

The Sacraments as Causes of Sanctification

REGINALD M. LYNCH, O.P.

St. Patrick Church

Columbus, OH

IN THE COURSE of the twentieth century, many areas of catholic life and thought were reconceptualized, and the Church experienced a great deal of upheaval. Of course this affected not only the life of the Church in its practical dimensions, but the conceptual world of theology as well. It is well known that one of the areas in which this was felt most keenly was the liturgy. Following the Second World War, a great deal of theological reflection focused on liturgical experience, and the connections between sacramentality, Church and culture were of great interest to many emerging theologians. Trends within the *ressourcement* movement produced a renewed understanding of the history of liturgical practice and a heightened awareness of the broader anthropological and cosmological dimensions of the liturgy. These trends were accompanied by a reduced emphasis on the shop-worn speculative categories associated with manualism and some strands of neo-Thomism.¹

In the second half of the twentieth century, certain new trends in speculative theology arose that tended to view the sacraments from a postcausal perspective. Thinkers such as Karl Rahner and Louis-Marie Chauvet favored an approach to the sacraments that was driven more

¹ See Philip McShane, "On the Causality of the Sacraments," *Theological Studies* 24 (1963): 433–34; Bernard Leeming, "Recent Trends in Sacramental Theology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 23 (1956): 195–217. Both of these articles provide helpful insights into the state of this question at the midpoint of the twentieth century.

by the categories of sign and symbolism than the concept of causality.² While the questions raised by these approaches cannot be adequately addressed here, this article will expose the historical importance of the subject of sacramental causality, calling attention to those perennial theological questions that gave rise to debates over sacramental causality during the scholastic and modern periods. The Church has consistently affirmed that the sacraments confer the grace that they signify; therefore the question of the *way in which* the sacraments of the New Law confer this grace must be of enduring theological interest.

This article will examine the concept of causality in relation to the sacraments as instruments of sanctification. Because of the immense historical breadth of this subject, it will of course be impossible to offer an exhaustive survey of the entire subject here. This essay will focus on those aspects of historical and contemporary theology that can contextualize the Thomistic approach to this subject. To this end, we will begin with the reception of Augustinian sacramental doctrine during the Middle Ages, exploring the ways in which various scholastic thinkers appropriated this common Augustinian inheritance; we will then examine the historical role of Aquinas's teaching in comparison with a variety of alternative views, concluding with the fate of sacramental causality in twentieth-century theology, paying particular attention to influence of Odo Casel and Edward Schillebeeckx. While an independent defense of Aquinas's teaching cannot be undertaken here, this study intends to present the cogency of his approach in light of the historical sources and the issues which concerned Aquinas himself and to which later commentators responded; further, we hope to demonstrate that the Thomistic approach is a viable—even an attractive—response to a set of perennial theological questions that present themselves even in our own day.

² For a summary of Rahner's thought on this subject, see Karl Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 3rd ed., trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 24–40. Chauvet's approach to this issue relies heavily on Heidegger's ontotheological critique, which Chauvet sees as characteristic of most kinds of classical sacramental theology, Thomist or no. See Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence*, trans. Patrick Madigan and Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 7–45.

Augustine and the Victorines

Beginning in the early middle ages, theories concerning the causality of the sacraments were frequently proposed as interpretations of Augustine's sacramental doctrine. Although speculative models varied, ranging from various forms of Neoplatonism to the Aristotelianism of the emerging Dominican school, Augustine's influence remains a constant in this area until the twentieth century.³ On this issue, the theological landscape of the Middle Ages was not defined by a split between Augustinianism and scholasticism; one of the issues that drove the debates over sacramental efficacy in the emerging scholastic tradition was the proper interpretation of the Augustinian heritage. How were theologians to understand, defend and preserve the teachings of Augustine in the context of fresh challenges?

During the Donatist controversy, Augustine produced a series of distinctions that would prove indispensable for sacramental theology. Perhaps most importantly, Augustine drew a clear distinction between a sacrament and its fruit: while baptism itself cannot be repeated, the fruition or grace of the sacrament can be lost and subsequently regained.⁴ Although Augustine's teaching on this subject is conditioned by the apologetic concerns of a particular period, the distinctions made by Augustine during the Donatist controversy were employed in a variety of subsequent historical periods, although the terminology and surrounding theological context shifted perceptibly.

Much of the Augustinian doctrine inherited in the early scholastic period was strongly influenced by the Berengarian controversy, which

³ Almost all Western theologians, including those of the Protestant tradition, have been concerned to show some form of continuity between their own thought and that of Augustine where the sacraments are concerned. It seems that this did not change until the midpoint of the twentieth century. (Thinkers of this period such as Rahner, Schillebeeckx, and Chauvet show decidedly less concern for the legacy of Augustine's sacramental doctrine). Augustine's doctrines concerning sign and sacramental reality are complex and have been subject to much scholarly debate. We have no intention of resolving these issues here. In the following pages, selections of Augustine's teaching that are of particular relevance to sacramental causality will be offered as a lens through which the debates and theories of scholastic and subsequent thinkers can be understood; an independent investigation of Augustinian doctrine must necessarily elude us here.

⁴ See *De Baptismo* CSEL 51, 3.16.21, et al.

significantly affected the interpretation of Augustine on the sacraments in subsequent theology.⁵ As an outgrowth of this conflict, Augustine's distinction between sacramental elements and interior grace is gradually transformed into the scholastic formula: *res tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, and *sacramentum tantum*.⁶ However, Augustine's central distinction be-

⁵ Elizabeth Frances Rogers, *Peter Lombard and the Sacramental System* (New York: Columbia University, 1917), 30–38. Although Berengar's teaching on the Eucharist was condemned, many of his textual selections and interpretations from Augustine came to be paradoxically normative for later theology. The threefold division between *res tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, and *sacramentum tantum* was gradually developed in response to this problem. N. M. Haring has convincingly argued that the word *sacramentum*—a polyvalent term for Augustine—underwent a transformation during the Berengarian controversy that gave rise to the later medieval understanding of *sacramentum* as outward sign alone. See Nicholas M. Haring, "Berengar's Definitions of *Sacramentum* and Their Influence on Mediaeval Sacramentology," *Mediaeval Studies* 10 (1948): 109–47; Haring, "A Brief Historical Comment on St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III qu. 67, a. 5: *Utrum non baptizatus possit sacramentum baptismi conferre*," *Mediaeval Studies* 14 (1952): 153–59, et al. There are instances in which Augustine uses what appears to be the reverse of the familiar medieval formula, using the phrase *res visibiles* to refer to "things" or signs employed by the *sacramentum*, which can refer generally to the signate event and the lasting sacramental effect. See *De Baptismo* 3.10.15, et al. However, Augustine's terminology is much broader than this. Elsewhere Augustine describes the sacraments as the visible form of invisible grace; *Epist.* 105.3.12. It seems that Berengar misappropriated the Augustinian understanding of *sacramentum* as referring only to the passing outward sign, whereas Augustine used the term to refer not only to signs, but to lasting effect as well. Lombard inherits this new post-Berengarian formulation of Augustinian sacramental doctrine. In *Sent* IV, d. 4 c. 1, Lombard teaches that infants and faithful adults receive the *sacramentum et rem*, but someone who receives the sacrament unworthily only receives the *sacramentum*, whereas an unbaptized martyr could receive the *res* alone. See Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 148–49. Unfortunately, a more thorough investigation of this issue eludes us here.

⁶ For our purposes, this distinction between the end result of the sacraments (*res tantum*), the sacramental event (*res et sacramentum*), and the outward signs themselves (*sacramentum tantum*) is significant for sacramental causality because of the relationship that necessarily exists between the outward signs and the effects toward which they are directed. After Berengar, these Augustinian concepts are universally expressed through the lens of this new threefold distinction. For a study of the development of this terminology, see Ronald F. King, "The Origin and Evolution of a Sacramental Formula: *Sacramentum Tantum*, *Res et Sacramentum*, *Res Tantum*," *The Thomist* 31 (1967): 21–82. The mature use of this threefold division is usually attributed to Hugh of St. Victor. In Hugh's *De Sacramentis*, a post-Berengarian understanding of Augustine's sacramental doctrine is evident in his treatment of the distinction between *res* and *sacramentum*. *De Sac.*, 1, 9, 2. PL 176: 317d–318b. This understanding was inherited from Hugh by his student Peter Lombard. "For [Hugh]

tween the sacramental sign or event and the lasting effect or fruit remained unobscured by these developments.⁷

Beyond his anti-Donatist writings, however, many other important elements of Augustinian thought came to be of central importance for subsequent discussions of sacramental cause. Although he did not speak directly of the sacraments as causes in the scholastic manner, Augustine had a strong sense of sacramental teleology; he saw sacraments as signs through which the power of God flows into the soul.⁸ For Augustine, the

the rite itself (*sacramentum tantum*) not only resembled or pointed to the inner reality (*res*) but also contained and conveyed that inner reality (*res et sacramentum*). The clarification was critical for the theology of the sacraments in general, a clarification made permanent by the increasingly widespread use of Peter's *Sentences*.⁹ Thomas Finn, "The Sacramental World in the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard," *Theological Studies* 69 (2008): 568. Hugh of St. Cher (d. 1263), a Dominican contemporary of Aquinas, seems to have been the first to use the term *res et sacramentum* specifically to describe the conferral of the character found in baptism, confirmation, and orders. Others such as Albert, Bonaventure, Alexander of Hales, and Aquinas follow this approach. See Bernard Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1963), 262.

⁷ Because Augustine lacks the technical precision of later theology, at times he uses *sacramentum* to mean the lasting effect imparted by baptism, as distinct from its fruit (baptismal grace). In this much, the word *sacramentum* can appear to be roughly equivalent with later notions of sacramental character. See *De Baptismo*, 1.1.2, 3.10.15, 3.14.19, 3.16.21, 4.25.32, et al. At other times he uses *sacramentum* to refer to the baptismal formula of the rite, where the *verba Evangelicis* impart the power and holiness of Christ to the recipient regardless of the holiness of the minister or the worthiness of the recipient. See *De Baptismo*, 3.10.15, 3.15.20, 3.14.19, 4.25.32, et al. (This use of *sacramentum* in connection with outward rite is distinct from the use of *res visibilis* to indicate the transient material signs). Lacking the threefold precision of later theology, it can be seen here that Augustine is forced to use the same term (*sacramentum*) for what we might now call the form of the sacrament (the *verba Evangelicis* spoken by the minister) and the lasting effect or character (as distinct from grace). Both the conferral of the lasting effect and the spoken formula comprise an essential part of what is now spoken of as the *res et sacramentum*—that is, the reality and the sign or sacramental act taken as a whole. Taken in the broad sense, the medieval categories of *res et sacramentum*, *res tantum*, and *sacramentum tantum* appear not as a betrayal of Augustinianism but as a refusal of the Berengarian interpretation thereof.

⁸ Although the degree to which the concept of instrumentality is present in Augustine's thought is disputable, his emphasis on the finality of the sacraments is clear. Concerning the sacraments as signs, see Emmanuel J. Cutrone, "Sacraments," in *Augustine through the Ages*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 741–43. Concerning the efficacy of sacramental signs, Cutrone states: "Augustine insists sacraments have a power which remains even after the ritual has been performed. The use of material things, elevated to the level of sacrament, has the

sacraments are *visible words* or signs that manifest their interior reality. Because it is the power of the Word that sanctifies the soul, Augustine argues that inasmuch as this power flows through the physical things (*res*) used in the sacraments, those same things become signs of the presence of the Word.⁹ In this regard, Augustine taught that grace moved through outward signs, even the sacramental actions of an unworthy minister, as light through an unclean place or water through an aqueduct.¹⁰ Augustine is ambiguous, however, concerning the causal status of these signs taken in themselves. Is it possible to attribute some power to the sacramental elements themselves, as instruments of God?¹¹

ability to work spiritual realities. But that efficacy is not something in the material things, but flows from the very nature of the sacrament as a visible word. The sacrament only has an efficacy because it is Christ's word, the word of faith that is preached . . . when such a sacrament functions within a believing Church, the power of the sacrament is always effective." Ibid., 745.

⁹ "Iam vos mundi estis propter verbum quod locutus sum vobis. Quare non ait, mundi estis propter Baptismum quo loti estis, sed ait, propter verbum quod locutus sum vobis; nisi quia et in aqua verbum mundat? Detrahe verbum, et quid est aqua nisi aqua? Accedit verbum ad elementum, et fit Sacramentum, etiam ipsum tamquam visibile verbum... Unde ista tanta virtus aquae, ut corpus tangat et cor abluat, nisi faciente verbo: non quia dicitur, sed quia creditur? Nam et in ipso verbo, aliud est sonus transiens, aliud virtus manens. Hoc est verbum fidei quod praedicamus, ait Apostolus, quia si confessus fueris in ore tuo quia Dominus est Iesus, et credideris in corde tuo quia Deus illum suscitavit a mortuis, salvus eris. Corde enim creditur ad iustitiam, ore autem confessio fit ad salutem. Unde in Actibus Apostolorum legitur: Fide mundans corda eorum... quo sine dubio ut mundare possit, consecratur et Baptismus. Christus quippe nobiscum vitis, cum Patre agricola, dilexit Ecclesiam, et seipsum tradidit pro ea. Lege Apostolum, et vide quid adiungat: Ut eam sanctificaret, inquit, mundans eam lavacro aquae in verbo. Mundatio igitur nequaquam fluxo et labili tribueretur elemento, nisi adderetur, in verbo... quamvis nondum valentem corde credere ad iustitiam, et ore confiteri ad salutem. Totum hoc fit per verbum, de quo Dominus ait: Iam vos mundi estis propter verbum quod locutus sum vobis." *Jo. Ev. Tr.* CCL 36, 80.3. See also *Contra Faust.* CSEL 25, 19.16.

¹⁰ "Qui vero fuerit superbus minister, cum zabulo computatur: sed non contaminatur donum Christi, quod per illum fluit purum, quod per illum transit liquidum venit ad fertilem terram. Puta quia ipse lapideus est, quia ex aqua fructum ferre non potest: et per lapideum canalem transit aqua, transit aqua ad areolas; in canali lapideo nihil generat, sed tamen hortis plurimum fructum affert. Spiritualis enim virtus Sacramenti ita est ut lux: et ab illuminandis pura excipitur, et si per immundos transeat, non inquinatur." *Jo. Ev. Tr.* 5.15 (text as in PL 35:1422). The example of light passing through an unclean place can also be found in *De Baptismo*, 3.10.15. William Harmless, "Baptism," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 88.

¹¹ This issue will come to divide the Franciscan and Dominican schools on this subject for centuries. Philip Cary's recent interpretation is more compatible with the

Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141) began a final synthesis of Augustinian sacramental doctrine that would become normative for many scholastic authors.¹² Hugh was very much animated by the Augustinian worldview, and was in large part responsible for recalling the intellectual culture of twelfth-century Paris to the methodological perspective of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*.¹³ Hugh's *De Sacramentis*¹⁴ follows the lines of creation and recreation in a manner similar in structure to Augustine's *De Doctrina* and *Civitate Dei*.¹⁵ Throughout his work, Hugh employs a broad sense of sacramentality that reflects the influence of Augustine's *doctrina signorum*, in which the senses associated with the manifestation of the incarnate Word under the mode of the Biblical letter are seen as a model for that same Word at work in the rites of the Church under the veil of sacred signs.¹⁶

Hugh famously taught that the sacraments were signs or instruments

extrinsic legalism of the Franciscan Nominalists than with the Thomist tradition. See Philip Cary, *Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹² Rogers, *Peter Lombard and the Sacramental System*, 52. The Victorine School, established in Paris in 1108, was of a decidedly Augustinian turn. Hugh's principle work, *De Sacramentis* (with which we are principally concerned here), "presents a synthesis of theology in the framework of an Augustinian vision of history as an account of the two works of God: the *opus conditionis* (creation) and the *opus restaurationis* (salvation). At some points he does draw expressly on texts from *De Trinitate*, *Contra Adimantum*, *De Bono conjugali*, and *Enchiridion*; for his eschatology (2.16-17) on *De civitate Dei* 20-22." Karlfried Froehlich, "Victorines," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 868.

¹³ Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 83-106. For the structural influence of Augustine's *De Doctrina* on Hugh of St. Victor, see *ibid.*, 86, et al.

¹⁴ Hugh is best known for his work *De Sacramentis*, which covers not only the sacraments but also offers a comprehensive theological worldview beginning with creation. For a study of the textual history of this and other works by Hugh, see R. Barron, "Hughes de Saint-Victor: Contribution à un Nouvel Examen de son Oeuvre," *Traditio* 15 (1959): 223-97.

¹⁵ Smalley, *Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 90.

¹⁶ Although ostensibly a work dealing with biblical interpretation and the nature of Christian doctrine, Augustine's *De Doctrina* roots the signate dimension of reality in creation and the Incarnation. In a visceral sense, the created world is composed of material signs that draw us to God. The Scriptural Word is understood in light of this, and in book three Augustine contextualizes the Christian sacraments in this way as well. *De Doct.* CSEL 80, 3.9.13. When Hugh treats the sacraments explicitly, his use of the biblical letter as a means to understand sacramental signs mirrors Augustine in this regard. *De Sac.* I, 9, 4 PL 176: 317b-318d.

of sanctification, containing grace as medicine in a vial.¹⁷ We see immediately from this text that for Hugh this signate dimension of sacramentality is explicitly understood as instrumental (*id est sacrorum signa vel instrumenta*). Hugh discusses causality to some extent, but only in terms of what could be called formal or final causality, exploring God's reasons for instituting the sacraments.¹⁸ For Hugh, the manner in which the sacramental instruments or signs are related to this finality is more ambiguous. Although Hugh's medical metaphor does not define sacramental causality with great precision, Hugh's description of grace being communicated as if it were held in a physical container does have materialist overtones. For some, this could imply that the sacraments worked by a kind of material causality—as if grace were physically contained in material things such as water, bread, the sign of the cross and similar elements.¹⁹ This interpretation raises a number of problems: if the grace of the *sacramentum* is contained in the sacramental elements materially, it is difficult to explain the relationship of this grace to the final recipient thereof.²⁰ If grace is conceived of as a product held in a material container, it is difficult to simultaneously describe that same product as something that is effected as a final result in the recipient. Furthermore, if the elements (or signs) *as material causes* (and not efficient instruments) are still to be considered the visible form of invisible grace, it would seem that water as a material element, for example, would necessarily be the form of the sacrament even prior to its use in baptism.²¹

¹⁷ "Vasa sunt spiritualis gratiae sacramenta, non ex suo sanant, quia vasa aegrotum non curant, sed medicina. Non ergo ad hoc instituta sunt sacramenta ut ex eis esset quod in eis esset; sed ut peritiam suam medicus ostenderet in illo remedium praeparavit, a qui languidus occasionem morbi accepit." *De Sac.* I, 9, 4 PL 176: 323.

¹⁸ "Est igitur triplex causa haec institutionis sacramentorum omnium: humiliatio, eruditio et exercitatio hominis. Quae causae si non essent, sacramenta omnino, id est sacrorum signa vel instrumenta, elementa per se esse non possent." *De Sac.* I, 9, 4 PL 176: 322A. (A parallel text from the Victorine school can be found in the *Summa Sententiarum* 4.1, PL 176: 117).

¹⁹ *De Sac.* I, 9, 2 PL 176: 317D. Haring, "Berengar's Definitions of Sacramentum," 126–27.

²⁰ Haring, "Berengar's Definitions of Sacramentum," 127. This objection is also raised by Bonaventure: *In IV Sent.* d. 1, p. 1, q. 3, contra 3.

²¹ This objection is raised by the author of the *Summa Sententiarum* (written between 1140 and 1146). *Summa Sent.* IV, 1; PL 176:117B. Haring, "Berengar's Definitions of Sacramentum," 127. The authorship of the *Summa Sententiarum* is disputed. Although it was thought for a long while to be the work of Hugh of St. Victor himself,

Although questions of causality became more refined in the early scholastic period, Augustine's teaching remained an enduring frame of reference. As speculative theology progressed, Augustine's teaching on the efficacy of the Word in relation to the waters of baptism became an interpretive locus for sacramental causality. In his tractates on John, Augustine taught that the water of baptism, made a sacrament by the presence of the Word, not only touches the body but cleanses the heart as well: *corpus tangat et cor ablumat*.²² Because Augustine says unambiguously that the waters of baptism cleanse the heart, it seems that something causal is being said of the water itself, albeit with obvious and necessary reference to the power and presence of the Word. The interpretation of this phrase, broadly circulated by Peter Lombard, occupied the best minds of the scholastic period.²³

Lombard and Early Scholasticism

More explicit discussion of the sacraments as causes of what they signi-

the *Summa Sententiarum* is now commonly held to be the work of a different member of the Victorine School, composed prior to the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. See King, "Origin and Evolution of a Sacramental Formula," 36–37.

²² See note 9.

²³ See Augustine's text from *Jo. Ev. Tr.* 80.3, cited in note 9. This passage, taken from an Augustinian sermon on John, was frequently cited during the medieval and scholastic period, largely owing to its use by Lombard as an explanation of the efficacy of baptism. *Sent.* IV, dist. 3 c. 1. (However, an allusion to the same text also appears in the *Summa Sententiarum* of the Victorine School, which predates Lombard's *Sentences*. PL 176: 129c.) This passage is of interest for at least two reasons: the combination between Word and water, from which the mature understanding of sacramental form and matter developed is present here. Concerning sacramental causality specifically, the concept of exterior washing and interior cleansing is of great importance. Many scholastic authors offered their theories of sacramental causality as interpretations of this passage. (For example: Bonaventure, *In IV Sent.* d. 1, p. 1, art. unicus, q. 4; Richard of Middleton, *In IV Sent.* d. 1, a. 4, q. 2; Aquinas, *In IV Sent.* d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 2, s.c. 1 and d. 3, q. 1, a. 5, qc. 3, expos. and d. 18, q. 1, a. 3, qc. 1, arg. 3 and d. 26, q. 2, a. 3, ad. 1; *Summa theologiae* (ST) III, q. 38, a. 6, arg. 5 and q. 60, a. 6, co. and q. 62, a. 4, s.c.; *Quodlib.* 12, q. 10, co.; *Super Ioan.* c. 15, 1; *Super Tit.* c. 3, 1; Scotus, *Ox. In IV Sent.*, d. 1, q. 4. All textual references to Bonaventure and Scotus refer to the following editions (unless otherwise indicated): S. Bonaventurae, *Opera Omnia*, ed. A. C. Peltier (Paris: Vivés, 1866); Joannis Duns Scoti, *Opera Omnia*, editio nova (Paris: Vivés, 1894). References to Richard of Middleton are taken from Willibrord Lampen, ed., *De Causalitate Sacramentorum iuxta Scholam Franciscanam*, Florilegium Patristicum tam veteris quam medii aevi auctores complectens 26 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1931). Textual citations from Aquinas will be indicated individually.

fy was introduced by Peter Lombard (d. 1160).²⁴ Lombard studied under Hugh of St. Victor, and was strongly influenced by his sacramental doctrine.²⁵ Lombard argues that the sacraments should be understood as both signs and causes because they not only signify the invisible grace at work, but sanctify the recipient as well.²⁶ For Lombard, it is the sanctifying effect of the sacraments that gives them their causal quality. Lombard presents this causal understanding of sacramentality as an interpretation of the Augustinian doctrine of sign, in which the sign conveys an imprint of what it signifies to the mind. Concerning the sacraments as signs, Lombard explicitly uses the language of causality to define the relationship between the sacraments and their sanctifying effect in the soul.²⁷ Sign and lasting effect were properly distinguished by Augustine against the Donatists; by the thirteenth century, Lombard's *Sentences* were widely used in the schools, and his use of the word *causare* to describe the connection between these same sacramental signs and their effects was frequently commented upon.

With the rising influence of Aristotle in the early scholastic period, there was an impetus to describe this relationship between sacramen-

²⁴ *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique (DTC)* s.v. "Sacraments, Causalité," 577. It appears that Lombard is the first to use the word *causare* in conjunction with the sacraments. However, the notion that the sacraments convey a real effect in the recipient is clear from the Augustinian tradition. Lombard's immediate predecessors in the Victorine School maintained this as well. See the *Summa Sent.* tract. 4 c. 1, PL 176: 117, et al.

²⁵ Peter Lombard studied with Hugh of St. Victor, beginning while the latter was completing his *De Sacramentis christianae fidei*. See Rosemann, *Peter Lombard*, 27. At times Lombard literally transcribes selections from both Hugh's *De Sacramentis* and the *Summa Sententiarum*. Rogers, *Peter Lombard and the Sacramental System*, 66.

²⁶ "Sacramentum enim proprie dicitur, quod ita signum est gratiae Dei et invisibilis gratiae forma, ut ipsius imaginem gerat et *causa existat*. Non igitur significandi tantum gratia sacramenta instituta sunt, sed et sanctificandi" (emphasis mine). In *IV Sent.* d. 1 c. 4.2.

²⁷ *Ibid.* Lombard's phrase *invisibilis gratiae forma* recall the words of Augustine that he employed earlier in his text: "Sacramentum est invisibilis gratiae visibilis forma." *Sent.* IV, d. 1 c. 2. Augustine's original text can be found in *Epistola* CSEL 34, 105.3.12. See Wayne J. Hankey, "Reading Augustine through Dionysius," in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 250n19, 254–55, et al. Use of this Augustinian phrase in this context reflects in part the legacy of the Berengarian controversy. Haring, "Berengar's Definitions of *Sacramentum*," 109–16, et al.

tal sign and effect using Aristotelian causal categories—accompanying this trend was the risk of misapplication. William of Auxerre (d. 1232) is seemingly the first to use explicitly Aristotelian categories to explain the way in which the sacraments function as causes.²⁸ William took up Hugh's metaphorical description of the sacraments as containers of grace (as medicine in a vial), and made explicit Hugh's implicit materialism, arguing that the sacraments are causes in the material sense, rather than the efficient.²⁹

Roland of Cremona (d. 1259) argued against this idea explicitly, proposing instead that the sacraments operate as efficient causes.³⁰ Cremona explicitly ruled out an extrinsicist approach, arguing that the power operative in the sacraments was not similar to the power of political or rhetorical persuasion. Rather, Cremona argues that the power at work in the sacraments is similar to the potency associated with an efficient cause. Because of its emphasis on movement toward an intended finality, the category of efficient cause would prove itself the most fitting ways to speak of sacramental efficacy in the causal language of Aristotle. Both Lombard and Augustine understood the power of the sacraments as working toward its final completion as an effect in the recipient. Efficient causality preserves the distinction between the end intended and

²⁸ John F. Gallagher, *Significando Causant: A Study of Sacramental Efficiency*, Studia Friburgensia New Series 40 (Fribourg: University of Fribourg Press, 1965), 57n2.

²⁹ "Ad hoc dicendum est quod cum dicitur sacramenta iustificant, attribuitur contenti quod est contenti. Est enim sensus: gratia contenta in sacramentis iustificat, unde sacramenta non iustificant tamquam causa efficiens, sed tamquam causa materialis...sacramenta iustificant tamquam medicinalia vasa, quia in ipsis sacramentis datur gratia." *De Sac.*, as cited by Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 61. Gallagher is reliant on the text of Simonin and Meersseman for this citation. See H. Simonin and G. Meersseman, *De Sacramentorum Efficientia apud theologos Ordinis Praedicatorum* (Roma: Pont. Institutum Angelicum, 1936), 118. Much of William's argument in this regard hinges on the issue of the matter involved in the sacrament—partially intending to preserve the nonarbitrary quality of the material elements employed in the sacraments, William described their causality in terms of that same material. The theory of *dispositive causality*, which was taken up by the early Aquinas in the *Sentences* commentary, seems to have originated here with William's theory of material causality. *DTC*, s.v. "Sacraments, Causalité," 578.

³⁰ *In IV Sent.* d. 1; fol. 79va. Roland seems to be contending with the thought of William of Auxerre (d. 1231), who argued that the sacraments were material causes, rather than efficient. Ephrem Filthaut, *Roland von Cremona, O.P., und die Anfänge der Scholastik im Predigerorden: Ein Beitrag zur Geistesgeschichte der älteren Dominikaner* (Vechta i. O.: Albertus Magnus Verlag der Dominikaner, 1936), 165.

the means by which it is accomplished, while at once speaking of the relationship between the two: efficient causality is in motion toward a final end—for the sacraments, this means that the causality of sacred signs is conditioned and defined by their directedness toward the sanctification of the person, made possible by the operative presence of the power of the Word.

Material causality, by contrast, is far less suitable. In this regard, Cremona recognized Hugh's medicinal imagery for the metaphor that it was: Cremona taught that the sacraments only "contained" grace in the sense that an effect can be contained in an efficient cause.³¹ In this much, he saw himself as standing in continuity with Augustine's sacramental theology, citing the same passage from Augustine's tract on John used by Lombard and many others.³² From this point forward, we begin to see efficient instrumental causality offered as an intrinsic interpretation of Augustinian sacramental teleology. After Cremona, efficient causality was the category of choice for those interested in applying Aristotle to the problem of sacramental causality in a manner that stood in continuity with the Augustinian tradition.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Interpretive Traditions

In order to sift the multitude of causal models on offer at the beginning of the scholastic period, we may distinguish between two trends—not yet schools—of interpretation.³³ The Berengarian controversy had made

³¹ *In IV Sent.* d. 1; fol. 79va. Ibid, 165.

³² "Virtutem dixerim, quia augustinus vocat illud virtutem, non est enim virtus politica vel gramatica (!), sed vocatur virtus, sicut frigiditas vocatur virtus aque, aqua agit in corpus baptizati." *In IV Sent.* d. 1; fol. 85^{a-b} (emphasis Filthaut), cited in Filthaut, *Roland von Cremona*, 167.

³³ In this much I follow J. Gallagher, a student of J. H. Nicholas, O.P., whose work on this subject is to be commended. Gallagher distinguishes two main patterns of thought that characterize the tradition received by St. Thomas: the first "sees real power in the sacramental rites to cause, under God. Its earliest form spoke of the sacraments as vials of grace, as in Hugh of St. Victor, Praepositinus, Alan of Lille, William of Auxerre, and others, who were taking up the thought of the fathers that grace was contained in the sacraments. This notion developed into seeing grace really in the rite, but as in its cause. At first, this meant as in its material cause, that is, grace was *in* the sacraments; then as in its efficient cause. The work attributed to Alexander, as well as Albert, Guerric of Saint Quentin and William of Meliton see that causality as effecting a disposition in the soul for grace. It is this opinion that

clear that in the hands of the wrong interpreter, the ambiguities inherent in Augustine's sacramental theology could actually conceal very serious error. As a result, the need to articulate *the way in which* the sacraments effect what they signify gradually emerged as a more urgent theological topic. As patristic ambiguity slowly yielded to scholastic precision on this topic, two distinct trends can be seen to emerge. The first approach could be called *intrinsic*, because it understands the sacraments as integrated into a causal action directed by God in which His power works *through* the working of the sacramental sign. There were reactions against the attribution of the category of cause to the sacraments in themselves, however. Seeking to preserve the absolute sovereignty of God with respect to grace, others insisted on a more *extrinsic* approach in which the sacraments were at best causes in the accidental sense, acting only as occasions, conditions or legal arrangements which invite the causal involvement of God in some way.³⁴ For the intrinsic approach, the sacraments are true

Thomas will follow in commenting on the book of *Sentences*. Others, such as Roland of Cremona and Hugh of Saint Cher, hint at a causality of grace itself, though not clearly. This view will be developed by Thomas in his *Summa*." Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 80–81. The second "approach to the sacraments . . . sees in them no real power to cause either grace or a disposition for grace. Rather God causes both of these directly, and alone. He does so, *a*) on the occasion of the sacraments being given; or *b*) on the condition of their being given, as in Abelard, Bernard, William of Auvergne; or *c*) because of a pact, an ordination of the sacrament to grace . . . we may place in this group William of Auvergne, Bonaventure, Fishacre, Hugh of Strasbourg, and Kilwardby. Later, moral causality will follow in the same path." Ibid., 81. The intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is also applied by Jean-Pierre Torrell in the context of Christ's resurrection. See J.-P. Torrell, "La causalité salvifique de la résurrection du Christ selon saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 96 (1996): 179–208, as cited by Philip L. Reynolds, "Efficient Causality and Instrumentality in Thomas Aquinas's Theology of the Sacraments," in *Essays in Medieval Philosophy and Theology in Memory of Walter H. Principe, O.S.B.*, ed. James R. Ginther and Carl N. Still (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 67–84.

³⁴ While we are aware that historical metanarrative can have serious limitations, the distinction offered here between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* approaches to sacramental causality is of great utility because it provides a workable framework for understanding the main lines of doctrinal development that shaped this issue through the centuries. This distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to sacramental causality is broadly congruent with the division between the physical and moral causality that emerged in the schools during the modern period. However, it should be noted that, for Thomists, the crux of the issue is more aptly expressed in terms of act and potency. Gallagher's distinction is most useful as a point of departure for understanding sacramental causality; a well-developed understanding of the issue

causes in the proper sense, the functioning of which has real effect under the direction of God. According to the extrinsic model, comparatively little is said about the functioning of the sacraments themselves, lest the causal sovereignty of God be compromised. In the former, instrumental causality is portrayed as an analogical species of efficient causality; in the latter, causality is attributed to the sacraments in a more equivocal sense.

These new speculative precisions brought fresh challenges for sacramental theology: not all scholastic theories proved equally suited for conveying the received tradition. Early attempts at material and efficient causality were clearly problematic, and while the extrinsic position does avoid attributing a supernatural effect to a natural instrument, it is comparatively deontological, lacking the means to describe the causal dimension of the instrument's action in language other than that of a legal decree, in which something of no inherent value is declared invaluable, by order of the king.

Concerning the Augustinian inheritance, one way in which the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic interpretations of sacramental causality is manifested is in the interpretation of the *virtus aquae* described by Augustine in the above quoted passage.³⁵ Augustine himself makes it clear that this is not a power had by the water alone, but is spoken of with necessary reference to the power of God. We have seen that Hugh of St. Victor interpreted this teaching using the language of *instrumentality*:³⁶ as a tool takes on instrumental power in the hand of a builder to work toward an end for which it has no native capacity, so too are the material elements of the sacraments taken up as instruments of divine power. Aquinas and the Thomistic School interpret this *virtus aquae* as a form of real instrumental efficient power, under the direction and impulse of God as principle efficient cause.³⁷ In this way, the

from a Thomistic perspective will necessarily transcend these categories. The categories of intrinsic and extrinsic also recall twentieth-century debates concerning nature and grace. In light of this, the work of Gallagher and others not only provides a useful paradigm for understanding the history of sacramental causality but also draws attention to the possibility that a truly intrinsic doctrine of grace must be accompanied and supported by an intrinsic sense of sacramental causality.

³⁵ "Unde ista tanta virtus aquae, ut corpus tangat et cor abluat, nisi faciente verbo: non quia dicitur, sed quia creditur?" *Jo. Ev. Tr.*, 80.3. See the full text cited in note 9.

³⁶ *De Sac.* I, 9, 4 PL 176: 322A. See note 18.

³⁷ See *In IV Sent.* d. 1, q. 1, solutio I; *ST* III, q. 62 a. 1.

material signs are made instruments of the Word, in whose power they participate as instrumental causes directed toward a final end. However, because of the conceptual difficulty involved in attributing any form of causality to the sacramental elements without at the same time compromising divine sovereignty, the extrinsicist approach was unable to develop a technical vocabulary for the *virtus aquae*, and gravitated instead toward a view of the sacraments as conditions or occasions for the expression of divine power.

While the Dominican school began to center around Aquinas's intrinsic model of efficient instrumental causality, the emerging Franciscan school took a decidedly extrinsic approach. Concerning sacramental cause, Bonaventure's (d. 1274) brand of Augustinianism can be understood in part as a reaction to the Aristotelian causal interpretations emerging at the time—the work of both Auxerre and Cremona would have been well known to Bonaventure.

In his treatment of sacramental cause in book four of the *Sentences*, Bonaventure first proposes a version of dispositive causality current in many of the schools: while the sacramental character may be the result of efficient causality, grace itself is caused only dispositionally—that is, the sacraments create the necessary condition in the soul for the reception of grace. Concerning the final end of the sacraments, however, they are causes *sine qua non*—causes without which the final effect is not possible.³⁸ Bonaventure nods with deference to this position, but in the end he tentatively proposes a more radical solution that would become the favored position of the Nominalist tradition.³⁹

Bonaventure acknowledges the Augustinian teaching received through the Victorines: the sacraments are comprised of both the power of the Word and material elements. However, he is concerned with

³⁸ *In IV Sent.* d. 1, p. 1, q. 4, *respond.*

³⁹ In this much, Bonaventure is building in part on the thought of his teacher Alexander of Hales (d. 1245). *Summa Theol. (Halensis)*, Pars IV, q. 5, a. 5. Lampen, *De Causalitate Sacramentorum*, 6–17. DTC, s.v. “Sacraments, Causalité,” 579–80. Versions of occasionalist or *sine qua non* causality was taught by others before him, but Bonaventure's specific use of this approach in response to the scholastic approach to sacramental causality ushers in a more idealistic approach to the sacraments which comes to be adopted by the Nominalists. Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) proposes an early form of this view, although his work predates the question of causality that arose in the scholastic period after Lombard. See *In Cena Domini*, PL 183: 272a.

the manner in which the spiritual power of the word comes to interact with the material substrate of the elements, and is unable to supply a fitting explanation for the way in which the natural potency or causal power of the elements (or signs) can be used in tandem with the causal power of the Word which works its effect in the recipient.⁴⁰ Bonaventure finds each of the four Aristotelian causes lacking in this regard,⁴¹ and his resulting emphasis on divine potency alone foreshadows the causal univocity of the Nominalists. While Aquinas will resolve this difficulty using efficient instrumentality, Bonaventure opts for a more idealistic solution to this problem. In an effort to explain the interrelation between the material sacramental elements and the spiritual effect for which God alone is principally responsible, Bonaventure defends the legitimacy of *sine qua non* or occasionalist causality, in which the sacraments are conditions or occasions without which grace is not given; the causal necessity here stems not from anything intrinsic to the function of the sacramental elements themselves, but from the authority of God who has decreed that they be used for this purpose. To illustrate this, Bonaventure uses the example of a promissory note sealed by the king—the note in itself is completely dependent on the king's power and authority, having no intrinsic power of its own, and loses what power it has upon the death of the king.⁴² As a result, Bonaventure will say that if the sacramental elements are to be considered causes it must be only

⁴⁰ "Sed difficile mihi videtur intelligere, virtutem illam simul esse verbo et element collatam, quantum ad essentiam et naturam, quantum ad eius existentiam, quantum ad durationis mensuram et etiam quantum ad operationis efficaciam; quae Omnia necesse est ponere et explicare circa virtutem illam, si quis dicat, quod aliqua qualitas detur verbo et element, per quam agat et influat in ipsam animam." *In III Sent.*, d. 40, dub. III. *Opera Omnia*, ed. Ad Claras Aquas (1887). As in Lampen, *De Causalitate Sacramentorum*, 28.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² "Sicut igitur litterae regiae anulo regis sigillatae magnae sunt dignitatis et virtutis et valoris et magna dicuntur et posse et facere, tamen in eis nulla virtus est absoluta, sed sola ordinatio per assistentiam virtutis regiae—quod patet, quia, mortuo rege, non plus curator de litteris suis quam de aliis, tamen nihil absolutum amiserunt." *In IV Sent.*, d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 4, *Resp. Opera Omnia*, ed. Ad Claras Aquas (1887). Lampen, *De Causalitate Sacramentorum*, 26. This example was used first by Bernard of Clairvaux. See note 39. See also Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger, eds., *Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 6, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments and the Mystery of the Eucharist*, by Johann Auer, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, trans. ed. Hugh M. Riley (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 80.

“in an extended sense.”⁴³ Bonaventure emphasizes the principle causality of God, while acknowledging that the sacraments can dispose us to receive grace through upbuilding faith and devotion by this same divine power.⁴⁴ Because Bonaventure is unable to articulate analogically the relationship between secondary instrumental causes and the principle causality of God, he shifts the focus of the conversation away from the instruments and toward the causality of the principle agent, resulting in a picture of the principle agent as cause in an all but univocal sense, the instruments being comparatively equivocal. As these respective schools continue to develop, the contrast between the Thomist and Franciscan positions on the doctrine of analogy will mark their differing approaches to sacramental causality, the intrinsic approach expressing itself in the analogical language of the Thomist school, and the extrinsic in the comparative univocity of the Franciscan.

Aquinas and the Thomist Tradition

Working within the received tradition, Aquinas describes sacramental causality intrinsically using the category of efficient causality. Following the lead of Roland of Cremona, Aquinas chooses to use the categories of potency and motion to describe the way in which the sacraments contain the grace they confer. The sacraments contain grace as an instrument contains the final effect intended by an artist. To this end, he understands instrumental efficiency as a participation in the power of the principle

⁴³ “Et si tu quaeras, utrum habeant virtutem aliquam creatam super increatam, respondent, quod praeter virtutem aliquam increatam est dicere aliquam virtutem habere sacramentum, sed extensor nomine virtutis. Si enim virtus dicat aliquam qualitatem vel naturam sive essentiam advenientem sacramentum, sicut proprie dicitur, sic secundum eos non est dicendum, quod habeat virtutem, sed extenditur nomen virtutis ad aliquam ordinationem, ut quando aliquid habet efficacem ordinationem ad aliquid, dicitur habere virtutem respect illius.—Et ponunt hoc exemplum: rex statuit, ut qui habent tale signum, habeant centum marcas. Post istam institutionem signum illud non habet aliquam proprietatem absolutam, quam non haberet prius; ad aliquid tamen est ordinatum, ad quod non erat prius. Et quia habet efficacem ordinationem, dicitur habere virtutem, ut faciat aliquem habere centum marcas, et tamen nihil plus habet de bonitate nunc quam prius.” *In IV Sent. d. I p. I, a. 1, q. 4, Resp. 2.4. Opera Omnia*, ed. Ad Claras Aquas (1887). As in Lampen, *De Causalitate Sacramentorum*, 25–26.

⁴⁴ “Sacramento enim dicunt assistere divinam virtutem, quae est causa gratiae, et fidem et devotionem succipientis, quae disponit ad gratiam.” *Ibid.*

agent, as color which moves through the air to be received by the eye, containing the form of the final cause as something as yet incomplete, as light still in potentia to be received by the eye. In this way, the sacraments (and all instrumental causes) are causal not equivocally (as in Bonaventure's "extended sense" of causality), but rather analogically, with necessary referent to the potency of the principle agent. Divine sovereignty is not compromised, and yet the sacraments can be considered causes in a real (non-equivocal) sense. This teaching also fits well with the inherited Augustinian tradition. Aquinas describes this instrumental efficiency as the power and intent of the principle agent flowing (*fluere*) through the instrument to reach its point of actualization in the intended recipient, working through the medium of motion to reach its end.⁴⁵ In this much, Aquinas's description of instrumental efficient causality as light passing through air to be actuated in its reception by the eye strongly resembles Augustine's description of the sacramental relationship of effect and sign as water passing through an aqueduct to reach its intended recipient.

In an effort to resolve the problem of a natural instrument producing a supernatural effect, in his *Sentences* commentary Aquinas bifurcates efficient instrumental causality between dispositive and perfective instrumental causality, arguing that with respect to the finality of grace, the sacraments are dispositive efficient instrumental causes.⁴⁶ Aquinas dis-

⁴⁵ "Ista dicuntur agentia univoca, sicut calor est in igne calefaciente. In quibusdam vero est idem secundum proportionem sive analogiam, sicut cum sol calefacit . . . Ex quo patet quod illud quod est in effectu ut forma dans esse, est in agente, inquantum hujusmodi, ut virtus activa; et ideo sicut se habet agens ad virtutem activam, ita se habet ad continendam formam effectus. Et quia agens instrumentale non habet virtutem agendi ad aliquod ens completum, sed per modum intentionis, ut dictum est, et forma introducta continetur in eo per modum intentionis, sicut sunt species colorum in aere, a quibus aer non denominatur coloratus; etiam hoc modo gratia est in sacramentis sicut in instrumento, non complete, sed incomplete...per modum intentionis fluentis duplici fluxu: quorum unus est de potentia in actum, sicut etiam in mobili est forma, quae est terminus motus, dum movetur ut fluens de potentia in actum; et inter haec cadit medium motus, cujus virtute instrumentum agit: alius de agente in patiens, inter quae cadit medium instrumentum, prout unum est movens, et alterum motum." *In IV Sent.* d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 4, co.

⁴⁶ "Ad cujus evidentiam sciendum est, quod causa efficiens dupliciter potest dividere... scilicet in disponentem, quae causat dispositionem ad formam ultimam; et perfectientem, quae inducit ultimam perfectionem...Hujusmodi autem materialibus instrumentis competit aliqua actio ex natura propria, sicut aquae abluere, et oleo facere nitidum corpus; sed ulterius, inquantum sunt instrumenta divinae misericordiae justificantis, pertinent instrumentally ad aliquem effectum in ipsa anima,

tinguishes between those instrumental efficient causes which touch the finality intended by the principle agent (perfective) and those which do not themselves touch this finality (dispositive), but are part of a chain of efficiency which is working toward the intended finality under the aegis of the principle agent—in this sense, these instrumental efficient causes can be said to dispose for the final end. Unlike Bonaventure (for whom dispositive causality is not a species of instrumental efficient causality), this provides Aquinas with a working model for speaking of the sacraments as real efficient causes without compromising the principle agency of God. The precise nature of Aquinas's mature teaching on this matter has been the subject of prolonged debate, however. Although most Thomists of the modern period came to see a development in Aquinas's teaching on sacramental causality between the *Sentences* and the *Summa*, Aquinas's early doctrine of dispositive cause remained the predominant position of the Thomistic commentatorial tradition for centuries. Because commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard persisted as the standard for theological method and instruction though the fifteenth century, Thomist theological methodology largely conformed itself to this text.⁴⁷ Early Thomistic commentators interacted with Thomas pri-

quod primo correspondet sacramentis, sicut est character, vel aliquid huiusmodi. Ad ultimum autem effectum, quod est gratia, non pertingunt etiam instrumentaliter, nisi dispositive, inquantum hoc ad quod instrumentaliter effective pertingunt, est dispositio, quae est necessitas, quantum in se est, ad gratiae susceptionem." *In IV Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, qc. 1, co. Aquinas understands instrumental efficient causality (both dispositive and perfective) as distinct from the principal efficient causality attributable to God alone. See *In II Sent.* d. 1, q. 1, a. 1–2, et al.

⁴⁷ It was not until the sixteenth century that St. Thomas's *Summa theologiae* replaced Lombard's *Sentences* as the standard textbook for western theology. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard*, 3. Unsurprisingly, it seems that the *Summa* first gained this prominence in Dominican schools, where this transition began as early as 1480–83. Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 137. However, Dominican commentators such as John Capreolus (d. 1444) continued to use the *Sentences* as a medium for debating the Nominalists at Paris in the early fifteenth century. By this time the content of these "commentaries on the *Sentences*" often had less to do with Lombard directly; written soon after the Dominican Order's return to the University of Paris in 1407 (after a long controversy surrounding the condemnations of the previous century), Capreolus's writings are proposed as a defense of Thomist teaching against the criticisms of the Nominalists, rather than a commentary on the thought of Peter Lombard. See Philipp W. Rosemann, "The Story of a Great Medieval Book: Peter Lombard's *Sentences*," in *Rethinking the Middle Ages*, vol. 2, ed. Paul Edward Dutton and John Shinnars (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007), 139–48.

marily through the framework that was in place in the wider university and employed by their intellectual peers. Because of its dominance in the academy, the *Sentences* formed the common intellectual medium for different theological schools, each of which continued to express their respective positions by commenting on this common text.⁴⁸ In this way, both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to sacramental causality continued to be expressed through the medium of the *Sentences*. Conversely, Thomists since the early modern period have understood the *Summa theologiae* to be their primary window into the thought of St. Thomas—as a result Aquinas's earlier works have come to be viewed through the doctrinal lens of the *Summa*. There are good reasons to favor the later works of an author over his earliest; however, because of the lasting influence of Peter Lombard, early Thomism took Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences* as its point of departure, reading works such as the *Summa theologiae* only later and most likely with reference to the *Sentences*. In this way, the textual hermeneutic of early Thomists such as Capreolus was vastly different than that of later Thomistic commentators and present students of Aquinas. Most other theologians during this period expressed their mature thought in *Sentences* commentaries, and one might easily assume that Aquinas was no different in this respect. Further, the practical need to shape theological discourse around the medium of the *Sentences* was an unavoidable reality for the first generations of Thomists. It is helpful to recall that during this period Thomism was far from dominant, and the need to respond to—and defend Aquinas from—the rise of late scholastic Nominalist interpretations was very real. As in our

⁴⁸ By the middle of the thirteenth century, “the *Sentences* commentary [had come] into its own as a preferred medium of scholastic theological (and philosophical) discourse, certainly rivaling, and often outshining, other vehicles of theological expression (e.g. Quodlibital questions, *Summae*, Biblical commentaries). During the period of 1250-1320 it became increasingly common for theologians to produce several *Sentences* commentaries (or several variations of their one *Sentences* commentary), having either lectured on the *Sentences* several times or having taken several opportunities to rework the material used in their lectures . . . parallel with the development of the *Sentences* commentary into a major bearer of theological ideas, the very structure of the commentaries themselves changed a great deal, and certainly the thought expressed in them saw a great deal of development . . . there arose shared theological tendencies, best described as traditions: a Franciscan theological tradition and a Dominican one.” G. R. Evans, ed., *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Current Research*, vol. 1 (Boston: Brill, 2002), 42.

own times, to do this effectively meant entering into discourse within commonly accepted theological mediums.⁴⁹

An internal factor which extended the life of Aquinas's early thought on sacramental causality was the muted quality of his shift on this subject in the *Summa*. While the explicit language of dispositive sacramental causality is not employed in the *Summa*, it is also not explicitly repudiated. As a result, almost all early Thomistic commentators believed that the sacraments were dispositive causes of grace, following Aquinas's explicit teaching in the *Sentences*. This position was also held by the young Cajetan (d. 1534) in his own *Sentences* commentary, which he produced around the year 1493.⁵⁰ Later, however, Cajetan would revise this position in his commentary on Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. Although Aquinas makes no mention of the distinction between dispositive and perfective instrumental causality in the *Summa*, he speaks of sacramental causality in a way that for some indicates that they are perfective instruments (in the manner described in his *Sentences* commentary).⁵¹

Cajetan's position was controversial at the time, and one of the chief objectors was Sylvester de Ferrara (d. 1528). However, it would subsequently become the standard explanation among Thomists of sacramental cause, upheld by Domingo Bañez (d. 1604), John of St. Thomas (d. 1644) and many others.⁵² One of the central issues for these

⁴⁹ For Capreolus, the *Sentences* provided the ground on which he could effectively engage the threat of Nominalism. See note 47, et al.

⁵⁰ Cajetan's *Sentences* commentary was not edited as a published final product, but consists rather of notes from students or perhaps his own lecture notes. (His argument in favor of dispositive causality can be found in his commentary on the fourth book of Lombard's *Sentences*: Cajetan, *In IV Sent.* q. 1, a. 1). See Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 191. Capreolus and Sylvester de Ferrara argued for dispositive physical causality as well. See Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 264.

⁵¹ "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." *ST* III, q. 62, a. 1, co.

⁵² Cajetan was the first Thomistic commentator to interpret Aquinas after the *Summa* was adopted as the standard text in Dominican schools and noted the implicit difference between the *Sentences* commentary and the *Summa theologiae* on the subject of sacramental cause. His position was not accepted by some older Thomist contemporaries, such as Sylvester de Ferrara, who maintained in his commentary on the *Summa contra gentiles* that Aquinas never abandoned dispositive causality. Both

commentators is the definition of grace in relation to sacramental instrumentality.⁵³

During the modern period and beyond, the position of Cajetan and later Thomists on the subject of sacramental causality was frequently referred to as “perfective physical causality.” Although this terminology is not used by Aquinas in the *Summa*, it is intended to clearly distinguish Cajetan’s teaching from that of both the earlier Thomists and those who favored an extrinsic approach. The word “perfective” is not used by Aquinas in his mature writings; however, its reference to the distinction between dispositive and perfective efficient instrumental causes in his *Sentences* commentary serves to rule out the option of a dispositive interpretation.⁵⁴ The word “physical” indicates the motive potency of an instrumental effi-

Cajetan’s commentary on the *Summa theologiae* and de Ferrara’s commentary on the *Summa contra gentiles* have been standard companions for generations of Thomists—both appear in the Leonine edition of Aquinas’s *Opera*. For an example of this, see *In contra gentiles* IV, c. 57, *Opera Omnia S. Thomae*, ed. iussu Leonis XIII, vol. 15, p. 192. De Ferrara argues that the sacraments are dispositive causes of grace, whose instrumental efficiency extends only to the sacramental character in the strict sense; the character then disposes the soul for the reception of grace. Here de Ferrara is interpreting the text of *ST* III, q. 62. He says that some have claimed that this text teaches that grace is caused instrumentally by the sacraments in an absolute sense. Regarding this interpretation of *ST* III, q. 62, de Ferrara has this to say: “Sed hoc ad mentem S. Thomae esse non puto.” See Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 137–41. De Ferrara refutes this claim using texts from the *De potentia* and the *Sentences*. In this much de Ferrara stood in line with the older commentatorial tradition claiming that Thomism in its purity is found in the *Sentences* and that later works such as the *De veritate* and *De potentia* support this teaching. The absence of an explicit retraction of his earlier position in the *Summa* only further confirms this for de Ferrara.

⁵³ The crux of the issue here is the status of grace as either created or uncreated. Because an instrument can have no role in the creative process, de Ferrara holds that the instrumentality of the sacraments cannot extend to grace per se, but must be limited therefore to the disposition. Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 137–41. Unfortunately, we cannot offer a thorough treatment of the subject of created and uncreated grace here. For a balanced treatment of this matter, see Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, 1^a 1^{ae}, Q. 109–114*, trans. Dominican Nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery, Menlo Park California (St. Louis: Herder, 1952), 110–15. Garrigou-Lagrange makes a crucial distinction between grace as the eternal love of God and grace as a potency produced in the human person, by which we participate in His divinity. Simply put, grace is a divinizing and participatory reality, bifurcated analogically along the lines of the relationship already established between creature and creator, albeit in an elevated and entirely supernatural sense.

⁵⁴ Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 190–91.

cient cause in the Aristotelian sense, and eliminates those theories which rely on external forms of legal pact or moral coercion.

Moral Causality

Around the time of the council of Trent, what came to be called “moral causality” arose as a new development within the extrinsicist tradition. Advocates of this position argue that the sacraments do not cause grace after the manner of a physical motive cause in the Aristotelian sense, but are causes after the manner of moral or legal compulsion: God establishes the sacramental economy, and binds Himself to respond to the sacraments with the gift of grace.⁵⁵ Although Melchior Cano (d. 1560) was the first to argue for moral causality explicitly,⁵⁶ some have claimed that it

⁵⁵ This explanation of sacramental causality was extremely popular from the sixteenth century to the early twentieth. Many claim that there are strong Nominalist tendencies in this school of thought. See Bañez, *Comentarios Ineditos a la Tercera Parte de Santo Tomas*, vol. 2, *De Sacramentis*: QQ. 60-90, ed. Vincente Beltran de Heredia, Biblioteca de Teólogos Españoles 19 (Salamanca: 1953), 47–48. See also Aloisius M. Ciappi, *De Sacramentis in Communi: Commentarius in Tertiam Partem S. Thomae (qq. LX-LXV)*, Pontificum Institutum Internationale Angelicum (Torino: R. Berruti, 1957), 70–71. Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 158.

⁵⁶ Melchior Cano (d. 1560) studied under Vitoria at Salamanca, and later succeeded him as chair in 1546. He was deeply involved in the debates surrounding the sacraments at the Council of Trent, particularly those concerning the Eucharist and Penance. His most influential work is *De Locis Theologicis* (Salamanca, 1563), which proposes a new method for theology in relation to its sources. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed. rev. (ODCC), s.v. “Cano, Melchior.” For more on the nature and influence of Cano’s *De Locis*, see A. Lang, *Die Loci Theologici des Melchior Cano und die Methode des Dogmatischen Beweises: Ein Beitrag zur theologischen Methodologie und ihrer Geschichte*, Münchener Studien zur Historischen Theologie 6 (München: Kösel & Pustet, 1925). Cano’s restructuring of theology in relation to its sources in *De Locis* had wide-ranging effects on ecclesiology in the modern period. The manner in which theologians conceived of conciliar and papal magisterial authority was deeply affected by his use of ecclesial authority. See Ulrich Horst, *Unfehlbarkeit und Geschichte: Studien zur Unfehlbarkeitsdiskussion von Melchior Cano bis zum I. Vatikanischen Konzil* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1982). Further, many of the manuals of the nineteenth and twentieth century are more indebted on a hermeneutical and methodological level to Cano’s *De Locis* than they are to Aquinas’s *Summa*. Jared Wicks, “A Note on ‘Neo-Scholastic’ Manuals of Theological Instruction, 1900-1960,” *Josephinum* 18 no. 1 (2011): 242. Cano was also deeply involved in ecclesial politics. He served as provincial of Castile, and opposed the Jesuits on a number of issues, theological and otherwise. ODCC, s.v. “Cano, Melchior.” Cano remained a controversial figure at the University of Salamanca for several centuries. During the reform of the curriculum, which began in 1771, attempts were

was Francis de Vitoria (d. 1546), his mentor and immediate predecessor at the University of Salamanca, who first proposed an early version of this theory.⁵⁷ Although there are certain differences between moral causality and occasionalism or *sine qua non* causality, many theologians see a strong continuity between the theory of moral causality proposed in the early modern period and the thought of some early Franciscan thinkers, including Bonaventure.⁵⁸ We know that Bonaventure saw the sac-

made to replace the *Summa theologiae* with Cano's *De Locis*, whole or in part. This curriculum controversy followed Salamancan disputes of the previous century concerning Jesuits, Dominicans, grace, Jansenism, and the Chinese rites. See George M. Addy, *The Enlightenment in the University of Salamanca* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1966), 116–17, 189–202, et al. Some see a connection between the Molinist controversy concerning the nature of grace and the sacramental systems connected with the conferral thereof. Some see an intellectual lineage connecting the Franciscan theological positions on the sacramental conferral of grace with the later Jesuit position on grace and the development of moral theology under Melchior Cano. Subsequent thinkers who held that the sacraments were moral causes of grace were likewise involved in arguing for the Molinist position. See Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments*, 79. Dominic de Soto (d. 1560), also a student of Vitoria, initially supported a position substantially similar to Cano's moral causality. See Ciappi, *De Sacramentis in Communi*, 72n8. See also Bañez, *Comentarios Ineditos a la Tercera Parte de Santo Tomas*, vol. 2, *De Sacramentis*: QQ. 60–90, 45. For a study of Soto on this subject, see Alfonso F. Feliziani, "La Causalita Dei Sacramenti in Domenico Soto," *Angelicum* 16 (1939): 148–94. The University of Salamanca provided a meeting place for a wide variety of ideas and intellectual trends in the sixteenth century. Paradoxically, the move toward a renewal in the humanities and classics within the arts faculty that preceded the Thomistic revival (roughly coterminous with Vitoria's tenure) did not transition into the enlightenment along with the rest of the continent, but existed in a comparatively harmonious relationship with scholastic theology and other traditional disciplines for some time. See Crisogono de Jesus, *The Life of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kathleen Pond (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), *passim*. See also Addy, *passim*.

⁵⁷ See Ciappi, *De Sacramentis in Communi*, 71n7, et al. Vitoria inherited certain Nominalist tendencies which undergird moral causality while studying theology in Paris. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, vol. 4, *De Sacramentis*, *De Novissimis*, 3rd ed., (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1956), 73n9. Francis de Vitoria (d. 1546) assumed his chair in sacred theology at the University of Salamanca in 1526. At this time, the *Summa theologiae* was already in use as a textbook for theology at the University. It was de Vitoria that began the Thomistic revival at Salamanca that would eventually produce the Carmelite Thomistic commentatorial school known as the *Salmanticenses*. It is of anecdotal interest that, during the early stages of this revival, the Carmelite masters at Salamanca would influence a young clerical student who would come to be known as St. John of the Cross. See Crisogono de Jesus, *The Life of St. John of the Cross*, 33.

⁵⁸ "We can see [moral causality's] roots in Scotus, Bonaventure and other Franciscans

raments as “occasions” for the reception of grace. The sacraments were causes of grace *sine qua non*: necessary conditions for the reception of grace established by divine decree.⁵⁹ Duns Scotus expands upon this by speaking of the relationship between merit and reward as a kind of wage contract. Scotus argued that the sacraments conferred grace not because of any intrinsic power or form contained within them, but because God has promised to give graces to those who receive the sacraments.⁶⁰ To this extent, Scotus’s mature Nominalism can be seen as a mature manifestation of something already proposed by Bonaventure.⁶¹ By describing the instrumentality of the sacraments solely in terms of merit and reward, Scotus’s position stands as a deeper expression of the extrinsic tradition. Although Bonaventure proposed sacramental occasionalism as a means of preserving God’s causal role in the sacraments, in committing to this model, however preliminarily, he starts down a path which will close in behind the Franciscan thinkers who follow him, making it impossible

... the chain of thought is clear, even if the diverse expressions of it do not state it in the same way, or leave implicit what is explicit in another form.” Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 158. Representatives of the Jesuit theological tradition in twentieth-century Spain include Ockham (*In 4*, d. 1, q. 1, 2) and Biel (*In 4*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 2, concl. 7) in this lineage as well. *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, vol. 4, *De Sacramentis*, *De Novissimis*, 65n4. (This series was produced by the Spanish Jesuits in the mid-twentieth century). In at least this much, Jesuits and Dominicans are not divided theologically: a clear lineage exists linking the early Franciscan tradition, the Nominalists, and later proponents of moral causality. This opinion is shared by twentieth-century Dominican commentators as well such as Aloisius Ciappi. Ciappi, *De Sacramentis in Communi*, 70–71. Ciappi is not alone in this regard, but rather stands in continuity with the classical Thomist commentatorial tradition: Bañez argues that in various ways, Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure, Ockham, Richard Fishacre, Scotus, Durandus, and Gabriel Biel all hold that the sacraments are causes of grace because, either through their presence or use, God is moved to confer grace. Bañez, *Comentarios Ineditos a la Tercera Parte de Santo Tomas*, vol. 2, *De Sacramentis*: QQ. 60–90, 44.

⁵⁹ For Bonaventure, only the sacramental character or *ornatus* can be attributed to efficient causality. Concerning grace, the sacraments function as “occasions” or “dispositions” for grace. *In IV Sent.* d. 1, p. 1, a. 1, q. 4, resp., s.c. 4, et al. Lampen, *De Causalitate Sacramentorum*, 22–23.

⁶⁰ “Merita sunt causa instrumentalis respectu praemii et quod per merita acquiritur praemium.” *Ox. In IV Sent.* d.1 q. 5: *Op. om.*, vol. 16, 167. See Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments*, 79–80. Lampen, *De Causalitate Sacramentorum*, 56–57.

⁶¹ While Bonaventure and Scotus differ in many ways, in the case of sacramental cause later Thomists saw a deep continuity between the two. See Bañez, *Comentarios Ineditos a la Tercera Parte de Santo Tomas*, vol. 2, *De Sacramentis*: QQ. 60–90, 44. Ciappi, *De Sacramentis in Communi*, 71. Gallagher, *Significando Causant*, 152.

to retreat to the place from whence they had come. Unlike their Thomist contemporaries, for Scotus and later the Nominalists there can be no analogical resolution to the problem of instrumental efficient causality.

Melchior Cano's theory of moral causality is based on a similar system of promise, merit and reward.⁶² Cano argues that there is a distinction between natural (or physical) causes, which involve physical motion, and moral causes, which involve the exercise of free will. Cano argues that physical causes cannot reach the essence of the sacramental action, while moral causes can. To illustrate this, he distinguishes between a stick in the hand used for murder (natural cause) and the one who counsels murder (moral cause).⁶³ (This distinction is significant because the image of a stick in the hand is used by Aquinas to describe the sacraments as instrumental causes).⁶⁴ Cano is clear that a moral cause does not cause a physical change of any sort, but functions in the order of merit.⁶⁵ Using Scriptural texts from Paul, 1 John and Revelation, Cano argues that the causal power

⁶² Cano uses the idea of a note as an example of a moral cause: "Consequentia videtur esse nota, quoniam id vocamus causam, qua applicata sequitur effectus." *Relectio de Sacramentis*, pars IV, in Melchior Cano, *Opera* (Padua: Typis Seminarii, 1734) (facsimile reprint of the Hyacinth Serry edition, Kila, MT: Kessinger, 2011), 483.

⁶³ "Causas esse in duplici differentia, alteras naturales, alteras morales. Morales autem appellamus causas liberas, quae scilicet libere movent: ut qui consulit, qui imperat, ejus rei causa est, quae per ejus aut imperium, aut consilium efficitur. Juxta quam distinctionem cum actio peccati dupliciter consideratur, & in ordine effectuum naturalium, & in ordine effectuum moralium, Deus quidem causa naturalis dicitur actionis, quae peccatum est: concurrit siquidem ad brachii motionem, qua hominem interficio, quemadmodum & coelum, motorque angelus simul etiam concurrit. At concursus hic naturalis est: non tamen illius actionis Deus est causa moralis: neque enim aut consulit, aut praecipit, quin potius prohibet. Inter has autem causas discrimen est. Nam naturales suos effectus attingunt per vim a natura inditam, ut ignis calefacit per calorem. Morales vero non attingunt actione physica effectus suos, nec influunt, aut producunt qualitates aliquas. Neque enim oportet, ut qui consulit homicidium, actione aliqua physica & naturali quicquam efficiat, quemadmodum natura efficere consuevit." *Relect. de Sacram.*, Pars IV, concl. 6, in Cano, *Opera*, 488.

⁶⁴ *ST III*, q. 65 a. 5, co.

⁶⁵ "Deinde magnopere considerandum, omnia quae de Sacramentis novae legis asseruntur, eadem & de sanguine Christi in sacris literis affirmari—1. Joan. I. Sanguis Jesu Christi emundat nos ab omni peccato. Apoc. I. Lavit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo. & c. 12. Vicerunt eum propter sanguinem agni: & ad Rom. 3. quem proposuit Deus propitiationem in sanguine ipsius. Eodem ergo sensu Sacramenta dici poterunt lavate, mundare, causae esse nostrae victoria ac remissionis peccatorum, quo sanguis Christi lavat, mundat, peccataque remittit." *Relect. de Sacram.*, Pars IV, concl. 6, in Cano, *Opera*, 488.

at work in the sacraments is the blood of Jesus Christ.⁶⁶ Although these Biblical references are uncontroversial in themselves, Cano uses them to propose a sacramental theology based largely on a legalistic sense of redemptive merit: the sacraments are moral causes of grace in which the blood of Christ pays the price for our sins. Cano uses the example of a Christian held captive by the Turks, for whom a price of ransom must be paid. Cano argues that a ransom such as this is a true instrumental cause of the redemption of the prisoner, but in the moral rather than the natural (or physical) sense.⁶⁷ While these statements are not without their clear Biblical resonances, the reduction of the sacraments to an otherwise arbitrary external legalism is less than desirable.

Cano's theory of moral causality was the favored position of many theologians during the modern period, including Jesuits involved in the Molinist controversy such as Vázquez (d. 1604) and de Lugo (d. 1660); moral causality was also favored by many of their nineteenth-century descendants such as Franzelin (d. 1886).⁶⁸

Subsequent Thomists such as Domingo Bañez who were prominent figures in the *De Auxiliis* controversy would respond with strong criticism to Cano's theory, rearticulating the position of Cajetan in the face of these new challenges.⁶⁹ Bañez reminds his reader that Aquinas

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "Sacramenta esse causas efficientes instrumentales nostrae salutis, gratiae, & iustitiae, loquendo de causa morali . . . Quemadmodum, si ego essem apud Turcas captivus, & eum qui daret pecunias redemptionis, videlicet pretium, & manum qua pecunias porrigeret, & pecunias etiam ipsas, quae sunt instrumenta ad redimendum, redemptionis causas esse, non naturales quidem, sed morales, nemo sanae mentis ibit inficias." Ibid, 489.

⁶⁸ Auer argues that the history of Cano's theory begins with Bonaventure, and can be traced though the Scotists to the Jesuits of the modern period who held the Molinist position (e.g., Vázquez, de Lugo, and Franzelin). Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments*, 79. The connection intimated here by Auer between sacramental causality and the *de Auxiliis* controversy further highlights the importance of the definition of grace in this debate and its governing role as final cause in sacramental motion.

⁶⁹ See Bañez, *Comentarios Inéditos a la Tercera Parte de Santo Tomas*, vol. 2, *De Sacramentis*: QQ. 60-90, 43-51, et al. Bañez argues that, while Christ's passion is certainly the meritorious cause of our redemption, this assertion does not substitute for a discussion of the role of the sacramental signs themselves as physical instruments in the conferral of grace. Bañez points out that the leaden coin found in Nominalist explanations of sacramental causality and the redemptive merit of Cano's moral causality both need some form of physical instrumentality to explain the actual accomplishment of the sacramental action itself. See Bañez, *Comentarios Inéditos a la*

himself acknowledges a category of meritorious causality present in the redemptive power of Christ's passion; however, this teaching is already couched within the framework of instrumental efficient causality, the humanity functioning as conjoined and the sacraments as separated instruments, effecting grace in the soul. Bañez argues that although the redemptive merits of the passion can be partially described by Cano's moral causality, the actual functioning of the sacraments themselves cannot. Recall that Augustine taught that the elements, taken up in union with the Word, became sacraments, working toward the sanctification of man by the power of God. Later thinkers such as Hugh of St. Victor use the category of *instrumentality* to describe the *way in which* the sacraments effect what they signify. Cano's reworking of Nominalist occasionalism raises for us a new question: is it sufficient to view the sacraments as rites ordained by God for our use, the successful completion of which God subsequently rewards? More fundamentally, should the action of sacraments themselves be understood as something we do, or something God does? In response to Cano, Bañez describes sacramental instrumentality by giving the example of a pencil worked by the hand of an artist to effect an image on a sheet of paper—so too are the sacraments moved by the action of the Holy Spirit as physical causes to effect grace in the human soul.⁷⁰ Bañez highlights the importance of the Thomistic doctrine referred to as “physical perfective causality,” in which the sacraments are understood as instrumental or analogical extensions of divine potency, functioning according to God's wisdom.

Interestingly, Francisco Suárez (d. 1617), who reacted in part against the Nominalist tradition and rejected Cano's theory of moral causality,⁷¹ argued for a version of physical causality, claiming to affirm the teaching of Cajetan in this regard. However, the differences between these two thinkers concerning the concept of physical premotion (which had such

Tercera Parte de Santo Tomas, vol. 2, *De Sacramentis*: QQ. 60-90, 47-48.

⁷⁰ “Sicut revera penicillus attingit ad productionem imaginis quatenus movetur ab artifice, ita sacramenta attingant ad productionem gratiae quatenus sunt instrumenta et movetur a Spiritu Sancto.” Bañez, *Comentarios Ineditos a la Tercera Parte de Santo Tomas*, vol. 2, *De Sacramentis*: QQ. 60-90, 47-48. Bañez is commenting on *ST* III, q. 62, a. 1.

⁷¹ In *ST* III, q. 62, a. 4, disp. 9 sec. II n. 10, 18-23.

wide-ranging implications for the doctrine of grace) affect their respective understandings of sacramental instrumentality as well.⁷²

⁷² Suárez affirms Cajetan's use of obediential potency in the context of sacramental causality seemingly without qualification. In 3, q. 62, a. 4, disp. 9 sec. II n. 13. However, Thomists are quick to point out that Suárez's failure to accept the Thomist doctrine of *physical promotion* compromises his understanding of obediential potency. For Suárez this is an *active* potency rather than a *passive* one. See Ciappi, *De Sacramentis in Communi*, 73n10. Suárez presents his teaching on *active* obediential potency in the context of the sacraments as an interpretation of a familiar Augustinian phrase: "Quaenam sit illa virtus, per quam possunt instrumenta Dei concurrere, quando eleuantur. Diximus enim non esse rem aliquam superadditam, sed esse ipsammet entitatem rei, quae hoc ipso, quod creata est, et subordinata primo agenti, est in *potentia obedientiali active* . . . Haec enim ratio obedientialis potentiae communis est sacramentis, quorum elevatio divina solum in hoc consistit, quod Deus altiori modo concurrat dando auxilium sufficiens, ut res operetur secundum hanc potentiam. Necque ad hoc refert, quod sacramenta sint imperfecta in sua entitate. Quia hic concursus non fundatur in naturali eorum perfectione, sed in praedicta virtute obedientiali et in infinita Dei virtute, cui omnia subordinantur . . . Quamquam fortasse non efficiant solum per ipsum motum, qui est ens imperfectum, seu modus entis, et significatur nomine ablutionis vel unctionis, sed per ipsammet res quae moventur, vel applicantur, dum sacramenta fiunt, vel accipiuntur, ut per oleum, aquam, species panis, etc.; sic enim dixit Augustinus aquam esse, quae corpus tangit et cor abluit." In 3, q. 62, a. 4, disp. 9 sec. I n. 21 (emphasis mine). Francisci Suarez, *Opera Omnia*, tom. 20, *Commentaria ac Disputationes in Teriam Partem D. Thomae, de Sacramentis in Genere, de Baptismo, de Confirmatione, de Eucharistia usque ad Questionem LXXIV* (Paris: Vivés, 1877), 147. Suárez considers this active form of obediential potency more thoroughly in his commentary on the *Prima Pars*: disp. 31 sect. 5 and disp. 36 sect. 6. Further divisions between Suárez and Cajetan emerge regarding the issue of natural form and potency in the context of instrumental causality. Where Cajetan says that the natural form of the instrument is taken up in the potency of the principle agent, Suárez seems to imply that it remains, to be assisted by divine power in the attainment of its supernatural end. Aquinas's own teaching on this subject in the *Summa* directly denies this in *ST* III, q. 62 a. 1, co.; Cajetan's commentary on this same text reinforces this teaching. Elsewhere Cajetan returns to this concept, using the example of a musician and his instrument to demonstrate the relationship that exists between a principal agent, the instrumental causes he employs, and the final effects that only he can intend: "Exemplum utriusque motus perspicue in cithara: cuius fides si moveantur a non-musico, sonabunt tantum; si vero moveantur a musico, efficiunt non solum sonum, sed sonum musicum, qui est effectus proprius artis musicae." Cajetan, Commentary on *ST* III, q. 62 a. 4, n. IV. Other non-Thomist theologians of the modern period argued for so-called "physical perfective causality" as well: Belarmine (*De sacramentis in genere*, 2.11), Valentia (*Commentaria theologica*, 4 disp. 3, q. 3, p. 1), Ripalda (*De ente supernaturali*, disp. 40 s. 3 n. 13). See *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, vol. 4, *De Sacramentis, De Novissimis*, 71n3. Even here, however, in a manual sympathetic to the Suárezian approach, the Thomist and Suárezian traditions are explicitly contrasted as intrinsic and extrinsic approaches, respectively, to efficient causality in the sacraments. *Ibid.*, 71.

Trent

The Council of Trent (1545–63) proved to be a major watershed for sacramental theology. Called principally to respond to the crisis of the Protestant Reformation, the council clearly teaches that the sacraments both contain (*continere*) grace and confer (*conferre*) or give (*dare*) it to their recipients, and that their use (or a desire therefore) is necessary for salvation.⁷³ The council's description of the sacraments as containing and conferring grace is reminiscent of prescholastic Victorine Augustinianism, and clearly rules out those most radical forms of occasionalism which had taken root in the doctrines of the Protestant reformers. However, this acknowledgement does little to resolve the longstanding conflict between the intrinsic and extrinsic approaches to sacramental causality that developed after the time of the Victorines.

Of the theological advisors present at the Council, many favored a more extrinsicist approach to sacramental causality. Although Cajetan died before Trent (d. 1534), Melchior Cano was deeply involved in drafting the council documents, particularly the treatise on the sacraments.⁷⁴ Some have argued that the ambiguity present in the final draft of the council document reveals that the council fathers sought to focus solely on the Protestant error, avoiding the condemnation of existing Catholic positions.⁷⁵ Some scholars argue that the use of the word *con-*

⁷³ "Si quis dixerit, sacramenta novae legis non continere gratiam, quam significant, aut gratiam ipsam non ponentibus obicam non conferre, quasi signa tantum externa sint acceptae per fidem gratiae vel iustitiae, et notae quaedam christianae professionis, quibus apud homines, discernuntur fideles ab infidelibus: a.s." Conc. Trid. Sess. 7 decl. 1 c. 6. "Si quis dixerit, non dari gratiam per huiusmodi sacramenta semper et omnibus, quantum est ex parte Dei, etiam si rite ea suscipiant, sed aliquando et aliquibus: a.s." Conc. Trid. Sess. 7 decl. 1 c. 7. "Si quis dixerit, per ipsa novae legis sacramenta ex opere operato non conferri gratiam, sed solam fidem divinae promissionis ad gratiam consequendam sufficere: a.s." Conc. Trid. Sess. 7 decl. 1 c. 8. "Si quis dixerit, sacramenta novae legis non esse ad salutem necessaria, sed superflua, et sine eis aut eorum voto per solam fidem homines a Deo gratiam iustificationis adipisci, licet omnia singulis necessaria non sint: a.s." Conc. Trid. Sess. 7 decl. 1 c. 4.

⁷⁴ Cano was the theologian for Philip II at the Council of Trent. He was particularly involved in framing the Council's teaching on the Eucharist and Penance. ODCC, s.v. "Cano, Melchior." Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 297.

⁷⁵ While the explicit definition of the sacraments as instruments was proposed in a plenary session, it was rejected in the final draft in favor of the more minimalist phrase *ex opere operato*. Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 10. H. Lennerz states: "In canone praeparato concilii Tridentini legabatur: 'per ipsa sacramentorum

ferre in the Council documents is an intentional attempt to avoid the use of the word *causare*.⁷⁶ This is not to say that the council fathers did not believe that the sacraments were causes—rather, it seems that it was deemed most useful to avoid an official teaching that would favor one school's interpretation of the word *causare* over another's. In the climate of the Protestant Reformation, further division within the Church over sacramental theology was extremely undesirable; instead, universally acceptable language was actively sought so as to present a unified stance against Protestant doctrine. This is not to say, however, that all causal theories are equally in accord with the council. Although Trent did not advocate for a specific causal model, the council does clearly teach against radical forms of occasional causality, building on the *Decree for the Armenians* from the Council of Florence (1439), which also insists that the sacraments “contain” and “confer” the grace they cause.⁷⁷ While the sacramental doctrine of the Protestants was radically occasional and extrinsicist, other ostensibly Catholic theories that we have already examined share some of these tendencies. Recall that Bonaventure and the Nominalists favored an occasionalism which emphasized divine causality and saw little causal role for the sacraments themselves beyond disposing the recipient in faith and devotion to receive the grace which God alone confers.

Trent clearly ruled out, among other things, theories which reduced

opera; haec paucis placebant, quia erant verba Lutheri; sed pluribus displicebant, qui proposuerunt vel ‘per ipsa sacramenta,’ vel ‘per ipsa sacramenta tamquam instrumenta,’ vel ‘per sacramenta ex opere operato,’ ‘per usum sacramentorum,’ ‘per opus operatum sacramentorum,’ ‘ex vi, virtute ipsorum sacramentorum.’ Electa et approbata deinde est forma ‘per ipsa sacramenta ex opere operato.’ Dicit ergo concilium, per ipsum ritum sacramentalem valide positum dari gratiam; hoc definitur contra Protestantem; hinc proxime et directe in oppositione ad opus operantis ipsius subiecti, sed ex sensu quem terminus eo tempore universim habebat opponitur etiam operi operantis ministri.” From this much, we can see that the Council actively sought language that would target the Protestants without causing further internal division. H. Lennerz, *De Sacramentis Novae Legis in Genere*, editio secunda (Roma: Typis Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1939), 220. See also *Sacrae Theologiae Summa*, vol. 4, *De Sacramentis*, *De Novissimis*, 66.

⁷⁶ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 10–12.

⁷⁷ DS 1310–11, *Decr. Pro Armeniis*. See P. Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments: A Study in Positive Theology*, authorized translation from the French edition, 4th ed. (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1930), 182–83.

the sacraments to mere external signs.⁷⁸ Aquinas's original objection to the extrinsicist approach was that it reduced the causality operative in the sacraments of the new law to the accidental status of a sign, no different from the sacraments of the old law.⁷⁹ To this extent, Trent's determination to avoid sacramental models which reduce the sacraments to mere outward signs broadly reflects Aquinas's original concerns.

After Trent, theologians tended to avoid the most radical positions of pre-Tridentine Nominalism because it too closely resembled the teachings condemned by the Council.⁸⁰ This aversion to radical occasionalism did not lead to widespread acceptance of the Thomistic position, however. Aside from ruling out the extremes of occasional causality, many theologians after Trent remained very willing to consider theories of causality which were less than Aristotelian in their structural underpinnings. It was generally held that physical causality, taught by the Thomists, and moral causality, held by (post-Tridentine) Scotists and many Jesuits, were both equally compatible with the letter of Trent.⁸¹ Generally speaking, the positions established in the theological schools during the Tridentine period regarding sacramental causality persisted without significant change until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although Cajetan's position came to be accepted almost universally by Thomists, it was widely misunderstood and rejected by many other theologians during this period.

However, Trent did affirm that the sacraments function *ex opere operato*, rather than *ex opere operantis*.⁸² This distinction—between the working of the sacraments themselves (*opere operato*) and our use of them (*opere operantis*)—was developed during the middle ages as a means of preserving an Augustinian distinction with which we are al-

⁷⁸ Conc. Trid. Sess. 7 decl. 1 c. 6. See note 73 for text.

⁷⁹ "Sed si quis recte consideret, itse modus non transcendit rationem signi. Nam denarius plumbeus non est nisi quoddam signum regiae ordinationis de hoc quod pecunia recipiatur ab isto." *ST* III, q. 62, a. 6, co. The position described by Thomas here using the example of a leaden coin was held by Fishacre (*In IV Sent.*, d. 1), Kilwardby (*In IV Sent.*, d. 1) and Bonaventure (*In IV Sent.*, d. 1, a. unic., qu. 1); cited in *Summa Theologiae*, Editiones Paulinae (Torino: Commerciale Edizioni Paoline s.r.l., 1988), 2172n3. See also *ST* III, q. 62, a. 6.

⁸⁰ A strict *sine qua non* occasionalism was almost universally recognized as unacceptable after Trent. Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 185.

⁸¹ See Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, trans. Patrick Lynch, ed. James Canon Bastible (Cork: Mercier Press, 1958), 330.

⁸² Conc. Trid. Sess. 7 decl. 1 c. 8. See note 73 for text.

ready familiar, forged during the Donatist controversy: the actions of an unworthy minister are distinct from the action and effect of the rite itself.⁸³ Aquinas himself insisted that this distinction differentiated between the sacraments of the old law and the new: while the sacraments of the old law function as signs which do not in themselves confer grace, the sacraments of the new law work *ex opere operato*, conferring grace in an intrinsic manner consonant with the Augustinian approach, functioning as instrumental causes participant in divine power.⁸⁴ Subsequent Thomists saw the working of the sacraments *ex opere operato* as an essential means of defending an intrinsic conception of the sacraments as “physical” or efficient instrumental causes.⁸⁵

Trent clearly teaches that the sacraments are effective because of a power intrinsic to their operation; as such a view of the sacraments as fundamentally human actions that God subsequently rewards is radically inadequate. As we have said previously, one of the questions raised by moral causality and other extrinsicist systems is this: should the sacraments be understood fundamentally as something we do, or as something God does? There is no question that, for Cano and the extrinsicist tradition that went before him, God—and not human agents—is responsible for causing grace. But what about the sacraments themselves? Many occasionalist theories used the example of a leaden coin, made valuable only by decree of the king. Applied to the sacraments, the coin frequently represents human sacramental action—that is, a sign we invoke or participate in, such as water being used to wash. Later Protestant sacramental theories would exhibit highly exaggerated forms of occasionalism, which Trent clearly condemns. But Trent’s insistence that the sacraments function *ex opere operato* also militates against an understanding of the sacraments as ritual human actions which God rewards, and seems to speak in favor of an intrinsic causal approach—it is the working of the sacraments themselves—*ex opere operato*—which sanctifies the human person.

Despite this Tridentine teaching, however, many theologians in the modern period and into the first half of the twentieth century found

⁸³ Pourrat, *Theology of the Sacraments*, 162–65.

⁸⁴ *In IV Sent.* d. 1, q. 1, a. 5. *ST* III, q. 62, a. 6, co.

⁸⁵ Ciappi, *De Sacramentis in Communi*, 69–70.

Cano's moral causality to be an attractive alternative to an unmodified occasionalism—it shared many of the basic characteristics which made occasionalism appealing in the first place. However, moral causality had the added benefit of appearing less extrinsicist and tenuous, because of Cano's added emphasis on the presence of the blood of Christ *in* the sacraments. Although emphasizing this Pauline concept⁸⁶ does not resolve the important questions raised in the scholastic debates over sacramental cause, it does reinforce the sense that there is some saving reality contained in and conferred by the sacraments themselves, even if this explanation is lacking on speculative grounds and the extrinsic legalism of the Nominalist approach is not avoided.⁸⁷

Contemporary Implications

At the beginning of the twentieth century, interest in sacramental causality among theologians remained widespread.⁸⁸ During this time, Louis Billot proposed a then-popular theory of sacramental causality called *in-*

⁸⁶ Cano refers to Romans 3:25. "Iustificati gratis per gratiam ipsius, per redemptionem, quae est in Christo Iesu, quem proposuit Deus propitiationem per fidem in sanguine ipsius, ad ostensionem iustitiae suae propter remissionem praecedentium delictorum in sustentatione Dei, ad ostensionem iustitiae eius in hoc tempore: ut sit ipse iustus, et iustificans eum, qui est ex fide Iesu Christi" (Rom 3:24–26). Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado, eds., *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Clementiam novo editio*, 12th ed. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 2005). This text, taken from the Clementine Vulgate, reads "*per fidem* in sanguine ipsius," where Cano's citation omits the phrase *per fidem*. While this omission may very well be the result of textual variants, the larger context of faith in Christ in which this passage occurs renders it a less obvious reference to the blood of Christ as a form of efficient sacramental causality. However, Cano also employs other passages such as 1 Jn 1:7, where the image of washing from sins has more discernable baptismal overtones. Cano further references 1 Cor 1, wherein the connection between Christian baptism and the crucifixion is clearly drawn. *Relect. de Sacram.*, Pars IV, concl. 6, in Melchior Cano, *Opera*, 488. See note 65 for portions of Cano's text.

⁸⁷ Despite its deep continuity with the Nominalist tradition, many authors see moral causality as somewhat distinctive because of its heavy focus on merit and the notion that the sacraments "contain" the blood of Christ, the price of our redemption. It is this language of containing that makes moral causality appeal as a post-Tridentine model. See Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 299.

⁸⁸ We cannot offer a comprehensive history of sacramental causality in the twentieth century and its many related theological topics here. With the exception of Odo Cappel, the selection of authors presented here all engage more or less directly with the classical causal categories employed by their predecessors.

tentional causality, which emphasized the identity of the sacraments as signs which expressed the intention of the agent—although their material elements did not contain a spiritual force as such, their sign function was similar to that of a will, that conveys real property to an heir.⁸⁹ When compared with the instrumental physical motion of Aquinas's causal system, the difference between this theory and moral causality seems minimal. Billot sees a kind of physical effect in the character, but the disposition to receive grace itself is a kind of moral cause.⁹⁰ Billot's emphasis on sign indicates a broader shift in sensibilities that would manifest itself elsewhere in theological circles. This is due in part to the liturgical movement; equally significant was the rise in existentialist alternatives to classical metaphysics. By this point, however, the sacramental systems inspired by moral causality, and their overtones of legalism, seemed less appealing to some. As a result, many sought completely new alternatives. Influenced in part by Rahner and Chauvet, in the mid-twentieth century widespread interest arose in the use of categories such as symbolism and experiential participation as modes of expressing sacramental efficacy.⁹¹ This interest in experience and liturgy-as-event has its roots in the mystery theology of Odo Casel, and to some extent the liturgical movement begun by Romano Guardini and others.⁹² When moral causality rose to

⁸⁹ Billot's theory can be found in his work *De Ecclesiae Sacramentis*, t. I in III S. theol. q. 62.3, et al. See A. H. Maltha, "De Causalitate intentionali Sacramentorum animadversiones quaedam," *Angelicum* 15 (1938): 337n1.

⁹⁰ A. H. Maltha provides a useful description of Billot's theory in comparison with the works of Aquinas (both his early and his mature writings). Maltha, "De Causalitate intentionali Sacramentorum animadversiones quaedam," 337–66.

⁹¹ Fully formed alternative sacramental systems emerged in the middle and later twentieth century and had their roots in these historical developments. If time and space permitted us to do so, a study of Karl Rahner's symbolic approach to the sacraments would be of great interest. For a treatment of this subject generally sympathetic to Rahner, see Daniel A. Tappeiner, "Sacramental Causality in Aquinas and Rahner: Some Critical Thoughts," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1975): 243–57. Louis-Marie Chauvet has also provided an influential account of sacramentality, using the Heideggerian notion of symbol and event. See Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 46–83, et al. For a critique of this approach from a Thomistic perspective, see Bernhard Blankenhorn, "The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 4 (2006): 255–94.

⁹² The liturgical movement served as a context for the work of both Casel and Schillebeeckx. See Erik Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx: A Theologian in His History*, vol. 1, *A Catholic Theology of Culture (1914–1965)*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Continuum, 2003), 199–207.

prominence in the early modern period, it represented a shift from one form of efficient cause to another: originally, moral causality was proposed as a (non-Aristotelian) form of efficient instrumental causality. However, Casel seems to express the general sentiments of the liturgical movement in shifting the conversation away from speculative arguments about efficient causality entirely and focusing instead on the experience of entering into the mystery of the liturgy.⁹³ Casel frequently interprets the institution of the Eucharist in light of texts such as First Corinthians 11:26.⁹⁴ He portrays the Eucharist as a representation of—and a participation in—the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, under the veil of mystery.⁹⁵ This approach begins with liturgical experience, and speaks of the gift of grace in light of our participation in the mystery of Christ. Under this approach, no kind of efficient cause is explicitly proposed as an explanation of sacramental efficacy. Rather, it is understood that, through our participation in the represented mysteries of Christ, the sacraments have their effect. Although Casel is not particularly interested in traditional speculative categories, his emphasis on mystery can be understood as part of a larger trend in theology during the modern period. Much of the disinterest in traditional causal language during this period was driven by a desire to escape the empty legalism which had marked those sacramental systems influenced by the Nominalist tradition;⁹⁶ it would be extremely unfortunate if in some way, these same

⁹³ See Odo Casel, *The Mystery of Christian Worship and Other Writings*, ed. Burkhard Neunheuser (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1962), 58–60, et al.

⁹⁴ “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26, RSV). See Odo Casel, *Die Liturgie als Mysterienfeier*, vol. 9, *Ecclesia Orans: Zur Einführung in den Geist der Liturgie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1923), 63.

⁹⁵ Referencing the institution of the Eucharist, Casel says: “Deshalb sagt auch Paulus (1 Kor. 11, 26) ‘So oft ihr dieses Brot esset und den Kelch trinket, verkündet ihr den Tod des Herrn, bis er kommt.’ . . . Dieser Tod aber war unsre Erlösung; er findet seinen krönenden Abschluß in der glorreichen Auferstehung, wie ja auch der nunmehr in der Eucharistie Gegenwärtige der Auferstandene und Verklärte ist. So wird die Eucharistiefeier zum Gedächtnis des gesamten Erlösungswerks; die Menschwerdung, das Leiden, die Auferstehung, die Glorie des Gottmenschen ist Gegenstand der Gedenkfeier. Vielmehr ist der Herr, wenn auch mystisch verhüllt, selbst unter seiner Gemeinde zugegen; er vollzieht immer wieder unter ihnen sein Opfer.” Ibid., 63–64.

⁹⁶ Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to the Sacraments in the Catholic Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 92–96, 134–37.

tendencies were not definitively banished, but merely cloaked in mystery. Some scholars see the emphasis on mystery that appears during the modern period as an extension of the Nominalist emphasis on the radical omnipotence and freedom of God and its accompanying reticence regarding causal connections. Where causal explanation fails, the rhetoric of mystery can appear as a supplement for metaphysical explanation.⁹⁷

The shift away from the traditional language of causality was welcomed by many theologians in the first half of the twentieth century, who wanted a renewed focus on the sacraments as signs rather than continued debate over the nature of the sacraments as causes.⁹⁸ It seems that for many, the interminable debates waged over ossified school positions had lost its savor—more to the point, the significance of the question of causality was no longer of central concern.

Scholastic explanations of efficient causality tend to begin and end with divine intentionality. For Thomists, whether one holds to perfective or dispositive physical causality, the sacraments function as instrumental efficient causes operating under the agency of God, whose motive power is extended analogically through the instrument as a *vis fluens*.⁹⁹ While other traditions from the scholastic period such as Nominalism may have lacked the analogical subtlety to speak clearly about instrumentality, they certainly did not underemphasize divine volition. Moral causality, although distinct from the scholastic tradition, also focuses somewhat univocally on divine agency and identifies the value of the blood of Christ alone as a form of efficient cause. Thus, most of the standing theological positions found in seminary manuals at the beginning of the twentieth century expressed various models of efficient causality, all with reference to divine agency. In Casel and his confreres, however, we see a strong focus on the liturgical subject in history as the recipient of the fruit of a mystery in which he participates through experience. The ideas of Casel and his contemporaries reflect the turn toward the subject

⁹⁷ *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche (LThK)* (1965), s.v. “Voluntarismus,” 871–72.

⁹⁸ For evidence of this, see either of the following: Leeming, “Recent Trends in Sacramental Theology,” 204–9, et al., or Colman O’Neil, “The Role of the Recipient and Sacramental Signification,” 2 parts, *The Thomist* 21 (1958): 257–301, 508–41. Many other examples of this can be found during this period. Of particular interest is the work of Rahner and Schillebeeckx in this regard.

⁹⁹ Aquinas defines the actuation of potency through efficient motion as power flowing toward an end. See note 45.

that is characteristic of post-Copernican thought. Casel's mystery theology can offer many insights about the nature Christian participation in liturgical action, and its popularity might also partially explain the disinclination of many post-*Ressourcement* theologians to appropriate sacramental models that emphasize with stronger language the category of efficient cause. For some scholars, however, the ambiguities of Casel's theory only further beg the question of sacramental cause: if the sacraments are fundamentally encounters with mystery, *how* do they cause what we say they effect?¹⁰⁰ Casel's disengagement from this question is a result of his own methodological choices. However, some scholars have asserted that Casel's position seems to be essentially a form of moral causality.¹⁰¹ Although Casel's supporters might bristle at this, the suggestion seems plausible. At the very least, the absence of any discernable form of physical instrumentality in his system could point to a minimalist approach to efficiency.

Although not everyone in the twentieth century was convinced by the arguments of Casel, there was a decided shift toward liturgy-as-event using the category of symbol or sign, even among those of Thomist sympathies. Technically speaking, the focus here can be described in terms of the familiar threefold division of sacramental reality: *sacramentum tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, and *res tantum*. When this sequence was first formed, discussions of efficient causality in the sacraments frequently centered on the production of grace. For Aristotle and Aquinas, physical efficiency is tied to the final cause, which in this case is the perfection of the subject in grace. This is also called the *res tantum*. (This is especially true when Thomists speak of sacramental efficacy in the perfective sense, as opposed to the dispositive). For some, a perceived focus on the causality of the *res tantum* alone seemed to preclude serious consideration of the sacraments as signs (*sacramentum tantum*). Because of the turn to the subject, there was an increasing tendency to view the sacraments through the lens of experience, which produced a much different perspective. If we view the categories of *sacramentum tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, and *res tantum* according to the chronology of human experience, we see that the *res et sacramentum*, as both sign

¹⁰⁰ See McShane, "On the Causality of the Sacraments," 433–34.

¹⁰¹ See Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 288.

and thing effected, represents the liturgical event. Because of this, the *res et sacramentum* becomes the locus for (at least) three kinds of theological concern: ecclesiology, liturgical experience (or active participation), and symbolism.

In the twentieth century, widespread theological interest in viewing the efficacy of the sacraments through the lens of either liturgical event, symbolism or ecclesiology gave renewed focus to the *res et sacramentum* among some Thomists interested in sacramental causality. Because dispositive causality focuses on the natural scope of action proper to the instrument rather than its participation in the potency of the principle agent, the *res et sacramentum* enjoys a special focus under this theory.¹⁰² As a result, interest in the *res et sacramentum* during this period (and therefore by extension dispositive causality) is not always fueled by a close study of the primary texts of Aquinas, but rather by other extratextual concerns.

From the time of Trent until the middle of the twentieth century, the early Thomistic theory of dispositive physical causality was all but abandoned.¹⁰³ Most Thomists followed Cajetan, arguing instead for physical perfective causality. For those twentieth-century dogmatic theologians still concerned to argue for some form of physical causality, however, describing the sacraments as dispositive causes came to have its advantages: dispositive causality effects the *res et sacramentum* directly, while only disposing for the finality of grace (*res tantum*). By shifting the causal focus in this way, it becomes possible to emphasize the causality of the sign action itself as part of the liturgical event of the *res et sacramentum* using traditional speculative categories.¹⁰⁴ Writing in the 1950s, Bernard Lee-

¹⁰² Cajetan notices that one of the principal differences between the *Sentences* and the *Summa* in this regard is that in the *Summa* the natural form of the instrument is taken up in the potency of the principal agent. By contrast, dispositive efficient causality concerns those efficient causes whose natural form cannot “touch” the final cause. See *In IV Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 4, solutio I; *ST III*, q. 62, a. 4, co.; Cajetan, *Commentary on ST III*, q. 62, a. 4, n. IV.

¹⁰³ Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 348.

¹⁰⁴ Although he does not share many of the sensibilities of twentieth-century theologians, Capreolus teaches that dispositive causality, as proposed by Aquinas in the *Sentences*, is focused in a certain sense on the *res et sacramentum*. Because the instrumentality of the sacraments only reaches (pertingunt) the *res et sacramentum* (which is the sacramental character or its equivalent), there is a sense in which the efficacy of the sacraments is focused there. Speaking of material elements as sacra-

ming argues in favor of dispositive physical causality and argues that it is preferable to perfective physical causality because the line of causality passes directly through the sign—it is the symbolic reality that causes—that is, the *res et sacramentum*.¹⁰⁵ This is appealing to Leeming because it focuses attention on the causality present in the sacramental event; it also allows for the articulation of a kind of sacramental cause operative *through* the mystical body of Christ—that is, the Church gathered in liturgical prayer.¹⁰⁶ Whether or not this is faithful to the original thought of Aquinas, this model was appealing to some because of its causal emphasis on sacramental character, which unites us to Christ and imparts a capacity for the reception of sacramental grace through the liturgical action of the Church. Taken in this way, the sacraments *cause* our union with Christ *in* the Church, *through* which we then receive the gift of grace. In this way, Leeming believed that a new articulation of dispositive physical

mental instruments, he says: “Inquantum sunt instrumenta divinae misericordiae justificantis, pertingunt instrumentaliter ad aliquem effectum in ipsa anima, qui primo correspondet sacramentis, sicut est character, vel aliquid hujusmodi. Ad ultimum autem effectum, qui est gratia, non pertingunt etiam instrumentaliter, nisi dispositive, inquantum hoc ad quod instrumentaliter effective pertingunt, est dispositio, quae est necessitas, quantum in se est, ad gratiae susceptionem.” Capreolus, lib. 4 d. 1, 2, 3, q. 1, a. 1 concl. 3. See Johannis Capreoli, *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis*, vol. 6, ed. Ceslaj Paban and Thomae Pègues (Turonibus: Alfred Cattier, 1906), 3–4.

¹⁰⁵ “The earliest and most authoritative commentators on St. Thomas not only accepted the symbolic reality but judged it to be the immediate cause of grace: Herve of Nedellec (Natalis), d. 1323, Paludanus, d. 1342, Capreolus, d. 1444, Sylvester of Ferrara, d. 1528, and Cajetan in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, written about 1493. These theologians developed the system of ‘dispositive’ causality, which explained that the rite causes the symbolic reality, and this in turn, unless there be an impediment, causes grace. Later theologians, however, felt that this concept of sacramental causality was not acceptable, and in consequence paid less attention to the *res et sacramentum*, although they all held it. Thus Cajetan in his *Commentary on the Summa*, and Dominic de Soto, d. 1560, reject the symbolic reality as an explanation of the validity of sacraments and of the ‘reviviscence.’” Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 264. That is, the *res et sacramentum* remains the seat of sacramental character for Cajetan and de Soto (indicated here by the term “reviviscence”), but not the final cause that directs the motion of the efficient cause. Leeming correctly notes that later Thomists shift the emphasis of efficient instrumental causality in the sacraments away from the *res et sacramentum*, where it has only a dispositive relationship with grace, and toward the *res tantum*, where efficient causality truly works toward the perfection of the final cause as a *vis fluens* that touches the final cause.

¹⁰⁶ See Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology*, 346–55.

causality could serve the wider interests of the Church by responding to the ecclesiological and liturgical trends of the early to mid-twentieth century.¹⁰⁷ However, the *way in which* the Church then imparts this grace, the reception of which our membership in the ecclesial body disposes us for, remains an open question.

Other Thomists in the twentieth century also felt that the *res et sacramentum* had ecclesiological significance.¹⁰⁸ Among these must be counted the young Edward Schillebeeckx, who argued that the Church is the fundamental locus for sacramental activity. According to Schillebeeckx, sacraments can be viewed from the perspective of the recipient community or from the perspective of God—either way, the medium through which the sacraments work is the ecclesial symbolism of the Church. This is a sign of the Church's symbolic action, and a "personal symbolic

¹⁰⁷ In 1956, B. Leeming observed that current trends in sacramental theology displayed "an inclusive tendency, greater emphasis upon the mystery of the sacraments, clearer recognition of the permanent efficacy of sacraments and stronger insistence upon the connection between sacraments and the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ." Leeming, "Recent Trends in Sacramental Theology," 204. For Leeming, these trends are "manifest first in an outlook, which tries to reconcile opposing views than to stress differences; for instance on the question of sacramental causality the intransigent disputes about "moral," "physical" and "intentional" causality have far less prominence and the effort is rather to incorporate into synthesis the differing elements stressed by different theologians...the trend is genial, but sometimes results in a lack of clearness and blunt facing of the problems." Ibid. Leeming lists the following authors as exhibiting these sentiments: Scheeben, Billot, Gonthier, Vonier, de Lubac (specifically referencing *Catholicism* and *Corpus Mysticum*), Mersch, N. M. Haring, Landgraf, Weisweiler, Danielou, H. Rahner, Graber, Roguet, Haynal, Marin-Sola, Bouüessé, A. M. Henry, L. Richard, M. M. Philipon, Taymans d'Eypernon, and A. Piolanti. Ibid., 204n1.

¹⁰⁸ For an example of this tendency, see Toshiyuki Miyakawa, "The Ecclesial Meaning of the *Res et Sacramentum*: The Sevenfold Cultic Status in the Visible Church as the Effect of the Sacraments," *The Thomist* 31 (1967): 381–444. J. M. Donahue states that "The special sacrament-community orientation of Vatican II theology invites renewed attention to the doctrine of the sacramental character. For in the traditional sacramental synthesis this instrumental participation in Christ's priestly power and mission is vitally involved in both the existential liturgical action and in its continuing influence on the Christian soul. The character is essential to every phase of the Church's sacramentality." John M. Donahue, "Sacramental Character: The State of the Question," *The Thomist* 31 (1967): 445. For a recent attempt to adapt Thomistic sacramental doctrine in light of the teaching of *Lumen Gentium*, see Benoît-Dominique de la Soujeole, "The Economy of Salvation: Entitative Sacramentality and Operative Sacramentality," *The Thomist* 75 (2011): 537–53.

act of Christ through the institutional medium of the Church.”¹⁰⁹ This ecclesial focus within the category of sacramental sign or symbolism is, broadly speaking, congruent with other trends in the twentieth century that desired to speak of the sacraments less as causes than as ecclesial events. This focus on ecclesiology in the context of the sacraments reflects a more anthropological—and less metaphysical—understanding of the sacraments as causes. It goes without saying that Schillebeeckx exerted an incredible degree of influence in many areas of theology throughout the second half of the twentieth century; sacramental theology was no different in this respect.¹¹⁰

Although perhaps not readily apparent, Schillebeeckx and Casel are more intimately related than one might suppose: both Schillebeeckx and Casel developed their respective theories within the context of the liturgical movement, as responses to the isolated individualism of modern times and the equally isolated speculations of dogmatic theology. Both can be understood as Catholic theologies of culture, which use the liturgy to express the corporate identity of the Church in society in different ways.¹¹¹ In fact, E. Borgman argues that Schillebeeckx’s doctoral thesis can be understood as a systematic interpretation of Casel’s mystery theology in light of his own Thomistic training.¹¹² Here an ecclesiological

¹⁰⁹ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, trans. Paul Barrett (Franklin, WI: Sheed and Ward, 1999), 74, et al.

¹¹⁰ From within the Thomistic commentatorial tradition, a constructive response to these trends was offered by Colman O’Neill in the late 1950s. See Colman O’Neill, “The Instrumentality of the Sacramental Character: An Interpretation of *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 63, a. 2,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 25 (1958): 262–68; O’Neill, “The Role of the Recipient and Sacramental Signification,” 2 parts, 257–301, 508–41.

¹¹¹ “Casel’s theology was not only, or even primarily, an interpretation of the Catholic liturgy, though his work was usually read in this way. Casel himself was primarily interested in a theology of culture—but not in the same way as Schillebeeckx.” Borgman, *Edward Schillebeeckx*, 201. “In Casel’s view the liturgy, in the midst of a modernity which had been stripped of any sense of mystery, was the only place where God’s holiness was still experienced and venerated . . . in Schillebeeckx’s view the liturgical celebration of the sacraments was ultimately a concentration of the human quest for God . . . Like Casel’s work . . . *De sacramentele heilseconomie* (Schillebeeckx’s thesis) in fact contained a theological view of human nature, modern culture and the significance of the Christian tradition.” Ibid., 206. Borgman argues that there are important differences between Casel and Schillebeeckx, but their fundamental point of departure is very similar.

¹¹² “Schillebeeckx’s major study on the sacramental economy of salvation [Borgman refers to his dissertation, *De sacramentele heilseconomie*] . . . began especially with

response to questions of cultural identity again reflects the generally anthropological focus of this new theological hermeneutic.

For many twentieth-century theologians, the impulses of both Schillebeeckx and Casel were extremely influential. However, to say that grace is mediated through the sacramental mystery of the Church does not in and of itself provide a specific account of the *way in which* this effect is reached. Writing in 1971, Johann Auer proposed an explanation of sacramental causality influenced by both Schillebeeckx and Casel. (This theory appears in a series of textbooks on dogma that he co-edited with Joseph Ratzinger).¹¹³ Although in dialogue with modern trends, Auer retains several traditional causal categories from the broader tradition. Auer proposes that while sacramental character is “ontically real,” the subsequent causation of grace is not physical but moral. Auer emphasizes that sacraments have objective efficacy as signs within the mystery of the Church. In this regard he seeks to follow Schillebeeckx, and implicitly Casel.¹¹⁴ Auer does not specify the mode of causality involved in producing the sacramental character. However, his phrase “ontically real” leaves open the possibility that some form of physical instrumentality could be involved, albeit of the dispositive kind.¹¹⁵ Even if there is dispositive physical causality involved here, however, it is clear that all physical in-

the so-called ‘mystery theology’ of the German Benedictine Odo Casel . . . In a sense, *De sacramentele heilseconomie* is to be regarded as a critically modified development of Casel’s theology of the mysteries.” Ibid., 201. To support this, Borgman cites *LThK* (1961), s.v. “Mysterientheologie,” 724–27.

¹¹³The series *Dogmatic Theology*, edited by Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger, has appeared in English translation from the Catholic University of America Press. The volume in question here, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments and the Eucharist*, vol. 6, is authored by Johann Auer. (The German original, *Allgemeine Sakramentenlehre und das Mysterium der Eucharistie*, was first published in 1971 by Friedrich Pustet Verlag, Regensburg).

¹¹⁴See Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments*, 67–82. Auer defines the sacramental character as “ontically real,” and as “dispositive for grace, not in the physical but in the moral sense.” Ibid., 73. He further claims that “The decisive consideration for the understanding of sacrament and its objective efficacy is that it is not regarded as a thing or object, but rather as a sign and a *function within the mystery of God, Christ, and the Church*, as an organ for humans of their encounter with God (Schillebeeckx), as an answer to fundamental questions of human existence (Smulders), and as a ‘sign’ in the comprehensive sphere of the Christian *mysterium*.” (The parenthetical references here are Auer’s). Ibid., 77.

¹¹⁵Any efficient instrumentality operative here must be dispositive because its action clearly does not touch the finality of grace.

strumentality is ruled out with respect to the finality of grace. Here Auer seems to make explicit what Casel and Schillebeeckx only implied: while sacramental character may be affected physically or “ontologically,” sacramental grace is given through the mystery of the Church’s liturgy via moral causality.¹¹⁶

The Second Vatican Council ushered in a new era of reflection on the ecclesiological dimension of sacramentality which has born much fruit in recent years. However, as the example of Auer shows, an ecclesiological approach to sacramentality does not of itself guarantee an intrinsic causal approach to the sacraments. Duns Scotus taught that the sacraments were effective because a pact had been established between God and the Church, ensuring that God would give grace when the sacraments were correctly performed.¹¹⁷ Melchior Cano’s system of moral causality is an adaptation of this model. Although modern ecclesio-sacramental systems ostensibly reject the legalism of previous thinkers and offer a more explicitly communal anthropology, the degree to which these new systems are truly distinct from classical moral causality is not always clear. In the case of Auer, however, it would seem that the affinity between the new and the old is greater than one might wish. The age-old question of the *way in which* the sacraments confer what they signify reasserts itself: the issue here remains the role of instrumental causality in the context of the relationship that exists between God and the recipient of grace, whether this recipient is conceived of in individual or ecclesiological terms.

In many ways, the theological paradigm set by persons such as Casel and Schillebeeckx has dominated the discussion of liturgical theology in our time. At the risk of oversimplification, one might say that theological discussion of the sacraments in the mid to late twentieth century has

¹¹⁶This is reminiscent of the dispositive model inherited by Bonaventure from Alexander of Hales and others, in which the character is the product of efficient causality, but grace itself is given *sine qua non*.

¹¹⁷“Ad questionem secundam patet per idem, quod nec manifeste possibile, nec aliquo modo necessarium est ponere illam virtutem, quae sit forma realis in sacramento . . . nec per illam, si poneretur, aliquid causaretur in anima, nec causaretur ipsa regulariter, nisi ex pactione divina cum Ecclesia et sic sine tot superfluis in aqua et anima intermediis potest salvari, quod pactio divina sit immediata respectu effectus conferendi recipienti sacramenta.” *Ox. In IV Sent.*, d. 1, q. 5, resp. Lampen, *De Causalitate Sacramentorum*, 58.

been centered on liturgical praxis or experience within the context of the Church, rather than on the nature of instrumental causality. Although some like Auer and Leeming have retained a vestige of the classical vocabulary of causality, they are clearly in the minority. For many students of sacramental theology and liturgical studies, the question of causality is not even a consideration. Be that as it may, even those who would reject the classical causal theories must turn to other conceptual models to explain the teachings of Trent and the lived experience of the Church, both of which confirm that the operation of the sacraments themselves (*ex opere operato*) confers the grace signified. Our attempts to understand the sacramental reality of grace at work in the Church must necessarily raise the question of the *way in which* the sacraments have this effect. Regardless of theological vocabulary, this unavoidable question at play here is that of *causality*. Because the sacraments effect the sanctification of man, any functional theological hermeneutic must necessarily have something to say about this saving reality. Whether one chooses to embrace a classical approach or no, the question of sacramental causality will be theologically relevant so long as the sanctifying effects of the sacraments themselves remain so. This is a question that, in the end, is not always served well by ambiguity. In response to the emphasis on mystery and liturgical experience found in Casel and many authors in our own day, Bernard Lonergan warns against confusing speculative theology with the warmth of religious feeling. Although the former cannot directly stimulate the latter, the categories of speculative theology remain proven tools that can assist our own assimilation of the light of faith.¹¹⁸ Although twentieth-century theologians such as Rahner and Chauvet prefer the ambiguity of symbolic language to the tight precision of scholastic vocabulary, twentieth-century Thomist Colman O'Neill, O.P. reminds us that Aquinas's choice of the category of cause represents an intentional decision to describe the sacraments as something more than symbols—

¹¹⁸ "Just as the equations of thermodynamics make no one feel warmer or cooler . . . so also speculative theology is not immediately relevant to the stimulation of religious feeling. But unless this fact is acknowledged explicitly and systematically, there arises a constant pressure in favor of theological tendencies that mistakenly reinforce the light of faith and intelligence with the warmth of less austere modes of thought." Bernard Lonergan, "Theology and Understanding," *Gregorianum* 35 (1954): 643. As cited by McShane, "On the Causality of the Sacraments," 434.

the causal language of creation itself can be extended to describe Christ's saving interaction with the symbolic reality of the sacraments.¹¹⁹ Unlike its medieval, modern and contemporary alternatives, the Thomistic approach to sacramental causality offers an integration between cause and effect, sign and sacred reality, that relates intrinsically to the human person in the order of grace; this is accomplished in no small part by addressing the subject of causality—*the way in which* the sacraments confer what they signify—with a degree of clarity and theological precision that is not often found in contemporary sacramentology. **N&V**

¹¹⁹ "The medievals, had they wanted to say of the sacraments 'they cause because, and to the degree that, they are symbols,' had sufficient command of Latin to say it clearly, and clarity was a tool of their trade. In fact, they used the word 'cause' in their sacramentology because that was the term they used to speak of God's creating the world; a [sic] St. Thomas used it because he considered that it could be extended to signify as well the active intervention of Christ in the symbolic act of the sacrament; and he went to the trouble of explaining that he was choosing this word so as to make it clear that an exclusively symbolic account of the sacraments does not measure up to the tradition of the Fathers (*Summa theol.*, III, q. 62, a.1; *ib.*, ad 1)." Colman E. O'Neill, *Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments* (Chicago: Midwest Theological Forum, 1998), 127. (The essay was originally published in 1983 by Michael Glazier).