

Sacramental Character and the Pattern of Theological Life: Medieval Context and Early Modern Reception

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In question 63 of the *tertia pars*, Thomas Aquinas defines the so-called *character* that is conferred by certain sacraments (namely baptism, confirmation, and holy orders), as a secondary effect caused by the sacraments, with grace itself identified as the primary effect. As separated instruments of the humanity of Christ, in his mature work in the *Summa theologiae* Aquinas argues that all Christian sacraments are perfective instrumental causes of the effect of the Incarnation in the human persons who receive them.¹ As instrumental means by which these effects are conferred, therefore, for Aquinas the sapiential intelligibility of the sacraments is found in the larger sweep of *sacra doctrina* and the Incarnation, wherein the *ratio* and necessity of these larger theological themes contextualize Aquinas's understanding of the necessity of the sacraments themselves as instrumental extensions of the same.² Taken in itself, aspects of what would later become the question of sacramental character for Scholastics first emerged as a doctrinal topic in the context of patristic debates over the permanence of the sacrament of baptism.³ In the Latin West, the influence of Augustine's distinction between the permanence of the *sacramentum* received in baptism and its *use* in charity proved to be a ubiquitous influ-

¹ See Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, qq. 62–63.

² For the necessity of *sacra doctrina*, the Incarnation, and the sacraments, see, e.g., Aquinas, ST I, q. 1, a. 1 ; III, q. 1, a. 2; q. 61.

³ See Jean Galot, *La nature du caractère sacramentel*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1958).

ence for later Latin theology.⁴ Concerning the metaphysical nature of this character, however, in both his *Sentences* commentary and *Summa theologiae*, Aquinas joins an ongoing conversation among thirteenth-century Scholastics about the utility of the Aristotelian categories for describing sacramental character. What *is* sacramental character specifically, and how should this be understood in relation to the wider speculative complexities of grace, the infused virtues and gifts, and beatitude? Because of continued controversy over the role of Aristotelianism in theology during the second half of the thirteenth century, many Scholastics of Aquinas's generation analyzed the quiddity of sacramental character from an Aristotelian perspective, working to describe the doctrine inherited from the Church's tradition using Aristotelian terminology. As will be shown, although some argued that sacramental character should be understood as a *habitus*, Aquinas argues that character is better understood as a *power*.

The second and third sections of this article will explore the development of Scholastic accounts of the quiddity of sacramental character during the medieval and early modern periods, and the wider theological implications of these conversations. In the final analysis, it is my aim to show not only that Aquinas's account of sacramental character is intrinsically fitting on theological grounds, but that Aquinas's account of sacramental character as a qualitative power conveys and preserves the received theological tradition more effectively than the options proposed by some of his contemporaries. With these larger objectives in mind, the first section of this article serves as a necessary historical prelude—what, precisely, is at stake from the wider perspective of the Church's theological tradition in these medieval and early modern Scholastic debates? Accordingly, the first section will provide an overview of the historical development of the doctrine of sacramental character, focusing specifically on the way in which certain Augustinian doctrinal concepts and linguistic usages developed in later medieval usage and ultimately came to be incorporated into the framework of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*—the text that would serve as the common backdrop for the Scholastic conversations about the “quiddity” of this same doctrine.

In the following, therefore, this article will begin by examining the origins of the doctrine of sacramental character in Latin theology in Augustine's baptismal theology. Building on this foundation, our attention will turn to Peter Lombard's reception of Augustine's as the context in which

⁴ Nicholas M. Haring, “St. Augustine's Use of the Word Character,” *Mediaeval Studies* 14 (1952): 79–97; Haring, “A Brief Historical Comment on St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III qu. 67, a. 5: *Utrum non baptizatus possit sacramentum baptismi conferre*,” *Mediaeval Studies* 14 (1952): 153–59.

thirteenth-century Scholastic debates about sacramental character would develop. Although the specific metaphysical questions that Scholastics like Aquinas and Bonaventure would entertain do not form part of Augustine's approach to this issue, Lombard's particular articulation of Augustine's sacramental theology would provide the textual and conceptual backdrop against which these later Scholastic conversations would develop. Accordingly, the second section of this article will build on the first, beginning with a consideration of Aquinas and Bonaventure in conversation with each other in their commentaries on the *Sentences*, and closing with a consideration of Aquinas's later treatment of this same subject in the wider context of his quidditative approach to the theological life in the *Summa theologiae*. In the final section of this article, a selection of important Renaissance and early modern interlocutors will be considered who each engage both Aquinas's and Bonaventure's positions in different ways. Beginning with John Capreolus, John Duns Scotus, and Thomas Cajetan, this final section will conclude with a consideration of Francisco Suárez, whose own approach to the metaphysics of sacramental character reflects the influence of both Bonaventure and Scotus, even as he engages aspects of Aquinas's arguments in his textual commentary on the *Summa*.

Augustinian Context and Medieval Reception

Although the notion of sacramental sealing can be found in Greek theology, the concept of sacramental character is a characteristically Western doctrine, frequently associated with the writings of Augustine.⁵ Although Augustine

⁵ For the Greek patristic tradition, the most common biblical source for the concept of sacramental permanence was the idea of "sealing" (σφραγίς; *sphragis*) with the Holy Spirit, using the epistles of Paul and other New Testament sources to describe this doctrine. See esp. Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22; John 6:27. See also *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. [BDAG] rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. σφραγίζω and σφραγίς. In the first and second centuries, σφραγίς was used to describe Christian baptism. Evidence of this usage of σφραγίς can be found in both *The Second Letter of Clement* (7.6; 8.6) and *The Shepherd of Hermas* (8.6.3; 9.16.3; cited in BDAG, 980-81). For a summary of scholarship and textual evidence on the dating and authorship of 2 Clement, see Christopher Tuckett, *2 Clement: Introduction, Text, and Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 58-64. Tuckett himself tentatively proposes that the text was authored in Rome during the early or middle of the second century (64). *The Shepherd of Hermas* is also understood to be a Roman document, produced in either the late first or early second century, between 70 and 150 (Dan Batovici, "The Shepherd of Hermas in recent scholarship on the canon: A Review Article," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 34, no. 1 [2017]: 90; see also Andrew Gregory,

frequently uses biblical terminology like *sigillum* and *signaculum* in various ways to describe the effect of baptism, at times he uses the term *character* as well. Among these terms, however, *character* would take on a much wider role in later theology. Augustine's baptismal terminology is shaped in large part by his response to the Donatist practice of rebaptizing those who had failed the test of martyrdom during times of persecution.⁶ For Augustine, the

"Disturbing Trajectories: 1 Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas and the Development of Early Roman Christianity," in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church*, ed. Peter Oakes [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002], 142). The term *sphragis* also features in later Greek patristic sources such as Cyril of Jerusalem (†386; see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 5th ed. [San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1978], 428–32). Charting the gradual appropriation of σφραγίς in the Greek theological tradition, Galot shows that, while some Greek theological circles employed σφραγίς primarily as a reference to the outward liturgical actions of baptism, this term also took on a distinct role as a sacramental concept in the Alexandrian school where it came to represent a kind of transformative sealing with the divine image (*La nature*, 29–30). The biblical texts cited here which reference the Spirit's σφραγίς appear in the Stuttgart Vulgate (*Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, ed. Robert Webber and Roger Gryson, 5th ed. [Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008]) as *signaculum* or *signare*: 2 Tim 2:19; 2 Cor 1:21–22, Eph 1:13; 4:30. The *Vetus Latina* textual tradition seems to mirror this usage: manuscript references to 2 Tim 2:19 in the *Vetus Latina* also utilize *signaculum*; references to 2 Cor 1:22 use *signare*; the majority of references to John 6:27 use *signare*, although there is a reference to the text as *significare*; references to Eph 1:13 use *signare*; references to Eph 4:30 use *signare*, although one text uses *significare*. References for *Vetus Latina* are retrieved from the *Brepols Vetus Latina Database* online, www.brepols.net/series/vld-o.

- ⁶ See "Donatism," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, rev. and ed. F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 503. The question of rebaptism had emerged earlier, in the third century, prior to the council of Nicaea (Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009], 380–99). Clement of Alexandria held that heretical baptism was not genuine (*Stromata* 1.19.96.3–4). Tertullian likewise argued that because heretics did not use the correct form of baptism, they had no baptism at all (*De baptismo* 15.2; see Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 380). In Augustine's North Africa, there was a strong theological tradition, tracing its authority to Cyprian, that supported the practice of rebaptism. On the general context of African Christianity, see: J. E. Merdinger, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997); *Christianity in Roman North Africa: the Development of its Practices and Beliefs*, ed. J. Patout Burns and Robin Margaret Jensen (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014); François Decret, *Early Christianity in North Africa*, trans. Edward Smither (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2011); Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). On Cyprian's theology and its context, see: *Cyprian of Carthage: Studies in His Life, Language and Thought*, ed. Henk Baker, Paul van Geest, and Hans van Loon (Leuven: Peeters, 2010); Maureen A. Tilley, "Cyprian of Carthage," in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan

Donatist controversy raised the questions of sacramental permanence and effect in the context of ecclesial communion. In responding to these issues, Augustine is clear that baptism is unrepeatable, regardless of the ecclesial status of the one who administers it.⁷ By the Scholastic period, “sacramental character” had acquired clear ontological significance, and in the sixteenth century the Council of Trent would define this *character* as a “spiritual and indelible mark on the soul.”⁸ Although not the most frequent terminological description of baptismal permanence in Augustine’s writings, the term

D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 262–64; Adrien Demoustier, “L’ontologie de l’église selon saint Cyprien,” *Recherches de science religieuse* 52 (1964): 554–88. Concerning the scriptural sources and dating of Cyprian’s works on baptism, see Karl Shuve, “Cyprian of Carthage’s Writings from the Rebaptism Controversy: Two Revisionary Proposals Reconsidered,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 61, no. 2 (2010): 627–43. On Augustine’s baptismal theology and his reception of Cyprian, see Matthew Alan Gaumer, *Augustine’s Cyprian: Authority in Roman Africa* (Boston: Brill, 2016). See also: William Harmless, “Baptism,” in Fitzgerald, *Augustine through the Ages*, 84–91; Adam D. Ployd, “The Power of Baptism: Augustine’s Pro-Nicene Response to the Donatists,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 22 no. 4 (2014): 519–40; Joyce E. Salisbury, “The Bond of a Common Mind: A Study of Collective Salvation from Cyprian to Augustine,” *Journal of Religious History* 13 no. 3 (1985): 235–47. For the place of North African theological controversy in the broader context of the social instability of the Roman world during the third century, see Géza Alföldy, “The Crisis of the Third Century as Seen by Contemporaries,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 15 (1974): 89–111, and “Der Heilige Cyprian und die Krise des Römischen Reiches,” *Historia* 22 no. 3 (1973): 479–501. For a study of Augustine’s appropriation of this Cyprianic tradition, see J. Patout Burns, “Appropriating Augustine Appropriating Cyprian,” *Augustinian Studies* 36 no. 1 (2005): 113–30. For a study of the continued relevance of Cyprianic and Augustinian models of baptism and ecclesiology for Orthodox Christianity, see Will Cohen, “Sacraments and the Visible Unity of the Church,” *Ecclesiology* 4, no. 1 (2007): 68–87.

- ⁷ In *De baptismo*, Augustine insists that the validity and permanence of baptism is not dependent on the minister’s status with respect to the Church; a priest or bishop not in full communion with the Church because of schism or personal sin can administer the fullness of the sacrament (1.1.2; *De baptismo* can be found in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* [CSEL], 51:145–375). Augustine’s specific use of the term *character* can be found in texts like *De baptismo* and *Contra Cresconium*. See Augustine, *De baptismo* 1.4.5; *Contra Cresconium grammaticum et Donatistam* 4 (CSEL, 52: 325).
- ⁸ Council of Trent, sess. 7, decl. 1, ch. 9 (*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner and Giuseppe Alberigo, vol. 2 [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990], 685). See also sess. 23, can. 4 (Tanner and Alberigo, *Decrees*, 2:742–44), esp. concerning the sacrament of orders. For a summary of the development of magisterial teaching on sacramental character, see Bernard Leeming, *Principles of Sacramental Theology* (New York: Longmans and Green, 1956), 132–43.

character—and the conceptual images it invokes—would have the widest and most pervasive influence on these later developments.

In many ways, the metaphorical root of Augustine's concept of *character* is more secular than it is biblical. Although *character* does appear in Jerome's Vulgate text in several instances (particularly in Revelation), to reference a marking of individuals, the earlier version of this Latin text available to Augustine used slightly different terms.⁹ Augustine's reference is rather to a Roman practice found in the military and elsewhere, in which a mark—or *character*—was tattooed on a person to differentiate him from others and to mark him irreversibly as a member of a group. The marking of Roman soldiers in this manner became widespread in the late fourth century, and spread throughout the empire during Augustine's lifetime.¹⁰

Although Nicholas Haring has argued that Augustine's semantic field for the term *character* may be restricted to the outward rite,¹¹ Haring also shows

⁹ Concerning Rev 16:2, see Haring, "St. Augustine's Use," 82n1: "Where the Vulgate reads *character*, the pre-Vulgate versions read *inscriptio nominis* or *nomen scriptum* or the simple transliteration *charagma*."

¹⁰ See Bradley Mark Peper, "On the Mark: Augustine's Baptismal Analogy of the *Nota Militaris*," *Augustinian Studies* 38, no. 2 (2007): 353–63. Concerning the means of effecting this mark and the terminology associated with it, although other armies in antiquity employed a brand for similar purposes, according to Peper, the Romans favored the cognate *stigma* to refer to the mark of the legion, associating it with the process of tattooing. The Greek root here is *στίλβειν*, signifying the "pricking" process of tattooing (355). Peper relies on the work of C. P. Jones, "Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 77 (1987): 139–55, and others. Augustine himself prefers the terms *nota* and *character*, both of which can refer to a stamping or impressing action (see entries in Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* [LS] [1879; repr. Oxford: Clarendon, 2002]). *Character* (derived from *χαράκτῆρ*) indicates either "an instrument for branding or marking," or "the mark or sign burned or imprinted" by the same (LS, s.v. *character*). *Nota* can stand for a mark, sign, or note and has a broader semantic field than *character*, ranging from tattoos to brands to characteristic qualities. (LS, s.v. *nota*). However, Peper argues that it seems unlikely that Augustine would have intended to indicate a brand-like impression, given his direct association of the term with the Roman military usage of his day ("On the Mark," 356).

¹¹ Haring argues convincingly: "The word *character*, as used by St. Augustine, designates not a spiritual imprint on the soul but the trinitarian form or the external rite. . . . In other words, to express the doctrine that these two sacraments (Baptism and Holy Orders) produce a permanent effect which modern theology calls *character*, St. Augustine uses a different terminology, viz., *sacramentum* or less frequently *sanctitas*, *consecratio*, *baptismus* and *ordinatio*" ("St. Augustine's Use," 83). Recently, Phillip Cary has made an even stronger claim; although similar to Haring in some respects, Cary goes much farther, arguing that for Augustine the signs that compose the outward rite of baptism are "causally inert," producing no necessary lasting effect in the recipient

that the sense of permanent, interior change that emerges in the later sense of sacramental character is more often expressed by Augustine with the term *sacramentum*.¹² While *sacramentum* has a number of secular usages,¹³ early in the history of Western theology it came to function as a specific reference for Christian religious ritual, commonly serving as a translation of the Greek *mystērion* (μυστήριον) in the *Vetus Latina* textual tradition of the Bible. As a result, *sacramentum* became a common theological term among early Latin Fathers.¹⁴ The term seems to have had a particularly rich theological life in Augustine's own North Africa: even when the Latin neologism *mysterium* became increasingly popular in the northern parts of the empire, *sacramentum* remained in use as a theological term in the Roman province of North Africa.¹⁵ In addition to many other theological applications, Tertullian

(*Outward Signs: The Powerlessness of External Things in Augustine's Thought* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2008], e.g., 200–201). It may be that Augustine's meaning is limited to some degree by the historical context of the metaphors he chooses; however, it seems likely that the larger theological themes that he desires to express also play a determinative role. But there is some reason to see more than this in Augustine: in Latin usage, the concept of 'character' is not usually found apart from the idea of marking or impressing—it can refer either to the mark itself or the means by which the mark is impressed (see note 10 above).

- ¹² Haring states that, "the Augustinian equivalent of *character* as used by Scholastic theology is *sacramentum*, signifying a lasting effect in the recipient" ("St. Augustine's Use," 83; see also 95–96). For an example of this usage, see *De baptismo* 1.1.2. On Augustine's use of *sacramentum* in this context and in others, see my previous work, *The Cleansing of the Heart: the Sacraments as Instrumental Causes in the Thomistic Tradition* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2017), e.g. 11–13 (nn. 3–5).
- ¹³ In Roman use, *sacramentum* referred to a sum of money deposited by two parties in a legal dispute; following the verdict, the sum deposited by the losing party was used to fund religious institutions. The term could also refer to the cause, suit, or civil process itself. Further, *sacramentum* could also refer to an oath of allegiance required for military service, and to other oaths and solemn obligations (LS, s.v. *sacramentum*.)
- ¹⁴ Both Cyprian and Tertullian use the term frequently: Cyprian uses it 64 times, and Tertullian 134 (Johann Auer, *A General Doctrine of the Sacraments and the Mystery of the Eucharist*, vol. 6 of *Dogmatic Theology*, ed. Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger [Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press], 10–11). Concerning Tertullian's use of *sacramentum*, see Robert Sider, "Approaches to Tertullian: A Study of Recent Scholarship," *The Second Century: A Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 4 (1982): 238–41.
- ¹⁵ André Mandouze, "A propos de *sacramentum* chez S. Augustin polyvalence lexicologique et foisonnement théologique," in *Mélanges offerts à Mademoiselle Christine Mohrmann* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1963), 225. Beyond conveying the Biblical meaning of μυστήριον, however, *sacramentum* quickly came to be specifically associated with the rites of the Christian Church in the West. Augustine employed *sacramentum* to refer not only to specified liturgical ritual but also to signification, meaning, and the process

specifically associated the term *sacramentum* with baptism, anticipating Augustine's more specific use of the term in this context in some respects.¹⁶

During the eleventh century, however, this usage of *sacramentum* underwent a fundamental transformation that would produce much of the sacramental vocabulary codified in Lombard and employed during the Scholastic period.¹⁷ As the term *sacramentum* began to be exclusively associated with the outward sign of the sacrament alone in the medieval West, the categories of *res et sacramentum* and *res tantum* were also introduced. By the thirteenth century, the permanent effect of baptism (now commonly referred to as the "sacramental character") came to be associated by many with the *res et sacramentum* of the sacrament, rather than with the *sacramentum tantum*.¹⁸ This development was initially forced in part by Berengar of Tours, who associated the Augustinian concept of *sacramentum* with the outward sign of the sacramental action alone, excluding any connection with the interior reality.¹⁹ Although developments like these in the medieval Latin

of sanctification. The Latin *sacramentum* comes to stand not only for individual liturgical acts, but also for the theological significance of the liturgy, in a way that can be compared to the Eastern use of the term μυστήριον (228).

¹⁶ See Auer, *General Doctrine*, 10–11: "Tertullian, who is of particular importance for the development of ecclesiastical Latin, used [*sacramentum*] in many different senses: in a general sense, like the Greek μυστήριον, for initiation rites and the celebrations of the mysteries of the gods; for sacrifices, signs, and gestures of cults; for faith and the doctrines of faith; for secret teachings and for the divine plan; but especially in the specifically Latin sense of 'oath formula' ('pledge of allegiance' in military language) and, as a legal term, it refers to the sum of money deposited as a security in a temple at the time of entering a contract. In the sense of 'pledge of allegiance' Tertullian applied *sacramentum* especially to the promises of baptism, and thereby he lay the foundation for the theological term 'sacrament' in the current sense." It is likely that Tertullian was the first to use *sacramentum* in relation to baptism and the Eucharist, and Cyril continued this usage. Augustine uses *sacramentum* in a wide sense, including references to sacred signs and manifestations of divine presence. It is in his debates with the Donatists and Manichees, however, that Augustine's use of *sacramentum* becomes more focused and reaches theological maturity (see Emmanuel J. Cutrone, "Sacraments," in Fitzgerald, *Augustine Through the Ages*, 741–47).

¹⁷ Nicholas Haring, "Berengar's Definitions of *Sacramentum* and Their Influence on Medieval Sacramentology," *Mediaeval Studies* 10 (1948): 109–47. See also Lynch, *Cleansing of the Heart*, 11–12.

¹⁸ Stephen P. McHenry, *Three Significant Moments in the Theological Development of the Sacramental Character of Orders: Its Origin, Standardization, and New Direction in Augustine, Aquinas, and Congar* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 148–49.

¹⁹ "Berengar of Tours," in *Corpus Christi: An Encyclopedia of the Eucharist*, ed. Michael O'Carroll (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 37. Those familiar with Scholastic

West presented new challenges for the reception of Augustine's sacramental doctrine, Augustine's texts and conceptual lexicon continued to function as a ubiquitous point of contact for the emerging paradigms of Scholastic thought. The threefold distinction between *sacramentum tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, and *res tantum*, which was further developed and integrated into the Latin theological tradition by Hugh of St. Victor and other Victorine theologians, would provide the lens through which the conceptual distinctions of Augustine's sacramental theology were received by later Western theologians.²⁰

Despite the shift in Augustinian vocabulary and the development of *res et sacramentum* as a sacramental concept, however, the Augustinian term *character* and its associated imagery were not immediately or universally adopted as the primary conceptual description of baptism's permanent effects. In

theology are used to hearing the word *sacramentum* used to define the outward aspects of the rite, either as distinct from the reality imparted (*sacramentum tantum* versus *res tantum*) or in combination with the reality (*res et sacramentum*). Haring argues that in Augustinian usage this was in fact reversed to a certain extent: *sacramentum* referred to that which was communicated by the sacraments (character or sacramental grace), while more ontic language (*res* or similar terminology) was sometimes used to describe the outward sign or physical "things" involved in sacramental symbolism and action. Haring has convincingly argued that the word *sacramentum* underwent a transformation during the Berengarian controversy that effectively reversed its usage, giving rise to the later medieval emphasis on *sacramentum* as outward sign (see "Berengar's Definitions" and "Brief Historical Comment") Because Berengar was concerned in no small part with the interpretation of Augustine's sacramental doctrine of sign and reality, the controversy that ensued gave rise to distinctions which affected the reception of Augustinian sacramental doctrine in the pre-Scholastic period. The link between the Berengarian controversy and the development of the distinction of *res tantum*, *res et sacramentum*, and *sacramentum tantum* is well studied: Ronald F. King, "The Origin and Evolution of a Sacramental Formula: *Sacramentum Tantum*, *Res et Sacramentum*, *Res Tantum*," *The Thomist* 31 (1967): 21–82. King differs from Haring on the original source of this theological formula (37). Within the Victorine School, Hugh of St. Victor incorporated the threefold distinction between *sacramentum* and *res* into his systematic account of the sacraments (Thomas Finn, "The Sacramental World in the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard," *Theological Studies* 69 [2008]: 568).

²⁰ It was Hugh of St. Victor in the early twelfth century who "deepened and specified the Augustinian definition. For [Hugh] the rite itself (*sacramentum tantum*) not only resembled or pointed to the inner reality (*res*) but also contained and conveyed that inner reality (*res et sacramentum*). The clarification was critical for the theology of the sacraments in general, a clarification made permanent by the increasingly widespread use of Peter's *Sentences*" (Finn, "Sacramental World," 568; in support Finn cites Hugh's *De sacramentis* 1.9.2 [*PL*, 176:317d–318b]); we should also note that Peter Lombard studied with Hugh, beginning while the latter was completing his *De sacramentis* (see Philipp W. Rosemann, *Peter Lombard* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], 27).

the case of Lombard, his teaching on the non-iterability of baptism as a sacrament and its sacramental effects is structured by the threefold distinction between *res* and *sacramentum*, rather than the term *character*. Indeed, Lombard mentions the term only once in his arguments against the rebaptism of heretics in distinction 6 of *Sentences* IV—despite having received the sacrament while outside the communion of the Church, Lombard argues that these persons are nonetheless protected (*servare*) by the *character* of Christ, and therefore should be reconciled through the imposition of hands alone so that they might receive the Holy Spirit.²¹

Lombard's teaching on baptism is found in *Sentences* IV, where he begins with a treatment of the sacraments—first in general, then individually beginning with baptism.²² After a brief treatment of the sacraments of the New Law, distinction 2 deals primarily with the distinction between the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ, where Lombard makes the point that while the baptism of John was of penance as a preparation for Christ's baptism, the baptism of Christ was for remission.²³ In distinction 3, Lombard takes up the form of baptism, its institution, and the reason for its institution.²⁴ Lombard does not discuss the permanence of the sacrament in this distinction, but he does touch on what he refers to as the *res* of the sacrament when describing the *causa institutionis*. Lombard maintains that through the grace of baptism, the renewal of the mind (*innovatio mentis*) is accomplished and the burden of sin removed.²⁵ In distinction 4, he takes up the question of the recipient in relation to the sacrament of baptism. Here he discusses the distinction between those who receive the *sacramentum et res*, and those who either receive the *sacramentum* only or the *res* only.²⁶

Throughout distinction 4, Lombard cites Augustine's *De baptismo*

²¹ Peter Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 6, ch. 2, no. 3. The text of Lombard's *Sentences* can be found in *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Rome: Ad Claras Aquas, 1981).

²² Lombard, *Sent.* IV, dd. 2–6. These distinctions deal with the sacrament of baptism; see also Rosemann, *Peter Lombard*, 145–48. Lombard first published his *Sentences* in AD 1156–1157, after having lectured on them during that academic year. The edition that has been handed down to the present in manuscript form appeared as a second edition in 1158 (Rosemann, *Peter Lombard*, 55).

²³ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 2, ch. 3; see also ch. 4.

²⁴ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 3, ch. 1.

²⁵ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 3, ch. 9.

²⁶ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 4, ch. 1. As he indicated at the close of distinction 3, the *res* of baptism is justification (ch. 9). Lombard makes it clear that infants and faithful adults receive the *sacramentum et res*, but someone who receives the sacrament unworthily only receives the *sacramentum*, whereas an un-baptized martyr could receive the *res* alone. See Rosemann, *Peter Lombard*, 148–49.

consistently (and makes mention of several other Augustinian texts). Although he does not mention the word *character* specifically, as Lombard works through the contingencies of receiving the *sacramentum* alone, the *res* alone, or the *sacramentum* and *res*, he does make consistent appeal to Augustine's *De baptismo* to resolve these questions. Lombard concludes his discussion of the *res* of baptism (justification) in relation to the *sacramentum* in distinction four by reasserting the fittingness of receiving the *res* along with the sacrament, even if some may receive it apart from baptism itself.²⁷

Because Lombard himself does not conceptually identify the place of sacramental *character* in this context or discuss its quiddity, subsequent Scholastic discussions of this topic would ground themselves in different sections of Lombard's text. Because of its emphasis on the threefold formula and the specific concept of *res et sacramentum*, it is perhaps unsurprising that Aquinas and a number of other Scholastics chose to address the quiddity of sacramental character in his commentary on distinction four of Lombard's text. However, it should be noted that there are other aspects of Lombard's teaching on baptism that also provided points of departure for Scholastic discussions of sacramental character. Bonaventure, for example, begins his discussion of character in distinction 3 of book IV. As will be shown, the association that Bonaventure sees here between the immediate effects of baptism and the habit of virtue prove important for his account of the quiddity of sacramental character. Building on this, Bonaventure takes up the subject again in distinction 6, which concerns the liceity of baptism. Building on his treatment of the theological nature of baptism in distinctions 2–4, Lombard addresses in distinctions 5–6 first the minister of the sacrament, and then the circumstances in under which it should be celebrated. In Lombard's discussion of liceity in distinction 6, the conceptual relevance of sacramental character in this discussion becomes immediately clear in chapter 2, where Lombard asks whether or not those baptized by heretics must be rebaptized. Lombard assembles a number of opinions from the Fathers, but the great majority of them are from Augustine, several of which are from *De baptismo*, and other works of Augustine as well.²⁸ In distinction 6 Lombard deals with a few other concerns regarding the minister and a curious *dubium* concerning the baptism of unborn children in their mother's womb;²⁹ overall, however, distinction 6 is dominated by the questions of heretical baptism and rebaptism mentioned at the beginning of the

²⁷ See Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 4, ch. 7.

²⁸ In Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 6, ch. 3, Lombard cites Augustine's *Ad Dardanum* (Epistle 187) 9.31.

²⁹ See Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 6, ch. 3.

distinction, which recall clearly, by both the choice of subject and supporting texts, the Donatist controversy and St. Augustine's response. Given this focus on the non-iterability of baptism and the re-presentation of key Augustinian texts from the Donatist controversy (already presented earlier by Lombard in his theological treatment of baptism) it should not surprise us that these texts also proved attractive to Scholastic commentators interested in the developing doctrine of sacramental character.

Character and the Species of Quality: Bonaventure and Aquinas

Although Augustine's thought would leave a lasting and definitive impression on later theological paradigms in the Latin West, his later receptions would be shaped by new context and theological concerns as well. Although Lombard's terminological reformulation of Augustine's categories would certainly be influential, during the thirteenth century, the Scholastic movement would also be deeply shaped by the thought of Aristotle, whose texts were newly available in more comprehensive and reliable editions in the Latin West. During the 1250s, Paris saw a great influx of newly available Aristotelian texts and commentaries that sparked renewed interest in the Stagirite's thought, not only in the arts faculty, but in Scholastic theology as well. Also beginning in the 1250s, the practice of commenting on Lombard's *Sentences* became a standardized practice at Paris and other universities. As this practice evolved, these commentaries gradually began to take on a theological life of their own, to the point that distinct theological schools could be recognized exercising themselves within the proscribed genera of the *Sentences* commentaries.³⁰ In many ways, Lombard's *Sentences* served as the context for new theological appropriations of Aristotelian concepts, even as it provided a standardized conduit for the reception of the pre-Aristotelian Western theological tradition by Scholastic thinkers. In the case of sacramental character, although the traditional Augustinian teaching conveyed by Lombard was clear enough doctrinally, for those interested in how these distinctions might be re-voiced using the conceptual language of Aristotle, the precise metaphysical implications of these inherited distinctions remained less certain. As some of the first commentaries on the *Sentences* within their own developing theological schools, the work of both Aquinas and Bonaventure would continue to influence Dominican and Franciscan theological perspectives for generations.

³⁰ G. R. Evans, ed., *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Current Research*, vol. 1 (Boston: Brill, 2002), 42.

When commenting on the *Sentences*, both Aquinas and Bonaventure choose to take up the idea of sacramental character, and offer conflicting accounts of its nature. From the outset, however, it is important to recognize that their disagreement is not total: in choosing to classify the sacramental character as a species of quality in the Aristotelian sense, the two men already share a great deal in common, even among those who would use elements of Aristotle's thought to explain baptismal character.³¹ Because baptism is the first of the sacraments, both Thomas and Bonaventure choose to situate their most substantive commentary on the subject of sacramental character there. It is primarily in their commentaries on the fourth book of the *Sentences* that Aquinas and Bonaventure can be seen to react in very different ways not only to the patristic texts put forward by Lombard (predominantly from Augustine), but to the speculative implications of the theological topic set before them by the *Sentences*. In the following we will examine first Bonaventure and then Aquinas, noticing the way in which they situate the question of sacramental character in relation to Lombard's text and the wider theological question of baptismal permanence. As will be shown, conversation that develops between Aquinas and Bonaventure regarding the most effective way to articulate the received doctrine of baptismal permanence within an Aristotelian view of reality will continue to resonate in later Scholastic conversations.

Bonaventure

Beginning his treatment of sacramental character in distinction 3 of book IV, Bonaventure distinguishes between baptism in itself as the *sacramentum* and *character*, which is the *res et sacramentum* most properly. In this way Bonaventure distinguishes between the event of baptism and its outward signs, and its effect.³² Bonaventure does allow for the *res et sacramentum* to be called baptism in a more specific sense, and here he calls upon St. John Damascene: "Baptism is the principle of the spiritual life, the seal [sigillum], preservation [custodia] and illumination [illuminatio] of the mind."³³ Bonaventure understands this statement to apply more properly to baptism's effect, which is the character. In this passage from Damascene Bonaventure sees a fourfold definition of baptismal character. As *principium vitae* it prepares the soul for grace. As *sigillum* it distinguishes those who are of God's flock from those who are not. *Custodia* refers to its permanent and

³¹ See Aristotle, *Categoriae* 7–8.

³² Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 3, pt. 1, a. 1, q. 1, ad 4 (as *Opera omnia*, Ad Claras Aquas, 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1882).

³³ Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 3, pt. 1, a. 1.

unrepeatable nature, and it is an *illuminatio mentis* in as much as it disposes for faith.³⁴ In this regard, Grahame Connolly has argued that Bonaventure's treatment of the nature of sacramental character in distinction 3 sets the stage for his more robust treatment of the subject under distinction 6 by introducing "the notion of a permanent effect in baptism—a lasting 'sacramentum' which is character."³⁵

Understanding baptism as a "principle of spiritual life" will shape Bonaventure's understanding of character. In the patristic period, debates over what came to be called "sacramental character" were framed by practical threats to the Church's faith and practice, and the insistence on the permanence and non-iterability of the sacrament, as well as the distinction between the "character" or "seal" and the life of grace itself, which can admit of increase or of loss. However, when Bonaventure and other Scholastic thinkers begin to concern themselves with the nature of the character *per se*, this conversation is not conducted without reference to the larger scope and thrust of the sacrament of baptism. Because Bonaventure understands the concept of *res et sacramentum* to be integrally linked to the finality of the sacrament's *res tantum*, Bonaventure's discussions of character in this context cannot be reduced to isolated speculations about the metaphysical nature of baptismal sealing—rather, Bonaventure is discussing an intermediate effect of the sacrament that makes possible the ultimate teleological finality of the same sacrament.³⁶ Following this pattern, Bonaventure identifies three effects of baptism, character being the first effect, while the infusion of grace is the second, and the restitution of innocence the third.³⁷

Moving to consider the quiddity of character more specifically, in his commentary on distinction 6 Bonaventure argues that character should be

³⁴ Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 3, pt. 1, a. 1, q. 1, ad 4.

³⁵ See Grahame J. Connolly, S.M., "Sacramental Character in Five Famous Medievals: A Study on the Teachings of Peter Lombard, Alexander of Hales, St. Albert the Great, St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas" (dissertation, Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1963), 25: "Under distinction IV, character is shown as the automatic effect of valid baptism. It is a mode of putting on Christ which can be effected despite evil dispositions in the recipient. And in such evilly disposed subjects, character forms the basis for what we would call reviviscence of the sacrament, against the day of their coming to a change of heart." See also 26–27.

³⁶ Despite the progress made in this regard by Hugh of St. Victor and others, the terminology in use in the thirteenth century was still somewhat fluid. Unlike St. Albert and at times Lombard, Bonaventure's use of this schema can be understood as more congruent with post-Tridentine understandings of this same threefold terminology. See Connolly, "Sacramental Character," 27–28.

³⁷ Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, pt. 1, a. 1, q. 3.

understood as a *habitual* quality.³⁸ Because Bonaventure sees character as an initial effect that is tied intrinsically to baptism's second and third effects, it is important for Bonaventure that the formal quiddity of character also reflect something of the sanctifying finality that fully configures us to Christ, even if only by kind of anticipation. Bonaventure selects *habitus* from a list among the following list of three things found in the soul, according to Aristotle: power, passion, and habit.³⁹ Bonaventure claims that character cannot be either power or passion, and so settles on habit. Aristotle himself presents the idea of quality as a form of accidental being in the *Categories*, and there delineates four species of qualities that shape Bonaventure's treatment of the issue, and Aquinas's response. In chapter 8 of the *Categories*, Aristotle defines "quality" as "that in virtue of which people are said to be such and such."⁴⁰ The first species of quality is in fact "habit" or "disposition," the former being the most solidified adequately. Among the qualities which can be said to be habits are knowledge and virtue. The second species of quality refers more to the inborn capacity or incapacity to accomplish something with ease. This second quality is sometimes referred to as power or potency. The third species of quality is that of affective qualities, which include such things as sweetness, bitterness, heat, and whiteness. The fourth species of quality is figure or form, and is understood as "the shape that belongs to a thing."⁴¹ Isolating habit as his preferred descriptor of sacramental character, Bonaventure rejects the other species of quality as possibilities in this case. Concerning the second species—which Aquinas will prefer—Bonaventure rejects the notion of character as power because he claims that describing character as a power would imply that the character was something natural, falling within the potency of human nature itself. Further, since he intends to describe character as a disposition to receiving grace, he is uncomfortable with the category of potency, as it would seem to imply that the character would be necessarily perfected in the presence of a perfecting agent, such as grace—a suggestion Bonaventure rejects.⁴²

³⁸ Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, pt. 1, a. unic., q. 1.

³⁹ See Aristotle, *Ethica nicomachea* 2.5; see Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, and Connolly, "Sacramental Character," 29.

⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Categoriae* 8.

⁴¹ Aristotle, *Categoriae* 8. This of course does not refer to substantial form, but rather to accidental forms such as "roundness" or "triangular."

⁴² See Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 6. Concerning affective or passible quality (the third species of quality), Bonaventure argues that this too is unsuitable. The proponents of this view describe this type of quality as interior, affecting the spiritual sense, but Bonaventure objects that this is not acceptable because all truths accessible to the intellect would then fall into this category. Concerning "figure" or "form" (the fourth

In favor of character as a *habitus*, Bonaventure clarifies that in this context he understands this term in the broadest sense, as essentially equivalent to a disposition. Although Aristotle distinguishes these two categories, arguing that *habitus* is distinct from disposition as a more permanent and stable quality, Bonaventure argues that in the case of character habit should be understood in the broad sense as a disposition, while at the same time retaining the permanence of *habitus*. Bonaventure wishes to accept habit in a broad sense, such that it can be understood as disposition, while at the same time retaining the permanence of habitude in the proper sense.⁴³ Although Bonaventure's reading of Aristotle on this point may seem idiosyncratic, in this case Bonaventure seems to be motivated primarily by the perceived theological utility of these Aristotelian ideas, rather than close textual interpretation of Aristotle on his own terms. In the context of the threefold distinction inherited from Lombard, recall that for Bonaventure character is one of three baptismal effects (the infusion of grace and restoration of innocence being the second and third, respectively). As a habitual quality that disposes towards these other effects, Bonaventure hopes to retain an understanding of character that is fundamentally ordered towards the perfection of grace. Accordingly, he defines the character in itself as a quality in the soul, not fully perfected in itself but rather disposing towards the perfection of grace; it is in this sense that character is essentially a disposition for Bonaventure, as a reality intrinsically ordered towards a further perfective finality.⁴⁴ Although Bonaventure's theological instincts in this regard may be sound, Aquinas will question whether or not such an eclectic appropriation of Aristotelian quality can sustain these theological intuitions. Specifically, the central weakness that emerges in Bonaventure's approach concerns the question of permanence—recall that for Augustine, the question of baptismal permanence featured prominently in the immediate historical context for his involvement with the questions of the Donatist controversy, and also informed Augustine's conceptual distinction between the *sacramentum* of baptism itself—which could not be repeated—and the use of this sacrament in charity, which could be lost and subsequently recovered. Despite Bonaventure's theological intuitions, if the qualitative category of disposition or habit is not able to capture the doctrine of baptismal permanence in the full sense, he risks undermining the doctrine of baptismal non-iterability

species), Bonaventure argues that "figure" or "form" implies a certain immobility that would be inappropriate in this context (*In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 1).

⁴³ See Aristotle, *Categoriae* 8, and Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, pt. 1, a. unic., q. 1, opin. 6.

⁴⁴ Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, pt. 1, a. unic., q. 1, opin. 6.

itself. As Aquinas will argue, a habit that is *difficult* to change is not the equivalent of an unrepeatable sealing.

The Early Aquinas

Bonaventure and Aquinas read the *Sentences* at roughly the same time in Paris, separated in their studies by only a few short years. Bonaventure probably lectured from 1250 to 1252, and Aquinas studied under St. Albert from 1252–1256. Bonaventure served a term as regent at Paris from 1253–1257 (while Aquinas was still lecturing on the *Sentences*), and Aquinas held this post from 1256–1259.⁴⁵ Although they are almost chronological contemporaries, Bonaventure was already lecturing as a popular master of theology when Aquinas was only beginning his studies in Paris. Bonaventure's *Sentences* commentary would have certainly been available to Aquinas, and as a proponent of the Aristotelianism that was gaining ground in some intellectual circles, Aquinas may well have taken an interest in Bonaventure's rather conservative attempt to appropriate some aspects of Aristotelian thought within the outlines of traditional Western theology.

Regarding the framework of Lombard's baptismal theology itself in the *Sentences*, Aquinas chooses distinction 4 of book IV as the nexus of his treatment of sacramental character, where Lombard discusses the relationship between what would come to be referred to commonly as the *res et sacramentum* and the *res tantum*. Almost immediately, the reader can notice a marked imbalance between the treatment of Aquinas and his immediate predecessors: while Bonaventure certainly treats the subject seriously, Aquinas devotes the entire substance of the first question of his commentary on distinction 4 to the topic of sacramental character, using that which is imparted at baptism as his point of departure.⁴⁶

St. Thomas begins his treatment of sacramental character by addressing directly the nature of the character itself—the first question posed in article 1 of question 1 of his commentary on distinction 4 is: “whether character is something in the soul.” In the first objection, he immediately takes up the Aristotelian model that Bonaventure invoked from *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle names three things in the soul: power, passion, and habit.⁴⁷ Regarding the first of these, Aquinas reiterates the substance of Bonaventure's argument against character as *potentia*: because *potentia* or *impotentia* is something consequent on nature, sacramental character cannot

⁴⁵ Evans, *Mediaeval Commentaries*, 44–45.

⁴⁶ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, proel.

⁴⁷ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 1.

be placed in this category. Aquinas also provides refutations of the other two options (power and passion), and so leaves himself with seemingly no basis for describing sacramental character from within the Aristotelian understanding of being.

In the second objection, however, Aquinas narrows the scope of the discussion to the category of quality: for Aquinas, character cannot be reduced to a species of being except quality—but this also seems impossible, because no species of quality can contain it. So far Aquinas has framed the question in the same way as Bonaventure, and accordingly he offers arguments against the possibility of understanding character under any of the four species of quality.⁴⁸ His arguments against the first and second species are of the most immediate interest here, as they correspond to Bonaventure's position and Thomas's own. Aquinas's objector brackets the discussion of *habitus* proper, assuring the reader that it will be discussed at a later time. Here the objector does dismiss the category of disposition, however, on the grounds that it contradicts the indelibility of character. This points to a weakness in Bonaventure's use of disposition in this same context, as an orientation towards the perfection of grace.⁴⁹ Aquinas himself will expand on this critique subsequently.

Against the idea of character as power, Aquinas's objector argues that character is less a function of natural potency or the absence thereof, but is rather attributable in some sense to the sacraments themselves.⁵⁰ The way in which Aquinas chooses to frame this objection is significant: Bonaventure had claimed that any reference to power would necessarily be a reference to nature; here Aquinas frames his objection as referring to *natural* potency, opening the way for a discussion of potencies more appropriate for the sacramental economy. However, he does grant Bonaventure the point that *impotency* is not an appropriate category for baptismal character.

Beginning his own response to these objections in the *sed contra*, Aquinas

⁴⁸ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 2.

⁴⁹ Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, pt. 1, a. unic., q. 1, opin. 6. Bonaventure uses the broader and more diffusive nature of "disposition" to avoid some of the attributes of *habitus* proper which he feels are ill-suited for his purpose, but then proceeds to deny to disposition its quality of "easy movement" or ready change, the very attribute which established it as distinct from habit properly so called in the first place (see Aristotle, *Categoriae* 8). Although Bonaventure's understanding of habit and disposition claims to allow of this interpretation, Aristotle dispels this notion: "One sort of quality is 'habit' or 'disposition.' Habit differs from disposition in being more lasting and more firmly established" (*Categoriae* 8.8b27–29, trans. Richard McKeon in *The Basic Works of Aristotle* [New York: Modern Library, 2001], 23).

⁵⁰ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 2.

immediately invokes Damascene, referencing the same text that Bonaventure used.⁵¹ However, where Bonaventure employed a fourfold interpretation of Damascene, Aquinas singles out the word *sigillum*, associating a *sign* impressed in something else as a character of that first thing.⁵² As Aquinas focuses on this term found in Damascene's definition, he also positions his understanding of character as a theology of *image*: now the character begins to appear as more than a simple permanent seal, but as a reality related to the person as *imago Dei*.⁵³ Many of these themes can be found in Bonaventure;⁵⁴ recall that in treating the same quote from Damascene, Bonaventure refers to *principium vitae*, *sigillum*, *custodia*, and *illuminatio mentis* as preparing the soul for grace, distinguishing the flock of God from the world, non-iterability, and disposing for faith (in that order).⁵⁵ Bonaventure's emphasis on *custodia* as the aspect of character which distinguishes is echoed by Aquinas in the second section of his *sed contra*, where he insists that character must be given in the sacraments in order to distinguish the faithful from the world and among themselves.⁵⁶ Bonaventure's emphasis on *principium vitae* and *illuminatio mentis* as the aspects of baptismal character which dispose the recipient for grace and faith is intriguing, and hints at the broader context in which Bonaventure intends to place his understanding of baptismal character, presumably embracing the elements of human life which elevated in faith and grace are transformed and deified. Bonaventure is less explicit about his intentions in this regard, however, and the reader is left to speculate about the implications of some of his statements for other areas of theology. How, precisely, for example, are the metaphysics of grace and character related to each other, and to that of the infused theological virtues?

For his part, Aquinas is able to situate baptismal character within the Aristotelian categories in such a way that the *res et sacramentum* and the *res tantum* of baptism can be fully integrated with the life of Christian holiness within the context of *image* and *perfection*. In the body of the first article, Aquinas treats the four species of quality one by one, in the same way as Bonaventure. Interestingly however, he frames the entire discussion

⁵¹ Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 3, pt. 1, a. 1.

⁵² Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, sc 1.

⁵³ Where St. Paul referenced the sealing of the Holy Spirit and the Greek fathers spoke of σφραγίς, the Scholastics now began to speak of character in relation to divine image. See Stephen McCormack, "The Configuration of the Sacramental Character," *The Thomist* 7, no. 4 (1944): 460.

⁵⁴ See McCormack, "Configuration," 460.

⁵⁵ See Bonaventure, *In IV sent.*, d. 3, pt. 1, a. 1, q. 1, ad 4; see Connolly, "Sacramental Character," 26–87.

⁵⁶ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, sc 2.

in terms of a triple distinction: sign, distinction, and configuration.⁵⁷ In the first way, character signifies relation to the sign, in the second to that from which it distinguishes, in the third to the one to whom we assimilate. It is this third relation of configurative assimilation that will most distinguish Aquinas's treatment of baptismal character. Aquinas continues to argue that the character must adhere accidentally in the soul (for reasons obvious to an Aristotelian), and that it must be a quality: since substantial form is not given in the sacraments, similitude must be conferred accidentally within the category of quality.⁵⁸ Aquinas treats all four species of quality here, but for the sake of brevity we will limit ourselves to the first two, which concern most immediately the point of disagreement between Aquinas and Bonaventure.

Aquinas argues that *habitus* is not a fitting category for baptismal character because a habit admits of both good and bad, lesser and greater, whereas power is said simply.⁵⁹ Aquinas seems to take on Bonaventure's use of disposition to broaden the concept of *habitus*, saying not only does disposition share all of the unacceptable traits of habitus, but that it is in fact nothing but an incomplete habit. Perhaps most interesting, however, is Aquinas's observation that by using *habitus*, one is limited to saying that the baptismal character is oriented only towards the disposition for grace, rather than ultimate perfection. When Aquinas offers potency—the second species of quality—as an alternative, it is partly this need to connect the character of baptism as *res et sacramentum* with the *res tantum* in a meaningful way.⁶⁰ Here, Aquinas offers a very rich treatment of the character imparted by the sacrament of baptism in relation to the final end of the sacrament. At this juncture, Aquinas introduces a new source, not found in Bonaventure: (pseudo) Dionysius. Until this point, Aquinas's commentary has resembled Bonaventure's in many respects and relied on similar sources, despite clear points of disagreement. Now for the first time, however, we see Aquinas introducing an entirely new source. In this section, Aquinas frames the Aristotelian category of quality-as-potency within the larger metaphysical vision of Dionysius. Throughout his treatment of character in his commentary on distinction 4, Aquinas consistently and very explicitly refers to Dionysius, unashamedly putting his ideas of participation, image, and divinization forward as the governing paradigms for his discussion of character: Aquinas corrects Bonaventure for failing to understand character as fundamentally ordered toward ultimate perfection, and in light of the Dionysian paradigm

⁵⁷ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, corp..

⁵⁸ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, corp.

⁵⁹ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, corp.

⁶⁰ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, corp.

he invokes, it is easy to see why this point would be so important for Aquinas. In this case, the disagreement between these two masters is not simply a philosophical quibble about the most appropriate way to interpret a seemingly obscure point from Aristotle, but in fact concerns the proper anthropological and anagogical context of this entire theological discussion in the first place. Aquinas responds to Bonaventure's concern that potency would limit character to the confines of human nature by indicating that it is by being born again in spiritual life that we acquire a new potency for participation in divine beatitude; as such, it is not the natural potency mentioned by the objector⁶¹ that is in question here, but rather a new supernatural potency that is otherwise unavailable to the human person on natural terms.⁶²

Aquinas goes further, integrating an understanding of sacramental efficacy within character-as-potency, such that the sacrament has instrumental power through both the minister and the character.⁶³ To this end, Aquinas claims that the character is the cause of sacramental grace.⁶⁴ This is significant, because it is as an instrumental power that character serves as our entry point into the moral life of grace,⁶⁵ opening up for us the life of participation in the divine hierarchy that Dionysius proposes.

In the rest of what follows of his treatment of baptismal character (articles 2–3 of question 1), Aquinas further develops the vision of sacramental character that we have seen here thus far. In article 2, Aquinas introduces two complementary *quaestiunculae*, in which he first reconciles his understanding of character as potency with the more traditional language of sign or sealing, and in the second he introduces the notion of the character as recreated Trinitarian image.

At the beginning of the first *quaestiuncula*, Aquinas introduces (under the guise of an objector), the possible non-congruity between his language of potency and participation and the more traditional language such as *signum* that appears in Lombard. Here in article 2, Aquinas introduces a definition of character that has been attributed to Dionysius,⁶⁶ and asks whether or not it is appropriately chosen.⁶⁷ In his response, Aquinas reminds the objectors

⁶¹ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 2.

⁶² Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, corp.

⁶³ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, corp.

⁶⁴ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4.

⁶⁵ See Colman O'Neill, O.P., "The Instrumentality of the Sacramental Character: An Interpretation of *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 63, a. 2," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 25 (1958): 263–64.

⁶⁶ Aquinas *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1. See also *ST* III, q. 63, a. 2, ad 3.

⁶⁷ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, arg. 1.

that character rightly takes on the name of sign, as it is through the visible and sacrament that the ends of the sacrament are effected and signified.⁶⁸ Further, Aquinas asserts that the category of potency is not incompatible with sign, as exterior signs and symbols frequently accompany power—such as the scepter and crown which signify the power of the king.⁶⁹

The second *quaestiuncula* contrasts the definition ascribed to Dionysius with a second *definitio magistralis* which defines character as an eternal image impressed on the rational soul, recreating the image of the Trinity.⁷⁰ St. Thomas interprets this recreation as a configuration—a participation in divine power⁷¹ which takes the form of recreation in the image of the Triune God.

More can be said concerning Aquinas's treatment of baptismal character, even from within this section of his commentary on the *Sentences*. However, in so far as his treatment of baptismal character is to be compared with Bonaventure's, it is clear that his understanding of *character* as a category of accidental being—a potency for eternal life and recreation in grace—represents an important advance in Scholastic conversations about the quiddity of sacramental character. Understanding character as a qualitative power more effectively preserves the doctrine of baptismal non-iterability inherited from Augustine. Furthermore, through the introduction of Dionysius, Aquinas is able to more accurately describe the relationship between baptism and Christian holiness, perfection, and beatitude.

Aquinas on Character in the Summa

In the *Summa*, Aquinas's causal approach to both character and sacramental grace shifts, making it clear that the principle effect of baptism is grace—character, by contrast, is named as only a secondary effect.⁷² Additionally, his interpretation of Damascene undergoes a degree of development in his mature thought in the *Summa*, where he associates it with both *sigillum* and *custodia*.⁷³ More than simply a semantic shift, this signals a more nuanced connection between the reality of sacramental character and Aquinas's mature doctrine of sanctification in grace and virtue. Invoking the distinction between character as *res et sacramentum* and that inward justification which

⁶⁸ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 1.

⁶⁹ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 1, ad 2.

⁷⁰ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, arg. 1. See also Leeming, *Principles*, 133–35.

⁷¹ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 2, qc. 2, ad 3.

⁷² *ST III*, q. 62, 63. See Lynch, *Cleansing of the Heart*, throughout.

⁷³ *ST III*, q. 66 a. 1, ad 1. In his commentary on the *Sentences* Aquinas associates character only with *sigillum* (Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 1).

is the *res tantum* of baptism, Aquinas uses Damascene's text to argue that *sigillum* and *custodia* refer to different aspects of baptismal character—as a kind of sealing (*sigillum*), character keeps the soul safe (*custodia*) in the good. Building on this, Aquinas notes that Damascene also introduces two conceptual distinctions that Aquinas argues pertain to the ultimate reality of the sacrament of baptism: regeneration, and enlightenment: Aquinas argues that the first of these (regeneration) refers to the beginning of the new life of grace in the one who is baptized; Aquinas argues that the second (enlightenment) refers more directly to the life of faith that flows from baptism.⁷⁴

Building on this baptismal trajectory towards the broader life of faith and grace, Aquinas returns to Dionysius, who positioned baptism in relation to the other sacraments as a principle that imparted the habits of soul necessary to engage fruitfully with the rest of the sacramental economy. For Dionysius, baptism is understood in relation to the other sacraments in different ways: like all sacraments, baptism is oriented towards beatitude; as a form of regeneration, however, baptism is the beginning of the spiritual life and also stands as a principle for the habitual disposition to receive the other sacraments.⁷⁵

In the *Summa*, Aquinas's treatment of sacramental character is positioned as part of his larger conceptual understanding of the perfection of the human person as divine image through the process of sanctification, of both the individual who possesses the character and others. In addition to these developments in his doctrine of sacramental character, in the *Summa* Aquinas has also introduced a number of distinctions within the process of sanctification itself, clearly distinguishing between grace—and its various species—and the reality of the infused theological virtues and that of the gifts of the Spirit. Those sacramental characters which pertain to different aspects of the process of sanctification are likewise distinguished from each other. Although baptismal character is directed to the sanctification of the individual who receives it, the character of orders is directed towards the sanctification of others. In this much, a parallel exists between this form of sacramental character and the charismatic gifts—both are intended to contribute to the sanctification of others.⁷⁶ Beginning with sanctifying grace (*gratia gratum faciens*), one may distinguish the concept of sacramental character from habitual grace itself and from the infused virtues and gifts according to the way in which each interacts with the parts of the human soul. Aquinas describes habitual grace as a quality adhering in the essence of

⁷⁴ *ST* III, q. 66, a. 1, ad 1.

⁷⁵ *ST* III, q. 66, a. 1, ad 1.

⁷⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 111, a. 4; III, q. 63, a. 6, corp.

the soul.⁷⁷ The infused virtues, which are distinct from grace,⁷⁸ are dispositions for divine life, derivative of habitual grace as a participation in divine nature according to the mode of Trinitarian indwelling.⁷⁹ Sanctifying grace, therefore, is effectively the principal or root of the infused virtues and the life that flows from them.⁸⁰ Accordingly, while grace directly concerns the essence of the soul, the infused virtues concern the soul's powers.⁸¹ Like the virtues, sacramental character is a power, as we have seen.⁸² For Aquinas, sacramental character is situated in the intellective power of the soul.⁸³ Although the infused virtues and sacramental characters are both located in the powers of the soul, they are distinguished from each other not only by the species of quality themselves (habit in the case of the virtues, power in the case of the characters), but by their respective ends as well. Where the infused virtues are ordered to participation in divine life, baptismal character (for example) orders us to divine worship according to the rites of the Church.⁸⁴ Regarding the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Aquinas implies that habit can be used to describe these as well,⁸⁵ inasmuch as they represent a special receptivity to divine motion, perfecting human nature to participate in the power of the Holy Spirit in a manner that resembles the manner in which moral virtues perfect the appetitive powers of the soul to participate in the power of reason.⁸⁶

Capreolus, Scotus, and Cajetan

After Aquinas, conversations about the quiddity of sacramental character continued between the Dominican and Franciscan schools. In his commentary on Aquinas's *Sentences*, in the prologue of his commentary, Capreolus begins by situating the question of character among the texts used by both

⁷⁷ *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 2, ad 1.

⁷⁸ *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 3, corp.

⁷⁹ *ST* I, q. 43, a. 3, corp.

⁸⁰ *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 3, ad 3.

⁸¹ *ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 4, sc and corp.

⁸² *ST* III, q. 63, a. 2, sc.

⁸³ *ST* III, q. 63, a. 4, ad 3; a. 5, corp. For Aquinas, the incorruptible nature of intellective being corresponds to the indelible nature of sacramental character. *ST* III, q. 63, a. 5, corp.

⁸⁴ *ST* III, q. 63, a. 2, corp. While character is reducible to the second species of quality (capabilities/incapabilities), grace is reducible to the first species of quality (habits and dispositions), as a *disposition* (*ST* I-II, q. 110, a. 3, ad 3).

⁸⁵ *ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 3, corp.

⁸⁶ *ST* I-II, q. 68, aa. 2–3.

Bonaventure and Aquinas in their commentaries on the *Sentences*, focusing on Damascene's terminological descriptions of baptism. Against those who would deny that sacramental character imprints anything in the soul, Capreolus focuses his reader's attention on Damascene's notion of character as *sigillum*, which Capreolus asserts implies that character is a quidditative impression on something. It quickly becomes clear that many of Capreolus's interpretations of Aquinas are framed as responses to Scotus. For Scotus, the concept of character is connected to the non-iterability of baptism as a divinely instituted sacrament, resulting from no prior cause or from any human volition; as a sacrament, baptism provides full remission for original sin and its effects. Baptism, Scotus argues, functions as a gate by which one enters the law of Christ as a kind of family member in his body, and a member of the Church militant.⁸⁷ Concerned that Aquinas's approach would result in classifying character as an absolute form (*forma absoluta*),⁸⁸ Scotus argues that character's non-repeatable nature distinguishes it from grace and the infused virtues, and refers most directly to that which formally distinguishes those who have received the sacrament of baptism from those who have not; further, this distinction also signifies the recipient's conformity to

⁸⁷ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 7, schol. (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 8 [Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968], 332). Although Scotus acknowledges that some kind of indelible character is a common explanation of the unrepeatable quality of the sacrament of baptism, he is also quick to point out that in Lombard's own treatment of baptism in the *Sentences*, the term *character* is mentioned only at the outset of distinction 6 (*Sent. IV*, dist. 6, ch. 2, no. 3), where Lombard indicates that baptized heretics have received the *character* of Christ, and therefore should not be rebaptized. Scotus attributes Lombard's use of this term to the baptismal vocabulary that Lombard inherited from Augustine, whose authority justifies the use of 'character' in the context of baptismal non-iterability. To establish a working definition of character, Scotus returns to the text of Heb 1:3, where he notes that the term *charactēr* (χαρακτήρ) occurs in the Greek text where *figura substantiae* appears in the Latin (*In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 9, schol. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:340). Focusing on the concept of "figure," Scotus turns to the use of *character* in Latin texts in Revelation, where the term describes a kind of figure or sign of the beast (e.g., 16:2). Basing himself on these biblical examples, Scotus argues that in the most general sense character should be understood as a sign—in this way, character is said of baptism, inasmuch as it is a kind of sign. On the use of *character* in the Vulgate and in the *Vetus Latina*, see Haring, "St. Augustine's Use," 82n1 (where the Vulgate uses *character*, pre-Vulgate versions use *inscriptio nominis* or *nomen scriptum* or *charagma*). Returning to the instance in which Lombard himself uses *character* in the *Sentences IV* (d. 6, ch. 2, no. 3), Scotus argues that Lombard's own reference to the "character of Christ" should be generally understood as a reference to the implications of the form of the sacramental words (*In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 9, schol. [*Opera Omnia*, 8:340]).

⁸⁸ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 10, schol. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:351)

Christ and the attending obligations that this conformity has imparted.⁸⁹ For Scotus, character is better understood as a kind of relation.⁹⁰ Because it is not associated with any specific act on the part of the baptized, but rather represents the distinction of those baptized from those not, for Scotus this relation is understood to be logical, rather than real.⁹¹

Were character to be considered among Aristotle's species of quality, Scotus argues, a number of problems would arise. For Scotus, if character is to be considered as accidental being in the absolute sense, it follows that it would likely be considered in either of the species of quality considered by Bonaventure and Aquinas: either habit or power. For Scotus, however, the second species of quality (power) is unsuitable, primarily because of the supernatural nature of sacramental character—for Scotus, Aristotle's description of qualitative power applies to natural potencies, and cannot easily be applied in this case. Throughout his treatment of sacramental character, Scotus consistently voices the concern that classifying character as a qualitative power not only would result in a reification of character as an absolute accidental form, but would also seem to associate character with the natural potency of the person possessing it; this would not only risk conflating natural and the supernatural powers, but also would imply an undue malleability in the character itself. A supernatural power, Scotus argues, if it is considered as a form of absolute, accidental, and spiritual being, would need to be classified within an intermediate genus; Scotus argues that supernatural habits represent an intermediate genus of this kind. Therefore, arguing that character should be considered a kind of supernatural qualitative habit (as Bonaventure did), in part because such habitual qualities are difficult to move or change, seems more reasonable to Scotus.⁹² However, should someone insist that character is in fact a supernatural power (as Aquinas does), this would be less suitable in Scotus's view. Responding to a series of possible critiques, Scotus invokes a number of concerns that might cause someone to exclude *habitus* in favor of power in this case: in addition to the seeming incompatibility between power and habit on both natural and supernatural levels, character is also understood to dispose for grace in a way that habit could not. Further, some (like Aquinas) have argued that *habitus* is unsuitable because, of its nature, habit is disposed towards good or evil actions in a way that character taken in itself is not.⁹³ For Scotus, as

⁸⁹ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 9, schol. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:340).

⁹⁰ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 10, schol. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:356).

⁹¹ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 10, schol. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:357).

⁹² Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 10, schol. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:361).

⁹³ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 10, a. 1, corp. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:361–62).

a disposition towards another term, habit can be understood as a principle disposed toward a concluding term. In this sense, habit is not reduced to disposition as described by Aristotle in his discussion of the first species of quality, inasmuch as disposition in this context represents an easily moved quality that is opposed to a comparatively immobile *habitus*. In this regard, Scotus defends aspects of Bonaventure's reasoning to a certain extent. Understood as a supernatural *habitus* (rather than a natural one), Scotus argues that character functions as the principle of certain supernatural actions. Concerning Aquinas's assertion that *habitus* is always associated with an ordering to either good or evil actions, Scotus argues that the acquisition of habit can be independent of its moral application—taken in itself, habit may be indifferent, Scotus argues. Calling attention to the science of geometry as an example, Scotus asserts that having facility with the conclusions of this science is independent of the use to which these conclusions are eventually put—one may have the habit of this science therefore, according to Scotus, without any specific inclination towards either good or evil acts.⁹⁴ In this respect, Scotus compares character to the infused theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which he argues are examples of supernatural habits that, while dispositions to good actions, are not the proximate eliciting principle of these same actions.⁹⁵ As a sign of the life of grace and its obligations and a disposition for sacramental grace, for Scotus character is in the will rather than the intellect.⁹⁶

In his response to Scotus, Capreolus argues that, although it is a relation in one sense, inasmuch as it is understood as a sign, in itself character refers to something truly in the soul, upon which the sign is founded.⁹⁷ For Capreolus, the underlying metaphysical reality that sustains the signate dimension of sacramental character does not fall within the category of substantial being as such, but rather should be considered as a quality. Introducing a distinction from Aquinas's *De veritate*, Capreolus differentiates between a consideration of something that pertains to that thing absolutely and a consideration of the same thing under a certain respect.⁹⁸ Here, Capreolus uses this text from the *De veritate* to provide context for one of Aquinas's responses to an

⁹⁴ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 10, a. 1, corp. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:361–62).

⁹⁵ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 10, a. 1, corp. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:362).

⁹⁶ Scotus, *In IV sent.*, d. 6, q. 11, a. 1, corp. (*Opera Omnia*, 8:369–71).

⁹⁷ Capreolus, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 3, no. 1 (*Defensiones Theologiae divi Thomae Aquinatis*, ed. Ceslaus Paban and Thomas Pègues, vol. 6 [Tours, France: Alfred Cattier, 1906], 90). See also a. 1, concl. 1.

⁹⁸ Capreolus, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 3, no. 1 (*Defensiones Theologiae divi Thomae Aquinatis*, 6:90), citing *De veritate*, q. 21, a. 6.

objector in the *Summa theologiae* who proposes that character should be defined as sign of the Church's communion, and of that which is conferred in ordination by the hierarchy. Based on this understanding of character as sign, the objector argues that, because sign is in the genus of relation rather than power, as a sign character should therefore not be understood as a spiritual power.⁹⁹ In his response, Aquinas insists that, inasmuch as the term "sign" indicates a relation of some kind, this presumes a foundation of some kind, other than the relation itself. For Aquinas, it is not the essence of the soul in the immediate sense, but rather something in the soul.¹⁰⁰ Continuing in his response to the fourth objection, Aquinas argues that, as a sign, character is to be compared most directly with the sensible sacrament by which the character itself is imparted. In itself, however, character has the nature of a principle.¹⁰¹ Capreolus continues to cite from Aquinas's treatment of character in the *Summa*, noting that Aquinas's reply to the second objection in article 1 also supports this approach to character as in one sense a sign: here, Aquinas argues that character is a sign insofar as it is imprinted by a sensible sacrament.¹⁰² For Capreolus, naming character as sign does not speak to character's quidditative identity in an absolute sense, but rather gives only a posterior and accidental definition of character that describes the reality of sacramental character only with regard to certain consequences of its essential identity. Properly speaking, Capreolus argues, character is a quality (specifically, of its second species) in the absolute sense.¹⁰³

Building on Capreolus's response to Scotus, in his commentary on the second article of question 63, Cajetan argues that, as distinct from the category of relation, sacramental character is best understood as a spiritual power that orders a person to divine worship.¹⁰⁴ Without implying anything natural within the essence of the soul, character indicates a capacity or power for a certain set of actions, just as a man is ordered as a soldier to strike, or as a doctor is ordered to heal. As a spiritual power, character renders the soul able to receive and hand on those things which properly pertain to the

⁹⁹ *ST* III, q. 63, a. 2, arg. 3.

¹⁰⁰ *ST* III, q. 63, a. 2, ad 3.

¹⁰¹ *ST* III, q. 63, a. 2, ad 4.

¹⁰² *ST* III, q. 63, a. 1, ad 2.

¹⁰³ Capreolus, *In IV sent.*, d. 4, q. 1, a. 3, no. 1 (*Defensiones Theologiae divi Thomae Aquinatis*, 6:90).

¹⁰⁴ Aquinas refers to character in this way in the corpus of this article, and Cajetan adopts this definition in his commentary. Cajetan, at *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 2. Cajetan's commentary can be found in the Leonine edition of Thomas's *Opera Omnia*, accompanying Thomas's text of *ST* III, qq. 60–90, in vol. 12.

Christian religion.¹⁰⁵ Responding to Scotus's notion of indifferent habits directly, Cajetan argues that no specific, individuated human act is morally indifferent. Taking up Scotus's geometrical example, Cajetan argues that when the conclusions of geometry are frequently considered—provided these conclusions are known scientifically—this frequent consideration generates a good habit, namely science itself. This scientific habit of mind is considered a virtue, through which good and truth alone are attained. However, if this frequent consideration is not scientific, only the habit of opinion is generated; such a habitual opinion is not indifferent in itself, however, but declines from either goodness or evil to the extent that the opinion in question is either true or false. Accordingly, inasmuch as character is understood as a supernatural form impressed by God, if this supernatural form is a *habitus*, it would not be able to be indifferent as Scotus claims. Further, Cajetan argues that, despite Scotus's assertions, these infused virtues are not examples of such indifferent habits and do in fact function as sufficient and proximate principles that elicit good actions—most especially, the infused virtue of charity functions as both a sufficient and a proximate principle that elicits the love of God above all things.¹⁰⁶

Suárez

Writing in the later sixteenth century, the Jesuit Francisco Suárez would engage Cajetan's work and promote some of Cajetan's conclusions, even as he defended and rearticulated important aspects of Scotus's position. In his commentary on question 63 of the *tertia pars*, Suárez treats each of the six articles of Aquinas's question separately, commenting on each in turn. In his commentary on the first article, which concerns the notion that the sacramental character constitutes something real in the soul itself, Suárez begins by affirming Cajetan's interpretation of Aquinas on this subject. Invoking Cajetan, Suárez affirms that the very nature of the question posed in this question situates sacramental character more specifically within the broader genre of sacramentality in the common sense—as opposed to the sacraments of the Old Law, only the sacraments of the New Law could be understood to have such an effect. In an indefinite manner, therefore, Suárez argues that the something of the nature of sacramental character already emerges not only from the very nature of this question but also from the intelligibility of the word *character* itself, which can be variously translated as *signum* or *sigillum*,

¹⁰⁵ Cajetan, *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Cajetan, *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 2.

noting that a sign of this kind indicates the marking that might be found on a servant or on sheep, distinguishing them as servants of the lord or members of their lord's flock. As a sign, therefore, the common sense of *character* implies something that is imposed by human persons that is intended to function as a sensible sign.¹⁰⁷ Beginning with the text from Second Corinthians (1:21–22) that Aquinas includes in the *sed contra*, Suárez concurs that this text can be understood as a reference to the sacramental character and argues that in this text Paul designates four divine effects: *the first* effect is faith, which is made firm in Christ; *the second* is charity and grace, with which we are anointed; *the third* is the pledge (*pignus*) of the Spirit, which is a testimony of a good conscience. *Fourth*, Suárez argues that the phrase “[God] has put his seal upon us [qui et consignavit nos]” in fact indicates an effect that is distinct from the others listed here, and which most aptly describes what is meant by the sacramental character that Christ imparts as a seal.¹⁰⁸ Expanding on this, Suárez proceeds to invoke a number of patristic sources not referenced by Aquinas in this article, ranging from Ambrose and Anselm to Chrysostom, who confirm that character is a distinguishing mark imposed on the baptized.¹⁰⁹

In the *Summa*, however, Aquinas engages the specific metaphysical identity of sacramental character in the second article of this question. Here, having established already that character is a mark imparted by Christ's sacraments in the soul, he asks whether or not this same character should be understood as a spiritual *power*. In commenting on this text, Suárez builds on his own argument in his commentary on the first article, arguing that the answer to the question raised by Aquinas in this second article—which concerns the quiddity of sacramental character—presupposes an understanding of sacramental character as a kind of sign. For Suárez, the question implied by Aquinas's second article concerns the coherence of an association

¹⁰⁷ For Suárez, the use of the term *character* in the context of the sacraments assumes this general definition, using it to describe the sign imparted by the sacraments of Christ to Christian souls as a spiritual sign or character' (*In III ST*, q. 63, a. 1; in *Opera omnia*, vol. 20 [Paris: Vivés, 1860], 182.1). In his response to the first and second objections, Aquinas does use *signaculum* to describe the sacramental character (*ST III*, q. 63, a. 1, ad 1 and ad 2). For Cajetan's own part, in his commentary on this same article he does not invoke this same etymological analysis (Leonine ed., 12:31).

¹⁰⁸ Suárez, *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 1 (*Opera*, 20:182.2). See 2 Cor 1:21–22: “But the one who gives us security with you in Christ and who anointed us is God; he has also put his seal upon us an given us the Spirit in our hearts as a first installment” (New American Bible, Revised Ed.).

¹⁰⁹ Suárez, *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 1 (*Opera*, 20:182.3.2).

between the concepts of sign and power.¹¹⁰ Suárez begins by affirming that, although all signs involve relations by virtue of their signification, as something imprinted on the soul sacramental character cannot be reduced to relation only—neither, however, should it be understood as a substance itself, since it clearly adheres in the soul as an existing substance. Among the categories of accidental being, however, after ruling out relation, quantity, and other alternatives, Suárez concurs with Aquinas's own conclusion in article 2, affirming that character should be understood as a kind of quality.¹¹¹

Although Suárez does agree with Aquinas that the real accidental being attributed to sacramental character should be described using the Aristotelian species of quality, he disagrees with Aquinas's arguments in both the *sed contra* and the *corpus* of this article. Concerning the *sed contra*, Suárez argues that Aquinas's interpretation of chapter 5 in the second book of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* remains inconclusive. As we have previously discussed, in this text Aristotle indicates that three things are in the soul: power, habit, and passion. Because of the indelible nature of character, for Aquinas the category of passion is too transitory; habit, although admittedly less changeable than passion, is intrinsically ordered to good use rather than bad—hence, virtue is a fitting perfection of moral habit, while vice is a distortion of the same. By contrast, Aquinas argues that character is not only permanent but also exhibits a kind of indifference to its *use*, noting that some who have character use it well, while others misuse the same character. For Aquinas, while habits themselves may be either virtuous or vicious, no single, really existing habit is indifferent to virtue and vice—rather, in the order of accidental being, virtue and vice are established *as habits*, without the option of adopting the other identity without becoming a *different* habit with the opposite character.¹¹² For Suárez, however, Aquinas's reasoning in the *sed contra* is unconvincing for at least two reasons. The first of these is that, according to Suárez, in the genre of moral habit, the good or bad use of a given habit is not necessarily contrary to the nature of qualitative habit itself. For example, Suárez argues, in a case in which the will is determined to act in only a probable sense, a certain indifference is expressed towards the habits of virtue and vice that may be relevant to the actions contemplated. At this stage, Suárez argues, the species of the act itself remains indifferent—even if the categories of good and evil are imposed extrinsically, the nature of the person and the determination of their will to act remains indifferent

¹¹⁰ Suárez, *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 2 (*Opera*, 20:184.1).

¹¹¹ Suárez, *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 2 (*Opera*, 20:184.1).

¹¹² Aquinas, *ST III*, q. 63, a. 2, sc. See Aristotle, *Ethica nicomachea* 2.5.2.

intrinsically, even at the level of habit.¹¹³ Secondly, Suárez argues that this also applies to the particular case of intellective *habitus*, where the intellect's habitual knowledge may be used for good or for ill. Because Aquinas situates character in the intellect, Suárez argues that there is nothing that would prevent character itself from being described as a *habitus*, to which the will puts to either good or evil use. For Suárez, it is the goodness of the will's judgment that determines the moral end to which the intellectual *habitus* is put.¹¹⁴ Accordingly, Suárez is happy to classify character as an intellectual quality, using the species of *habitus*. Clearly, however, Suárez's position relies on an approach to the relationship between intellect and will that differs from Aquinas's in critical respects. In several respects, Suárez's arguments also resemble those advanced by Scotus and the earlier Franciscan tradition—Suárez does not share Scotus's aversion to identifying character within an accident that has real being (in the "absolute" sense), and his use of the concept of qualitative *habitus* in this regard resembles Bonaventure to a certain extent. However, his approach to the indifference of this *habitus* to moral action resembles Scotus's defense of Bonaventure's position, in which Scotus implicitly responds to certain of Aquinas's critiques of the use of *habitus* in this context. Although Suárez has clearly engaged Cajetan's commentary on question 63 of the *tertia pars*, it does not seem that Cajetan's response to Scotus on the question of indifferent habits has impacted Suárez's interpretation of this same question.

Despite his disagreements with Aquinas, Suárez's detailed and thorough commentary on the *Summa theologiae* represents a development in the emerging Jesuit theological tradition. Although previous Jesuit theologians like Robert Bellarmine did not publish extensive commentaries on the *Summa*, aspects of Suárez's approach seem to have been influenced by Bellarmine's treatment of character in his *Controversies*.¹¹⁵ Suárez's synthe-

¹¹³ Suárez, *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 2 (*Opera*, 20:184.2).

¹¹⁴ Suárez, *In III ST*, q. 63, a. 2 (*Opera*, 20:185.2).

¹¹⁵ Placing Suárez in the broader context of the emerging Jesuit tradition in the late sixteenth century, earlier sources within this tradition also emerge that provide context for Suárez's views on this subject. The earlier Robert Bellarmine, for example, approached sacramental character in a similar way. Although Bellarmine did not comment extensively on Aquinas's *Summa* directly, in his *Controversies* he does provide a catalogue of critiques of the doctrine of sacramental character, emphasizing sixteenth-century Protestant arguments. Following a recapitulation of the Catholic teaching on this subject—then recently articulated by the Council of Trent—Bellarmine proceeds to offer a defense of this doctrine from scriptural and patristic sources, and from rational arguments (*Controversiae* II [*De sacramentis*], ch. 18; in *De Controversiis Christianae fidei adversus huius temporis Haereticos*, vol. 3 [Paris, 1613], 161). Several

sis would prove influential, however, and later Jesuits like Gabriel Vásquez would follow Suárez's approach to character as a qualitative habit.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

In the preceding pages, we have examined a series of critical developments in the doctrine of sacramental character in the Latin West, focusing especially on Scholastic conversations about the metaphysical identity of sacramental character. We have seen that Aquinas's view of sacramental character as a qualitative power differentiates him from Bonaventure, who holds instead that character is a *habitus*. Further, we have seen that these respective positions continued to develop in the later Franciscan and Dominican traditions as Capreolus and Cajetan began to engage Scotus's amplification and development of Bonaventure's *habitus* theory. In these later conversations, the continued disagreement between Thomists and Scotists on the topic of sacramental character also serves to underscore the more fundamental metaphysical disagreements over which these two traditions diverged—ranging from analogy to the concepts of substantial and accidental being, the Scotistic and Thomistic traditions developed significantly different accounts of reality that would put them at odds on a wide range of natural and theological topics for centuries. The specific case of sacramental character, however, highlights a certain set of these more fundamental disagreements, inasmuch as they pertain not only to the quiddity of character directly, but to the wider anthropological context in which character and other aspects of grace

aspects of Suárez's approach to this question are also found in Bellarmine's *Controversies*. For example, concerning the text from 2 Corinthians that Aquinas cites in *ST* III, q. 63, a. 1, sc, and Suárez exegetes at length, Bellarmine also provides an explanation of this text similar to that found in Suárez, including some of the patristic exegesis that Suárez relies upon from Ambrose (*Controversiae* II, ch. 20 [*De Controversiis Christianae fidei*, 3:166]). On the quiddity of sacramental character specifically, however, Bellarmine's approach to character provides only a partial foundation for Suárez's later teaching on this subject. Bellarmine argues that, excepting Scotus and Durandus, there is consensus in the Catholic tradition not only that character is a spiritual sign imprinted on the soul, but that this spiritual imprint is a kind of quality. For Bellarmine character is neither a *habitus* nor an operative power. Although he acknowledges that some theologians situate character in either the will or the intellect, others place it simply in the substance of the soul—and for Bellarmine, this explanation seems most probable, not only because it seems to accord most directly with conciliar teachings of the Church which indicate that character is an indelible mark on the soul, but because, according to Bellarmine, character is neither a *habitus* nor an operative power (*Controversiae* II, ch. 19 [*De Controversiis Christianae fidei*, 3:163–64]).

¹¹⁶ See Vásquez, *In III ST*, q. 63, disp. 2, ch. 3.

and sanctification pertain to human nature. Cajetan's response to Scotus's misclassification of the theological virtues, for example, points to an important contrast between these two Scholastic perspectives on the relationship between accidental being and human nature, and the implications of this for the relationship between the natural and the supernatural. Although the question of the metaphysical identity of sacramental character might appear to be a Scholastic quibble that would seem to hold little relevance outside of the proprietary concerns of specific Scholastic schools of thought, the underlying questions of the relationship between human nature and the sanctifying effects of the sacraments are of enduring importance. In this regard, Augustine's ecclesiology of charity—and the sacramental categories it engenders—continues to provide a determinative frame of reference for continued considerations of these questions in the present. Although hermeneutically distinct from Augustine in many respects, Aquinas's approach to sacramental character as a power captures central aspects of Augustine's doctrine of baptismal non-iterability more fulsomely than do the various articulations of *habitus* theory found in Bonaventure, Scotus, and later in Suárez. Additionally, viewed from the broader perspective of theological anthropology, Aquinas's account of character as a qualitative power also allows him to integrate the concept of habit into other aspects of his theological anthropology—namely grace and infused virtue—in a manner that complements the nature of character as a permanent quality and provides a more compelling account of both the permanence of the sacrament of baptism (and other character-conferring sacraments) and their use in charity in the broader context of the theological life. These considerations not only suggest a deep compatibility between the sacramental theologies of Aquinas and Augustine, but further recommend them both as resources for conversations about the sacramental implications of the Church's theological anthropology in the present. N.V