hier.* v), there is a threefold state of mankind; the first was under the old law; the second is that of the new law; the third will take place not in this life, but in heaven. But as the first state is figurative and imperfect in comparison with the state of the Gospel; so is the present state figurative and imperfect in comparison with the heavenly state, with the advent of which the present state will be done away as expressed in that very passage (1 Cor. 13:12): 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face.'" Matthew Levering traces the importance of 1 Cor 13 in Aquinas's understanding of the new law of grace in *ST* in his *Paul in the Summa Theologiae* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015): "The main role of 1 Corinthians 13 in the *prima secundae*, therefore, is to explore the virtue of charity" (247).

³⁹ *ST* I, q. 93, a. 4. Romanus Cessario, O.P., writes: "The first image is found in all men, the second only in the justified, and the third only in the blessed. This tripartite division of the *imago Dei* is not peculiar to Aquinas. Christian tradition returns frequently to the image of creation, the image of grace, and the image of glory, although some recent spiritual and theological authors eschew this tripartite understanding of man's relationship to God" (*Theology and Sanctity*, ed. Cajetan Cuddy [Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2014], 80).

*Faith in Christ and Works of the Law in Aquinas's Commentaries on
Galatians and Romans*

Let us consider how Aquinas treats some central passages in Galatians and Romans and how these might illuminate Barclay's insights, and vice versa.⁴⁰ Aquinas presents all of the Pauline epistles as unfolding the mystery of the grace of Christ: "This entire teaching is about Christ's grace."⁴¹ He summarizes Romans as considering the grace of Christ "as it is in itself."⁴² In his division of the text for Romans, Aquinas shows how he sees the grace of Christ as the unifying theme of the letter:

Part I. Romans 1:16–11:36: "the power of the Gospel of grace"
Romans 1:18–4:25: "the Gospel of grace is necessary for salvation"

⁴⁰ For introductions to the historical, philosophical, and theological context of Aquinas's biblical commentaries, see Nicholas M. Healy, "Introduction," in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries*, ed. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 1–20, and Eleonore Stump, "Biblical Commentary and Philosophy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzman and Eleonore Stump (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 252–68. Jean-Pierre Torrell, O.P., suggests that the *Expositio et lecture super epistolas Pauli apostoli* as we have it now may represent multiple teaching periods. Torrell dates *Super Rom* "very probably" to the end of Aquinas's life, 1272–1273, as Aquinas corrected the first eight chapters in his own hand, and the commentary also includes broader theological development, while *Super Gal* is included in a section that is a *reportatio* from Reginald of Piperno, likely recorded from Aquinas's teaching in 1265–1268 (*Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996], 340). Pasqual Porro reports Torrell's findings, but ultimately concludes that "no precise date can be fixed with regard to the course [of the Pauline commentaries], its revision, or its publication" (*Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*, trans. Joseph G. Trabbic and Roger W. Nutt [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2016], 189).

⁴¹ *Super Rom* prol. (Marietti no. 11). All English translation from *Super Rom* will be from an unpublished translation by Fabian Larcher, O.P. Aquinas identifies the first nine Pauline letters, Romans through 2 Thessalonians, as addressed to the church of the Gentiles and says those are concerned with the grace of Christ "as it is found in the Mystical Body itself, that is, the Church"; the next four, 1 Timothy through Philemon, consider the grace of Christ "as it exists in the chief members of the Church, namely the prelates"; and the final letter, Hebrews, which Aquinas attributes to Paul, considers the grace of Christ as "it exists in the head of the body, Christ himself."

⁴² Aquinas notes that Romans is placed before 1 Cor not because of its chronological priority, which it lacks, but because "the order of teaching requires that grace should first be considered in itself before being considered as it is found in the Sacraments" (*Super Rom*, prol. [Marietti no. 12]).

Romans 5:1–8:39: “the Gospel of grace is sufficient for salvation”

Romans 9:1–11:36: “the origin of grace, of whether it can be given by the sole election of God or by preceding merits of works, taking occasion from the seeming rejection of the Jews”

Part II. Romans 12:1–16:27: “the use of grace, which pertains to moral instruction.”

This division of themes resonates with some of Barclay’s treatment and insights. Although Aquinas is interested in theological questions with respect to election and grace, he nonetheless attends to Paul’s mission to the Gentiles, as does Barclay. Aquinas presents all of Romans as addressing a central theme of the grace of Christ, while Barclay centers Paul’s theology on the gift of Christ. Aquinas shows that the grace of Christ is properly understood as the new foundation of God’s covenantal relationship with his people. In other words, it is the new standard of worth, as Barclay says, replacing Torah observance. The grace of Christ is also incongruous and circular, as Barclay argues. Aquinas shows that the grace is incongruous, since it is necessary for salvation because no one can achieve the needed righteousness before God apart from the gift of Christ. The grace, however, is circular, since it is also sufficient for salvation, showing that it does transform the unworthy into the worthy. “Necessary for salvation” and “sufficient for salvation” parallel Barclay’s wording of the grace of Christ as incongruous and circular.

Having seen the overall centrality of the grace of Christ in Aquinas’s treatment of Romans, let us begin with Aquinas’s treatment of faith and the law first in his *Commentary on Galatians* and then, second, in his *Commentary on Romans*. He summarizes Galatians as considering the grace of Christ as it exists in the sacraments of the Church, “in which superfluous sacraments are rejected against certain men who wanted to join the old sacraments to the new ones.”⁴³ Aquinas addresses Galatians 2:16, where Paul says that he and Cephas had been “justified by faith in Christ, and not by works of the law, because by works of the law shall no

⁴³ *Super Rom.*, prol. (Marietti no. 11). Aquinas offers an outline of the entire Pauline corpus in the prologue of *Super Rom.* Barclay summarizes the difference between Galatians and Romans thus: “Galatians has a Christological focus whereas Romans has a theological focus. The theological focus on Romans allows Paul to situate the Christ-gift more clearly with the salvation history of Creation and Israel. It is definitive, final, complete, decisive, and comprehensive. The Christ-event explains God’s dealings with Israel, which are not revealed always to have been a gift to the unworthy” (560).

one be justified.” Aquinas first situates this verse in its context by showing that Paul is here explaining how he, Peter, and the other apostles were justified: even though Jews, they were justified by faith in Christ.⁴⁴ The Latin wording here is illuminating. Aquinas refers to the apostles’s *conversatio-nem*, or way of life, conduct, and behavior. In this way, justification refers to the apostles’s new way of living, and thus a new manner of being. The apostolic way of life no longer seeks righteousness from the works of the law, but is defined by its faith in Christ.⁴⁵ Aquinas interestingly contrasts the works of the law (*opera legalia*) with the precepts of faith (*praeceptis fidei*): a Torah-observance way of life versus a faith-observance way of life. The contrast is between works and precepts, the old law and the new law. In this pre-Lutheran interpretation, faith and the precepts of faith go hand in hand: faith submits to all that Christ has taught in the new law of grace. Aquinas supports his interpretation of Galatians 2:16 by quoting Romans 3:28 (“For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law”) and Acts 4:12 (“For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved”). Faith is not contrasted with works in general, but specifically with the works of the old law.

Aquinas, however, is aware of the peculiarity of Paul’s expression that we are not justified by works of the law. He then asks how Paul’s expression here is to be squared with Romans 2:13—“For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.” Aquinas distinguishes two senses of justification. It may be considered as *doing* what is just or as *being made* just. With respect to doing what is just, it depends on which part of the law one is observing. Aquinas notes that “some works of the Law were moral and some ceremonial.” The ceremonial parts of the law are properly the “works of the Law,” because their force comes from the law itself. The moral parts of the law are not properly “works of the Law,” since human beings have a natural instinct and are led to them by the natural law.⁴⁶ With this distinction in

⁴⁴ *Super Gal* 2, lec. 4; all translations of *Super Gal* are taken from dhsprory.org/thomas/SSGalatians.htm.

⁴⁵ Valkenburg illumines such references to the apostolic way of life: “Another important aspect of this intellectual and spiritual horizon was the identity of the mendicant orders as presenting a new ideal of apostolic life. This passion for the apostolic life and for the newness of the Gospel leads to a form of hermeneutics in which the person of Christ and the Gospel gained a central position in the new law. . . . In Aquinas’ commentaries on Scripture, his sermons, and his polemical writings, this ideal of a new life of poverty and preaching was presented as an imitation of the apostolic life of the disciples of Christ” (*Words of the Living God*, 214).

⁴⁶ Aquinas clarifies that this natural inclination needs the guidance of the revealed

hand, Aquinas thus solves the apparent contradiction between Romans 2:13 and Galatians 2:16: Paul refers to the moral law when he says that “it is the doers of the law who will be justified” and to the ceremonial law when he says that “by works of the law shall no one be justified.” Faith in Christ will include both moral works of love and new ceremonial works of the sacraments. Aquinas then considers justification as being made just. Here, he clearly affirms that “no one is made just save by God through grace.”⁴⁷ This grace is not a general divine benefaction, but specifically “the grace of Christ.” The gift of Christ is communicated through the sacraments of the new law.⁴⁸

Following up on Galatians 2:16, Aquinas comments on the conclusion of chapter 2 to show that the gift of Christ is something new that cannot be absorbed into the old law. In this section, Aquinas emphasizes both the newness of the life Paul now lives and the irreplaceable role of the death of Christ in bringing about that new life. Paul writes in Galatians 2:20–21: “The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.” Aquinas interprets this passage as showing the incapacity of the old law to deliver the righteousness to which it pointed. If justification could have been achieved from the Torah, “the death of Christ would have been superflu-

old law so that human beings can come to know the requirements of the moral law. *ST I-II*, q. 100, a. 11, reads: “The judicial and ceremonial precepts derive their force from their institution alone: since before they were instituted, it seemed of no consequence whether things were done in this or that way. But the moral precepts derive their efficacy from the very dictate of natural reason, even if they were never included in the Law. Now of these there are three grades: for some are most certain, and so evident as to need no promulgation; such as the commandments of the love of God and our neighbor, and others like these, as stated above [a. 3], which are, as it were, the ends of the commandments; wherefore no man can have an erroneous judgment about them. Some precepts are more detailed, the reason of which even an uneducated man can easily grasp; and yet they need to be promulgated, because human judgment, in a few instances, happens to be led astray concerning them: these are the precepts of the decalogue. Again, there are some precepts the reason of which is not so evident to everyone, but only the wise; these are moral precepts added to the decalogue, and given to the people by God through Moses and Aaron.”

⁴⁷ *Super Gal 2*, lec. 4: “non autem iustus fit aliquis nisi a Deo, per gratiam.”

⁴⁸ *Super Gal 2*, lec. 4: “The sacraments of the old law were certain declarations [*protestationes*] of the faith of Christ, just as our sacraments are, but not in the same way, because those sacraments were configured to the grace of Christ as to something that lay in the future; our sacraments, however, testify as things containing a grace that is present.”

ous.”⁴⁹ The death of Christ achieves righteousness because Christ himself now lives in Paul. Aquinas explains this reality by saying that, as Paul’s body is moved by his soul, now his soul is moved by Christ. Paul lives then at two levels according to Aquinas: Paul himself lived according to the life of the flesh, subject to death and temptations; but, “as to his relation to God, Christ lived in Paul.”

Now let us turn to see how Aquinas takes up the issue of the works of the law and justification in his *Commentary on Romans*. As we previously saw, in his *Commentary on Galatians*, Aquinas addresses Romans 2:13: “[It is] the doers of the law who will be justified.” Aquinas comments that “this point seems to conflict with [Paul’s] own statement below that ‘no human being will be justified in his sight by the works of the law.’”⁵⁰ To unravel this apparent contradiction, Aquinas focuses on the cause of justification. What makes us righteous before God? Aquinas says that the doers of the law do not acquire justice from the works of the law. Here in Romans, he does not distinguish between the ceremonial and moral works of the law as he did in Galatians. Here, he includes both the ceremonial works and the moral works, saying that neither impart justifying grace. Instead, he writes, “we do such works in virtue of an infused habit of justice.” In this manner, doers of the law are truly justified before God, but they cannot become doers of the law apart from the grace of God given in Jesus Christ.⁵¹

The same emphasis on the unilateral direction of grace comes forward in Aquinas’s commentary on Romans 3:28: “For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law.”⁵² To begin with, Aquinas examines the prior verse, 3:27, in which Paul asks what is the basis for our boasting: “On the principle of works? No, but on the principle of faith.” The word “principle” here is translated from the Greek *nomos* or the Latin *lex*. Aquinas observes that “the Apostle alludes here to two laws, that of works and that of faith.” Aquinas first asks whether the law of works and the law of faith refer to the old law and the new law. He answers negatively,

⁴⁹ *Super Gal* 2, lec. 6.

⁵⁰ *Super Gal* 2, lec. 3 (Marietti no. 212).

⁵¹ Aquinas considers it the proper role of theological exegesis to discern principles. Christopher Baglow writes: “Thomas would consider the appropriation of Scripture in sacred doctrine to be, first and foremost, a quest for certain principles in Scripture that are characterized by their centrality and their preeminently irreducible status” (“Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine in St. Thomas Aquinas,” in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum [New York: T&T Clark, 2004], 1–25).

⁵² *Super Rom* 3, lec. 4 (Marietti nos. 314–17).

since the old law also requires faith and the new law also requires works. Instead, the “law of works” is “outwardly presented and written [law], through which men’s external works are directed,” and the “law of faith” is “inwardly written [law], through which are directed not only external works but even the very motions of the heart, among which is the act of faith first.”⁵³ Aquinas thus eschews any interpretation of “justified by faith” that opposes law and Gospel.

In his treatment of Romans, Aquinas emphasizes the unity of the old law and its fulfillment in the new. Here, he interprets the “works of the law” as both the ceremonial works and moral works of the old law. In commenting on Romans 3:28, he writes: “Not only without the ceremonial works, which did not confer grace but only signified it, but also without the works of the moral precepts, as stated in Tit 3:5, ‘Not because of deeds done by us in righteousness.’” This interpretation shows that the mode of Torah observance, including the moral precepts, was not sufficient for full righteousness before God. That righteousness was opened up only through the gift of Christ, received by faith.

To deal further with the role of works, Aquinas employs the temporal distinction between before and after justification, or before and after receiving the gift of Christ. Justification begins without works, but it does not continue without works. Aquinas writes that justification is “without works prior to becoming just, but not without works following it, because, as it is stated in Jas 2:26, ‘Faith without works,’ i.e., subsequent works, ‘is dead,’ and, consequently, cannot justify.”⁵⁴ Aquinas here summarizes Barclay’s fundamental insight into Paul’s teaching on grace: the Christ gift is *incongruous*, since it is given to the unworthy, but it is also *circular*, since those who receive the gift participate in Christ’s worthiness, and so offer works back to God.

It is worth noting that the ceremonial works and the moral works of the old law are treated in the same vein as oriented to the gift of Christ. Apart from the Christ gift, such works do not justify. Nonetheless, this way of putting it suggests that they are disconnected from the Christ gift. Aquinas approaches the gift of Christ, however, as the intelligible fulfillment of the moral and ceremonial precepts of the Torah. Commenting on Romans 3:31—“Do we then overthrow the law by faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law”—Aquinas avers that “by faith we complete and fulfill the law” and includes the dominical saying from Matthew 5:17: “I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it.” The

⁵³ *Super Rom* 3, lec. 4 (Marietti no. 316).

⁵⁴ *Super Rom* 3, lec. 4, (Marietti no. 317).

ceremonial precepts are fulfilled because, “being figures, they were upheld and fulfilled by the fact that the truth signified by them is shown forth in the faith of Christ.” The moral precepts are likewise fulfilled because “the faith of Christ confers the help of grace to fulfill the moral precepts of the Law and even adds special counsels, through which the moral precepts are more safely and securely kept.”⁵⁵ Thus, the gift of Christ is not given to dispense us from the burden of the moral precepts, but rather to allow the moral precepts to be fulfilled. Barclay employs this same dimension by stating that the gift of Christ is “unconditioned” (given by the goodness of God to unworthy recipients) but not “unconditional” (as if it were given by the goodness of God without an eye to the recipients becoming worthy).⁵⁶ Nonetheless, Barclay separates the Torah from the covenant promise and shows how the Christ gift completes the promise, and so eliminates the role of the Torah in the transformative dynamic of the Christ gift.⁵⁷ Aquinas shows that the Christ gift is the intelligible fulfillment of the ceremonial and moral precepts of the old law. This insight allows for a more sacramental understanding of the new law for Aquinas and a more cohesive and comprehensive understanding of salvation history in which the ceremonial precepts of the old law pointed toward the Paschal mystery they prefigured.

Law as Charity in Aquinas’s Commentaries on Galatians and Romans

Having considered how Aquinas presents the grace of Christ through the lens of faith and works of the law, let us now turn to how he presents the grace of Christ as a new law of love. Two central passages are Galatians 6:2 (“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”) and Romans

⁵⁵ *Super Rom* 3, lec. 4 (Marietti no. 321). Aquinas identifies the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience in his treatment of the new law in the *ST* I-II, q. 108, a. 4.

⁵⁶ Bruce Marshall argues that Aquinas’s commentary on Romans 4 shows that he considers grace as both transformational and dispositive: “In just this twofold way, God not only cleanses our souls, but covers our sinful acts. For God to forgive sins is not only for him to be undeterred by the foulness of what he intends to change, but for him to overlook—to cover—what cannot be changed” (“*Beatus vir*: Aquinas, Romans 4, and the Role of ‘Reckoning’ in Justification,” in *Reading Romans with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012], 216–37, at 233).

⁵⁷ Barclay writes: “What was entirely *unnatural* for anyone reared in the Jewish tradition was to decenter the Torah, to limit its role in history to an interlude, and to distinguish it categorically from ‘covenant’ and ‘promise.’ But this is precisely what Paul does in Galatians 3–4, a narrative account of the purposes of God whose interpretive center is the Christ-event itself” (401).

8:2 (“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death”). Commenting on the former, Aquinas summarizes the law of Christ in the one word “charity” in three ways. First, the new law is a law of love, not fear. Second, Christ promulgated his law as the new commandment to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:35). Third, Christ himself fulfilled this commandment when he “bore our sins out of charity.”⁵⁸ The grace of Christ transforms the believers to be able to fulfill the law of Christ, the law of love.

In Romans 8:2, Paul speaks of “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” In this context, Aquinas sees the new law not merely in terms of the goal or terminus of the law of love, but as the process of making that love possible. He paraphrases Romans 8:2 thus: “The law of the spirit frees man from sin and death.” Such a gift is clearly incongruous, since it is given to those under sin and death. Aquinas develops this incongruity, however, by viewing the gift as it is presented here by Paul as a law. Drawing on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aquinas considers that all laws are given to make us good. Aquinas then distinguishes between human law and the law of the spirit in terms of how each helps us to be good: whereas human law can only indicate what ought to be done, the “Holy Spirit dwelling in the mind not only teaches what is to be done by instructing the intellect, but also inclines the affection to act aright.”⁵⁹ The emphasis thus moves from the incongruity of the gift to its efficacy and circularity as it frees the recipient to become worthy. In addition to considering the law as given to make us good, Aquinas considers the law of the spirit as the proper effect of the Spirit. Here he summarizes this effect as “faith working through love”: “[This] faith teaches us what is to be done, ‘His anointing teaches you about everything’ (1 John 2:27) and inclines the affections to act, ‘The love of Christ controls us’ (2 Cor 5:14).”⁶⁰ Aquinas identifies this law of the spirit as “the new law, which is the Holy Spirit himself or something which the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts, ‘I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts’ (Jer 31:33).”⁶¹ The law of the spirit is both the gift of the Holy Spirit and the movement of the Holy Spirit in the members of the new covenant.

Aquinas then considers how the law of the Spirit frees us from sin and death through the Incarnation taken as a whole. Here he speaks in a manner similar to Barclay’s treatment of the Christ event. The gift of

⁵⁸ *Super Gal* 6, lec. 1.

⁵⁹ *Super Rom* 8, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 602).

⁶⁰ *Super Rom* 8, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 603).

⁶¹ *Super Rom* 8, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 603).

the new law of the spirit is not something other than the Incarnation as a whole, but rather is intimately connected to the Incarnation. Aquinas shows this by observing that the Spirit is in an individual only insofar as that person is connected to Christ as head.

Aquinas shows how the law of the spirit of life depends on the Incarnation's power to justify the sinner.⁶² He points out that the first effect of the Incarnation is "the removal of sin" and that the second is "the justification of the law,"⁶³ and he expands upon the latter: "The justice which the Law promised and which some hoped to obtain from the Law" is now fulfilled in us, but justification can be accomplished only "through Christ."⁶⁴ Aquinas contrasts Christ's power to justify and the law's inability to do so: "It was necessary that Christ be incarnated, because the Law could not justify." Interestingly, Aquinas points out here that this is not "due to a shortcoming in the Law, but because it was 'weakened by the flesh' (Rom 8:3), . . . a weakness in man due to the corruption of the inclination to sin [*fomes*], . . . [and] sinful desire [*concupiscentia*]."⁶⁵

The Incarnation as a whole, including the death and resurrection, is given to make human beings worthy before God. The Torah was good and wise and showed forth "the path of righteousness" (Ps 23:3), but according to Aquinas, Paul came to see that his relationship to the Torah was changed in light of the death and resurrection of Christ. Christ's death reveals a deeper sense of human weakness and a deeper inclination to sin than did the Torah: the gift of Christ is given to those who are unworthy, who see themselves as unworthy, and who see themselves in need of the forgiveness Christ offers. In this way, Christ's death and resurrection perfect the Torah, insofar as Christ makes possible the path of righteousness that was previously outlined. The gift actualizes the drama of forgiveness and repentance that is necessary for human beings to live in right relationship with God.

Consider how Aquinas treats Paul's teaching on the love of neighbor as fulfilling the Law. Two central passages are Galatians 5:14—"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'"—and Romans 13:8–9: "For he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments . . . are summed up in this one sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Let us consider first the passage from Galatians. Aquinas notes the parallel verse in Romans 13 and then asks

⁶² *Super Rom* 8, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 606).

⁶³ *Super Rom* 8, lec. 1 (Marietti nos. 609–10).

⁶⁴ *Super Rom* 8, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 611).

⁶⁵ *Super Rom* 8, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 611).

whether it is appropriate to speak only of the love of neighbor, and not of the love of God.⁶⁶ He answers that the love of God and the love of neighbor include one another, since “he who loves God should love his brother also” (1 John 4:21), and that “we love our neighbor for the love of God.” Following Paul, Aquinas reduces all of the law to the “one precept of charity.”⁶⁷ Aquinas then explains how this is true.

In Aquinas’s exegesis of Galatians 5:14, he emphasizes the unified character of the divine law by showing how the old law and the new law have the same *ratio*, at least in the order of precepts. Aquinas unpacks the unity of the law by beginning with the unity of the old law. He makes his customary distinction among the moral, ceremonial, and judicial precepts, yet he does not thereby separate them into three laws. The threefold distinction reveals a deeper unity: the moral precepts are the Decalogue and show that “three precepts concern the love of God, and the other seven the love of neighbor”; the judicial precepts offer specification of the love of neighbor; and the ceremonial precepts offer specifications of the love of God. So all of the law is fulfilled in the “one precept of charity.” Aquinas then concludes by citing Leviticus 19:18 as the source of this teaching: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Aquinas does not oppose the old law as bad and the new law as good. Instead, the precepts of the two show a profound unity, insofar as both may be reduced to the one precept of charity, the love of God and the love of neighbor for his sake. The difference that the gift of Christ makes is not primarily in the precepts, although the specifications are certainly changed, but in the power of justification.⁶⁸ The most perfect and righteous gift is given to the imperfect and unrighteous so that they may become perfect and righteous.

Aquinas elsewhere affirms the profound unity of the law that comes from God. When he describes it in the *Summa theologiae*, he speaks of one divine law with two parts.⁶⁹ The new law and the old law share the

⁶⁶ *Super Gal* 5, lec. 3.

⁶⁷ *Super Gal* 5, lec. 3.

⁶⁸ See *Super Gal* 1, lec. 2, in which Aquinas argues that Paul contrasts the “grace of Christ” as not properly “another gospel” to show that Christ properly fulfills the old law: “Although [the new law] is another gospel according to the tradition of the deceivers, yet according to [Paul’s] preaching it is not. It is different in the promises, but not in the figure, because the same thing is contained in the Old Testament and in the New [*idem continetur in veteri testamento et in novo*]: in the Old, indeed, as in a figure, but in the New as in the express reality. Therefore it is another gospel if you consider the outward appearances; but as to the things that are contained and exist within, it is not another gospel.”

⁶⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 91, aa. 4–5.

same end, and in this way, “the new law is not distinct from the old law: because they both have the same end, namely, man’s subjection to God.”⁷⁰ The distinction between the new law and the old law is found rather in the way in which the new law is closer to the goal than the old: “The new law is distinct from the old law: because the old law is like a pedagogue of children, as the Apostle says (Gal 3:24), whereas the new law is the law of perfection, since it is the law of charity, of which the Apostle says (Col 3:14) that it is ‘the bond of perfection.’”⁷¹ In this way, Aquinas interprets the Pauline image of the law as pedagogue to emphasize a discontinuous continuity.

When Aquinas turns to the parallel passage of Romans 13:8–9, he develops the theme of love in the language of debts and gifts. He begins by observing the full passage: “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.”⁷² While we ought to seek to pay back all debts, there are some debts “from which a man can never absolve himself.” Aquinas considers the love of God and the love of neighbor as debts that ever remain with us. He quotes Psalm 116:12—“What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me?”—to show that the excellence of God’s gifts are such that equal payment could never be made.⁷³ Aquinas then also presents the love of neighbor in this same context: “The debt of fraternal love is paid such a way that it is always owing.”⁷⁴ He says this because we owe our neighbor love on account of God, because we continue to love those to whom we are “alike in nature and grace,” and because the cause of love does not diminish, but “grows by loving.”⁷⁵ There is a delicate balance in this treatment of the gift of love: Aquinas emphasizes the incomplete circularity of the gift in this context. The gift of love expects and deserves return even when that return is inadequate to the original gift of God’s love or to the ongoing deepening of a friend’s love.

Aquinas situates the gift of love within the context of perfection. Romans 13:8–9 falls within the larger section of 12:1–13:14, summarized by Aquinas under the theme of Paul setting forth “the use of grace that man might be perfect.” This section he further subdivides, “first with regard to the holiness that man maintains for God (ch. 12), second with

⁷⁰ *ST I-II*, q. 107, a. 1.

⁷¹ *ST I-II*, q. 107, a. 1.

⁷² *Super Rom* 13, lec. 2 (Marietti no. 1045).

⁷³ *Super Rom* 13, lec. 2 (Marietti no. 1046).

⁷⁴ *Super Rom* 13, lec. 2 (Marietti no. 1047).

⁷⁵ *Super Rom* 13, lec. 2 (Marietti no. 1047).

regard to the justice that he shows his neighbor (13:1–10), and finally with regard to the purity that he preserves in himself (13:11–14).⁷⁶ The gift of grace has power to assist the human creature in attaining holiness.

Aquinas questions how the reader should understand Paul's teaching that the love of neighbor fulfills the law. Is Paul speaking of the law of the old law versus the law of the new law? In his *Commentary on Galatians*, Aquinas discussed how the love of neighbor fulfilled the law by referring back to the old law. Specifically, Aquinas showed how the entire old law, including the moral, ceremonial, and judicial precepts, could be reduced to the love of neighbor that entails the love of God. In his treatment of the parallel passage in his *Commentary on Romans*, he makes no reference to the ceremonial or judicial precepts, but only to the Decalogue, following Paul's reference in Romans 13:9. Aquinas first argues that the love of neighbor is included in the love of God, "as the effect in its cause,"⁷⁷ affirming that Scripture sometimes uses interchangeably the love of God and the love of neighbor as though either one were sufficient for salvation. Here, Aquinas follows Paul and suggests that the law and the precept of charity are synonymous. Thus, although Aquinas may at other points distinguish between the old law and the new law, here he sees the deeper shared *telos* of the laws God revealed. The gift of Christ fulfills the law, since Christ fulfills perfect love of neighbor in laying down his life for us while we were sinners and in loving the Father. Aquinas concludes his comments on Romans 13:8–10 by saying: "Paul draws the conclusion mainly intended, saying: 'Therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law,' i.e., the Law is fulfilled and made perfect by love, 'Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony' (Col 3:14)."⁷⁸ With an emphasis different from that employed by Barclay, Aquinas affirms the fulfilled presence of the Torah in the new law, since both are ordered to love. Love does not eschew order, but both reveals and creates its own deeper harmony, drawing on the history of Israel and the gift of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Barclay offers a much-needed insight into Paul's notion of grace/gift that is simultaneously incongruous and reciprocal. The gift of Christ thus comes as a kind of *habitus* that has the power to transform us both interiorly and

⁷⁶ John Boyle, "On the Relation of St. Thomas's Commentary on Romans to the *Summa theologiae*," in Levering and Dauphinais, *Reading Romans with St. Thomas Aquinas*, 75–82.

⁷⁷ *Super Rom* 13, lec. 2 (Marietti no. 1049).

⁷⁸ *Super Rom* 13, lec. 2 (Marietti no. 1059).

communally. Aquinas offers a specification of this *habitus* that allows for a better understanding of how grace is circular/transformative/not-unconditional, and thus the fulfillment of the law in charity.

Aquinas argues for the primacy of charity in the new covenant. So, the transformed life of the Christian is principally a life of charity: love for God and neighbor that is a participation in God's own love. These insights of Aquinas develop an idea shared with Barclay, namely, that grace is unconditioned, but not unconditional. Aquinas, however, presents a deeper understanding of the nature of the *habitus* of grace and the fulfillment of the old law in the new law of the Christ gift.

By attending to Paul's emphasis on love as the fulfilling of the law, Aquinas shows forth the necessary relationship between gift and order. The deepest order and law of the cosmos is that of love, the Trinitarian love of God disclosed through the Incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. The ultimate order and love of the cosmos finds its meaning in divine friendship that exceeds the grasp of a darkened human reason and a disordered human will. To receive this higher order of gift and love one must escape the rationalism of the modern age. How can love be ordered with evil? Justice ordered with injustice? How can the creator's love be received and returned by the creature? Human reason on its own can merely affirm that these are not *per se* contradictions. The ultimate gift of divine love, however, has to be received from above and acknowledged from below. The Christ gift exceeds and yet perfects the drama of human existence. By following Barclay's lead—with slight corrections from Aquinas's treatment of grace, law, and love in his theological exegesis and doctrinal writings—we see that the Christ gift establishes a new order of living in communion with the Triune God and the members of the body of Christ. The new order is nothing other than the Christ gift given, received, and returned through the sacramental and moral life of the Church.

For a final consideration of the gift in Paul, we turn from L'Engle's earthly opposition between love and reason look instead to Dante's depiction of the beatifying vision in his great poem *The Divine Comedy*. Here, the incarnate Word strikes as "lightning," an unexpected gift disclosing a deeper harmony, and alone perfects and elevates the deepest human desires to know and to love in accord with Love himself.

O Light that dwell within Thyself alone,
 who alone know Thyself, are known, and smile
 with Love upon the Knowing and the Known!
 That circle which appeared—in my poor style—
 like a reflected radiance in Thee,

after my eyes had studied it awhile,
Within, and in its own hue, seemed to be
tinted with the figure of a Man,
and so I gazed on it absorbedly.
As a geometer struggles all he can
to measure out the circle by the square,
but all his cogitation cannot gain
The principle he lacks: so did I stare
at this strange sight, to make the image fit
the aureole, and see it enter there:
But mine were not the feathers for that flight,
Save that the truth I longed for came to me,
smiting my mind like lightning flashing bright.
Here ceased the powers of my high fantasy.
Already were all my will and my desires
Turned—as a wheel in equal balance—by
The Love that moves the sun and the other stars.⁷⁹

N.V.

⁷⁹ Dante Alighieri, *Paradise*, trans. Anthony Esolen (New York: Random House, 2007), 357–59.