

The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet*

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IN THE PAST twenty years, we have witnessed the rise of “postmodern theology” in Catholicism. As a philosophical movement, postmodernism seems to have begun with Nietzsche and then taken two great steps forward with Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein. But as usual, Catholic theology needs a few decades to catch up. One of the most important developments in postmodern theology has been the growing influence of Heidegger. Jean-Luc Marion’s *God Without Being* and the recent publications of the English theologian Laurence Paul Hemming are just two examples of the German philosopher’s influence in theology.¹ One can find a similar trend in sacramental theology. For

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¹ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Lawrence Paul Hemming, *Heidegger’s Atheism: The Refusal of a Theological Voice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); idem, “After Heidegger: Transubstantiation,” *Heythrop Journal* 41 (2000): 170–86; idem, “Transubstantiating Our Selves,” *Heythrop Journal* 44 (2003): 418–39; idem, “The Being of God: The Limits of Theological Thinking After Heidegger,” *New Blackfriars* (2004): 17–32. While Marion’s 1995 essay “Saint Thomas d’Aquin et l’onto-théologie” (*Revue Thomiste* 95 [1995]: 31–66) offered what the author himself called a partial *retractatio* of his onto-theology critique directed against Aquinas in *God Without Being*, it seems to come at the cost of denying the possibility of all substantial divine naming (see Brian Shanley, OP, “St. Thomas Aquinas,

example, Louis-Marie Chauvet at the Institut Catholique in Paris seems to have attained a certain dominance in French sacramental theology, while the 1995 translation of his major work *Symbol and Sacrament*, which is heavily marked by Heidegger's philosophy, has brought attention to his thought in the United States.² Some of postmodern theology's most distinguishing aspects include the insistence on the cultural and linguistic mediation of all thought and doctrine as well as a wide-scale rejection of classical metaphysics. The Church Fathers, scholastics, and contemporary theologians such as Hans Urs von Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger (in his personal theology) are thus critiqued for having violated the mystery of God by reducing him to a being or first cause, for having misunderstood being as presence, or for having interpreted the sacraments according to a human model of mechanistic production, all the while ignoring the human being's profoundly corporeal and historical nature in the attempt to bypass the mediation of culture. These supposed patristic, scholastic, and modern errors are often given the label of "onto-theology." Such a critique is by no means restricted to Heidegger and theologians such as Chauvet.³ A recent major conference on sacramental presence held (in 2001) at the University of Leuven in Belgium suggests that the "onto-theology" critique has gained fairly wide acceptance among mainstream European sacramental theologians.⁴ There are also signs of Heideg-

Ontotheology, and Marion," *The Thomist* 60 [1996]: 623), which leaves one wondering to what extent Marion has truly made a retraction. One looks forward to the upcoming publication of Thierry-Dominique Humbrecht's recent Sorbonne dissertation on negative theology in Aquinas and its relation to the onto-theology critique as a possible solution to this impasse (the doctoral committee included Marion).

² Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan, SJ, and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995); see also David Power, OMI, Regis A. Duffy, OFM, and Kevin W. Irwin, "Sacramental Theology: A Review of Literature," *Theological Studies* 55 (1994): 657–705, which includes a section about Chauvet.

³ Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Stuttgart, Germany: Klett-Cotta, 1957), 31–67; Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 21–45. Some of the first Catholic theologians and philosophers to adopt Heidegger's "onto-theology" critique include Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, 53–107, and Claude Geffré, OP, *Le christianisme au risque de l'interprétation* (Paris: Cerf, 1983). It has recently been taken up again by Hemming, *Heidegger's Atheism*, 179–214, 249–69.

⁴ Lieven Boeve, "Thinking Sacramental Presence in a Post-Modern Context," in *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, eds. Lieven Boeve and L. Leijssen (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2001), 6–9; Georges de Schrijver, SJ, "Postmodernity and the Withdrawal of the Divine," in Boeve and Leijssen, *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 39–64.

ger's and Chauvet's growing influence among sacramental theologians in the United States.⁵

Those who spend much time seeking the wisdom of the Church Fathers or the great scholastics are thus given a challenge to dialogue with this new and growing theological movement. I will offer some reflections on Chauvet's Heideggerian critique of Aquinas's doctrine of sacramental causality found in his *Symbol and Sacrament* and propose a Thomistic response. Chauvet is a major representative of a significant theological movement, and he has devoted considerable attention to Aquinas. He is thus an ideal partner for a dialogue between postmodern and Thomistic theology. Furthermore, Chauvet is opposing what is perhaps the best theological expression of a doctrine that appears to be quite central to Catholicism, that is, the belief that the sacraments cause grace. It will become clear that Chauvet's critique of Aquinas inevitably targets patristic sacramentology as well.⁶

I. Chauvet's Critique

Chauvet's first critique begins with Plato's *Philebus*. Socrates wants to demonstrate the superiority of wisdom over pleasure, of existence (*ousia*) over process (*genesis*). Socrates likens the relationship between an infatuated lover and the beloved to shipbuilding in order to illustrate the superiority of *ousia*. Shipbuilding is for the sake of ships, not vice versa. Analogously, the beloved is in a state of perfection, unlike the infatuated lover. Chauvet proposes that this analogy is quite false. A lover does not produce the beloved. "The lover only causes the other to exist *as a beloved*, and thus capable of making a *response in return*. . . . The beloved is precisely a product that is *not finished*."⁷ Chauvet applies this principle to

⁵ Kenan Osborne, OFM, *Christian Sacraments in a Postmodern World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999); David Power, OMI, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: Crossroad, 1999); idem, "The Language of Sacramental Memorial," in Boeve and Leijssen, *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 135–60; Glenn P. Ambrose, *Eucharist as a Means for 'Overcoming' Onto-Theology? The Sacramental Theology of Louis-Marie Chauvet* (Berkeley, CA: Graduate Theological Union Dissertation, 2001).

⁶ My approach will be complementary to that of Liam Walsh, the only Thomist whom I am aware of who has dealt with the challenge presented by Chauvet. See his "The Divine and the Human in St. Thomas's Theology of Sacraments," in *Ordo sapientiae et amoris: Hommage au professeur Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP*, ed. Carlos-Josaphat Pinto, OP (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1993), 321–52; idem, "Sacraments," in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 326–64.

⁷ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 24, original emphasis.

the relationship between God and the believer as well as to the realm of sacramental efficacy. He argues that Plato's subordination of "genesis" to existence and causality launched the long history of "onto-theology" in which being is the common trait of all entities and in which God is treated only from the perspective of causality and foundation.⁸

For Chauvet, this is the metaphysical background that determines Thomas's thinking on sacramental efficacy, the ontological presupposition that structured his and all of the scholastics' culture.⁹ Aquinas inevitably accepts the logic of Plato's *Philebus* and the consequent logic of God as first cause, absolute foundation, and presence, thus interpreting the lover-beloved relationship through Socrates's analogy of shipbuilding. This analogy for love in turn explains "why the relation of humans to God in the sacraments is *unavoidably* represented according to the technical and productionist scheme of instrumentality and causality."¹⁰ This then is Chauvet's first major critique of Aquinas that we will consider: The notion of instrumental causality in the sacraments proceeds from the shipbuilding analogy for the relationship of love, a model for love that does not work. For Chauvet, the *metaphysical* language of production and causality has no place in the order of love.

The second major critique follows directly from the first. If the sacraments are instrumental causes, then the sacraments *produce* grace. They produce a thing, a work, something of value, something that the artist represented in his mind and then made or crafted with an instrument. But grace is not a thing. Grace refuses or explodes the logic of the marketplace and production, for it is a "non-value."¹¹ God's "graciousness" cannot be calculated or measured. Grace cannot be treated as a finished product, not even a spiritual one.¹² Thus, Chauvet's second major critique is that Thomas's doctrine of sacramental causality treats grace as an object of value, a produced thing. A brief reflection on the widespread phenomena of aggressive parents who insist that their non-practicing Catholic teenage children should be allowed to receive the sacrament of confirmation suggests that Chauvet's description of the misapprehension of grace may not be far from the unconscious theology of numerous Catholics.

Chauvet's third major critique pertains to the close connection between Christology and the sacraments in Aquinas. In this theology, Christ's

⁸ Ibid., 26–28.

⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰ Ibid., 44.

¹¹ Ibid., 45.

¹² Ibid., 108–9.

power to instrumentally cause grace is rooted in the hypostatic union and continues to operate through the sacraments. Chauvet argues that “a sacramental theology conceived *primarily* on the basis of the hypostatic union . . . cannot be inserted into the movement of concrete history.”¹³ For Chauvet, Thomas has moved away from the Church Fathers and the dynamism of the sacraments as mysteries and toward a notion of the sacraments as continuations of the hypostatic union.¹⁴ Much of *Symbol and Sacrament* implies an opposition between metaphysics and history.

Underneath each of Chauvet’s critiques, we find the assumption that static Platonic and Aristotelian philosophies with a mechanistic, causal understanding of God dominate Aquinas’s thinking. Chauvet even attributes the development in Thomas’s teaching on sacramental efficacy to an exchange of philosophical models, so that in the *Summa*, the discovery of an Aristotelian approach to instrumental causality led to the replacement of the Avicennian approach that Thomas used in his early years.¹⁵ In fact, Chauvet’s critique manifests his own theological method, which he clearly summarized in his article at the recent Leuven conference: “Theology . . . has as its task to express the mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ with new freshness in the cultural categories of a time,”¹⁶ a statement that explains why “we can no longer think the Eucharistic mystery in the wake of metaphysical theology or classical onto-theology.”¹⁷ This understanding of theology is already central to Chauvet’s methodology in *Symbol and Sacrament*.

This fourth interpretation of Thomas’s theology as the expression of revelation through the categories of one or another philosophical model that he has received (from non-Christian thinkers), which implicitly justifies Chauvet’s own theological method, will bring a certain unity to our study of Aquinas as we apply Chauvet’s three particular critiques. As we consider the weight of each of the three critiques, we will also ponder the relationship between the philosophical models that Thomas receives and his theological doctrine. For at the heart of this debate lies a profound difference in theological method.

Our task will be most fruitful if we ponder the three critiques and the overall question of the relationship between philosophy and theology within a study of the development of Thomas’s thought. Chauvet’s aim is

¹³ Ibid., 456.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁶ Chauvet, “The Broken Bread as Theological Figure,” in Boeve and Leijssen, *Sacramental Presence in a Postmodern Context*, 238.

¹⁷ Ibid., 239.

to point to the underlying logic of Aquinas's theology, its "onto-theology," its unconscious assumptions, and its forgetting of the patristic doctrine of the sacraments as dynamic mysteries. Thomas's underlying logic will manifest itself most clearly if we can discover why he changed his mind on sacramental efficacy, why he connects the hypostatic union and the sacraments, and why he changes philosophical categories. A consideration of this development will also best manifest the function of metaphysics, the teachings of the Church Fathers and Sacred Scripture in Aquinas. This approach necessitates a general outline of Thomas's development, since we will need to trace evolutions in multiple, tightly interwoven doctrines. Thus, I can only offer a first sketch of Thomas's evolving thought, but one that I believe to be a very fruitful first response to Chauvet. My aim is to eventually show the details in the future. I will conclude with a brief mention of a partial synthesis of Aquinas's and Chauvet's teachings on sacramental efficacy.

II. The Commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences: Disposing Causality

Thomas's early doctrine of sacramental causality can be found in the *Commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences* and in the *Disputed Questions on Truth* (*De veritate*), both written in the 1250s. Aquinas found two major options for sacramental causality among his contemporaries: first, the notion of disposing causality proposed by Alexander of Hales, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure, and other scholastics before them, and second, the notion of occasional causality that Bonaventure offered as a possible alternative. The first position appropriates the thought of Avicenna, a medieval Islamic philosopher and commentator on Aristotle. Avicenna divided efficient causality into two kinds: a disposing cause that prepares the matter for a form and a perfecting cause that accounts for the actualization of a form. Numerous scholastics found this idea convenient to account for two things. First, they sought to affirm the patristic language about the intrinsic efficacy of the sacraments. Second, the idea of disposing causality allowed theologians to attribute all perfecting efficient causality of sanctifying grace to God alone, thus safeguarding the following Augustinian axiom: Only God causes grace, only God gives the Holy Spirit.¹⁸ Therefore, the sacraments prepare us for God's action in our soul or take away obstacles to grace, and so on. We should also note that, as disposing causes, the sacraments are placed in a somewhat univocal scheme of divine and creaturely action. Created realities such as the signi-

¹⁸ St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XV, c. 19.

fication of a natural element joined to the words of the liturgical rite have one effect, and God then causes something wholly separate.

Thomas found a second theological option in St. Bonaventure's *Sentences* commentary. Bonaventure justly reacted to thirteenth-century descriptions of disposing causality as a kind of physical quality or power subsisting in the sacraments. He offers two reasonable, probable solutions. The first is somewhat close to Alexander of Hales: The sacraments are direct efficient causes of the sacramental character and disposing or *sine qua non* causes of sanctifying grace. The second solution is more radical. God has chosen to infuse grace whenever we receive the sacraments, but the sacraments themselves are only the occasions of this event and without any intrinsic power. Bonaventure admits that he has stretched the term "causality" to its limits. Yet he remains cautious and concludes by refusing to deny that there might be a greater power in the sacraments than either of his models grants.¹⁹

This is the context in which Thomas began to construct his sacramental theology as a young doctoral student commenting on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. As in Alexander, Albert, and Bonaventure, the essential theoretical foundation for Aquinas's understanding of sacramental efficacy depends on his conclusions regarding the impossibility of created agents directly sharing in the causality of sanctifying grace. He offers no less than five arguments against such direct causality. First, Thomas accepts the Augustinian axiom about God as the sole giver of grace.²⁰ Second, the operation of any finite agent presupposes a potential form in the patient's matter, a basic Aristotelian principle. Now grace is not a form in the potency of human beings ready to be activated, so it must be conferred by God alone. Third, any per se agent produces its like, so that a received perfection that immediately joins a patient to the agent must be immediately (that is, exclusively) caused by that agent. Grace joins us to God without mediation, so God alone produces it. Fourth, the ultimate perfection of effects that are caused through an instrument is always attributed to the first agent, another Aristotelian notion.²¹ Finally, Aquinas implicitly accepts the doctrine that grace is created *ex nihilo* as held by Albert and Bonaventure by maintaining a

¹⁹ St. Bonaventure, *Commentarii in quatuor Libros Sententiarum Petri Lombardi* (Florence, Italy: Quaracchi, 1882–1902), IV, d. 1, part 1, a. 1, q. 4; cf. A. Michel, "Sacraments," in *Dictionnaire théologique Catholique*, vol. 14 (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1939), col. 579; Hyacinthe Dondaine, OP, "A propos d'Avicenne et de St. Thomas: de la causalité dispositive à la causalité instrumentale," *Revue Thomiste* 51 (1951): 441–53.

²⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis* (Paris: Sumptibus P. Lethielleux, 1933–1947), III, d. 13, q. 2, a. 1, ad 1–3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, d. 14, q. 3, c.; cf. III, d. 19, q. 1, c.

close correspondence between the creation of the soul and its recreation. Thomas thus appeals to the Pauline doctrine of the new creation and follows his contemporaries by interpreting the term “creation” in an univocal way.²² For these five reasons, any direct participation by the sacraments in the efficient causality of grace is excluded.

These five arguments also lead young Thomas to restrict the causality of Christ’s humanity to the realm of merit (or “moral causality”) and exemplar causality. Christ merits grace for us in his humanity, but has no direct relation to its efficient influence in the soul. Thomas adopts St. John Damascene’s language of Christ’s humanity as an instrument of the divinity. He speaks of Christ’s humanity as a disposing cause, again implying an efficient efficacy, yet this language is eventually reduced to Christ’s merit and satisfaction.²³ A rather univocal vision of the disposing and perfecting causes found in some of Thomas’s scholastic predecessors is

²² Ibid., IV, d. 5, q. 1, a. 2, c.; Bonaventure, *Commentarii in quatuor Libros*, IV, d. 1, part 1, a. 1, q. 4; cf. Michel, “Sacraments”; Theophil Tschipke, OP, *Die Menschheit Christi als Heilsorgan der Gottheit: Unter Besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lehre des Heiligen Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany: Herder, 1940), 107.

²³ Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, III, d. 13, q. 2, a. 1, ad 3: “Ad tertium dicendum, quod in actione aliqua potest aliquid esse medium dupliciter; scilicet quantum ad perfectionem, et quantum ad dispositionem tantum: sicut natura est medium in operatione qua Deus producit animam sensibilem, quia ipsa perfectio ultima fit mediante natura; sed in operatione qua producit animam rationalem, natura non est medium, nisi quantum ad dispositionem. Similiter dico, quod Deus immediate format mentem nostram quantum ad ipsam perfectionem gratiae, tamen potest ibi cadere medium disponens; et sic gratia fluit a Deo mediante homine Christo: ipse enim disposuit totum humanum genus ad gratiae susceptionem; et hoc tripliciter. Uno modo secundum operationem nostram in ipsum: quia secundum quod credimus ipsum Deum et hominem, justificamur; Rom 3:25: ‘quem posuit Deus propitiatorem per fidem in sanguine ipsius.’ Alio modo per operationem ipsius (in nos), inquantum scilicet obstaculum removet, pro peccatis totius humani generis satisfaciendo; et etiam inquantum nobis gratiam et gloriam sui operibus meruit; et inquantum pro nobis interpellat ad Deum. Tertio modo ex ipsa affinitate ejus ad nos; quia ex hoc ipso quod naturam humanam assumpsit, humana natura est magis Deo accepta”; Ibid., III d. 19, a. 1, q. 1, c.: “delere peccatum dicitur dupliciter. . . . Alio modo dicitur effective. Et hoc contingit tripliciter, secundum tria genera causae efficientis. Dicitur enim causa efficiens, uno modo perficiens effectum, et hoc est principale agens inducens formam; et sic Deus solus peccatum delet, quia ipse solus gratiam infundit. Alio modo dicitur efficiens, disponens materiam ad recipiendum formam: et sic dicitur peccatum delere ille qui meretur peccati deletionem, quia ex merito efficitur aliquis dignus quasi materia disposita ad recipiendum gratiam, per quam peccata deleantur. Hoc autem contingit dupliciter: vel sufficienter, vel insufficienter. Sufficienter quidem disposita est materia, quando fit necessitas ad formam: et similiter sufficienter aliquis per meritum disponitur ad aliquid, quando illud sibi efficitur debitum; et hoc est meritum condigni. . . . Solus

improved by an integration of the doctrine of instrumental causality (which Aquinas found in Aristotle *and* Damascene) that emphasizes the divine initiative in the meritorious activity of Christ's humanity, all the while restricting the efficacy of the created cause to the task of preparing the human person for the exclusively divine infusion of sanctifying grace. This means that Christ's disposing causality is not truly in the realm of efficient causality, but rather what the scholastic tradition has come to call moral causality (in addition to exemplarity).²⁴

As in his doctrine on the power of Christ's humanity, Aquinas clearly teaches that sacramental efficacy essentially involves an instrumental action fully subordinated and dependent on the divine principal cause. An instrument is a moved mover, and an instrumental action occurs to the extent that the principal agent moves a finite agent.²⁵ What do the sacraments cause in an instrumental way? Following the common patristic and medieval sacramental interpretation of the blood and water flowing from the side of the crucified Christ in John 19, Thomas affirms that the sacraments have their efficacy from Christ's passion and apply its power to us.²⁶ The Johannine image suggests a very physical, efficient

autem Christus aliis potest sufficienter mereri: quia in naturam potest, inquantum Deus est, et caritas sua quodammodo est infinita, sicut et gratia, ut supra dictum est, dist. 13, q. 1, a. 2, quaestiunc. 2. In hoc autem pro tota natura meruit, in quo debitum naturae, scilicet mortis quae pro peccato ei debebatur, exsolvit ipse peccatum non habens; ut sic non pro se mortem solvere teneretur, sed pro natura solveret; unde satisfaciendo pro natura tota, sufficienter meruit deletionem peccatorum aliis qui peccata habebant. Tertio modo dicitur agens instrumentale; et hoc modo sacramenta peccata delent, quia sunt instrumenta divinae misericordiae salvantis." Cf. *Ibid.*, III, d. 18, a. 6, q. 1, s.c. 1; IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, q. 3, ad 1. While emphasizing Aquinas's focus on the moral causality of Christ's humanity in the *Sentences*, Tschipke also proposes that a disposing efficient causality is attributed to that humanity in the fourth book of the same work (*Die Menschheit Christi*, 124). Yet this claim is based on Aquinas's sparse adoption of St. Bede's teaching that Christ's body imparted the power of regeneration to the baptismal waters by his physical contact with the Jordan River (*Scriptum Super Sententiis*, IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, q. 2, s.c. 1; d. 3, expositio), a teaching that is hardly integrated into the rest of Aquinas's Christology.

²⁴ At least in this context, moral causality as a type of efficient causality becomes extremely problematic, since the causality's object is God. In restricting the efficacy of Christ's humanity to the realm of merit, satisfaction (moral causality), and exemplar causality, Thomas is essentially following the teachings of Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, and Bonaventure. Tschipke, *Die Menschheit Christi*, 103–11.

²⁵ Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, c.: "Agens enim principale est primum movens, agens autem instrumentale est movens motum. Instrumento autem competit duplex actio: una quam habet ex propria natura, alia quam habet prout est motum a primo agente."

connection between Christ's humanity and the sacraments. However, we have seen that the efficacy of Christ's humanity is essentially restricted to merit and satisfaction. Thus, the sacraments apply the power of Christ's merit to us.²⁷ Yet sacramental efficacy seems to go further than the moral causality of Christ's humanity! Whereas Christ's disposing activity is hardly in the realm of efficient causality,²⁸ the sacraments are properly called disposing efficient causes. In book IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, c., Aquinas carefully synthesizes instrumental and disposing sacramental causality. After rejecting Bonaventure's notion of the sacraments as simply assisting or accompanying causes of grace, Aquinas accepts Alexander's teaching that the sacraments directly and efficiently cause the sacramental character as well as a certain "decoration" of the soul, while acting as efficient disposing causes of sanctifying grace. Such disposing activity is really indistinct from the direct infusion of the sacramental character and soul's decoration, for these two modifications of the soul are precisely what prepare us for the exclusively divine infusion of grace. Any direct or perfecting efficient causality of grace by the sacraments is clearly excluded.²⁹ Like Christ's humanity, the sacraments thus remain only indirectly related and extrinsic to sanctifying grace. Not even Aquinas's realist language about the efficacy of baptism allows us to make an exception. He describes baptism as taking away all fault, destroying sin, and having a regenerative power, language clearly inspired by Scripture and

²⁶ Ibid., III, d. 19, a. 1, q. 2, ad 4; IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, q. 3, s.c. 1; d. 4, q. 2, a. 1 q. 2.

²⁷ Ibid., IV, d. 5, q. 1, a. 1: "Respondeo dicendum, quod triplex est potestas absolvendi a peccato in Baptismo. Una potestas auctoritatis; et haec solius Dei est, quia propria virtute peccata dimittit, quasi principalis causa remissionis peccati; unde tali potestate Christus, secundum quod homo, peccata remittere non poterat. Alia potestas est ministerii, quae eis competit qui sacramenta dispensant. . . . Tertia est media inter has duas, quae dicitur potestas excellentiae; et hanc Christus prae aliis habuit. Attenditur autem haec excellentia quantum ad tria. Primo quantum ad hoc quod ex merito passionis ejus Baptismus efficaciam habet unde non est melior Baptismus a meliore baptizante datus. Secundo quantum ad hoc quod Christus sine sacramento sacramentorum effectum conferre poterat quasi dominus et institutor sacramentorum; quod de aliis non est verum. Tertio quantum ad hoc quod ad invocationem nominis ejus dabatur remissio peccatorum in Baptismo in primitiva Ecclesia. Sed quia secundae rationes videntur procedere de prima potestate, ideo concedendae sunt illae, et respondendum est ad primas."

²⁸ For example, Thomas predicates the term "disposing causality" of Christ's human activity in *Scriptum super Sententiis*, III d. 19, a. 1, q. 1, c. The same text explains that Christ's *effective* operation consists of his merit and satisfaction.

²⁹ Ibid., IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4c; q. 1, ad 2 and 5; q. 4c.

the Fathers.³⁰ Yet the precise way in which baptism brings about these effects is eventually reduced to disposing causality.³¹

Thomas thus largely accepts the doctrine of Alexander of Hales, granting Avicenna an important role in his sacramental theology. But here, we should not exaggerate the function of Arabic philosophy. Thomas refuses the direct sacramental causality of sanctifying grace because of the five arguments against any mediating causality of grace given above. There is no potential form of grace already in human beings that is ready to be educed into potency. Avicenna's Platonizing Aristotelianism has little use for such potential forms, since for him, forms are infused by the universal agent intellect. Thomas thus chose Avicenna's doctrine of disposing causality because he could not arrive at the notion of the creaturely instrumental causality of sanctifying grace in a subject with a purely passive potency for such grace (*capax gratiae*), a potency that would require the instrumental causality of the infusion of a form.³² In other words, Thomas adopts Avicenna because he follows Aristotle's teaching on the origin of forms in a rather strict manner instead of applying Avicenna's doctrine of forms infused by a secondary agent, in addition to the other four reasons against creaturely mediation of grace already mentioned. Ironically, the infusion of form is precisely what Thomas proposes for the direct causality of the sacramental character by the sacraments, following the teaching of Alexander of Hales.³³ Thus, Aquinas did manage to make a striking exception to an overly strict Aristotelian approach to form. But St. Augustine's authority and the notion of grace as created *ex nihilo* keep Thomas from making a similar exception for grace. The Avicennian model is accepted, yet was of itself incapable of determining Thomas's decision to exclude perfecting instrumental efficient causality from the sacraments (Aquinas's mature doctrine), an option that Aquinas's version of the Avicennian model itself presents, as is clear in the central *Sentences* article on sacramental efficacy.³⁴ In other words, having rejected Avicenna's notion of a universal agent

³⁰ Ibid., IV, d. 3, q. 3, q1a. 3, ad 1; d. 4, q. 2, c.; and q1a. 1, ad 3; d. 4, q. 2, a. 3, q1a. 1, ad 1; d. 4, q. 3, a. 3, q1a. 1, ad 1.

³¹ Ibid., IV, d. 18, q. 1, a. 3, q1a. 1, ad 2.

³² Ibid., I, d. 14, q. 3, c.; III, 3.1.1, q1a. 2, c.; IV, 6.1.2, q1a. 3, ad 2.

³³ Ibid., IV, d. 4, q. 1, a. 4, q1a. 1, ad 2; Michel, "Sacraments," 578–579; Jean-Philippe Revel, *Traité des sacrements I, Baptême et sacramentalité: 2. Don et réception de la grâce baptismale* (Paris; Cerf, 2005), 92–93.

³⁴ Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis*, IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, c.: "Causa efficiens dupliciter potest dividi. Uno modo ex parte effectus; scilicet in disponentem, quae causat dispositionem ad formam ultimam; et perficientem, quae inducit ultimam perfectionem . . . actio instrumenti quandoque pertingit ad ultimam perfectionem, quam principale agens inducit aliquando autem non; semper tamen pertingit ad aliquod

intellect that alone is capable of perfecting efficient causality, there is no reason in Aquinas's version of Avicennian causality to opt for the disposing efficacy of the sacraments instead of their perfecting causality. It is because of Aristotle, Augustine, and a univocal approach to the biblical term "creation" that Thomas chooses disposing causality. No other alternative seems to be on the horizon, especially since Bonaventure's second probable solution is rejected for reducing the sacraments of the new law to pure signs, thus making them indistinguishable from the rites of the old law.³⁵

Chauvet thus overestimates Avicenna's influence in Aquinas by granting the Arabian philosopher a determining role in the latter's early sacramental doctrine. Citing Dondaine's fine article on Avicenna's role in thirteenth-century sacramental theology, Chauvet maintains that "the innovation in the *Summa* in this matter is that 'St. Thomas abandons the Avicennian distinction in causality in favor of that of Aristotle and Averroes.'"³⁶ In fact, the *Summa* could easily be interpreted as a switch from one type of Avicennian cause (disposing) to another (perfecting). Second, Dondaine raises the phrase quoted by Chauvet in order to demonstrate that such an interpretation of the evolution in Aquinas's sacramental doctrine is "too easy," for it "misunderstands the soul of this theologian's mode of procedure." The latter is none other than "to receive something from the philosophical disciplines for the greater manifestation of those things which are handed on in this (theological science)."³⁷ In other words, the purpose of Dondaine's essay is to disprove the notion that Thomas's theology essentially operates by fitting theological doctrines into philosophical categories. He proceeds to show that, already in the fourth book of the *Sentences*, Thomas synthesizes the Avicennian model with the notion of instrumental causality that he found in Aristotle and Averroes.³⁸ Dondaine's interpretation fits perfectly with our conclusions on the teaching of *Super Sententiis* IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, where Thomas constantly balances and synthesizes disposing and instrumental causality. The "one stroke" to which Chauvet attributes the evolution in Aquinas's thought between the *Sentences* and the *Summa*, which is the substitution

ultra id quod competit sibi secundum suam naturam, sive illud sit ultima forma, sive dispositio, alias non ageret ut instrumentum."

³⁵ Like his early doctrine of Christological efficacy (see note 24 above), Thomas's early doctrine of sacramental efficacy is heavily influenced by his contemporaries, most notably Alexander of Hales.

³⁶ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 18.

³⁷ Dondaine, "A propos d'Avicenne," 441.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 450 note 3: "Son livre IV des *Sentences* offre déjà les éléments d'une théorie des causes efficientes de type nettement aristotélicien, c'est à dire centrée sur la communication du mouvement à partir d'un premier moteur."

of Avicenna with Aristotle and Averroes, does not exist in Thomas's works. He never broke with Avicenna, and he never developed a pre-Aristotelian sacramental theology. The "Aristotelian distinction" between a principal moving cause and the instrumental agent that is a moved mover that allowed Thomas "to discover a means of explaining the communication between two agents with one subordinated to the other"³⁹ is already clearly present in the *Sentences*.⁴⁰ The innovation in the *Summa* is really Thomas's innovation in the *Sentences*.

Yet philosophy will play a crucial role in Aquinas's evolution, though in a way quite different from the one that Chauvet proposes. A proper grasp of Aquinas's evolving sacramental doctrine will demand the recognition of a development in his understanding of instrumental causality, which *begins* with a fairly strict Aristotelian approach and proceeds to an original philosophy. Aquinas's scattered comments on the metaphysics of instrumental causality in the *Sentences* reveal at least two considerable difficulties. First Aquinas tends to follow Aristotle in denying an action can be properly (or at all) attributed to its instrumental cause.⁴¹ Second, he seems to struggle to grasp how an instrument truly shares in the operating power of the principal cause. He uses the language of instruments participating in the principal agent's power only once in this early work, yet in such a way that he seems to eventually deny the ontological nature of such participation.⁴² Instruments play a role in certain effects, yet Thomas's language suggests that they are almost causes acting alongside the primary agent. As a general rule, the actions of the primary and instrumental causes are fully individuated and separate because they proceed from distinct forms or intrinsic principles of operation, even though the instrument's intrinsic form is only a basis for an instrumental activity that exceeds that form's operating capacities.⁴³ This Aristotelian doctrine even excludes the unity of Christ's human actions with the divine operation, even when he

³⁹ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 18.

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, c.: "Agens enim principale est primum movens, agens autem instrumentale est movens motum."

⁴¹ Ibid., IV, d. 5, q. 2, a. 2, sol. 2, ad 1; d. 8, q. 2, a. 3, ad 1; d. 44, q. 1, a. 2, sol. 1, ad 3.

⁴² Ibid., III, d. 18, a. 1, ad 1: "Humana actio ipsius Christi participabat aliquid de perfectione divina, sicut intellectus ejus aliud eminentius intelligebat ex virtute divini intellectus sibi in persona conjuncti." A true participation of Christ's humanity in the divine power is quite absent in the following passages: Ibid., III, d. 18, q. 1 ad 5; IV, d. 48 q. 2 a. 5 exposito.

⁴³ Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, III, d. 18, a. 1, c.: "Quia ad diversitatem causarum sequitur diversitas in effectibus. Causa autem actionis est species, ut dicitur in 3 *Physic.*: quia unumquodque agit ratione formae alicujus quam habet; et ideo ubi sunt diversae formae, sunt etiam diversae actiones."

acts as an instrument of the Trinity, placing Aquinas in explicit opposition to St. John Damascene.⁴⁴ The treatment of instrumental causes is dominated by Aristotelian analogies between strictly finite agents such as a human lord and his servant or a human artist and his tool.⁴⁵ The *Sentences* notion of instrumental causes hardly seems to integrate the analogous nature of divine and finite agents, so that the operating capacities of instruments as instruments remain quite limited.

Chauvet's claim that Aquinas's sacramental doctrine is detached from history and develops mostly because of an exchange of philosophical models also turns our attention to the function of Sacred Scripture in Thomas's thought. It is very striking that in the *Sentences* all of Thomas's arguments for his doctrine of sacramental causality remain unrelated to Scripture. In the key articles on the impossibility of created efficient causes of grace and sacramental efficacy discussed above, biblical citations abound in "on the contrary," a section often reserved for authorities. Yet the bodies of these articles and answers to objections that lay out Thomas's position have little or no relation to these citations.⁴⁶ The only biblical argument for the exclusively divine causality of grace depends on a univocal interpretation of Paul's teaching on the Christian disciple as a new creation. The central article on sacramental efficacy (IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4) never cites or alludes to Scripture in the body of the text or responses to objections, while Aristotle is cited no less than six times. The articles on the efficacy of baptism do seem to integrate Scripture into Thomas's argumentation, yet this baptismal doctrine is eventually placed within the strict requirements of the previous conclusions that firmly separate instrumental causality and the causality of grace, thus once again disconnecting Thomas's thought from the Bible.⁴⁷ Scripture's minimal function in Aquinas's early teachings on sacramental (and Christological) efficacy will become all the more striking as we contrast it to an evermore biblical approach in his subsequent career.

Let us conclude this section with a final note on the disposing causality of Christ's humanity and the sacraments. These causes are analogous, yet their effects are so separate that we seem to be left with a certain lingering univocity. The sacraments as instrumental causes of the Trinity effect one spiritual change and the Triune God alone brings about another.⁴⁸ Aristotle (who seems to be omnipresent in Aquinas's early

⁴⁴ Ibid., III, d. 18, q. 1, c., and ad 4.

⁴⁵ Ibid., II, d. 40, q. 1, a. 4, ad 4; IV, d. 44, q. 1, a. 2, q. 1, ad 3.

⁴⁶ Ibid., I, d. 14, q. 3; III, d. 18, a. 6, s.c. 1; III, d. 19, a. 1, c.; IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4.

⁴⁷ Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, IV, d. 18, q. 1, a. 3, q. 1, ad 2.

⁴⁸ Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, q. 1, ad 4.

sacramental doctrine), Augustine, and (secondarily) Avicenna, seem to take absolute priority over Scripture. All of this will soon change.

III. The *De veritate*: A Transition in Thought

Shortly after completing the *Sentences*, Thomas composed the *De veritate*. Toward the end of this set of disputed questions, he returns to a consideration of the efficacy of the sacraments. In fact, his understanding of sacramental causality remains essentially unchanged, and again, there is little or no relation between his doctrine of sacramental disposing causality and Scripture.⁴⁹ However, Thomas simultaneously proposes several shifts in his understanding of grace and the relation between Christ's humanity and the sacraments that will have immense consequences for sacramental efficacy.

Thomas changes his mind on grace as created in the strict sense. Properly speaking, subsisting things are created, not forms, whether these are substantial or accidental forms. Forms are con-created, with the exception of subsisting forms like the human soul. Now grace is an accidental form, presupposing a human subject and is therefore not created in the strict sense.⁵⁰ This opens grace to the possibility of having a finite, secondary cause, unlike the act of creation in the strict sense of creating being out of nothing, which excludes all secondary causality.⁵¹ The only biblical argument against creaturely participation in the causality of grace has been eliminated by shifting from a univocal interpretation of the term "creation" in St. Paul to an analogous approach. Indeed, it was a puzzle that only metaphysics could solve, since Scripture itself simply does not tell us how to interpret creation and recreation in Paul. And yet, Thomas continues to deny a mediating causality of grace for three of the reasons already raised in the *Sentences*. First, the operations of created agents presuppose a form in the patient's potency. Second, the end (or effect) is proportioned to the first agent, so that the ultimate effect of our immediate union with God requires his immediate (that is, exclusive) causality of grace.⁵² Third,

⁴⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, in *Opera omnia* (Leonine ed.), tomus 22, vol. 3 (Rome: Editori di San Tommaso, 1976), q. 27, a. 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, q. 27, a. 3, ad 9.

⁵¹ Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 5, a. 9; *Summa theologiae* (ST) (Rome, Italy: Editiones Paulinae, 1962), I, q. 45, a. 5; I-II, q. 110, a. 2, c., and ad 3.

⁵² Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 3, ll. 214–26, 271–79. ST I-II, q. 112, a. 1, will also speak of "God alone" causing grace, while the answers to the objections (*ibid.*, ad 1–2) make it clear that Thomas really means that "God alone as principal cause" causes grace, as he affirms the direct or perfecting instrumental efficient causality of grace by Christ's humanity and the sacraments. Our interpretation of the three-fold use of "God alone" in Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 3 (ll. 220, 275, 279) as a reference to the exclusion of all instrumental causality is thus justified by the

Aquinas continues to affirm the Augustinian axiom.⁵³ Therefore, God alone causes grace, for he alone con-creates it.⁵⁴ This is why we find no unambiguous, explicit affirmation in the *De veritate* that the sacraments or Christ's humanity are direct or perfecting efficient causes of grace.

Thomas's new understanding of grace and its causality already demonstrates a weakness in Chauvet's critique. Properly speaking, God creates beings, things, or objects, not modes of being or forms. Thomas's new doctrine therefore emphasizes that grace is neither a thing nor a being nor an object. Chauvet recognizes the shift in Thomas's thinking on grace, but he seems to miss these implications.⁵⁵ Grace is that by which I attain spiritual healing or spiritual health. Grace is neither a thing nor a being, but a way of being. Grace is a "that by which," not a "that which." Perhaps a strict adherence to the Augustinian axiom could have led to the reification of grace, but Thomas's new doctrine offers a safeguard against this pitfall.

In addition, Thomas develops his Christology in the *De veritate* in a way that will affect the relationship between sacramental and Christological efficacy. First, not only does he adopt Damascene's language about Christ's humanity as the organ of the divinity, but unlike the *Sentences*, the realities expressed by the language seem to be *partially* integrated into Aquinas's thought.⁵⁶ The teaching of Damascene and the Pauline doctrine of Christ's

continuing presence of the two philosophical arguments against mediating causes, neither of which are found in the *Summa* article. Instead, they simply seem to disappear from Aquinas's mature works. I will propose a reason for this change in my discussion on the Christology of the *Summa contra Gentiles* below. Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 3, only allows a creaturely ministerial action that orders toward the reception of grace (l. 212). Christ as God diffuses grace effectively, while his human activity is described as ministerial, and not an effective infusion (ibid., ad 5). Christ's instrumental causality thus remains indistinguishable from his ministerial (moral) causality, though subsequent articles may imply a disposing efficient causality as well. See note 59 below.

⁵³ Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 3, s.c. 1; a. 4, ad 19.

⁵⁴ Thomas also offers a second argument against the strictly created status of grace, namely, that the soul's recreation presupposes a terminus (the preexisting human subject), unlike creation *ex nihilo* (Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 4, ad 15). Yet this difference between the first creation and recreation must have been obvious to Thomas and his contemporaries before, and thus seems insufficient as a major reason for the change in Aquinas's doctrine of grace. The metaphysical reflection on substances and forms as proper and improper terms, respectively, of the creative act is much more subtle, and thus qualifies as the most likely candidate for causing the doctrinal evolution.

⁵⁵ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 19.

⁵⁶ Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 4, c.; q. 29, a. 5, c.

headship gain greater prominence in Thomas's argumentation. In an article on Christ's headship as man (q. 29, a. 5), he describes Christ's activity as one of "influencing," "transmitting," and "pouring out grace,"⁵⁷ terms whose proper sense was explicitly restricted to God's efficient causality in the *Sentences*.⁵⁸ Our text seems to imply that Christ's humanity is an efficient instrumental cause of grace in a way that is well beyond the capacities of a disposing cause. Yet elsewhere, he retrieves his *Sentences* doctrine and refuses to predicate the phrase "to influence spiritually" of Christ as man.⁵⁹ The continued application of the Aristotelian principle that created causes always presuppose potential forms in the subject being acted upon, the Augustinian axiom on grace, and a persistent weakness in the general metaphysics of instrumental causality seem to keep Aquinas from fully assenting to the implications of his more patristic, biblical, and realist language. A full evolution in Christological efficacy seems to be excluded by Thomas's restriction of Christ's causality to the realm of merit.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid., q. 29, a. 4, c., and a. 5, c.

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis*, III, d. 13, q. 2, a. 1, ad 2; d. 19, a. 1, c.

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 29, a. 4, ad 17.

⁶⁰ Ibid., q. 29, a. 4, ad 9: "Ad nonum dicendum, quod Christus, secundum quod homo, mediator est inter Deum et homines, ut dicitur 1 Tim. 2:5. Unde, sicut Deus dupliciter nos iustificare dicitur, principaliter scilicet per actionem suam, in quantum est causa efficiens nostrae salutis, et etiam per operationem nostram in quantum est finis a nobis cognitus et amatus; ita etiam Christus, secundum quod homo, dupliciter nos iustificare dicitur. Uno modo secundum suam actionem, in quantum nobis meruit et pro nobis satisfecit; et quantum ad hoc non poterat dici caput Ecclesiae ante incarnationem. Alio modo per operationem nostram in ipsum secundum quod dicimur per fidem eius iustificari." The text appears to offer an exclusive list of Jesus' supernatural efficacy as man. Thomas appears to give a summary of his doctrine of the divine and Christological causes of justification. After calling God the efficient cause of salvation, he only mentions merit and satisfaction to describe Christ's human role in our justification. Ad 17 again implies the exclusion of the efficient causality of grace from Christ's humanity. The fourth objection in Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 29, a. 5, restricts the activity of Christ's headship as man to the realm of merit, a claim that Thomas does not deny in his response. Such a restriction is in perfect agreement with the continuing exclusion of mediating efficient causes of grace in Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 3, as discussed above. Thomas's Christology in the *De veritate* is extremely tricky and even misleading. Without the qualifications offered in q. 27, a. 3, c., and q. 29, a. 4, ad 9 and 17, Aquinas's description of the efficacy of Christ's humanity (especially in q. 29, a. 4, c., and a. 5) seems to lead inevitably to the conclusion that Jesus as man is an instrumental perfecting efficient cause of grace. This seems to explain why Jean-Pierre Torrell mistakenly attributes a proper instrumental (efficient) causality of grace to Christ as man in the *De veritate*. See Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, *Le Verbe Incarné en ses Mystères*, vol. 4 (Paris: Cerf, 2005), 337; idem, *Saint Thomas d'Aquin, maître spirituel, Initiation 2* (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 169, note 16. In fact, we will not find

This new *language* about Christ's activity has certain consequences for sacramental efficacy, for Aquinas begins to connect these two kinds of causes in a new way. In question 27, article 4, Thomas begins his explanation of the instrumental salvific efficacy of the sacraments (which q. 27, a. 7, will firmly limit to a disposing causality) by expounding on the efficacy of Christ's humanity. Following Damascene, he speaks of Christ as an instrumental cause with reference to the leper who is healed by Jesus' touch (Luke 5, Matthew 8), an act that is, in turn, a sign of his spiritual healing activity. As Christ's human visible nature shared in the power of the divinity to effect physical changes, so the same human nature shares in that power to effect spiritual changes. Aquinas suggests that this is why the Book of Revelation teaches that the blood of Christ has the power to cleanse from sin (1:5). Romans 3:5 offers the same doctrine, teaching us that we are justified in his blood. But now the question is: How is this power of Christ's humanity applied to us? The answer is twofold. The power is applied to us spiritually through faith and corporeally through the sacrament. The reason for this distinction is Christ himself, who was spirit and body. Christ healed through his touch, through the sensible, and he wished to act in this way for all time. The sacraments allow us to receive and perceive his spiritual activity.⁶¹ The corporeal application of Christ's power through the sacraments seems to be for the sake of our perception of Jesus' activity. Yet this does not mean that the sacraments' function is just epistemological, since article 7 will continue the *Sentences* teaching of their disposing efficient causality. Rather, Aquinas means to say that Christ's instrumental causality is corporeally applied to whoever receives the sacraments, and it is spiritually applied to whoever receives the sacraments with faith.⁶²

an unambiguous affirmation of such a causality until the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Here, I am in agreement with Tschipke's interpretation of Christological efficacy in the *De veritate* and the *Summa contra Gentiles*. Tschipke, *Die Menschheit Christi*, 127–33.

⁶¹ Thomas uses the term *percipere*, which can mean “to receive” or “to observe.”

⁶² Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 4, c.: “Dicendum est ergo, quod nec sacramentum nec aliqua creatura potest gratiam dare per modum per se agentis, quia hoc solius virtutis divinae est, ut ex praecedenti art. patet. Sed sacramenta ad gratiam operantur instrumentaliter; quod sic patet. Damascenus in libro III dicit quod humana natura in Christo erat velut quoddam organum divinitatis; et ideo humana natura aliquid communicabat in operatione virtutis divinae, sicut quod Christus tangendo leprosum mundavit; sic enim ipse tactus Christi causabat instrumentaliter salutem leprosi. Sicut autem humana natura in Christo communicabat ad effectus divinae virtutis instrumentaliter in corporalibus effectibus, ita in spiritualibus; unde sanguis Christi pro nobis effusus habuit vim ablutivam peccatorum; Apoc. 1:5: ‘lavavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo’; et Rom. 3:24: ‘iustificati . . . in sanguine ipsius.’ Et sic humanitas Christi est instrumentalis causa iustificationis; quae quidem causa

While this sacramental doctrine still remains far from Aquinas's mature teaching, he takes an important step toward the perfecting instrumental causality of the sacraments, to their direct participation in effecting sanctifying grace. Following St. John Damascene and biblical language, Thomas points to what we might call the logic of the Incarnation. God has chosen to communicate his divine life through the finite and the sensible. He has done so through the Incarnation, and he continues to do so through the sacraments. The ultimate sign that the logic of the Incarnation continues is the Eucharist. We find a strong hint of this logic in question 27, article 4. Thomas continues his discussion of the corporeal (and spiritual) application of Christ's instrumental causality through the sacraments by invoking the Eucharist. This sacrament really contains the body of Christ in a substantial way, and therefore it applies the instrumental power of Christ's humanity and its work of justification in both spiritual and corporeal ways. Christ is spirit and body, and so is the sacrament that really contains the whole Christ. Jesus operates physically and spiritually, and so does the Eucharist. The perfect sacrament thus demonstrates an intimate ontological connection between Christ and the sacraments. Because the Eucharist closely parallels the twofold efficacy of Christ's historical humanity, it is the sacrament that perfects or consummates the other six. The hierarchy of the sacraments is the result of the degree of their participation in the power of Christ's humanity. The other six sacraments also participate in something of the instrumental power of that humanity. The Eucharist is the model sacrament whose efficacy is found in the other six sacraments to a lesser degree, mainly because Christ's presence is not as intense.⁶³ The doctrine of the Real Presence entails the principle that the whole sacramental order continues the

nobis applicatur spiritualiter per fidem, et corporaliter per sacramenta: quia humanitas Christi et spiritus et corpus est; ad hoc scilicet ut effectum sanctificationis, quae est Christi, in nobis percipiamus. Unde illud est perfectissimum sacramentum in quo corpus Christi realiter continetur, scilicet Eucharistia, et est omnium aliorum consummativum, ut Dionysius dicit in *Ecl. Hierarch.*, cap. III. Alia vero sacramenta participant aliquid de virtute illa qua humanitas Christi instrumentaliter ad iustificationem operatur, ratione cuius sanctificatus Baptismo, sanctificatus sanguine Christi dicitur ab apostolo Hebr. 10:10. Unde passio Christi in sacramentis novae legis dicitur operari. Et sic sacramenta novae legis sunt causa gratiae quasi instrumentaliter operantia ad gratiam."

⁶³ Thomas Aquinas, *Super evangelium sancti Matthaei lectura*, ed. Raphaelis Cai (Rome: Marietti, 1951), c. 26, no. 2173: "Unde illud sacramentum finis et perfectio omnium est sacramentorum. Et ratio est, quia esse quod est per essentiam, est finis et perfectio eorum quae per participationem: alia enim sacramenta Christum continent per participationem, in isto autem est Christus secundum substantiam."

causal efficacy of Christ's humanity. The Real Presence is thus a kind of bridge between sacramental efficacy and Christ's humanity.

Thomas then confirms his doctrine of a certain participation in Christ's instrumental power by the six sacraments with a reference to Hebrews 10:10: "[W]e are sanctified by the sacrifice of his body, once for all." Aquinas understands the phrase "once for all" to refer both to Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and to the application of its fruits in baptism, which can only be received once. The text also implies an important theological principle. Biblical teachings regarding the effects of one sacrament such as baptism are applied with qualification to all of the sacraments, for the sacramental order enjoys a profound unity. Thus, Hebrews 10 refers to the principle that Christ's passion operates in each of the sacraments, though in diverse ways.⁶⁴ This means that Scripture itself teaches a strong ontological connection between Christ's humanity and all of the sacraments.⁶⁵ The extent of Christ's causal efficacy will determine the *possibilities* of sacramental efficacy.

Now the *Sentences* already rooted all sacramental efficacy in Christ's humanity (which essentially means his merit). We have seen a similar restriction of Christ's human efficacy in the *De veritate*. Yet Thomas sometimes implies a certain efficient causality of Christ's humanity in this set of disputed questions (at least a disposing efficient causality). The close parallel between the instrumentality of Christ's humanity and the sacraments in question 27, article 4, is a prime example. Further on, as he discusses Christ's headship as man, Aquinas simply presumes the principle that the whole efficacy of the sacraments was in his holy humanity.⁶⁶ Sacramental efficacy is clearly dependent on the merit of Christ, yet the *De veritate* seems to go beyond the *Sentences* by also proposing the sacraments' dependency in the order of efficient causality. Our discussion above makes it clear that, despite some very intriguing language, such Christological efficiency remains strictly in the realm of disposing for grace. This problematic lays a certain groundwork for the rest of our study. The sacraments are not yet fully modeled on the hypostatic union in the early Aquinas, though the *De veritate* moves in that direction. Aquinas will also develop his notion of the relation between the hypostatic union and the sacraments, thus better enabling us to ponder Chauvet's third critique. For

⁶⁴ Aquinas found the notion of Christ's passion operating in the sacraments in Peter Lombard's *Super Rom.* 5:14 (PL 191, 1392C).

⁶⁵ Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 4, c. In many ways, Thomas's sacramental doctrine is quite close to that of Scripture, especially Romans 6. See Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 433–39.

⁶⁶ Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 29, a. 4, ad 2.

we will need to determine why the direct perfecting efficient causality of grace of Christ's humanity in Thomas's mature thought is an operation that necessarily continues in the sacraments. Our task is to determine why sacramental causality parallels Christ's causality in a profound way, for this doctrine goes beyond the conclusion that all sacramental efficacy is rooted in Christ's humanity and Passion.

At times in the *De veritate*, Christ already seems to acquire a disposing or perhaps even perfecting instrumental causality, though the doctrine is really in the midst of a transition and tension.⁶⁷ One does not yet find this transition in sacramental efficacy. Yet the new metaphysics of grace as con-created, the close intertwining of Christological and sacramental efficacy through the logic of the Incarnation, a real integration of biblical passages into Thomas's argumentation, and the theological consequences of the dogma of the Real Presence will soon bear great fruit.

IV. The *Summa contra Gentiles*: The Mature Period Begins

After completing his three-year term as master of theology at Paris, Thomas was assigned to the Dominican priory in Orvieto next to the papal palace and library. This gave him access to an incredible collection of ancient texts, including numerous patristic and conciliar documents of which most scholastics had little knowledge. Here Thomas came across a collection of citations and paraphrases of the works of St. Athanasius, St. John Chrysostom, St. Cyril of Alexandria, and the proceedings of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Aquinas thus gained perhaps the best familiarity with the two great Christological councils and the Greek Fathers of any thirteenth-century Latin scholastic.⁶⁸

An essential background evolution to the "Greek turn" in Aquinas's mature Christology seems to be a new approach to the metaphysics of instrumental causality that manifests itself in the *Contra gentiles* chapters that precede his treatises on Christ and the sacraments. First, when the primary cause acts through an instrumental cause, the whole effect is attributed to each, though in distinct ways.⁶⁹ Such a doctrine cannot be found before the *Contra gentiles*. Second, for the first time, Thomas unambiguously

⁶⁷ Again, I am in agreement with Tschipke, *Die Menschheit Christi*, 128.

⁶⁸ Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1, *The Person and His Work*, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 102–3, 115.

⁶⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Liber de veritate Catholicae fidei contra errores Infidelium seu Summa Contra Gentiles* (Rome: Marietti, 1961), III, c. 70, no. 2466: "Patet etiam quod non sic idem effectus causae naturali et divinae virtuti attribuitur quasi partim a Deo, et partim a naturali agente fiat, sed totus ab utroque secundum alium modum: sicut idem effectus totus attribuitur instrumento, et principali agenti etiam totus."

affirms the participation of instrumental causes in the power of the principal cause.⁷⁰ He thus offers us the ontological foundation for the ability of an instrumental cause to bring about a whole effect in its own proper way. The proper, if secondary, attribution of a whole effect to an instrumental cause follows from the instrument's full participation in the operation that brings about the whole effect.

Thomas develops this new metaphysics in full consideration of the transcendent Creator God who is glorified by analogous creaturely participation in his providential design, thus escaping the immanent paradigm of Aristotle that refuses any proper attributions of effects to the instrument. The absence of Aristotle's examples in key metaphysical passages on instrumental causality is noteworthy.⁷¹ Instead of scattered appropriations on Aristotle's sparse notion of instrumentality, Aquinas offers a highly developed and original doctrine of analogous causes. The context of this doctrinal evolution is important. Thomas enriched his understanding of primary/secondary and principal/instrumental causality in the framework of the most extensive treatise on providence that he ever produced (forty-six chapters in *SCG* III).⁷² More than at any other time in his life, Thomas is devoting significant attention to questions of providence, theodicy, and the relation of divine and created agents.⁷³

With the help of this new metaphysics of causality, the ambiguity that we found in Thomas's Christology in the *De veritate* is resolved. All traces of an exclusively moral, exemplar, or disposing causality disappear from Thomas's Christology.⁷⁴ Not once in the *Contra gentiles* does Aquinas describe the activity of Christ's humanity as one of disposing causality! Not once does he restrict Christ's instrumental causality to the realm of merit, satisfaction, or exemplarity! Instead, Jesus' human actions now clearly have a divine and direct salutary efficacy. This is because of the hypostatic union that imparts to Christ's human operations a certain divine efficacy. Thomas explains this doctrine by appealing to the nature of secondary agents,

⁷⁰ *SCG* III, c. 78, no. 2536; IV, c. 74, no. 4092.

⁷¹ The Stagirite is not cited at all in *SCG* III, c. 70, a crucial text. Aristotle's *Ethics* are cited in *SCG* III, c. 43, no. 2203, but not with regard to its main theme of instrumental power and efficacy.

⁷² Bernard Lonergan, SJ, has shown that Thomas's new doctrine of providence plays a key role in a development of his teaching on operating and cooperating grace. See his *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

⁷³ Torrell, *The Person and His Work*, 114–16.

⁷⁴ We should note that disposing causality retains a place in Thomas's mature metaphysics. *SCG* III, c. 147, no. 3206.

whose actions obtain a certain efficacy of the principal agent. He implies nothing other than instruments' real participation in the operating power of the principal agent. The new metaphysics of instrumental causality allows Aquinas to adopt the language of the Greek Fathers with complete serenity and confidence, instead of turning it upside down in order to reduce it to Aristotelian categories, as he did in the *Sentences* (where he was already familiar with Damascene). Such divine efficacy, he continues, explains why the operations of Christ's flesh were salutary, a clear allusion to Damascene.⁷⁵ Aquinas now appropriates the language and the thought of the last great Greek Father, having discovered that he, in fact, represents the theology of St. Cyril of Alexandria.⁷⁶

A developed philosophy of instrumental efficacy allows us to grasp the possibility of a radical creaturely participation in divine operations. The reality of such an instrumental causality is realized in and by the hypostatic union. Such a union surpasses all created unions in intensity, so it is best described by analogy with the most profound union found within creation, that of body and soul. Aquinas cites an analogy from the Athanasian Creed between the soul-body relationship and the union of Christ's two natures, not realizing that Athanasius's Logos/Sarx Christology stands in the background.⁷⁷ The soul is to the body as Christ's divinity is to his humanity. Aquinas then invokes the principle that the soul is united to the body as to an instrument, an analogy that he found in (among other places) Damascene's *On the Orthodox Faith*.⁷⁸ Since the humanity

⁷⁵ SCG IV, c. 36, no. 3748: "Humana etiam operatio Christi quandam efficaciam divinam ex unione divinitatis consequabatur, sicut actio secundarii agentis consequitur efficaciam quandam ex principali agente: et ex hoc contigit quod quaelibet eius actio vel passio fuit salubris." St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, bk. IV, c. 19.

⁷⁶ St. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Luc. 4* (PG 72, 552b), cited in Thomas Aquinas, *Catena Aurea in quatuor Evangelia Expositio in Lucam* (Rome: Marietti, 1953) c. 4, lectio 9: "Quamvis autem ut Deus potuisset omnes verbo pellere morbos, tamen tangit eos; ostendens propriam carnem efficacem ad praestanda remedia; nam caro Dei erat: sicut enim ignis appositus vasi aeneo, imprimit ei propriae caliditatis effectum, sic omnipotens Dei Verbum, cum univit sibi veraciter assumptum templum ex Virgine animatum, et intellectivum, particeps suae potestatis effectum, ei inseruit." Cf. B. Fraigneau-Julien, P.S.S., "L'efficacité de l'humanité du Christ selon saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie," *Revue Thomiste* 55 (1955): 619–20; Tschipke, *Die Menschheit Christi*, 41–54.

⁷⁷ In fact, the Creed's author appears to have been a fifth-century Pseudo-Athanasius. See the editors' comments in SCG IV, c. 24, no. 3609, note 4.

⁷⁸ *Scriptum super Sententiis*, IV, d. 48 q. 2 a. 5 expos.: "Et dicendum, quod sicut Damascenus in 3 Lib., dicit, humanitas Christi est quasi divinitatis organum, sicut corpus animae." The analogy can also be found in St. Athanasius (*Contra Arianos Oratio III*),

relates to the divinity as the instrument of the body relates to the principal agent that is the soul, it follows that Christ's humanity is the instrument of his divinity. At the end of the same paragraph, Thomas cites Damascene's famous phrase about Christ's humanity as "a certain organ of the divinity," an expression that Thomas takes as a representative of "the sayings of the ancient doctors," certainly alluding to Cyril of Alexandria.⁷⁹ Thomas consistently understands the term "organ" as a synonym of "instrument," as is clear in the present text.⁸⁰ Aristotle is never cited in Aquinas's discussion of Christ's causality in the *Contra gentiles*.⁸¹ In fact, the direct source and inspiration for Thomas's first unequivocal teaching of the instrumentality of Christ's humanity, one surpassing the simple appropriation of Damascene's language, is not Aristotle but two Greek Fathers.

A powerful consequence of the hypostatic union is that by his human nature, Christ instrumentally operates that which is proper to God alone! In the *Sentences* and the *De veritate*, the phrase *sola Deo* excluded any creaturely share in the causality of grace. Aquinas now uses the same phrase to emphasize the radical elevation of Christ's instrumental operation as man through a participation in the divine power. Such activity includes purification from sin, the illumination of the soul through grace, and our introduction into eternal life.⁸² The final obstacles to the creaturely participation in the direct, efficient causality of grace have been wiped away. The three

yet it seems that Thomas did not have even mediated access to this aspect of the Alexandrian's *Logos/Sarx* Christology. Thomas also attributes this anthropology to Aristotle (SCG II, c. 73, no. 1490; ST I, q. 76, a. 5, s.c.), as is especially clear in light of note 80 below.

⁷⁹ SCG IV, c. 41, nos. 3796–97: "In omnibus autem rebus creatis nihil invenitur huic unioni tam simile sicut unio animae ad corpus. . . . Unde et propter hanc similitudinem utriusque unionis, Athanasius dicit, in symbolo quod, 'sicut anima rationalis et caro unus est homo, ita Deus et homo unus est Christus.' Sed cum anima rationalis uniatur corpori et sicut materiae et sicut instrumento, non potest esse similitudo quantum ad primum modum unionis: sic enim ex Deo et homine fieret una natura, cum materia et forma proprie naturam constituent speciei. Relinquitur ergo ut attendatur similitudo secundum quod anima unitur corpori ut instrumento. Ad quod etiam dicta antiquorum doctorum concordant, qui humanam naturam in Christo organum quoddam divinitatis posuerunt, sicut et ponitur corpus organum animae." In fact, Thomas quotes the very sentence in Damascene's major work that also gives the soul/body analogy for instrumentality.

⁸⁰ The two terms are explicitly posited as synonyms in Thomas's *Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima* II, lectio 9, no. 348; *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* V, lectio 2, ninth paragraph; ST I, q. 76, a. 5, c.

⁸¹ SCG IV, cc. 36, 41.

⁸² SCG IV, c. 41, no. 3798: "Sed humana natura in Christo assumpta est ut instrumentaliter operetur ea quae sunt operationes propriae solius Dei, sicut est mundare peccata, illuminare mentes per gratiam, et introducere in perfectionem

objections that Thomas himself raised against such participation in the *De veritate* disappear. Thomas does not even seem to sense the need to deal with them directly. The union of Christ's two natures in his single divine person is so intimate that his human operations truly share in the power of the divinity, so that supernatural power truly "goes out" of his body (Lk 6:19), a truth made intelligible to us by the philosophy of instrumental causes fully subordinated to, dependent on, and participating in the power of the Triune principal cause.⁸³ Ephesus and Chalcedon, the Greek Fathers and Aquinas's original metaphysical reflections on form as con-created and instrumentality are the three pillars on which his mature doctrine of creation's real participation in its healing by grace rests. The two great Christological councils provide the dogmatic certitude, the Fathers a proper theological grasp of the council's meaning, and metaphysics allows our frail minds to grasp the possibility and intelligibility of the Triune God elevating created instruments in such a radical way so that they become the means by which God con-creates grace in us.

Aquinas's patristic meditation on the person of Christ clashes with Chauvet's proposal that the notion of instrumental causality is rooted in a mistaken philosophy that begins with Plato's misunderstanding of the nature of love. Thomas's doctrine of the instrumental causality of grace begins with a new meditation guided by the Greek Fathers on the person of Christ and the miraculous healings he accomplishes. His first concern is not the production of grace. Rather, Aquinas first applies the language of instrumentality to the Word Incarnate to express the reality of who Jesus is. The term "instrument" helps to describe the profound union of his humanity and divinity. Certainly, Christ's supernatural causal activity in his humanity naturally follows. Christ's operation brings about natural and spiritual healing, effects spiritual health or a way of being with God. Yet such efficacy is only attributed to Christ because of the intimate nature of the hypostatic union.⁸⁴

vitalis aeternae. Comparatur igitur humana natura Christi ad Deum sicut instrumentum proprium et coniunctum, ut manus ad animam."

⁸³ For a recent magisterial appropriation of this doctrine for Christological and sacramental efficacy, see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1115–16.

⁸⁴ In the *SCG*, Thomas prefers the language of Christ operating or causing salvation rather than causing or infusing grace (*SCG* IV, c. 56, nos. 3962, 3965), though the two notions are really inseparable. Grace leads to salvation, and salvation essentially consists of life with God made possible by grace. Yet the *SCG* does not include a chapter on Christ's headship, a theme that provides an ideal platform for the notion of the infusion of grace. In the *Summa* question on Christ's headship (III, q. 8), Thomas attributes to Christ the "power of outpouring [*influenti*] grace" (a. 1, c.). Furthermore, Christ "influences the soul" (a. 2, c.)

Even Thomas's transition from a meditation on Christ's humanity as an instrument to Christ's causal activity and thus a certain production of grace escapes Chauvet's critique. The French theologian proposes that the doctrine was a mistake at its Platonic beginning, for one lover does not produce the other. Yet this presumes that we are dealing with two lovers of the same kind, with two created lovers. "The lover . . . does not produce the beloved."⁸⁵ But the divine lover and the beloved disciple are on two very different ontological planes. The divine lover has to create me in love.

Yet should or must this act of creation be conceived as one of production? With Heidegger, Chauvet insists that this takes us into the realm of "onto-theology."⁸⁶ Are we not imposing a notion of human production onto an utterly mysterious divine act, thus manifesting a hidden will-to-power? How can sacred theology resolve this dilemma? Theology's primary source of wisdom is the divine revelation that is transmitted through Scripture (its formal object).⁸⁷ Scripture transmits divine revelation, which is the rule of faith (*regula fidei*).⁸⁸ Thus, the ultimate resolution to our question must be sought in the biblical text.

Let us turn to the Book of Wisdom for such a response. In Wisdom 7:22, the sage offers a praise of Wisdom as *hè pantôn technitis*. *Technites* refers to an able worker, an expert artisan. Wisdom 13:1–5 will apply this attribute to the divine author of the universe. *Pantôn* refers to all existing beings.⁸⁹ In Wisdom 8:6a, the sage speaks of the *phronèsis* required for all human art. The term designates industrious wisdom, technical or artistic competence. The text thus recalls the practical wisdom of artisans, as well as the industrious woman of Proverbs 31:10–31. Wisdom 8:6b proceeds to attribute this trait to Wisdom. Thus, existing beings bear the mark of an incomparable technique (*technitis*). The term emphasizes a consum-

and is the source of "the outflow of grace" (a. 6, c.). This refers to the same reality as the infusion of the form of grace.

⁸⁵ Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 24.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 27. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, 60–66; idem, *Nietzsche II*, GA 6.2 (Pfullingen, Germany: Neske, 1989), 399–420, esp. 414; cf. Hemming, *Heidegger's Atheism*, 183–84.

⁸⁷ ST II–II, q. 1, a. 1.

⁸⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *In librum Beati de Divinis Nominibus Exposito* (Rome: Marietti, 1950), c. 1, lectio 1, nos. 6–13; c. 2, lectio 1, no. 125; ST II–II, q. 1, a. 9, ad 9; a. 10, ad 1. The medieval understanding of Scripture as the rule of faith remains far from the Protestant Reformer's *Sola Scriptura*. See Yves Congar, *La Tradition et les traditions*, vol. 1 (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1960), 146–49.

⁸⁹ C. Larcher, OP, *Le Livre de la Sagesse ou La Sagesse de Salomon*, vol. 2 (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1984–1985), 478–79.

mated art. The realizations of “artist” Wisdom unceasingly follow upon one another.⁹⁰ The author thus begins with a human skill, a perfection of human artistic faculties, and proceeds to attribute it in an even higher mode (analogously) to creative Wisdom. In Wisdom 9:1, the sage shows the influential role of Genesis 1 for his doctrine of creation. The Lord has made the universe by his Word, *en logōi sou*. *En* has an instrumental value, so that the Word is the instrument by which God creates. In Wisdom 9:2, the instrument is no longer the Word but Wisdom, thus identifying the two. By Wisdom, the Lord *kataskueusas*, he “equips, constructs, or constitutes.” The term can also be translated as “fashions, creates.”⁹¹ In Wisdom 11:24, the sage maintains that God loves all creatures and that creation was a work of love. God hates nothing of that which he “equips, constructs, or constitutes” (*kataskueusas*). The verb’s profane meaning is “to fabricate, to fashion,” expressing the idea of an artist who freely realizes his work. While the teaching is implied in Genesis 1, this verse is the only passage in the entire Old Testament that explicitly affirms love as the motive of God’s creative work, a work that is analogous to human artistic production.⁹²

In other words, precisely when Scripture most explicitly connects the language of the Creator God to the notion of artistic production do we find the clearest teaching that creation is an act of divine love. Wisdom 7–11 offers find a striking response to Chauvet’s opposition between love and production. We could not be further from the exclusion of the notion of production from God’s love relationship with his creatures. The production of grace or recreation follows (in an analogous way) the logic of the first creation, which God *produced* in infinite love. Heidegger has justly criticized modern theologies that posit a God who is the cause of himself (*causa sui*), a divine being whose creative activity is essentially that of a perfect human clockmaker, a God who is different from us by degree. Heidegger points out the possible pitfalls of an all-too-univocal understanding of creation and that the language found in the Book of Wisdom must be grasped analogously. Yet after the Book of Wisdom, a philosophical exclusion of all production language from divine activity is no longer possible. Philosophy offers us tools to understand divine revelation. It cannot provide theology with all of its fundamental categories, for then philosophy would become the rule of faith. Chauvet does not

⁹⁰ Ibid., 526–27.

⁹¹ Ibid., 565–66.

⁹² Larcher, *Le Livre de la Sagesse*, vol. 3, 693. Yet the Book of Wisdom does not simply adopt Platonic philosophy. Rather, the Greek notion of goodness is already transformed into a Jewish understanding of divine love. Ibid., 694.

consider the biblical background to Aquinas's causal language. In fact, his critique of causality in Aquinas and other classical thinkers in chapter 1 of *Symbol and Sacrament* never mentions Scripture.

One can also consider this opposition of production language and love in light of the doctrine of grace. I am only raised to the divine life and initiated into the life of charity by Christ's gift of himself on the Cross and the application of its fruits to me. I do not enter a relationship with the Triune God with my own charity. Rather, God begins this relationship by infusing a similitude of himself into me through the power of Christ's mysteries. Chauvet forgets that the lovers are analogous and not univocal. Finally, an understanding of a share in the divine life or grace as a kind of technical production in the modern, mechanistic sense is a crude univocal interpretation of an analogous divine activity, a classic example of reading modern philosophical categories into a medieval text.

Scripture itself thus legitimates the theological appropriation of the notion of artistic production as found in Aquinas, especially as he continues to deepen the connection between Christ's causality and that of the sacraments in the *Contra gentiles*. The treatise on the sacraments opens with the statement that Christ's death, the universal cause of salvation, must be applied to individual human beings to have its effect. Christ's historical actions two thousand years ago are universal causes of grace, for every one of his actions are salutary. Yet Christ has ascended to heaven and is no longer sensibly present for us to encounter his healing, as he was to lepers and repentant sinners during his lifetime. Thus, like Jesus' contemporaries, we have access through faith, but unlike his contemporaries, we are in need of other sensible means to efficaciously encounter Christ, which is precisely what the sacraments do.⁹³ In the *De veritate*, this application by the sacraments was called corporeal and spiritual. Sacramental activity was essentially reduced to a sensible manifestation of a spiritual effect and a spiritual disposition for the divine infusion of sanctifying grace. No such restriction is found in the *Contra gentiles*. The sacraments are instruments of the Word, incarnate and suffering, and are particular causes that are applied to their operation by the principal cause so that they may apply the effect of the universal cause of grace.⁹⁴ The language of "application to opera-

⁹³ Joseph Fitzmyer uses very similar language to describe the function of baptism in Romans 6 (ibid., 433-9)

⁹⁴ SCG IV, c. 56, no. 3962: "Mors Christi est quasi universalis causa humanae salutis; universalem autem causam oportet applicari ad unumquemque effectum: necessarium fuit exhiberi hominibus quaedam remedia per quae eis beneficium mortis Christi quodammodo coniungeretur. Huiusmodi autem esse dicuntur Ecclesiae sacramenta." Ibid., no. 3965: "Nec est inconveniens quod per res visibiles et

tion" points to Aristotle's influence, though we are again dealing with a vision of causality that goes much further than Greek philosophy ever did. The application of the sacraments to their activity by the primary cause that is the Trinity enables them to operate "spiritual health" or "spiritual salvation." Salvation is "made" through Christ, the Word incarnate and suffering, who "operates our salvation."⁹⁵ We obtain this salvation through the sacraments, which are salutary by his power.⁹⁶ For the first time, Thomas acknowledges a direct tie between sacramental causality and the effect of sanctifying grace. As with his teaching on the efficacy of Christ's humanity, Aquinas never speaks of sacramental causality as disposing efficacy in the *Contra gentiles*. The doctrinal evolution from the *Sentences* (IV, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4) and the *De veritate* (q. 27, a. 7) is undeniable.⁹⁷ The causality is clearly analogous. The sacraments produce or cause salvation in human beings, which can only mean that they produce grace. Any difficulties about the infusion of a form by the mediation of an instrumental cause have disappeared.

The shift in Christology was a necessary prelude for the change in sacramental efficacy. As Christ's instruments, the sacraments are particular causes of his universal causality of salvation. The efficacy of the sacraments

corporales spiritualis salus ministretur: quia huiusmodi visibilia sunt quasi quaedam instrumenta Dei incarnati et passi; instrumentum autem non operatur ex virtute suae naturae, sed ex virtute principalis agentis, a quo applicatur ad operandum. Sic igitur et huiusmodi res visibiles salutem spiritualem operantur, non ex proprietate suae naturae, sed ex institutione ipsius Christi, ex qua virtutem instrumentalem consequuntur."

⁹⁵ SCG IV, c. 57, no. 3966: "Sed Verbum incarnatum et passum est salutem huiusmodi operatum . . . sacramenta autem quae Christ passionem consequuntur, alia esse oportet ut salutem hominibus exhibeant, et non solum significando demonstrant."

⁹⁶ SCG IV, c. 77, no. 4115: "Non igitur militia ministrorum impedit quin fideles salutem per sacramenta consequantur a Christo." Ibid., no. 4116: "Ut ergo spem nostrae salutis in Christo ponamus, qui est Deus et homo, confitendum est quod sacramenta sunt salutaria ex virtute Christi."

⁹⁷ That there is such an evolution in Aquinas's thought is generally admitted by Thomists and historians. However, disagreement remains over the details. For example, Revel places this doctrinal shift in the *Summa theologiae*, but not before (Revel, *Traité des sacrements*, 96–101). His main argument is the continuing presence of disposing sacramental causality in the *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, which Aquinas disputed after writing the SCG. Yet the single passage he refers to for this argument is extremely brief (*De potentia*, q. 3, a. 4, ad 8: "Sacramenta iustificare dicantur instrumentaliter et dispositive"), and should be interpreted in the same way that the great Thomistic commentators have understood the same expression as found in ST I, q. 45, a. 5 (see Michel, "Sacrements," 585). Revel's interpretation cannot make sense of Thomas's positive teaching in the *Contra gentiles*.

depends on the efficacy of the Incarnate Word. If the Word made flesh only disposes toward grace, only merits and prepares for grace, then the sacraments can only apply this kind of efficacy. If Christ is an instrumental cause of salvation in the unrestricted sense of direct or perfecting efficient causality, then the sacraments *can* be as well. Thomas seems convinced that the sacraments *must* be such perfecting causes because the universal cause of grace has ascended into heaven, and grace needs to be applied to us by particular causes. Divine mercy and the logic of the Incarnation stand behind this first major argument for the new status of the sacraments in the economy of salvation. We will look for other reasons in the *Summa theologiae*.

Chauvet proposes that Thomas discovered instrumental causality in Aristotle and Averroes, adopted it in place of his previous Avicennian philosophy, and therefore proceeded to his mature doctrine of sacramental causality. We have already pointed out that Thomas synthesized Aristotelian and Avicennian doctrines of causality in the *Sentences*. Furthermore, Thomas's mature doctrine of instrumental causality is quite far from Aristotle's thinking. First, Aristotle's teaching on instrumental causality is extremely sparse (like Aquinas's comments in the *Sentences*). Second, Aristotle hardly conceived of physical instruments infusing spiritual accidental forms, nor a temporary intrinsic power by which an instrument produces an effect that radically exceeds anything in proportion to its own form whenever it is moved as an instrumental cause by the primary agent.⁹⁸ If Thomas is integrating Aristotle into his Christology and Sacramentology, then he can only do so by exploding the limits of Aristotle's teaching.⁹⁹ Furthermore, the growing openness to secondary causes of the infusion of forms sounds immensely Platonic. Here one thinks not so much of Avicenna, whose universal agent intellect remains far from Aquinas, but of Proclus and the *Liber de causis*, with their rich hierarchies of secondary causes and the infusion of perfections. Yet as with Aristotle, the teaching on instrumental causality is quite sparse among these Platonists.¹⁰⁰ In the end,

⁹⁸ Thomas clearly posits such an intrinsic power for the sacraments in *ST* III, q. 62, a. 4.

⁹⁹ Mark Jordan has also pointed out that this is precisely what Aquinas does with regard to the instrumental causality of the sacraments. See his "Theology and Philosophy," *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 245–46.

¹⁰⁰ For an example of Thomas's appropriation of Platonic doctrine and its development into his own doctrine of instrumental causality, see propositions 1 and 23 of Thomas Aquinas's *Super librum de Causis Exposito*, ed. H. D. Saffrey, OP (Fribourg: Société Philosophique, 1954). We still need a precise study of the manner in which Thomas synthesized and surpassed his diverse sources of and inspirations

Aquinas's metaphysics far surpasses all of the pagan philosophers. He engaged in a significant metaphysical transition between his pagan philosophical sources and his theological doctrine, a kind of purification of concepts that had been developed by non-Christian philosophers. His philosophy of instrumental causality passed through a profound change in the *Contra gentiles* because, unlike his teaching in the *Sentences*, it fully integrated the reality of a transcendent Creator God. This was an essential, preliminary step to his mature Christology and sacramentology.¹⁰¹

There is a crucial lesson for fundamental theology in such historical considerations. The turn in Thomas's sacramentology is primarily caused by a parallel turn in his Christology, and Aquinas changed his Christology primarily because he learned to meditate with the Greek Fathers on Jesus' healing activity in the Gospels and on his hypostatic union. Thomas's mature metaphysics of instrumental causality and the metaphysical realization that grace is not created in the strict sense form a second necessary

for the notion of instrumental causality (Aristotle, Averroes, Proclus, the *Liber de Causis*, and the Greek Fathers).

¹⁰¹ This is not to say that Thomas changes his metaphysics by appropriating supernatural revelation as a source for philosophy. Thomas is rethinking philosophical doctrines in light of the reality of the transcendent Creator God who can elevate instrumental causes to a status that we simply cannot find in Aristotle. Yet for Thomas, the doctrine of the Creator God may well be philosophically accessible. Furthermore, one wonders to what extent his mature metaphysics of instrumental causality may have been accessible to the kind of Aristotelian Platonism that one finds in Aquinas's commentary on the *Liber de Causis*. The key shift in Thomas's metaphysics of causality is threefold: First, the doctrine fully integrates the reality of a first efficient cause of all beings, which was missing in the Aristotelian analogies and examples found in the *Sentences*. Second, the infusion of forms through the participation of finite causes is accepted as possible, most likely because of an adequate consideration of the first cause's transcendent power to elevate the operation of lower causes. Third, the real participation of instrumental causes in the power of the first cause is unambiguously affirmed. All three elements are intimately connected. The main point is that theology does not replace metaphysics in Aquinas. On philosophy's access to the doctrine of creation, see *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 3, a. 5, c.; and *ST I*, q. 44, aa. 1–2. For a Thomistic approach to creation as a faith-doctrine inaccessible to philosophy alone, see David Burrell, CSC's "The Challenge to Medieval Christian Philosophy: Relating Creator to Creatures," in idem, *Faith and Freedom: An Interfaith Perspective* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 129–42. I remain open to Burrell's position, though I do not find him providing convincing arguments. Perhaps historically, only Christian, Jewish, and Muslim philosophers have affirmed the doctrine of creation, yet argumentation that uses this fact to conclude that creation is strictly a faith doctrine strikes me as rather Scotistic. Aquinas was interested in the potentiality of human reason as such, and not the actual conclusions of philosophers in history.

prelude to the shift in Christology and sacraments. We are far from a theological method that would import a philosophical tool developed in complete abstraction from revelation and apply it in theology without any added qualification of the tool. On the other hand, Thomas did not simply change his mind because he discovered the Greek Fathers. His metaphysical genius was indispensable in this evolution.

The *Contra gentiles* is an important first stage of Thomas's mature doctrine. Yet the work's genre minimizes the place of authorities and thus often conceals the biblical and even patristic inspirations behind Thomas's thought. The text is still somewhat limited in its ability to point to the reasons behind the development in Thomas's sacramental doctrine. The one explicit argument in the *Contra gentiles* for the nature of sacramental efficacy is that a universal cause of grace needs to be applied to its effect by a particular cause. A full answer to the question of why Thomas changed his mind on sacramental causality will be found in the *Summa theologiae*.

V. The *Summa theologiae*: The Mature Doctrine Unfolds

Thomas fully develops and explicates his mature doctrine of sacramental causality in the *Summa theologiae*. We thus turn to two key articles in third part of the *Summa theologiae* to complete our study. Question 62, article 1, asks whether the sacraments are causes of grace. The *corpus* begins with Galatians 3:27: "However many of you have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." The passage is taken to refer to the sacraments of the new law as the means of incorporation into Christ (again applying Scripture's teaching on one sacrament to all of the sacraments). This only happens through grace. Thus, the sacraments cause grace. Thomas does not yet specify the mode of causality. His point is to show that the sacraments must be causes of grace in some way or another and that this is the explicit teaching of Sacred Scripture and therefore a certain theological doctrine.¹⁰² A glance at Thomas's *Commentary on Galatians* will help us grasp the biblical and patristic roots of his approach (we should read the *Summa* together with Thomas's biblical commentaries). The commentary tells us that Paul's expression "baptized into Christ" means being baptized into Christ's power or operation.¹⁰³ This is a fairly dry, scholastic way of referring to the patris-

¹⁰² ST III, q. 62, a. 1, c.: "Respondeo dicendum quod necesse est dicere sacramenta novae legis per aliquem modum gratiam causare. Manifestum est enim quod per sacramenta novae legis homo Christo incorporatur, sicut de baptismo dicit Apostolus, Galat. III, 'quotquot in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis.' Non autem efficitur homo membrum Christi nisi per gratiam."

¹⁰³ Thomas Aquinas, *Super epistolam ad Galatas lectura* in *Super spistolae S. Pauli lectura*, vol. 1 (Rome: Marietti, 1953), c. 3, lectio 9, no. 183 (my translation): "Vel 'in

tic doctrine of the sacraments as a participation in Christ's mysteries or salvific acts. Thomas's *Summa* article thus opens with an allusion to an entire patristic heritage supported by a strong biblical foundation. The sacraments effect a real ontological connection with Christ's saving activity. In other words, they cause grace. The question is how.

As in the *Sentences* and the *De veritate*, Thomas summarizes Bonaventure's doctrine and again rejects his second (occasionalist) approach for reducing the sacraments to mere signs, which in turn denies their status as causes. This leaves Thomas with two options: instrumental disposing causality or instrumental perfecting causality. Yet he never mentions disposing causality and, instead, immediately proceeds to the second alternative. The sacraments are direct instrumental causes of grace. He clearly means sanctifying grace, since the same passage defines the term "grace" as a participation in the divine nature.¹⁰⁴

But let us return to the striking omission. Aquinas knows that virtually all of his contemporaries favor either occasionalism or disposing causality. While Thomas's *Sentences* and its sacramental doctrine did gain an immediate influence among the Parisian masters, this simply led to the diffusion of another version of disposing causality.¹⁰⁵ His subsequent works such as the *Contra gentiles* give fairly brief attention to an explication of his mature sacramental doctrine. So why does he ignore the dominant approach to sacramental causality as he writes the *Summa theologiae*, especially since the proponents of disposing causality are closer to Thomas's mature position than the promoters of occasionalism, and thus more likely

Christo Iesu,' id est, in virtute et operatione eius. Io. 1:33: 'super quem videris spiritum descendentem, hic est qui baptizat.' Quicumque ergo istis quatuor modis *baptizati estis, Christum induistis.*"

¹⁰⁴ ST III, q. 62, a. 1, c.: "Quidam tamen dicunt quod non sunt causa gratiae aliquid operando, sed quia Deus, sacramentis adhibitis, in anima gratiam operatur. Et ponunt exemplum de illo qui, afferens denarium plumbeum, accipit centum libras ex regis ordinatione, non quod denarius ille aliquid operetur ad habendum praedictae pecuniae quantitatem; sed hoc operatur sola voluntas regis. Unde et Bernardus dicit, in quodam sermone in cena domini, 'sicut investitur canonicus per librum, abbas per baculum, episcopus per anulum, sic divisiones gratiarum diversae sunt traditae sacramentis.' Sed si quis recte consideret, iste modus non transcendit rationem signi. Nam denarius plumbeus non est nisi quoddam signum regiae ordinationis de hoc quod pecunia recipiatur ab isto. Similiter liber est quoddam signum quo designatur traditio canonicatus. Secundum hoc igitur sacramenta novae legis nihil plus essent quam signa gratiae, cum tamen ex multis Sanctorum auctoritatibus habeatur quod sacramenta novae legis non solum significant, sed causant gratiam. Et ideo aliter dicendum, quod duplex est causa agens, principalis et instrumentalis."

¹⁰⁵ Dondaine, "A propos d'Avicenne," 450–51.

to be convinced of his argument? I believe we can shed light on Thomas's logic by considering the end of the corpus in question 62, article 1, a few lines after he simply skips over disposing causality as a viable option. An instrument's effect is proportioned to the principal cause, and this is the way that the sacraments cause grace. Properly speaking, an instrument is that through which something operates. Aquinas tells us that this is the teaching of St. Paul in Titus 3:5: "Christ saved us *through* a bath of regeneration."¹⁰⁶ Thomas interprets the term "through" to refer to instrumental causality.¹⁰⁷ It is not that baptism prepares or disposes us toward regeneration. Rather, Christ's saving work is actually applied to us in or by baptism. The bath itself is a means to new life, to a new creation. Neither disposing nor occasional causality can make sense of this kind of biblical language. It is no wonder that the function of Scripture in Thomas's teaching on sacramental causality in the *Sentences* was minimal. The early Thomas followed many of his contemporaries by adopting a still unrefined metaphysics while allowing the development of his theological positions to remain fairly detached from Scripture, thus straight-jacketing the biblical texts on the sacraments. Yet after his metaphysical reflections on grace as created and on instrumental causality, as well as after his meditation on the mysteries of Christ, the hypostatic union, and the intimate connection of these mysteries enacted by the Word made flesh to the sacraments worked out in previous texts, Thomas could return to Sacred Scripture and begin to make sense of its realistic language, to see what he could not see before, and recognize the meaning behind Scripture's refusal to distinguish the efficacy of the sacraments and the beginning of life in Christ. Theology demands the constant inter-

¹⁰⁶ Emphasis added. *ST* III, q. 62, a. 1: "Principalis quidem operatur per virtutem suae formae, cui assimilatur effectus, sicut ignis suo calore calefacit. Et hoc modo non potest causare gratiam nisi Deus, quia gratia nihil est aliud quam quaedam participata similitudo divinae naturae, secundum illud II Pet. I, 'magna nobis et pretiosa promissa donavit, ut divinae simus consortes naturae.' Causa vero instrumentalis non agit per virtutem suae formae, sed solum per motum quo movetur a principali agente. Unde effectus non assimilatur instrumento, sed principali agenti, sicut lectus non assimilatur securi, sed arti quae est in mente artificis. Et hoc modo sacramenta novae legis gratiam causant, adhibentur enim ex divina ordinatione ad gratiam in eis causandam. Unde Augustinus dicit, XIX contra Faust., 'haec omnia,' scilicet sacramentalia, 'fiunt et transeunt, virtus tamen,' scilicet Dei, 'quae per ista operatur, iugiter manet.' Hoc autem proprie dicitur instrumentum, per quod aliquis operatur. Unde et Tit. III dicitur, 'salvos nos fecit per lavacrum regenerationis.'"

¹⁰⁷ The work of the exegete Ceslas Spicq, OP suggests that Thomas's interpretation of Titus 3:5 is quite faithful to the text. See his *Les Épitres Pastorales I* (Paris: Gabalda, 1969), 652–55.

play of metaphysics and Scripture, and not a one-way street between the two. In the *Sentences*, Augustine and an underdeveloped Aristotelian metaphysics of grace led Aquinas to choose disposing causality over direct or perfecting instrumental causality as the central model for sacramental efficacy. Now, Scripture is one of the primary reasons for a reversal in this choice and the exclusion of disposing causality. Thus, in addition to an original metaphysics of instrumental causality and a profoundly Greek Christology, a new, more biblical theological style and method explains Thomas's doctrinal evolution.

A second reason to exclude occasional and disposing causality in favor of (perfecting) instrumental causality is found in question 62, article 5. The question at hand is whether the sacraments of the new law have their power from Christ's passion. The first objection, citing Augustine, proposes that Christ's passion only vivifies bodies, while the eternal Word vivifies souls. Thomas responds by returning to the doctrine of instrumental causality, which is rooted in the hypostatic union. Because Christ's humanity is a conjoined instrument of the eternal Word, all of the mysteries that Christ performed in the flesh instrumentally operate for the life of the soul.¹⁰⁸ It is not just the eternal Word but his *flesh* and the mysteries enacted in and by the *flesh* that the life of the soul (justification and salvation) is operated or accomplished. In modern terms, Christ's salvific acts are sacramental. The implication here and in the article's corpus is that the sacraments apply the mysteries of Christ to us, since the overall question at hand concerns the source of the sacraments' power. In the corpus of article 5, Aquinas states that "the sacraments especially have their power from Christ's passion,"¹⁰⁹ meaning their power is not just

¹⁰⁸ *ST* III, q. 62, a. 5, ad 1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod Verbum prout erat in principio apud Deum, vivificat animas sicut agens principale, caro tamen eius, et mysteria in ea perpetrata, operantur instrumentaliter ad animae vitam. Ad vitam autem corporis non solum instrumentaliter, sed etiam per quandam exemplaritatem, ut supra dictum est."

¹⁰⁹ *ST* III, q. 62, a. 5, c.: "Sacramentum operatur ad gratiam causandam per modum instrumenti. Est autem duplex instrumentum, unum quidem separatum, ut baculus; aliud autem coniunctum, ut manus. Per instrumentum autem coniunctum movetur instrumentum separatum, sicut baculus per manum. Principalis autem causa efficiens gratiae est ipse Deus, ad quem comparatur humanitas Christi sicut instrumentum coniunctum, sacramentum autem sicut instrumentum separatum. Et ideo oportet quod virtus salutifera derivetur a divinitate Christi per eius humanitatem in ipsa sacramenta. . . . Christus liberavit nos a peccatis nostris praecipue per suam passionem, non solum efficienter et meritorie, sed etiam satisfactorie. . . . Unde manifestum est quod sacramenta Ecclesiae specialiter habent virtutem ex passione Christi, cuius virtus quodammodo nobis copulatur per susceptionem sacramentorum."

rooted in his passion, but rather in all of Christ's actions and sufferings. Thomas is pointing to this twofold patristic doctrine of the mysteries (Christ's saving actions in the flesh and the sacraments) that *all* of his contemporaries had forgotten.¹¹⁰

Now what would happen if the sacraments were not such instrumental causes, but only disposing causes? They would prepare us for Christ's action and apply his merit, but the salvific efficacy of Christ's humanity would remain essentially separate from the sacraments. In other words, the sacraments would not grant a real share in Christ's saving mysteries. Christ's humanity would act in us in a way that would remain almost indistinguishable from the primary causality exercised by the Trinity, thus becoming invisible, uncertain, and wholly unpredictable. The logic of the Incarnation, to effect and manifest grace in us through the finite and the sensible, would essentially come to an end with the Ascension.

By returning to the theme of Christ's saving mysteries in the context of his discussion of sacramental causality, Thomas points us to the heart of his teaching, which in turn demonstrates a twofold weakness in Chauvet's critique. First, it is through the instrumentality of the sacraments that I attain a real participation in the efficacy of past historical events, a spiritual contact with the power Christ's saving actions. Through the sacraments, I enter into communion with the Christ of history two thousand years ago. I am not simply connected to the power of his hypostatic union, but rather

¹¹⁰ In his doctoral dissertation, Edward Schillebeeckx, OP, emphasizes the patristic roots of Aquinas's doctrine and suggests that Thomas was the only medieval theologian who taught that the historical mysteries of Christ are really active in the sacraments. See his *L'économie sacramentelle du salut*, trans. Yvon van der Have, OSB (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004), 131–40. For the patristic doctrine of sacramental efficacy, see: St. Basil the Great, ("If there is any grace in the water, it does not come from the nature of the water, but from the Spirit's presence") *On the Holy Spirit*, c. 15, n. 35 (PG 32, 132); St. Gregory of Nyssa, ("Baptism, then, is a purification from sins, a remission of trespasses, a cause of renovation and regeneration") *On the Baptism of Christ*, n. 2 (PG 46, 580); St. Cyril of Jerusalem, ("The plain water, after the invocation of the Holy Spirit, and Christ, and the Father, acquires a power of sanctification") *Catechesis* III, n. 3 (PG 33, 429–32); St. Ambrose, ("Not all water cures, but the water which has the grace of Christ cures") *On the Sacraments*, bk. I, c. 5, n. 15; St. John Damascene, ("The Holy Spirit is present in the water") *On the Orthodox Faith*, bk. IV, c. 9. For the Christian cult as mystery in the Church Fathers, see St. Athanasius, *Oration 2 Against the Arians*, n. 42 (PG 26, 236); St. Gregory of Nazianzen, *Oration 15 on Holy Baptism* (PG 36, 364); St. John Chrysostom, *Homily 7 on 1 Corinthians* (PG 61, 55); St. Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Adoration of the Holy Spirit in Truth*, n. 3 (PG 68, 284). For a summary of these patristic doctrines, see Michel, "Sacraments," 501–10; Revel, *Traité des sacrements*, 18–25; Schillebeeckx, *L'économie sacramentelle*, 57–89.

to the power emanating from his humanity, to the “instrumental flux” that was active in the particular operations of the Jesus of history. The efficacy of his holy humanity is elevated by the divinity that is really joined to his humanity, and its power continues to work because an instrument operates according to the conditions of the principal cause.¹¹¹ The hypostatic union as a source of sacramental power is not in competition with the mysteries, for only the former makes the latter possible. Sacramental causality is conceived on the foundation of the hypostatic union and the mysteries of Christ, so that Thomas’s doctrine is not at all trapped in an ahistorical approach. It is precisely through the instrumental causality of the sacraments that we are inserted into history, into the power that proceeds through each of Christ’s actions and sufferings in the flesh. It is precisely metaphysics that enables the insertion of the sacraments into the dynamism of salvation history, a precious goal for Chauvet.

Second, Thomas never separates the causality of grace involved in the sacraments from Christ’s operations or mysteries, since the acting and suffering Christ is the conjoined instrumental cause of grace. Thomas’s mature Christology and sacramentology demand that we think the causality of grace and Christ’s mysteries together, for they are ontologically inseparable. It is precisely this connection that prevents us from turning grace into an object, a thing to be possessed. Grace is not the generic product of an invisible God but the fruit of my psychological and ontological encounter with the power of Jesus’ actions and sufferings during his earthly lifetime. If I really encounter the suffering and resurrected Christ in the sacraments, could I ever in good conscience treat the fruit of this encounter that is grace as an object to be seized?

Conclusion

While Chauvet’s critique suffers from a misreading of Aquinas, the French theologian’s creative work also has an important positive lesson for us.

¹¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Super primam epistolam ad Corinthios lectura*, c. 15, lectio 2, no. 915: “Effectus sequitur ex causis instrumentalibus secundum conditionem causae principalis.” Cf. *ST* III, q. 56, a. 1, ad 3. Here I am following Torrell’s interpretation on the nature of this spiritual contact with the historical Christ. One can therefore acknowledge that Jesus’ historical acts have reached their term, yet their instrumental power continues. See Torrell, *Le Verbe Incarné en ses Mystères*, vol. 4, *Le Christ en sa résurrection et son exaltation*, 346–63, esp. 355; idem., “La causalité salvifique de la résurrection du Christ selon Saint Thomas,” *Revue Thomiste* 96 (1996), 196–205, esp., 201, reprinted in idem., *Recherches Thomasiennes* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2000), 232–38. The end of *ST* III, q. 62, a. 5, c., which speaks of the sacraments as joining us to the power of Christ’s passion, seems to confirm this interpretation (see the citation in note 109 above).

Chauvet insists that sacramental theology's fundamental principle should be to begin its reflection with the act of the liturgical celebration itself.¹¹² What he implies is that one should not begin with a definition of the sacraments, but instead opt for a phenomenological approach, much as Heidegger did with regard to being. I would propose that Chauvet's method could bear great fruit. At the same time, one can only begin to make sense of the liturgical act if it is placed in its theological and historical context. One should begin to construct a sacramental theology by reflecting on the liturgical celebration and Scripture and Tradition together and not approach the sacred liturgy in a decontextualized manner. Otherwise, theology would separate itself from history, deny the mediated nature of the knowledge that we can gain from the liturgy, and lock itself up in an immanent present, thus falling directly into the onto-theological trap. Phenomenology is not enough, yet Chauvet demonstrates its importance.

Furthermore, I would suggest that many of Chauvet's creative insights on sacramental symbolism and efficacy could be integrated into Aquinas's vision of sacramental causality. The sacraments of the new law effect what they signify. Our participation in the power of the mysteries of Christ is signified above all, yet they signify much more. The heart of sacramental signification and efficacy is the manifestation and causality of sanctifying grace. The proper *ratio* of a sacrament of the new covenant is the signification of our sanctification and its causality. Thus, anything that is ordered toward the signification, causality, and effect of sanctification might be integrated into sacramentality in a certain way. Therefore, I see no reason to exclude the symbolization and realization of the existential transformations that Chauvet proposes as secondary elements of the sacraments of the new law, for they can share in the analogous unity of sacramental signification and efficacy that Aquinas himself has laid out.¹¹³ Thomas's definition does not claim to fully comprehend the mysterious power of the sacraments. The definition gives us the concept by which we come into intellectual contact with the reality of sacramental efficacy, yet the full reality referred to by the definition cannot be comprehended. It is precisely Aquinas's mature sacramentology with its unique attentiveness to the sacraments as signs that seems ripe for synthesis with Chauvet's speculative insights on the external efficacy of signs that gradually becomes intrinsic to the human being.¹¹⁴

¹¹² Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 15, 389.

¹¹³ *ST* III, q. 60, a. 3. The heart of Chauvet's speculative contribution on sacramental efficacy can be found in *Symbol and Sacrament*, 431–43. See also Innocent Hakizimana, "L'efficacité des sacrements chez L. M. Chauvet," *Teresianum* 55 (2004): 413–21.

¹¹⁴ For the importance of the sign aspect of the sacraments in the later Aquinas, see John Yocum, "Sacraments in Aquinas," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*,

Finally, let us glean two important lessons for the method of theology. First, Chauvet manifests the widespread tendency amongst postmodern theologians to apply philosophical concepts directly to the realm of theology, without the intermediary task of purifying those concepts. What Thomas's sacramentology and Christology teach us is that even the best philosophical ideas sometimes demand radical revision before they can be fruitfully applied in sacred doctrine. The notion that Aquinas essentially synthesized the Bible and Aristotle or other non-Christian philosophers remains widespread. However, it turns out to be simplistic and quite inaccurate. Thomas's Aristotle is all too Christian even before the metaphysical principles are applied to his reflection on Sacred Scripture that we call faith seeking understanding.¹¹⁵

Second, Aquinas's evolution in thought demonstrates the centrality of the Fathers, and especially the Greek Fathers, in his mature doctrine. Their influence on Aquinas's mature Christology and sacramental theology seems to be much greater than Aristotle's. The lesson for us is that the theological appropriation of contemporary philosophical tools must be combined with the work of *ressourcement*, a rich reappropriation of the Fathers of the Church. Aquinas's notions of Christological and sacramental efficacy are deeply rooted in these sources, even if the patristic nature of his sacramental theology often remains implicit. It seems that the task of sacramental theology today is to seek a new synthesis of Scripture, the councils, the Fathers, and Aquinas, all the while selectively appropriating tools from the wealth of philosophical methods and concepts that phenomenology and Heidegger have to offer. Such an endeavor would make us worthy disciples of Aquinas. N.V

eds. Thomas Weinandy, Daniel Keating, and John Yocum (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 160–64.

¹¹⁵ Serge-Thomas Bonino, OP, has recently pointed to Thomas's manner of appropriating philosophy for the work of theology. This task is always for the sake of enlightening the content of revelation and involves the critical appropriation of philosophical tools from multiple sources. See his "Être Thomiste," in *Thomistes ou de l'actualité de saint Thomas d'Aquin*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino (Paris: Paroles et Silences, 2003), 21.