

The *De Auxiliis* Controversy, Molinism, and Physical Premotion: The Christological Implications*

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From 1582 until 1607, the *de Auxiliis* controversy consumed much of the attention of Dominicans, Jesuits, and the Papacy.¹ The controversy began in 1582 at Salamanca when a Scholastic debate entertained the question of

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¹ For the history of the *de Auxiliis* controversy and the role of Thomism therein, see Matthew T. Gaetano, “The Catholic Reception of Aquinas in the *De Auxiliis* Controversy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception of Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering and Marcus Plested (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 254–79. Robert Joseph Matava has written both a shorter article summarizing the controversy (“A Sketch of the Controversy de Auxiliis,” *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 7, no. 3 [2020]: 417–46) and a longer monograph that engages the various theological positions in the dispute (*Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Domingo Báñez, Physical Premotion, and the Controversy de Auxiliis Revisited* [Boston: Brill, 2016], esp. ch. 1), both of which are very helpful. See also E. Vansteenbergh, “Molinisme,” in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* [DTC], 15 vols. in 23 (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1929), vol. 10/2, col. 2098; Vicente Beltrán de Heredia, *Domingo Báñez y las controversias sobre la gracia: textos y documentos*, Biblioteca de teólogos españoles 24 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Instituto “Francisco Suárez,” 1968), 12–99; Jacques-Hyacinthe Serry, *Historiae Congregationum de Auxiliis Divinae Gratiae, sub Summis Pontificibus Clemente VIII et Paulo V*, vol. 4, *Quibus Etiam Datâ Operâ Confutantur Recentiores Hujus Historiae Depravatores, Maximè Verò Nuperrimus Autor Libelli Gallicè Inscripti, Remontrance à M. l’Archevêque de Reims, Sur Son Ordonnance Du 15. Juillet 1697, et Actorum Fides Adversus Inanes Epistolae Leodiensis Argutias Vindicatur* (Louvain: Societas, 1709).

how Christ's sacrifice was both free and meritorious.² The Jesuit, Prudencio de Montemayor, claimed that if Christ had been commanded to lay down his life and be crucified, then his action was not free and, therefore, not meritorious.³ The Dominicans, on the other hand, resolved the question of Christ's merit and freedom using what would later come to be known as physical premotion.⁴ In a word, the *de Auxiliis* controversy has Christological roots. Even though the controversy quickly engaged other, related questions, a successful adjudication of these conflicting positions must have reference to the Christological truths implicated in the controversy.⁵

² Matava, *Divine Causality*, 19–23; Vansteenbergh, “Molinisme,” cols. 2098–99. The problem can be simplified as follows. According to St. Thomas, to merit, one must choose according to his own will (see *ST I-II*, q. 114, a. 1, corp. & ad 1). If it is not done from a free will, then it cannot be meritorious, nor is it considered a human act (*ST I-II* Q. 6, a. 1). How then, does Christ merit if his human will is in a *necessary* concord with the divine will (*ST III* q. 18, a. 6, corp.)? The answer to this question will depend upon the definition of freedom and the composed and divided senses (discussed below).

³ Montemayor's position, as summarized by Domingo Báñez, states: “Si Christus praeveniretur praecepto Patris praecipientis ut vellet mori et obedire cum tanta intensione actus voluntatis, non mereretur quia non libere operaretur, propterea quod stante praecepto non poterat non operari; alias posset peccare si posset tunc non operari”—“If Christ were led by a precept of the Father commanding such that he would choose to die and obey with an act of the will thus constrained, then he would not merit because he would not be freely acting, since, in light of the command, he would be unable not to act; otherwise he would be able to sin, if he were able not to act” (Heredia, *Domingo Báñez*, 102). Note: Unless quoted from an edition with a translator stated in first citation, all English translations will be my own. See also Matava, *Divine Causality*, 19: “The real significance of this question, however, was not that it called into question the free and meritorious character of Christ's paschal sacrifice, but rather that it probed the conditions of an act's being free and therefore meritorious. The question provided a test case for thinking about predestination and justification, and for critically discussing the theory of physical premotion maintained by the Dominicans.”

⁴ See Matava, “Sketch,” 422: “On Báñez's view, the Father predetermined Jesus to laying down his life, just as he predetermines all other creaturely free acts, whereas on Montemayor's view, the freedom of the human will excludes its predetermination by God. Consequently, for Báñez, grace is intrinsically and infallibly efficacious whereas for Montemayor, grace's efficacy is determined by the human person to whom grace is offered.” For a summary of Báñez on free choice, see Matava, *Divine Causality*, 73–83.

⁵ According to Matava, “the real point of concern was not Christological, but soteriological and anthropological: the question of Jesus's death provided a test case for sounding out positions on the efficacy of grace, and the relationship of human freedom and merit to divine foreknowledge and predestination” (“Sketch,” 422). While there is truth in this observation, this essay presumes that any robust understanding of soteriology, merit, and predestination must cohere with Christological truths. As such, engaging in a discussion of the *de Auxiliis* controversy must, in the final analysis, have reference back to Christology to illustrate the strength of the analysis.

The goal of this present study, therefore, is to exposit the Christological implications of the *de Auxiliis* controversy in an effort to reexamine the conflicting proposals about grace.

Historically, in order to resolve the confusion about the God-man, the partisans of the debate needed to clarify their differing principles regarding God and man generally. As was soon apparent, however, the parties of the debate had contradictory understandings of basic philosophical principles.⁶ The participants in the controversy engaged other topics such as man's freedom, God's foreknowledge of future contingents, and predestination.⁷ It is understandable, therefore, that when Domingo Báñez (†1604), one of Montemayor's principal interlocutors, submitted his list of theses that summarized Montemayor's position, many of them dealt with questions other than those of Christ's merit.⁸

Eventually, the controversy centered upon Luis de Molina's *Concordia* after its publication in 1588.⁹ The *Concordia* became the focus and

⁶ Another major philosophical disagreement underpinning this dispute concerned the nature of man's freedom. As Matava notes: "Molina and Suárez deny that creatures endowed with causal powers of their own require anything more to be introduced de novo order to act, because if something additional were required, the causal integrity of secondary causes would be undermined. Furthermore, in Molina and Suárez's view, if free secondary causes were unable to move themselves without the addition of something from outside, they would not be free" (*Divine Causality*, 42). This is discussed further below.

⁷ Perhaps the most foundational philosophical issue this question hinges upon is the real distinction between act and potency, along with its corollary, the real distinction between essence and existence. Even though he is a congruist rather than a pure Molinist, Francisco Suárez's engagement with the topics discussed in this article is worth noting. While there are differences between congruism and pure Molinism, there is debate whether these constitute real difference. See H. Quilliet, "Congruisme," in *DTC*, vol. 3, cols. 1130–34, and Matava, "Sketch," 431–32. While a robust engagement with congruism and Suárez is outside the scope of this article, references to Suárez and other Jesuits will be provided in the footnotes of this article in order to provide greater context for the argument that follows. For a brief but robust analysis of Suárez on these issues, see Thomas U. Mullaney, *Grace and Freedom According to Suarez: A Thomistic Analysis*, ed. Cajetan Cuddy (Providence, RI: Cluny Media, 2020). For an overview of Suárez's thought, see Emmanuel J. Bauer, "Francisco Suárez (1548–1617): Scholasticism After Humanism," in *Philosophers of the Renaissance*, ed. Paul Richard Blum (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 236–55.

⁸ These propositions are found in Báñez's "Sobre las Tesis Del Padre Prudencio de Montemayor, S.J." from 1582. He sent them to the Church's Inquisition for its analysis. The documents can be found in Heredia, *Domingo Báñez*, 101–2.

⁹ For a discussion of Molina as compared to Aquinas, especially given their respective religious orders, see Romanus Cessario, "Molina and Aquinas," in *A Companion to*

touch-point for the debate, since various parties aligned themselves based on their support for or condemnation of the work. The papal Congregation *de Auxiliis* (1594–1607), initially convoked by Pope Clement VIII, analyzed Molina's work and the positions contained therein. This, again, helped specify the debate. To keep the relevant parties focused and to make clear the lineaments of the controversy, it was helpful to have a standard text to which all parties had reference. Questions about God's grace and man's freedom were concretized through specific questions about Molina's approach to grace, God's knowledge, and predestination and whether his positions agreed with Thomas, Augustine, the Fathers of the Church, and Church councils. Hence, the Controversy *de Auxiliis*, which began by dealing with questions of Christology, resulted in a debate about the Molinist position as described in the *Concordia*.

The subsequent years of the controversy have retained much of the same breadth: grace, freedom, God's foreknowledge, and predestination.¹⁰ The original impetus for the debate—Christology—can many times be overlooked or seen as a historical curiosity.¹¹ On one level, passing over the

Luis de Molina, ed. Matthias Kaufmann and Alexander Aichele, *Companions to the Christian Tradition* 50 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 291–323.

¹⁰ See the essays contained in *Beyond Dordt and "De Auxiliis": The Dynamics of Protestant and Catholic Soteriology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Jordan J. Ballor, Matthew T. Gaetano, and David S. Sytsma (Leiden: Brill, 2019), and *Thomism and Predestination: Principles and Disputations*, ed. Steven A. Long, Roger W. Nutt, and Thomas Joseph White (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2016). Most of these essays engage questions of God's foreknowledge and man's freedom. Another example is the translation of Molina's *Concordia* done by Alfred J. Freddoso (*On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988]), whose specific interest is in God's foreknowledge. Note: all translation from the Freddoso's translation of the *Concordia* will be cited as "Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*."

¹¹ While various writers acknowledge the Christological context of the debate, recent scholars seem to focus on other issues or to include Christology as one issue among many. In the third of his three volumes of *De gratia et libero arbitrio* (Friburgi Helvetiorum: Consociatio Sancti Pauli, 1907), Norbert del Prado engages Molina's view at great length and under numerous aspects. He carefully examines the various claims Molina makes in the *Concordia* and whether they agree with the teaching of St. Thomas, with traditional church teaching, and right reason. He does not, as far as the present author can tell, engage in Christological questions directly. Matava's volume, which is much more recent and explicitly treats the history of the question, does not examine the controversy under the formality of Christology. Freddoso's translation and introduction to Molina's work comes very close to making Christological statements (*On Divine Foreknowledge*, 273n36), but he does not pursue the question at length. Robert Trent Pomplun does engage Christological questions, but his thoughts mainly concern predestination rather than efficacious grace, which are closely related, but not

Christological issues is reasonable: Molina's *Concordia* was first published after the lines of the debate had already been formed, and thus it is not a work of Christology. In fact, it was only in response to certain objections from Francisco Zumel that Molina included a more explicit treatment of Christ in his second edition.¹² While those involved in the debate understood the details of Christ's merit to be a related and important issue, Molina's theological position was no longer seen primarily in terms of Christology.¹³ Even so, since the action of God in the human soul is nowhere clearer and nowhere more powerful than in the soul of Christ, any attempt to resolve these questions must take the original arena of Christology into account.¹⁴

reducible to one another ("Predestined a Possible Redeemer: Scientia Media in Early Modern Christologies," in Ballor, Gaetano, and Sytsma, *Beyond Dordt*, 87–102). One possible exception to this is Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange in *Grace: A Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109–14*, trans. the Dominican Nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1952), 286–304. While he does not approach the Christological question in the same way as the present study, he does examine the importance of efficacious grace for Christ's impeccability. Further, he explains the Thomistic position and defends the freedom of Christ, his merit, and the command of God on Thomistic grounds. Garrigou-Lagrange shows that the Thomistic solution is a satisfying answer to the original question. He does not, however, make the link between an error in this matter and Nestorianism.

¹² For a discussion of Francisco Zumel and the *de Auxiliis* controversy, see Vicente Muñoz Delgado, "Nuevos documentos acerca de las controversias 'de auxiliis' en Salamanca," *Salmanticensis* 1, no. 2 (1954): 441–49. Additionally, for one example of Zumel's engagement with Molina, see *Zumel y el molinismo: informe del P. Francisco Zumel, mercedario, sobre las doctrinas del P. Luis Molina, S.J., presentado en julio de 1595*, ed. Vicente Muñoz Delgado (Madrid: Revista Estudios, 1953).

¹³ For a recent discussion of Christological implications of these early modern theological debates, see Pomplun, "Predestined a Possible Redeemer." For a discussion of predestination vis-à-vis Christ, see Roger W. Nutt, "From Eternal Sonship to Adoptive Filiation: St. Thomas on the Predestination of Christ," in Long, Nutt, and White, *Thomism and Predestination*, 77–93.

¹⁴ See, for instance, John 1:14, in which the evangelist tells us that "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth" (NABRE). Christ gives us the most excellent manifestation of grace. As Thomas teaches, the nearer something is to the source, the more influence it receives from that source. Since God is the source of grace, the more closely someone is united to God, the greater influx of grace will fall upon him (*ST* III, q. 7, a. 1, corp.). Just how profound is the hypostatic union? According to Thomas, it is the most preeminent of all unions because the natures are united in the very person of the Word (*ST* III, q. 2, a. 9). There can be no greater participation in divine life for a human nature to have than to *be* the One who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (cf. John 14:6). This coheres with the teaching of Thomas on the *imago Dei*: Man is *ad imaginem Dei* while the eternal Logos is the *imago Dei* (see *ST* I, q. 35, a. 2, ad 3).

What follows is an attempt to reexamine the two proposals on grace—that of Molina and that of the Thomists on physical premotion—in Christological terms.¹⁵ The main Christological tenets at play are: (1) the fact that the hypostatic union is not *of* persons, but *in the person*; (2) that Christ's humanity is an instrument of his divinity and, therefore, his actions are theandric; and (3) that Christ is impeccable because of the hypostatic union. After a brief summary of the Church's articulation of Christology in these three areas, this article will first examine Molina's teaching on general and special *concursum*, as well as his comments on instrumentality. Molina also asserts some specific claims about Christ that flow from his thought about grace generally. During this engagement with Molina, we will note in passing the ways in which Molina's contemporaries, like Francisco Suárez and Gabriel Vázquez, engaged these issues. As we will see, Molina's thought, while well-known, did not provide a final resolution even among other Jesuits. The section on Molina will conclude by noting that his proposals about grace are difficult to integrate into the Church's teachings on the person of Christ. The next section will exposit St. Thomas's teaching on Christ and grace, and specifically the Thomistic teaching on physical premotion. By observing that the teaching of Thomas comports well with the Church's presentation of grace in the life of Christ and his theandric acts, this essay reframes the *de Auxiliis* debate over grace in Christological terms. After noting areas for further research, the article will conclude with a little-known historical observation that both sheds light upon the reason for the dissonance between Molina and the Church's teaching on Christ and highlights the benefit of returning to the Christological roots of the *de Auxiliis* controversy.

Christ, Instrumentality, and Grace in the Church's Teaching

Before we examine Molina's thought specifically, the following brief exposition of Catholic teaching on Christology will serve as a backdrop to this article. This section makes three main points as illustrated by either patristic sources or conciliar statements. They are: (1) that the hypostatic union is not an accidental union, (2) that Christ's human acts are theandric and that his humanity is an instrument of his divinity, and (3) that Christ was impeccable because of the hypostatic union.

¹⁵ The meaning of "physical premotion" will be discussed more below. For now, note that "physical" here does not mean "material," but rather efficacious and real, as opposed to merely a "moral" influence.

A Union in the Person, Not an Accidental Union

Christ is not a human person, but rather a divine person subsisting in two natures. In order to defend this unity of Christ's person, the early Church articulated anti-Nestorian teachings, beginning at the Council of Ephesus. Subsequent councils reaffirmed these teachings. According to the Council of Chalcedon (451), there is a double consubstantiality in Christ—in his divine nature, he is consubstantial with the Father and in his human nature, consubstantial with us.¹⁶ These natures are united in the person of the Eternal Word. Constantinople II and III both confirmed this teaching and drew further implications from it. Constantinople II (553) condemned Theodore of Mopsuestia for claiming that “the union of God the Word with Christ is similar to that of man and wife.”¹⁷ The hypostatic union is not like two persons joined in a moral union. At the same council, the hypostatic union was clarified by explaining: “Others, who think with Theodore and Nestorius, favoring division, introduce an accidental union [σχετικὴν τὴν ἔνωσιν ἐπεισάγουσιν]. The Holy Church of God, rejecting these two impious heresies, confesses the union of God the Word with the flesh as being by synthesis, that is, according to the hypostasis.”¹⁸

This basic explication of the hypostatic union is the grounding for all Christological discussion. Since action follows being, the hypostatic union—one divine person subsisting in two natures—forms the backdrop for a discussion of Christ's actions.¹⁹

Theandric Acts and Instrumentality

Following from the teaching on the hypostatic union, councils subsequent to Chalcedon expounded the teaching about Christ with respect to his wills and operations. According to Constantinople III (680–681), “The difference of natures in that same and unique hypostasis is recognized by the fact that each of the two natures wills and performs what is proper to it in communion with the other. Thus, we glory in proclaiming two natural wills and actions concurring together for the salvation of the human race.”²⁰

¹⁶ Heinrich Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, ed. Helmut Hoping and Peter Hünermann, 43rd ed. [DH], Latin–English trans. and ed. Robert Fastiggi and Anne Englund Nash (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), no. 301.

¹⁷ DH no. 434.

¹⁸ DH no. 425.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the Christological import of “first act” (being) and “second act” (operation), see Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 61–70.

²⁰ DH no. 558.

Constantinople III is clarifying that, since Christ is both fully God and fully man, he has all that belongs to both natures. Therefore, he has two wills, which correspond to the two natures.

The Church's emphasis on the two wills and two operations of Christ is not meant to introduce a division between the two, however. The two wills of Christ operate together and in unison; Christ's actions are theandric. There is one person acting through two wills. The teaching about Christ's theandric acts finds clear expression in the writings of St. John Damascene (†749):

Thus, we do not say that the operations are separated and that the natures act separately, but we say that they act conjointly, with each nature doing in communion with the other that which it has proper to itself. He did not perform human actions in a human way, because He was not a mere man, nor did He perform the divine actions in a divine way only, because He was not just God, but God and man together. . . . It is therefore the same thing to say that Christ acts according to each of His natures and to say that each nature in Christ acts in association with the other. Accordingly, when the flesh is acting, the divine nature is associated with it because the flesh is being permitted by the good pleasure of the divine will to suffer and do what is proper to it and because the operation of the flesh is absolutely salutary—which last does not belong to the human operation, but the other divine. And when the divinity of the Word is acting, the flesh is associated with it, because the divine operations are being performed by the flesh as by an instrument and because He who is acting at once in a divine and human way is one.²¹

The human actions of Christ are perfectly in accord with the divine. The humanity of Christ functions as an "instrument" of the divine person Christ.²² John Damascene was not teaching an entirely new doctrine, however. The fact that Christ's acts are theandric is found virtually in documents like Leo's Tome when he says that "God is not changed by compassion, nor is man swallowed up by such dignity. For each nature does what is proper

²¹ John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 3.19, in *Saint John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic Hathaway Chase, Fathers of the Church 37 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958), 322.

²² For an overview of this concept in various patristic sources, see Theophil Tschipke, *L'humanité du Christ comme instrument de salut de la divinité*, Studia Friburgensia (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2003), 35–85.

to each in communion with the other [agit enim utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est].”²³ The actions of Christ through his human nature are done in communion with the divine nature. Even though there is not an exact metaphysical explication of this teaching in a Church council, it does provide a boundary marker for our understanding of who Christ is and how his actions should be understood. The implications and metaphysical import of this communion ground the present discussion. As will be shown below, a correct understanding of actual grace is necessary for a robust explanation of the Incarnation.

Christ's Grace and Impeccability

Christ's humanity, because it is the closest creature to God, is also the most graced. The humanity of Christ participates in the divine life of God more fully and deeply than any other creature. Because of the hypostatic union, the human soul of Christ was radiant with grace from the very beginning of its existence.²⁴ St. Gregory of Nazianzus tells us that the anointing of holiness Christ received is due to the presence of the One who anoints, not merely by the action of the One who anoints.²⁵ Any discussion of Christ's impeccability, therefore, must take both the grace of union and Christ's habitual grace into account.²⁶

As a summary of the relevant Christological doctrines for our present purposes, Philippe-Marie Margelidon explains John Damascene's thought on the coordination of the human acts of Christ with his divinity.

No human operation of Jesus is done independently of the person of the Word and the divine nature (the divine person and nature act *efficiently* by one single and identical action). The two actions are coordinated and ordered from the human to the divine for three reasons that John Damascene brings to light. First, the theandric operation assures the moral perfection of the human operation that, always directed by the divine, acts in total and immediate conformity to the requirements of the divine will. Second, by the theandric subordination of the human will of God in Christ, the full realization of the

²³ DH no. 294.

²⁴ ST III, q. 2, a. 12.

²⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. Frederick Williams and Lionel R. Wickham (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 111.

²⁶ See the discussion in Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 132–59.

divine will for salvation was achieved. This entire and spontaneous submission of his human will finds its principle of explanation in the instrumental status of the humanity of Jesus. Third, because of the union, all of his “theandric” human actions are thus imbued with an infinite value. So, the theandric operation is the dynamic and operative expression of the hypostatic union, just as the instrumentality of the humanity of Jesus is its functional expression.²⁷

Christ acts as one person, in two natures. He has two operations, but they are perfectly coordinated and ordered, the human to the divine. There are three reasons for this coordination of the human and the divine operation: (1) it guarantees the moral perfection of the divine Logos, which includes his impeccability; (2) it ensures a submission of the human to the divine in an instrumental way for salvation; and (3) the human actions of Christ are manifestations of the divine person. The third point, said differently, is that Christ’s actions are done in a filial mode. These points will structure the following analysis. Specifically, we will determine the extent to which Molina’s teaching and that of St. Thomas respectively cohere with the Church’s teaching on the hypostatic union, the instrumentality of Christ’s humanity and his impeccability, and the filial mode of Christ’s action.

Molina’s Claims about *Concursus* and Christ

Divine Concursus according to Molina

Even though *scientia media* receives much of the focus in Molina’s doctrine, it is only part of his system.²⁸ The two primary principles of Molina’s system—

²⁷ Philippe-Marie Margelidon, *Les christologies de l’assumptus homo et les christologies du verbe incarné au XXe siècle: les enjeux d’un débat christologique, 1927–1960* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2011), 615.

²⁸ In fact, there is a sense in which *scientia media* is the solution to Molina’s perception of the problem of freedom. As Anton C. Pegis explains, the fact that Molina changes and rejects so much of Thomas while agreeing with other thinkers “is not the point. The point is that, having changed the philosophical conditions of the problem that he is concerned to analyze and answer, Molina has changed in a decisive way the philosophical direction which he can follow in answering that problem . . . That Molina did do this is, as a matter of history, important. Those who look at the doctrine of *scientia media* as a finished position, and who are more concerned with the theological problem of the relations between the gratuity of grace and the liberty of choice, do not always face the lesser and philosophical problem involved in Molina’s decisions [the philosophical problem regarding God’s causality as antecedent, but not violent]. To see the historical background of those decisions is one important way of seeing in

as described by Molina himself—are general and special *concursus*.²⁹ These serve as the “link” between God’s *scientia media* and man’s radical freedom. Without Molina’s teaching on *concursus*, one would fall into either deism (in which God has no influence after creating) or overt Pelagianism (in which God’s work is no longer needed for man’s achieving his end).³⁰ Since God’s action in the life of man is exemplified by God’s action in the life of Christ, Molina’s claims about the interaction between God and man must have as

its proper light the answer to which they lead” (“Molina and Human Liberty,” in *Jesuit Thinkers of the Renaissance: Essays Presented to John F. McCormick, S.J.*, ed. Gerard Smith [Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1939], 119–20). For a discussion of Molina’s understanding of freedom as compared to Luther’s and the way in which this question became the lodestar for Molina’s project, see chapter 1 of Gerard Smith, “Freedom in Molina” (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1936). For more recent discussions of Molina on freedom and the will, see Alexander Aichele, “Luis de Molina: The Metaphysics of Freedom,” in *Jesuit Philosophy on the Eve of Modernity*, ed. Cristiano Casalini, *Jesuit Studies* 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 297–324, and “The Real Possibility of Freedom: Luis de Molina’s Theory of Absolute Willpower in *Concordia* I,” in Kaufmann and Aichele, *Companion to Luis de Molina*, 3–54.

- ²⁹ Molina outlines his four principles in *Concordia*, pt. 7, q. 23, aa. 4–5, disp. 1, mem. ult. nos. 7–10 (*Liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione concordia*, ed. Iohannes Rabeneck, Societatis Iesu selecti scriptores [Oniae: Collegium Maximum S.I., 1953], 584–85. The Congregatio de Auxiliis begins with an analysis of these four “new” principles that Molina introduces: (1) divine *concursus* that acts upon the effect, but not the cause; (2) that grace, which God gives for persevering, is the gift of perseverance if it be foreseen that man will consent (this second principle is the supernatural pair of divine *concursus*); (3) that God knows the future conditionals prior to his divine decree (middle knowledge); (4) that predestination does not differ from providence except on account of being foreknown. These four principles were outlined in the third meeting of the Congregatio and discussed in meetings 4–9 (from January 23 to March 13, 1599). The fourth session’s conclusion was that “according to the truth of the matter, the *concursus* of God is an influx into causes, but according to Molina it is an influx into effects with causes.” This was the first session that dealt with particular matters after outlining more general aspects of the *Concordia* and Molinist thought. See “Prima tabula chronologica Congregationum de Auxiliis sub Clemente VIII; Romae habiturum Anno Domini 1598 & 1599,” in Serry, vol. 4 of *Historiae Congregationum de Auxiliis Divinae Gratiae*.
- ³⁰ That is, presuming he retains his radical understanding of freedom. Even with his teaching on *concursus*, however, Molina was still accused of Pelagianism. Meetings 5–9 of the Congregatio de Auxiliis in 1599 all concluded that various aspects of Molina’s teaching were false, erroneous, semi-Pelagian, or Pelagian. Specifically, with respect to the first principle mentioned above regarding divine *concursus*, the fifth session responded “esse Pelagianum” when faced with the question “Whether the first principle of Molina is worthy of some type of censure?” For a comparison of Molina’s view to those of Gabriel Biel (occasionalism), Durandus (deism), and St. Thomas, see Vansteenbergh, “Molinism,” col. 2110.

their primary reference and test case the Incarnation. Should his understanding of concurrence fail to cohere with the truths about the incarnate God, then it is difficult to see how it provides insight into God's action in the life of man in general.

According to Molina, there are two types of *concursum*.³¹ The first involves actions naturally proportioned to man (general *concursum*) and the second accounts for supernatural acts (special *concursum* or actual grace). Molina understands God's general concurrence to be an action of God with the creature (not through the creature) on the effect. This influence is indifferent initially and determined by the action of the secondary cause.³² The general *concursum* of God is not an influx of God's causality into the fire that heats, for example, but into the water that receives the effect of heat from both God and the fire.³³ Thus, any natural human action receives no causal influx

³¹ For a brief catena of quotes from Molina regarding general *concursum* and a summary of his thought, see Prado, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, 3:13–17; for the same regarding special *concursum*, see 3:17–23.

³² See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 26, no. 11: “Deus namque generali concursu influit ut causa universalis influxu quodam indifferenti ad varias actiones et effectus, determinatur vero ad species actionum et effectuum a particulari influxu causarum secundarum qui pro diversitate virtutis cujusque ad agendum diversus est, aut si causa libera sit, in ipsius potestate est ita influere ut producat potius haec actio quam illa, puta velle quam nolle, aut ambulare quam sedere, et hic effectus potius quam ille, nempe hoc artefactum potius quam aliud, vel etiam suspendere omnino influxum ne ulla sit actio” — “God, by general concursus influences as a universal cause by a certain indifferent influence for various actions and effects, but [God's influence] is determined to the specific actions and effects by the particular influence of the secondary causes. [This concursus] is diverse according to the diversity of the powers for acting; if the cause is free, it is in the power of man to influence such that he produce this action rather than another, for example to will or to not to will, to walk or to sit, and to produce this effect rather than that, and, of course, to produce this artifact rather than that, or even to suspend all influence, such that there be no action” (p. 167).

³³ See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 29, no. 1: “Sicut concursus Dei generalis cum causa agente per actionem transeuntem, ut cum igne producente calorem in aquam, non est influxus Dei in ignem, sed in aquam in quam recipitur effectus a Deo et ab igne simul productus” — “The general *concursum* of God [is] with the acting cause through the passing action. So, in the case of fire producing heat in water, the influx of God is not in the fire, but in the water in which the effect is received [both] from God and from the fire simultaneously producing it” (p. 185). Suárez will, effectively, hold the same position: “De ipso vero concursu generali, tam naturae, quam gratiae, quod illam physicam praedeterminationem non postulet, certum est, cum sit immediatus influxus in actionem causae secundae, et non in causam ipsam. Quae actio simul est ab utraque causa, prima et secunda, et essentialiter ab utraque pendet, licet causa prima, ob suam eminentiam et independentiam, dicatur prius natura in illam influere” — “But regarding general *concursum* itself, both of nature and of grace, that it

from God to a determined action *through* the person's will. Rather, God acts alongside the created will to cause the effect. Neither God nor the creature are superfluous, however. Both man and God are necessary for the act, since God's *concursus* is specified by the creature's action and the creature could not achieve the effect without God's help.

Yet, Molina adds that general *concursus* is not sufficient for supernatural acts. When man makes graced acts of faith, hope, and charity, something more is needed.³⁴ In the case of special *concursus*, God excites the will to give it the possibility of making supernatural acts. Even so, the will remains free to make the act or not. In either case, man's free will and the grace are two parts of an integral cause; the full effect of the action depends on the influx of each.³⁵ Thus, both general *concursus* and grace (special *concursus*)

does not demand physical predetermination is certain, since it is an immediate influx into the action of the secondary cause, and not into the cause itself. This action is simultaneously from both causes, the primary and secondary, and it essentially depends on both, although the primary cause, on account of its eminence and independence, is said to flow into the action 'prior to nature' (*Opusculum Tertium: Brevis Resolutio Quaestionis de Concursu et Efficaci Auxilio Dei Ad Actus Liberi Arbitrii Necessario*, no. 59, ed. A. Carolo Berton, new ed., in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 11 [Paris: Apud Ludovicum Vives, Bibliopolam Editorem, 1858], 390; see also *Opusculum Primum: De Concursu, Motione, et Auxilio Dei*, bk. 15, no. 7, ed. A. Carolo Berton, new ed., in *Opera Omnia*, 11:79–80).

³⁴ See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 1, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 6, no. 2: "Liberum nostrum arbitrium cum solo concursu Dei generali nihil efficere potest non solum quod vitam aeternam aut gratiae incrementum promereatur, sed neque quod tamquam ordinem ad finem naturalem transcendens commensuratum cum fine supernaturali aliquo modo sit, etiam tamquam remota dispositio ad gratiam, tam ex parte voluntatis quam intellectus; sed ad id omne indigent auxilio et ope supernaturali vel per influxum Dei immediatum vel per habitum supernaturalem ad eam rem collatum"— "Our free choice with only the general *concursus* of God is able to achieve nothing, not only what belongs to eternal life or to merit an increase of grace, but it is also unable to transcend its ordering to a natural end, since the supernatural end is of a different order. Indeed, it is unable to achieve even a remote disposition to grace, both on the part of the will and the intellect; but to achieve these things it needs help [*auxilio*] and supernatural power either through the immediate influx of God or through a supernatural habit contributing to the goal" (p. 30).

³⁵ See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 37, no. 2: "His ita constitutis, cum tangente Deo ac excitante nostrum arbitrium per auxilium gratiae praeventientis liberum illi sit consentire aut non consentire atque adeo elicere vel non elicere actum credendi, sperandi aut poenitendi, constat profecto liberum nostrum arbitrium et gratiam illam praeventientem esse duas partes unius integrae causae actus credendi, sperandi aut poenitendi, prout ad solutem oportet singulosque ejusmodi actus pendere ab influxu tam liberi arbitrii quam gratiae praeventientis; atque a libero quidem arbitrio habere ut actus illi quoad substantiam sint credere, sperare aut poenitere, ab influxu

are needed for supernatural acts.³⁶ Yet, there are two important differences between general and special *concursum*. (1) General *concursum* does not act on the will, but *with* the will; while grace moves the will and makes it capable of performing a supernatural act. (2) As a result, general *concursum* does not precede the action, while special *concursum*, or grace, precedes the action logically.³⁷

vero gratiae praevenientis habere ut sint supernaturales et quales ad salutem sunt necessarii. Quare quivis illorum actuum totus est a libero arbitrio et totus a gratia praeveniente seu a Deo per eam tamquam per supernaturale instrumentum in eundem actum influente; at a neutro est ut a tota et integra causa, sed ut a parte integrae causae”—“With [the definitions from Trent’s session 6, ch. 5, can. 4; see DH no. 1554] in mind, given that by God’s touching and exciting our choice [*liberum arbitrium*] through that free help of prevenient grace to consent or not consent and therefore to elicit or not elicit the act of believing, hoping, or repenting, it is certainly clear that both (1) our free choice [*liberum arbitrium*] and (2) prevenient grace are two parts of one integral act of believing, hoping, or doing penance—just as freedom requires that every act of this kind depends as much on the influx of free choice [*liberi arbitrii*] as on prevenient grace. Both are necessary: (1) free choice [*libero arbitrio*] such that the act is in substance an act of believing, hoping, or doing penance, and (2) an influx of divine grace such that it is supernatural and, therefore, leads to salvation. This is why, any act [of believing, hoping, or doing penance] is wholly from free choice [*libero arbitrio*] and wholly from prevenient grace either from God or through grace as through a supernatural instrument flowing into the same act; but the act is from neither as if one was a total and integral cause; rather, they are parts of a whole cause” (p. 225). In summary form, Vansteenbergh explains: “One sees here that, when God touches and excites the soul through prevenient grace, it is free to consent or not and therefore to make or not to make the act of faith, of hope, or of penance. It is evident, as a result, that prevenient grace and liberty are two parts of a single integral cause, and that these salutary acts depend on the influx of each” (“Molinisme,” col. 2113).

³⁶ See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 3, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 37, no. 5: “Liquido sane constat ut liberum arbitrium una cum gratia praeveniente producat quemcumque illorum actuum, necessarium esse ut Deus quoque una cum illis immediate in actum producendum per concursum suum universalem influat. Quo fit ut quivis illorum trium actuum licet sit unica actio . . . tres nihilominus habeat partes unius integrae causae a qua ita emanat totus, ut a singulis etiam partibus partialitate, ut vocant, causae totus etiam emanet, diverso tamen modo”—“It is clearly reasonable to state that free choice [*liberum arbitrium*] together with prevenient grace produces any of those acts [of believing, hoping, or doing penance]. It is also necessary that God move [*influat*] together with the [person’s will] immediately in producing the act through his universal *concursum*. This is why, in the case of those three acts, although they are one action, . . . nevertheless each has three parts of one integral cause from which the whole is produced, from each part partially contributing, as they say, the whole emanates from the cause, but in diverse ways” (p. 226).

³⁷ See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 3, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 41, no. 1 (p. 257); Vansteenbergh, “Molinisme,” col. 2114.

Molina's claim above, that grace moves the will, requires a further clarification. By movement, we ought not understand a predetermination of the will.³⁸ Speaking of supernatural acts in Molina's thought, Gerard Smith explains that "God is the specific cause of the supernaturality of the act through his special concourse which first of all enables a man to act supernaturally, and, *if man proceeds freely to act in virtue of the power thus conferred upon him*, immediately together with the will effects the supernaturality of the act."³⁹ God's special *concurso*, therefore, is a moral cause, not a physical cause (a claim that both Vázquez and Suárez would agree with).⁴⁰ Therefore,

³⁸ As Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange explains, for Molina "operative actual grace urges only by moral, but not by physical, impulsion, and leads only to indeliberate acts, but never of itself alone to free choice or consent" (*Grace*, 163). Suárez would later nuance the Molinist position. Instead of claiming that the difference between sufficient and efficacious grace is wholly extrinsic to the grace, Suárez would claim that there is a real difference between efficacious and sufficient grace in the first act of each. For Suárez, efficacious grace does not add anything *in man* that makes it different from sufficient grace, it does carry with it a special benefit and a certain moral call that differs from sufficient grace: "Quamvis gratia efficax physice et re ipsa nihil ex necessitate ponat in homine ultra sufficientem, tamen ex parte Dei auxilium efficax . . . addere speciale beneficium, et quamdam moralem rationem . . . quae in hoc consistit, quod Deus ex speciali et efficaci proposito et effectu dandi homini fidem vel gratiam ei praebebat illam vocationem, et in illo tempore et modo, prout novit accommodatam, ut cum illa homo re ipsa et cum effectu consentiat, quamvis possit non consentire"—"Although efficacious grace physically and of itself in no way places in man something above sufficient grace, nevertheless on the part of God, efficacious grace [*auxilium*] . . . adds particular benefit, and a certain moral cause [*rationem*]. . . Which consists in this, that God, from a special and efficacious notion and effect, by giving man faith or grace supplies that call to man, both in the time and way as he knows is exactly fitting, such that man consents to the thing itself and the effect, although he is able not to consent" (*Opusculum Tertium*, no. 48 [*Opera Omnia*, 11:387]). Importantly, efficacious grace remains in the realm of a "moral" cause.

³⁹ Smith, "Freedom in Molina," 293 (emphasis added). As Smith later summarizes, Molina "simply distinguishes two divine concourses and their effects: the general concourse effects, together with the will, the act; the special concourse first influences the soul's power to act supernaturally, and then, concurrently with the act (if it is posited), specifies the nature of the act to be supernatural" (299).

⁴⁰ Suárez defines a physical cause negatively when discussing the causality related to the will. "Igitur determinatio moralis in hoc a physica differt, quod veram et realem potentiam relinquit ad resistendum tali determinationi, id est, ad aliter operandum quam ea determinatio inclinet; ideo enim moralis dicitur, quia nulla causalitate physica, quae potentiam ad oppositum omnino superet et vincat, ad alteram partem voluntatem coarctat, sed solum morali modo inducit persuasionem vel affectionem quadam. Unde cum determinatio moralis dicitur, conditio additur diminuens, qui illa revera absolute non est determinatio, sed potest esse vehemens quaedam propensio, quae vel frequentius, vel forte semper perducitur ad effectum, et ideo moralis determinatio vocatur; sicut

even though prevenient grace is in a sense “in” the human will, it merely disposes and excites the will rather than actually moving it.⁴¹ According to Molina himself, “it is not characteristic of the gift of grace to determine our will to consent, as is often claimed, but it is only to invite and attract.”⁴² Special *concursum* is a moral attraction or excitement, rather than a physical motion. Since it is a merely moral attraction, in the case of supernatural acts, all three aspects are needed for a supernatural act to occur: God’s general *concursum*, the actual grace (special *concursum*), and man’s free consent.⁴³

etiam solet dici moraliter impossibile quod est valde difficile, quamvis simpliciter et absolute impossibile non sit. Ex qua vocis declaratione constat determinationem hanc moralem, etiamsi praeveniat seu antecedit usum liberum, non impedire libertatem, in quo multum differt a praedeterminatione physica: haec enim non relinquit potentiam ad oppositum, compositione facta, quia, cum sit ex suppositione prorsus antecedente et causali, repugnat libertati; illa vero, cum absolute relinquat potentiam ad oppositum, etiam compositione facta, non est cur libertati repugnet, ut constat ex doctrina Concilii Tridentini saepe citata” — “Therefore, moral determination differs from physical determination in the following way. Moral determination leaves a true and real possibility of resisting such a determination, that is, it inclines to the operation differently than [physical] determination does. Indeed, moral determination has this name because there is no physical causality that would supervene and completely restrict the ability to choose the opposite course (thus coercing the will to one alternative). Rather, moral determination induces toward action either by a certain persuasion or affection, and therefore, it is called moral determination. Hence, when it is called moral determination, a moderating condition is added, which really and absolutely is not determining, but it is able to be powerful by a certain inclination, which is either frequent or strong, and it always leads to the effect. It is, therefore, called moral determination. For something is called morally impossible which is very difficult, although simply and absolutely it is not impossible. From this clarification of language, it is clear that this moral determination does not impede freedom [*libertatem*], even if it is prevenient or antecedent to the use of freedom [*usum liberum*]; in this, it greatly differs from physical predetermination. Physical determination does not leave the ability to do the opposite in the composed sense [*compositione facta*], since it is by supposition absolutely antecedent and causal, and this is opposed to freedom [*libertati*]. But moral determination, since it absolutely retains the ability to do the opposite, even in the composed sense [*compositione facta*], is not thus opposed to freedom, as is consistent with the frequently-cited teaching of the Council of Trent” (*Opusculum Primum*, bk. 3, ch. 10, no. 1 [*Opera Omnia*, 11:192]).

⁴¹ Matava, *Divine Causality*, 112.

⁴² See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 7, q. 23, aa. 4–5, disp. 1, mem. 7, no. 16: “Quoniam id non est donis gratiae determinare voluntates nostras ad consensum, ut saepe est explanatum, sed est solum invitare et allicere” (p. 505).

⁴³ See Juan Cruz Cruz, “Predestination as Transcendent Teleology: Molina and the First Molinism,” in Kaufmann and Aichele, *Companion to Luis de Molina*, 103.

Instrumentality According to Molina

In part II of the *Concordia* (the same portion examined above), Molina explains his position on instrumentality. He begins by distinguishing his understanding from that of St. Thomas, whose teaching on causal influxes into secondary causes, he admits, causes difficulty for him.⁴⁴ St. Thomas teaches in *Summa theologiae* [ST] I, q. 105, a. 5, that God acts in all things in three ways: God is the end of all things; he gives each thing its form; and he moves it to act. Molina confesses that he does not understand how God is able to move and apply secondary causes to their act because, at least according to Molina, there are some things that need no further actualization.⁴⁵ Although Thomas held for an actualization of all things by God (i.e., anything moved is moved by God), Molina wants to distinguish between the things moved by God and things given their form by God. In other words, Molina does not concede that God acts in all things by moving them to act, as Thomas describes. To illustrate this point, Molina makes a distinction between two types of instruments: those that need continual influx and those that need only to be set in motion or to be given a form.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 26, no. 2: "Duo autem sunt quae mihi difficultatem pariunt circa doctrinam hanc D. Thomae"—"Moreover there are two things which are difficult for me about this teaching of St. Thomas" (p. 164).

⁴⁵ See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 26, no. 2: "Primum est, quod non videam, quidnam sit motus ille et applicatio in causis secundis qua Deus illas ad agendum moveat et applicet; quin potius existimem ignem sine ulla sui mutatione calorem in aquam sibi admotam inducere"—"The first [of the two teachings of St. Thomas that seem difficult to me] is that I do not see why there is a motion in secondary causes by which God moves and applies them to act. Rather, I judge it more likely that the fire heats water by its own motion without any change in the fire itself" (p. 164). This illustrates a deeper metaphysical disagreement between Thomists and Molinists/Congruists, namely, whether the will can reduce itself from potency to act. Framed more generally, the question is whether there is a real distinction between potency and act. Even though this is a metaphysical disagreement, there are Christological implications for the respective positions.

⁴⁶ See Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 26, no. 2: "Duo namque sunt instrumentorum genera. Quaedam quae non habent integram virtutem ad operationem, qualia sunt instrumenta artis. Atque haec indigent motu et applicatione alterius agentis ut aliquid efficiant. . . . Alia vero sunt instrumenta quae vel habent integram virtutem ad agendum, ut semen decusum a generante, vel sunt ipsamet integra virtus, ut calor ignis et ceterae virtutes naturales"—"There are two types of instruments. One type that does not have the whole power for its operation; instruments of art are of this sort. These instruments require both the motion and application from another acting agent so that they produce an effect. . . . The other type of instruments are those that either have the whole power for acting in themselves—such as semen generated from a father—or they are the whole power as they are in themselves, as the heat of fire and other natural powers" (pp. 164–65).

Molina describes the first, those that need continual influx, as instruments of art, like a hatchet. Without constant movement from the woodworker, the hatchet would not move. On the other hand, Molina claims there are some things that do not need a constant influx, such as heat in fire or the seed of a father.⁴⁷ In both cases, the primary actor (the fire or the father) is not constantly needed for the product to achieve its effect once the initial form is given (either heating or procreation). This distinction provides Molina the opportunity to explain general *concursus*. Molina believes man to be the latter type of instrument that merely receives his form from God, but then requires no further physical causal input.⁴⁸ For the present investigation, it is sufficient to realize that Molina sees instruments as two kinds: those that do not have the complete power to act in themselves and those that do have the complete power in themselves. The latter kind has no further need of a causal influx to achieve its effect. David Oderberg has summarized this well. He explains that the Molinist theory is one of

joint co-operative action, whereby the secondary and principal causes work together like two men towing a boat.⁴⁹ Each man has some power of his own to contribute to the production of the effect, even though neither can produce the effect on his own. The assistance each gives the other is purely extrinsic, adding to what the other is able to contribute by himself. We cannot call this a case of instrumental causation, since neither man depends instrumentally on the other even though they do depend on each other for the production of the effect. Not only is there no instrumental dependence because each is able to contribute something unaided to the production of the effect, but the dependence that does exist is symmetrical: each depends on the other even if one man happens to be stronger than the other and so contributes more to the production of the effect. . . . On the

⁴⁷ Suárez holds a very similar position with respect to instruments (see Mullaney, *Grace and Freedom According to Suarez*, 47–48). For a discussion of Suárez on efficient causality, see Jacob Tuttle, “Suárez’s Non-Reductive Theory of Efficient Causation,” in *Oxford Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 125–58.

⁴⁸ While it is true that Thomas uses “instrument” analogously and would consider the hatchet and the fire slightly differently, Thomas does not, like Molina, believe this distinction should be applied directly to God without any nuance. God moves all things as instruments according to their proper natures. See *ST* III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 2.

⁴⁹ Molina himself uses this analogy to describe general *concursus*—God and man act as two men rowing a boat (*Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 26, no. 15 [p. 170]; cf. pt. 1, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 12, no. 11 [p. 64]).

Molinist model, there is no causal dependence in either direction, but there is symmetrical non-causal dependence, inasmuch as each man needs the extrinsic assistance of the other to tow the boat. So on the instrumental model we have asymmetrical causal dependence, whereas on the Molinist model we have symmetrical non-causal dependence.⁵⁰

Given this definition of instrumentality, we can fairly ask how the reader ought to understand the function of Christ's humanity as a conjoined instrument in the Molinist system. Before attempting to answer this question, the next section will examine specific claims Molina makes about Christ.

Specific Claims about Christ

As we noted above, Molina's work in the *Concordia* is not primarily a Christological tract. In fact, he wrote it as a commentary on certain questions of the *prima pars* of Thomas's *ST*. Nevertheless, given the original Christological context of the *de Auxiliis* debate, Molina does examine certain Christological questions in response to objections he received. Two specific claims about Christ in the *Concordia* are relevant here: the causality of Christ's miracles and the nature of Christ's impeccability. As we will see, both of these claims follow from our previous analysis of Molina's teaching on God's *concursus* and instrumentality.

The Instrumentality of Christ's Humanity in Working Miracles

In his consideration of Christ's human actions, Molina analyzes the causal chain of Christ's miracles. To explain the connection between miraculous events and predetermination, Molina first discusses the extent of God's predeterminations in the world.⁵¹ He distinguishes between three types of contingency in the world, which also corresponds to his presentation of a threefold distinction in God's predeterminations and to his teaching on God's need for *scientia media*. The first type of contingency is based on natural occurrences. Since God makes some creatures follow a necessity of nature—like rocks that fall downward due to gravity—God is able to predetermine them without fear of impinging upon free will. Since an unsupported rock will fall, God is able to predetermine that it will fall. In

⁵⁰ David S. Oderberg, "Divine Premotion," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 79, no. 3 (2016): 207–22, at 220.

⁵¹ This disputation was written for the second edition of the *Concordia* to respond to the criticisms of Zumel (see Freddoso's translator's comment in Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 196n1; the relevant section of Molina's work is *Concordia*, pt. 4, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 53, mem. 3, no. 384 [p. 192]).

fact, were the universe to include only non-rational creatures that acted merely “by a necessity of nature, without any dependence on any other source of contingency,” then God would not need middle knowledge: his free knowledge and natural knowledge would be sufficient.⁵² In fact, the very name of “middle knowledge” supports this observation. This knowledge is called “middle” because it is “in between” God’s natural knowledge and his free knowledge. As Molina explains,

It should be said (1) that *middle* knowledge partly has the character of *natural* knowledge, since it was prior to the free act of the divine will and since God did not have the power to know anything else, and (2) that it partly has the character of *free* knowledge, since the fact that it is knowledge of the one part rather than of the other derives from the fact that free choice, on the hypothesis that it should be created in one or another order of things, would do the one thing rather than the other, even though it would indifferently be able to do either of them. And this last point is surely demanded by the freedom of the created will.⁵³

The distinctive characteristic of middle knowledge is that it is God’s pre-volitional knowledge of what free rational agents would do in various circumstances. Thus, were there no free rational agents, there would be no need for pre-volitional knowledge of those agents.

The second type of contingency is that of the human will. Because, according to Molina, the will of man remains free from God’s coercive action, it provides a source of uncertainty and contingency in the universe. How does this radical contingency correspond to God’s omnipotence and omniscience? This is the exact question that Molina answers by invoking middle knowledge as mentioned above.⁵⁴ The contingency in this second category is rooted directly in created free choice and so escapes God’s proximate, efficient causal predetermination.⁵⁵

⁵² See Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 239: “Now, in order to do this better, we should note that among created things there are some whose proximate source of contingency is *God’s faculty of choice alone*. These include both (i) the things that are produced immediately by God alone and do not depend on any other source of contingency, as was the case with all the things that were produced by God in the first establishment of things, and also (ii) the things that thereafter have emanated from those first things just by a necessity of nature, without any dependence on any other source of contingency.”

⁵³ Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 52, in *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 169.

⁵⁴ For an explanation and defense of *scientia media*, see Freddoso, “Introduction,” in Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 46–62. For a summary of middle knowledge and its relation to the rest of Molina’s thought, see Aichele, “Luis de Molina.”

⁵⁵ See Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 250: “We . . . claim, first of all, that through

The final type of contingency directly impinges upon Christology. Molina discusses miraculous occurrences like the raising of Lazarus, the restoration of sight to the blind man, and Paul's conversion. According to Molina, these events can be seen in two ways, each with different implications for God's causal predetermination. Considered, on the one hand, as a historical progression that is presupposed by and leads up to the moment of the miracle, these events fall into the second category above: that of a contingency rooted in the human will. For example, the man born blind had to exist and make free, contingent choices in his life leading up to his healing by Christ, even including his free choice to ask Christ for healing. Insofar as events impinge upon a created free will, God must employ *scientia media* for his providential ordering. To guide the man born blind to Christ for healing, God must use external circumstances and moral influence; he cannot determine the created free will.

On the other hand, insofar as these events require the direct intervention of God for the miraculous effect, they are completely determined. As Molina explains, addressing the example of Lazarus:

For even though the actual existence of Lazarus, along with the rest of the things that accrued to him up to the instant at which he was raised by Christ, had, in addition to God, other sources for their existing contingently in such-and-such a way, . . . nonetheless, the raising up of Lazarus, the receiving of sight by the man born blind and the calling of Paul had, presupposing all those other things, no source for their existence other than the free will of God, by which alone they were produced.⁵⁶

Because God alone predetermined the healing *qua* healing, it is not known through *scientia media*, but through free knowledge. Alfred Freddoso helpfully summarizes this situation in a note to his translation:

His wisdom God provides for each thing in accordance with its nature and, for this reason, provides for free beings with respect to their free effects, whether these effects are natural or supernatural, in a way that always preserves their freedom of choice, that is, by leaving it within their power, at the very moment at which they produce those effects and despite all the circumstances obtaining at that moment, not to produce those effects and, indeed, if they so will, to produce contrary effects—so that they are the masters of their own actions, and they are fit for virtue and vice, praise and blame, reward and punishment.” Suárez, again, will echo these ideas (*Opusculum Primum*, bk. 1, ch. 17, nos. 7–8 [*Opera Omnia*, 11:89]).

⁵⁶ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 240.

There are two ways of considering the certitude of God's foreknowledge of the fact that Lazarus was going to be raised from the dead. On the one hand, God is the sole cause of the precise effect in question, and so the certitude of His foreknowledge of it stems solely from His predetermination to raise Lazarus up. On the other hand, God has predetermined to raise Lazarus up within a historical context whose causal ancestry involves many human free choices, and so God needs middle knowledge in order to know with certainty that just those circumstances will obtain and hence in order to know with certainty that Lazarus will be raised up in just those circumstances.⁵⁷

From the foregoing, the reader is left with the following question: was Christ's human action an occasion and circumstance of these miracles (and thus known by *scientia media*) or was Lazarus raised through a predetermination that included Christ's action? If the latter, then it is difficult to see how Molina's definition of freedom would apply to Christ or how his claim would differ from the Thomistic view (the very view with which he disagrees). If the former, then Molina has introduced a division between the divine and human work in a way that creates dissonance with the truth of Christ's theandric acts. On this interpretation, God's raising Lazarus via Christ would have been brought about by occasional causality rather than instrumental causality. In other words, Christ's being at the tomb and saying "Lazarus come out" was merely the occasion on which God raised Lazarus, rather than the very instrument through which the God-man raised Lazarus.⁵⁸ If this is the case, then Christ's human actions are just like those of all other created persons—at best moral causes of miracles. Thus, Molina's position mitigates the meaning of theandric acts. To illustrate this further, compare the following two statements, one from John Damascene and one from Molina. John Damascene says: "Thus the theandric operation shows this: when God became man, that is to say, was incarnate, his human operation was divine, that is to say, deified. And it was not excluded from

⁵⁷ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 241n5 (emphasis original).

⁵⁸ For a brief analysis of some scriptural arguments in favor of Christ's humanity acting as an instrumental cause, see Édouard Hugon, "La causalité instrumentale de L'Humanité Sainte de Jésus," *Revue Thomiste* 13 (1905): 47–54. Regarding the resurrection of Lazarus, Hugon observes "Note the *moral* value in the prayer to the heavenly Father, the *physical* action in this firm voice which commands death to release its prey" (50; emphasis original). Hugon argues that it is precisely through human actions of intellect and will (such as speaking) that Christ works miracles. Thus, Christ's humanity is instrumental. This does not, however, exclude the moral component of action.

his divine operation, nor was his divine operation excluded from his human operation. On the contrary, each is found in the other.”⁵⁹ Molina, on the other hand, claims: “Indeed, since God, through his universal *concursus*, and the secondary agent immediately cause the effect of that secondary agent as two parts of one whole integral cause, neither of them influences the other precisely by its activity, but each immediately flows into the effect, such that neither, by those precise causal influences, occurs before the other.”⁶⁰ Because of Molina’s position regarding general *concursus*, his teaching on theandric activity lacks the robust and ordered harmony found in Damascene. Specifically, with respect to the causality of Christ’s humanity, Molina’s teaching inadvertently implies a division between the causal activity of Christ’s humanity and Christ’s divinity.⁶¹

⁵⁹ John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 3.19 (p. 323).

⁶⁰ Molina, *Concordia*, pt. 2, q. 14, a. 13, disp. 30, no. 5: “At vero cum Deus per concursum universalem et causa secunda immediate influant in effectum causae secundae tamquam duae partes unius integrae causae, quarum neutra illis praecise influxibus singularibus influit in alteram, sed utraque immediate in effectum, ita ut neutra, illis praecise influxibus singularibus, prius altera concurrat” (p. 192).

⁶¹ Gabriel Vázquez, S.J., who held views similar to Molina’s with respect to actual grace, is even more clear in his language when discussing the causality of Christ’s humanity. He explicitly states that the most probable opinion is that Christ’s humanity is merely a moral cause of miracles. “Cum 1 p. Disp. 176, c. 3 in universum docuerimus, non posse assumi a Deo pro sola sua voluntate quamlibet rem, ut physicum instrumentum ad quemlibet effectum, sed ea tantum esse posse physica instrumenta alicuius effectus, quae suapte natura vim aliquam habet ex proportionem cum tali effectu, sicut ibidem explicavimus, atque humanitas Christi suapte natura non habeat hanc vim, et proportionem cum quovis opere mirabili, et super naturam, quod Christus effecit, sequitur, eam non fuisse instrumentum physicum, sed solum morale Deitatis. Pro hac sententia citari possunt Doctores, qui censent, sacramenta non esse physica instrumenta gratiae, quos suo loco memorabimus; nam eadem ratione de potentia Christi ad patranda miracula philosophari debent . . . Colligamus igitur nostram sententiam, nempe humanitatem Christi non fuisse physicum instrumentum Deitatis ad patranda miracula, sed tantum instrumentum morale, cuius ministrorium in eo consistebat, ut a Deo tanquam a causa principali miracula impetraret, sicut quovis instrumento morali uberius explicavimus” — “When we explained in the first part, disp. 176, c. 3 in general, that nothing whatsoever is able to be assumed as a physical instrument (no matter the effect) by God for his will alone, but something is able to be the physical instrument of some effect only when the cause has in its own nature some power proportionate to the effect, as we have explained in the aforementioned place. Further, the humanity of Christ by its very own nature does not have this power, lacking both a proportion to the working of marvels and things supernatural. It follows, then, that the effects of Christ’s actions are not because he is the physical instrument, but only the moral instrument of the Godhead. In support of this thesis, we are able to cite the doctors of the Church who determine that the sacraments are not physical instruments of grace,

Molina's views on "instrumentality" mentioned above are entirely consistent with his comments on Christ's humanity. For Molina, there are instruments of art that require a constant causal influx and those that have all that is necessary to act and no longer require influx as a result. Of the two, which is Christ's humanity? Given our examination of Molina's thought thus far, we can conclude that Christ's humanity is the latter—it has everything needed to act and therefore no longer requires a direct, predetermining causal influx from God. "It should be denied that Christ's acts . . . were predetermined by God through intrinsically efficacious assistance, as though in the presence of this assistance Christ did not have the power not to elicit those acts despite such assistance."⁶² Such an account, especially considered in light of Oderberg's analysis above, fundamentally denies the instrumentality of Christ's humanity. Is there, then, a meaningful way to talk about Christ's human actions being the actions of the Divine Word in Molina's thought? Or, to frame the question using Molina's own analogy, does Christ's humanity cooperate with God's action of salvation as if he were one of two men rowing a boat? At the very least, these questions should give us pause, for it is not clear how Molina's teaching can effectively serve orthodox Christology. Namely, it is unclear how the single personal subject of the incarnate divine Word can choose *in his human will* if God can have no physical effect upon the human will.⁶³

which we will explain in the appropriate place [below]. Now, by the same reason, they must conclude the same of the power of Christ in working miracles. . . . We, therefore, summarize our opinion: truly the humanity of Christ was not the physical instrument of the Godhead when working miracles, but only a moral instrument, whose action consists in this, that he asked God as from a principle cause, just as we have explained fully about moral instruments in general"; see *Commentariorum ac Disputationum in III Partem S. Thomae*, disp. 57, a. 2, ch. 5, in vol. 2 (Compluti apud Andream Sanchez Ezpeleta, 1609), 597. Notice that he links the causality of Christ and the causality of the sacraments. Vázquez will go on to say in ch. 6: "Sacramenta novae legis non esse instrumentum physicum gratiae, neque humanitatem Christi, neque passionem ejus"—"The sacraments of the New Law are not physical instruments of grace, nor is the humanity of Christ, nor is His passion" (1:602). For Vázquez, the humanity of Christ does not instrumentally cause grace.

⁶² Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 272.

⁶³ See also Anton C. Pegis, "Molina and Human Liberty," 129. When Suárez engages these questions, he focuses on Christ's knowledge as the reason for the created will's volitional acts. For instance, when discussing the conformity of Christ's human and divine wills, he gives as a reason: ". . . quia, supposita hac scientia animae Christi, qua sciebat omnem divinam voluntatem beneplaciti seu consequentem, impossibile erat aliud efficaciter velle; quia facta illa suppositione, objectum representabatur ut impossibile, unde illa voluntas non solum esset otiosa et imprudens, sed (ut existimo)

Impeccability

In the *Concordia*, Molina examines Christ's impeccability and freedom in response to Zumel's objection that Christ was able to choose not to die on

etiam fuit impossibilis, et ideo neque beati possunt habere talem actum, quando illis constat de divina voluntate"—". . . this knowledge of Christ's soul being presupposed, by which he knew everything pleasing to or flowing from the divine will, and thus it was impossible that he will something other than this; because, presupposing this knowledge, the object was seen as impossible, hence to choose this would be not only pointless and imprudent, but also, as I judge the matter, impossible. And, therefore, neither are the blessed able to will in such a way, when the divine will is clear to them" (*Tertia Pars Summae Theologiae*, . . . *cum Commentariis et Disputationibus P. Francisci Suarez e Societate Jesu*, disp. 38, sect. 4, no. 2, ed. A. Carolo Berton, new ed., in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 18 [Paris: Ludovicum Vives, Bibliopolam Editorem, 1877], 309). Suárez holds that Christ's human will must infallibly follow the divine will, while at the same time not receiving a physical premotion nor being deprived of freedom (as he understands freedom). To reconcile these ideas, he cites the infinite prescience of the divine intellect as the essential aspect that reconciles and joins Christ's freedom with infallible government: "Respondetur, haec duo conjungenda esse et concilianda, supposita infinita praescientia divini intellectus, qua de omnibus creatis voluntatibus cognoscit, non solum quid possint operari, aut quid de facto operaturae sint, sed etiam quid essent facturae in omnibus eventis et opportunitatibus, si hoc vel illo modo applicarentur vel excitarentur ad operandum. Hac enim scientia supposita, facile intelligitur posse Deum aliquam voluntatem semper ita regere et excitare, ut infallibiliter consentiat, quamvis libere; quia potest illam motionem vel operandi occasionem illi praestare, cum qua infallibiliter praescivit esse operaturam; et ita intelligendum est factum esse cum voluntate Christi, cujus singularem curam et regimen divina persona assumpsit, quando illam sibi secundum hypostasim univit. . . . Et ideo, si Christi voluntas habebat praeceptum hic et nunc operandi talem actum, per divinam gratiam et providentiam applicabatur et movebatur ad illum actum, eo modo quo praescivit Deus fore infallibile, ut ipsa consentiret. Et ita haec infallibilis connexio non fundatur in necessitate, seu physica determinatione ipsius potentiae, sed in sapientissima et efficacissima Dei providentia, qua novit regere voluntatem creatam modo illi accommodato, ut, quamvis libere, infallibiliter tamen consentiat"—"I respond: it is necessary to join and reconcile these two things by supposing the infinite prescience of the divine intellect, by which God knows all created wills—not only what they are able to do or what they will in fact do, but even what they would do in all situations and eventualities if they are applied or excited to operation in this way or that. For, when this knowledge is presupposed, it is easy to see that God is always able to rule and excite someone's will, such that he infallibly consent, while remaining free. This is because he is able to provide that motion or that occasion for acting with which he knows the operation will infallibly come about. It is in this way that we should understand the will of Christ, whose singular care and rule a divine person assumed, when he united it to himself in the hypostatic union. . . . And therefore, if the will of Christ had a precept here and now, to act in a certain way, it was applied and moved to act through divine grace and providence, in just the way that God foresaw would be infallible, such that his will would consent.

the Cross in the divided sense, but not in the composed sense.⁶⁴ During his discussion of Christ's impeccability, Molina says the following:

If Christ is thought of as having those things that are owed to his nature by reason of the grace of union, then it must be claimed that Christ was in no way able to sin. . . . For it was owed to Christ's humanity that it should in no way be permitted by God to sin, and it was altogether abominable and improper that the Word should sin, even through the assumed nature. Therefore, just as it involves a contradiction for God to lie—not, to be sure, because God lacks the power to form those sounds that, if they were uttered, would constitute a lie, but rather because for God to lie is altogether unseemly and incompatible with His infinite goodness—so, too, it involves a contradiction for Christ to sin, not because Christ as a wayfarer lacks the ability to transgress commands, but rather because it is impossible for God to permit it, and because it is incompatible with the infinite goodness for the divine Word that he should sin, even through his assumed nature, and thus that God should permit it. Therefore, it pertained to divine providence to arrange things in such a way that while Christ's freedom was preserved, a freedom required for merit and for the purposes explained above, he would in no way sin.⁶⁵

There are two troublesome aspects to Molina's claim. First, he does not deny that Christ had the "ability to transgress commands." Molina grounds Christ's impeccability, at least partially, in the fact that circumstances were arranged to prevent sinful action, even while Christ retained the ability to sin. An impeccability grounded in a favorable arrangement of external

And thus, this infallible connection is not founded on necessity or physical determination of the power itself, but rather on the most wise and efficacious providence of God, by which he knows how to rule the created will in a way accommodated to it, such that it infallibly consent, while also remaining free" (disp. 38, sect. 3, no. 12 [18:186–87]). Given the fact that he is citing a moral influence, not a physical motion, he still falls in line with Molina's thought. This makes Suárez susceptible to the same inconsistencies being noted about Molina.

⁶⁴ For a discussion of the composed and divided senses, see Matava, *Divine Causality*, 83–88; Steven A. Long, "St. Thomas Aquinas, Divine Causality, and the Mystery of Predestination," in Long, Nutt, and White, *Thomism and Predestination*, 59. To speak in the composed sense is to take both potentiality and actuality into account while the divided sense takes only potentiality into account. Socrates may either stand or sit (in the divided sense), but he cannot actually sit while actually standing.

⁶⁵ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 270.

circumstances seems to locate the source of Christ's holiness not in the hypostatic union and the grace that followed therefrom, but rather to locate it in something accidental to who Christ is. Given the metaphysical certitude that the divine Word cannot sin, it is unnecessary for his humanity to be shielded from sin by circumstances. While Molina's claim that it is impossible for God to sin is indeed true, his justification for Christ's impeccability is metaphysically thin. After all, if he is God, why would Christ need protection from sin through pre-arranged circumstances?

Second, Molina introduces the possibility of predicating acts of natures rather than acts of supposits.⁶⁶ He claims Christ's human *nature* was not permitted to sin because of the goodness of God. To predicate sin of a nature rather than of a person through a nature prompts questions about the relationship of the person to the nature vis-à-vis moral responsibility or moral blame.⁶⁷ We will return to this point below.

Molina returns to the question of Christ's impeccability later in the same section. There, he argues that Christ is impeccable for two reasons. First,

⁶⁶ This philosophical axiom, that acts are of supposits, is presupposed for the arguments that follow. While there are differing views regarding the meaning and value of this principle, a full justification of it is outside the scope of this article. For a discussion of the metaphysical context of divine *concursus* that also applies to this axiom, see Stanislaus Adamczyk, "De Universali Concursu Divino in Doctrina S. Thomae Aquinatis," *Divus Thomas* 73, no. 3 (1970): 273–307. For other views of this principle, specifically that of Scotus, who denies this principle in favor of predicating acts of forms, see Richard Cross, "Accidents, Substantial Forms, and Causal Powers in the Late Thirteenth Century: Some Reflections on the Axiom 'actiones sunt suppositorum,'" in *Compléments de substance: études sur les propriétés accidentelles offertes à Alain de Libera*, ed. Christophe Erismann and Alexandrine Schniewind, Problèmes & controverses (Paris: J. Vrin, 2008), 133–46. For a response to Cross and some comments about the importance of this principle, see Corey Ladd Barnes, *Christ's Two Wills in Scholastic Thought: The Christology of Aquinas and Its Historical Contexts* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2012), 314–28.

⁶⁷ Besides the secondary literature mentioned above, St. Thomas uses the axiom that acts are predicated of supposits in, among other places, *ST* II-II, q. 58, a. 2, corp. In addition, he claims in *ST* III, q. 7, a. 13, corp., that one reason habitual grace follows upon the grace of union in Christ is as follows: "Third, the reason of this order can be taken from the end of grace, since it is ordained to acting rightly, and action belongs to the suppositum and the individual. Hence action and, in consequence, grace ordaining thereto, presuppose the hypostasis which operates. Now the hypostasis did not exist in the human nature before the union, as is clear from q. 4, a. 2. Therefore, the grace of union precedes, in thought, habitual grace." Of particular note is the link between grace and action. Thomas presupposes that grace is ordained to *acting* properly. Therefore, grace that *moves* is ontologically posterior but still retains some teleological superiority. This is verified in the case of Christ: Christ's actions are for salvation.

on account of the hypostatic union, Christ is unable to sin. Second, Christ is impeccable because he is “the most exalted of those confirmed in grace and goodness.”⁶⁸ This phrase “confirmed in grace” is related to a previous discussion of both the *beati* who enjoy the beatific vision and those who, while still *viatores*, were so confirmed in grace as to no longer commit sin, like St. Peter and Mary.⁶⁹ After reviewing these two grounds for Christ’s impeccability, Molina invokes the composed and divided senses of freedom to explain the way in which grace operated in Christ’s life. Zumel had argued that Christ was impeccable because of the efficacy of grace that he received. On the contrary, Molina argues that:

It is not because of the efficacy of the assistance but rather because of those other two things [the grace of union and the confirmation in grace] that Christ was not able in the composed sense to sin and hence not able in the composed sense not to elicit those acts [meritorious for our salvation]; and this does not deprive Christ of his freedom in the divided sense or absolutely, with the result that he was able not to elicit those acts at the very moment at which he elicited them.⁷⁰

Molina is claiming that we can use the divided sense to discuss Christ’s actions in a way that brackets the grace of union and Christ’s confirmation in grace. The implication is that, by mentally abstracting these graces from Christ’s humanity, Christ could have sinned. Molina is thus claiming that actions can be meaningfully predicated of the humanity of Christ as abstracted from the grace of union, as abstracted from the personal being of the eternal Logos.⁷¹ However, because acts are predicated of suppositis and

⁶⁸ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 270.

⁶⁹ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 264–65.

⁷⁰ Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 272. As Freddoso admits, there is some lack of clarity in Molina’s statement here (272n35). Regardless, the possible confusion does not affect the present analysis.

⁷¹ Suárez is much clearer about Christ’s impeccability: “Simpliciter autem falsum est dicere, Christum potuisse peccare, aut non implere praeceptum, quia jam includitur sensus compositus, et indicatur potuisse Christi voluntatem carere illa divina custodia, cum qua non potuit componi peccatum”—“Simply speaking, it is false to say that Christ was able to sin or that he could fail to fulfill a command because it would be included in the composed sense, and it would be declared that the will of Christ lacked that divine protection, since by that divine protection he would be unable to sin” (*Tertia Pars Summae Theologiae*, disp. 37, sect. 3, no. 24 [18:292]) In the same section, he explains that Christ would be impeccable even if he did not have the beatific vision or if he was ignorant of the hypostatic union. Even though he is clear

not natures, Molina's position implies that there are in fact two persons in Christ: the divine person and the human person, of whom sin would be predicated were the grace of union bracketed.

Even though Molina does not delve into these issues, the reader ought not pass them over too quickly. If sin, by definition, is alienation from God, then to permit the possibility of sin in the humanity of Christ is to permit the possibility of a total alienation of the humanity of Christ from the Word.⁷² If

that Christ cannot sin, he still denies the need for a physical premotion to ensure the impeccability of Christ: "Quamvis autem Christi voluntas privata fuerit positivo concursu ad malum actum efficiendum, non tamen fuit affecta motione aliqua physice praedeterminante illam ad efficiendum actum praeceptum, quia talis motio neque est connaturalis voluntati liberae, ut suppono, alias esset connaturale illi privari usu libertatis, quod repugnat; neque est debita illi voluntati ratione unionis, quia neque est ei debitum, ut privetur suo connaturali operandi modo, neque est id necessarium ad Christi impeccabilitatem, nam suaviori modo potest Deus illam voluntatem regere, ut infallibiliter non peccet, ut expositum est, quod est satis ad impeccabilitatem Christi, ut jam declarabo"—"Although the private will of Christ was by positive *concursus* open to evil action, nevertheless, it was not by some affective, physically predetermining motion for fulfilling the commanded act because such a motion is not connatural to free will (as I suppose), otherwise it would be connatural to it to be deprived of the use of freedom, which is repugnant. Nor is it necessary to the will by reason of the union, because it is not necessary that it be deprived of its connatural mode of operating, nor is it necessary for the impeccability of Christ. For God is able to rule the will in a sweeter way, such that he would infallibly not sin (as we explained), because it is enough for the impeccability of Christ, as I will now declare" (no. 18 [18:290]). For a discussion of Suárez's Christology vis-à-vis Christ's holiness and habitual grace, especially compared to a Thomistic understanding, see Legge, *Trinitarian Christology*, 136–45.

⁷² Interestingly, Vázquez, in his treatment of the hypostatic union, entertained the hypothetical question of whether the humanity of Christ could sin given, in the same instant, the dissolution of the hypostatic union. His basis for asking this question is a comparison with the just man. As long as a man is just, he cannot sin. If he does sin, however, he has, in the same moment, lost justice (see *Commentariorum*, disp. 61, ch. 7 [1:647–49]). While Vázquez concludes that Christ cannot sin, his question is equivalent to asking whether a square would still have right angles if its sides were abstracted. Since the sides constitute the square, no square would remain if the sides were abstracted and, therefore, there would be no right angles. Or, for a more theological example that builds upon Thomas, we can ask whether the Son could become incarnate if the divine relation of filiation were mentally abstracted. This builds upon Thomas's question in *ST* I, q. 40, a. 3: "Whether the hypostases remain if the relations are mentally abstracted from the persons?" The answer is that the Son could not become incarnate if the relations were abstracted because the Son is constituted by the relation. Therefore, if there were no relations, there would be no Son who could become incarnate. Vázquez, however, does not think the axiom "actiones sunt suppositorum" is applicable to Christ's humanity. Therefore, it is possible to impute actions to the humanity of Christ: "Deinde si concedatur humanitati Christi propria existentia,

this is a real possibility, then there is another acting subject who is able to be alienated from God.⁷³ Thus, this hypothetical humanity that Molina posits could, in a sense, have a subjectivity that is sufficient to be blamed for sin.

Molina's teaching on grace and its operation in the life of man can seem compelling. It aims to ensure that man is free from compulsion and, in this sense, appears to have much to recommend it. However, the "freedom" guaranteed by Molina's system is, ultimately, a freedom that sequesters man from God's saving action. This is most evident, as noted above, in the case of Christ—the human nature of Christ has been labeled a "no-fly zone"

infirmum sane est fundamentum illud, *actiones sunt suppositorum*, ad probandum, non fuisse in Christi humanitate meritum aliquod, quo mereretur uniri Verbo: efficaciter enim monstrare possemus, subsistentiam propriam, aut alienam non esse conditionem requisitam ex parte principii ad agendum, sed humanitati ipsi posse tribui actionem, tanquam principio agentis, quod vocari solet in scholis, *Principium ut quod*— "If a proper existence is conceded to the humanity of Christ, then the premise that 'acts are predicated of supposits' is clearly invalid. In order to prove this, I say that there was no merit in the humanity of Christ by which it merited to be united to the Word. For we are able to show this clearly, that proper subsistence or a foreign one is not a requisite condition on the part of the principle for acting, but it is possible to attribute action to the humanity itself, as to an acting principle, which the schoolmen usually name the *principium ut quod*" (*Commentariorum*, disp. 21, ch. 3 [2:257]). An incorrect understanding of the truth "*actiones sunt suppositorum*" leads to Nestorianism. Brian T. Carl explains: "If 'the Son of God weeps' is true only because one is allowed by synecdoche to attribute the action of Christ's human nature to the divine supposit, then *actiones sunt suppositorum* might seem entirely compatible with—or even to be an expression of—Nestorianism. When Aquinas cites the thesis that actions are of supposits, however, he insists not merely that one is *permitted* to say that 'the human person understands' or that 'the Son of God weeps,' but that these expressions are *more proper* than 'the human soul understands' or 'Christ's human nature weeps.' It seems clear that the greater propriety of the former expressions must be grounded in something real, rather than being only a matter of a linguistic convention such as synecdoche" ("Action, Supposit, and Subject: Interpreting *Actiones Sunt Suppositorum*," *Nova et Vetera* [English] 17, no. 2 [2019]: 545–65, at 550). Further discussion of Vázquez's position in this regard would require an investigation into his views regarding Christ's *esse* and how he understands the communication of idioms. While issues like this provide provocative areas for further research, the scope of this article limits further engagement.

⁷³ Indeed, as Édouard Hugon explains, the possibility of Christ's humanity committing sin has dire consequences: "The Word does not suppress or replace the proximate cause of the human acts of Christ, clearly; but the Word ought to direct the humanity, and it is to the Word, in the end, that all the works are attributed as to the first and responsible principle. Therefore, unless we wish to reopen the door to Nestorianism, it is not permitted to conceive the power to sin in the humanity assumed by God. The human will that the Word is charged to govern eternally ought to be absolutely, intrinsically impeccable" (*Le mystère de l'Incarnation*, 8th ed [Paris: P. Téqui, 1946], 293–94).

in which the Godhead cannot act.⁷⁴ Molina may have preserved a certain understanding of man's volitional autonomy, but he has inadvertently created a rift between man and God that extends through the hypostatic union. In the Thomistic tradition, this rift is prevented by acknowledging that God acts *suaviter et fortiter* in all things, thus respecting the creature's nature.

Thomism, Physical Premotion, and Christ

In the previous section, we noted some infelicities that emerge when Molina's doctrine of grace and human freedom is applied to the person of Christ. This section argues that the Thomist account of physical premotion, in contrast, comports well with orthodox Christology while also providing a robust framework for understanding Christ's instrumentality, impeccability, and mode of acting.

*Physical Premotion and Christ*⁷⁵

St. Thomas teaches that God's action in the world is multiform. God is present everywhere by his power, presence, and essence; one manifestation of his ubiquity is that he works in all things, giving them their form and their end and actualizing their movement.⁷⁶ God does not merely cooperate externally with agents by causing the effect alongside the created agent. Instead, through physical premotion, God actualizes the human will directly, and thus he efficiently "pre-moves" the will to act. Rather than being merely a moral attraction for the will, physical premotion reduces the will from potency to act.

⁷⁴ The phrase "no-fly zone" is used by Long to describe the human will as viewed by those who disagree with physical premotion ("St. Thomas Aquinas, Divine Causality, and the Mystery of Predestination," 76). While Long's reference here is to the will of a created person, his claim is also true of the human will of Christ, since it is moved in the same way that the will of a saint is moved, as Thomas reminds us in *ST* III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1.

⁷⁵ For various summaries of physical premotion from Thomistic thinkers, see Taylor Patrick O'Neill, *Grace, Predestination, and the Permission of Sin: A Thomistic Analysis* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2019). See also Oderberg, "Divine Premotion"; Matava, *Divine Causality*; Joseph G. Trabbic, "Praemotio Physica and Divine Transcendence," in Long, Nutt, and White, *Thomism and Predestination*, 152–65; Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, trans. Bede Rose (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1939), 256–82.

⁷⁶ For Thomas's view on God's ubiquity, see *ST* I, q. 8, a. 3; as mentioned above, God's action in all creatures is found in q. 105, a. 5. The Thomistic teaching on physical premotion is found, among other places, in *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7; *ST* I, q. 2, a. 3; q. 105, a. 4; I-II, q. 9, a. 6; and *SCG* III, chs. 66–67, 70.

In the case of Christ specifically, Thomas explains in *ST* III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1, that God moves the human will of Christ as he moves the will of the saints; God moves the will *ad nutum* or “at his nod.” Since God is unchanging, a *nutus* from him does not imply a change in him. Rather, there is a change in the creature.⁷⁷ This change is specified later in the passage to be an *internal* movement in the creature’s will from God: “For although the will is not able to be moved interiorly by another creature, nevertheless it is moved interiorly by God.”⁷⁸ God’s action in the life of Christ clarifies the meaning of “physical premotion.” When God acts through an inward movement, he is not merely exciting or disposing the will, but he moves the will interiorly toward a specific end.

Further, the use of “physical” to describe physical premotion has interesting parallels with anti-Nestorian language. Diego Alvarez (1558–1635) explains that “physical” is able to be taken in two ways. It can either mean that God physically predetermines the *liberum arbitrium* to its operation, a proposal which no Catholic holds, since this would remove freedom. Or, on the other hand, “physical” can be understood as distinct from “moral” determination, which is “only through persuasion and by the proposing of a fitting object, be it interior or exterior.” To emphasize the difference between a moral proposal and a physical motion, Alvarez explains: “Indeed, also at the Council of Ephesus, in the third anathema, the union of the incarnate Word is called a physical union, that is, a true and real union as distinguished from a union according to dignity or authority.”⁷⁹ Antonin Massoulié (1632–1706), in his defense of the neologism “physical premotion,” also claims that the word “physical” in “physical premotion” is used to describe “a true, real, not merely metaphorical efficiency.”⁸⁰ Massoulié then echoes

⁷⁷ As Long explains, the difference between God’s causing something and his not causing something must be on the side of the creature. To speak of a “nod” from God requires, then, a motion on the part of the creature, not on the part of God (“St. Thomas Aquinas, Divine Causality, and the Mystery of Predestination,” 60).

⁷⁸ *ST* III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 1.

⁷⁹ Diego Alvarez, *De Auxiliis Divinae Gratiae et Humani Arbitrii Viribus, et Libertate, ac Legitima Eius Cum Efficacia Eorundem Auxiliorum Concordia: Libri Duodecim*, bk. 3, disp. 22, no. 2 (Cardon & Cavellat, 1620), 89–90.

⁸⁰ Antonin Massoulié argues in a similar way: “Ad significandam vim hujus motionis effectricis bonae operationis, existimatum est a S. Thomae Discipulis, usurpandum esse praemotionalis physicae nomen, quod veram, realem, nec metaphoricam solum efficientiam designaret” — “In describing the power of this efficacious motion of good works, it was determined by the disciples of St. Thomas to use the name ‘physical premotion,’ which would designate a true, real and not merely metaphorical, efficiency” (*Divus Thomas Sui Interpres de Divina Motione, et Libertate Creati*, bk. 1. diss. 1, q. 2, a. 1,

Alvarez and claims that “physical,” can be helpfully understood in parallel to the Council of Ephesus. Ephesus claimed that, “if anyone, with respect to the one Christ, divides the hypostases after the union, joining them by a mere connection of dignity, authority or power, and not rather by a coming together according to a natural union [ἐνωσιν φυσικὴν], let him be anathema.”⁸¹ Both Thomists, therefore, are explaining the idea of “physical premotion,” the way in which God works in our lives, by appeal to what God has already done in the hypostatic union.

An immediate objection to this type of motion is that, if God were to act in this way, it would not respect the integrity of the creature’s nature. However, this objection presupposes that God’s causality is competitive with man’s causality. Far from being violent or unnatural, God acts in all things in accord with their nature—God’s action is strong and sweet, never violent.

This non-violence is manifest both on the level of the efficient cause and on the level of the final cause. The three ways in which God acts in creatures that St. Thomas outlined in *ST* I, q. 105, a. 5—by giving them form, moving them, and being their end—are deeply related. God’s motion in creatures respects and perfects their proper forms while also directing them to their proper ends. In the case of man, God’s action in moving man toward his ultimate goal, the beatific vision, acts as the lodestar that provides intelligibility to physical premotion. God’s providential plan in guiding the whole of creation toward his glorification (the final cause) is achieved with certainty through the efficient actualization of potencies.⁸² This general picture of God’s actualization takes on new meaning when seen in Christ’s life. Christ achieves the glorification of God through his being and his action. The physical premotion from God into the human nature of Christ ensures the efficacy of his actions for the salvation of man.

Instrumentality

As mentioned above, Molina disagrees with Thomas’s understanding of instrumentality because Molina understands instruments of art, like a chisel,

no. 2 [Rome: Komarek, 1707], 9). While not strictly speaking the same use of the term, Reginald Lynch emphasizes the importance of recovering an Aristotelian understanding of “nature” (*physis*) when examining the *de Auxiliis* proceedings. Reginald Lynch, “Divine Causality and Human Freedom: Aquinas, Báñez, and Premotion after Descartes,” in Ballor, Gaetano, and Sytsma, *Beyond Dordt and “De Auxiliis,”* 219–44.

⁸¹ DH no. 254.

⁸² The immediate question this claim prompts is: how does God’s action permit sin without causing it? For a wonderful examination of this question within the Thomistic tradition see O’Neill, *Grace*, ch. 9.

to be less ontologically independent from God than fire that heats.⁸³ Indeed, based on an initial reading, Thomas's teaching on instrumentality, along with the comments above about physical premotion, could immediately prompt the possibility of occasionalism. Does God work in all things in a way that deprives them of true causality? Phrased differently, if all things are instruments of God, how is it possible that created causes are true causes in their own order? Indeed, Thomas's statement in chapter 41 of *Summa contra gentiles* IV that all men are like separated instruments would seem to indicate an occasionalism. However, the charge of occasionalism falls flat when this comment is understood in light of Thomas's overall teaching that God acts on a higher causal plane than man. According to St. Thomas, an instrument is a moved mover that achieves an effect that is relatively supernatural to the nature of the instrument.⁸⁴ So, for instance, a chisel can cut, but it is only as instrument that it can participate in the crafting of the statue of David. Even so, the chisel's ability to participate in the higher activity of sculpting is grounded in its own form as a chisel. The chisel's own participation in the higher end of the sculptor is precisely because of the form it has as a chisel; without this form, it could not be exalted to the dignity of being Michelangelo's chisel. It is because of the nature of the chisel and through an action proper to the chisel—chipping away at marble—that it is able to act as instrument in the higher art of sculpting.

In a similar way, all things are instruments of God for two reasons. First, all things are ordered to the good of the whole universe and, therefore, function as instruments.⁸⁵ When seen from the perspective of God's providence, all creatures are instruments, but, as mentioned above, God respects each creature's nature.⁸⁶ As such, God's movement of each thing is never violent, but rather in exact accord with the nature of the thing moved. When God moves rocks, they are moved as rocks, horses as horses, and men as rational agents.⁸⁷ It is precisely because of the nature of the creature and through an action proper to the creature that said creature can act as an instrument in

⁸³ For an examination and explanation of instrumental causality according to St. Thomas, see James S. Albertson, "Instrumental Causality in St. Thomas," *New Scholasticism* 28, no. 4 (1954): 409–35.

⁸⁴ *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] II, ch. 21.

⁸⁵ SCG III, ch. 94. This twofold aspect of instrumentality is noted in Albertson, "Instrumental Causality," 431n54.

⁸⁶ This is closely related to the question of God's causality respecting the mode of the second cause. God causes necessary things necessarily and contingent things contingently; see *ST* I, q. 19, a. 8, corp. For God's action in man specifically, see *ST* I, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3.

⁸⁷ *ST* III, q. 18, a. 2, ad 2. See also Albertson, "Instrumental Causality," 422.

the higher order of divine providence. Far from denigrating or being a source of violence, God's action elevates an instrument's dignity because of the end for which it is used. In the case of man, he is ennobled by being elevated to participate himself, through his rational agency, in the ordering of the supernatural common good of the universe.⁸⁸ On the experiential level, we see this principle in play when collectors pay extra for musical instruments used by famous musicians, for the use by the musician has increased ("elevated") the worth ("dignity") of the instrument.

The second reason all things are instruments in God's action is that any action by a created agent has *esse* as its effect to some degree (even if accidental).⁸⁹ Since God is the proper cause of *esse*, all things are instruments insofar as they cause *esse*.⁹⁰ In other words, God's acting is the necessary precondition for man to act, since the proper act of God is to give being—a thing man cannot do.

In addition, the instrument must have some causal input from the primary cause. This causal input is directly linked to the finality mentioned above. Because of the intrinsic connection between efficient and final causes, there is a physical causal influx necessary in order to achieve the higher end. Thomas explains that, since the instrument is in touch with both the effect (as its cause) and the principal cause (as instrument), there must be an influx from the principal, through the instrument, to the effect.⁹¹ Édouard Hugon explains this as follows:

In order for the tool to be distinguished from the principal cause, it does not suffice for the tool to be moved and applied to act; it is necessary that it be elevated, placed in harmony with the principal

⁸⁸ *ST* I, q. 22, a. 2, ad 4; q. 103, a. 2, ad 3.

⁸⁹ This is not to say that God uses instruments in creation *ex nihilo*. Thomas is clear that this is impossible; see *ST* I, q. 45, a. 5, corp.

⁹⁰ *SCG* III, ch. 67. See also T. C. O'Brien, "Esse, the Proper Effect of God Alone," in *Divine Government (ST I-II Q. 103–109)*, vol. 14 of *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975), 171–72. As Albertson explains: "God is the proper cause of *esse*, and the second causes are the proper causes of the formal perfections which determine the *esse*. And since *esse* is the actuality or perfection of all perfections, God's activity is the most intimate and fundamental to the effect. But because the limiting formal perfections are the proper effect of the second[ary] cause, the effect is formally proportioned to it rather than God; . . . [a] second[ary] cause can be called principal in its own order, the order of formal perfections, since the effect is formally proportioned to it" ("Instrumental Causality," 434).

⁹¹ *SCG* II, ch. 21.

cause, and carried to the same level as the effect for action. This physical motion is not a simultaneous *concursus* that flows only into the effect: it touches the faculty; it is prior to the operation. Its role is to perfect the instrument, to strengthen it and make it more in act. Simultaneous *concursus* does none of this; because it flows only into the effect, the faculty does not receive anything extra, it remains in its native incapacity, and since this is the case, in a perpetual state of inactivity. How can it exceed itself if it does not have the added power to do so natively? As long as a new power does not touch the instrument, it does not act. What is necessary for the instrument to move? The secondary and dependent agent exerts a real causality only because it is actually subordinated to the causality of the principal cause. But if the superior influx comes only into the effects, then there are two parallel actors [agents], two collaborators, not two subordinated causes.⁹²

Given the two causal aspects—both the efficient and the final—a causal influx is needed in order to elevate the dignity of the instrument. Applying this to God and his creatures, God must actualize the creature through a physical, causal influx in order for the creature to be brought into act and take part in the higher ordering of providence.⁹³

Applying this teaching to Christ specifically, if we wish to preserve the teaching of the tradition that Christ's humanity functions as an instrument, then there must be both (1) a higher end that is achieved through the proper acts of the instrument and (2) a causal influx.⁹⁴ The former is clear: Christ's humanity is salvific. Through his human acts, he drew us back to God. The

⁹² Édouard Hugon, *La causalité instrumentale dans l'ordre surnaturel: théologie et piété*, 2nd ed. (Paris: P. Téqui, 1924), 14–15.

⁹³ As already mentioned in note 82 above, these claims prompt questions about the causal lines of sin. In short, God gives being to the act *qua* act, but he does not give formal specification—this comes from the creature. See the analysis of sin and premotion in Thomas M. Osborne Jr., "How Sin Escapes Premotion: The Development of Thomas Aquinas's Through by Spanish Thomists," in Long, Nutt, and White, *Thomism and Predestination*, 192–213.

⁹⁴ For a brief argument that Christ's humanity functioned through physical instrumentality, see Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christ the Savior: A Commentary on the Third Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder, 1950), 393–99. For a discussion of the link between Christology and sacramental theology with references to Thomas's development of thought, see Bernhard Blankenhorn, "The Instrumental Causality of the Sacraments: Thomas Aquinas and Louis-Marie Chauvet," *Nova et Vetera* (English) 4, no. 2 (2006): 275–91.

latter is precisely what Thomists denote by the term “physical premotion.” In sum, for Christ’s humanity to be moved by God to achieve salvation *through* the incarnate Word’s action, there must be a physical premotion from the author of salvation, through the humanity of Christ, to the effect. It is to this dynamic—the dual operations of Christ—that we now turn.

Christ’s Theandric Acts and Impeccability

Given the explication of physical premotion and instrumentality above, we can now apply these ideas more directly and explicitly to Christ. Because instruments presuppose a physical premotion that moves them and elevates them to take part in the higher end intended by the agent, this motion must both respect the nature of the instrument and use the inherent powers of the instrument in achieving the effect. These reflections come to bear on Christ in a particular way since he is a single divine person with two natures and two wills. There is, as already mentioned, perfect coordination between the two wills. The actions of Christ are theandric. They are actions through his human nature that truly respect the created nature. Moreover, Christ’s humanity is called a conjoined instrument of his divinity. As a man’s hand is a conjoined instrument of the person, so the humanity of Christ is conjoined to his divinity.⁹⁵

Christ’s divine nature perfectly elevates the natural powers of his humanity, achieving in them a supernatural and complete conformity with the divine will.⁹⁶ That Christ’s human will was always moved in accord with the divine will is effected through physical premotion. A mere ontological relationship without conformity to act would deny true instrumentality to the human nature of Christ.⁹⁷ To claim the humanity of Christ is joined to the divine Word without receiving movement for operation would be similar to claiming that a lame hand functions truly as a hand; even though it is

⁹⁵ See SCG IV, ch. 41, and Paul G. Crowley, “*Instrumentum Divinitatis* in Thomas Aquinas: Recovering the Divinity of Christ,” *Theological Studies* 52, no. 3 (1991): 451–75, at 458.

⁹⁶ For a summary discussion of Thomas’s view on theandric actions, see Legge, *Trinitarian Christology*, 190–201.

⁹⁷ See Tschipke, *L’humanité du Christ*, 163: “It is therefore equally necessary that the actuality from which the instrumental efficacy proceeds be really given, in a certain manner, to the humanity of Christ. A purely ontological relationship to the divine person, without the reception of the necessary causal influx for action, a simple subordination to God, excluded from the supernatural in the order of operation, would not permit the humanity of Christ to have an instrumental activity. The human nature of Christ is a true instrument of grace only by the gift of the fullness of act that is communicated to it.”

conjoined to the body, it is not fulfilling its true excellence because of the lack of causal influx.⁹⁸ The actions of Christ in his human nature are actions of a divine person and, therefore, require efficient causality to remain actions of the divine person.⁹⁹ As Dominic Legge explains, “if Christ’s humanity were to act in perfect conformity with the divine will but without being *moved* by the divinity, his actions would not be truly instrumental or theandric.”¹⁰⁰

In the case of Christ, each and every one of his actions are manifestations of the eternal Logos. We can see, in every action of Christ, a manifestation of who he is. Phrased differently, all the actions of Christ have a “filial mode.”¹⁰¹ St. Thomas notes this “mode of willing” when discussing the unity of wills in Christ. In *ST* III, q. 18, a. 1, ad 4, Thomas explains:

When we say “to will” in a certain way, we signify a determinate mode of willing. Now a determinate mode regards the thing of which it is the mode. Hence, since the will pertains to the nature, to will in a certain way belongs to the nature, not indeed considered absolutely, but as it is in the hypostasis. Hence the human will of Christ had a determinate mode from the fact of being in a divine hypostasis, that is, it was always moved in accordance with the bidding of the divine will.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *ST* III, q. 19, a. 1, corp.

⁹⁹ See Thomas U. Mullaney, “Created Personality: The Unity of Thomistic Tradition,” *New Scholasticism* 29, no. 4 (1955): 369–402, at 399: “Personality is actually constituted by the agency of the efficient cause. Thus if a nature is actually ordered to created existence its actual personality is created; if it is actually ordered to an uncreated existence (as in the Sacred Humanity of Christ) the Person is clearly Divine.”

¹⁰⁰ Legge, *Trinitarian Christology*, 199 (emphasis original).

¹⁰¹ Thomas Joseph White cites Christ’s “filial mode” of acting to defend the Son’s having the beatific vision in his human nature: “Without the [beatific] vision, the man Jesus—moved by faith—could only obey what he *believed and hoped* was *his own* divine will, but his acts would not stem from an evidential knowledge of this will. Consequently, the human obedience of Christ would function with a kind of independence, moved by the decision of faith. . . . The human obedience and the divine will of Christ would therefore run on parallel tracks but never touch directly. His human operations could not be immediately moved by his divine operations in the unified cooperation of one subject. It follows that even though Christ as man would subsist in the Word, in his acts of obedience he would seek in faith to obey himself in his divine nature” (*Incarnate Lord*, 266–67; emphasis original). This reflection also defends the need for a causal influx into Christ’s human will. White is defending the formality of choosing (informed by the rationality of the beatific vision), while this essay is defending the efficiency of the choice. For a discussion of further implications of the “filial mode” of acting in Christ, see Legge, *Trinitarian Christology*, 111–22. Legge’s discussion would seem to presuppose physical premotion.

¹⁰² For an examination of Thomas’s thought as presented in *ST* III, q. 18, see Barnes,

The human will of Christ having a “filial mode” presupposes being moved by the divine will. Therefore, for there to be a “filial mode” of action, there must be a *nutus*, as discussed previously. Thomas’s claims regarding the nature “as it is in the hypostasis” presuppose that the actions done through this particular human nature are predicated of the divine person. As Paul Crowley observes, there is an intimate link between instrumentality, the person acting, and the “mode of acting”:

The instrumental relation between the two operations is not merely a moral one; the principles of causality which bind the two operations are rather “physical,” or real; they show how the two natures are realized, fulfilled, and perfected precisely in their operations in the person of Christ, each working in relation with the other. And because personhood is that principle by which a nature is realized in *ratione termini*, we have the foundation here for a substantial theological inference: To the degree that the human nature of Christ is realized, precisely according to its nature as a conjoined, animate and rational instrument of the divinity, that nature will be fully human.¹⁰³

Crowley is claiming that, for the human nature of Christ to be fully human, the operations of Christ in his human will must be instrumental for the divine person, which means that there must be a perfect, “physical” type of causality directing the human will to be in conformity with the divine.

The theandric acts of Christ and the conjoined instrumentality of his humanity come to bear most clearly in miracles and in the communication of grace. When Christ healed the leper, the healing occurred through the touch of Christ.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the whole salvation of man is wrought by and through theandric acts.¹⁰⁵ Christ’s own humanity becomes the instrument through which mankind receives grace. As Thomas explains: “Now the principal efficient cause of grace is God himself, in comparison with whom Christ’s humanity is as a united instrument, whereas the sacrament is a separate instrument. Consequently, the saving power must needs be derived by the sacraments from Christ’s Godhead through his humanity.”¹⁰⁶ Thomas

Christ’s Two Wills, 113–78.

¹⁰³ Crowley, “*Instrumentum Divinitatis* in Thomas Aquinas,” 474. For a Thomistic explanation of personhood, see Mullaney, “Created Personality.”

¹⁰⁴ *De veritate*, q. 27, a. 4, corp.

¹⁰⁵ *ST* III, q. 19, a. 1, ad 2.

¹⁰⁶ *ST* III, q. 62, a. 5, corp. For a discussion of the importance of physical instrumentality on sacramental theology, along with a discussion of the relationship of both to

is not dividing instruments into those that need no impulse and those that do. Rather, he understands God's action in a more multifaceted way such that all things act as instruments of God, not only in their existence, but also in their action. The humanity of Christ is the clearest, most intimate work of God in the world—a work that still continues. Even now, all grace comes through the humanity of Christ.

The fact of Christ's impeccability is closely linked to these reflections.¹⁰⁷ Since, by definition, God cannot sin, Christ's impeccability is grounded first in the hypostatic union.¹⁰⁸ Yet, there must be a causal link between the two wills. What are the means by which the conjoined instrument of Christ's humanity is guaranteed, with *metaphysical* certainty, not to sin? In order to retain this level of certitude, there must be a reduction of potency to act "in" the human will. This actualization of the will must come from God, and it is secured by the Thomistic notion of physical premotion. Were Christ's human will actualized through only a moral attraction, then there would be no metaphysical necessity in his choice, since the will is only necessitated

Christology, see Reginald M. Lynch, "Domingo Bañez on Moral and Physical Causality: Christic Merit and Sacramental Realism," *Angelicum* 91, no. 1 (2014): 105–26. For a discussion of moral causality and the link between the *de Auxiliis* controversy and sacramental causality, see Lynch, *The Cleansing of the Heart: The Sacraments as Instrumental Causes in the Thomistic Tradition*, Thomistic Ressourcement Series 9 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 195–200. Lynch claims: "The historical connection between moral causality and *de Auxiliis* gestures towards deeper ties that would associate moral causality within the structures of systems of moral theology developing in the modern period. There is a sense in which one's approach to broader theological topics predetermines one's view of the sacraments. A comprehensive theology of grace is clearly essential for any speculative discussion of the sacraments, and as a result sacramental theory cannot be effectively disentangled from larger hermeneutical approaches to grace and the questions which surround it" (197). Massoulié argues in a similar fashion that, if we agree that sacraments effect grace in a truly physical, instrumental way, then, *a fortiori*, we also ought to understand God's actual grace as a physical motion as well (since the causality most strictly speaking is physical causality); he explicitly engages Suárez (*Divus Thomas*, bk. 1, diss. 2, q. 60, a. 6 [pp. 430–31]). Suárez accepts the physical instrumentality of the sacraments (and explains this through an active obediential potency) while also denying that grace is a physical premotion. Francisco Suárez, *Tertia Pars Summae Theologiae*, disp. 9, sect. 1, no. 21, in *Opera Omnia*, 20:147.

¹⁰⁷ For a succinct but illuminating explanation of the Thomistic understanding of Christ's impeccability, see Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought*, trans. Patrick Cummins (n.p.: Ex Fontibus, 2015), 189–91.

¹⁰⁸ Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christ the Savior*, 411. See also Hugon, *Le mystère de l'Incarnation*, 292.

by the perfect good.¹⁰⁹ Christ's metaphysical impeccability requires physical premotion into and "through" the human will of Christ. Additionally, it is impossible to bracket the grace of union while retaining an actually existing human will.¹¹⁰ Bracketing the grace of union prohibits the possibility of predicating acts of Christ's human nature, since, without the human nature of Christ having a real relation to the eternal Word (what we mean by the grace of union), there is no really existing human nature and no person of whom to predicate the actions.

In sum, the Thomistic teaching on physical premotion ensures the instrumentality of Christ's humanity, his theandric acts, and his impeccability. This in no way denigrates the truth of the Incarnation; rather, the teaching of Thomas elucidates and explains the implications of the Church's dogmatic, conciliar teaching. Physical premotion not only preserves the integrity of Christ's human nature;¹¹¹ it also gives a causal analysis of the traditional teaching on Christ's theandric acts and explains how his humanity is a conjoined instrument in which each nature does what is proper to it and in total communion with the other.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ *ST* I-II, q. 10, a. 2, corp.

¹¹⁰ Thomas engages the hypothetical of whether Christ could sin and whether Christ had the ability to sin in *In III sent.*, d. 12, q. 2, aa. 1–2. It is also worth noting that, as far as the present author can tell, Thomas does not entertain these exact questions anywhere else in his corpus. In the *ST* he changes the way in which he asks the question: "Utrum in Christo fuerit peccatum" (*ST* III, q. 15, a. 1). In the *Sentences* commentary, he is asking whether Christ could perform an action that is sinful. His formulation in the *ST* makes it clear that he is considering whether Christ could *assume* sin: "Et ideo Christus nullo modo assumpsit defectum peccati, nec originalis nec actualis" (q. 15, a. 1, corp.). While this difference is subtle, does it perhaps show that the mature Thomas was more sensitive to Nestorianism and that he understood the possible Nestorian implications of asking whether Christ was able to sin?

¹¹¹ See Crowley, "Instrumentum Divinitatis in Thomas Aquinas," 470: "Imbedded in this discussion [of the two natures of Christ] is the question of the subordination of the human to the divine nature. The two natures are not simply parallel; one is indeed moved by the other. If the human nature is moved by the divine nature, yet possesses its own principles of operation, how is the integrity of the human nature preserved? First if the agent and the instrument both participate in the same action, then *together* they constitute a causal order within one movement or action. The divine requires the human in order to be made manifest. Second, although the agents can be distinguished from the instrument by virtue of their respective proper operations, the unity of their action within the causal order is established by the motion of the first cause, which rests in the agent. But the instrument becomes an instrument, properly speaking, only when its *own proper* operations freely act in accord with the motion imprinted upon it by the agent" (emphasis original).

¹¹² The respective members of the *de Auxiliis* debate frequently made appeal to Scripture

Conclusion

As discussed above, it is unclear how Molina's view accords with the patristic teaching that Christ's humanity is the instrument of his divinity. The general *concursum* and grace that Molina describes do not easily map onto John Damascene's statement that "Christ acts through each of his natures and in Him each nature acts in communion with the other."¹¹³ Indeed, this lack of clarity is evidenced by the conflicting accounts of Christological instrumentality in other Molinist thinkers. While Suárez holds that Christ's humanity is a physical instrument, Vázquez claims that it is merely a moral instrument of grace and miracles. Further reflection on these thinkers is necessary before making any definitive judgment about their own thought. Even so, the reflections given herein provide an initial impetus for further research.

Molina's incongruity with the early Church teaching on Christ is deeper than may be realized at first sight. During the *de Auxiliis* controversy, Molina was compared to John Cassian for his supposed semi-Pelagianism.¹¹⁴ Subsequent scholars have shown that Cassian is innocent of the semi-Pelagian charges held against him.¹¹⁵ As such, it is somewhat ironic that he provides the closing connection for this article. In his *De Incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*, Cassian makes a unique and provocative correlation.¹¹⁶

and the Church Fathers, especially Augustine, in an effort to defend their positions. See, for instance, the discussion in Sylvio Hermann De Franceschi, *Thomisme et théologie moderne: L'école de Saint Thomas à l'épreuve de la querelle de la grâce (XVII–XVIIIe) Siècles* (Perpignan: Artège/Elidia, 2018), 170–98. Given the common recognition of the importance of being rooted in tradition, it is all the more necessary to ensure the coherence of a theological position with the entirety of the Church's teaching—especially in areas that may not have obvious implications.

¹¹³ John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 3.15 (p. 311).

¹¹⁴ See, for example, Serry, *Historiae Congregationum de Auxiliis Divinae Gratiae*, bk. 3, ch 16. (vol. 4, cols. 353–354).

¹¹⁵ See, for instance, Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 166–68; Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 76–81. Cassian may be imprecise at times, but as Stewart explains, he is no Pelagian.

¹¹⁶ Among other locations in Cassian's work, see John Cassian, *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium* 7.2, in *Iohannis Cassiani Opera*, ed. M. Petschenig, vol. 1, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 17 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1888). As with other discussions above regarding the grace of union, habitual grace, and actual grace, Cassian's claims can be applied to the present discussion only if they are adjusted for the difference between actual grace and the grace of union. Cassian is linking true Nestorianism (an accidental union of the suppositis Christ and the Logos) and Pelagianism. Even in light of this difference, the links between actual grace and Christology are still worth considering. For a brief discussion of this work, see Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, 22–24.

In response to Nestorianism, he claims that, if Christ is merely a man, then salvation is reduced to imitation. In drawing this connection, he illustrates the common ground upon which Pelagianism and Nestorianism are built, which is a misunderstanding of grace.¹¹⁷ This correlation between the work of grace in the life of the Christian and the grace in Christ is foundational to the Christian faith.¹¹⁸ Given the historical link between Pelagianism and Nestorianism and the frequent association of the teaching of the *Concordia* and Pelagian-type themes, the *Concordia*'s difficulty in cohering with orthodox Christology merits attention.¹¹⁹ The deeper doctrinal implications of Molina's claims impinge upon Christological orthodoxy. More specifically, Molina teaches that the human nature of Christ could have sinned in the divided sense, that Christ's human will was never directly moved to a complete action by the grace of God, and that all Christ's theandric acts were performed merely on the occasion of his human nature's acting. Can the savior Molina propose to communicate salvation *through his human will*? Or ought the human acts of Christ be understood as those of one man rowing a boat with another? Based on the previous analysis, the salvation that Molina's Christ communicates would be based on moral and meritorious

¹¹⁷ Aaron Riches, *Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 45–49. For a discussion of the political and historical factors that would influence the connection between Pelagianism and Nestorianism, see M.-Th. Disdier, "Le pélagianisme au concile d'Éphèse," *Échos d'Orient* 30, no. 163 (1931): 314–33. For a discussion of John Cassian's Christology in the *De Incarnatione*, see Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, 167–99.

¹¹⁸ Fairbairn's comments about patristic writers are also applicable to this study: "It is well known that much patristic discussion about the person of Christ was motivated by a concern to safeguard the accomplishment of redemption and that differing conceptions of salvation contributed to the Christological controversy. If a patristic writer believes that salvation is largely a human task, a matter of achieving the vocation that God has set before us, then he is likely to see Christ as the leader who has first achieved the human calling and now assists us to follow him. Therefore, Christ must not simply be fully human, but his humanity must also have a measure of autonomy and must receive prominence in one's conception of his person, in order for this achievement of redemption to be of any saving significance for us. On the other hand, if a patristic writer sees salvation as more of a divine rescue operation, an act of God to deliver people from a morass from which they cannot extricate themselves, then he is more likely to argue that only if God the Son was truly and personally present on earth is salvation possible. In this case, the writer is not likely to be as concerned with distinguishing the deity and humanity of Christ as he is with maintaining that Christ is 'God with us' in the fullest possible sense" (*Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, 12).

¹¹⁹ As already noted, John Cassian's discussion deals with grace at the entitative level and the hypostatic union. Even so, the operative level is also implied. This similarity is also found in the studies of White and Legge (see notes 19 and 101 above).

grounds. As we have seen, there must be a physical causality from God through Christ's will to retain consonance with the Church's teaching on Christology and soteriology.

In summary, this article has argued that reframing the *de Auxiliis* controversy in light of its Christological roots provides a fruitful line of reflection by highlighting the principal metaphysical questions that are in play. Examining the implications of each school's thought on who Christ is and *how* he acts provides avenues of investigation that this article has not exhausted but highlighted in hopes of further discussion. Molina's claims about Christ are unsatisfying because they imply that there is another subject present in Christ's humanity who is not the divine Word. This Christological distinction in Molina's teaching is directly grounded in his understanding of divine *concursus*. How these claims cohere with the Catholic understanding of Christ's humanity as the instrument of his divinity remains unclear. In contrast to Molina's position, the Thomist teaching on physical premotion easily comports with and safeguards the causal structure of the Incarnation. The Thomistic view provides a rich understanding of salvation—that it is God who works in us, both to will and to accomplish unto the praise of his glory (Phil 2:13; Eph 1:14).