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*The Distinction between the Episcopate
and the Presbyterate
according to the Thomistic Opinion*

by the

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To my Mother and Father

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PREFACE

What is presented in the following pages is only the latter half of the doctoral dissertation, i.e., chapters three and four. These are printed in their entirety, while chapters one and two are given in a very brief and condensed summary. Two copies of the complete dissertation are on file with the Librarian of the Catholic University of America, Washington, 17, D. C.

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INTRODUCTION

All the sacraments have in varying degrees their problems of theological speculation, and the Sacrament of Orders is no exception. In many Councils, particularly the Council of Trent, the Church has defined various dogmas concerning the Sacrament of Orders, which all Catholics must believe as *de fide*; but at the same time there are many points of theological speculation upon which the Church has made no pronouncement, and which therefore can be discussed freely by theologians.

Just concerning the relationship between the episcopate and the presbyterate alone there are three principal controversies that have engaged the time and talents of theologians.

The first controversy, the oldest of the three, revolves around the question of whether or not episcopal consecration is a sacrament and order totally distinct from the presbyterate. From the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries theologians favored the negative opinion. But in the sixteenth century there was a shift in theological thought so that today the more generally accepted opinion is that which says episcopal consecration is a sacrament and order specifically distinct from the presbyterate, and impresses its own proper character.

In the seventeenth century a new development arose in the shape of an historico-theological controversy on the necessity of priestly ordination before valid episcopal consecration. A number of historians and theologians held that in early Rome for a good many years deacons were consecrated as bishops without first receiving presbyteral ordination. Hence, they concluded that the episcopal character, conferred in episcopal consecration, bestowed upon the deacon not only the episcopal powers of confirming and ordaining but also the presbyteral powers of consecrating the Eucharist and forgiving sins. This opinion, however, is

rejected by the vast majority of theologians of the present day who hold that presbyteral ordination must precede episcopal consecration, and this for validity.

The third controversy is a division of theological thought among the affirmative proponents of the first controversy mentioned above. That affirmative opinion maintains that the episcopate, i.e., episcopal consecration, is a sacrament and an order totally distinct from the presbyterate. But the division of theological thought occurs on the issue of just how independent, separate, and distinct is the episcopate from the presbyterate. One school advocates that the episcopate is so independent of the presbyterate that a man could be a bishop without being a presbyter, i.e., he could confirm and ordain but could not say Mass nor forgive sins. The second and more probable opinion in this third controversy denies such an assertion, and teaches that although the episcopate is distinct and separate from the presbyterate it, nevertheless, necessarily depends upon the presbyterate; hence, the episcopate without the presbyterate is nothing more than a figment of the mind.

This dissertation will not attempt to treat all three controversies. It will be concerned only with the first, i.e., whether or not episcopal consecration is a sacramental order distinct from the presbyterate. And the purpose here will be to present and review only the Thomistic side in this controversy—its roots in patristic and post-patristic writers as well as its development, the doctrine itself of St. Thomas, and some of the more representative theologians who have commented upon and further explained his teaching. It is hoped that this study will be able to show that the Thomistic opinion has lost none of its solid intrinsic probability since the Council of Trent, although it is given at times not even a passing nod by a great number of present day theological manuals.

CHAPTER I
STATUS QUAESTIONIS
(Synopsis)

Before entering into a detailed investigation of the Thomistic opinion in this controversy, it seems useful to present here some ideas that form the general background of that opinion, ideas which are necessary for a proper understanding of what follows, and ideas which the succeeding chapters will presuppose. Accordingly, this chapter will treat in four articles the following topics.

Article I—The terms *bishop* and *presbyter*

In less precise thought and writing of the present day the words *bishop* and *priest* are generic terms. In strict theological language, however, the noun *priest*, *sacerdos*, is a generic term which embraces members of two specifically distinct hierarchical orders, namely, *bishops* and *presbyters*. It was by such designations as *episkopoi*, *presbuteroi*, and *proestotes* that the heads of the Christian communities were referred to in the New Testament books and in the early Christian writings, never by the names *iereus*, *archiereus*, *sacerdos*.¹

At the beginning of the third century Tertullian spoke of the bishop as the *summus sacerdos*, and appears to have been the first Christian writer to apply the word *sacerdos* to a person other than Christ. Soon this word without any further qualification began to be reserved for bishops while simple priests were designated as *secundi sacerdotes*, *presbyteri*, etc. In the eleventh century a further change appears in which the bishop is called *episcopus*, and the simple

¹ Cf. J. A. Jungmann, *Liturgical Worship* ([tr. from the German] New York and Cincinnati, 1941), p. 32 ff. Cf. also A. Michel, "Prêtre," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 13 (1), 141.

priest or presbyter *sacerdos*. By the thirteenth century this usage had crystallized and it was the two words, *episcopus* and *sacerdos*, that were commonly placed in juxtaposition.

In order therefore to have throughout a uniform terminology that will suffice for the various changes indicated above, and at the same time be exact, this dissertation will use the words *presbyters* and *bishops* to refer to the specifically distinct hierarchical orders of the general priesthood.

Article II—The *episkopoi-presbuteroi* problem

The scriptural basis for the pro and con of the episcopate as a non-distinct sacramental order from the presbyterate itself presents a problem. For example, St. Paul on his last recorded journey to Jerusalem stopped at Miletus and sent for the presbyters of the Church of Ephesus; but in speaking to them he addressed them as bishops.² Writing to his disciple Titus he refers to the same individuals as presbyters and as bishops.³ Now the problem is this: are the individuals referred to as bishops and presbyters two distinct hierarchical groups or are they members of the same identical hierarchical group but called by two different names?

Catholic scholars are agreed that the two terms, bishop and presbyter, were synonymous in the early Church and were interchangeably applied to the same individuals. Although there is accord on the identity of names there is a division of thought on the question as to whether the *episkopoi-presbuteroi* were bishops properly so-called or simple, ordinary priests. This latter alternative is favored by a representative number of Catholic scripture scholars.

The other side in this question holds that the *episkopoi-presbuteroi* of the early Church were bishops properly so-called, because in those early times there were only two grades in the hierarchy of orders, namely, these *episkopoi-*

² *Acts of the Apostles* 20:17-18, 28.

³ *Epistle to Titus* 1:5-7. For other related passages cf. *Epistle to the Philippians* 1:1; *I Epistle to Timothy* 3:1-2, 8; 4:14.

presbuteroi and the deacons. It was only sometime later that the presbyterate, as a portion of the priesthood established by Christ, came into existence. Such an explanation is taught by some recent authorities, the majority of whom are theologians. This dissertation adheres to this second opinion as the more probable one, the one that seems to be warranted by the writings of the apostolic and sub-apostolic ages, the one that can more readily be understood in view of the needs of the growing Church at that time.

Article III—Defined Dogma and Debatable Speculation

During the course of centuries various heretical attacks have been launched against the superiority of bishops over presbyters. The earliest was perhaps that made in 360 when Aerius of Pontus proclaimed that bishops and presbyters were absolutely equal in rank, in honor, and in dignity. In the first part of the fourteenth century Marsilius of Padua ascribed to human laws and to human origin the various degrees of the hierarchy. And some two hundred years later Protestantism resurrected the same error, adding a few improvements of its own.

Now, in each of the proposed errors it was the divinely established *hierarchical* inequality of bishops and presbyters that was directly attacked. In each of the replies, stating the Catholic dogma, it was the divinely established *hierarchical* inequality of bishops and presbyters that was unequivocally affirmed. Epiphanius' reply to the heresy of Aerius makes no reference to the theological problem about the *sacramental* relationship of the episcopate to the presbyterate because the question had not yet arisen. When condemning Marsilius of Padua, Pope John XXII hints at the problem but immediately by-passes it because his purpose was to censure an heretical teaching, not to settle a point of speculation. In the final decrees of the twenty-third session of the Council of Trent there is again an official silence for the very same reason.

However, in the discussions among the theologians and then among the Fathers of Trent, which preceded the final draft of the doctrine and canons of this session, the theological problem as to whether or not episcopal consecration was a sacramental order distinct from the presbyterate occasionally cropped up. But it never appeared as a direct issue; it was always used as a means to an end, never as an end in itself. Despite the attempt of the Spanish bishops to force this question, Trent in its final decrees condemned the current heresies while it left open to further discussion the theological problems of Catholic Schools.

The dogmatic beliefs as stated by Epiphanius, John XXII, and Trent can be summarized as follows: 1) bishops are superior to presbyters in the power of orders; 2) bishops are superior to presbyters in the power of jurisdiction; 3) the hierarchy in the Catholic Church proceeds from the divine law; 4) the hierarchy at present consists of bishops, presbyters, and ministers; 5) presbyters cannot confirm nor ordain *ex officio*; and 6) presbyters do not have the same power as bishops. These are *de fide* pronouncements that must be accepted and held by all Catholics.

But the Church in an official capacity has never pronounced whether the rite of episcopal consecration is a sacramental order distinct from the presbyterate or merely the completion and perfection of the presbyterate; and it has never pronounced whether the character received in episcopal consecration is distinct from or is merely a modification and amplification of the presbyteral character. And thus we still have the unsettled theological problem about the *sacramental* relationship between the episcopate and the presbyterate.

Article IV—The Thomistic Opinion: Past and Present

From the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, which we can rightfully call the ages of faith, the opinion of the Schoolmen was universally received. Except for a comparatively few dissenters it was generally taught that the episcopate

was not a sacrament distinct from the presbyterate. Then came the Protestant Revolt in the early part of the sixteenth century, to be followed by the Council of Trent at the middle of the same century. Both of these events, plus a highly sensitive doctrinal reaction among theologians to Protestantism, had an indirect bearing on the theological controversy we are considering.

The best known Italian controversialist of the sixteenth century was Robert Bellarmine, who in his outstanding work *De Controversiis* energetically vindicated the Catholic dogmas. But when he treated the episcopate St. Robert thought that the superiority of bishops over presbyters could be even more securely safeguarded, than was done at the Council of Trent, if episcopal consecration were considered a distinct sacrament rather than a mere extension of the presbyterate.⁴ The authority of St. Robert, together with the reason he gave for taking this stand, seems to have turned the tide of theological thought, and from the end of the sixteenth century his teaching gradually became the more generally accepted opinion.

Very many modern theologians follow the teaching of Bellarmine. But in presenting their case so enthusiastically a good number of them create the impression that the opinion of the old Scholastics can no longer be held. These give no treatment to the Thomistic side of this question; they adduce no arguments why the followers of St. Thomas held the contrary view. Thus, the average reader of these manuals of dogmatic and moral theology comes to the conclusion that this controversy has long ago been settled in favor of the episcopate being a sacrament distinct from the presbyterate, and the only thing lacking is an official declaration of the Church.

So opposed, for example, is Gasparri to the Thomistic view that he lets himself make a most misleading statement.

⁴ *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei* (Naples, 1856), vol. 3, controv. 5, de Sacramento Ordinis, cap. 5.

Writing about the opinion of St. Thomas and the Scholastics, he says their teaching "is vague and founded upon a confusion of ideas," and that "today [it] is discarded and must be discarded by all."⁵

Taking a second and more penetrating gaze at this controversy, we see a far different picture than some canonists and theologians would paint for us. Others such as Claude Frassen (d.1711), Dominic Bouix (d.1870), and the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique*, while following the view of Bellarmine, do not believe his opinion is so well established as to make the Thomistic position untenable.⁶ Add the statements of Benedict XIV and Leo XIII, and we see that this controversy is yet an open question and that both sides can still be freely discussed by theologians.⁷ In addition, there are many eminent and learned theologians who since the sixteenth century have supported the Thomistic opinion. Men such as *Sylvester de Ferrariensis*, *Dominic Soto*, *Cardinal Toletus*, *Seraphinus Capponi a Porrecta*, *Laymann*, *Ripalda*, *Morinus*, *Gonet*, *Salmanticenses Morales*, *Grandi*, and *Billuart* have taught that the episcopate is not a sacrament distinct from the presbyterate.⁸ And in our own

⁵ P. Gasparri, *Tractatus Canonici de Sacra Ordinatione* (Parisiis, 1893-1894), vol. 1, cap. 1, n. 21.

⁶ C. Frassen, *Scotus Academicus* (Romae, 1900-1902), vol. 12, p. 61; D. Bouix, *Tractatus de Episcopo* (Parisiis, 1859), vol. 1, p. 97 ff.; A. Michel, "Prêtre," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 13 (1), 158.

⁷ Benedict XIV, *Epistola "In postremo"* (*Opera Omnia* [Prati, 1839-1846] vol. 15, 394); Leo XIII, "Apostolicae curae," *ASS* 29 (1896-1897), 200.

⁸ Franc. de Sylvestris Ferrariensis, *Commentarium in Summam Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 76 (*Opera Omnia S. Thomae* [ed. Leonina, Romae, 1930] vol. 15, 242); Dominicus Soto, *Comment. in Librum IV Sententiarum* (Venetiis, 1569), d.24, q.1, a.3, and *De Justitia et Jure* (Venetiis, 1589), lib. 10, q.1, a.2; Franc. Cardinal Toletus, *Enarratio in Summam Theologiae S. Thomae Aquinatis* (Romae, 1869-1870), vol. 4, de Confirmatione, q.72, a.11; Seraphinus Capponi a Porrecta, *Elucidationes Literales in Summam Theologicam Sancti Thomae* (Patavii, 1698), vol. 5, In Suppl., q.40, a.5; P. Laymann, *Theologia Moralis* (Paris, 1627), lib. 5, tract. 9, de Sacramento Ordinis, cap. 3, n.6, and cap. 4, nn. 2-3; J. Ripalda, *De Ente Supernaturali* (Paris,

day the same thesis has been defended by such theologians as Gury, Hilarius a Sexten, Billot, Holtum, Lottini, Diekamp, Paquet, Sabetti-Barrett, Pégues, Hugon, Merkelbach, Lemonnier, Héris, Iorio, Lépicier, Brinktrine, Ferland, Garrigou-Lagrange, Connell, and Doronzo.⁹

In the light of such evidence as this we are far from convinced that the opinion which says the episcopate is a sacrament distinct from the presbyterate "must be maintained"; or conversely, that the Thomistic opinion which teaches the episcopate is not a sacrament distinct from the presbyterate "today is abandoned by all." On the contrary, the evidence points most conclusively to the extrinsic probability of the Thomistic view. In a following chapter we shall examine into the intrinsic reasons of this opinion and see why it is not "vague and founded upon a confusion of ideas."

1870-1871), vol. 4, d.24, n.6; J. Morinus, *Commentarius de Sacris Ecclesiae Ordinationibus* (Paris, 1655), pars 2, exercit. 3, cap. 1, n.14, and cap. 2, n.1; J. Gonet, *Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae* (Paris, 1875-1876), vol. 6, De Ordine, disp. 4, a.2; *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologiae Moralis* (Venetiis, 1714-1724), vol. 2, tract. 8, de Ordine, cap.1, n.33; B. Grandi, *Cursus Theologicus* (Ferrariae et Venetiis, 1692-1697), vol. 3, Suppl., q.40, a.5, dub.1; C. Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae* (ed. nova, Paris, no date), vol. 7, de Sacramento Ordinis, dissert. 4, a. 2.

⁹ J. Gury, *Compendium Theologiae Moralis* ([ed. 5] Ratisbonae, 1874), pars 2, de Ordine, n.697; Hilarius a Sexten, *Tractatus Pastoralis de Sacramentis* (Moguntiae, 1895), pars 2, cap. 6, de Sacramento Ordinis, sect. 64; L. Billot, *De Ecclesiae Sacramentis* ([ed. 3] Rome, 1900-1901), vol. 2, de Ordine, th. 31; G. Holtum, "Quaeritur utrum episcopatus sit ordo?," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie* 14 (1900), 1 ff.; J. Lottini, *Institutiones Dogmaticae Specialis* (Florentiae, 1903-1905), vol. 3, de Ordine, cap. 64, n.673; F. Diekamp, *Theologiae Dogmaticae Manuale* (Paris, 1944-1946), vol. 4, de Sacramento Ordinis, cap.1, sect. 63, n.3; A. Paquet, *Commentaria in Summam Theologicam D. Thomae—De Sacramentis* ([ed. 3] Quebec, 1923), pars 2, disp. 6, de Ordine, q.1, a.3, concl. 2; A. Sabetti-T. Barrett, *Compendium Theologiae Moralis* ([ed. 33] New York, 1931), de Ordine, cap. 1, n.829; T. Pégues, *Commentaire français littéral de la Somme Théologique* (Paris, 1922-1933), vol. 20, In Suppl., q.40, a.5; E. Hugon, *Tractatus Dogmatici*, vol. 3, de Ordine, a.5, n.6; B. Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae Moralis* ([ed. 3] Paris, 1938-1939),

CHAPTER II
TRADITION FOR THE THOMISTIC OPINION
(Synopsis)

In looking into the tradition for the Thomistic opinion as found in some of the late Fathers, succeeding ecclesiastical writers, and early Scholastics, we must keep in mind that such questions as whether or not the episcopate was a sacramental order specifically distinct from the presbyterate, whether or not the presbyteral character was extended in episcopal consecration—such questions, so precisely stated, cannot be found. The reason is that sacramental theology with its exact concepts and careful terminology had to pass through many centuries before it reached its perfection, and it was not until approximately the eleventh century that any kind of scientific theological development manifested itself. Nevertheless, in these preceding centuries the teaching upon which the Thomistic position rests was slowly crystallizing.

It would appear that *St. Jerome* in the fourth century unwittingly laid the foundation when he wrote a defense of the presbyterate against the arrogance and abuses of certain

vol. 3, de Ordine, n.731; A Lemonyer, "Mémoire théologique sur l'épiscopat," *La Vie Spirituelle* 47 (April, 1936), Suppl., p. 40; Ch. V. Héris, *Le mystère du Christ* (Paris, 1927), pp. 286, 324-326, 328; Th. Iorio, *Compendium Theologiae Moralis* (Naples, 1934-1935), de Ordine, n.697, and *Theologia Moralis* ([ed. 3] Naples, 1946-1947), vol. 3, de Ordine, n.786; Alexis Lépicier, *Institutiones Theologiae Speculativae* (Rome, 1931-1932), vol. 3, de Sacramento Ordinis, q.1, a.4, n.8; J. Brinktrine, "De Ministro Confirmationis Extraordinario," *Divus Thomas* (Piacenza) 35 (1932), pp. 516, 518; A. Ferland, *Commentarius in Summam D. Thomae—De Sacramentis in Speciali* (Montréal, 1940), de Ordine, cap. 1, disp. 2, a.1; R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Eucharistia* (Rome, 1946), p.413, and *De Sanctificatione Sacerdotum* (Rome, 1946), cap. 1, a.4; F. Connell, "The Episcopate," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 72 (April, 1925), 337 ff., and *De Sacramentis Ecclesiae* (Brugis, 1933), vol. 1, n.150; E. Doronzo, *De Baptismo et Confirmatione* (Milwaukee, 1947), p.395.

Roman deacons.¹ In order to restore to the presbyterate its rightful place and authority Jerome pointed out that in the very early days of the Church the terms *episcopus* and *presbyter* signified the same individuals. In other words, as we interpret Jerome all were bishops in the sense in which this word is understood today, with full powers to confirm and ordain. But when the universal monarchical episcopate was introduced into the government of the Church only the chief priest (ie., the bishop) was given the full powers of confirming and ordaining, while all other priests who were subjected to him (in other words, the presbyters) were given only a limited or restricted share in the powers of the priesthood.

The great scripture scholar was concerned solely with establishing the superiority of the presbyterate over the diaconate; the relationship of the presbyterate to the episcopate was not directly at issue. Nevertheless, this relationship did have a place in Jerome's arguments, namely, that in the early days of the Church presbyters and bishops were the same, and now, although there was a clear-cut distinction between the two groups, presbyters could still do all the things that bishops do with the exception of ordaining. Outstanding among these common powers was that of consecrating the Body and Blood of Christ.

These latter ideas of Jerome were repeated and taught in the following centuries by such writers as: *St. Isidore* (d.636), Archbishop of Seville; the unknown author of the *Opusculum de Septem Ordinibus Ecclesiae* (ca. end of seventh century); *Rabanus Maurus* (d.856), Archbishop of Mainz; *St. Peter Damian* (d.1072), Cardinal Bishop of Ostia; *Yves* (d.1117), Bishop of Chartres; and *Stephen de Balgiaco* (d.1139), Bishop of Autun. With the accelerated development of sacramental theology in the eleventh century we find a correlative development in the question of the precise relationship between the episcopate and the presby-

¹ The references to Jerome and to all other writers mentioned in this condensed second chapter can be found in the bibliography.

terate. *St. Peter Damian* looked upon the episcopate, not as a new and distinct order, but rather as a "more sublime elevation in the very same priesthood." *Hugh of St. Victor* (d.1141) considered it "a power of excellence" in the same sacramental order. *Peter Lombard* (d. ca. 1160) declared it to be a dignity and an office. And finally, the thirteenth century theologians, prominent among whom were *Alexander of Hales* (d.1245), *Albert the Great* (d.1280), *St. Bonaventure* (d.1274), gave the question a further development by viewing the episcopate as an amplification and extension of the presbyteral character.

Using Jerome as his source *St. Isidore* stated that the reservation of certain functions to bishops, such as the administering of confirmation, the conferring of orders, the consecration of churches, etc., was done because of the bishop's authority. And writer after writer for the next five hundred years assigned the very same reason—*propter ejus auctoritatem*. Precisely what these authors meant by this phrase, ie., whether it implied a distinct and superior sacramental power in the bishop, appears impossible to determine. However, if we may interpret this phrase in the light of the teaching of the Scholastic and subsequent periods it would seem that it had no such connotation. Well aware of this phrase these theologians taught that the power to confirm and ordain did not confer on the bishop a sacramental order specifically distinct from that of presbyters. They distinguished between the Real and the Mystical Body of Christ. Over the latter bishops have by reason of their episcopal consecration a sacramental power to perform these reserved functions, but it is not thereby a sacramental power specifically distinct from nor totally diverse from the sacramental power of simple priests.

Lastly, the basic and fundamental reason why the full power of the bishop is not a sacramental character specifically distinct from the limited power of the presbyter is the same identical capacity that both have for consecrating the Body and Blood of Christ. That is the essence of sacerdotal

mediation. Jerome stated it in the very beginning of his *Letter of Evangelus*, and this idea took deeper root with every passing year and was recognized by nearly every Latin writer in the ensuing centuries. The Scholastics accepted this idea and made it the first of two elements in their famous distinction—the distinction between power over the Real Body of Christ and power over the Mystical Body of Christ.

In conclusion, then, the Scholastics' thesis that episcopal consecration was not a sacramental order specifically distinct from the presbyterate seems to be founded upon a long and constant ecclesiastical tradition. Far from being at variance with patristic and post-patristic teaching, as some theologians assert, it appears rather to be the evolution, the development, the scientific elucidation of what was there contained in germ.

CHAPTER III

THE TEACHING OF ST. THOMAS

The preceding chapter has endeavored to show that by the time St. Thomas wrote there were at least nine centuries of ecclesiastical tradition upon which he could base his opinion that the episcopate was not a sacramental order specifically distinct from the presbyterate. This authority St. Thomas accepted, as any theologian must; but being an original thinker St. Thomas added to and developed and expanded the reasons for this view. Although his treatment of this question is quite different from that of the earlier writers, nevertheless beneath the dress of presentation and the variation of approach we find a substantial agreement. An analysis of St. Thomas' doctrine will show that the basic, fundamental reason for his position is the basic, fundamental reason that Jerome gave back in the fourth century—the same identical power that presbyters as well as bishops have of consecrating the Body and Blood of Christ.

Having studied the views of some of the late Fathers, ecclesiastical writers, and theologians who preceded St. Thomas, we will now examine into the teaching of the Angelic Doctor himself. But before taking up the sacramental aspects of his doctrine on this point it might be well to look into the hierarchical aspects of the episcopate in order to show that his stand in this controversy in no way derogates from nor minimizes the hierarchical grandeur of the episcopate.

Article 1—The Episcopate as an Hierarchical Power *jure divino* Superior to the Presbyterate

Looking at his arguments of congruity we see that St. Thomas thought it fitting and proper for a number of reasons that there should be an episcopal power superior to the presbyterate. The first he takes from the order and arrangement that exists in things human. There we find that

in every office or administration one is placed in charge who is the responsible head, one who leads and directs others, as a commanding general does an army. Now, if such is the method and common practice in things purely human, then that is all the more reason why there should be at least a similar ordered arrangement among ministers in the service of God. Therefore, St. Thomas concludes that an episcopal power should be above the presbyteral power.¹

A need in the order of practical necessity suggests a second reason. This St. Thomas gives in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*:

“There ought to be in the Church some superior power of a higher ministry to dispense the sacrament of Orders. And this is the episcopal power, which although it does not surpass the power of the priest in the consecration of the Body of Christ, nevertheless exceeds it in those things that pertain to the faithful. The sacerdotal power itself is derived from the episcopal; and any unusual [ie., uncommon] action in reference to the laity is reserved to bishops, by whose authority even priests are able to do that which has been committed to them. Whence, also in those functions in which they exercise their ministry priests use things consecrated by the bishop, as for example, in the confecting of the Eucharist they use the chalice, the altar [stone] and corporal which have been consecrated by the bishop. Therefore, it is evident that in the governing of the laity the supreme authority belongs to the episcopal dignity.”²

¹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.1, qun.1, sed contra (*Opera Omnia* [Parmae, 1852-1873] vol. 7): “Praeterea, divina ministeria debent esse magis ordinata quam humana. Sed humanorum officiorum ordo exigit ut in quolibet officio praeponatur unus qui sit princeps illius officii, sicut praeponitur militibus dux. Ergo et sacerdotibus debet aliquis praeponi qui sit sacerdotum princeps, et hic est episcopus. Ergo episcopalis potestas debet esse supra sacerdotalem.” Cf. also *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.4, sed contra (*Opera Omnia* [Leonine ed., Rome, 1882-] vol. 12).

² *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 76, in prin. (*Opera Omnia* [Leonine ed.] vol. 14). “...necesse est aliquam superiorem potesta-

This dependence upon and subjection of the presbyter to the bishop in the New Law St. Thomas sees foreshadowed and prefigured in the Old Law. There Aaron was the High Priest and his sons the minor priests. To this ordered arrangement ought to correspond in the New Law the bishop and the presbyters.³ But even in this adumbration St. Thomas was careful to distinguish between what today we call the sacramental power and the hierarchical power. As regards the offering of sacrifices, not only Aaron but also the minor priests were able to perform this sacred rite; but as regards certain functions specially reserved to the chief priest, such as entering the Holy of Holies once a year, only Aaron could do this while his sons could not.⁴

tem esse in Ecclesia alicujus altioris ministerii, quae Ordinis sacramentum dispenset. Et haec est episcopalis potestas, quae, etsi quidem quantum ad consecrationem corporis Christi non excedat sacerdotis potestatem; excedit tamen eam in his quae pertinent ad fideles. Nam et ipsa sacerdotalis potestas ab episcopali derivatur; et quicquid arduum circa populum fidelem est agendum episcopis reservatur; quorum auctoritate etiam sacerdotes possunt hoc quod eis agendum committitur. Unde et in his quae sacerdotes agunt, utuntur rebus per episcopum consecratis; ut in Eucharistiae consecratione utuntur consecratis per episcopum calice, altari et pallis. Sic igitur manifestum est quod summa regiminis fidelis populi ad episcopalem pertinent dignitatem.”

Throughout this dissertation the presence of brackets [] in the translations of direct quotations signifies insertions made by this writer for the purpose of clarification, explanation, or completeness.

³ *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 23, in prin. (*Opera Omnia* [Vivès ed., Paris, 1871-1880] vol. 29): “. . . si quis ad anteriora tempora progredi voluerit, inveniet etiam in veteri lege distinctos Pontifices a minoribus sacerdotibus, in quantum erat sacerdotium illud nostri figurale. Dicitur enim Dist. 21, cap. *De Quibus*: ‘Summi Pontifices et minores sacerdotes a Deo instituti per Moysen, qui ex praecepto Domini Aaron in summum Pontificem, filios vero ejus unxit in minores sacerdotes.’”

⁴ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun. 1, ad lum: “. . . Aaron sacerdos fuit et pontifex, id est sacerdotum princeps. Sumpsit ergo sacerdotalis potestas ab ipso exordium, in quantum fuit sacerdos sacrificia offerens, quod etiam minoribus sacerdotibus licebat; sed non ab eo in quantum fuit pontifex, per quam potestatem

Every priest bears about him the figure of Christ; but the bishop as a priest represents Christ in a manner different from that in which a presbyter as a priest represents Christ. And in these different modes of representation of the Divine Exemplar St. Thomas found another reason for the hierarchical superiority of the bishop over the presbyter. He writes:

“Just as the perfections of all natural things pre-exist in God as their exemplar, so was Christ the exemplar of all ecclesiastical offices. Wherefore, each minister of the Church is, in some respect, a copy of Christ, as appears from the text; yet he is the superior who represents Christ according to a greater perfection. A priest represents Christ in this, that He fulfilled a certain ministry *per se*; but a bishop [represents Christ] in this, that He instituted other ministers and founded the Church. Hence, it belongs to a bishop to dedicate a thing to the divine offices, as establishing the divine worship after the manner of Christ.”⁵

Passing from what ought to be to what is, we come to St. Thomas' teaching on the hierarchy in the Catholic Church. He begins first with a definition of the word 'hierarchy' by saying that it is, as it were, a sacred government;⁶ and

poterat aliqua facere, ut ingredi semel in anno in sancta sanctorum, quod aliis non licebat.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, *Suppl.*, q.40, a.4, ad lum.

⁵ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.1, ad 3um: “. . . sicut omnium rerum naturalium perfectiones praexistunt exemplariter in Deo, ita Christus fuit exemplar officiorum ecclesiasticorum. Unde unusquisque minister Ecclesiae quantum ad aliquid gerit typum Christ, ut ex littera patet; et tamen ille est superior qui secundum majorem perfectionem Christum repraesentat. Sacerdos autem repraesentat Christum in hoc quod per se ipsum aliquod ministerium implevit; sed episcopus in hoc quod alios ministros instituit, et Ecclesiam fundavit. Unde ad episcopum pertinet mancipare aliquid divinis obsequiis, quasi cultum divinum ad similitudinem Christi statuens.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, *Suppl.*, q.40 a.4, ad 3um.

⁶ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 2, d.9, q.1, a.1, corp: “Hierarchia dicitur a *ieron*, quod est sacrum, et *archon*, quod est princeps.”

secondly, that in every government there is required a gradation of power.⁷ Specifying that gradation of power, he teaches:

“Dionysius expressly states that there are three orders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, namely, bishops, presbyters, and deacons.”⁸

As to their respective offices, he writes as follows:

“There are three hierarchical actions, to cleanse, to enlighten, to perfect. Cleansing is the distinctive [office] of deacons, enlightening [the distinctive office] of presbyters, and this consists chiefly in the Eucharist; perfecting is [the distinctive office] of bishops; and therefore all those sacraments which confer perfection are reserved to the bishop, such as, the bestowing of orders, the consecration of virgins and of [sacred] vessels, and the sacrament of confirmation.”⁹

This paragraph shows the ordered arrangement that exists among the Church’s ministers and at the same time the superior position of the bishop. On the last point, however, St. Thomas is elsewhere more explicit. For example, on the question of granting indulgences the Angelic Doctor states that only bishops, and not parish priests, can grant them because of the bishop’s full and complete authority. And he reasons thus:

⁷ *Ibid.*; “In omni autem principatu requiritur gradus potestatis. . . .”

⁸ *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 24, in fine: “Expresse enim dicit Dionysius esse tres ordines ecclesiasticae hierarchiae, scilicet Episcoporum, Presbyterorum, et Diaconorum. . . .”

⁹ *Quodlibet 11*, art. 7 (Vivès ed., vol. 15): “. . . tres sunt actiones hierarchiae, purgare, illuminare, et perficere. Purgare est proprium diaconorum, illuminare presbyterorum, et hoc consistit maxime in Eucharistia; perficere vero est Episcoporum; et ideo omnia sacramenta quae ad perfectionem conferuntur pertinent ad collationem Episcopi; quae sunt collatio ordinum, consecratio virginum et vasorum, et confirmationis sacramentum.” Cf. also *Quodlibet 3*, art. 17.

The cleansing or the purging action of deacons is explained in another place by St. Thomas as the peculiar office they have “super catechumenos et energumenos, in quibus sunt dispositiones contrariae illuminationi, quae eorum ministerio remouentur.” Cf. *De Veritate*, q.9, a.3 (Vivès ed., vol. 14).

“The bishop alone is properly called a prelate of the Church; and he alone as a spouse of the Church is given a ring; and therefore he alone has full power in dispensing the sacraments, and full jurisdiction, as a public person, in the external forum; others, however, [receive jurisdiction] according as it is delegated by him to them. Pastors, moreover, are not hierarchical prelates, but as it were [the bishop’s] coadjutors Hence, pastors cannot grant indulgences.”¹⁰

The full and complete authority of the bishop in the matter of conferring the sacraments and in the matter of jurisdiction makes him have the principal care or charge of the diocese. All others in the diocese, presbyters included, are subject to him as to a chief administrator, to such an extent that they are not to baptize, not to say Mass in their own parishes, nor to undertake anything at all without his consent and permission.¹¹ Whence, St. Thomas makes the following comparison and distinction:

“In the government of the Church archdeacons and parish priests have the same relationship to the

¹⁰ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.20, q.1, a.4, qun.1, corp.: “. . . solus episcopus proprie praelatus Ecclesiae dicitur; et ideo ipse solus quasi sponsus anulum Ecclesiae recipit; et ideo solus ipse habet plenam potestatem in dispensatione sacramentorum, et jurisdictionem in foro causarum quasi persona publica; alii autem secundum quod ab eo eis committitur. Sed sacerdotes qui plebibus praefficiuntur, non sunt simpliciter praelati, sed quasi coadjutores. . . . Unde sacerdotes parochiales . . . non possunt hujusmodi indulgentias dare.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.26, a.1, corp. For a similar statement of the bishop’s full and supreme jurisdiction in his diocese, cf. *Quodlibet 12*, a.30, corp. (Vivès ed., vol. 15).

¹¹ *Quodlibet 3*, a.17, ad 5um: “Nam Episcopi principalem populi curam habent, plebani autem et archidiaconi sunt subministratores et coadjutores eorum, unde dicitur XVI, q. 11: ‘Omnibus presbyteris et diaconibus et reliquis clericis attendendum est ut nihil absque Episcopi proprii licentia agant; non utique Missas sine suo jussu quisque presbyterorum in sua parochia agat, non baptizet, nec quidquam absque ejus permissu faciet’”. Cf. also *Summa Theologica*, 2-2æ, q.184, a.6, ad 2um; *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 23, in fine; cap. 24, in medio.

bishop as governors and mayors in the civil government have to the king; and just as the king is crowned and anointed, while the governors and mayors are not, so also is the bishop, while the archdeacons and parish priests are not. And therefore, the episcopate is an order *in relation to the Mystical Body*.¹²

This last sentence, "the episcopate is an order in relation to the Mystical Body," is an important distinction, as we shall see, in the theology of St. Thomas on orders. Although he admitted, as above, the complete subjection of presbyters to bishops in those matters wherein the laity were affected, although he acknowledged that the presbyteral power was derived from the episcopal,¹³ and although he conceded that the episcopate was superior not only in the power of jurisdiction but also in the power of orders,¹⁴ inasmuch as the bishop could confer the two sacraments of confirmation and holy orders which the presbyter could not ordinarily do—nevertheless, the episcopate was not thereby a *sacramental* order specifically distinct from the presbyterate; it was only an *hierarchical* order distinct from and superior to the

¹² *Quodlibet 3*, a.17, ad 5um: "...in regimine Ecclesiae comparantur archidiaconi et plebani ad Episcopum sicut in regimine temporali praepositi et balivi ad regem; et ideo, sicut rex coronatur et inungitur in regno, non autem praepositi vel balivi; ita etiam Episcopus in Ecclesia, non autem archidiaconi vel plebani. Et propter hoc Episcopatus est ordo in comparatione ad corpus mysticum..." Cf. also *Opusculum Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum et Religionem*, cap. 4, in prin. (Vivès ed., vol. 29); *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 23, in fine; cap. 24, in medio; *Summa Theologica*, 2-2æ, q.184, a.6, ad 2um.

¹³ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.23, q.1, a.3, qun.3, corp.: "...sacerdotalis potestas ab episcopali derivata [est]..." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.29, a.6, corp. Cf. also *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 76, in prin.

¹⁴ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.2, ad 3um: "...potestas episcopalis non est tantum jurisdictionis, sed etiam ordinis... secundum quod ordo communiter accipitur." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5, ad 3um. Cf. also *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 24, in fine.

presbyterate. This distinction, as well as the reasons for it, St. Thomas gives in the following passage:

“A priest has two acts: one is principal, namely, the consecration of the Real Body of Christ; the other is secondary, namely, the preparation of the people for the reception of this sacrament As regards the first act, the power of the priest does not depend upon any higher power, except the divine; but as regards the second act, it does depend upon some superior power, and that a human power. Every power which cannot exercise its act unless certain conditions are presupposed depends upon that power which makes those conditions. A priest cannot bind nor loose without the presupposed jurisdiction of authority, by which those whom he absolves are made subject to him; however, he can consecrate any matter which has been determined by Christ; nor is anything else required for the validity of the sacrament, although from a certain congruity the episcopal power is presupposed in the consecration of the altar [stone], the vestments, etc. And thus it is behooving that there be an episcopal power above the sacerdotal as regards the secondary act of the priest, but not as regards the principal act.”¹⁵

¹⁵ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.1, corp.: “. . . sacerdos habet duos actus: unum principalem, scilicet consecrare verum corpus Christi; alium secundarium, scilicet praeparare populum ad susceptionem hujus sacramenti. . . . Quantum ad primum actum actus sacerdotis non dependet ab aliqua superiori potestate, nisi divina; sed quantum ad secundum dependet ab aliqua superiori potestate, et humana. Omnis enim potestas quae non potest exire in actum nisi praesuppositis quibusdam ordinationibus, dependet ab illa potestate quae illas ordinationes facit. Sacerdos autem non potest absolvere et ligare nisi praesupposita praelationis jurisdictione, qua sibi subdantur illi quos absolvit; potest autem consecrare quamlibet materiam a Christo determinatam; nec aliud requiritur quantum est de necessitate sacramenti, quamvis ex quadam congruitate praesupponatur actus episcopalis in consecratione altaris, et vestium ejus. Et ita patet quod oportet esse supra sacerdotalem potestatem episcopalem quantum ad actum secundarium sacerdotis, non autem quantum ad primum.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.4, corp.

There is a similar passage in the *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae*

We have stated above that St. Thomas' opinion that the episcopate was not a *sacramental* order specifically distinct from the presbyterate in no way derogated from nor minimized the hierarchical position of the bishop. Perhaps this is best seen in St. Thomas' defense of the episcopate as a superior hierarchical power against the objection that in earlier times the episcopate and the presbyterate were the same. To say that the bishop in no way differed from the presbyter was, in St. Thomas' mind, heretical, and it *Spiritualis*, cap. 24, in fine, which reads as follows: "Quod vero quarto proponitur, quod Episcopatus non est ordo, hoc manifeste continet falsitatem, si absolute intelligatur. Expresse enim dicit Dionysius esse tres ordines ecclesiasticae hierarchicae, scilicet Episcoporum, Presbyterorum, et Diaconorum, et dist. 24, cap. *Cleros*, habetur, quod ordo Episcoporum quadripartitus est. Habet enim ordinem Episcopus per comparationem ad corpus Christi mysticum, quod est Ecclesia, super quam principalem accipit curam, et quasi regalem. Sed quantum ad corpus Christi verum, quod in Sacramento continetur, non habet ordinem supra presbyterum. Quod autem habeat aliquem ordinem et non jurisdictionem solam, sicut archidiaconus vel curatus presbyter, patet ex hoc, quod Episcopus potest multa facere, quae non potest committere, sicut confirmare, ordinare, et consecrare basilicas et hujusmodi; quae vero jurisdictionis sunt potest aliis committere."

It is this statement—"quod Episcopatus non est ordo, hoc manifeste continet falsitatem, si absolute intelligatur"—that Francis Sylvius (*Commentarius in Suppl. ad IIIam Partem S. Thomae Aquinatis* [Douai, 1622], q.40, a.5), Contenson (*Theologia Mentis et Cordis* [Paris, 1875], vol. 4, lib. 11, pars 4, dissert. 2, cap. 1, spec. 1), Capello (*Tractatus Canonico-Moralis De Sacramentis* [Rome, 1928-1935], vol. 2, pars 3, cap. 2, a.2, nn. 42, 49) and Zubizaretta (*Theologia Dogmatico-Scholastica* (3rd ed., Bilbao, 1939), vol. 4, n. 639) quote to show that St. Thomas changed his mind in his later years and held that the episcopate was a sacrament distinct from the presbyterate. But a reading of the statement in its context, as we have given in the preceding paragraph, shows that St. Thomas did not change his mind in his later years and that his thoughts on the episcopate in 1269 were exactly the same as in 1256. It also shows that by *absolute* St. Thomas understood order in its widest signification, i.e., as an *hierarchical* power, not as a distinct *sacramental* power.

In reply to the assertion of Francis Sylvius, Billuart wrote (*Summa Sancti Thomae*, vol. 7, De Ordine, dissert. 4, a.2): "Miror spectatissimi

smacked of the false teaching of Aerius.¹⁶ Of bishops and presbyters in the early Church, he writes :

“Concerning the bishop and the presbyter we can speak in a twofold manner. First, with regard to the name: and in this way bishops and presbyters formerly were not differentiated Whence the Apostle frequently uses the word ‘presbyters’ in reference to both. And likewise the word ‘bishops’ [in reference to both] . . . But as regards the thing signified by these terms, there always was a difference between them, even in Apostolic times Later, however, in order to avoid schisms it became necessary that even the names be differentiated, and so the greater [priests] were called bishops and the lesser ones presbyters.¹⁷”

mum doctoris Angelici interpretem [Franc. Sylvium] haec non potuisse conciliare cum his quae hic docet S. Doctor, siquidem aperte se explicet: dicit ergo quod episcopatus sit ordo, si nempe consideretur ‘secundum quod est officium quoddam respectu quarumdam actionem sacrarum, non vero secundum quod ordo est sacramentum.’ Haec dicit non solum in praesenti articulo [*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5] sed etiam in ipso opusculo citato in objectione, ubi post verba objecta subjungit: ‘Habet enim ordinem episcopus per comparisonem ad corpus Christi mysticum, quod est Ecclesia . . . , sed quantum ad corpus Christi verum, non habet ordinem supra presbyterum.’ Docet autem in priori loco, quod ordo ut est sacramentum attendatur secundum relationem ad corpus Christi naturale.”

¹⁶ *Summa Theologica*, 2-2æ, q.184, a.6, ad lum: “Dicere autem presbyteros non differre ab episcopis, inter dogmata haeretica numerat Augustinus in libro *de Haeres.*, ubi dicit quod Aeriani dicebant presbyterum ab episcopo nulla differentia debere discerni.” Cf. also *Opusculum De Articulis Fidei et Sacramentis Ecclesiae*, in fine (Vivès ed., vol. 27); *Comment. in Epist. ad Titum*, cap. 1, lect. 2, in prin. (Vivès ed., vol. 21).

¹⁷ *Summa Theologica*, 2-2æ, q.184, a.6, ad lum: “. . . de presbytero et episcopo dupliciter loqui possumus. Uno modo, quantum ad nomen. Et sic olim non distinguebantur episcopi et presbyteri . . . Unde et Apostolus communiter utitur nomine presbyterorum quantum ad utroque. Et similiter etiam nomine episcoporum . . . Sed secundum rem, semper inter eos fuit distinctio, etiam tempore Apostolorum . . . Postmodum tamen, ad schisma vitandum, necessarium fuit ut etiam nomina distinguerentur: ut scilicet majores dicerentur episcopi. Minores autem dicuntur presbyteri.”

An even stronger stand is made in a writing several years previously, the *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*. In this treatise, penned in defense of the religious life, St. Thomas takes up the assertion that presbyters are in a more excellent state of perfection than religious. His adversaries, in support of this contention, quoted Jerome's commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, and then concluded that since bishops and presbyters were the same, and since bishops are in a higher state of perfection than religious, presbyters are also.¹⁸

Although St. Thomas' final answer to the assertion does not concern us in this place, his attack upon the major premise does because it is here that he goes to great length to show that bishops have always been considered *hierarchically* superior to presbyters. His first authority is St. Augustine who, in a letter to St. Jerome, states that the usage in the Church of the two words shows that the episcopate is greater than the presbyterate.¹⁹ Lest anyone say this difference did not exist anterior to Jerome, St. Thomas cites Dionysius who, he remarks, wrote of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as it was in the primitive Church. And then he repeats the Areopagite's teaching that there were three orders in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, namely, bishops, presbyters, and deacons.²⁰ In order to forestall the objection that Dionysius spoke of the hierarchy as instituted by the Apostles but not necessarily as instituted by Christ, St. Thomas then quotes Luke 10:1: "And after these things the Lord appointed also other seventy two", and the commentary of Walafriid Strabo on this passage: "Just as the bishops hold the place of the Apostles, so too do presbyters of the second order hold the place of the seventy two disciples."²¹ Then he concludes:

¹⁸ *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 21, in prin.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, cap. 23, in prin.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.* For other references where St. Thomas teaches that bishops are the successors of the Apostles, cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun.2, sed contra; *Comment. in Epist. ad Philippenses*,

“From which it is evident that they misunderstand the thought of Jerome. Jerome did not intend to say that in the primitive church the grade or the state of bishops and presbyters was the same, but that the use of these words was interchangeable, because presbyters were called bishops in reference to their supervisory work, and bishops were called presbyters in reference to their dignity There was a real difference [between them] but there was a nominal identity because of the dignity which the word ‘presbyter’ connoted. Later, however, in order to avoid the danger of schism which arose from the identity of names, it became necessary that even the names be differentiated, and thus the greater presbyters were called bishops, and the lesser ones simply presbyters.”²²

A final point in the doctrine of St. Thomas on the hierarchical relationship between these two orders is his explicit teaching that the bishop is superior *ex jure divino* to the presbyter. This we find in another opusculum, *Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum et Religionem*, also written in defense of the religious life. The adversaries had stated that in the manner in which bishops are subject to archbishops, in the same way are priests subject to bishops. But archbishops cannot interfere in the diocesan affairs nor legislate

cap. 1, lect.1, in prin. (Vivès ed., vol. 21); *Opusculum De Perfecti-
one Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 26, in fine; *Opusculum Contra Impugnantes
Dei Cultum et Religionem*, cap. 4, in medio; *Summa Theologica*,
2-2æ q.185, a.5, sed contra; and *ibid.*, 3, q.67, a.2, ad lum.

²² *Opusculum De Perfecti-
one Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 23, in prin.:
“Ex quo patet, quod falsum intellectum concipiunt ex verbis Hieron.
Non enim intendit Hieron. dicere, quod in primitiva Ecclesia esset
idem ordo, vel status episcoporum et presbyterorum, sed quod vocabu-
lorum istorum erat promiscuus usus, quia et presbyteri dicebantur
episcopi quasi intendentes, et episcopi presbyteri propter dignitatem
. . . differentia esse in re, sed convenientia in nomine propter digni-
tatem, quam importat nomen presbyteratus. Fuit autem postmodum
necessarium ad vitandum schismatis errorem, qui ex indifferentia
nominis oriebatur, ut etiam nomina distinguerentur, ut scilicet soli
majores presbyteri episcopi dicerentur, minores vero solum pres-
byteri dicerentur.”

for the subjects of their suffragans. Therefore, neither can bishops interfere in the parochial affairs nor legislate for the parishioners of their priests without obtaining their consent.²³

In reply St. Thomas states that the analogy is not exact, and goes on to explain the reason:

“It is evident that an archbishop does not have immediate jurisdiction over those who are subject to his suffragan bishops, except when a case is referred to him; but a bishop has immediate jurisdiction over the parishioners of a priest, since he can summon anyone [of the priest’s parishioners] and excommunicate him, which an archbishop cannot do to the subjects of bishops, as was said; and the reason is that the power of the priest is naturally and *ex jure divino* subordinated to the power of the bishop, since it is imperfect in relation to his, as Dionysius proves; but a bishop is subject to an archbishop only by ecclesiastical law, and therefore a bishop is subject to an archbishop only in those things in which the Church states he is subject to him. The priest, on the other hand, who is subordinated to the bishop *ex jure divino*, is subject to him in all things . . .”²⁴

A summary of the foregoing pages can be stated under the following points: 1) the presbyter, as regards his *sacramental* power of consecrating, is subject only to God, to

²³ *Opusculum Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum et Religionem*, cap. 4, in prin.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, in fine: “Constat enim quod archiepiscopus non habeat immediatam jurisdictionem in illos qui sunt de dioecesi episcopi, nisi causa ad eum differetur, sed episcopus habet immediatam jurisdictionem in parochianos sacerdotis, cum possit quemlibet coram se citare et excommunicare, quod archiepiscopus non potest in subditis episcoporum, ut dictum est; cujus ratio est, quia potestas sacerdotis naturaliter et ex jure divino subditur potestati episcopi, cum sit imperfecta respectu illius, ut Dionysius probat; sed episcopus subditur archiepiscopo solum ex ordinatione ecclesiae, et ideo in quibus ecclesia statuit episcopum archiepiscopo subjectum, in illis tantum subjectus est ei. Sacerdos autem qui ex jure divino episcopo subditur, in omnibus est ei subjectus . . .”

no one else; 2) the presbyter, as regards the lawful *exercise* of his sacramental power to consecrate and forgive sins, is subject to the bishop; 3) the bishop is superior to the presbyter in those actions that have a relationship to the Mystical Body of Christ; 4) the bishop is superior to the presbyter not only in the power of jurisdiction but also in the power of orders; and 5) the superiority of the bishop over the presbyter stems not from an ecclesiastical law, not from an Apostolic ordinance, but from the divine law itself.

Article II—Sacramental Character and the Episcopate

The formal treatment that St. Thomas gives to the episcopate, precisely as a non-sacramental order, in relation to and in contradistinction to the presbyterate, is quite brief in view of the controversy that developed in the succeeding centuries.²⁵ In his *Commentary on The Four Books of Sentences*, in the treatment of the sacrament of orders, is contained the principal exposition and presentation of his views on this point.²⁶ Although in appearance the material content there is rather meager, an analysis shows that some arguments of St. Thomas have a definite relationship to certain underlying postulates that are at the basis of his sacramental theology. In other words, these arguments are the conclusions that logically flow from the application in a given case of the primary principles. In order, then, to

²⁵ So universally accepted and so generally incontestable was his view at this time that St. Thomas does not list any dissenting opinion. Cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2. It was his practice, however, to mention all the opinions put forth on disputed points, and then select what he thought was the best of the various opinions. Just three examples of many such instances in the *4th Book of Sentences* alone can be found: (1) in d.4, q.1, a.1, corp., where he treats of the precise nature of character; (2) in d.7, q.3, a.1, qun.3, corp., where he treats the presbyter as the extraordinary minister of confirmation; and (3) in d.25, q.1, a.2, where he treats the question of heretical bishops conferring valid orders.

²⁶ The treatise on the episcopate in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5, is a compilation whose elements have been drawn, by some later disciple, from the *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24.

understand fully St. Thomas' reasons for holding the episcopate to be a non distinct sacramental order, it will be helpful to single out these principles and see how they are applied to the episcopate. This present article will deal with the first, namely, sacramental character.

In an objection it is stated that the episcopate would seem to be a superior sacramental order because the bishop can confer the two sacraments of confirmation and orders, which a simple priest cannot ordinarily administer. To which St. Thomas makes the following reply:

“Order, according as it is a sacrament impressing a character, is specially ordained to the sacrament of the Eucharist, in which Christ Himself is contained, because through the character we are configured to Christ; and, therefore, although in his promotion some [additional] spiritual power is given to the bishop in reference to some of the sacraments, this power does not have the nature of a character; hence, the episcopate is not an order according as order is a sacrament.”²⁷

More briefly stated, this argument can be given as follows: the episcopate is not a sacramental order because it does not impress a character; and it does not impress a character because it does not empower the recipient in regard to the Eucharist nor configure him to Christ in any new way, distinct from and superior to that power and configuration which he has as a presbyter.

The question of configuration in the theology of St. Thomas is intimately bound up with his concept of the *na-*

²⁷ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.2, ad 2um: “...ordo, secundum quod est sacramentum imprimens characterem, ordinatur specialiter ad sacramentum eucharistiae, in quo ipse Christus continetur, quia per characterem ipsi Christo configuramur; et ideo licet detur aliqua potestas spiritualis episcopo in sui promotione respectu aliquorum sacramentorum, non tamen illa potestas habet rationem characteris; et propter hoc episcopatus non est ordo, secundum quod ordo est quoddam sacramentum.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5, ad 2um.

ture of sacramental character.²⁸ St. Thomas was the first to state clearly the doctrine of sacramental character as a participation in the priesthood of Christ.²⁹ He was also the first to depart from the then common teaching that character belonged to the Aristotelian category of *habitus*,³⁰ and assign it to the category of potency.³¹ This conviction of St. Thomas regarding the nature of character stemmed from his teaching regarding the effects which the sacraments produce. According to his view they had a dual role to fulfill—to bring down God's grace upon man, and to send heavenwards man's homage to God.

“Sacramental grace seems to be ordained chiefly to two things: firstly, to remove the defects of past sins, inasmuch as the guilt remains, though the sinful act was transient; and secondly, to perfect the

²⁸ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.2, a.1, qun.1, sed contra: “...in ordine [imprimitur] character potestatis, conformans nos divinae potentiae.”

²⁹ L. Audet, *Notre Participation au Sacerdoce Du Christ* (Quebec, 1938), p.26: “La théorie du caractère sacramentel, participation au sacerdoce du Christ, théorie qui pour la première fois fut clairement formulée par l'Ange de l'École...” Cf. also B. Durst, “De Characteribus Sacramentalibus”, *Xenia Thomistica* (Rome, 1925), vol. 2, p.541.

³⁰ Alexander of Hales taught that character was a *habitus*, i.e., a quality which affected the soul intrinsically and primarily disposed it for the reception of grace. Cf. his *Summa Theologica*, lib. 4, q.8, membr.8, art.1. Two other well-known Schoolmen of this era followed the same view: the Dominican, Albertus Magnus, *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.6, C, a.3, sq. (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 29); and the Franciscan, St. Bonaventure, *Comment. in Sententias Petri Lombardi*, lib. 4, d.6, pars I, a.1, q.1 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 4); and his *Breviloquium*, p.6, a.6 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 5). These three looked upon character as an imperfect habit which demanded grace for its full perfection. Inasmuch as it was a dispositive sign of grace, it likened the soul to God; but this configuration of the soul to the Blessed Trinity, although superior to that of the natural image of God in man, was far inferior to the configuration realized through grace. Cf. S. McCormack, “The Configuration of the Sacramental Characters”, *The Thomist* 7 (October, 1944), 461.

³¹ Cf. McCormack, *op. cit.*, 466.

soul in those things which belong to the worship of God according to the rite of the Christian religion."³²

St. Thomas then states that that which makes possible these two effects of the sacraments is the Passion of Christ:

"It is evident from what has been said above [in QQ. 48 and 49] that Christ delivered us from our sins chiefly through His Passion . . . ; in like manner through His Passion He instituted the rite of the Christian religion, *offering Himself as an oblation and victim to God . . .*"³³

Thus, the connecting link between the sanctification of man and the glorification of God is Christ's death on the cross. Calvary is an historic fact that happened centuries ago; but the two-fold aspect of Calvary is re-presented in every age by means of the sacraments.

Speaking of the worship of God, which St. Thomas calls the second end of sacramental grace, Abbot Vonier remarks: "It will be readily seen that the introduction of the element of cult into the sacramental system as its second and nobler half, modifies profoundly sacramental thought. The sacrament, remaining a sacrament, may be a worship as much as a sanctification; in fact, it is more truly a sacrament through the worship of God than through the sanctification of man. If we go back on the fundamental concept of the sacrament, that in one way or another it is a representation of Christ's Passion, the element of cult belongs intrinsically

³² *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.62, a.5, corp.: "Gratia autem sacramentalis ad duo praecipue ordinari videtur: videlicet ad tollendos defectus praeteritorum peccatorum, in quantum transeunt actu, et remanent reatu; et iterum ad perficiendam animam in his quae pertinent ad cultum Dei secundum religionem Christianae vitae." Cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.1, q.1, a.4, qun.3, corp.; ad 2um; ad 3um.

³³ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.62, a.5, corp.: "Manifestum est autem ex his quae supra dicta sunt [quest. 48 et 49] quod Christus liberavit nos a peccatis nostris praecipue per suam passionem. . . . Similiter etiam per suam passionem initiavit ritum Christianae religionis, *offerens seipsum oblationem et hostiam Deo*, ut dicitur Ephes. V."

to Christ's death on the cross, which before all things and above all things was a sacrifice unto God."³⁴

In this Thomistic view of a sacrament, therefore, cult and sanctification are indissolubly united. Yet, there are certain sacraments that stress the cult aspect more than others because they confer a special deputation for divine worship.

"Through certain sacraments which impress a character man is specially sanctified by a certain consecration, which deposes him for divine worship, just as inanimate things are said to be sanctified inasmuch as they are set apart for divine worship."³⁵

As a further elucidation on this point St. Thomas states that this special deputation to divine worship occurs in the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and orders, which mark men either as agents or recipients:

"As for agents in the sacraments, there is the sacrament of orders, because it is by this sacrament that men are deputed to confer the sacraments on others. As for recipients, there is the sacrament of baptism, through which man is given the power of receiving the other sacraments of the Church; whence, baptism is said to be the gate of the sacraments. To this same [class] also belongs confirmation. . . ."³⁶

³⁴ Dom Vonier, *Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (Westminster, Md., 1946), pp. 46-47.

³⁵ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.6, ad 2um: "Sed specialiter per quaedam sacramenta, quae characterem imprimunt, homo sanctificatur quadam consecratione, utpote deputatus ad divinum cultum: sicut etiam res inanimatae sanctificari dicuntur in quantum divino cultui deputantur." Cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.4, q.1, a.4, qun.2, corp.

³⁶ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.6, corp.: "... ad agentes in sacramentis pertinet sacramentum ordinis: quia per hoc sacramentum deputantur homines ad sacramenta aliis tradenda. Sed ad recipientes pertinet sacramentum baptismi, per quod homo accipit potestatem recipiendi alia Ecclesiae sacramenta; unde baptismus dicitur esse janua sacramentorum. Ad idem etiam ordinatur quodammodo confirmatio. . . ." Cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.2, a.1, qun.1, corp.

As was stated above, it was St. Thomas' concept of sacramental effects that shaped and formed his concept of sacramental character. With this premise as a starting point—ie., that a sacrament was a worship of God as well as a sanctification of man—St. Thomas logically looked for character to be something real which marked the soul, a reality which at the same time not only deputed to divine cult but also conferred the wherewithal to carry out that deputation. Hence, it is not difficult to see why St. Thomas could not accept that definition of character which Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, and Bonaventure had proposed. For him, *habitus* was a determination by which a thing was disposed well or badly either in itself or towards something else.³⁷ Therefore, character could not be a *habitus* because "no habit is indifferent to acting rightly or wrongly, whereas a character is indifferent to either, since some use it well, some badly. This cannot occur with a habit because no one abuses a habit of virtue, or uses well an evil habit."³⁸ Pursuing this same line of thought in another place, St. Thomas cites the example of a presbyter who can say Mass either in the state of grace or in the state of sin.³⁹ In either case the personal dispositions of the presbyter do not affect the validity of his Mass. But if the character was a *habitus* it would appear that the presbyter in mortal sin could not say a valid Mass.

Thus, St. Thomas placed character in the second species of quality, ie., *potentia*.⁴⁰ And in the following passage he

³⁷ *Summa Theologica*, 1-2æ, q.49, a.1, corp.: "Philosophus... dicit quod habitus dicitur dispositio secundum quam bene vel male disponitur dispositum, et aut secundum se aut ad aliud... Et sic loquimur nunc de habitu."

³⁸ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.2, sed contra: "... nullus habitus est qui se possit ad bene et male habere. Character autem ad utrumque se habet: utuntur enim eo quidam bene, alii vero male. Quod in habitibus non contingit: nam habitu virtutis nullus utitur male, habitu malitiae nullus bene. Ergo relinquitur quod character sit potentia."

³⁹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.4, q.1, a.1, corp.

⁴⁰ McCormack, *op. cit.*, 461: "In that assignment [i.e., of character

gives the reasons which justify his putting character in this classification :

“The sacraments of the New Law impress a character, insofar as by them we are deputed to the divine worship according to the rite of the Christian religion. . . . Divine worship, however, consists either in receiving divine things or in administering them to others. But for both of these acts a certain potency is required : for administering divine things to others an active potency is required ; and for receiving [divine things] a passive potency is required. And, therefore, character conveys a spiritual potency ordained to whatever pertains to divine worship.”⁴¹

According to his way of thinking, then, the essential end of character was not to fit the soul for grace, as his prominent contemporaries had taught, but rather to make the soul capable of performing acts of divine worship. This was its immediate function ; if the acts of divine worship were to be performed worthily and becomingly, then and only then did grace have any connection with character.⁴²

In stating that character conferred a spiritual potency for promoting the worship of God, St. Thomas clearly in-

to the category of potency] is contained not only the point of departure from his predecessors, but the root of all St. Thomas' doctrine regarding sacramental configuration.”

⁴¹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.2, corp.: “. . . sacramenta novae legis characterem imprimunt in quantum per ea deputamur ad cultum Dei secundum ritum Christianae religionis. . . Divinus autem cultus consistit vel in recipiendo aliqua divina, vel in tradendo aliis. Ad utrumque autem horum requiritur quaedam potentia: nam ad tradendum aliquid aliis, requiritur potentia activa; an recipiendum autem requiritur potentia passiva. Et ideo character importat quamdam potentiam spiritualem ordinatam ad ea quae sunt divini cultus.”

⁴² *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.4, ad lum: “Character autem directe quidem et propinque disponit animam ad ea quae sunt divini cultus exequenda: et quia haec idonee non fiunt sine auxilio gratiae . . . , ex consequenti divina largitas recipientibus characterem gratiam largitur, per quam digne impleant ea ad quae deputantur.” Cf. also *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.4, q.1, a.1, ad 5um; a.3, qun.3, ad lum.

licated that this power was distinct from and superior to the natural potencies of the human soul.⁴³ He further specified it to be an instrumental as well as a physical power, a precisioning that was derived from the principles he had set down earlier concerning the sacraments in general, that they are instrumental, physical causes of grace.⁴⁴ Affirming that God is the principal agent in the sacramental production of grace, St. Thomas hastens to add that character too plays its role, although a dependent one:

“Character, which is an interior effect of certain sacraments, is an instrumental power that flows from the principal agent, which is God.”⁴⁵

The “characterized” minister of the sacraments, then, has a part in the production of sacramental grace. But his contribution consists not in creating that something which is produced,⁴⁶ but rather as a means by which the grace is produced.⁴⁷ The instrumental role of the sacramental character, however, does not imply that it is simply an impotent, inactive conduit, like “a channel through which water flows.”⁴⁸ On the contrary, it is a real power that operates according to its specific nature; and since its specific nature is that of an instrumental *esse*, the character acts not in virtue of a power that originates within itself, but in virtue

⁴³ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.4, ad 2um: “...essentia animae est subjectum potentiae naturalis, quae ex principiis essentiae procedit. Talis autem potentia non est character: sed est quaedam spiritualis potentia ab extrinseco adveniens.”

⁴⁴ Cf. *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.62, a.1, and a.4.

⁴⁵ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.64, a.1, corp.: “Character etiam, qui est interior quorundam sacramentorum effectus, est virtus instrumentalis, quae manat a principali agente, quod est Deus.”

⁴⁶ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.64, a.1, corp.: “...quia gratia, quae est interior sacramenti effectus, est a solo Deo...”

⁴⁷ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.2, corp.: “Habere enim sacramenti characterem competit ministris Dei: minister autem habet se per modum instrumenti...”

⁴⁸ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.64, a.5, corp.: “...fistula per quam transit aqua...”

of the power of the principal agent which flows into it and sets it into motion.⁴⁹

Perhaps the presbyteral character as an instrumental, physical power is best illustrated by St. Thomas in his treatment of the minister of the Eucharist. It was objected that since the Eucharist is confectioned *vi verborum*, which are the form of the sacrament, any person should then be able to consecrate the Eucharist. To which St. Thomas answers:

“Sacramental power entails many things and is not limited to one thing only, as for example, the power of baptism depends upon both words and water. Whence the consecratory power entails not only the words but also the power of the priest which is given to him in his consecration and ordination, when the bishop says to him: *Receive the power of offering in the Church a sacrifice for both the living and the dead*. Thus, instrumental power embraces many instruments through which the principal agent acts.”⁵⁰

In brief, St. Thomas says that the presbyteral power is an instrumental power which derives its efficacy from God Who is the principal agent. At the same time it is a physical

⁴⁹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.62, a.1, corp.: “Causa vero instrumentalis non agit per virtutem suae formae, sed solum per motum quo movetur a principali agente.”

In this connection it is well to point out that since the ordained minister is an instrument animated by a rational soul, his instrumentality differs from the operation of an inanimate instrumental cause, e.g., the external sacrament. Cf. *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.64, a.8, ad lum. Cf. also, J. Haran, “Minister Christi Sacerdos”, *Theological Studies* 8 (June, 1947), n.2, pp. 257-259.

⁵⁰ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.82, a.1, ad lum: “...virtus sacramentalis in pluribus consistit, et non in uno tantum: sicut virtus baptismi consistit et in verbis et in aqua. Unde et virtus consecratoria non solum consistit in ipsis verbis, sed etiam in potestate sacerdoti tradita in sua consecratione vel ordinatione, cum ei dicitur ab episcopo: *Accipe potestatem offerendi sacrificium in Ecclesia tam pro vivis quam pro mortuis*. Nam et virtus instrumentalis in pluribus instrumentis consistit, per quae agit principale agens.” Cf. also *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.13, q.1, a.1, qun.1, sed contra; d.24, q.2, a.2, ad 2um.

power because the power of the presbyter 'flows' into the result produced, i.e., it effects transubstantiation.⁵¹ In other words, the character operates directly and immediately of itself; it is not merely a sign which disposes God to work through a certain concomitance.⁵²

Leaving the consideration of character in general, we come next to St. Thomas' treatment of character in the sacrament of orders.⁵³ The essence of the character of holy

⁵¹ *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologicus* (Paris, 1870-1883), vol. 17, De Sacramentis in Communi, disp. 5, dub. 2, n.34: "... facile constat nullam majorem occurrere repugnantiam in eo, quod sacerdos per characterem concurrat physice ad praedictam conversionem quam in eo, quod verba praedicto modo concurrant... consequens est characterem saltem sacerdotalem importare potestatem physicam ad effectus sibi correspondentes. Eadem autem ratio militat in aliis characteribus, ut important potentiam activam respectu effectuum, vel operationum sibi correspondentium."

⁵² This was St. Robert Bellarmine's concept of character. He writes in *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei*, vol. 3, Controv. 1, lib. 2, De Effectu Sacramentorum, cap. 19: "Est tamen hic notandum, istam potentiam non videri physicam, sed moralem. Non enim character attingit effectum, sed tantum operari dicitur, quia ubicumque est talis character Deus ex pacto adest, et concurrat ad effectum supernaturalem producendum, quod non facit ubi non est talis character." According to his way of thinking, then, character connoted directly and immediately a *state* of deputation for divine worship rather than a *power* of deputation.

⁵³ St. Thomas died in 1274 and was thus prevented by death from completing his life's great work and masterpiece, the *Summa Theologica*. Consequently, he did not have the opportunity to treat the sacrament of orders with that fullness of mental vigor and maturity of genius which marked his last years. For his teaching on orders, then, and particularly the sacramental character in orders, we must refer to his earlier work, the *Comment. in Sententias*, composed 1252-1256. Now, it might appear to be an unlawful transition to state the mature thought of St. Thomas on sacramental character in general, as given in the *Summa*, and then proceed with his initial commentator's teaching on character in the sacrament of orders, as a particular application of the general principles. The transition, however, appears to be lawful because it is not a question of St. Thomas changing or modifying in the *Summa* the views and opinions he held in the *Comment. in Sententias* regarding sacramental char-

acter. On the contrary, the *Commentary* is to the *Summa* what an undeveloped and imperfect work is to a developed and perfect work—much like the same human nature that matures from childhood into manhood.

The ideas in the *Summa* that character is a consecration to divine worship, a configuration to Christ the Priest, and a participation in the Priesthood of Christ, can all be found in embryo in the *Commentary*. For example, St. Thomas writes in *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.1, qun.2, corp.: "...ministri Ecclesiae a populo separantur ad vacandum divino cultui. In cultu autem divino quaedam sunt quae per potentias determinatas sunt exercenda; et ad haec datur spiritualis potestas ordinis." And *ibid.*, d.4, q.1, a.1, ad 3um: "...characterem Christi aliquis configuratur ad actiones Christi." And *ibid.*, a.3, qun.5, ad lum: "...ut per characterem principali sacerdoti configuretur." And *ibid.*, d.7, q.2, a.1, sed contra: "...per characterem ordinis [ascribimur] quasi ministri sacerdoti summo..." And *ibid.*, d.19, q.1, a.1, qun.2, ad lum: "...potestas clavium, quae est in nobis a Christo derivata, sequitur characterem quo Christo conformamur."

In reference to the quotation—"characterem Christi aliquis configuratur ad actiones Christ"—B. Thierry d'Argenlieu, "La doctrine de saint Thomas d'Aquin sur le caractère sacramental dans les 'Sentences'", *Revue Thomiste* 34 (1929), 227, writes: "Saint Thomas paraît bien là faire allusion aux actions cultuelles exercées par le Christ, et il semble bien près d'exprimer la ressemblance avec le Christ Prêtre dont il fera la base de sa doctrine dans la Somme. Cependant, si implicitement on sent que cette pensée est contenue dans les Sentences, elle n'y est pas expressément; mais il faut reconnaître qu'elle y est en germe et que les Sentences marquent certainement un nouveau jalon vers cette doctrine aujourd'hui communément admise par les théologiens que le caractère sacramental nous assimile au Christ Prêtre."

Concerning the idea that character is a participation in the Priesthood of Christ, the same article, p. 233, states: "...la doctrine de saint Thomas sur le caractère dans les Sentences... [constate]... que dès cette époque [1256] nous trouvons la trace ou le germe de la future doctrine de la Somme [1273] où les trois caractères seront considérés comme des participations au sacerdoce du Christ. Ce point de vue n'est pas exposé dans les Sentences, mais il est permis d'en trouver comme le pressentiment dans le fait que saint Thomas rattache très étroitement la caractère à l'exercice des actions cultuelles."

A contributing reason why the idea of character as a participation in the priesthood of Christ is more explicitly and more fully stated

orders, in the main, consists in an active power to administer divine things, ie., the sacraments, to others.⁵⁴ But to this administration of the sacraments a cleric approaches only gradually and by degrees. First, by clerical tonsure he is separated from the laity⁵⁵ and deputed to the office of singing the divine praises;⁵⁶ but such an office does not demand a power of orders, whence tonsure does not confer a character, nor is it a sacramental order. After this initiation, however, with each step that he takes he is "constituted above the people in a certain grade of power which is ordained to the dispensation of the sacraments."⁵⁷ Accord-

in the *Summa* than in the *Commentary* is suggested by B. Thierry d' Argenlieu in this, that during the years which intervened between the composition of these two works St. Thomas had written his commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, which "from beginning to end is a continual praise of the glory of the eternal priesthood of Christ." Cf. "La doctrine du caractère sacramentel dans la 'Somme'", *ibid.*, p. 297.

⁵⁴ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.6, corp.: "... per hoc sacramentum [ordinis] deputantur homines ad sacramenta alii tradenda." Cf. also *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, q.1, a.1, qun.3, sed contra; a.2, qun.1, corp.

Durst, "De Characteribus Sacramentalibus", *Xenia Thomastica*, vol. 2, p. 568 states the root and fundament of the presbyteral power: "Essentia metaphysica seu constitutum metaphysicum alijus rei est id, quo primo constituitur res seu ab omnibus distinguitur, quodque est prima radix ceterorum, quae de re concipiuntur... essentia metaphysica characteris sacerdotalis consistit in potestate valide conficiendi Ss. Eucharistiam et administrandi sacramenta novae legis."

⁵⁵ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.1, qun.2, ad 3um: "... ex hoc quod aliquis est clericus, est in altiori statu quam laicus." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.2, ad 3um.

⁵⁶ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.1, qun.2, corp.: "... dicere divinas laudes; et ad hoc non praeexigitur aliqua potestas ordinis, sed solum quaedam deputatio ad tale officium; et hoc fit per coronam; et ideo non est ordo sed perambulium ad ordinem." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.2, corp.

⁵⁷ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.1, a.2, qun.2, corp.: "... per quemlibet ordinem aliquis constituitur supra plebem in aliquo gradu potestatis ordinatae ad sacramentorum dispensationem." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.35, a.2, corp.

ingly, not only the presbyterate, but all the orders, both minor and major, confer a character,⁵⁸ because

“... each order has an act either connected with the Eucharist, or is ordained to the dispensation of the sacraments; thus, doorkeepers exercise the act of admitting men to be present at the divine sacraments, and so forth; and consequently, a spiritual power is required in each [order].”⁵⁹

It is in the presbyterate, however, that the sacramental character, conferred in a limited but ascending degree in the first six orders,⁶⁰ reaches its perfection and completion.

⁵⁸ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.1, a.2, qun.2, corp.: “... cum character sit signum distinctivum ab aliis, oportet quod in omnibus [ordinibus] character imprimatur...” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.35, a.2,, corp.

⁵⁹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.1, a.2, qun.2, ad lum: “... quilibet ordo vel habet actum circa ipsum sacramentum, vel ordinatum ad sacramentorum dispensationem; sicut ostiarii habent actum admittendi homines ad divinorum sacramentorum inspectionem, et sic de aliis; et ideo in omnibus requiritur spiritualis potestas.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.35, a.2, ad lum.

In the following article, which treats the Eucharist as the norm for constituting a sacramental order, it will be seen how the three other minor orders, plus the subdeaconate and diaconate, are “ordained to the dispensation of the sacraments.” Cf. note 126, *infra*.

Explaining the operation of the characters below the presbyterate, *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologicus*, vol. 17, De Sacramentis in Communi, disp. 5, dub. 2, n.46 states: “... ad alios ministros sacerdote inferiores non pertinet conficere sacramenta ex officio. Posset tamen dici praedictas characteres in sacerdote concurrere ad conficiendum sacramenta, saltem mediate, et cum subordinatione ad principalem characterem sacerdotii.”

⁶⁰ This phrase does not imply that the character of orders is a simple quality which is increased by degrees with the reception of each succeeding power. St. Thomas says they are distinct and separate powers. In *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.1, a.2, qun.5, corp., he writes: “... non est de idoneitate superiorum ordinum quod aliquis minores ordines prius habeat: quia potestates sunt distinctae; et una, quantum est de sui ratione, non requirit aliam in eodem subjecto.” *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologicus*, vol. 17, De Sacramentis in Communi, disp. 5, dub. 4, n.70 calls them “qualitates indivisibiles et diversae speciei.”

The presbyterate confers the power of consecrating the Body and Blood of Christ, and there is no power on this earth greater than this power of the presbyter:

“And because the principal act of the priest is to consecrate the body and blood of Christ, therefore, in the handing of the chalice, accompanied with the proper words, the sacerdotal character is impressed.”⁶¹

“[This] power of the priest is not subject to any higher power, except the divine power”⁶²

The presbyterate, then, gives the supreme sacramental character,⁶³ the summit, the zenith of all mediatorial acts because it confers a direct and immediate power over the Real Body of Christ. Because presbyter and bishop share this power alike there is no such thing as a separate, distinct, *sacramental*, episcopal character:

“And although in his promotion some [additional] power is given to the bishop in reference to some of the sacraments, this power does not have the nature of a character.”⁶⁴

And again,

“In the promotion of a bishop there is given to him a power which remains with him forever; however,

⁶¹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.2, a.3, corp.: “...et quia principalis actus sacerdotis est consecrare corpus et sanguinem Christi, ideo in ipsa datione calicis sub forma verborum determinata character sacerdotalis imprimitur.” Cf. also d.13, q.1, a.1, qun.3, sed contra.

⁶² *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.1, corp.: “...actus sacerdotis non dependet ab aliqua superiori potestate nisi divina.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.4, corp.

⁶³ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.2, a.1, qun.1, ad 2um: “Tota enim plenitudo sacramenti hujus est in uno ordine, scilicet sacerdotio . . .” Cf. *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologicus*, vol. 17, De Sacramentis in Communi, disp. 5, dub. 4, n.69; C. V. Hérís, *Le Mystère du Christ* (Paris, 1927), p.325.

⁶⁴ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.2, ad 2um: “Et ideo licet detur aliqua potestas spiritualis episcopo in sui promotione respectu aliquorum sacramentorum, non tamen illa potestas habet rationem characteris . . .” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5, ad 2um.

it cannot be called a character because through it the bishop is not ordained directly to God but to the Mystical Body of Christ.”⁶⁵

Thus far, one of the elements in St. Thomas' interpretation of character. It is a power, residing in the intellect,⁶⁶ which enables the ordained minister to work instrumentally and physically in bringing about the worship of God according to a rite that has been specifically determined by Almighty God. That power attains its greatest perfection, its completion, in the presbyterate because it enables the recipient to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ, just as He did at the Last Supper. Over and above this there is no greater *sacramental* power.

In the order of causality, however, before this power is impressed upon the soul there is first a consecration and a deputation to the divine worship. It is true that all the sacraments, even those which do not impress a character, sanctify and consecrate man by the infusion of grace.⁶⁷ But the consecration of which St. Thomas speaks is a particular kind of consecration; it is different from the general consecration effected by grace because it has attached to it the added formality of a deputation and commission to bring about the worship of God.⁶⁸ Thus St. Thomas writes:

⁶⁵ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.2, ad 2um: "...in promotione episcopi datur sibi potestas quae perpetuo manet in eo, quamvis dici non possit character quia per eam non ordinatur homo directe ad Deum, sed ad corpus Christi Mysticum." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.38, a.2, ad 2um.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.4, ad 3um; and a.5, corp.

⁶⁷ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.6, ad 2um: "...per omnia sacramenta sanctificatur homo, propter hoc quod sanctitas importat munditiam a peccato, quae fit per gratiam."

⁶⁸ Hérés, *Le Mystère du Christ*, pp. 270-271: "Sans doute il ne peut être ici question d'une consécration substantielle identique à l'union hypostatique; mais de même que l'union hypostatique consacrait le Christ et le députait au culte le plus parfait qui puisse exister, de même le caractère consacre l'homme et lui donne de prendre part à ce même culte très parfait institué par le Christ. Le caractère est donc comme une dérivation de la consécration substantielle de l'union hypostatique. Les actes culturels de l'homme n'ont de valeur que

"Through certain sacraments which impress a character man is specially sanctified by a certain consecration which deutes him to the divine worship, just as inanimate things are said to be sanctified inasmuch as they are set apart for divine worship."⁶⁹

This divine worship, just as the deputation which is ordained to it, is also a specific kind of worship. It is not the worship of God according to the religion of a child of God; nor is it the worship of God according to the rite of a supernatural religion.⁷⁰ But it is the worship of God according to the rite of the *Christian* religion.⁷¹ Thus, explaining that sacramental character is nothing else than the character of Christ the Priest, St. Thomas writes:

"The whole rite of the Christian religion is derived from the priesthood of Christ. And therefore it is

s'ils reproduisent les actes cultuels du Christ lui-même; c'est pour leur donner cette valeur que le caractère confère à l'homme une consécration qui se relie et s'ordonne à la consécration substantielle du Sauveur.

"En d'autres termes, c'est parce que le Christ appartient à Dieu d'une manière tout à fait transcendante qu'il peut lui rendre l'hommage parfait du à sa souveraine Majesté. Pour nous unir à cet hommage et nous donner de la faire nôtre, le caractère nous introduit dans ce même ordre d'appartenance à Dieu, sous un mode dérivé sans doute, accidentel comme l'est toute participation, mais qui ne nous en élève pas moins jusqu'à pouvoir perpétuer un culte où Dieu retrouve le culte de son Christ et qu'il daigne agréer au même titre. Ce que la consécration hypostatique est au sacerdoce de Jésus, le caractère l'est à nôtre sacerdoce; et parce que ce dernier n'est que la continuation du sacerdoce du Christ, il faut bien que le caractère lui aussi soit de quelque manière une dérivation de la consécration hypostatique. C'est pourquoi saint Thomas ne se contente pas d'enseigner que le caractère sacramental est une consécration, mais déclare en même temps qu'il est une participation au sacerdoce du Christ."

⁶⁹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.6, ad 2um. Cf. note 35 supra

⁷⁰ Cf. McCormack, "The Configuration of the Sacramental Characters", *The Thomist* 7 (October, 1944), pp. 446-467.

⁷¹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.2, corp.: "... deputamur ad cultum Dei secundum ritum Christianae religionis."

evident that sacramental character is especially the character of Christ, to whose priesthood the faithful are configured by the sacramental characters, which are nothing other than certain participations of the priesthood of Christ, derived from Christ Himself."⁷²

The fount and source, then, of the Christian religion is Christ Himself, precisely in the role of the Great High Priest, *the* mediator between God and man. It was in the role of Priest and Victim that Christ established the rite of the Christian religion.⁷³ Therefore, the priesthood of Christ is the link or nexus between the consecration and deputation with which an ordained minister is sealed and the power which is bestowed upon him. It is the character of Christ as Priest that gives a determination to the minister's consecration and deputation; and it is the character of Christ as Priest that makes the minister's participated priesthood be an active power for bringing about the worship of God according to a divinely revealed and approved rite.⁷⁴ Therefore, St. Thomas states that the character is truly a configurative sign, because

"...those who are deputed to divine worship,

⁷² *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.3, corp.: "Totus autem ritus Christianae religionis derivatur a sacerdotio Christi. Et ideo manifestum est quod character sacramentalis specialiter est character Christi, cujus sacerdotio configurantur fideles secundum sacramentales characteres, qui nihil aliud sunt quam quaedam participationes sacerdotii Christi, ab ipso Christo derivatae."

McCormack, *op. cit.*, p. 488: "...characters are participations [in the priesthood of Christ] in the sense that men through them participate in Christ's causation of the sacramental effects."

⁷³ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.62, a.5, corp.: "Similiter etiam per suam passionem iniciavit ritum Christianae religionis, offerens seipsum oblationem et hostiam Deo, ut dicitur Ephes. V."

⁷⁴ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.5, corp.: "...character sacramentalis est quaedam participatio sacerdotii Christi in fidelibus ejus: ut scilicet, sicut Christus habet plenam spiritualis sacerdotii potestatem, ita fideles ejus ei configurentur in hoc quod participant aliquam spiritualem potestatem respectu sacramentorum et eorum quae pertinent ad divinum cultum."

whose author is Christ, receive a character by which they are configured to Christ.”⁷⁵

The ordained presbyter is then configured to Christ the Priest. But the participated priesthood of man has meaning only in the light of the perfect priesthood of the God-Man. Hence, it will be necessary to study briefly the priesthood of Christ.

So important is this role of Christ in the Thomistic view of the economy of salvation that St. Thomas devotes the whole of the 22nd quest. in Pars III of the *Summa* to the consideration of the *Priesthood of Christ*. And in this section he treats the priesthood of Christ as one of the consequences of the Hypostatic Union. This last became necessary⁷⁶ in order that the damage caused by original sin might be repaired and man be once more restored to the favor and friendship of God. But in this his greatest need man was hopelessly lost, if left to his own resources. As St. Thomas so well explains, a condign satisfaction was required in order that the offended Divine Majesty be adequately recompensed. Man, in his fallen state, was unable to make such satisfaction for two reasons. First, through original sin the whole of humanity was corrupted, and therefore no man, nor any number of men, in their state of corrupted nature, no matter how good and perfect they were, could make an adequate satisfaction for the original offense. Secondly, the gravity of the offense is determined by the dignity of the one offended. And since it was the Divine Majesty of an Infinite Being Who was offended, it was utterly impossible that finite man could make an infinite reparation. In order, then, that the Divine Justice be completely placated it was necessary that the one making the satisfaction be a

⁷⁵ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.3, ad 2um: “. . . illi qui deputantur ad cultum Christianum, cujus auctor est Christus, characterem accipiunt quo Christo configurantur.”

⁷⁶ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.1, a.2, corp.: “. . . necessarium fuit Deum incarnari ad humanae naturae reparationem.” In art. 3 of this same question St. Thomas maintains the opinion that the Son of God would not have become Incarnate if man had not sinned.

man, but yet without the corruption of fallen nature, and at the same time be God Who could give an infinite recompense.⁷⁷

With this need of a mediator being understood, St. Thomas begins his treatment of the priesthood of Christ. And he finds first that the work of mediation is the essential and constitutive formality of the sacerdotal office, for the two following reasons:

“The proper office of a priest is to be a mediator between God and men, inasmuch as he obtains divine things for the people, whence he is called *sacerdos*, giving, as it were, sacred things, according to that of the Prophet Malachias, II, 7: *They shall seek the law at his mouth*, namely, the the priest’s; and again, [he is a mediator] inasmuch as he offers the prayers of the people to God and in some way or other satisfies God for their sins, whence St. Paul writes in Hebrews, V, 1: *Every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things that pertain to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.*”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.1, a.2, ad 2um: “... aliqua satisfactio potest dici sufficiens dupliciter. Uno modo, perfecte: quia est condigna per quandam adaequationem ad recompensationem commissae culpa. Et sic hominis puri satisfactio sufficiens esse non potuit: quia tota natura humana erat per peccatum corrupta; nec bonum alicujus personae, vel etiam plurium, poterat per equiparantiam totius naturae detrimentum recompensare. Tum etiam quia peccatum contra Deum commissum quandam infinitatem habet ex infinitate divinae majestatis: tanto enim offensa est gravior, quanto major est ille in quem delinquitur. Unde oportuit, ad condignam satisfactionem, ut actio satisfaciens haberet efficaciam infinitam ut puta Dei et hominis existens.”

⁷⁸ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.22, a.1, corp.: “... proprium officium sacerdotis est esse mediatorem inter Deum et populum: in quantum scilicet divina populo tradit, unde *sacerdos* dicitur quasi *sacra dans*, secundum illud Malach. II, 7: *Legem requirent ex ore ejus*, scilicet sacerdotis; et iterum in quantum preces populi Deo offert, et pro eorum peccatis Deo aequaliter satisfacit; unde Apostolus dicit ad Hebr. V, 1: *Omnis pontifex ex hominibus assumptus pro hominibus constituitur in his quae sunt ad Deum, ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis*”.

The sacerdotal office then has a dual task to perform in the way of mediation: to transmit divine things to men and to reconcile men with God. The first really follows as a result of the second, and the second cannot be effected unless condign satisfaction is made. Therefore, the Perfect Mediator, the Perfect Priest is none other than Jesus Christ, the God-Man.

"This [office of a priest as mediator] especially belongs to Christ because through Him gifts have been bestowed on men, as it is stated in II Peter, I, 4: *By Whom* (namely Christ) *He has given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made partakers of the divine nature.* He [Christ] has also reconciled the human race to God, according to Colossians I, 19: *In Him* (namely Christ) *it has well pleased [God the Father] that all fullness should dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself.* Whence, it especially pertains to Christ to be a Priest."⁷⁹

After showing in the first article of the twenty-second question that the office of priest most fittingly belongs to Christ, St. Thomas discusses in the second article whether or not Christ was at the same time both Priest and Victim. And in the *sed contra*, in which he gives an affirmative answer, the Angelic Doctor quotes St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians:

"Affirmatively, there is that which the Apostle wrote to the Ephesians V, 2: *Christ also has loved us and has delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness.*"⁸⁰

⁷⁹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.22, a.1, corp.: "Hoc autem maxime convenit Christo. Nam per ipsum dona hominibus sunt collata; secundum illud II Petri, I, 4: *Per quem, scilicet Christum, maxima et pretiosa nobis promissa donavit, ut per haec efficiamini divinae consortes naturae.* Ipse etiam humanum genus Deo reconciliavit: secundum illud Coloss. I, 19: *In ipso, scilicet Christo, complacuit omnem plenitudinem inhabitare, et per eum reconciliare omnia.* Unde Christo maxime convenit esse sacerdotem."

⁸⁰ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.22, a.2, *sed contra*: "Sed contra est quod Apostolus dicit Ephes., V, 2: *Christus dilexit nos, et tradidit semetipsum pro nobis oblationem et hostiam Deo in odorem suavitatis.*"

In this passage from St. Paul as used by St. Thomas we are also told that it was Christ's death on the cross, as the most pleasing and most acceptable sacrifice that could be offered to God,⁸¹ that gave condign satisfaction for the offense of man.⁸² The priesthood of Christ thus reached its consummation and perfection in the sacrifice He made of Himself. By His death on the cross God was glorified, the Divine Majesty satisfied, the human race reconciled, and a shower of graces rained down upon man by reason of his new status of an adopted son of God.

In answering an objection which misunderstands the efficacy of Christ's priesthood because of the daily Sacrifice in the Church, St. Thomas takes the opportunity to link up the Sacrifice of Calvary with the Sacrifice of the Mass, and shows that the one is a commemoration of the other, not a perfecting of the other. He writes:

"The sacrifice which is daily offered in the Church is not different from the sacrifice which Christ Himself offered, but is rather its commemoration. Whence Augustine says in his *De Civitate Dei*, lib. 10, cap. 20: *Christ Himself is the Priest Who offers, He Himself is also the oblation; and He wishes the sacrifice of the Church to be the daily mystery of this thing.*"⁸³

⁸¹ This St. Thomas affirms when he is treating of the Passion of Christ in particular. In *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.47, a.2, corp., he writes: "... ipsa mors Christi fuit quoddam sacrificium acceptissimum Deo, secundum illud *Ephes.*, V, 2: *Tradidit semetipsum pro nobis oblationem et hostiam Deo in odorem suavitatis.*" St Thomas also uses this same passage to prove that the Passion of Christ was truly a sacrifice. Cf. q.48, a.3, in its entirety.

⁸² *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.22, a.3, ad lum: "Et ideo, in quantum ejus humanitas operabatur in virtute divinitatis, illud sacrificium erat efficacissimum ad delenda peccata." Cf. also the corp.: "Ipse [Christus] etiam pro nobis plenarie satisfecit..."

⁸³ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.22, a.3, ad 2um: "Sacrificium autem quod quotidie in Ecclesia offertur, non est aliud a sacrificio quod ipse Christus obtulit, sed ejus commemoratio. Unde Augustinus dicit in 10 *de Civitate Dei*: *Sacerdos ipse Christus offerens, ipse et oblatio; cujus rei sacramentum quotidianum esse voluit Ecclesiae sacrificium.*"

The Sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrifice of the Mass are substantially the same, but their modes of being are different. On Calvary it was Christ in His *natural esse* as the God-Man Whose body was pierced, Whose blood was spilled, and both so completely separated one from the other that a sacrificial death resulted.⁸⁴ In the words of St. Paul, "Christ also has loved us and has delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness."⁸⁵ In this historic sacrifice Christ died a bloody death, He was alone as Priest and Victim, He was alone in offering Himself as the Head of all mankind, and He was paying the ransom price of our redemption.

⁸⁴ The sacrificial efficacy of Christ's death on the cross did not result from the mere undergoing of bodily death, i.e., materially considered; rather, it consisted in the voluntary offering of His life to His heavenly Father, as St. Thomas writes in *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.48, a.3, corp.: "et hoc ipsum quod voluntarie passionem sustinuit, Deo maxime acceptum fuit. . . . Unde manifestum est quod passio Christi fuerit verum sacrificium."

On this point and on the identification between laying down one's life and pouring out one's blood, Vonier, *Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist*, pp. 173-175 remarks: "The feature in the passion which seems especially the gift of Christ to his Father, and which therefore is more particularly the element of sacrifice, is the laying down of his life: 'Therefore doth the Father love me: because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me: but I lay it down of myself. And I have power to lay it down: and I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of my Father [John, 10:17-18]'. And this laying down of his life is the same as the pouring out of his life-blood. So we see St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews [9:11-15 and 25-28] making the sacrifice of the cross consist in the blood. . . . Much could be said on these inspired words; but if they make one thing clear it is this, the sacrificial nature of the passion of Christ, and above all, the sacrificial nature of the pouring out of the Blood. This latter feature in Christ's passion seems to be the supreme sacerdotal act, and no doubt it is here we must find the essence of the great Christian sacrifice. This is the thing represented in the Eucharist; this was the thing foreshadowed in all the sacrifices of the Old Law." Cf. also H eris, *Le Myst ere de Christ*, p. 347.

⁸⁵ Cf. note 80, supra.

The Sacrifice of the Mass, on the other hand, re-presents Christ in a *sacramental esse*, in which His Body and Blood, under the appearances of bread and wine, are sacramentally separated by distinct consecrations. This latter is a sacrament-sacrifice, while Calvary was a physical sacrifice. Yet, they are substantially identical because the one is a divine prolongation of the other in which the sacramental species on the altar are historically, and as an unbroken chain of remembrance, linked up with the dead Christ on the cross.⁶⁶

In addition to the distinct modes of being there are also other accidental differences between the two sacrifices. On the altar, Christ dies a real but sacramental death, and therefore His immolation is not bloody. On the altar Christ offers Himself, but the Church, His Mystical Body, joins with Him because this is also her sacrifice, which He gave to her as a most sacred trust the night before He died. And, on the altar it is not the paying again of the ransom price for the whole human race, but rather the application of infinite treasures to the individual members of the human race.

But, from the viewpoint of sacramental character, the most important accidental difference between Calvary and the Mass is the employment of a visible minister, a duly ordained presbyter, who offers the Sacrifice of the Altar in the person and in the name of Christ. Priesthood and sacrifice are correlative terms, ie., one demands the other. And therefore on the eve of His death, just as Christ gave His Church a sacramental sacrifice—"This is my body which is given for you"; "This is the chalice, the new testament in my blood, which is being shed for you"⁶⁷—so also did He give Her a sacramental priesthood with which to carry out that sacrifice. With the words, "Do this for a commemoration of Me,"⁶⁸ Christ communicated His priesthood to His Apostles and to all others whom they and their successors

⁶⁶ Cf. Vonier, *op. cit.*, p. 112

⁶⁷ Luke 22:19-20. For other parallel accounts, cf.: Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; and I Corinthians 12:23-26.

⁶⁸ Luke 22:19

should ordain. Since, however, it is a participated priesthood, the *alter Christus* acts only as a ministerial agent while Christ Himself remains the principal agent. But the ministerial agent acts *in persona Christi*, as St. Thomas explains:

“This sacrament is of such great dignity that it is not confected except in the person of Christ. Whosoever does anything in the place of another should do this through a power granted by the other. Just as to a baptized person the power is given by Christ to receive this sacrament [the Eucharist], so also to a priest, when he is ordained, there is conferred the power of consecrating this sacrament in the person of Christ. Through this [power] he is placed in the ranks of those to whom it was said by Our Lord: *Do this for a commemoration of Me.*”⁸⁹

In this passage St. Thomas stresses the power the presbyter has to consecrate, a power that by reason of his sacramental character⁹⁰ enables him to act *in persona Christi* and to take the place of Christ in the sacramental re-enactment of His Passion.⁹¹ But in a parallel passage from the *Commentary on the Sentences* St. Thomas stresses the configura-

⁸⁹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.82, a.1, corp.: “...hoc sacramentum tantae est dignitatis quod non conficitur nisi in persona Christi. Quicumque autem aliquid agit in persona alterius, oportet hoc fieri per potestatem ab illo concessam. Sicut autem baptizato conceditur a Christo potestas sumendi hoc sacramentum, ita sacerdoti, cum ordinatur, confertur potestas hoc sacramentum consecrandi in persona Christi: per hoc enim ponitur in gradu eorum quibus dictum est a Domino, *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem.*” Cf. also art. 5, corp.

⁹⁰ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.82, a.8, corp.: “... potestas consecrandi Eucharistiam pertinet ab characterem sacerdotalis ordinis.” Cf. also *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.2, a.3, corp.

⁹¹ Cf. *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.82, a.7, ad 3um. J. P. Haran, “Minister Christi Sacerdos,” *Theological Studies* 8 (June, 1947), p. 269: “The priest acts in the name and in the person of Christ when he offers the sacrifice of the Mass. The essence of the sacrifice of the Mass consists in the double consecration. Hence, the double consecration may be considered under a twofold aspect: (1) as an act

tive aspect of the character, by which in this very act the presbyter *represents* Christ. He says :

“This sacrament is directly representative of the Lord’s Passion, in which Christ as Priest and Victim offered Himself to God on the altar of the cross. The victim which the priest offers is identical with that which Christ offered *secundum rem*, because it really contains Christ; but the minister who offers is not the same [as Christ] in reality; whence, he must be the same by representation; and that is why the priest, consecrating in the person of Christ (prout gerit personam Christi) pronounces the words of consecration in a narrative formula in the name of Christ (ex persona Christi) in order that the victim be the same.”²²

of transubstantiation; (2) as an act of sacrificial oblation. The humanity of Christ was the instrument of His Godhead in effecting transubstantiation at the Last Supper. The human will of Christ was the principal agent in the act of sacrificial oblation at the supper and on the cross. Thus the priest has a twofold instrumentality in the double consecration in the Mass: (1) he is the instrument of Christ as God and as Man in effecting transubstantiation; (2) he is the instrument of Christ as Man in the act of sacrificial oblation.”

²² *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.8, q.2, a.1, qun.4, ad 4um: “... hoc sacramentum directe repraesentativum est dominicae passionis, qua Christus ut sacerdos et hostia Deo se obtulit in ara crucis. Hostia autem quam sacerdos offert, est una cum illa quam Christus obtulit secundum rem, quia Christum realiter continet; minister autem offerens non est idem realiter; unde oportet quod sit idem repraesentatione; et ideo sacerdos consecrans prout gerit personam Christi, profert verba consecrationis recitative ex persona Christi, ne hostia alia videatur.”

In reference to this passage, Hérís, *Le Mystère du Christ*, pp. 357-358, writes: “Le prêtre du sacrifice eucharistique est donc bien le Christ, mais représenté sacramentellement par les ministres de nos autels. Et cette représentation sacramentelle n’est pas quelconque: le caractère sacerdotal, en effet, qui investit le prêtre du pouvoir de parler et d’agir au nom et en la personne du Christ appartient à ce genre de réalités que nous avons nommé *res et sacramentum*. Il est un signe, mais il est aussi un pouvoir et une consécration réels, en sorte que le prêtre qui s’en trouve revêtu est véritablement, quoique sacramentellement, le Christ lui-même; sa consécration l’assimile au Souverain Prêtre et lui donne le pouvoir de tenir sa place dans l’oblation eucharistique.”

With the precision that is so characteristic of him St. Thomas here singles out a very important identity, and with almost the same stroke of the pen, a very important dissimilarity; but this latter only emphasizes the truly configurative nature of the presbyteral character. The identity concerns the Victim of Calvary and the Victim of the Mass. They are the same *secundum rem*, ie., Christ Himself. The dissimilarity has to do with the ministers; they are not the same *secundum rem*. On Golgotha Christ was the sole, unique, visible minister; at the altar He is still the principal but now the invisible minister. Therefore, the visible minister, who is to take His place and perform the sacramental rite in His name, must be the same as Christ, if not in reality at least by representation. This is the reason, to continue the thought of St. Thomas, why the presbyter at Mass uses neither a deprecatory formula, nor an impetratory formula, nor a descriptive formula, only a recitative or assertive formula. He does not say, "Let this become the Body of Christ", nor "This is the Body of Christ", nor "Christ said: 'This is My Body'", but "This is My Body". He is so analogously identified with Christ and so completely representative of Christ, that he uses the very same words as Christ. Therefore, St. Thomas does not hesitate to state that the presbyter "bears the very person of Christ" in consecrating the Eucharist.

Thus, the second element in St. Thomas' interpretation of sacramental character—it is a configuration to Christ the Priest. And behind that simple statement there is presupposed the whole theology of the Incarnation together with the mediatorial and sacerdotal functions of Christ, which are consequences of the Incarnation.

By His redemptive act upon the cross Christ, the Eternal Priest, fulfilled in the most perfect possible manner the mediatorial office of a priest. That act, the voluntary offering of His life as a holocaust to His Heavenly Father, gave infinite glory to God and unending graces to mankind. By this act Christ also instituted the rite of the Christian re-

ligion,⁹³ which therefore has as its aim and purpose these same two objectives—the glorification of God and the sanctification of man. Hence, all those external visible means, ie., the sacraments, which He has left in His Church, as the custodian of the Christian religion, for transmitting to men the graces He merited for them on the cross, will attain these same ends. Among the sacraments, however, there are some which more so than others bring about the worship of God and the sanctification of man according to this rite of the Christian religion. As a result, they bestow upon the soul a character, i.e., a mark or seal which signalizes the recipient as specially deputed for promoting this Christian religion. Since this deputation and consecration is not an empty office, a real power is conferred, and it is 'active' or 'passive' according as it is the character of orders or the characters of baptism and confirmation.⁹⁴

The active character of orders consists in a power to administer the sacraments to others.⁹⁵ But since in the present economy of salvation all divine things come to us from the Passion of Christ,⁹⁶ in which He functioned as the Great High Priest,⁹⁷ it follows that the administration of the sacraments by an ordained minister will necessarily be in terms of his configuration to Christ as Priest. And his configuration to Christ as Priest as well as his participation in the priesthood of Christ will necessarily make the character to be an instrumental power, ie., one which is derived from and set in motion by the principal agent, and which

⁹³ Cf. note 73, supra.

⁹⁴ Cf. note 36, supra. For the role that sacramental character plays in the "christian" life of the laity, cf. the two recent dissertations: T. Hesburgh, *The Relation of the Sacramental Characters of Baptism and Confirmation to the Lay Apostolate* (Washington, D.C., 1946); and J. Rea, *The Common Priesthood of the Members of the Mystical Body* (Washington, D.C., 1947).

⁹⁵ Cf. note 54, supra.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Cumma Theologica*, 3, q.62, a.5, entire.

⁹⁷ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.84, a.7, ad 4um: "...suae passionis, inquantum Christus est sacerdos et hostia."

refers all the works of sanctification to the principal agent.⁹⁸ Thus, in the administration of the sacraments the character of the presbyter does not of itself produce grace, but is rather a subordinate, operative power that enables the signs instituted by Christ to cause grace.⁹⁹ And this sanctification of man is at the same time a glorification of God because the efficacy of the sacramental rite is derived from the Passion wherein for the first time these two ends were attained.

This being so, since the Eucharist is a "memorial of His Passion in which Christ was both Priest and Victim",¹⁰⁰ the Eucharist is the highest and principal form of divine worship according to the rite of the Christian religion.¹⁰¹ In this sacred drama, as St. Thomas says, the Eucharist represents the Passion of Christ, the altar represents the cross of Christ, and the *priest bears the image of Christ*.¹⁰² Bear-

⁹⁸ McCormack, *op. cit.*, pp. 487-488: "To understand the notion of configuration of which St. Thomas is speaking, it must constantly be kept in mind that character is an instrumental potency. Therefore, the likeness of the character is found in the fact that the function of the character is to produce the works of Christ, works which, properly, are not to be attributed to the character, nor to the one who possesses the character, but to Him Who works through the character, namely, Christ the Priest." And, *ibid.*, p. 489: "The configuration of the character is the configuration that a moved cause has to its mover, a configuration or participation in the order of efficient causality."

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 480: "As the miracle worker 'carries the intention' of God to the miraculous operation, so the 'characterized' man carries in virtue of his character the intention of Christ to the sign instituted by Christ, making it in the concrete productive of grace."

¹⁰⁰ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.84, a.7, ad 4um: "Sacramentum autem Eucharistiae... est memoriale suae passionis, in quantum Christus est sacerdos et hostia."

¹⁰¹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.6, corp.: "... pertinet ad divinum cultum Eucharistia in qua principaliter divinus cultus consistit, in quantum est Ecclesiae sacrificium."

¹⁰² *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.83, a.1, ad 2um: "... sicut celebratio hujus sacramenti est imago repraesentativa passionis Christi, ita altare est repraesentativum crucis ipsius..." And *ibid.*, ad 3um: "... per eandem rationem etiam sacerdos gerit imaginem Christi, in cujus persona et virtute verba pronuntiat ad consecrandum..."

ing the image of Christ, the presbyter consecrates in the name, in the person, and by the power of Christ, using the very same words of Christ. Therefore, in no other act of orders is the ordained minister more fully configured to Christ the Priest, in no other act of orders is his participation in the priesthood of Christ more fully realized, and in no other act of orders is his instrumental power of bringing about the Christian worship of God more fully exercised.

Perhaps in the light of the above teaching of St. Thomas on sacramental character we can more readily and more easily understand the wisdom of the Angelic Doctor in maintaining that the episcopate is not a *sacramental* order distinct from and superior to the presbyterate. The saying, "the episcopate is the perfection of orders", is a common enough expression today. In one sense the statement is true; but Thomistic theology definitely excludes the other sense, i.e., that it is a *distinct sacramental* perfection of orders, because in his consecration the bishop is not given any additional power over the Eucharist—the memorial and representation of the Passion—distinct from and superior to that which he has as a presbyter.

Article III—The Eucharist as the Norm of Sacramental Orders

At the beginning of the preceding article we mentioned that in St. Thomas' formal treatment of the episcopate as a non-distinct sacramental order there are some arguments which are but the conclusions of certain underlying principles at the basis of his sacramental theology. There we treated the first of these principles, namely, sacramental character. Here we shall consider a second, to wit, that the Eucharist is the norm of the sacramental orders, i.e., an order is to be considered sacramental only if it has a direct relationship to the Holy Eucharist.

Applying this principle to the episcopate, St. Thomas writes:

“Order can be understood in a twofold sense. In one sense, according as it is a sacrament; and thus, as was said above, every order is ordained to the sacrament of the Eucharist; whence, since the bishop does not have a power superior to the priest in regard to the Eucharist, the episcopate is not a [sacramental] order”¹⁰³

Before going further into this question of the relationship of orders to the Eucharist, it might be well to establish the validity of the principle St. Thomas here invokes for giving harmony to the whole sacramental system and distinction to the various sacramental orders. It is evident that at least in his own day some questioned the supposition that the Eucharist was the principal or chief sacrament, and this for various speculative reasons. One objector thought that the dignity of a sacrament should be judged by the dignity of the conferring minister; and since confirmation and orders can be administered only by a bishop, these two should hold first place among the sacraments.¹⁰⁴ Another thought that sacramental character should be the standard of estimation, and therefore, baptism, confirmation, and orders should be considered the chief sacraments.¹⁰⁵ A third thought that the order of necessity should determine the excellence of a sacrament, and therefore baptism should hold the first place.¹⁰⁶

In his reply St. Thomas stated that the comparison of sacraments among themselves can be manifold, and the resulting determination of primary sacrament will vary according to the particular view that is taken. For example, from the viewpoint of necessity, baptism holds the first

¹⁰³ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.2, corp.: “. . . ordo potest accipi dupliciter. Uno modo secundum quod est sacramentum; et sic, ut prius dictum est, ordinatur omnis ordo ad eucharistiae sacramentum; unde, cum episcopus non habeat potestatem superiorem sacerdote quantum ad hoc, non erit episcopatus ordo. . . .” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40 a.5, corp.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.65, a.3, obj. 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, obj. 3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, obj. 4.

place; from the viewpoint of recipiency perfection, orders holds the first place.¹⁰⁷ These various comparisons, however, look only to a *secundum quid* quality in the sacrament, not to an absolute quality. According to an absolute quality the Eucharist is the first and the greatest of the sacraments:

“Absolutely speaking, the Eucharist is the greatest among the sacraments. And this for three reasons: first, from the fact that in the sacrament of the Eucharist Christ Himself is substantially contained; in the other sacraments there is present only a certain instrumental participated power of Christ That which is [present] by essence is always greater than that which is [present] by participation. Secondly, from the order of the sacraments among themselves, for all the other sacraments seem to be ordained to this sacrament as to an end. It is evident that the sacrament of orders is directed to the consecration of the Eucharist. The sacrament of baptism is ordained to the reception of the Eucharist. Also confirmation by which a person is perfected so as not to feel ashamed to frequent so great a sacrament. By penance also, and by extreme unction, a person is prepared to receive worthily the Body of Christ. Matrimony also, at least by its signification is related to this sacrament inasmuch as it signifies the union of Christ and His Church, which union is typified by the sacrament of the Eucharist. Whence, St. Paul writes in Ephesians V, 31: *This is a great mystery; but I speak in reference to Christ and to the Church.* Thirdly, from the ritual aspect of the sacraments. For nearly all the other sacraments end in [the celebration of] the Eucharist as for example, ordinands communicate and also baptized adults.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, corp., in fine. Cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.1, a.1, qn.3, corp., where St. Thomas lists other modes of comparison.

¹⁰⁸ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.65, a.3, corp.: “. . . simpliciter loquendo, sacramentum Eucharistiae est potissimum inter alia sacramenta. Quod quidem tripliciter apparet. Primo quidem ex eo quod in eo continetur ipse Christus substantialiter: in aliis autem sacramentis continetur quaedam virtus instrumentalis participata a Christo . . .

There is also a fourth argument which St. Thomas gives that makes even more compelling the reason why the Eucharist should be the norm for the distinction of orders. The argument is found in his reply to the second objection. There it was stated that those sacraments which impress a character should be considered the more excellent sacraments because of the greater power they confer on their recipients. St. Thomas admitted that these sacraments do consecrate their recipients to special offices in the Church, but he took this very line of argumentation as a proof in favor of his thesis. The reason is that the Eucharist is the perfection, completion, and ordination of all the special offices in the Christian rite of divine worship.¹⁰⁹

This St. Thomas had explained previously when writing of character. In naming the three 'character' sacraments as those which in a special way bring about the worship of God according to the rite of the Christian religion, St.

Semper autem quod est per essentiam, potius est eo quod est per participationem. Secundo hoc apparet ex ordine sacramentorum ad invicem: nam omnia alia sacramenta ordinari videntur ad hoc sacramentum sicut ad finem. Manifestum est enim quod sacramentum ordinis ordinatur ad Eucharistiae consecrationem. Sacramentum vero baptismi ordinatur ad Eucharistiae receptionem. In quo etiam perficitur aliquis per confirmationem, ut non vereatur se subtrahere a tali sacramento. Per poenitentiam etiam et extremam unctionem praeparatur homo ad digne sumendum corpus Christi. Matrimonium autem saltem sua significatione attingit hoc sacramentum, in quantum significat conjunctionem Christi et Ecclesiae, cujus unitas per sacramentum Eucharistiae figuratur: unde et Apostolus dicit *Ephes. V: Sacramentum hoc magnum est: ego autem dico in Christo et in Ecclesia*. Tertio hoc apparet ex ritu sacramentorum. Nam fere omnia sacramenta in Eucharistia consummantur... sicut patet quod ordinati communicant, et etiam baptizati si sint adulti." The same doctrine and reasoning can be found in *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.1, a.1, qun.3, corp.; cf. also d.8, q.1, a.1, qun.1, corp., in fine; and ad lum in fine.

¹⁰⁹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.65, a.3, ad 2um: "Per sacramentum vero Eucharistiae non deputatur homo ad aliquod officium: sed magis hoc sacramentum est finis omnium officiorum..."

Thomas showed why and how the Eucharist, even though it conferred no character, brought this about in the most perfect way. Promoting of divine worship, he said, could be done by an agent, by a recipient, and lastly by way of the action itself. Agents were constituted by the sacrament of orders; recipients, by the characters of baptism and confirmation. As for "the action itself",

"the Eucharist, in which divine worship principally consists, pertains to divine worship inasmuch as it is the sacrifice of the Church. And by this same sacrament a character is not bestowed upon man because through this sacrament a man is not ordained to anything further to be administered or to be received in the sacraments, since it is rather the *end and consummation of all the sacraments*, as Dionysius writes in his *De Eccles. Hier.*, cap. 3. It contains in its very self Christ, in Whom there is no character but in Whom there is the whole plenitude of the priesthood."¹¹⁰

These two statements—the Eucharist gives harmony to the whole sacramental system and at the same time serves as a norm for determining sacramental orders—these two statements are reductively the same; in other words, because the Eucharist contains Christ Himself. It gives a metaphysical ordering, so to speak, to all the other sacraments inasmuch as they are ultimately referred to the Eucharist, as St. Thomas has shown above. And it affords a standard of judging just what is and what is not a sacramental order inasmuch as the sacrament of orders as a

¹¹⁰ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.63, a.6, corp.: "Per modum quidem ipsius actionis pertinet ad divinum cultum Eucharistia, in qua principaliter divinus cultus consistit, inquantum est Ecclesiae sacrificium. Et per hoc idem sacramentum non imprimitur homini character: quia per hoc sacramentum non ordinatur homo ad aliquid aliud ulterius agendum vel recipiendum in sacramentis, cum potius sit *finis et consummatio omnium sacramentorum*, ut Dionysius dicit, cap. 3, *Eccles. Hier.* Continet tamen in se ipso Christum, in quo non est character, sed tota sacerdotii plenitudo." Cf. Billot, *De Ecclesiae Sacramentis*, vol. I, De Sacramentis in Communi, th.31.

whole is ordained directly to this sacrament-sacrifice, as St. Thomas will show below.¹¹¹

That there are seven orders in the Church as parts or subdivisions of the one sacrament of orders is a long and ancient tradition. In the primitive Church, as St. Thomas tells us, there were only three (hierarchical) orders, namely, bishops, presbyters, and ministers; and this he attributed to the scarcity of clerics as well as the infancy of the Church. The last order of ministers, however, contained in itself all the grades inferior to it.¹¹² The earliest explicit mention that we have of all the orders such as we know them today is contained in the famous letter of Pope Cornelius to Bishop Fabius of Antioch, written in 251. There the Holy Father tells the Antiochean Bishop that the Church of Rome has presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, lectors, and doorkeepers.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Some three centuries later the Council of Trent was to make express mention of the excellence of the Eucharist over all the other sacraments. In Sess. 13, cap. 3 (*Mansi* 33, 81; *DBU* 876) it is stated: "verum illud in ea [Eucharistia] excellens et singulare reperitur, quod reliqua sacramenta tunc primum sanctificandi vim habent, cum quis illis utitur: at in Eucharistia ipse sanctitatis auctor ante usum est." Cf. also Sess. 7, can. 3, *De Sacramentis in Genere* (*Mansi* 33, 52; *DBU* 846).

¹¹² *Comment. in Epist. ad Titum*, cap. 3, lect. 1 (Vivès ed., vol. 21): "In primitiva ecclesia, solum erat tres ordines... episcoporum, presbyterorum et ministrorum: et non dividebantur per diversos gradus; sed omnia erant in uno ordine propter paucitatem ministrorum, et propter novitatem Ecclesiae." Cf. also *Comment. in I Epist. ad Timoth.*, cap. 3, lect. 2 (Vivès ed., vol. 21).

That St. Thomas understands in an hierarchical sense the three grades here mentioned can be gathered from another writing of his. In the *Opusculum Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum et Religionem*, cap. 4, in fine, he states: "... in primitiva Ecclesia fuerunt soli duo ordines sacri, scilicet presbyteri et diaconi..."

¹¹³ Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, lib. 6, cap. 43 (*GCS Eusebius* 2.2, 618 Schwartz). Hippolytus' *Traditio Apostolica*, which is anterior to Pope Cornelius' letter by some forty years, does not list all the seven orders. It mentions only bishops and presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, and lectors. Cf. *Sources Chrétiennes 11: Hippolyte de Rome, La tradition apostolique*, pars 1, nn. 2, 8, 9, 12, 14 (Dom Botte, Paris, 1946).

As was stated in the beginning of Chapter Two, sacramental theology had a rather late development, and this is particularly noticeable in the treatment of the sacramental orders. Up until the eleventh century there were comparatively few writers who dealt *ex professo* with this precise point of the number of orders, and when they did it was merely to restate their names and number, and add a word or two in explanation of their origin and function.¹¹⁴ Except for the cause of practical necessity, i.e., the expansion of the Church and the growing work of the ministry, no reason was assigned why there were seven orders.

Towards the end of the eleventh century, however, the first beginning of an attempt to justify the existence of seven sacramental orders was made. This can be faintly seen in Peter Damian who said "the seven orders of ecclesiastical dignity are like to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁵ The idea was then taken up and developed by Yves of Chartres,¹¹⁶ and Hugh of St. Victor,¹¹⁷ and finally given summary expression by Peter Lombard: "There are seven grades or orders of spiritual offices *because* of the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit."¹¹⁸ Two other reasons were also advanced a little later. One adapted the various

¹¹⁴ Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, lib. 7, cap. 12 (PL 82:290) and *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, lib. 2, cc. 7-15 (PL 83: 787-794); Amalarius of Metz, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, lib. 2, cc. 6-13 (PL 105: 1082-1091); and Rabanus Maurus, *De Clericorum Institutione*, lib. 1, cc. 4-12 (PL 107: 299-305).

¹¹⁵ *Opusculum 6—Gratissimus*, cap.15 (PL 145: 118): "Enim vero ad instar septem donorum Spiritus sancti, septem nihilonimus sunt ordines ecclesiasticae dignitatis."

¹¹⁶ *Sermo 2—De Excellentia Sacrorum Ordinum* (PL 162: 514): "Haec officia septem gradibus sunt distincta, quia sancta Ecclesia septiformis gratiae est munere decorata."

¹¹⁷ *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*, lib. 2, pars 3, cap. 5 (PL 176: 423): "Septem ergo spiritualium officiorum gradus proinde in sancta Ecclesia secundum septiformem gratiam distributi sunt..."

¹¹⁸ *Petri Lombardi Sententiae*, lib. 4, d.24, cap.2 (Ad Claras Aquas ed., vol. 2, n.236): "Septem autem sunt [spiritualium officiorum gradus sive ordines] propter septiformem gratiam Spiritus sancti..."

orders to the *gratiae gratis datae* listed in St. Paul's I Epist. Corinthians XII, 8-10;¹¹⁹ and another to the different orders of the heavenly hierarchy.¹²⁰ But of the three opinions the most popular seems to have been the Lombardian view, as is witnessed by Albert the Great, who in his century embraced it.¹²¹

To St. Thomas' mind, however, none of the assigned reasons were convincing. The *gratiae gratis datae* adaptation was inexact because the gratuitous graces were not all given, as the orders were, to the same individual; moreover, this view included the episcopate and the office of cantor, "which are not orders."¹²² The likeness of the seven ecclesiastical orders to those of the celestial hierarchy was inept because the latter are not distinguished by hierarchical actions, since each of them is applicable to every order; also, this view misinterpreted the thought of Dionysius.¹²³ And finally, the conformity of the seven orders to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit was unsuitable because the sevenfold grace of the Holy Spirit was given with the reception of each order.¹²⁴

In addition to the reasons stated by St. Thomas in his specific rejections we can also see an over-all reason that was uppermost in his mind. The various adaptations were related to the seven orders only through a point of contact that was extrinsic, external, and accidental. St. Thomas considered each of the seven orders as sacramental, impressing a character and imparting a distinct spiritual power. Therefore, the reason for their existence must be sought in something that was intrinsic and proper to each one, some-

¹¹⁹ St. Thomas, *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.2, a.1, qun.2, corp., in prin.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, A, a. 6 (*Opera Omnia* 30).

¹²² *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.2, a.1, qun.2, corp., in prin.: "Et iterum ponuntur quaedam quae ordines non dicuntur, scilicet episcopatus et psalmistatus."

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

thing that gave a determination and ordination to that spiritual power which each one possessed. This St. Thomas found in the relationship of the various orders to the Holy Eucharist. Whence, he writes:

“Orders are sacraments from their relationship to the greatest of the sacraments; and therefore, according to this [norm] must the number of orders be determined.”¹²⁵

Not content with the general statement of a principle, St. Thomas gives a particular application of it by showing what the relationship of each order is to the Eucharist. It is a rather long passage but we are quoting it in full, lest an abridgment fail to bring out the integrality of St. Thomas' argument.

“The sacrament of orders is ordained to the sacrament of the Eucharist which is the greatest of the sacraments, as Dionysius says in his *Eccles. Hier.*, c. 4. Just as churches and altars and vessels and vestments, so also do ministeries, which are ordained to the Eucharist, need consecration; and this consecration is the sacrament of orders; and therefore the distinction of orders must be determined by their relationship to the Eucharist; for the power of orders is given either for the consecration of the Eucharist itself or for some ministry ordained to the Eucharist. If the former, there is then the order of priests; and therefore, when they are ordained they receive the chalice with wine and the paten with a host when they receive the power of consecrating the Body and Blood of Christ.

The cooperation of ministers is either towards the sacrament itself or toward those receiving the sacrament. Toward the sacrament itself there is a threefold cooperation. First, there is that whereby the minister cooperates with the priest in dispensing the sacrament, although not in consecrating the sacrament, which the priest alone is able to

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, ad lum: “Sed ordines habent quod sint sacramenta ex relatione ad maximum sacramentorum; et ideo secundum hoc numerus ordinum accipi debet.”

do; and this is proper to the deacon; whence, it is said in the text that the deacon ministers to the priests in all those things that are done in the sacraments; whence, the deacons dispense the Precious Blood. Secondly, there is the ministry ordained to the matter of the sacrament contained in the sacred vessels; and this is proper to the sub-deacon; whence, it is said in the text that they carry the vessels of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and place the offerings on the altar; and therefore, when they are ordained they receive an empty chalice from the hand of the bishop. Thirdly, there is the ministry ordained to proffering the matter of the sacrament; and this is proper to the acolyte; whence, as is stated in the text, he prepares the cruets with wine and water; whence, they receive [in their ordination] an empty cruet.

The ministry ordained to the preparation of those who are to receive this sacrament can be exercised only upon unclean persons, because those who are clean are already worthy to receive the sacraments. There are three kinds of uncleanness, according to Dionysius (*De Eccles. Hier.* cap. 3). There are some who are absolute infidels, unwilling to believe; and these must be kept away from attendance [at the celebration] of divine things and from the assembly of the faithful; and this is the duty of doorkeepers. Others there are who wish to believe but are not yet instructed, namely, catechumens; and the instruction of these is the duty of lectors; and therefore they are charged with reading to catechumens the first rudiments of the doctrine of the faith, namely, the Old Testament. Others there are who believe and are instructed but who are impeded by the power of the devil, namely, possessed persons; and for this ministry there is the order of exorcists. And so, the reason and the number and the grades of orders is manifest."¹²⁶

¹²⁶ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.2, a.1, qun.2, corp. in fine: "...ordinis sacramentum ad sacramentum eucharistiae ordinatur quod est sacramentum sacramentorum, ut dicit Dionysius (ubi supra cap. 4). Sicut enim templum et altare et vasa et vestes, ita

In this passage the mention of the power of the bishop is conspicuous by its absence. Elsewhere, however, St. Thomas had stated that "since the bishop does not have a power superior to the priest in regard to the Eucharist, the episco-

et ministeria quae ad eucharistiam ordinantur, consecratione indigent; et haec consecratio est ordinis sacramentum; et ideo distinctio ordinum est accipienda secundum relationem ad eucharistiam; quia potestas ordinis aut est ad consecrationem eucharistiae ipsius, aut ad aliquod ministerium ordinandum ad hoc. Si primo modo, sic est ordo sacerdotum; et ideo cum ordinantur, accipiunt calicem cum vino, et patenam cum pane, potestatem accipiendo consecrandi corpus et sanguinem Christi.

Cooperatio autem ministrorum est vel in ordine ad ipsum sacramentum, vel in ordine ad suscipientes. Si primo, sic tripliciter. Primo enim est ministerium quo minister cooperatur sacerdoti in ipso sacramento quantum ad dispensationem, licet non quantum ad consecrationem, quam solus sacerdos facit; et hoc pertinet ad diaconum; unde in littera dicitur, quod ad diaconum pertinet ministrare sacerdotibus in omnibus quae aguntur in sacramentis Christi, unde ipsi sanguinem dispensant. Secundo est ministerium ordinatum ad materiam sacramenti ordinandam in sacris vasis ipsius sacramenti: et hoc pertinet ad subdiaconum; unde in littera dicitur quod vasa corporis et sanguinis Domini portant, et oblationes in altari ponunt; et ideo accipiunt calicem de manu Episcopi, sed vacuum, cum ordinantur. Tertio est ministerium ordinatum ad praesentandum materiam sacramenti; et hoc competit acolytho; ipse enim, ut in littera dicitur, urceolum cum vino et aqua praeparat; unde accipiunt urceolum vacuum.

Sed ministerium ad praeparationem recipientium ordinatum non potest esse nisi super immundos; quia qui mundi sunt, jam sunt ad sacramenta recipienda idonei. Triplex autem est genus immundorum ut Dionysius dicit (*De Eccles. Hier.* cap. 3, par. 1,2,3). Quidam sunt omnino infideles, credere non volentes; et hi totaliter etiam a visione divinorum et a coetu fidelium arcendi sunt; et hoc pertinet ad ostiarios. Quidam vero sunt volentes credere, sed nondum sunt instructi, scilicet catechumeni; et ad horum instructionem ordinatur ordo lectorum; et ideo prima rudimenta ad doctrinam fidei, scilicet vetus testamentum, eis legendum committitur. Quidam vero sunt fideles et instructi, sed impedimentum habentes ex daemonis potestate, scilicet energumeni; et ad hoc habet ministerium ordo exorcistarum. Et sic patet ratio et numerus et gradus ordinum." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.37, a.2, corp. Cf. also *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 75.

pate is not an order."¹²⁷ Since an order becomes sacramental by reason of its peculiar and distinct relationship to the Eucharist, and since the episcopate and the presbyterate are identified in their supreme power of confecting the Eucharist, St. Thomas could not consider the episcopate as a distinct and superior *sacramental* order. Nor could he consider it such even by reason of the power the bishop has to confer the sacrament of orders, the very sacrament which consecrates the Eucharist. It might appear that the episcopate is thereby more directly related to the Eucharist than is the diaconate. But according to the mind of St. Thomas this additional power of the bishop has only an indirect relationship to the Holy Eucharist.¹²⁸ The deacon,

¹²⁷ Cf. note 103, supra.

¹²⁸ Cf. note 65, supra. The adversaries of the Thomistic opinion in this controversy maintain that the bishop, because he can communicate the power of consecrating to a presbyter, has therefore a direct power over the Real Body of Christ. They consider this as a demonstrative proof that the episcopate is sacramentally distinct from and superior to the presbyterate.

But back in the beginning of the sixteenth century, Francis De Sylvestris Ferrariensis, the great commentator on St. Thomas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*, showed that such reasoning is false. He wrote: "Aliud est enim loqui de executione actus sacerdotalis, qui est conficere corpus Christi; et aliud de receptione sacerdotalis potestatis, qua quis ad illum actum ordinem habet. Nam per receptionem talis potestatis homo ad corpus Christi mysticum ordinem habet, cujus est pars: non enim esset talis potestatis susceptivus nisi esset pars populi Christiani. Per executionem vero actus sacerdotalis circa Eucharistiae consecrationem, ad corpus Christi verum habet ordinem. Unde ex hoc quod potestas episcopalis est superior ordine sacerdotali, ordinato principaliter ad actum circa corpus Christi verum, tanquam talis ordinis dispensativa, sequitur quod sit illo superior quantum ad actum circa corpus Christi mysticum in quantum episcopus non solum potest absolvere, et alios actus circa fideles exercere in quos et simplex sacerdos potest, sed etiam habet ipsum sacerdotalem conferre ordinem; non autem quantum ad actum qui immediate circa corpus Christi verum exercetur, quia nec talis actus simplicis sacerdotis quantum ad sui executionem ab episcopali dependet potestate, nec aliquid potest episcopus circa actum consecrandi Eucharistiam, quantum ad ea quae sunt de necessitate sacramenti,

the subdeacon, and each of the four minor ministers exercise a power of orders that is directly related to the Real Body of Christ, because it is *per se* ordained to the dispensing of the sacrament, to the matter of the sacrament, or to the recipients of the sacrament. Even though in the order of doorkeepers it is rather remote, it is still direct. Whereas, when the bishop ordains he bestows upon a member of the Mystical Body the power to consecrate the Real Body of Christ; and it is the ordained candidate who then exercises that communicated power. Therefore, St. Thomas says, the episcopal power of ordaining has only an indirect relationship to the Holy Eucharist.

A summary of St. Thomas' teaching on what are and what are not sacramental orders is best given by himself in one of his opuscula:

"There are seven orders, namely, the presbyterate, the diaconate, the subdeaconate, the order of acolyte, the order of exorcist, the order of lector, and the order of porter; tonsure is not an order, but a certain profession of life of those who give themselves to the divine ministry. *The episcopate is more a dignity than it is an order.*"¹²⁹

Article IV—The Episcopate and the Mystical Body of Christ

According to the Thomistic classification there are seven sacramental orders. The last, the presbyterate, is the greatest of them all because it confers the greatest sacra-

quod simplex sacerdos non possit." Cf. *Comment. in Summam Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 76, De Episcopali Dignitate, n. 3, 2 (Leonine ed., vol. 14).

¹²⁹ *Opusculum De Articulis Fidei et Sacramentis Ecclesiae*, in fine: "Sunt autem septem ordines, scilicet presbyteratus, diaconatus, subdiaconatus, acolytatus, exorcistae, lectoris, et ostiarii; clericatus autem non est ordo, sed quaedam professio vitae dantium se divino ministerio. Episcopatus autem magis est dignitas, quam ordo." Cf. also *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 21, in fine: "Episcopatus enim non est novus ordo, sed gradus in ordine, alioquin essent plures ordines quam septem."

mental power. Through his character the presbyter receives a direct and immediate power over the Real Body of Christ, a power which enables him as an instrumental agent to consecrate bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, to offer them to God in sacrifice, and thus renew the sign and the memorial of Calvary. From his power over the Body of Christ in the Eucharist is derived the presbyter's power of sanctifying the faithful through the other sacraments. Being charged with the Eucharistic cult he has the consequent obligation of preparing the laity for a worthy participation in that worship.¹³⁰

From this it would seem to follow logically that, since he has the duty to sanctify souls by the administration of the sacraments, the presbyter should be able to confer all the sacraments, including confirmation and orders. St. Thomas, however, clearly teaches that these two sacraments are reserved to bishops as their ordinary ministers. Why the presbyter, who has a *sacramental* power commensurate with that of the bishop, cannot administer confirmation and orders is neatly stated by St. Thomas. The explanation occurs in a distinction the Angelic Doctor makes between the episcopate as a sacramental order and the episcopate as an hierarchical order. He writes:

“Order can be understood in a twofold sense. In one sense, according as it is a sacrament; and thus, as was said above, every order is ordained to the sacrament of the Eucharist; whence, since the bishop does not have a power superior to the priest in relation to the Eucharist, the episcopate is not a [sacramental] order. In another sense order can be understood as a certain office in relation to certain sacred actions; and in this sense, since the bishop has a power superior to the presbyter's in

¹³⁰ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.1, corp.: “... sacerdos habet duos actus; unum principalem, scilicet consecrare verum corpus Christi; alium secundarium, scilicet praeeparare populum ad susceptionem hujus sacramenti...” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.4, corp.

hierarchical actions relating to the Mystical Body of Christ, the episcopate is an [hierarchical] order."¹³¹

To appreciate fully all that is implied in this distinction we must go back to the teaching of St. Thomas on one of the effects of baptism, a teaching that is basically a restatement of Pauline theology.¹³² With the reception of this sacrament, the Angelic Doctor writes, "a person is incorporated into Christ and made His member."¹³³ In other words, baptism is the beginning of membership in the Mystical Body of Christ. It is something more than the washing away of original sin and the flooding of the soul with sanctifying grace, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the theological and the moral virtues. In addition to such inestimable personal benefits that come to the individual, there is also a corporate aspect to baptism. Through it one becomes part of a vast world-wide reality that is supra-temporal, supra-local, and supra-national. Looked at as an external, visible, organized assembly of baptized persons that reality is called the Church; but viewed from its interior life, its union with Christ the Head, its participation and sharing in all the supernatural benefits that flow from the God-Man, that reality is called the Mystical Body of

¹³¹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun. 2, corp.: "...ordo potest accipi dupliciter. Uno modo secundum quod est sacramentum; et sic, ut prius dictum est, ordinatur omnis ordo ad eucharistiae sacramentum; unde, cum episcopus non habeat potestatem superiorem sacerdote quantum ad hoc, non erit episcopatus ordo. Alio modo potest considerari ordo secundum quod est officium quoddam respectu quarundam actionum sacrarum; et sic, cum episcopus habeat potestatem in actionibus hierarchicis respectu corporis mystici supra sacerdotem, episcopatus erit ordo." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5, corp.

¹³² J. Anger, *La Doctrine du Corps Mystique de Jésus-Christ* (Paris, 1929), Introduction, p.1: "La doctrine du Corps Mystique... c'est l'une des conceptions qui tiennent le plus de place dans l'oeuvre de saint Paul; et même, peut-on dire, tout peut s'y ramener."

¹³³ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.69, a.3, corp.: "...per baptismum homo incorporatur Christo et efficitur membrum ejus..."

Christ.¹³⁴ The two concepts are not disjunctive; rather, they are complementary, although the latter is much more rich and meaningful. This second sense, moreover, was preferred by St. Thomas, no doubt because it alone gave fullest expression to the reality that is the Church. For example, he writes:

“Just as the natural body is one although it consists of many members, so the *whole Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is one person with its Head Who is Christ.*”¹³⁵

His preference, too, is in evidence on the many occasions when he speaks of the episcopate as a ruling power in the Church. In such instances he refers to the episcopate as “an hierarchical order in relation to the Mystical Body of Christ.”¹³⁶

By baptism, it was said, a person becomes a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, which in external visible ap-

¹³⁴ Anger, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. 11: “L’expression ‘Corps Mystique du Christ’ peut s’entendre de deux manieres: ou bien elle désigne seulement le corps qui est uni au Christ comme à sa Tête, et alors elle ne vise que l’Église seule, independamment du Christ-Chef; ou bien elle désigne à la fois la Tête et les mebres, et dans ce cas elle s’applique au Christ-Chef et à tous les membres qui composent l’Église.”

¹³⁵ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.49, a.1, corp.: “Sicut enim naturale corpus est unum, ex membrorum diversitate consistens, ita tota Ecclesia, quae est mysticum corpus Christi, computatur quasi una persona cum suo capite, quod est Christus.”

¹³⁶ For example, *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.23, q.1, a.3, qun.3, ad lum (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.29, a.6, ad lum): “. . . quantum ad corpus Christi verum nullus ordo est supra sacerdotium; sed quantum ad corpus Christi mysticum episcopalis ordo est supra sacerdotalem . . .” Cf. also *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun.2, ad 3um; qun.3, corp.; d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.1, corp. (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.4, corp.); qun.2, corp. (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5, corp.); qun.2, ad 2um (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5, ad 2um); d.25, q.1, a.1, ad 3um (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.37, a.1, ad 3um); a.2, ad 2um (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.37, a.2, ad 2um); *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.82, a.1, ad 4um; *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, 3, a.17, ad 5um; *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 76, in prin.

pearance is the Church. The Church is a perfect society founded by Jesus Christ to continue the work of His mission of saving souls. As a perfect society the Church is independent of every other society, has a proper objective, contains within itself the means necessary for the attainment of that objective, and lastly, consists of those who govern and those who are governed. Those who govern do so, not in their own name nor in their own power, but in the name and by the power of Christ, the Head. Thus, the salvation of the faithful and their sanctification is an organized and corporate work.¹³⁷ In this cult society some, such as the Pope and bishops, have their hierarchical authority (in different degrees, however) from the very offices which they hold. Others, such as presbyters, exercise only a delegated authority which is committed to them by their superiors.¹³⁸ On this last point in particular St. Thomas writes:

“The bishop receives the power of acting in the person of Christ upon His Mystical Body, ie., upon the Church; this power the presbyter does not receive in his ordination, although he is able to have it by delegation from the bishop.”¹³⁹

The power of the presbyter, direct and supreme in relation to the Real Body of Christ, is only indirect and delegated in relation to the Mystical Body of Christ. The presbyteral

¹³⁷ Anger, *op. cit.*, p. 210: “Le salut des fidèles, leur sanctification s’opèrent en société; ils ont non seulement à être sanctifiés, mais aussi à être dirigés, gouvernés. D’où nouvel ordre, nouvelle inégalité entre les membres du Christ; il y a les chefs et il y a les sujets; et voilà constituée la hiérarchie de gouvernement.”

¹³⁸ *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.6, ad 3um: “. . . potestas sacerdotis exceditur a potestate episcopi quasi a potestate alterius generis. Sed potestas episcopi exceditur a potestate Papae, quasi a potestate ejusdem generis.”

¹³⁹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.82 a.1, ad 4um: “. . . episcopus accipit potestatem ut agat in persona Christi supra corpus ejus mysticum, id est, super Ecclesiam: quam quidem potestatem non accipit sacerdos in sua consecratione, licet possit eam habere ex episcopi commissione.”

power is not, then, properly speaking, a power of ruling; it is a power for the sanctification of the Mystical Body of Christ, a power of sacerdotal mediation.¹⁴⁰

Christ established His Church upon the twelve Apostles of whom Peter was the chief.¹⁴¹ Just as the Pope has succeeded to the place of Peter, so have bishops succeeded to the place of the Apostles.¹⁴² They teach, sanctify, and govern the Church to which they have been appointed, not as departmental prefects or provincial governors of the Pope, but as real pastors who have over their subjects an authority that is ordinary, proper and full, but at the same time particular and subordinated.¹⁴³ Expressing in his own way the thought of this last sentence, which is a precisioning of a later century, St. Thomas says:

“The Pope has the plenitude of pontifical power, being like a king in his kingdom; but bishops are appointed to a share in his solicitude, like judges over particular cities. Hence, them alone the Pope in his letters addresses as ‘brethren’, whereas he calls all others his sons.”¹⁴⁴

Such complete and full authority over the diocese to which he is assigned makes the bishop supreme in all the affairs of that diocese. Being in direct line of succession to the Apostolic powers of teaching, sanctifying, and governing, the bishop is for his part of the universal Church *the* teacher, *the* sanctifier, and *the* ruler. No difficulty presents itself about the subordinate role of the presbyter in relation to the episcopal power of teaching and governing. But a question might seem to arise about the right of the bishop

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Hérís, *Le Mystère du Christ*, p. 321

¹⁴¹ Cf. Matt. 16:18-19

¹⁴² Cf. note 21, supra.

¹⁴³ Cf. Hervé, *Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae*, vol. 1, n. 458

¹⁴⁴ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.20, q.1, a.4, qun.3, corp.: “... Papa habet plenitudinem pontificalis potestatis, quasi Rex in regno; sed episcopi assumuntur in partem solitudinis, quasi iudices singulis civitatibus praepositi: propter quod etiam solos eos in suis litteris fratres vocat, reliquos autem omnes vocat filios.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.26, a.3, corp.

to be the principal sanctifier of his diocese. As was said above, the presbyteral power is essentially a power for sanctification, which is derived from his direct and immediate power over the Eucharist. Since this power is identically the same in bishops and presbyters, both would appear to be co-equal in the sanctification of others.

Such, however, is not the thought of St. Thomas. The power to teach, the power to sanctify, and the power to rule are all episcopal prerogatives indissolubly bound up with one another.¹⁴⁵ The last necessarily presupposes the first two. And therefore the bishop could not be the principal ruler of his diocese unless he were at the same time the principal sanctifier of his diocese. Moreover, in the present economy of salvation a man achieves sanctification not on his terms with God but on God's terms with him. In other words, his sanctification is not personal in the sense of being independent and self-directing. According to those terms, a man is to be saved through membership in the Church which is His Mystical Body.¹⁴⁶ Membership implies corporate and social activity, an organization, a society. Therefore, salvation will be effected through the means of sanctification within the Mystical Body of Christ. And the means of sanctification, the sacraments, will be subject to and regulated by the authority of him who in each particular church represents Christ, namely, the bishop.¹⁴⁷ Thus, St. Thomas writes:

“The bishop alone is properly called a prelate of the Church; and he alone as a spouse of the Church

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Anger, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249

¹⁴⁶ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.18, q.2, a.1, qun.1, corp.: “... ille qui per baptismum in Ecclesia ponitur, ad duo adscribitur, scilicet ad coetum fidelium, et ad sacramentorum participationem.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.21, a.1, corp.

¹⁴⁷ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.8, a.6, corp.: “... Christus est caput Ecclesiae propria virtute et auctoritate: alii [ie., episcopi] vero dicuntur capita in quantum vicem gerunt Christi...”

is given a ring; and therefore, he alone has full power in dispensing the sacraments...."¹⁴⁸

Another reason which shows clearly that the bishop is the principal and chief sanctifier of his diocese is the fact that the presbyteral power of sanctifying is itself derived from the episcopal; and being derived from it, it is therefore inferior to it at least in actual exercise upon the laity. St. Thomas took occasion to point this out when answering a question about the consecration of the matter of extreme unction. An objector could see no reason why this should not be performed by presbyters since they perform much greater consecrations, namely, of the Eucharist. To which St. Thomas answers:

"The sacrament of the Eucharist consists in the very consecration of the matter, not in its use; and therefore, properly speaking, that which is the *materia* of the sacrament [of the Eucharist] is not a consecrated thing; whence, there is not required beforehand any consecration of the matter by the bishop; but there is required the consecration of the altar, and other things, and even of the priest himself, which can be done only by a bishop. Whence, even in that very sacrament [the Eucharist] the sacerdotal power is shown to be derived from the episcopal, as Dionysius writes in his *Eccles. Hier.* c.3. Therefore, a priest is able to perform that consecration of matter which is in itself a sacrament, but cannot perform that consecration which is a certain sacramental ordination to something that is a sacrament in its use by the faithful, because in relation to the Real Body of Christ there is no order above the presbyterate; but in relation to the Mystical Body of Christ the episcopal order is above the sacerdotal order."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.20, q.1, a.4, qun.1, corp.: "...solus episcopus proprie praelatus Ecclesiae dicitur; et ideo ipse solus quasi sponsus anulum Ecclesiae recipit; et ideo solus ipse habet plenam potestatem in dispensatione sacramentorum..." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.26, a.1, corp.

¹⁴⁹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.23, q.1, a.3, qun.3, ad 1um: "...sacramentum eucharistiae consistit in ipsa materiae sanctifica-

The dispensation, then, of the means of grace to the incorporated member of Christ is done in an orderly and regulated manner. It is Christ Himself Who sanctifies the members of His Mystical Body by the graces which He merited for them as the Head of that Mystical Body. But being invisible He is represented by a visible Head. For the universal Church that visible Head is the Pope; for the particular Church (diocese), which is not a separate entity but an integrated part of the universal Church, that visible Head is the bishop. Therefore, the distribution of divine things as means of sanctification will be subject to the authority of him who holds the place of Christ. Accordingly, St. Thomas writes:

“The minister of the sacrament does not produce the effect of the sacrament by his own power as a principal agent, but through the efficacy of the sacrament which he dispenses. This efficacy comes first from Christ, and then from Him it descends upon others in an orderly fashion, ie., upon the people by means of the ministers who dispense the sacraments, and upon the inferior ministers by means of the superior ministers who consecrate the matter [of certain sacraments]; and in all those sacraments which require a sanctified matter, the first consecration of the matter is performed by the bishop”¹⁵⁰

tione, non autem in usu; et ideo, proprie loquendo, illud quod est materia sacramenti non est quid consecratum; unde non praeexigitur aliqua sanctificatio circa materiam per episcopum facta; sed exigitur sanctificatio altaris, et hujusmodi, et etiam ipsius sacerdotis, quae non nisi per episcopum fieri potest. Unde in illo etiam sacramento ostenditur potestas sacerdotalis ab episcopo derivata, ut Dionysius dicit (*De Eccles. Hier.* cap. 3); ideo autem illam consecrationem materiae potest facere sacerdos quae est in se sacramentum, et non illam quae ut sacramentale quoddam ordinatur ad sacramentum quod consistit in usu fidelium, quia quantum ad corpus Christi verum nullus ordo est supra sacerdotium; sed quantum ad corpus Christi mysticum episcopalis ordo est supra sacerdotalem . . .” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.29, a.6, ad 1um.

¹⁵⁰ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.23, q.1, a.3, qun.3, corp.: “...minister sacramenti non propria virtute effectum sacramenti

That the bishop is the chief sanctifier of his flock in the Mystical Body of Christ is very readily seen in the case of the sacrament of penance. As St. Thomas states,

“In order to absolve from sin a twofold power is required: the power of orders and the power of jurisdiction. The first power is the same in all priests; not, however, the second.”¹⁵¹

A presbyter receives the power of the keys when he is ordained; but since it is a power that affects immediately a member of the Mystical Body, the presbyter cannot actually exercise his power until such time as he receives the necessary jurisdiction.¹⁵² Jurisdiction is an act by which certain members of the Mystical Body are made directly subject to him for his absolution. They are made directly subject to the presbyter only by an act of delegation, and only by him who “at the time of his promotion receives a power that is *directly* ordained to the Mystical Body of Christ.”¹⁵³ Therefore, concludes St. Thomas,

“For the use of this power [by the presbyter], as was said, there is required jurisdiction, which is

inducit ut principale agens, sed per efficaciam sacramenti quod dispensat; quae quidem efficacia primo est a Christo, et ab ipso in alios descendit ordinate; scilicet in populum mediantibus ministris qui sacramenta dispensant, et in ministros inferiores mediantibus superioribus qui materiam sanctificant; et ideo in omnibus sacramentis quae indigent materia sanctificata, prima sanctificatio materiae fit per episcopum. . . .” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl. q.29, a.6, corp.

¹⁵¹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.19, q.1, a.3, ad 1um: “. . . ad absolutionem a peccato requiritur duplex potestas, scilicet potestas ordinis et potestas jurisdictionis. Prima quidem potestas est aequaliter in omnibus sacerdotibus, non autem secunda. . . .” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.20, a.1, ad 1um.

¹⁵² *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.18, q.1, a.1, qun.2, ad 2um: “. . . clavis cum ordine datur; sed executio clavis indiget materia debita, quae est plebs subjecta per jurisdictionem.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.17, a.2, ad 2um.

¹⁵³ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.2, ad 2um: “. . . in promotione episcopi datur sibi potestas quae . . . ordinatur . . . directe . . . ad corpus Christi mysticum.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.38, a.2, ad 2um.

delegated by greater ones [bishops] to lesser ones [ie., presbyters]”¹⁵⁴

As evident as it is in the instance of penance, the bishop's position as principal sanctifier is even more apparent in the case of confirmation and orders. The bishop alone is the ordinary minister of these two sacraments, while the presbyter, endowed with the necessary jurisdiction from his bishop, is associated with him as the ordinary minister of sacramental penance. Having in mind the role of the bishop as the head of his diocese, St. Thomas sees a certain fitness in the reservation of confirmation to the bishop. He compares the diocese to a Christian army of which bishops are the leaders. And just as it is the duty of the leaders of secular armies to conscript their soldiers, in like manner is it the prerogative of bishops to make of their subjects soldiers of Christ by conferring upon them the sacrament of confirmation.¹⁵⁵ To continue the analogy, whatever is said of confirmation applies with even greater appositiveness to the sacrament of orders. If it is the duty of the general to enlist recruits for his army, there is all the more reason why he alone should have the prerogative to commission lieutenants and subordinate officers who will help him in leading that Christian army.

In addition to such arguments of congruity, however, there is an intrinsic reason, arising from the very nature of the two characters, that reserves confirmation and orders to the bishop. Character, in general, is a “certain spiritual

¹⁵⁴ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.19, q.1, a.3, qun.2, corp.: “...ad usum hujus potestatis, ut dictum est, requiritur jurisdictio, quae a majoribus in inferiores descendit...” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.20, a.2, corp.

¹⁵⁵ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 60, De Confirmatione: “Convenienter etiam hoc sacramentum a solis pontificibus confertur, qui sunt quodammodo duces exercitus Christiani: nam et apud saecularem militiam ad ducem exercitus pertinet ad militiam eligendo quosdam adscribere; ut sic qui hoc sacramentum suscipiunt, ad spiritualem militiam quodammodo videantur adscripti.”

power ordained to certain sacred actions.”¹⁵⁶ By the very fact of receiving the character of baptism a person is placed in an incipient state of perfection, i.e., *quasi* or *secundum quid*, because it is merely the state of the faithful as opposed to the state of infidels. Because baptism only joins a person to the common state of the faithful and does not elevate him above that common state,¹⁵⁷ and since it is the lowest office in the Mystical Body of Christ, therefore presbyters are the ordinary ministers of this sacrament.¹⁵⁸

But the case is quite different with confirmation and orders. With the reception of these sacraments the member of the Mystical Body of Christ is elevated to a perfection that is above the common state of the baptized faithful.¹⁵⁹ This perfection of the confirmed member consists in a deputation and consecration to profess *ex officio* the Christian religion. It is true that from the time of his baptism he had to live and act in a Christian way. But then it was for his own personal interest; whereas, confirmation directs the same activity in the interest of the general well-being of the Christian community.¹⁶⁰ The public profession of faith,

¹⁵⁶ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.72, a.5, corp.: “...character est quaedam spiritualis potestas ad aliquas sacras actiones ordinata.” Cf. also *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.4, q.1, a.4, qun. 1, corp.

¹⁵⁷ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun. 2, ad 1um: “...per ipsum [baptismum] non ponitur aliquis supra communem statum, sicut fit per confirmationem...”

¹⁵⁸ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.67, a.2, ad 2um: “Per baptismum autem non adipiscitur aliquis nisi infimum gradum in populo Christiano. Et ideo baptizare pertinet ad minores principes Ecclesiae, idest, presbyteros...”

¹⁵⁹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun. 2, ad 2um: “Et ideo suscipientem haec sacramenta [scilicet confirmationem et ordinem] promovent ad perfectionem quamdam ultra statum fidelium.”

¹⁶⁰ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.72, a.5, corp.: “Nam in baptismo accipit [homo] potestatem ad ea agenda quae ad propriam pertinent salutem, prout secundum seipsum vivit: sed in confirmatione accipit potestatem ad agendum ea quae pertinent ad pugnam spiritualem contra hostes fidei. Sicut patet exemplo Apostolorum, qui, antequam plenitudinem Spiritus Sancti acciperent, erant *in coenaculo perseverantes in orati-*

then, is to be made in the defense of the Christian community against the attacks of its visible and avowed enemies.¹⁶¹ And such public profession of faith entails not only the role of defending, but also that of preserving, conserving and strengthening the Christian religion.¹⁶²

The perfection of the ordained member consists in a deputation and consecration to be an official minister of the Christian religion. Just as the confirmed member of Christ is dedicated to the public defense of the Christian cult, so the ordained member of Christ is dedicated to the public promotion of the Christian cult. For this end he receives a power to consecrate in a sacramental sacrifice the Real Body of Christ; and thus, as an official representative of the Christian community he worships God in its name by celebrating "the sacrament of the universal Church."¹⁶³

Rightly, therefore, does St. Thomas call the deputation of confirmation and orders "special offices."¹⁶⁴ By these sacraments certain members of the Mystical Body are elevated above other members and charged with official duties which bear upon the general welfare of the whole Christian community. Since the acts of these two sacraments have the nature of public functions in a cult society, the conferring of these two sacraments must be reserved to him who

one; postmodum autem egressi non verebantur fidem publice fateri, etiam coram inimicis fidei Christianae."

¹⁶¹ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.72, a.5, ad 1um: "... pugna spiritualis contra hostes invisibiles omnibus competit. Sed contra hostes visibiles, id est, contra persecutores fidei pugnare, nomen Christi confitendo, est confirmatorium...."

¹⁶² Cf. Hérís, *Le Mystère du Christ*, p. 288

¹⁶³ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.2, a.2, ad 2um: "... solus sacerdos habet actus immediate ad Deum ordinatos, quia ipse solus potest gerere actus totius Ecclesiae qui consecrat eucharistiam, quae est sacramentum universalis Ecclesiae." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.37, a.4, ad 2um.

¹⁶⁴ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.65, a.3, ad 2um: "... per ordinem et confirmationem deputantur fideles Christi ad aliqua specialia officia...."

has the supreme hierarchical authority to teach, sanctify, and govern that cult society. Wherefore, St. Thomas writes:

“Since bishops hold the highest place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, that which is the most excellent in hierarchical actions must be reserved to them. And because to perfect someone in such a manner that he is [elevated] above the common state of others is the greatest of hierarchical actions, therefore, the sacraments of confirmation and orders, by which this is effected, can be dispensed only by bishops.”¹⁶⁵

The presbyteral power over the Real Body of Christ is then, in itself, truly a power of sanctification. But the sanctification of others, for which the presbyter is ordained, is not brought about by unincorporated or isolated communications of grace. According to the Divine Plan, on the contrary, it is to be effected within the framework of the Mystical Body of Christ, in which the communications of grace proceed from the highest instrumental agents down through the lowest. In such a sacerdotal ministry, then, the inferior minister will be subject to the superior minister who is endowed with the authority to teach, to sanctify and to govern his portion of the Mystical Body. Since “the presbyter does not have the complete authority over the hierarchical offices that the bishop has,”¹⁶⁶ the conclusion of St. Thomas is that the episcopate is indeed an *hierarchical* order, superior to that of the presbyterate, by reason of its

¹⁶⁵ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun.2, corp.: “Unde cum episcopi in ecclesiastica hierarchia teneant supremum locum, illud quod est ultimum in actionibus hierarchicis, eis reservandum fuit. Et quia perficere aliquem hoc modo quod sit supra communem statum aliorum est supremum in actionibus hierarchicis, ideo sacramentum confirmationis et ordinis, quibus hoc efficitur, solis episcopis dispensanda reservantur.” Cf. *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.82, a.3, ad 3um: “... autem perfectiones, quibus homo perficitur per comparationem ad alios, episcopo reservantur.”

¹⁶⁶ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.1, ad 5um: “... sacerdos non habet completam potestatem in hierarchicis officiis sicut episcopus...” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.38, a.1, ad 5um.

hierarchical power over the hierarchical offices of the Mystical Body of Christ.¹⁶⁷

Article V—Episcopal Consecration

In ecclesiastical language, the ceremonies whereby certain ministers of the Church are raised to specific dignities have each their own proper term or designation. We speak, e.g., of the *creation* of a cardinal, the *consecration* of a bishop, and the *ordination* of a presbyter. Such distinction of terminology may have originated in the desire to state the corresponding order of precedence among such ministers; and in reference to the episcopate and the presbyterate, such specific terminology may also have at its basis the hierarchical superiority of the episcopal office over the presbyteral. But looked at from a strictly Thomistic viewpoint, the terminology takes cognizance of its contention that the presbyterate is the last and greatest of the sacramental orders, and therefore it alone can properly be designated as an ordination.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ The hierarchical authority of the bishop to sanctify the Mystical Body of Christ extends not only to the chief means of sanctification, i.e., the sacraments, but also to all things related thereunto. In *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.3, corp. St. Thomas gives a list of nine strictly episcopal functions: "...novem sunt quae ipsi [episcopi] supra sacerdotes possunt, scilicet clericos ordinare, virgines benedicere, pontifices consecrare, manus imponere, basilicas dedicare, clericos deponere, synodos celebrare, chrisma conficere, vestes et vasa consecrare." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.7, corp.

In another place, in which he is teaching that the consecration of the Eucharist is the proper office of the presbyter, the Angelic Doctor lays down the principle which governs such episcopal reservations: "Et ideo ea quae non pertinent ad dispositionem corporis mystici, non reservantur episcopo: sicut consecratio hujus sacramenti [Eucharistiae]" (*Summa Theologica*, 3, q.82, a.1, ad 4um). But all those things which do pertain to the disposition of the Mystical Body of Christ, "episcopo reservantur, tanquam *principi totius ecclesiastici ordinis*" (*Ibid.*)

¹⁶⁸ Connell, "The Episcopate," *The Ecclesiastical Review* 72 (April, 1925), 337: "The distinction of terminology may have originated in

For St. Thomas the words "character," "ordo," and "sacramentum" were all interchangeable, and where one was missing the other two were necessarily absent. It was for this reason that he could not consider episcopal consecration as a distinct sacrament, although he recognized that in this ceremony an additional power was conferred upon the bishop-elect, a power that he did not have as a simple priest.

"And although in his promotion some [additional] power is given to the bishop in relation to some of the sacraments, this power does not have the nature of a *character*, and therefore, the episcopate is not an *order* according as order is a *sacrament*."¹⁶⁹

The episcopate is not a sacrament because it is not an order; and it is not an order because it does not impress a character; and it does not impress a character because

"... through it the bishop is not ordained directly to God, but to the Mystical Body of Christ."¹⁷⁰

Thus, in the bishop's direct and immediate relationship to the Mystical Body of Christ does St. Thomas find the *raison d'être* of his additional power. It is also in the fact

the wish to emphasize the preeminence of the episcopal rank over all other ecclesiastical offices. However, a more probable explanation of this discrimination is found in the theological controversy which centres about the office of a bishop. It is still an open question whether or not the episcopate is, in the strict sense, an Order. And since only the conferring of an Order in the strict sense can be designated as an ordination, the more indefinite term *consecration* is employed for the conferring of the episcopate."

¹⁶⁹ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.3, a.2, qun.2, ad 2um: "... et ideo licet detur aliqua potestas spiritualis episcopo in sui promotione respectu aliquorum sacramentorum, non tamen illa potestas habet rationem characteris; et propter hoc episcopatus non est ordo, secundum quod ordo est quoddam sacramentum." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.40, a.5, ad 2um.

¹⁷⁰ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.2, ad 2um: "... in promotione episcopi datur sibi potestas quae perpetuo manet in eo; quamvis dici non possit character, quia per eam non ordinatur homo directe ad Deum, sed ad corpus Christi mysticum..." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.38, a.2, ad 2um.

that the bishop is given the chief and principal charge of a particular part of the Mystical Body that St. Thomas find the *raison d'être* of episcopal consecration with its solemnity and anointing. That the power which comes to the bishop by reason of this consecration is not a sacramental power specifically distinct form and superior to the presbyteral power St. Thomas makes clear not only from his argumentation but also from the analogy he uses—a favorite one of his whenever he speaks of the episcopal power.

“Bishops have the chief care of all in their diocese, while parish priests and archdeacons exercise an inferior ministry under the bishops. Hence Dionysius says in his *Eccles. Hier.* ch. 5 that *just as we see the whole hierarchy culminating in Jesus, so each [office] culminates in its respective godlike hierarch*, that is, the bishop From which it is evident that they [parish priests and archdeacons] have the same relationship to the bishop as governors and mayors have to the king. Wherefore, just as in earthly governments the king alone receives a solemn blessing while others are appointed by a simple commission, so also in the Church the episcopal office is conferred with the solemnity of a consecration while the office of archdeacon and parish priest is conferred with a simple appointment”¹⁷¹

It is on the ceremony of episcopal consecration that Cardinal Bellarmine and his followers base one of their principal

¹⁷¹ *Summa Theologica*, 2-2æ, q.184, a.6, ad 2um: “... episcopi principaliter habent curam omnium suae dioecesis: presbyteri autem curati et archidiaconi habent aliquas subministraciones sub episcopis. Unde . . . Dionysius dicit, cap. 5, *Eccles. Hierar.*, quod *sicut universam hierarchiam videmus in Jesu terminatam, ita unamquamque in proprio divino hierarcha*, idest, episcopo. . . . Ex quo patet quod ita se habent ad episcopum sicut balivi vel praepositi ad regem. Et propter hoc, sicut in mundanis potestatibus solus rex solemnem benedictionem accipit, alii vero per simplicem commissionem instituuntur; ita etiam in Ecclesia cura episcopalis cum solemnitate consecrationis committitur, cura autem archidiaconatus vel plebanatus cum simplici injunctioe.” Cf. also *Opusculum De Perfectione Vitae Spiritualis*, cap. 24, in med.

arguments in maintaining that the episcopate is a sacrament distinct from the presbyterate. St. Robert writes that it is rather strange for the Thomists to maintain on the one hand that the subdeaconate and the diaconate confer grace, and are therefore sacraments; and, on the other hand, to deny that the episcopate, which is much more excellent and one-rous, does not confer grace since it is not a sacrament. The very rite of episcopal consecration, St. Robert continues, proves that the episcopate is a sacrament. "In no other ceremony is there such great solemnity as in the ordination of a bishop; there is the imposition of hands, anointing, and many other things; it is incredible that there should be so many sacramentals where there is no sacrament."¹⁷²

To conclude, however, that the ceremony of episcopal consecration does not confer grace since it is not a distinct sacrament—to draw that conclusion is to misinterpret the mind of St. Thomas. He himself taught very positively that episcopal consecration, although it was not a sacrament, did confer grace; Capreolus, in his *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis*, gives a very clear if somewhat hesitant exposition of this point; and Thomists ever since have been reaffirming the teaching of the Angelic Doctor.

But first the words of St. Thomas himself. In answer to an objection he states:

"Not every blessing or consecration which is bestowed upon a person is a sacrament; monks and abbots are blessed, but those consecrations are not sacraments; and neither is the anointing of a king [a sacrament], because these kinds of consecra-

¹⁷² *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei*, vol. 3, contr. 5, De Sacramento Ordinis, cap. 5: "Denique, mirabile est, quod velint aliqui ad officium diaconi et subdiaconi requiri novam gratiam, et ideo illas ordinationes esse sacramenta; et ad officium episcopi, quod est sine ulla comparatione difficilius et excellentius, nolint gratiam requiri. . . . In nulla enim ordinatione adhibetur tanta solemnitas, quanta in ordinatione episcopi; ibi est impositio manus, ibi unctio, ibi plurima alia; non est autem credibile tot sacramentalia instituta, ubi nullum sit sacramentum."

tions do not ordain the recipients to the dispensation of divine things, as does the consecration of orders."¹⁷³

In this passage two points stand out. The first is that the mere ceremony of a consecration, no matter what kind it be—whether that of a monks, abbots, or kings—is not sufficient in itself to constitute a sacrament. Closely connected with this is the second point, namely, that a consecration has the nature of a sacrament only from an intrinsic reason, not from external appearance. The intrinsic reason which constitutes the consecration of orders as a sacrament is that it empowers the recipient to be a dispenser of the other sacraments. The power of dispensing the other sacraments, as we have seen above,¹⁷⁴ rests fundamentally upon the presbyteral power to consecrate the Real Body of Christ, because all the other sacraments are ordained to the Eucharist as to an end.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, according to the reasoning of St. Thomas, since episcopal consecration does not empower the bishop to consecrate more intensively nor vigorously the Body and Blood of Christ, and since it does not give him a new power over the Real Body of Christ upon which the dispensation of all the other sacraments depends,

¹⁷³ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.24, q.1, a.1, qun.3, ad 3um: "... non omnis benedictio quae adhibetur homini, vel consecratio, est sacramentum: quia et monachi et abbates benedicuntur, et tamen illae benedictiones non sunt sacramenta; et similiter nec regalis inunctio, quia post hujusmodi benedictiones non ordinantur aliqui ad dispensationem divinatorum sacramentorum, sicut per benedictionem ordinis." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.34, a.3, ad 3um.

¹⁷⁴ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.65, a.3, corp. Cf. note 108 supra.

¹⁷⁵ In reference to the phrase, "ad dispensationem divinatorum sacramentorum", J. Capreolus, *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis* (Tours, 1900-1908), In *Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.3 (vol. 6, p. 484) writes: "Et intellige de dispensatione sacramenti Eucharistiae. Quia potestas dispensandi alia sacramenta, ut praescindit a potestate dispensandi Eucharistiam, conficiendo vel ministrando conficienti, non sufficit ad rationem sacramenti. Nihil enim est sacramentum nisi habeat ordinem ad Eucharistiam, ut ostendit sanctus Thomas, IIIp. q.65, a.3...."

the ceremony of episcopal consecration is not a sacrament.¹⁷⁶

With this point cleared up, namely, that a consecration and its solemnity does not necessarily constitute a sacrament, we proceed to the question of such ceremonies bestowing grace. Certainly, as Bellarmine writes, the eminence and the burdens of the episcopal office would seem to demand the bestowal of proportionate graces for the worthy fulfillment of the incurred obligations. St. Thomas thought so too; and this can be gathered from a statement he makes about the need of special graces consequent upon the elevation to any state, be it secular or ecclesiastical:

“With the eminence of any state there is given a certain sanctification since there is necessary the special help of grace, as in the consecration of kings, and monks, and nuns; and these are hierarchical actions ; they do not have the nature of a sacrament; only that eminence [has the nature of a sacrament] by which a man is made a dispenser of sacred things.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ In *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.4, q.1, a.2, qun.1, ad 2um St. Thomas makes a reply to an objection which asserts that character is a potency and therefore cannot be a sign. Although his answer is directly concerned with correcting this false notion, it has significance for us in this, namely, in his reply St. Thomas clearly puts episcopal consecration in the class of regal coronation and not among the sacramental signs properly so-called. He writes: “. . . cum qualibet potestate exterius datur aliquod visibile signum illius potestatis, sicut regi in signum regiae potestatis datur corona et sceptrum; et Pontifici mitra et baculus et anulus; et similiter cum spirituali potestate, quae in sacramentis confertur, datur signum sacramentale exterius; et per comparationem ad illud exterius signum, ipsa spiritualis potentia dicitur signum, in quantum homo per eam configuratur et determinatur ad actiones spirituales.”

¹⁷⁷ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.2, q.1, a.2, ad 9um: “. . . ad quamlibet eminentiam status datur aliqua sanctificatio, cum sit ibi necessarium speciale auxilium gratiae, sicut in consecratione regum et monachorum et monialium; et ideo sunt actiones hierarchicae; . . . non tamen habent rationem sacramenti; sed solum illa eminentia per quam homo efficitur sacrorum dispensator.”

Episcopal consecration is not mentioned in the specific examples which St. Thomas gives here. But it is not difficult to include this consecration among the various states of eminence for which the Angelic Doctor requires special graces, because: (1) if such be needed consequent upon the consecration of a monk or nun, *a fortiori* is it needed consequent upon the consecration of a bishop; and (2) we have already seen above where St. Thomas compares episcopal consecration to the anointing of a king or chief ruler. A third reason which confirms these first two is that in his *Comment. in Epist. II ad Timoth.* St. Thomas clearly teaches that grace is conferred in episcopal ordination. Concerning chapter I, verse 6, he writes:

“And he [Paul] adds: ‘which is in thee by the imposition of my hands’, by which he [Timothy] was ordained bishop; in which imposition of hands there was given to him the grace of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁷⁸

But here a contradiction seems to be looming. On the one hand St. Thomas teaches that episcopal consecration is not a sacrament, and on the other hand that episcopal consecration bestows grace. The viewpoint, however, that these two statements are contradictory, seems to rest on the misapprehension that any *ex opere operato* conferring of grace must necessarily be a *per se* sacramental operation. Such would seem to be the misapprehension of the adversaries in this controversy, who chide the Thomists for acknowledging that in the subdeaconate and the diaconate grace is bestowed but denying that in episcopal consecration grace is conferred since the episcopate is not a sacrament. What, then, is the

¹⁷⁸ *Comment. in Epist. 2 ad Timoth.*, cap. 1, ver. 6, lect. 3, in prin.: “Et addit: ‘quae est in te per impositionem manuum mearum’, a quo scilicet ordinatus erat episcopus; in qua manus impositione data est ei gratia Spiritus Sancti.” Cf. also *Comment. in Epist. I ad Timoth.*, cap. 4, ver. 14, lect. 3, in med.: “‘noli negligere gratiam quae in te est’. Per hoc intelligere vel *dignitatem episcopalem*, vel donum scientiae, vel prophetiae, vel miraculorum, quorum nihil debet negligi.”

causal relationship between episcopal consecration and the bestowal of grace?

The answer is supplied by John Capreolus, one of the earliest defenders of the doctrine of St. Thomas. He writes:

“Although episcopal consecration confers grace *ex opere operato* it does not have the nature of a sacrament properly so-called, because it does not have the complete *ratio* of any species of any sacrament. This is evident in reference to the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, penance, Eucharist, extreme unction, and matrimony. As regards the sacrament of orders it is evident that episcopal consecration does not have the perfect *ratio* of this sacrament because it is not ordained to the sacrament of the Eucharist but to the Mystical Body of Christ. It is not therefore a sacrament properly so-called, but an office or a power superadded to the sacrament of orders and to its character, its complement as regards the secondary act of the priesthood, an accidental perfection which is consequent upon the character of the priesthood *per accidens* and not *per se*. . . . If anyone should say that the episcopate is a sacrament, this will be true only equivalently or analogically with the other [sacramental] orders, but not univocally. And perhaps St. Thomas understood it in this way.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Capreolus, *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis*, In *Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.3, II, ad 2um (vol. 6, p. 483): “. . . licet in episcopali consecratione conferatur gratia ex opere operato non tamen habet rationem sacramenti vere et proprie dicti, quia scilicet non habet completam rationem alicujus speciei sacramenti. Et quidem de sacramento baptismi, confirmationis, poenitentiae, Eucharistiae, extremae unctionis, et matrimonii constat. De sacramento vero ordinis, patet quod non habet perfectam rationem illius sacramenti, quia non ordinatur ad Eucharistiae sacramentum, sed ad corpus Christi mysticum. Non est ergo vere et proprie sacramentum, sed officium vel potestas superveniens sacramento ordinis et ejus characteri, et plentum ejus quoad actum secundarium sacerdotii, et perfectio accidentalis, et per accidens, non per se, consequens characterem sacerdotii. . . . Si autem quis contendat episcopatum esse verum sacramentum, hoc erit aequivoce, vel analogice, et non univoce cum caeteris ordinibus. Et forte hoc intellexit sanctus Thomas.”

Thus, Capreolus teaches that episcopal consecration is not *per se* a sacrament like baptism, confirmation, penance, etc. Nor is it *per se* a sacramental order like the diaconate and the presbyterate because it bears no direct relationship to the Eucharist, such as these orders do. At the most it can be only a complement of the sacrament of orders, a super-added perfection that is strictly accidental to the character of the presbyterate. Therefore, one cannot predicate "sacramental order" of the episcopate in the same univocal sense as one does of the four minor and the three major orders. The conclusion, which Capreolus definitely implies but does not expressly state, is that episcopal consecration confers grace not *per se* as a distinct sacramental order but *per accidens* as a complement of the sacrament of orders.

It is quite evident, however, from the last sentence of the above passage that Capreolus allows this implication only with the greatest hesitancy. Yet the uncertainty seems to arise not from any doubt as to the truth of the explanation, but rather from an overly strict adherence to the exact teaching of St. Thomas. At least in his section on the episcopate, if not in other sections, Capreolus appears very careful to expound only the pure thought of the Angelic Doctor, and avoids all positive statements that rest upon logical deductions even when these necessarily follow from the teaching of St. Thomas.

Later commentators, however, have not so limited themselves, and they state positively what Capreolus suggested uncertainly. For example, Gonet writes as follows:

"... in order that episcopal consecration cause grace it is not necessary that it be a [distinct] sacrament, but it suffices that it be the most excellent complement of a sacrament, namely, the presbyterate; as is evident in that ceremony by which there is conferred on the presbyter already ordained the power to absolve from sin, through the imposition of the hands of the bishop and those words: 'Receive the Holy Spirit', etc.; although at that time a new grace is bestowed upon the pres-

byter that ceremony is not a sacrament distinct from presbyteral consecration, effected in the touching of the chalice, at which time the presbyteral character was impressed, but only an extension and complement of the presbyterate to an act related to the Mystical Body of Christ, namely, absolution from sin. The same is to be said, with due proportion, of episcopal consecration. . . ."¹⁸⁰

Others who concur in this teaching that episcopal consecration confers grace, not *per se* as a sacramental order but *per accidens* as a complement of the sacramental order of the presbyterate, are: the *Salmanticenses Morales*, *Billuart*, *Holtum*, *Pégues*, *Billot*, *Diekamp*, *Hugon*, *Merkelbach*, *Garrigou-Lagrange*, and *Ferland*.¹⁸¹

Dom Gregory Holtum has taken particular care to point

¹⁸⁰ Gonet, *Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae*, vol. 6, De Ordine, disp. 4, a. 2, n. 37: "... ut enim episcopalis consecratio causet gratiam, non requiritur necessario quod sit sacramentum, sed sufficit quod sit excellentissimum quoddam complementum sacramenti, scilicet sacerdotii; ut patet in ceremonia illa qua confertur sacerdoti jam ordinato potestas ad absolvendum a peccatis per impositionem manuum episcopi, et verba illa, *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*, etc.; licet enim tunc sacerdoti nova gratia conferatur, tamen ceremonia illa non est sacramentum distinctum a consecratione sacerdotali, quae fit in contactu calicis, in quo character sacerdotalis imprimitur, sed tantum complementum et extensio sacerdotii, in ordine ad actum corpus Christi mysticum respicientem, nempe absolutionem a peccatis. Idem cum proportione de consecratione episcopali dicendum est. . . ."

¹⁸¹ *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologiae Moralis*, vol. 2, tract. 8, De Ordine, cap. 1, n. 33; Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, vol. 7, De Ordine, dissert. 4, a. 2, obj. 3; Holtum, "Quaeritur utrum episcopatus sit ordo," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie et Spekulative Theologie* 14 (1900), pp. 3-4; Pégues, *Commentaire français littéral de la Somme Théologique*, vol. 20, Suppl., q.40, a.5; Billot, *De Ecclesiae Sacramentis*, vol. 2, De Ordine, th. 31, sect. 2; Diekamp, *Theologiae Dogmaticae Manuale*, vol. 4, De Sacramento Ordinis, cap. 1, sect. 63, n. 2; Hugon, *Tractatus Dogmatici*, vol. 3, De Ordine, a. 5, n. 6; Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae Moralis*, vol. 3, De Ordine, n. 731; Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Eucharistia*, De Ordine, p. 412, and *De Sanctificatione Sacerdotum*, cap. 1, a. 4; Ferland, *Commentarius in Summam D. Thomae—De Sacramentis in Speciali*, De Ordine, sect. 3, disp. 2, a. 1.

out the "*propter aliud*" relationship of episcopal consecration to the sacrament of orders, lest one think that St. Thomas conceived it to be purely and simply an hierarchical office and nothing more. He writes:

"St. Thomas called powers over the Mystical Body of Christ hierarchical powers, but he in no wise intended to affirm that these are to be excluded *absolutely* from the *ratio* of a sacrament. This cannot be done without departing from the teaching of faith As a consequence of the strict logic of St. Thomas' teaching, those orders which have a direct and specifically diverse relationship to the Eucharist are sacred orders specifically diverse; an order which has a relationship—no matter how eminent—merely to the Mystical Body of Christ, such as the episcopate, is to be excluded from the number of specifically diverse orders. Take care lest you believe from this teaching of St. Thomas that such an order in no wise has the *ratio* of a sacrament, or in no way impresses a character. For in the opinion of St. Thomas the episcopal order pertains truly and properly to the sacrament of orders, not *per se* as the presbyterate and the other orders, but *propter aliud*, ie., because of the presbyterate and in conjunction with it; it also impresses the indelible character of this sacrament, but not *ex se* nor specifically diverse from the presbyteral character. The conclusion is that episcopal consecration is not entirely equivalent to presbyteral ordination, but nevertheless is a sacred ordination because the character of the presbyterate is extended in the episcopate."¹⁸²

¹⁸² Holtum, *art. cit.*: "Potestates in mysticum corpus Christi vocat S. Thomas potestates hierarchicas, nullo modo intendens affirmare has absolute excludi a ratione sacramenti. Neque id salva fide facere potuit. . . . Ut consequens rigoris logici ex hac S. Thomae doctrina derivatur, ordines qui directam eamque specificè diversam ad S. Eucharistiam habitudinem important, esse ordines sacros specificè diversos; ordinem vero qui habitudinem, licet gravissimam, ad corpus Christi mysticum dicit, episcopatum, esse alienum a numero ordinum specificè diversorum. Cave tamen credas ex doctrina S. Thomae talem ordinem nullo modo aut habere rationem sacramenti, aut nullo modo imprimere characterem. Nam in sententia S. Thomae ordo episco-

A final point in the teaching of St. Thomas regarding episcopal consecration is that it confers a power which remains forever. Denying that heretical or degraded bishops lose the power of conferring orders validly, St. Thomas states:

“In the promotion of a bishop there is given to him a power which remains with him forever; yet it cannot be called a [distinct] character because through it the bishop is not ordained directly to God but to the Mystical Body of Christ; nevertheless, it remains indelibly, like a character, because it is given by a consecration.”¹⁸³

In summary, episcopal consecration according to the mind of St. Thomas is not a sacrament. But the true meaning of this statement becomes clear only when we understand that he is talking about episcopal consecration considered in itself, and apart from the generic sacrament of orders. As a dissociated ceremony he places it in the same class with the consecrations of kings, abbots, monks, and nuns; and just as these consecrations are not sacraments since they do not impart any direct relationship to the Eucharist, so also episcopal consecration.

On the other hand, St. Thomas speaks of the bestowal of grace in Timothy's ordination as a bishop. If episcopal consecration is not a sacrament *per se*, it must then confer

patus pertinet vere et proprie ad sacramentum ordinis, non tamen per se, ut presbyteratus et alii ordines, sed propter aliud, id est, propter presbyteratum et in ordine cum hoc: imprimit quoque characterem sacramenti indelebilem, non tamen ex se nec specificè diversum a characterè presbyterali. Consequens est, ordinationem episcopi non ex toto aequivalere ordinationi presbyteri, sed esse sacram ordinationem ex ordine ad characterem presbyteratus extensi in episcopatu.”

¹⁸³ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.2, ad 2um: “...in promotione episcopi datur sibi potestas quae perpetuo manet in eo, quamvis dici non possit character quia per eam non ordinatur homo directe ad Deum, sed ad corpus Christi mysticum; et tamen indelebiter manet, sicut character, quia per consecrationem datur.” Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.38, a.2, ad 2um.

grace by reason of some connection with the sacrament of orders. That much is clearly indicated by the Angelic Doctor. It is from the commentators of St. Thomas, however, that we learn precisely what that connection is. According to their unanimous opinion episcopal consecration has a "*propter aliud*" relationship to the sacrament of orders, and is therefore called by them a complement of the sacramental order of the presbyterate.

Article VI—Extraordinary Minister of
Confirmation and Orders

With episcopal consecration the bishop receives a direct and immediate power over the Mystical Body of Christ. As a result, the bishop is the supreme teacher, sanctifier, and governor for that particular part of the Mystical Body, and in the office of sanctifier is the ordinary minister of all the sacraments.¹⁸⁴ Associated with the bishop in the administration of the sacraments is the simple priest or presbyter. However, only in four of the sacraments—baptism, penance, Eucharist, and extreme unction—is the presbyter the ordinary minister. To be able to confer confirmation and orders the presbyter needs special delegation from the Holy See, and in this role he is called the extraordinary minister of these two sacraments.

St. Thomas treated the question of the extraordinary minister in both his *Comment. in Sententias* and in the *Summa*. For him it was not a matter of mere idle speculation to determine whether or not a presbyter *could* be delegated to confer the two sacraments of confirmation and orders usually reserved to bishops. There were instances in the history of the Church in which this had actually been

¹⁸⁴ Matrimony is excepted because by reason of the very nature of this sacrament the contracting parties are themselves the ministers, while the bishop or the presbyter is the official ecclesiastical witness. Cf. St. Thomas, *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.28, q.1, a.3, ad 2um (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.45, a.5, ad 2um).

done; so his problem was to seek out the theological basis on which such delegation was made.

St. Thomas himself, in speaking of confirmation, mentions¹⁸⁵ only the case of Pope Gregory the Great who in the year 594 permitted the presbyters of Cagliari in Sardinia to confirm in the absence of the bishop.¹⁸⁶ But up to the time of St. Thomas there were other renowned instances in which such delegation had been given by both Councils and Popes.¹⁸⁷ And in the Eastern Church we have already seen the testimonies of Ambrosiaster and Jerome who state that it was a common practice for the Egyptian presbyters to confirm when the bishop was not present.¹⁸⁸ This was true not only of Egypt but of all other provinces in the Oriental

¹⁸⁵ Cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun.3, sed contra.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *Epist. 26, ad Januarium* (PL 77: 696).

¹⁸⁷ Cf. I Council of Toledo (a.400), can. 20 (*Mansi* 3: 1002); I Council of Orange (a.441), can. 1 (*Mansi* 6: 435). As for the Popes, Hervé, *Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae*, vol. 3, n.633 writes: "... potestas confirmandi saepe data est sacerdotibus, ut nonnullis fratribus minoribus a Nicolao IV, Joanne XXII, Urbano V, Eugenio IV, Leone X, Adriano VI; itemque quibusdam abbatibus, missionariis et aliis, a Gregorio XIII, Benedicto XIII, Clemente XI, Benedicto XIV...; unde generatim dici potest, ut videtur, inde a tempore S. Gregorii M. hanc facultatem a Sede Apostolica, fere quolibet saeculo, factam esse presbyteris latinis, quibusdam in casibus singularibus..."

Concerning the two councils of Toledo and Orange, however, some authorities think that the canons refer to baptismal anointing and not to confirmation. As Doronzo remarks: "Circa finem tamen saec. 6 apparet prima certa confirmandi facultas presbyteris facta." Cf. E. Doronzo, *De Baptismo et Confirmatione*, pp. 382, 389.

For the recent decree extending the privilege of confirming to presbyters of the Latin rite, under certain conditions, cf. "Decretum de Confirmatione," AAS 38 (1946), 349ff.; also *American Ecclesiastical Review* 116 (April, 1947), 241 ff.

¹⁸⁸ In chapter II of the complete dissertation these testimonies are given in full. Here we shall merely indicate the references: Ambrosiaster, *Quaestiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, q.101 (*CSEL* 50:196 Souter); Jerome, *Epistola ad Evangelum* (*CSEL* 56:310 Hilberg).

Church, so that today with the approval of the Holy See Uniate presbyters still enjoy this privilege.¹⁸⁹

Concerning the extraordinary minister of holy orders St. Thomas cites the privilege of Cardinal presbyters who had the faculty to confer tonsure and the four minor orders.¹⁹⁰ It is known that back in the fifth century a somewhat similar privilege was extended to the presbyters of Lucania, a province in Lower Italy. This appears from a letter of Pope Gelasius in which he forbade them to ordain subdeacons and acolytes without delegation from the Sovereign Pontiff.¹⁹¹ The II Council of Nice in 787 permitted an abbot, provided he was a presbyter and had received the blessing of the local bishop, to confer in his own monastery the order of lector.¹⁹² And Alexander III, towards the end of the twelfth century, granted to some priests who were not bishops the privilege of ordaining to tonsure and the four minor orders.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Doronzo, *op. cit.*, pp. 390-391. As an explanation of how simple priests of the Eastern Church in the first centuries could confirm without any delegation from Rome, it is stated that they received from their own bishops the necessary authorization and delegation. Such delegation was made validly and licitly because the Pope had not as yet reserved such delegation to himself as regards the Oriental Church, but permitted those bishops the full exercise of their ordinary jurisdiction. Cf. M. Jugie, *Theologia Dogmatica Christianorum Orientalium*, as quoted by *L'ami du Clergé* 53 (1936), 312.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun. 3, sed contra.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *Epist.* 9, n.6 (PL 59: 50).

¹⁹² Cf. Mansi 13: 753; also, Hallier, *De Sacris Electionibus et Ordinationibus*, pars 3, sect. 5, cap. 1, a.2, n.12 (Migne, *Theologiae Cursus Completus*, 24, 908).

Benedict XIV mentions that by a "jure antiquiori" there was granted to certain abbots the privilege of conferring tonsure and the four minor orders not only on their own subjects but even on others who did not come under their jurisdiction. Cf. *De Synodo Dioecesana*, lib. 2, cap. 11, n.9 (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 11).

¹⁹³ Cf. Hallier, *op. cit.*, n.13 (Migne, *op. cit.*, 909).

At the present time, in the Latin Rite, the following have *ex jure* the privilege of conferring tonsure and the minor orders, as

The theological basis for such delegation regarding confirmation and the minor orders¹⁹⁴ St. Thomas found in the full, complete, and supreme power the Pope has as the visible head of the Mystical Body of Christ.

“Since the episcopate does not add anything to the presbyterate in relation to the Real Body of Christ, but only in relation to the Mystical Body, the Pope by reason of being the greatest of bishops does not have the plenitude of power in relation to the Real Body of Christ but only in relation to the Mystical Body. And because sacramental grace in the Mystical Body descends from the head, every sacramental operation in the Mystical Body, through which grace is given, depends upon the sacramental operation over the Real Body of Christ. Therefore, only a priest can absolve in confession and baptize *ex officio*. Hence, it must be said that the Pope, who has the plenitude of pontifical power, can commission a [simple] priest, who has the greatest operation over the Real Body of Christ, to promote [candidates] to those perfections which have a relationship only to the Mystical Body, but not to the Real Body of Christ; [The Pope cannot commission] a deacon nor anyone inferior to a deacon [to confer those states of perfection regarding the Mystical Body of Christ] be-

the *Codex Juris Canonici* (Rome, 1918) indicates: (1) All Cardinals, even though they are not bishops (c. 239, par. 1, n.22); (2) Vicars and Prefects Apostolic, abbots, and Prelates *nullius*, who do not have episcopal consecration (c. 957, par. 2); (3) Abbots actually holding office with ordinary jurisdiction over their subjects (c. 964, par. 1). By special indult from the Holy See a presbyter can be constituted extraordinary minister of these same orders (c. 951).

¹⁹⁴ Hugon, *Tractatus Dogmatici*, vol. 3, de Ordine, a. 6, n. 3: “Quod autem de minoribus dicitur applicari potest subdiaconatui, qui non fuit semper ordo major, nec etiam hodie major est in Ecclesia Graeca.” Cf. also *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologiae Moralis*, vol. 2, tract. 7, de Ordine, cap. 4, n. 28; Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, vol. 7, de Ordine, dissert. 3, a. 1; Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae Moralis*, vol. 3, de Ordine, n. 734; and Tanqueray, *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae* (24th ed., Paris, 1935-1938), vol. 3, de Ordine, n. 1034.

cause the deacon cannot confect the Real Body of Christ nor absolve in sacramental confession.

Neither can [the Pope] commission a simple priest to promote [candidates] to those perfections which are related in some way to the Real Body of Christ; and therefore a simple priest, even with delegation from the Pope, cannot confer the order of priesthood, because sacred orders have an operation over the Real Body of Christ or over Its matter. [The Pope], however, can commission a simple priest to confer the minor orders, because they do not have an operation over the Real Body of Christ nor Its matter, neither do they have over the Mystical Body an operation through which grace is conferred; but they have *ex officio* certain secondary and preparatory acts.

And in like manner [the Pope] can delegate a simple priest to confirm, because confirmation perfects him in an act over the Mystical Body, not however over the Real Body of Christ."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁵ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun.3, corp.: "... cum episcopatus non addat aliquid supra sacerdotium per relationem ad corpus Domini verum sed solum per relationem ad corpus mysticum, Papa per hoc quod est episcoporum summus, non dicitur habere plenitudinem potestatis per relationem ad corpus Domini verum, sed per relationem ad corpus mysticum. Et quia gratia sacramentalis descendit in corpus mysticum a capite, ideo omnis operatio in corpus mysticum sacramentalis, per quam gratia datur, dependet ab operatione sacramentali super corpus Domini verum; et ideo solus sacerdos potest absolvere in foro poenitentiali, et baptizare ex officio. Et ideo dicendum, quod promovere ad illas perfectiones quae non respiciunt corpus Domini verum, sed solum corpus mysticum, potest a Papa, qui habet plenitudinem pontificalis potestatis, committi sacerdoti, qui habet actum summum super corpus Domini verum; non autem diacono, vel alicui inferiori, qui non habet perficere corpus Domini verum, sicut nec absolvere in foro poenitentiali.

Non autem potest simplici sacerdoti committere promovere ad perfectionem quae respicit aliquo modo corpus Domini verum: et ideo simplex sacerdos ex mandato Papae non potest conferre ordinem sacerdotii: quia ordines sacri habent actum supra corpus Domini verum, vel supra materiam ejus. Potest autem concedere simplici sacerdoti quod conferat minores ordines, quia isti nullum actum habent supra corpus Domini verum, vel materiam ejus, nec etiam

The basic distinction St. Thomas makes between power over the Real Body of Christ and power over the Mystical Body of Christ, which is so continually recurrent in his theology of orders, appears in nearly every sentence of this passage. It shows how precise was the thinking of the Angelic Doctor, and at the same time becomes the major premise, so to speak, in his argument why the episcopate was not and could not be a *sacramental* order distinct from and superior to the presbyterate. In this passage the distinction also places certain limitations to the role of extraordinary minister, both as regards the author of the delegation as well as the recipient of the delegation. The Sovereign Pontiff has the plenitude of power only over the Mystical Body of Christ; over the Real Body of Christ the presbyter is the equal of the Pope.¹⁹⁶ Christ alone has the plenitude of power over His Real Body, and therefore the transmission of a power that is concerned directly and immediately either with the act of the Eucharist or the matter of the Eucharist must be communicated through the channels established by Christ, namely, the bishops. Hence, the Pope cannot delegate a presbyter to bestow the orders of the diaconate or the presbyterate. But he can delegate a simple priest to confer the minor orders because these have only secondary and preparatory acts over the Real Body of Christ. He can also delegate a simple priest to administer confirmation because, being related to the Mystical Body of Christ, it falls within the plenitude of the Papal power.

supra corpus mysticum habent actum per quem gratia conferatur; sed habent ex officio quosdam actus secundarios et praeparatorios.

Et similiter potest concedere alicui sacerdoti quod confirmet; quia confirmatio perficit eum in actu corporis mystici, non autem habet aliquam relationem ad corpus Domini verum." Cf. *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.1, ad 3um (*Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.38, a.1, ad 3um) for the same teaching in more summary form.

¹⁹⁶ *Comment. in Sententias*, lib. 4, d.25, q.1, a.1, ad 3um: "...ad corpus Christi, supra quod consecrandum Papa non habet majorem potestatem quam simplex sacerdos." Also in *Summa Theologica*, Suppl., q.38, a.1, ad 3um.

On the other hand, regarding the subject of such delegation, St. Thomas teaches that the designee must be a priest; he cannot be a deacon nor anyone below a deacon. The reason which is assigned is the divinely ordered arrangement for the distribution of grace—"since sacramental grace in the Mystical Body descends from the head, every sacramental operation in the Mystical Body, through which grace is given, depends upon the sacramental operation over the Real Body of Christ." Hence, no one who does not have the power to consecrate can be designated as a valid minister of confirmation.¹⁹⁷

As is evident from the above passage, St. Thomas is concerned solely with the power of delegation as it emanates from the Pope, plus its limitations in the author and the recipient. He says nothing about such delegation as it affects the sacerdotal character of the extraordinary minister, i.e., whether it is a power of orders, a power of jurisdiction, or a combination of both. Nor does he say whether such an act augments the presbyteral character in any way, or whether it is merely a requisite condition necessary for administering confirmation and orders. To state that St. Thomas would have answered these various questions, if

¹⁹⁷ F. De Sylvestris Ferrariensis, *Comment. in Summam Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 60, De Confirmatione, nn. IV, V: "Cum enim ad integritatem sacramenti requiratur convenientia ministri... quaeritur quis sit minister necessarius in sacramento confirmationis? Si episcopus: ergo non poterit Papa alteri quam episcopo confirmationis collationem committere: quia papa non potest tollere id quod ad sacramenti integritatem pertinet. Si simplex sacerdos: ergo hic male dicitur quod a solis pontificibus confertur.

Respondetur quod dupliciter possumus loqui de ministro necessario: scilicet aut cui soli potest convenire absolute ut sacramentum ministret; aut cui soli convenit ordinarie et ex officio... dicimus quod neque sacerdos simplex, neque sacerdos episcopus est necessarius minister hujus sacramenti, sed sacerdos absolute et indistincte... [Dicimus] quod collationem hujus sacramenti convenientem uni, scilicet episcopo, ordinarie et ex officio, alteri imponit [Papa] extraordinarie, cui non competit ex officio, habenti tamen quod est de necessitate sacramenti simpliciter."

he had lived to write the tract on orders in his *Summa Theologica*, would be mere guesswork. We can hazard a negative probability, however, if we can judge from his treatment in the *Summa* of the extraordinary minister of confirmation.¹⁹⁸ There the exposition of the question is even less extensive than in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, although it proceeds along the same identical lines.

The solution to the questions, so it would appear, can best be sought in a determination of the exact nature of the episcopate itself. Thus far, from the teaching of St. Thomas, we know what the episcopate is not—it is not a *sacramental* order distinct from nor superior to the presbyterate. Later Thomistic theologians have attempted to state what the episcopate is; and it is only after ascertaining, according to their opinions, the nature of the ordinary minister of confirmation and orders that one can logically proceed to the determination of the nature of the extraordinary minister. The presentation of the Thomistic School's intrinsic extension theory will form the next chapter.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.72, a.11, ad 1um.

CHAPTER IV

NATURE OF THE EPISCOPATE ACCORDING TO COMMENTATORS ON ST. THOMAS

It was not until approximately the end of the eleventh and the beginning of the twelfth century that sacramental theology as such began to show signs of a growth and expansion that was later to develop into a very important field of Catholic teaching. We have already indicated one sign of this growth—the attempts to assign a reason for the existence of only seven sacramental orders. Another sign was the endeavor to determine the exact nature of the episcopate, considered precisely in itself.

For the first ten centuries the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers looked upon and spoke about the episcopate as the supreme ruling power in each Church, and as the office which had reserved to it certain functions that presbyters could not ordinarily perform, such as to ordain clerics, to administer confirmation, to consecrate virgins, to dedicate altars and churches, etc. The reason assigned by these writers for such reservations was simply the bishop's authority. At the same time, however, they acknowledged that the presbyter was the equal of the bishop in consecrating the Body and Blood of Christ, and that in this memorial of the Passion of the Lord one was as truly the vicegerent of Christ as the other. With the definition by the eleventh and twelfth century writers of the nature of a sacrament and the reaffirmation of the ancient tradition that there were only seven sacramental orders, the question of the episcopate naturally suggested itself. If the presbyterate was the last and the greatest of the sacramental orders, just what was the nature of the episcopate strictly so-called? In addition to his presbyteral powers to consecrate and absolve the bishop possessed a power of ruling as well as a power to confirm and ordain *ex officio* which the simple priest did not enjoy. So, how to account for the episcopate?

It was certainly superior in one respect, but in another it was not.

St. Peter Damian (d. 1072) suggested an answer to this question by writing that "bishops do not appear to receive a new order but rather to be more sublimely elevated in the very same priesthood."¹ Such a solution is not as precise as we would like it to be, but considering the infancy of sacramental theology at the time it certainly was a step forward. Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1141), Peter Lombard (d. ca. 1160), and Albert the Great (d. 1280) all explained the episcopate as a dignity and an office annexed to the presbyterate.² Further clarification came in the middle of the thirteenth century when the *Summa Theologica* (erroneously ascribed to Alexander of Hales) taught that the episcopate was an *amplification and extension* of the presbyteral power.³ This same exposition of the nature of the episcopate was embraced by St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) in his lectures at the University of Paris. Commenting on the twenty-four distinction of the *IVth Book of Sentences*, he stated:

"The episcopate as it is distinguished from the priesthood is a certain dignity or office annexed to the priesthood, and is not *properly* the name of an order, neither is a new character imprinted nor a new power given, *but the power which has already been given is amplified.*"⁴

¹ *Opusculum 6—Gratissimus*, cap. 15 (PL 145:118): "ab his [episcopis] non tam novus ordo suscipi, quam in eodem ipsi sacerdotio videnter excellentius sublimari."

² Hugh of St. Victor, *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*, lib. 2, pars 3, cap. 5 (PL 176:423), and lib. 2, pars 2, cap. 5 (PL 176:419); Peter Lombard, *Sententiae*, lib. 4, d. 24, cap. 14 (vol. 2 [2nd ed., Ad Claras Aquas, 1916] n. 248); Albert the Great, *Commentarium in Sententias*, lib. 4, d. 24, A, a. 5, corp. (*Opera Omnia* [Paris, 1894] vol. 30).

³ *Summa Theologica* (Cologne, 1622), lib. 4, q. 20, membr. 8, a. 1; and q. 21, membr. 4, ad 5um.

⁴ *Commentarium in Sententias P. Lombardi*, lib. 4, d. 24, pars 2, a. 2, q. 3, corp. (*Opera Omnia* [Quaracchi, 1889] vol. 4): "Episcopatus . . . prout distinguitur contra sacerdotium, dicit *dignitatem*

Thus, we see that by the time St. Thomas wrote some progress had been made in the theological concept of the episcopate. But it was to undergo further clarification in the hands of the Angelic Doctor. And it would appear that his greatest contribution in the clarification of the notion of the episcopate lay in his insistent distinction between power over the Real Body of Christ and power over the Mystical Body of Christ. The episcopate in its relationship to the Real Body of Christ did not confer a new power over the Eucharist, and therefore it was not a new sacrament, was not a new order, nor did it impress any new and distinct character superior to that of the presbyterate.⁵ In relationship to the Mystical Body of Christ, however, the episcopate was an order in the wide sense of the term as used by Dionysius, ie., an hierarchical grade and office, and in this respect the episcopate was an order superior to the presbyterate.⁶ This new power that the bishop had over the Mystical Body of Christ embraced: (a) a power that was properly hierarchical relative to the conferring of certain sacraments and sacramentals; and (b) a power of ruling that was compared to the civil power of government. This is apparent from an answer to an objection in which St. Thomas states:

“The episcopal power is not only a power of jurisdiction, but also a power of orders according as the word ‘order’ is commonly used.”

quandam vel officium ipsi annexum, et non est *proprie* nomen ordinis, nec novus character imprimitur, nec nova potestas datur, sed potestas data ampliatur. . . .”

⁵ Cf. chapter 3, notes 27 and 131.

⁶ Cf. chapter 3, note 131.

⁷ Cf. chapter 3, note 14. That St. Thomas understands the phrase, “a power of orders” in the hierarchical sense and not the sacramental sense is evident from the *corpus articuli*.

In this connection Ferrariensis writes: “Considerandum ulterius, ut est de mente Sancti Thomae . . . quod potestas episcopalis est potestas non solum jurisdictionis, sed etiam ordinis, non secundum quod ordo est sacramentum, sed secundum quod est officium respectu quarundam actionum sacrarum.” Cf. *Comment. in Summam Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 76, De Episcopali Dignitate, Comment. III, 2.

St. Thomas, then, is very clear in telling us what the episcopate is not—it is not a *new and distinct sacramental* power superior to the presbyterate. He is also clear up to a certain point in telling us what the episcopate is—it is an hierarchical power which is added over and above the presbyteral power.⁸ But precisely how this new hierarchical power affected the presbyteral character, St. Thomas did not say. He never once used the terms “extension” or “amplification,” although he certainly must have been familiar with this teaching of his contemporary, St. Bonaventure. The Angelic Doctor is frequently listed by theologians as teaching the extension theory. Perhaps it would be more exact to state that the teaching of St. Thomas harmonizes very well with the theory of intrinsic extension, and that in reality this theory is based upon the principles laid down by him. It does not appear that the Angelic Doctor committed himself beyond the statement that the episcopate “added something” to the presbyterate. Whether this addition extended the presbyteral character intrinsically or extrinsically, or did not extend the character at all—such cannot be proved *conclusively* from the writings of St. Thomas. This is evident from the variety of theological thought that has resulted from the attempts of later theologians to interpret St. Thomas.

Some Dominicans in the years immediately following the era of the Angelic Doctor were not Thomists, and in the forefront of such Friars Preachers stands DURANDUS OF ST. POURCAIN (d. 1334). There were a number of points in the fields of both philosophy and theology in which he differed with St. Thomas. So, it is not too surprising, when we read his tract on orders, to find Durandus teaching that the episcopate is both a sacrament and an order which impresses its own character. He adds, however, that the epis-

⁸ *Comment. in Sent.*, lib. 4, d.7, q.3, a.1, qun.3, corp: “. . . cum episcopatus non addat aliquid supra sacerdotium per relationem ad corpus Domini verum, sed solum per relationem ad corpus mysticum. . . .”

copate as a sacrament and an order is not really distinct from the presbyterate, but forms one sacrament with it:

“The episcopate or episcopal ordination is an order and a sacrament, not, however, precisely distinct from the simple priesthood, but forms one sacrament with it, just as something which is perfect and something which is imperfect. Wherefore, it is to be understood that just as the consecration of the bread and wine constitute the integral parts of the one sacrament, so does the ordination of a presbyter and the ordination of a bishop constitute one complete sacrament, as that which is perfect and that which is imperfect. Since a perfect thing is that which is able to reproduce itself, that priesthood is not complete in which the priest does not receive the power of ordaining another to the priesthood, and such is the simple priesthood. The pontificate, ie., the episcopate, is the perfect priesthood because by it one receives the power of ordaining another either as a bishop or a simple priest, and thus presbyteral ordination and episcopal ordination constitute one sacrament. The episcopate impresses a character, because by episcopal ordination there is conferred the power of performing spiritual actions which before could not be performed”⁹

⁹ *Comment. in IVum Sententiarum* (Venetiis, 1586), d. 24, q.6, n.8: “Dicendum est ergo aliter quod episcopatus seu ordinatio episcopalis est ordo et sacramentum non quidem precise distinctum a sacerdotio simplici, sed est unum sacramentum cum ipso, sicut perfectum et imperfectum. Juxta quod sciendum est quod sicut consecratio panis et vini constituunt unum sacramentum tamquam partes ejus integrales, sic ordinatio sacerdotis simplicis et ordinatio summi sacerdotis (ie., episcopi) constituunt unum completum sacramentum sicut perfectum et imperfectum; cum enim perfectum sit quod potest facere sibi simile, illud sacerdotium non est completum per quod sacerdos non recipit potestatem ordinandi alium in sacerdotem, et tale est sacerdotium simplex. Sacerdotium autem summum (ie., episcopatus) est perfectum sacerdotium quis per ipsum recipitur potestas ordinandi alium in sacerdotem summum, vel simplicem, et sic ordinatio simplicis sacerdotis et ordinatio episcopalis constituunt unum sacramentum. Imprimit autem episcopatus characterem, cum per ordinationem episcopalem conferatur potestas per quam ordinatus potest in spirituales actus in quos prius non poterat”

The solution of the question concerning the exact nature of the episcopate, however, is not as easy as Durandus would make it appear. His reasoning contains half-truths and misleading statements, and his conclusion is thereby considerably weakened. Moreover, in true nominalist fashion he seems to be making distinctions for the sake of distinctions rather than for the sake of truth. In his *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae* Capreolus, in the following century, pointed out the false logic in the above passage. First, the analogy of the double consecration does not clarify Durandus' point but only confuses it. The consecration of the bread and the consecration of the wine are one sacrament by the unity of perfection, i.e., by reason of the end towards which they are ordained. But the presbyterate and the episcopate are not ordained to the one and same end; the presbyterate is ordained to the Real Body of Christ and the episcopate to the Mystical Body of Christ. Secondly, the statement that a perfect thing is that which is able to reproduce itself, such an assertion is not *ad rem* because it is true only in those forms deduced from the potencies of matter. Capreolus then illustrates his point with examples of a rational soul, an angel, grace, and charity, which cannot reproduce themselves no matter how perfect they be. Thirdly, Capreolus asks, if the presbyterate and the episcopate constitute one perfect sacrament which is called the *summum sacerdotium*, in virtue of which part is it a more perfect sacrament than the simple priesthood? Not by reason of the presbyteral character because the same thing cannot surpass itself; neither by reason of the power which the episcopate adds to the simple priesthood, because that power is less perfect than the presbyteral power since it is ordained to a less perfect act. Neither can the *summum sacerdotium* be a more perfect sacrament by reason of the total aggregate of power, because something imperfect added to something more perfect by way of aggregation does not make a thing more perfect intrinsically than before, but only extrinsically; and granted that the total aggregate

is in some way more perfect than the simple priesthood, it does not necessarily follow that it is a sacrament.¹⁰

Moreover, it is difficult to see how the episcopate, which according to Durandus impresses a character because it bestows a power of performing acts that before could not be performed, can at the same time be but one sacrament with the presbyterate and not distinct from it. This seems to be nothing more than a distinction without difference. In itself, then, the teaching of Durandus is quite at variance with that of St. Thomas as well as that of contemporary Scholastic theologians. But it occasioned a rebuttal in which a further contribution and precisioning of theological thought was brought out.

This occurred in the work of PETER de PALUDE (d. 1342), a fellow Dominican, who undertook in his *Commentary on the Four Books of Sentences* to combat the somewhat rash teachings of Durandus. How well he succeeded is not of interest here, but on the question of episcopal consecration Peter stated it as his view that this ceremony was both a sacrament and an order but not distinct from the presbyterate. On the point of character Peter, unlike Durandus, maintained that the episcopate did not confer any distinct character but merely expanded the presbyteral character, and in this showed himself faithful to the thought of St. Thomas. He writes:

“Certain ones [Durandus] say that the episcopate impresses a character because it confers a power of doing something absolute. But it can more truly be said that the episcopate extends the priestly character so that it is one and the same; and therefore it does not impress a [new] character but expands that which previously has been impressed. And this is the reason why the episcopate presupposes the presbyteral [character] because it is not a different character but rather its augmentation and perfection; otherwise, just as one order does not of necessity presuppose another, so

¹⁰ Cf. Capreolus, *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis*, lib. 4 sent., d.25, q.1, a.3, I, ad 2um (vol. 6, p. 481).

neither would the episcopal dignity presuppose the presbyteral [order]. It can be stated then that the episcopate is an order but not distinct from the priesthood; and it is a sacrament but not distinct from the sacrament of orders; and it impresses a character but not a distinct character."¹¹

As parallel examples of such character extensions Paludanus cites the order of acolytes who in their ordination first receive the candlestick and then the cruets; the subdeacons who first receive the power of reading the epistle and then the power of ministering at the altar; the presbyters who first receive the power of consecrating and then the power of absolving. In all these cases, continues de Palude, the second power is nothing but an extension of the first so that in reality there is but one power and one character having two subordinate acts. His conclusion is:

"There are then seven orders, but the seventh, namely the priesthood, contains a twofold power in general, ie., the sacerdotal, properly so-called, and the episcopal And because of this the *episcopate is not said to be an order in relation to the Real Body of Christ since it is not distinct from the priesthood.*"¹²

In order to illustrate his meaning about the extension of

¹¹ *Quartus Sententiarum Liber* (Parisiis, 1518), d.24, q.7, a.4, ad 3um: "Quidam dicunt quod episcopatus characterem imprimit, quia potestatem faciendi aliquid absolute. Sed verius dici potest quod per episcopatum ampliatur character sacerdotalis, ut sit unus et idem; et ideo non imprimit characterem, sed impressum intendit ad aliud. Et haec est necessitas quare supponit sacerdotalem, quia non est aliquid aliud, sed ejus intensio et perfectio; alias, sicut unus ordo non de necessitate praesupponit alium, sic nec episcopalis dignitas sacerdotalem supponeret. Potest ergo dici quod episcopatus est ordo, sed non est distinctus a sacerdotio; et est sacramentum, sed non distinctum a sacramento ordinis; et imprimit characterem, sed non alium."

¹² *Ibid*: "Sunt ergo septem ordines; sed septimus, scilicet sacerdotium, continet duplicem potestatem in generali, scilicet sacerdotalem proprie dictam, et episcopalem. . . . Et propter hoc dicitur episcopatus non esse ordo in relatione ad corpus Christi verum, quia scilicet non est distinctus a sacerdotio."

the presbyteral character, Paludanus uses the analogy of the habit of knowledge acquiring new conclusions :

“If the episcopate were distinct from the priesthood it would be something less [than the presbyterate] ; and a man could be a bishop who would not be a priest, just as a man can be a priest who is not a deacon, because one character is distinct from the other. But this is not the case [with the episcopate and the presbyterate]. For just as the habit of knowing is sometimes increased, not intensively regarding the same conclusion, but extensively regarding a new conclusion, so, the priestly character which before was not able to ordain and confirm, but able only to anoint, to consecrate and to absolve, cannot now consecrate more intensively than before, but can ordain and confirm, which before it could not do. And thus it is that the ordination of a presbyter is different from the ordination of a bishop, and the character impressed by the first is perfected by the second.”¹⁸

However, he foresaw a possible objection against his theory, which he states and then answers :

“Since the extension of a potency does not enable it to do what before it could not do, but only to do more intensively what before it could do, how is the bishop able to do what the presbyter cannot do? And why cannot the bishop consecrate more [perfectly] than the presbyter, if he has a more extended character? The answer is that when the effect is not of itself capable of intensification, the extended power is not able [to operate] more in-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ad lum: “... si episcopatus esset distinctus a sacerdotio, esset quid minus; et posset fieri episcopus, qui non esset sacerdos, sicut sacerdos qui non esset diaconus; quia unus character est ab alio distinctus. Nunc autem non sic est. Sed sicut habitus scientiae aliquando augetur non intensive respectu ejusdem conclusionis, sed extensive respectu alterius... ita character sacerdotalis qui prius non poterat ordinare vel confirmare, sed tantummodo inungere, conficere et absolvere, non potest plus conficere quam prius posset, sed ordinare et confirmare quod prius non poterat; ita quod est alia ordinatio episcopalis, et alia sacerdotalis, et talis character imprimitur per primam, et perficitur per secundam...”

tensively than when not extended; sometimes the power of vision is able to see something when it is strong which it cannot see when it is weak, because the stronger it is to the more things does it extend itself. Thus, therefore, the presbyteral character is primarily and principally for consecrating the Body of Christ, so that its principal act is to consecrate; but when it is extended, then it can consecrate many things, not only the Body of Christ, but also men and other things; but it cannot consecrate more [intensively or perfectly] than before because the effect is not capable of intensification. That episcopal consecration can extend the presbyteral character is of divine institution, which confers such power in these consecrations and not in any other way"¹⁴

Peter de Palude is classified by a number of theologians as being opposed to St. Thomas on the question of the episcopate.¹⁵ But, in addition to the remark of Gonet, the falsi-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*: "Sed occurrit dubium: cum intensio potentiae non facit eam posse quod prius non poterat, sed tantum intensive posse quod prius poterat, quomodo episcopus potest id quod sacerdos non poterat? Et quare non plus potest conficere quam ille, si habet characterem intensiorem? Et dicendum quod quando effectus non est de se intensibilis, virtus intensa non plus potest in illum quam remissa; sed aliquando virtus visiva potest videre aliquid quando est fortis, quod non poterat quando erat debilis, quia quanto est fortior, tanto ad plura se extendit. Sic ergo character sacerdotalis primo et principaliter est ad consecrandum corpus Christi, ita quod consecrare est ejus actus; sed quando extenditur, tunc potest plura consecrare, qui non solum corpus Christi, sed hominem et alia; sed non potest plus conficere quam ante, quia effectus ille non est intensibilis. Quod autem consecratio episcopalis possit intendere characterem sacerdotalem . . . est ex divina ordinatione, quae sic contulit virtutem istis consécrationibus, et non aliter. . ."

¹⁵ Cf., for example, Vasquez, *Commentaria et Disputationes in III Partem Sancti Thomae* (ed. novissima, Lugduni, 1631), vol. 3, disp. 240, cap. 3, n.24; Bellarmine, *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei*, vol. 3, controv. 5, De Sacramento Ordinis, cap. 5; Sylvius, *Commentarius in Supplementum ad III Partem S. Thomas Aquinatis*, q.40, a.5, concl. 2a; Hallier, *De Sacris Electionibus et Ordinationibus*, pars 2, sect. 2, cap. 1, a.2, n. 2 (Migne, *Theologiae Cursus Completus*, 24, 711); Frassen, *Scotus Academicus*, vol. 12, tract. 3, disp. 1, a.1,

ty of such an assertion appears quite evident from the above passages selected from his writings. He seems to be thoroughly Thomistic in his basic thought, and if any further confirmation be needed it can be had in the following citation in which we hear an echo of the teaching of St. Thomas himself. Paludanus writes:

“... the six orders minister to the presbyter in the act [of consecrating]. Hence, as order is a sacrament in relationship to the Eucharist, the six orders are sacraments; *not, however, the episcopate*; otherwise, the bishop would be superior to the presbyter in regard to this act ; but he is not superior in regard to this act because no hierarchical act is superior to that which is proper to a presbyter by reason of his priesthood. . . . But according as order is a grade of superiority and a spiritual power, the episcopate is an order.”¹⁶

Despite such faithful exposition of the teaching of the Angelic Doctor, Paludanus uses a phrase, in the first passage quoted above, which on a cursory reading would appear to be opposed to the thought of St. Thomas. He writes that the episcopate is an order but not distinct from the priesthood, and it is a sacrament but not distinct from the sacrament of orders. In that he would seem to agree with Durandus who is definitely non-Thomistic. But Paludanus clearly removes all doubt about his meaning when he treats

q.4, sect. 3; and Zubizarreta, *Theologia Dogmatico-Scholastica*, vol. 4, De Sacramento Ordinis, n. 637.

Gonet, *Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae*, vol. 6, De Ordine, disp. 4, a.2, n.20 pointed out this error when listing the theologians who were in agreement with St. Thomas. He mentioned Paludanus, then added: “falso pro contraria sententia citatus.”

¹⁶ Paludanus, *op. cit.*, ad 2um “... sex ordines presbytero subministrant in actu illo. Unde prout ordo est sacramentum in comparatione ad Eucharistiam, sex ordines sunt sacramentum; non autem episcopatus; alias esset dignior quam sacerdos respectu hujus...; non est autem respectu ejus dignior quia nullus actus hierarchicus est isto dignior qui debetur sacerdoti in ratione sacerdotii... Sed prout ordo dicit gradum superioritatis et spiritualement potestatem, episcopatus est ordo.”

of character, because there he states that the episcopate does not confer a new and distinct character but merely expands the presbyteral character. Since character is at the basis of the conferring of any sacramental order, according to Thomistic principles, the first statement of Paludanus must then be understood in the light of his second. Moreover, we do not believe that de Palude is guilty of any deviation from Thomistic thought, as Capreolus does.¹⁷ On the contrary, it would seem, in the light of the interpretations of modern Thomistic theologians, that de Palude was giving a further clarification of the notion of the episcopate that was not explicitly mentioned by St. Thomas. The Angelic Doctor taught that the episcopate was not an order according as that word was understood to mean "sacramental order". But he also taught that the episcopate superadded a power to that of the presbyterate, which gave the bishop a direct relationship to the Mystical Body of Christ. All hierarchical power over the Mystical Body of Christ, however, depends fundamentally upon sacramental power over the Real Body of Christ. Certainly the implied thought of St. Thomas would seem to be that the episcopate then fell some place within the general framework of the sacrament of orders. It was not merely an hierarchical dignity and power that had no connection whatsoever with the sacrament of orders, but was in some way a part of that generic whole. We believe that Paludanus was expressing such a thought when he wrote that the episcopate was "a sacrament but not distinct from the sacrament of orders." And this is his first contribution to the developing theological notion of the episcopate.

His second lies in his explanation of the way the presbyteral character is expanded in episcopal consecration. Some of the older Scholastics had only stated the fact without any attempt to explain the fact. It is true that Paludanus' explanation of this character extension is by way of analogy

¹⁷ Cf. *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae Aquinatis*, lib. 4 Sent., d. 25, q.1, a.3, I, ad 2um (vol. 6, 483).

rather than by way of definition. But to us it seems to be one of the clearest of any explanations that even later theologians will give. Further, Paludanus appears to be among the first, if not the first, to introduce the theory of "intrinsic extension", as opposed to that of "extrinsic extension" proposed some two and a half centuries later by Vasquez. De Palude does not qualify his extension theory with the term 'intrinsic', because there was no need for it at the time, but the thought is definitely there inasmuch as any extension of a potency must of necessity be an intrinsic modification. Thus, Paludanus is not to be placed in the company of Durandus and William of Auxerre,¹⁸ but seems to have made a definite contribution to the Thomistic School's understanding of the nature of the episcopate according to the principles laid down by the Angelic Doctor.

In JOHN CAPREOLUS (d. 1444), a Dominican theologian of Paris and Rodez, the Thomistic concept of the episcopate comes to a temporary standstill. This was occasioned remotely by the general decadence of both philosophy and theology at this period in which the brilliant teaching and orthodox originality of the great masters of the past was no longer in evidence.¹⁹ Despite such a decline the Order of Preachers managed to retain a noteworthy doctrinal vitality, and one of the men it produced at this juncture was John Capreolus. More proximately, the standstill was caused by the very nature of the work this theologian undertook. His *Defensiones Theologiae Divi Thomae*, planned as a commentary on the Lombard, was a comprehensive defense of the doctrine of St. Thomas against the various opponents and critics who had attacked it since the end of the thirteenth century. By reason of this objective, then, the work had for its purpose not so much a further

¹⁸ William of Auxerre (d.1231) in his *Summa Aurea* (Paris, 1500), lib. 4, tract.8, q.1, dissented from the common Scholastic teaching on this question.

¹⁹ Cf. Mandonnet, "Frères Prêcheurs," *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* 6 (1), 905.

explanation and elucidation of the teaching of St. Thomas as a restatement and reaffirmation of his true doctrine.

In the twenty-fifth distinction of the IVth Book of Sentences, in which he takes up the question of the episcopate, Capreolus wars principally against Durandus and Aureolus.²⁰ Although he approves on a number of occasions the writing of Paludanus, he nevertheless labeled as foreign to the thought of St. Thomas Paludanus' statement that the "episcopate was a sacrament but not distinct from the sacrament of orders."²¹ But Capreolus did admit that in some way or another the episcopate complemented the presbyteral power. This appears from his answer to the "impediment-removing" theory of Aureolus:

"It is a fiction to say that the bishop in his consecration receives no new power, nor an extension nor augmentation of his previous power, but only the removal of an impediment to that power. This is contrary to the words used in his consecration in which there is no mention of such removal of an impediment, but in which there is mention of the conferring of a power. In this connection St. Thomas writes . . . : 'In the promotion of a bishop there is given to him a power which remains with him forever; however, it cannot be called a character, because through it the bishop is not ordained directly to God but to the Mystical Body of Christ.'"²²

²⁰ Peter Aureolus (d.1322), a Franciscan, in his *Commentary on the IV Books of Sentences*, taught that in episcopal consecration an impediment was removed from the presbyteral character; consequently, no new power was given to the bishop but his priestly power was no longer held in check. And thus the amplification of power really meant the removal of a restraining force. Hence, the conferring of orders pertained to the presbyteral power—unimpeded. Cf. Capreolus, *op. cit.*, a. 2, sect. 2, ad 2um (vol. 6, 480).

²¹ Cf. note 17, *supra*

²² Capreolus, *op. cit.*, a.3, sect. 2, ad 2um (vol. 6, 486): "... fictio est dicere quod episcopus in sua consecratione nullam novam potestatem accipiat, nec intensionem vel augmentationem praecedentis, sed solam remotionem impedimenti prioris potestatis. Hoc enim est contra formam verborum suae consecrationis, in quibus nulla fit mentio de

With a scrupulous fidelity and an inflexible adherence to the pure teaching of the Angelic Doctor, Capreolus for the most part holds fast to the categorical statements of St. Thomas, namely, that the episcopate is not a sacramental order and does not impress a character.

The same can be said of FRANCIS de SYLVESTRIS FERRARIENSIS (d. 1526). In his *Commentary on the Summa Contra Gentiles* this author clings to the basic distinction St. Thomas made between the episcopate as a sacramental order and the episcopate as an hierarchical order; and because the episcopate does not bear any direct and immediate relationship to the Real Body of Christ it cannot be called a sacrament. He returns to this same principle again when he considers the power of the bishop, both as received by him in his consecration and as exercised by him on others, e.g., in the conferring of confirmation and orders. In the former instance, even though it is a power for dispensing the sacraments to others and is received under sensible signs, still it is not primarily ordained to the Real Body of Christ. And in the second instance, the act of the bishop in bestowing these sacraments on others affects immediately members of the Mystical Body of Christ. The question of augmentation or extension of the presbyteral character Ferrariensis does not treat at all.²³

Towards the middle of the same century DOMINIC SOTO (d. 1560), after having distinguished himself at the Council of Trent, succeeded Melchior Cano in the Chair of Theology at the University of Salamanca. He propounded the doctrine of St. Thomas on the nature of the episcopate and joined to it the extension theory of Paludanus. For example,

tali remotione impedimenti, et fit mentio de collatione potestatis. De hoc S. Thomas, In Sent., IV, d. 25, q.1, a.2, ad 2um: 'In promotione episcopi datur sibi potestas quae perpetuo manet in eo, quamvis dici non possit character quia per eam non ordinatur homo directe ad Deum, sed ad corpus Christi mysticum.' "

²³ *Comment. in Summam Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 76, De Episcopali Dignitate, Comment., nn. II-III.

after repeating St. Thomas' distinction between the episcopate as a sacramental order and as an hierarchical order, he states:

"That the episcopate is not *per se* a sacrament is proved, firstly, because those asserting the contrary are opposed by the common opinion as well as the practice of the Church which acknowledges only seven orders. Secondly and chiefly, all orders are compared to the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, and are distinguished in relation to it; the episcopate therefore is not a sacrament Thirdly, if the episcopate would be *per se* a sacrament superior to the priesthood, it would follow that it would imprint a new character ; such a consequence does not follow, because if one were consecrated a bishop before he were a priest, he would be neither a bishop nor a priest."²⁴

It is in answer to an objection, which states that the episcopate is a sacrament since it empowers the bishop to confirm and ordain, that Soto replies with what seems to be the intrinsic extension theory:

"And although the diaconate, because *per se* one can be a deacon before he is a priest, *per se* confers a character, nevertheless, the episcopate, since it is not a step leading to the priesthood but rather presupposes and perfects it, does not imprint a new character; but the same priestly character, when a priest is consecrated a bishop, is extended and amplified; it is extended, I say, to other offices which before he could not perform."²⁵

²⁴ *In Quartum Sententiarum*, vol. 2, d. 24, q.2, a.3: "...quod episcopatus non sit per se sacramentum, probatur primo: quia contrarium asserentes sine causa adversantur communi opinioni et ecclesiae usui, quo non celebrantur nisi septem ordines. Secundo et potissimum, ordines omnes ad sacrosanctum eucharistiae sacramentum referuntur, et in ordine ad ipsum distinguuntur; episcopatus . . . ergo non est sacramentum. . . . Tertio, si episcopatus esset per se sacramentum superius sacerdotio, sequeretur quod novum characterem imprimeret . . . ; consequens tamen est falsum: quoniam si episcopus ante quam fieret sacerdos consecraretur, nihil fieret."

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ad 2um: "Et ideo licet diaconatus, quia per se potest esse diaconus antequam fit presbyter, characterem per se imprimat, tamen

In this teaching of Soto it is interesting to note his statement that those who assert the episcopate is a distinct sacrament go contrary to the common opinion; thus, according to this author, the view of St. Thomas as late as the Council of Trent was still the generally accepted opinion. A second noteworthy statement is the phrase: "the episcopate is not *per se* a sacrament." Some two hundred years earlier Paludanus had written that the episcopate was a sacrament but not distinct from the sacrament of orders. It was remarked then that de Palude seemed to be stating explicitly a thought that was only implicitly contained in the teaching of St. Thomas, namely, that the episcopate in some way or other belonged to the generic whole of the sacrament of orders. Here we venture to say that Dominic Soto is giving a further clarification to the same thought. We understand his phrase of *per se* to mean that the episcopate considered in itself and apart from the generic sacrament of orders is not a sacrament; but in relation to the sacrament of orders, and especially in relation to the presbyterate, the episcopate is *per accidens* a sacrament inasmuch as it is an extension and complement of the presbyterate. Perhaps the logical deduction about the *per accidens* aspects of the episcopate as a sacrament was thought too open to misinterpretation or too foreign to the original statements of St. Thomas. But whatever the reason, Soto's phrase of *per se* did not impress later theologians because we do not find them using it. However, it did occasion a search for a more precise phrase, which was eventually produced in the eighteenth century, and which is still used in the present day.

Leaving for the moment Dominican theologians, we turn aside to consider, in chronological order as well as for a

episcopatus, quia non est via ad sacerdotium sed illud praesupponit illudque perficit, non imprimit characterem novum, sed ipse idem character sacerdotalis, dum sacerdos in episcopum consecratur, fit extensior et amplior; extenditur, inquam, ad aliqua munera exequenda quae antea nequiverat." Cf. also dist. 24, q.1, a.4; and dist. 25, q.1, a.1, obj.

better understanding of later Thomistic teaching, the opinion of GABRIEL VASQUEZ (d. 1604), Jesuit professor at Alcala and at Rome. He introduced the theory of "extrinsic extension", which seems to be so called for the sake of convenience or perhaps for the sake of contrast to that of the Dominican theory of "intrinsic extension". More properly speaking it could be called the theory of "extrinsic denomination" since it does not admit any extension of the presbyteral character at all.

First, Vasquez taught that the episcopate was both a sacrament and an order, but not distinct from the presbyterate. He writes:

"I have always favored the opinion of Durandus and others who say that the episcopate is both an order and a sacrament but not distinct from the priesthood; not that the bishop is exactly the same as the priest, but that the bishop is as it were a more perfect priest"²⁶

In order not to seem opposed to the common opinion of only seven orders, as invoked above by Dominic Soto, Vasquez then explains further his statement made in the preceding paragraph:

"We do not add a new order to the septenary number of orders which here and there [ie., by various authors] has been assigned in the Church. But we say that the episcopate is an order in such wise that it is not distinct from the priesthood but has the same relationship to it as the power of absolving from sins, conferred in sacerdotal ordination, has with the power of consecrating. It is a power of orders, and orders is a sacrament; nevertheless, it is neither an order nor a sacrament integrally distinct from the previous power [ie., the power of consecrating], but with that power

²⁶ *Commentaria et Disputationes in III Partem Sancti Thomae*, vol. 3, De Sacramento Ordinis, disp. 240, cap. 5, n. 47: "Mihi tamen semper placuit sententia Durandi et aliorum, qui dicunt episcopatum esse quidem ordinem et sacramentum, non tamen distinctum a sacerdotio; non quod omnino idem sit episcopus quod sacerdos, sed quod episcopus sit quasi sacerdos magis perfectus. . . ."

constitutes one integral order and sacrament. The same thing is true in the episcopate; for just as the power of absolving does not constitute an order and sacrament separate from the previous power, which is so necessary that unless it has previously been impressed the power of absolving cannot be conferred, for then there would be no ordination and no conferring of such power, so also unless the priesthood has been received beforehand the episcopate cannot be conferred, and if it should be conferred it would be entirely invalid. The episcopate is then the perfect priesthood, by which a priest is able to generate and ordain other priests, and thus the bishop is compared with the priest as a male adult, who is able to beget other men, is compared with a child who cannot; for the bishop is able to father priests through ordination, while the priest himself cannot."²⁷

Vasquez gives mention to the theory of intrinsic extension and does not seem too much opposed to it. As a matter of fact, he says such an extension necessarily takes place if one

²⁷ *Ibid.*, n.50: "...respondemus ad primum argumentum oppositae sententiae, desumptum ex numero ordinum, ad probandum episcopatum non esse ordinem: nos non addere novum ordinem supra septenarium numerum ordinum, qui passim in Ecclesia constituitur: quia ita dicimus episcopatum esse ordinem, ut asseramus, non esse distinctum a sacerdotio, sed eodem modo cum illo se habere, sicut... se habere potestatem collatam sacerdotali absolvendum a peccatis cum potestate consecrandi. Est enim potestas ordinis, et ordo sacramentum, non tamen distinctus integer ordo, neque sacramentum a priori potestate, sed cum priori unum integrum ordinem et sacramentum constituens. Est autem eadem omnino ratio in episcopatu: nam sicut potestas absolvendi non constituit diversum ordinem et sacramentum a priori, qui illam ita necessario tanquam praeviam postulat ut nisi ea impressa conferri nequeat, et alioqui nulla sit ordinatio, et collatio talis potestatis: ita etiam nisi praevio sacerdotio, episcopatus conferri non potest, et aliter collatus nullus omnino sit. Est igitur episcopatus sacerdotium perfectum, quo sacerdos alios sacerdotes generare et ordinare potest, et ita episcopus cum sacerdote comparatur sicut vir adultae aetatis, qui alios homines potest gignere, cum juvene qui non potest: nam episcopus generare potest sacerdotes per ordinationem, sacerdos autem non potest."

understands character to be a *potentia*.²⁸ He even defends this theory against the ridicule of Michael de Medina who scoffed at those who held this opinion, pointing out that Medina wrongly understood it as a quantitative extension while its proponents rightly understood it as a qualitative extension.²⁹ Vasquez, however, does not embrace this opinion but sets forth an entirely different view on the relationship of the episcopate to the presbyterate. To the question whether or not character is conferred in episcopal consecration, he replies:

“In this matter I philosophize the same as I did concerning the sacerdotal order and the absolving from sin, so that in such an ordination [i.e., episcopal consecration] neither is there imprinted a character entirely distinct from the preceding, nor is the preceding character extended, but while the character remains the same there is conferred another power distinct from the preceding, and for the very same reason”³⁰

He then refers the reader to his preceding disputation in which he theorized concerning the impression of the presbyteral character relative to the power of consecrating and the power of absolving. The question was whether or not in the ordination ceremony the presbyteral character, impressed with the *traditio instrumentorum*, was extended with the last imposition of hands and the words, *Accipe Spiritum Sanctum*, etc. His answer is:

“... since . . . character cannot be in the species of natural potency, nor a principle of operation, it must then be in the species of habit and disposition, not to something else, i.e., to operation, but to itself, i.e., that by which the subject *bene se ha-*

²⁸ *Ibid.* disp. 239, cap. 6, n. 56.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, disp. 240, cap. 5, n. 52.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 54: “Ego vero in hoc re ita censeo philosophandum, sicut disp. 239, cap. 6, de ordine sacerdotali ad absolvendum a peccatis philosophatus sum, ut neque in tali ordinatione imprimatur character omnino distinctus a praecedente, nec extendatur praecedens, sed permanente eodem caractere, conferatur alia potestas distincta a praecedente, ob eandem prorsus rationem. . . .”

beat; therefore, I do not think it necessary that a distinct character be produced by the imposition of hands and the words "Accipe Spiritum Sanctum", etc., nor [do I think] that the same character is extended, but it is sufficient that to one who has such a character as well as the power of consecrating annexed to that character, that another power be conferred for absolving; this power, just as the preceding, adds nothing else to the character than a relation of divine destination to this or that ministry, which is an extrinsic denomination, and therefore in the thing denominated it is a *relatio rationis ex fundamento reali*, proceeding as from an extrinsic form, as happens also in other things."⁸¹

The phrase—"and for the very same reason"—at the very end of the next to last quotation, must evidently refer then to Vasquez's concept of sacramental character. As he himself says, it is a *habitus*; it is then not a *potentia*, but at most a sign of a potency. And as a sign of a potency, the character itself does not operate in any presbyteral or episcopal act, but rather the respective powers attached to the character. The character is simply that which anchors, so to speak, these powers in the soul. And the word 'power' is to be understood, not in the sense of an inherent ableness or energized quiddity that accomplishes these acts, but rather in the sense of a commission or delegation by God to execute such acts. Thus, in the ordination ceremony, with

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, disp. 239, cap. 6, n. 57: "... quia ... character non potest esse in specie naturalis potentiae, neque principium operandi, ac proinde debeat esse in specie habitus et dispositionis, non ad aliud, hoc est, ad operationem, sed ad se, hoc est, qua subjectum bene se habeat: ideo existimo, necessarium non esse distinctum characterem per impositionem manuum et verba illa 'Accipe Spiritum Sanctum' etc., produci, neque eundem extendi, sed satis esse ei, qui talem characterem habet et priorem potestatem, nempe consecrandi ei annexam, conferri aliam ad absolvendum, haec autem potestas, sicut et prior, supra characterem nihil aliud addit nisi relationem destinationis divinae ad hoc, aut illud ministerium, quae est extrinseca denominatio ac proinde in re denominata relatio rationis ex fundamento reali; tanquam a forma extrinseca proveniens, sicut in aliis etiam accidit."

the *traditio instrumentorum* the presbyteral character is imprinted in the soul of the ordinand, and at the same time the power to consecrate is annexed to the character. Then, with the last imposition of hands a second power is annexed to the character, namely, the power to forgive sins. In the meanwhile the character itself has not undergone any change because these powers are only extrinsically attached to the character. Since episcopal consecration is the addition of a third, distinct and separate power it might appear that one could be consecrated a bishop without first having been ordained a presbyter. But Vasquez says this could not happen because character, which is imprinted in presbyteral ordination, is necessary as the anchor or base on which to latch the episcopal power or commission. This would seem to be necessary not by reason of any intrinsic necessity but only as a *sine qua non* condition, in much the same way as nobility might be required for appointment to some high office in a royal government. A final point in this teaching of Vasquez is that episcopal consecration effects nothing real in the bishop himself. As Vasquez says, it is nothing other than "a relation of divine destination to this or that ministry, which is an extrinsic denomination." In other words, it is a divine *appointment* to a new and higher office without the communication of any real, inherent power, just as the appointment of the above official by the king gives legality to all the acts of that official without communicating to him any intrinsic capability with which to fulfill his office.

In the seventeenth century in France, when new modes of thought were beginning to supplant the traditional ones and when theological discussion was rife, a champion of Thomistic theology arose in the person of the Dominican, JOHN GONET (d. 1681). He held the Chair of Scholastic Theology at the University of Bordeaux, and, like Capreolus some two hundred years before, set about to expound and defend the pure doctrine of St. Thomas. This he did in his principal writing, which bears the significant title of

Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae, and the equally indicative subtitle, *contra novas ejus impugnatores*.

In the introduction to his section on the episcopate as an extension of the presbyterate, Gonet mentions a theologian who stated that only a blind and confused person would dare doubt that the episcopate was not an order distinct from the presbyterate, for the simple reason that it requires a separate ordination. Then Gonet quotes with approval the logical deduction of another theologian who challenged the first with these words: "In his judgment, then, St. Thomas was blind, St. Bonaventure was blind, Scotus and Middleton and Albert the Great were blind, all of whom thought the episcopate was not an order."³²

With this remark more or less pitching the tone of what follows, Gonet goes about proving not only the triviality of the first statement but also the soundness and reasonableness of the Thomistic position. He formulates his proposition as follows:

"I say therefore that the episcopate is not an order distinct from the priesthood but an extension of the priesthood itself, and its most excellent complement."³³

Then follow arguments based upon the Council of Trent, the teaching of St. Thomas, and theological reasoning—which will be given later in this chapter. Among the objections it is alleged that if episcopal ordination is not a sacrament then it cannot be proved from the scriptures that orders is a sacrament, because the pertinent passages³⁴ are understood to refer to episcopal ordination.³⁵ To which Gonet replies:

³² Gonet, *Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae*, vol. 6, de Ordine, disp. 4, a. 2, n. 20

³³ *Ibid.*: "Dico igitur episcopatum non esse ordinem distinctum a sacerdotio, sed ipsius sacerdotii extensionem, et excellentissimum ejus complementum."

³⁴ 1 Timothy 4:14; and 2 Timothy 1:6.

³⁵ Gonet, *op. cit.*, n. 32

"In order that we may gather from the scriptures that orders is a true sacrament it is sufficient that the *episcopate be an intrinsic complement of the sacrament of orders*, since indeed it is impossible that orders should be completed in the measure of a sacrament by the episcopate unless orders were a sacrament."⁸⁶

He explains further the meaning of intrinsic complement, when he writes:

"Episcopal consecration does not confer a new character but only completes and extends the priestly character, by causing in it a new, real, and physical modal entity which it did not have before, in virtue of which it is extended to administering and confecting two other sacraments which the simple priest, at least by reason of his ordination alone, cannot administer or confect; it is an indelible modal entity, like the character itself. This can be explained by the example of the physical power to absolve from sin which the priest receives in his ordination. This [power] does not have the nature of a character but that of a real, intrinsic and physical modal entity which extends the priestly character, impressed earlier in the [act of] touching the chalice, to the Mystical Body of Christ, ie., to cleansing from sin instrumentally and physically the members of that Body. Wherefore, the episcopate is nothing else than the perfect priesthood, and just as a child and a grown man differ in this, that the child *in ratione hominis* is imperfect and does not have the power of reproducing himself, while the adult *in ratione hominis* is perfect and can generate others, so also the simple priest in his own way is imperfect and cannot spiritually beget other priests, while the bishop can."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 34: Sufficit enim quod episcopatus sit complementum intrinsecum sacramenti ordinis, ut ex Scripturis in quibus est sermo de ipso, colligamus ordinem esse verum sacramentum; quandoquidem impossibile est quod ordo compleatur in ratione sacramenti, per episcopatum, nisi ordo sit sacramentum."

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 39: "... consecratio episcopalis non confert novum characterem, sed dumtaxat characterem sacerdotalem complet et extendit,

Gonet is ranged among the outstanding representatives of Neo-Thomism both by reason of his fidelity to the principles of his School as well as the clarity and skill with which he expounded those principles. Certainly the few passages relating to the episcopate bear that out. In addition to that they also mark another step in the further precisioning of the Thomistic School's concept of the episcopate. This appears first in the statement of the proposition. In the fourteenth century de Palude had phrased it as follows: "the episcopate is a sacrament but not distinct from the sacrament of orders." In the sixteenth century Soto had worded it: "the episcopate is not *per se* a sacrament." Now, in Gonet we have the same ideas stated but regrouped into a different collocation which makes the concept of the episcopate more precise. The negative part of the proposition is placed first: "the episcopate is not an order distinct from the priesthood"; then follows the positive part: "but an extension of the priesthood itself and its most excellent complement."

Such wording would seem to imply that the episcopate belongs to the sacrament of orders considered as a whole. But what is only implicitly said here is explicitly stated by

causando in eo novum modum realem et physicum quem antea non habebat, ratione cuius extenditur ad ministrandum et conficiendum duo alia sacramenta, quae non potest simplex sacerdos, saltem ex vi praecise suae ordinationis, ministrare vel conficere; est modus ille indelebilis, sicut ipse character. Quod potest explicari exemplo... potestatis physicae ad absolvendum a peccatis, quam recipit sacerdos in sua ordinatione; haec enim non habet rationem characteris, sed modi realis intrinseci et physici, characterem sacerdotalem, in contactu calicis antea impressum, extendentis ad corpus Christi mysticum, sive ad ipsius membra instrumentaliter physice mundanda a peccatis. Quare episcopatus nihil aliud est praeter sacerdotium perfectum, et sicut puer et vir perfectus in eo differunt, quod puer in ratione hominis sit imperfectus, nec vim habeat gignendi sibi simile; vir autem in ratione hominis sit perfectus, et alios possit generare; ita etiam simplex sacerdos suo modo est imperfectus, nec potest alios sacerdotes spiritualiter gignere vel consecrare; episcopus autem id potest."

Gonet when he writes: "the episcopate is an intrinsic complement of the sacrament of orders." He is the first of the Thomistic theologians, treated thus far, to place the episcopate (as a non-distinct sacrament) clearly and unequivocally within the framework of the sacrament of orders, while his predecessors had done so only by inference. He is also the first, whom we have been able to discover, to use the word "intrinsic", although again such men as Paludanus and Soto seemed to have taught the same identical theory of extension. But if we recall that Vasquez about the beginning of the seventeenth century had come forward with his theory of "extrinsic extension", perhaps in this we can find a reason why Gonet, some sixty years later, deemed it necessary to use the word "intrinsic" as a specifying adjective.

The extension of the presbyteral character by episcopal consecration he explained as a new, real, and physical modal entity which is caused in the character. Since it is an amplification of a quality and not of a quantity, the extension is more properly called a modification. Such accidental modifications are of two kinds: (a) *absolute accidents*, which immediately affect the substance itself; and (b) *modal accidents*, which immediately affect an absolute accident and through this latter the substance itself.³⁸ In both instances there is an *intrinsic* modification or determination of the substance. Thus, in presbyteral ordination the character of orders is conferred; this character is a *modal accident* which adheres immediately to the faculty of the soul and which gives the soul an actual determination to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ. In the same ordination, towards the end of the ceremony, the bishop confers

³⁸ Henry Grenier, *Cursus Philosophiae* (2nd. ed., Quebeci, 1944), vol. 2, n. 644: "Accidens adhuc dicitur *absolutum* aut *modale* prout immediate ipsam substantiam, vel prout potius immediate ipsum accidens absolutum et ipso mediante substantiam afficit." Cf. also Joseph Mellino, *Lexicon Scholasticorum Verborum* (contained in *Summa Theologica Divi Thomae* [Romae, 1886-1887], vol. 6), s.v. 'modus'. Cf. also St. Thomas, *Summa Theologica*, 1, q.77, a.7, ad 2um, and 1-2æ, q.56, a.1, ad 3um.

the power to forgive sins. This act does not add a new character but gives an intrinsic modification to the same presbyteral character. This modification is another *modal accident* and is a further determination of the character, ie., the bestowal of a power to effect sacramental absolution, an act which up to that time the ordinand could not perform.

In episcopal consecration a similar change takes place. The presbyteral character undergoes still another modification. Just as the presbyteral character was first extended and endowed with the power to confer sacramental absolution, so now it is again extended and endowed with the power to confirm and ordain *ex officio*, acts which before it could not perform. The *modal accident* of absolving and the *modal accident* of confirming and ordaining, when considered in themselves, are not greater nor more excellent than that of consecrating. The reason is that they have a direct relationship to the Mystical Body of Christ, whereas this last has a direct relationship to the Real Body of Christ. But the added modalities of absolving, and of confirming and ordaining, do contribute to the idea of completeness in the priesthood, ie., the *sacerdotium* in its widest signification. The *essence* of the priesthood consists in the power to consecrate. The *integrity* of the priesthood consists in the powers to consecrate and absolve. The *perfection* of the priesthood consists in the powers to consecrate, to absolve, and to ordain. Thus, Gonet uses much more aptly than Vasquez the analogy of the child and the adult. Both have the same identical essence of *homo*, but the adult with his power to reproduce himself has an accidental mode of perfection which the child does not have. Yet this accidental mode of perfection does not make the adult to be a *homo* specifically different from the child; it is nothing more than a modification or further determination of his essence as *homo*. In like manner the power to ordain and to consecrate, ie., to beget spiritually other presbyters and bishops, does not make the episcopate to be a sacramental order specifically diverse from the presbyterate; it is nothing

more than a modification or further determination of the presbyteral character, which is the essence of the priesthood. On the other hand, since the additional powers to absolve and to ordain effect a real internal modification of the presbyteral character they are considered to be intrinsic and indelible, not extrinsic and revocable like the commissioning of a presbyter as an extraordinary minister of confirmation and orders. As a result these powers belong to the sacrament of orders, as a generic whole, although they do not constitute sacramental grades specifically diverse from the order of the presbyterate. Thus, Gonet called the episcopate an intrinsic complement of the *sacrament of orders*.

In brief, then, Gonet, unlike Capreolus, did not confine himself to the strict verbal statements of St. Thomas, but took cognizance of the thomistic development of the theological notion of the episcopate and added to that concept.

The SALMANTICENSIS CURSUS THEOLOGIAE MORALIS, like its more famous dogmatic counterpart, made strict adherence to Thomism its guiding principle. In 1668 Andrés de la Madre de Dios wrote the tract on orders,³⁹ and when he came to the question of the episcopate gave very clear evidence as to that guiding principle. He repeats the fundamental arguments, namely, that there are only seven sacramental orders,⁴⁰ that a sacramental order is so constituted by reason of its immediate relationship to the Eucharist,⁴¹ and that the episcopate is a complement of the presbyterate.⁴² This complement he explains with the most recent and scholarly exposition thus far advanced, namely Gonet's theory of intrinsic extension.⁴³ Gonet had written his *Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae* only a few years earlier, and perhaps it was such proximity in time that made it impossible for the Salmanticenses Morales to contribute any-

³⁹ Cf. Hugo Hurter, *Nomenclator Literarius* (2nd. ed., Oeniponte, 1892-1899), vol. 2, col. 267.

⁴⁰ *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologiae Moralis* (ed. novissima, Venetiis, 1714-1724), vol. 2, tract. 8, De Ordine, cap. 1, n. 28

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, n. 31

⁴² *Ibid.*, n. 33

⁴³ *Ibid.*

thing new to the evolving notion of the episcopate among the followers of the Angelic Doctor. But the very use and approval by this *Cursus* of Gonet's theory attests the thomistic character of his explanation.

In CHARLES RENÉ BILLUART (d. 1757) the Thomistic concept of the episcopate attains another degree of precision. Billuart wrote his learned *Summa Sancti Thomae* when he was in his early sixties and after thirty-five years of teaching that were periodically interrupted by election and appointment to high administrative posts among the Belgian Dominicans. Intending the work principally as an answer to the writings of Honoratus Tournely (d. 1729), the powerful exponent of Molinism at the Sorbonne,⁴⁴ Billuart showed an equally keen penetration of problems and his penchant for precise, clear-cut distinctions when he took up the topic of the episcopate. It is in his *status quaestionis* that he makes his contributions. He writes:

"The episcopate can be considered in a twofold sense: first, *adaequate*, i.e., every power which it essentially implies, namely, [the powers] to consecrate, to absolve, to ordain, to confirm, and to govern; for the bishop is essentially a priest . . . ; secondly, *inadaequate*, inasmuch as it adds [something] to the simple priesthood, in other words, the powers only of ordaining, confirming, and governing.⁴⁵

Having made this distinction, he continues:

"I suppose, in the first place, that the episcopate considered *inadaequate* is an order, in the wider signification, distinct from the priesthood, because

⁴⁴ Jos. Fenton, *The Concept of Sacred Theology* (Milwaukee, 1941), p. 253.

⁴⁵ C. Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, vol. 7, De Ordine, dissert. 4, a. 2.: "Item episcopatus potest dupliciter considerari: primo, *adaequate* secundum omnem potestatem quam essentialiter importat, scilicet consecrandi, absolvendi, ordinandi, confirmandi et gubernandi; est enim episcopus essentialiter sacerdos . . . ; secundo, *inadaequate* pro eo quod addit simplici sacerdotio, seu pro potestate tantum ordinandi, confirmandi et gubernandi."

it confers a power in hierarchical actions relative to the Mystical Body of Christ, namely, the power of ordaining, of confirming, and of jurisdiction, which the simple priest does not have.

I suppose in the second place, that the episcopate considered *adaequate* is and is called a true order strictly speaking: the sacrament of orders; because, as I have said already and will say below, it [the episcopate] essentially implies the priesthood, and what it adds to it [the priesthood] does not destroy the nature and the name of orders; because a perfection that is superadded to a genus does not destroy the nature and the name of that genus. For example, rationality following upon animality does not destroy the nature and the name of animal in man; the quality of general when added to a soldier does not destroy the nature and name of soldier in the general.⁴⁶

Then the statement of the proposition:

"I say [therefore] that the episcopate, considered *inadaequate* inasmuch as it adds [something] to the simple priesthood, is more probably not an order strictly so-called, i.e., the sacrament of orders, nor consequently is it an order distinct from the priesthood, but is its extension and most perfect complement."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*: "Suppono primo episcopatum inadaequate sumptum esse ordinem in latiori significatione a sacerdotio distinctum, quia confert potestatem in actionibus hierarchicis respectu corporis Christi mystici, scilicet potestatem ordinandi, confirmandi et jurisdictionis, quam non habet simplex sacerdos.

Suppono secundo episcopatum adaequate sumptum vere esse et dici ordinem stricte sumptum seu sacramentum ordinis; quia, ut jam dixi et dicam iterum infra, essentialiter importat sacerdotium, et quod illi superaddit non destruit rationem et denominationem ordinis; quia perfectio superveniens generi non destruit rationem et denominationem illius. Sic rationale superveniens animali non destruit rationem et denominationem animalis in homine; et qualitas ducis superveniens militi non destruit rationem et denominationem militis in duce."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*: "Dico: episcopatus inadaequate sumptus pro eo quod addit simplici sacerdotio, probabilius non est ordo stricte sumptus seu sacramentum ordinis, nec consequenter ordo distinctus a sacerdotio, sed est ejus extensio et perfectissimum complementum."

Billuart supports his position with the traditional arguments of the Thomistic school, and calls the amplification of the presbyteral character in episcopal consecration an intrinsic extension.⁴⁸ This latter he explains, following Gonet, as a real physical modal entity which extends the character to acts that before were not proper to it.⁴⁹

Thus the contribution of Billuart lies in the introduction of the terms *adaequate* and *inadaequate*.⁵⁰ It is, however, not so much primarily a precisioning of thought as a precisioning of terminology because the idea was certainly present among the older theologians. But precise terminology makes for precise thinking, and Billuart's clarity of expression has left its stamp on present-day Thomists, nearly all of whom, when writing on the episcopate, make use of his distinction. Whether or not the Thomistic School's con-

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, resp. obj. primo

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, resp. obj. tertio

⁵⁰ Billuart was not the first theologian to use these terms in this dispute about the episcopate. But he was the first *Thomist*, so far as we know, to employ them in the sense in which he does.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, Claude Frassen, O.F.M. (d.1711) wrote his celebrated *Scotus Academicus*, and in his treatment of the episcopate this terminology can be found. Frassen is definitely non-Thomistic inasmuch as he holds that the episcopate has the *ratio* of a distinct sacramental order, properly so-called. Hence, there is no need for him to distinguish on this point between the episcopate strictly considered and the episcopate as embracing the powers of the presbyterate. It is later on, when faced with the conclusion of admitting more than the traditional seven sacramental orders, that he makes the distinction of *adaequate* and *inadaequate*. He writes: "Distinguo minorem: essent plures ordines quam septem adaequate sumpti, nego; inadaequate, concedo. Quamvis enim episcopatus sit distinctus a sacerdotio, attamen ab eo adaequate non distinguitur, quemadmodum caeteri ordines sunt inter se distincti et mutuo separabiles; licet enim sacerdotium possit existere separatim ab episcopatu, cum plures sint sacerdotes qui non sunt episcopi; attamen episcopatus consistere nequit absque sacerdotio, cum nulli quoad potestatem ordinis possint esse episcopi, qui non sint sacerdotes." Cf. *Scotus Academicus*, vol. 12, tract. 3, disp. 1, a.1, q.4, sect. 3, obj. 4.

cept of the episcopate has reached its perfection is hard to say. But this much seems certain, that in the last two hundred years, i.e., from Billuart's time down to our own, there has been no further development of that concept. Perhaps the reason is that this theological dispute is no longer the controversial question that it was in times past; or perhaps the reason is that modern trends of irreligion make more imperative the exposition and defense of revealed dogmas. But whatever the reason, present day Thomists simply restate and reaffirm their School's concept of the episcopate as it evolved from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century. Among such theologians can be found: *Holtum, Lottini, Pégues, Paquet, Diekamp, Héris, Lépicier, Billot, Hugon, Merkelbach, Garrigou-Lagrange, Ferland, and Iorio*.⁵¹

The theological reasons which are commonly adduced in favor of this theory of intrinsic extension are principally the following:

1. The Council of Trent, in the twenty-third session, the

⁵¹ Holtum, "Quaeritur utrum episcopatus sit ordo," *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und Spekulative Theologie* 14 (1900), 11-14; Lottini, *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae Specialis*, vol. 3, n. 673; Pégues, *Commentaire français littéral de la Somme Théologique*, vol. 20, Suppl., q.40, a.5; Paquet, *Commentaria in Summam Theologicam D. Thomae*, De Sacramentis (II Pars), disp. 6, De Ordine, q.1, a.3, concl. 2; Diekamp, *Theologiae Dogmaticae Manuale*, vol. 4, De Sacramento Ordinis, cap. 1, sect. 63, n. 3, obj.; Héris, *Le Mystère du Christ*, p. 326; Lépicier, *Institutiones Theologiae Speculativae*, vol. 3, De Sacramento Ordinis, q.1, a.4, n.10; Billot, *De Ecclesiae Sacramentis*, vol. 2, De Ordine, th. 31, sect. 2; Hugon, *Tractatus Dogmatici*, vol. 3, De Ordine, a. 5, n. 6; Merkelbach, *Summa Theologiae Moralis*, vol. 3, De Ordine, n. 731; Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Eucharistia*, De Ordine, p. 412, and *De Sanctificatione Sacerdotum*, cap 1, a. 4; Ferland, *Commentarius in Summam D. Thomae—De Sacramentis in Speciali*, De Ordine, sect. 3, disp. 2, a. 1; Iorio, *Theologia Moralis*, vol. 3, De Ordine, n. 786.

Lottini, Pégues, Paquet, Héris, Lépicier, Billot, Hugon, and Iorio *loc. cit.*, do not use the word "intrinsic"; but they speak of the character itself as extended or amplified by episcopal consecration, which can mean only an *intrinsic* modification of the presbyteral character.

second chapter, lists only seven orders; it begins with the priesthood as the supreme order, and makes no mention of the episcopate. But if episcopal consecration were an order distinct from the priesthood, and were superior to it, Trent would not have omitted it in the list of orders, nor would it have placed the priesthood as the first and supreme order. Therefore, Trent considered the episcopate not as an order distinct from the priesthood, but only its extension and complement.⁵²

It might be objected against this argument that Trent did not enumerate the episcopate among the orders because, although it is specifically distinct from the presbyterate, it is nevertheless generically one with it. Billuart replies that if one follows such a line of reasoning, then Trent should not have enumerated the various orders at all because, although they are specifically distinct one from the other, nevertheless they form only one generic sacrament of orders.⁵³

2. Nor does it suffice to say that Trent omitted the episcopate from the number of orders for the reason that it is the cause of all the other orders. Granted that it is the cause of all the other orders, still it ought to have been included among these orders if it were in itself an order distinct from the presbyterate and if it impressed a distinct character. Since orders are distinguished among themselves by reason of the various relationships they have towards the Eucharist, not only those orders should have been mentioned which either dispose towards the Eucharist or immediately affect it, but also that which prepares worthy ministers for the Eucharist. Therefore, no other probable reason can be assigned why Trent omitted the episcopate and began with the priesthood as the supreme order, ex-

⁵² Gonet, *Clypeus Theologiae Thomisticae*, vol. 6, De Ordine, disp. 4, a. 2, n. 22; *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologiae Moralis*, vol. 2, tract. 8, De Ordine, cap. 1, n. 24; Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, vol. 7, De Ordine, dissert. 4, a. 2.

⁵³ Billuart, *ibid.*; *Salmanticenses Morales*, loc. cit., n. 29

cept that it thought the episcopate was not an order distinct from the priesthood but only its extension and complement.⁵⁴

3. The distinction of sacramental orders arises from the relationships they have towards the Eucharist, the *sacramentum sacramentorum*, towards which they are ordained as towards an end, as appears in the priesthood, the diaconate, the subdeaconate, and the four minor orders.⁵⁵ But the episcopate does not give any new relationship to the Eucharist over and above that which the priesthood gives; for the bishop cannot consecrate more intensively, nor more vigorously, nor more perfectly than the simple priest. Therefore, the episcopate is not an order distinct from the priesthood.⁵⁶

4. The adversaries in this controversy point out that the episcopate does give a new, although indirect relationship to the Eucharist inasmuch as it empowers the bishop to ordain other priests who can in turn consecrate the Eucharist. If such reasoning be true, then the episcopate is an order inferior to the presbyterate because the indirect relationship to the Eucharist, which confers the power of consecrating its ministers, is less perfect than the direct relationship, which confers the power of consecrating the Real Body of Christ. In the supernatural order there is no power higher nor more divine than the Eucharistic power of consecrating.⁵⁷

5. If the episcopate were an order specifically distinct from the presbyterate, it would be either equal to it, superior to it, or inferior to it. But the episcopate could not be equal to the presbyterate because the diverse essences of

⁵⁴ Gonet, *op. cit.*, n. 24

⁵⁵ For St. Thomas' explanation of this relationship, cf. chapter 3, note 126.

⁵⁶ Gonet, *op. cit.*, n. 25; Salmanticenses Morales, *loc. cit.*, n. 31; Billuart, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ Gonet, *op. cit.*, n. 27; Salmanticenses Morales, *loc. cit.* n. 33; Billuart, *op. cit.*

things, just as diverse numbers, cannot be equal. The episcopal character could not be superior to the presbyteral character because power over the Real Body of Christ, which is the distinctive power of presbyters, is much more excellent than power over the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the distinctive power of bishops. Finally, the episcopate could not be inferior to the presbyterate because the episcopate is, as it were, the apex of the priesthood and the first grade of the hierarchical order.⁵⁸

6. The episcopate includes the priesthood not only *eminenter*, as the priesthood includes the diaconate, but also *essentialiter-formaliter*, so that there can be no bishop who is not first a priest. Therefore, the episcopate is not an order specifically diverse from the priesthood, for one species does not include another species *essentialiter-formaliter*. If the episcopate did contain the priesthood only *eminenter* and not *essentialiter-formaliter*, and if it did imprint a distinct character, then a non-priest could be validly consecrated a bishop, just as a non-deacon can be validly ordained a priest.⁵⁹ The reason is that among distinct orders there is no essential dependence, such as the reception of a lower order before the reception of a higher order. And just as the non-deacon who was ordained a priest can fulfill all the offices of the diaconate, since the priesthood contains the diaconate *eminenter*, so also the non-priest who was consecrated a bishop could consecrate the Eucharist and give sacramental absolution without having the presbyteral character, since it is inferred that the episcopate contains the priesthood only *eminenter*. Such an absurdity would follow

⁵⁸ Gonet, *op. cit.*, n. 28; Billuart, *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ This statement is made with a view towards the rite of episcopal consecration as used in the Church at the present day. It prescinds from the fact that the Church could formulate a rite which would confer in a single ceremony the priestly order in all its fullness, i.e., the strictly presbyteral powers as well as the strictly episcopal powers. Cf. Connell, "The Origin of the Presbyterate," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 82 (March, 1930), 232.

if the episcopate were an order specifically diverse from the priesthood; therefore, it is evident that it is not a distinct sacramental order.⁶⁰

7. Lastly, Gonet adds a reason based upon the needlessness of the unnecessary. He writes:

"If in the natural order this axiom is true, namely, *non sunt multiplicanda entia absque urgenti necessitate*, with all the more reason is it true in the supernatural order, since grace much more than nature shrinks from the superfluous, and lest it be said that God in the supernatural order produces many more actions than are necessary for obtaining the effects He intends. But the bishop is able to perform his episcopal functions, eg., to confirm and to ordain, through his presbyteral character to which there is annexed some physical and supernatural modal entity, by which that character is completed and extended to such functions . . . This is illustrated by the example of the presbyteral character which is extended to the Mystical Body of Christ, and receives the power of absolving from sin, without the addition of any new character, in that it receives some supernatural modal entity. Otherwise, we would have to admit that there are as many characters as there are supernatural and hierarchical actions performed by the bishop and the presbyter; and thus one character would be given for consecrating the Body of Christ, another for baptizing, another for confirming, another for administering extreme unction, another for absolving from sin. But such is admitted by no theologian."⁶¹

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⁶⁰ Gonet, *op. cit.*, nn. 29, 30; Salmanticenses Morales, *loc. cit.*, n. 30; Billuart, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Gonet, *op. cit.*, n. 31: "Si verum est in naturalibus hoc axioma: *Non sunt multiplicanda entia absque urgenti necessitate*, a fortiori verum erit in supernaturalibus, cum gratia magis abhorreat a superfluo, quam natura, et ne dicamus Deum plures actiones supra naturam producere, quam sint necessariae ad effectum quem intendit: sed episcopus potest munia episcopalia exercere, puta conferre sacramentum confirmationis et ordinis, per characterem sacerdotalem, ut

The other extension theory proposed by Vasquez does not seem to have impressed very favorably later theologians, if we are to judge by the small number who have embraced it. In the middle of the seventeenth century, Morinus declared himself in favor of it and went so far as to state that to his mind the opinion of Vasquez approached closest to the teaching of St. Thomas and the early Scholastics.⁶² The only other earlier theologian who had followed the view of Vasquez was Philip Gammache (d. 1625), a Doctor of the Sorbonne.⁶³ Three others, namely, Koning, Nicholas Ysambert (d. 1642), and Louis Meratius are listed by Morinus as declaring that the theory of Vasquez was probable, although they themselves adhered to the opposite view as the more probable.⁶⁴ The general non-acceptance of this view at the present time is attested by Dr. Connell, when he writes: "*Considering its lack of defenders among modern theologians, it would be rash to designate this opinion as more than probable.*"⁶⁵ However, Dr. Connell himself upholds the theory of Vasquez because of its ability to explain the power of confirming and ordaining when delegated to a simple priest as extraordinary minister.⁶⁶

habet adjunctum modum aliquem physicum et supernaturalem, quo completur et ad munia illa extenditur. . . . Constat exemplo characteris sacerdotalis, qui se extendit ad corpus Christ mysticum, et potestatem recipit absolvendi a peccatis, absque novi characteris additione, per hoc solum quod modum aliquem supernaturalem recipiat; alioquin tot essent admittendi characteres, quot sunt actiones supernaturales et hierarchicae, quae a sacerdote vel episcopo exercentur; et sic alius daretur character ad consecrandum corpus Christi, alius ad baptizandum, alius ad confirmandum, alius ad conferendum sacramentum extremae unctionis, alius ad absolvendum a peccatis; quod nullus theologorum dixit."

⁶² Cf. Morinus, *Commentarius de Sacris Ecclesiae Ordinationibus*, Pars 3, Exercit. 3, cap. 1, n. 14

⁶³ *Ibid.*, n. 12

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* nn. 11, 12

⁶⁵ Connell, "The Episcopate," *The Ecclesiastical Review* 72 (April, 1925), 344

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; cf. also his book, *De Sacramentis Ecclesiae*, vol. 1, n. 150

But in addition to such tenuous extrinsic probability for this opinion, there are also intrinsic reasons which make one question Morinus' statement that this view of Vasquez approaches closest to the teaching of St. Thomas. Four of these reasons are the following:

1. Vasquez taught that character was a *habitus* and not a *potentia*:

"Therefore it follows that character is in the first species [of quality] which is *habitus* or *dispositio*, not in the species of *habitus* or *dispositio* disposing the subject to something else, ie., to operation, but disposing the subject *secundum se ut bene se habeat*, as, eg., habitual grace" ⁶⁷

From both the statement that character is not an operative habit as well as the example of sanctifying grace, it is evident that Vasquez considered character as an *entitative habit*.

But St. Thomas taught that character was a *potentia*. It could not be a *habitus* because no habit is indifferent to acting rightly or wrongly, whereas a character is indifferent to either, since some use it well, some badly.⁶⁸ Positively, character had to be a *potentia* because divine worship consists either in receiving divine things or in administering them to others, and for both of these acts a certain potency is required.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Commentaria et Disputationes in III Partem Sancti Thomae*, vol. 2, De Sacramentis in Genere, disp. 134, cap. 3, n. 70: "Jam vero ex dictis sequitur characterem esse in prima specie, quae est habitus seu dispositio non quidem in specie habitus seu dispositionis disponentis subjectum ad aliud hoc est ad operationem sed disponentis subjectum secundum se, ut bene se habeat, cujusmodi esset gratia habitualis . . ."

⁶⁸ Cf. this teaching of St. Thomas in Chapter 3, notes 38, 39.

⁶⁹ Cf. Chapter 3, note 41. For a more exhaustive refutation of Bellarmine, Suarez, Vasquez, and other theologians who maintain that character is a *habitus* and not a *potentia*, cf. the dogmatic *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologicus*, vol. 17, De Sacramentis in Comuni, disp. 5, dub. 2, nn. 21-28 and John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Theologicus* (Parisiis, 1885-1886), vol. 9, disp. 25, a. 2, dub. 2, nn. 75-93.

2. Conceiving the second species of quality to be only a natural potency, Vasquez accordingly taught that character could not operate physically, that it functioned only morally. For example:

“Therefore the character of the priest cannot be the efficient physical principle of transubstantiation. Although the words [of consecration] might be the physical instrument of transubstantiation, the character is not the [physical] instrument, except remotely, inasmuch as it is the principle of the words. Again, character is not the physical principle of the words because the same words can be pronounced by anyone [not a priest]; but character is, as it were, a *condition* of divine institution so that such words as *moral instruments* have a valid use only when pronounced by one who has the [priestly] character.”⁷⁰

On the contrary, St. Thomas taught that the presbyteral character operated physically as an instrumental agent, i.e., that it was a real power which flowed into the effect produced. Thus, in the act of consecration the presbyteral character was more than a *conditio sine qua non*, such as Vasquez imagined it; as an instrumental power it actually effected transubstantiation.⁷¹

3. Taking as his authority Dionysius the Areopagite,⁷² St. Thomas taught that the Eucharist was the norm of sac-

⁷⁰ Vasquez, *op. cit.*, n. 66: “. . . ergo neque character sacerdotis . . . potest esse principium efficiens physicum transubstantiationis. Præterea licet verba essent instrumentum physicum transubstantiationis, character non esset instrumentum, nisi remote, quatenus esset principium verborum. Adde quod character non esset principium physicum verborum, nam eadem verba a quovis alio proferri possunt, sed est veluti conditio ex institutione Dei, ita ut non assumantur talia verba, ut instrumenta moralia, nisi prolata ab habente characterem.” Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 64; and cap. 2, n. 34.

⁷¹ For the teaching of St. Thomas, cf. chapter 3, notes 45, 48, 49, and 50. Cf. also the dogmatic *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologicus*, *loc. cit.* n. 34., and John of St. Thomas, *op. cit.*, nn. 96, 98, 121, 147, 148.

⁷² This is not Dionysius the Areopagite, converted by St. Paul, and mentioned in Acts 17:34. It is rather this man's name used

ramental orders, ie., any order which had a direct relationship to the Eucharist, even though remote, was to be classified as a sacramental order; any order which had only an indirect relationship to the Eucharist was not to be classified as a sacramental order.⁷³ Thus, the episcopate was excluded as a specifically distinct sacramental order, while the presbyterate with its power of consecrating the Body and Blood of Christ was the greatest as well as supreme sacramental order.

Vasquez, however, thought that such a norm was too restrictive and should be modified to include the episcopate. He writes:

“I say that the theologians of the opposite opinion, without any reason, have declared that an order is to be considered sacramental only through relationship to the consecration of the Eucharist. What is there to prevent the episcopate, which consecrates and ordains priests as ministers of the Eucharist, from being constituted a [sacramental] order?”⁷⁴

This theologian admitted that the presbyteral power of consecrating was the greatest power, and that the episcopal power of confirming and ordaining, considered in itself, was inferior to the presbyteral. But both the presbyteral and episcopal powers as actually found in the bishop place him in a more eminent grade above the simple priest, inasmuch as he can do not only what all other priests can do but also is able to ordain others to the same ministry of consecrating

as a pseudonym by some unknown author of the late fifth century. Cf. Cayré, *Précis de patrologie*, vol. 2, pp. 89-91.

⁷³ Cf. chapter 3, note 126.

⁷⁴ Vasquez, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, De Sacramento Ordinis, disp. 240, cap. 5, n. 51: “. . . dico doctores oppositae sententiae sine absque ullo fundamento ita definisse ordinem sacramentum, ut per respectum tantum ministerii ad consecrationem Eucharistiae constituti debeat. Quid enim obstare potest quominus etiam per respectum ad consecrandos et ordinandos sacerdotes, ministros Eucharistiae, possit ordo constitui, qualis est episcopatus?”

the Body of Christ, which simple priests cannot do.⁷⁵ Thus, Vasquez does not deny in so many words the Thomistic measure of a sacramental order, but the modification he proposes certainly affects profoundly the basic distinction St. Thomas made between direct power over the Real Body of Christ and direct power over the Mystical Body of Christ. Moreover, if the power of ordaining other ministers of the Eucharist is to constitute the episcopate as a sacramental order, it must then be distinct from the presbyterate which does not have such a relationship to the Eucharist. And if it is distinct from the presbyterate in this respect, what is the meaning of Vasquez's earlier statement that "the episcopate is both an order and a sacrament but not distinct from the priesthood?"⁷⁶

4. St. Thomas taught that in episcopal consecration there was conferred upon the bishop some additional power which he did not have before.⁷⁷ This additional power was something real in the subject, and just as the presbyter with his additional power of absolving became a physical, instrumental agent in the forgiving of sins, so too did the bishop with his additional power of hierarchical chief become a physical, instrumental agent in administering confirmation and ordination.

Vasquez, on the contrary, taught that the episcopate did not effect anything real in the subject, but that it was only

"a relation of divine destination to this or that ministry, which is an extrinsic denomination, and therefore in the thing denominated it is a *relatio rationis ex fundamento reali* . . ."⁷⁸

In the theory of Bellarmine an entirely new and distinct character is produced by episcopal consecration.⁷⁹ In the Thomistic School's theory of intrinsic extension the same presbyteral character is intrinsically modified by episcopal

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 55

⁷⁷ Cf. chapter 3, notes 64, 65.

⁷⁶ Cf. note 26, *supra*.

⁷⁸ Cf. notes 30, 31, *supra*.

⁷⁹ *De Controversiis Christianae Fidei*, vol. 3, controv. 5, De Sacramento Ordinis, cap. 5.

consecration. According to Vasquez, however, neither is there produced a new and distinct character, nor is the same character intrinsically modified in any way, but while it remains unchanged there is added to it a new and distinct relation of reason. This extrinsic denomination is, like the commission to absolve, another *appointment* by God to a new and higher office. An easy illustration of such extrinsic denomination is that of a man appointed by the head of a government to one official post after another, each time receiving the authority (but not any intrinsic power) to exercise functions which in his former capacity he could not exercise.

The theory of extrinsic denomination would then seem to be somewhat analogous to Durandus' concept of character. Durandus had taught that character was only an *ens rationis*, an extrinsic denomination which did not effect anything real in the recipient but merely designated him for sacred actions.⁸⁰ Vasquez avoided this error by teaching that character was a *qualitas* (more specifically, a *habitus*) and that it accordingly did effect something real in the recipient. This reality, however, was not a *posse* for sacred actions, but only a *sign* of a power.⁸¹ Thus, while the character was something real and intrinsic, the various divine commissions to consecrate, to absolve, to ordain, of which the character was only a sign, were *relationes rationis* and extrinsic denominations.

This concept of the sacerdotal character and its powers the *Salmanticenses* labeled as "most absurd":

"Vasquez . . . taught that the character of the priest was not a power of consecrating and absolving, but a sign of his power. Which appears to be devoid of sense and most absurd; for, if the spiritual power of the priest toward such effects does not

⁸⁰ *Comment. in Quartum Sententiarum*, dist. 4, q. 1, n. 11.

⁸¹ Vasquez, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, De Sacramentis in Genere, disp. 134, cap. 5, n. 95: "Quocirca dicendum est, characterem sacerdotalem non esse potestatem physicam sacerdotis, sed signum tantum illius. . ."

consist in his character, but is signified by his character, we ask in what then does it consist? Not in anything consequent upon the character, because with the character present and everything else consequent upon the character taken away, the priest could validly consecrate; he would thus have the power of consecrating. Not in anything antecedent to the character, because otherwise, antecedent to the character of the priesthood, a man would have the power of consecrating and would validly consecrate; which is heretical. Nor, finally, in anything concomitant with the character, because we have no basis in either the Councils or the Fathers for such a statement It is therefore entirely false and absurd to say that the character of the priesthood is not a spiritual power but the mere sign of that power.”⁸²

Although the *Salmanticenses* is talking about only sacramental character and the presbyteral power, the same reasoning applies with equal force to sacramental character and the episcopal power. If the spiritual power of the bishop in the act of confirming and ordaining does not consist in an intrinsic modification of his sacramental character, in what then does it consist? Vasquez replies that it consists in a relation of divine destination to such a minis-

⁸² *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologicus*. vol. 17, De Sacramentis in Communi, disp. 5, dub. 2, n. 38: “... Vasquez ... ut dixerit characterem sacerdotis non esse potestatem consecrandi et absolvendi, sed signum ejus potestatis. Quod durissimum et absurdissimum apparet: quoniam si spiritualis potestas sacerdotis ad praedictos effectus non consistit in characterem, sed characterem significatur, inquirimus in quonam alio consistit? Non in aliquo characterem consequente: quiaposito characterem, et omni alio consequente sublato, sacerdos valide consecraret: haberet itaque potestatem consecrandi. Nec in aliquo characterem antecedente: quia alias antecederet ad characterem sacerdotii haberet homo potestatem consecrandi, et valide consecraret; quod est haereticum. Nec denique in aliquo characterem concomitante: tum quia nullum habemus in Conciliis et Patribus fundamentum ad introducendum illud... Falsum itaque omnino est, et absurdum, dicere quod character sacerdotii non sit spiritualis potestas, sed merum signum illius.”

try, which is an extrinsic denomination, and therefore in the thing denominated is a relation of reason.⁸³ But if it is a relation of reason its *esse* is only of the ideal order; it has no real *esse* in the bishop himself.

Thus, upon examination the theory of Vasquez contains elements that seem to be quite at variance with the elements of St. Thomas' teaching on the episcopate. It would therefore appear, contrary to Morinus, that the theory of extrinsic extension is just as foreign to the thought of the Angelic Doctor as the opinion championed by Bellarmine, namely, that the episcopate is a sacrament specifically distinct from the presbyterate.

* * * * *

Indirectly but nevertheless closely connected with the determination of the nature of the ordinary minister of confirmation and ordination is the question of the nature of the extraordinary minister of these two sacraments. In the Western Church there is the historic fact that on certain occasions simple priests have been delegated by the Holy See to confer confirmation and the four minor orders. And in the Eastern Church there is the immemorial custom that presbyters have enjoyed, and still do enjoy, the privilege of confirming. But the question of the extraordinary minister has assumed an added importance by reason of Pius XII's recent decree whereby pastors are delegated as extraordinary ministers of confirmation for those in their jurisdiction who are in danger of death from serious illness.⁸⁴ Before, to a particular individual or to a number of individuals in a particular territory, such delegation had been given. But this is the first time in the history of the Western Church that the faculty of confirming has been so extensively

⁸³ Cf. note 31, *supra*.

⁸⁴ "Decretum de Confirmatione," *AAS* 38 (1946), 349 ff.; cf. also Connell, "Decree Empowering Priests to Confirm," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 116 (April, 1947), 241 ff.

granted to simple priests;⁸⁵ and it approaches somewhat the prevailing custom of the Oriental Rites whereby all presbyters, even though they are not pastors, may confirm.

As regards the exact nature of the extraordinary minister there is a great variety of theological thought. The first division of this thought occurs on the nature of the delegation considered in itself. Is the power of confirming and conferring the four minor orders, when exercised by an extraordinary minister, a power of orders, a power of jurisdiction, or a combination of both? There are theologians who adhere to each of these three opinions. In order to pass on to a further and more fundamental point, we shall presume as true that opinion which is common among theologians of the present day, namely, that the power of confirming and ordaining in the extraordinary minister is a power of orders only.⁸⁶

The second and more crucial question is that of the delegation considered in relation to the extraordinary minister. Precisely how does such delegation, which is a power of orders, affect the character of the simple presbyter? Does he possess by reason of such delegation the episcopal power itself to confirm and ordain, or is his presbyteral character temporarily extended to include such powers? Each of the theories advanced to explain the nature of the episcopate has a corollary which attempts to answer the question of the precise nature of the extraordinary minister. Before taking up that of the Thomists we shall state briefly the solutions proposed by Bellarmine and Vasquez.

St. Robert said that the act of confirming is an act of orders, but that this power of orders is only rudimentary and imperfect in the presbyter. The episcopal character is an absolute, perfect, and independent power of confirming

⁸⁵ Connell, *ibid.*, p. 256: "[This decree is] well-nigh as epochal as the decrees of Pope Pius X on daily communion and on the age for first communion."

⁸⁶ For a discussion of all these opinions, cf. Doronzo, *De Baptismo et Confirmatione*, pp. 398, 399.

and ordaining. On the other hand, the presbyteral character, as regards baptism and the Holy Eucharist, is an absolute, perfect, and independent power; but as regards the sacrament of confirmation, is an inchoate and imperfect power that depends upon the will of a superior. He continues:

“Wherefore, unless that power is perfected by a dispensation of his superior, the presbyter will confirm invalidly; but if it is perfected, he will confirm by reason of his [perfected] character. This is easier to understand if we consider character to be not some physical potency which operates physically (for then it is difficult to understand how it can be perfected by a pontifical dispensation), but to be a sign of a divine pact by which God concurs towards the production of a sacramental effect with him who has a character, and not with any other; it is easy to understand that one character is a sign of an absolute pact, the other the sign of a conditional pact.”⁸⁷

The delegation of the Holy See therefore perfects the presbyteral character and thus enables it to execute the role of extraordinary minister. But except for the statement of the fact, no theological reason is assigned why the presbyteral character as regards confirmation (and minor orders) is the sign of a conditional pact, and the episcopal character as regards the same sacraments is the sign of an absolute pact. Nor is any reasonable explanation given as to how the one and the same character in the

⁸⁷ Bellarmine, *op. cit.*, *controv.* 2, *De Sacramento Confirmationis*, cap. 12: “Quocirca nisi perficiatur per dispensationem superioris ea potestas, presbyter confirmando nihil ageret, at si perficiatur, jam ex ipso suo caractere confirmabit. Id quod minus mirum videbitur, si cogitemus, characterem non esse physicam aliquam potentiam quae physice aliquid operetur (tunc enim difficile esset intelligere quomodo posset perfici per dispensationem pontificiam), sed esse signum divini cujusdam pacti, quo Deo concurrat ad effectum sacramentalem producendum cum eo, qui habet characterem et non cum aliis; facile enim est intelligere, unum characterem esse signum pacti absoluti, alium autem esse signum pacti conditionati.”

presbyter is partly the sign of an absolute pact in reference to baptism and the Eucharist, and partly the sign of a conditional pact in reference to confirmation (and minor orders.)⁸⁸

The opinion of Vasquez is even less satisfactory, although at first sight it would appear to be an easy explanation. According to this theologian the episcopate is an extrinsic denomination, i.e., a *relatio rationis* of divine appointment to particular ministry. The delegation of the extraordinary minister is simply another commissioning by Almighty God, manifested through the will of the Roman Pontiff, essentially of the same nature as that given in episcopal consecration except that it is limited and revocable.⁸⁹

The first objection to such a solution is that it does not explain precisely how the act of delegation, which is a power of jurisdiction as it emanates from the Roman Pontiff, can transmit the power of orders extrasacramentally to the extraordinary minister. Secondly, Vasquez taught in conformity with his "divine appointment" view that a simple priest could confer the diaconate and even the presbyterate.⁹⁰ But in such an opinion Vasquez is definitely opposed by the common teaching of theologians. Thirdly, a further deduction of the "divine appointment" view would seem to be that a laic could be constituted extraordinary minister of sacred orders, and a presbyter extraordinary minister of episcopal consecration. Vasquez states, however, that this could not happen. But the reasons he gives are not intrinsic, nor are they in any way convincing. The reasons are: (a) it is not fitting that a superior be ordained or consecrated by an inferior; and (b) there is no instance in the history of the Church in which a laic has ordained or a pres-

⁸⁸ Cf. Brinktrine, "De Ministro Confirmationis Extraordinario," *Divus Thomas* 35 (1932), 512.

⁸⁹ Cf. Connell, "The Episcopate," *The Ecclesiastical Review* 72 (April, 1925), 342, 344.

⁹⁰ Vasquez, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, De Sacramento Ordinis, disp. 243, cap. 4, n. 41

byter has consecrated.⁹¹ This latter is definitely a negative argument, but as such is not devoid of all validity. However, as used by Vasquez, it is devoid of all validity, because this same identical type of argument he had earlier rejected when invoked by those theologians who opposed him on the question of a presbyter being able to confer the presbyterate.⁹² If it had no probative force then, why should it have any probative force now? That leaves a mere argument of congruity to prevent a laic from ordaining or a presbyter from consecrating! Certainly, it would seem that reasons more intrinsic and fundamental could be advanced to explain why such an unprecedented occurrence has never happened.

Thirdly, there is the solution proposed by the Thomists, among whom, however, there is not perfect unanimity of thought in stating precisely what the pontifical delegation contributes to the extraordinary minister.

Some, such as *Merkelbach* and *Ferland* say that to confirm (and to ordain to the minor orders) are acts of the episcopal rank for which a certain excellent dignity is required. This the bishop has by reason of his consecration; this the simple priest needs in order to act as extraordinary minister. Thus, the act of delegation by the Holy See confers upon him this revocable excellent dignity. It in no wise changes his presbyteral character intrinsically; it merely extends it *extrinsically* by perfecting and completing a radical power he before possessed only inchoatively and imperfectly.⁹³ However, this solution also leaves unexplained just

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, n. 42 ⁹² *Ibid.*, n. 38

⁹³ *Ferland*, *Commentarius in Summam D. Thomae—De Sacramentis in Speciali*, De Confirmatione, cap. 3, a.2, n.3; *Merkelbach*, *Summa Theologiae Moralis*, vol. 3, De Confirmatione, n. 189.

For other theologians who do not follow the Thomistic School's concept of the episcopate as an intrinsic modification of the presbyteral character, but who do teach that pontifical delegation confers upon the extraordinary minister a certain excellent dignity, cf.: *Tanquerey*, *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae*, vol. 3, De Confirmatione, n. 579; *Van Noort*, *Tractatus de Sacramentis* (2nd ed., Amstelodami,

how the act of delegation, which is a power of jurisdiction as it emanates from the Roman Pontiff, can transmit the power of orders extrasacramentally to the extraordinary minister.

The greater number of Thomists, however, teach that the simple priest has *ex jure divino* the power to act as extraordinary minister, but that the *exercise* of this act is dependent on the commission or delegation of the Roman Pontiff as on an *extrinsic and requisite condition*. The first beginning of this view can be traced back to *Peter de Palude* (d. 1342) who, writing about the extraordinary minister of confirmation, stated:

“... the minister is twofold. One is the minister *simpliciter* who is thus able to do something which another cannot. Such a minister cannot be constituted or nullified by the Pope. Thus, the priest is the minister of [Eucharistic] consecration; neither the prohibition of the Pope can impede a priest from consecrating, nor can the delegation of the Pope enable a non-priest to consecrate ... Secondly, the other is the minister, not *simpliciter*, but *ex officio*, who is able to do something by reason of his office, as an ordinary thing, which another in his own right cannot do except by delegation ... Thus, the minister of confirmation and minor orders is the bishop, so that it pertains to him alone *ex officio* ... But the Pope can delegate a non-bishop, provided he is a priest, because he is the minister *simpliciter*; but of himself he is imperfect and needs either another consecration or the commission of a superior.”⁹⁴

1910), vol. 1, De Confirmatione, n. 263; and “Confirmation conférée par un simple prêtre,” *Ami du Clergé* 53 (1936), 311.

⁹⁴ *Quartus Sententiarum Liber*, dist. 7, q.4, ad 6um: “... minister est duplex. Unus simpliciter, qui sic potest hoc facere, quod nullus alius. Et talis per Papam non potest poni, nec amoveri: sicut sacerdos est minister conficiendi; quia nec prohibitio Papae impedit quin sacerdos possit conficere, nec facit ejus commissio quod non sacerdos conficiat. ... Secundo est aliquis minister, non simpliciter, sed *ex officio*, qui scilicet potest facere aliquid *ex officio* suo, quasi ordinarie, quod alius jure suo non potest, sed tantum *ex commisso*. ... Et sic

With *Ferrariensis* (d. 1526) it was a question of the *necessary* minister who could be either the bishop or the simple priest:

“We can speak of the necessary minister in a two-fold manner, namely, the one to whom alone it is fitting absolutely to confer the sacrament, or the one to whom alone it is fitting ordinarily and *ex officio*. In the first sense the priest, absolutely speaking, is the necessary minister of confirmation In the second sense, the bishop alone is the necessary minister.”⁹⁵

In the following century the *Salmanticenses Morales* stated the same idea but in different phraseology:

“The *essential* minister of this sacrament [confirmation] is not the bishop exclusively, but either the bishop or the simple priest who has a commission from the Sovereign Pontiff.”⁹⁶

Under the pen of *Billuart* (d. 1757) a more exact presentation of the nature of the extraordinary minister was given as follows:

“When the delegation to confirm is granted to a priest, there is not imparted to him an act of the episcopal order because he is not constituted as the ordinary minister; but there is committed to him an act of the sacerdotal order so that he might

minister confirmationis et collationis minorum ordinum est episcopus, ut ad ipsum solum pertineat ex officia. . . . Sed hoc ipsum Papa potest committere non episcopo, dum tamen sit sacerdos; quia ille est minister simpliciter, sed imperfectus de se, nisi vel major consecratio, vel superioris commissio suppleat.”

⁹⁵ *Comment. in Summam Contra Gentiles*, lib. 4, cap. 60, De Confirmatione, Comment. n. IV: “. . . dupliciter possumus loqui de ministro necessario: scilicet aut cui soli potest convenire absolute ut sacramentum ministret; aut cui soli convenit ordinarie et ex officio. Si primo modo loquamur, sic sacerdos, absolute loquendo, est necessarius minister confirmationis. . . . Si vero loquamur secundo modo, sic solus episcopus est minister necessarius.”

⁹⁶ *Salmanticensis Cursus Theologiae Moralis*, vol. 1, tract. 3, De Confirmatione, cap. 4, n.10: “. . . essentialis hujus sacramenti minister non est solus episcopus, sed vel hic, vel simplex sacerdos habens talem Summi Pontificis commissionem.”

be the extraordinary minister. . . . As regards confirmation the priesthood approaches closest to the episcopate, from which it differs only in this, that the episcopate has a more extended power inasmuch as it contains the power of confirming and ordaining . . . ; whence, the power of the priesthood is said to be inchoate in relation to these two functions, and with [pontifical] delegation is said to be extended to them."⁸⁷

To this explanation have subscribed such present day Thomists as *Diekamp*, *Billot*, *Hugon*, and *Doronzo*.⁸⁸ This last has given to date perhaps the most precise and most thorough explanation of pontifical delegation in relation to the presbyteral character of the extraordinary minister. He writes:

"In virtue of his ordination the presbyter receives in his physical character itself the power of orders for confirming; to this character and to this power, however, God gives the influx requisite for the validity of this sacrament only when the extrinsic condition of delegation by an ecclesiastical superior has been fulfilled. In this sense many theologians say that the presbyter receives a power only in

⁸⁷ Billuart, *Summa Sancti Thomae*, vol. 6, De Confirmatione, dissert. unica, a.7, obj. 2: "Dum autem conceditur sacerdoti facultas confirmandi, non ei committitur actus ordinis episcopalis, quia non constituitur minister ordinarius; sed committitur ei actus ordinis sacerdotalis, ut sit nempe minister extraordinarius. . . . Quantum ad confirmationem sacerdotum proxime accedit ad episcopatum, a quo non differt nisi per hoc quod episcopatus sit potestatis magis extensae, in quantum scilicet continet potestatem confirmandi et ordinandi. . . ; unde potestas sacerdotii potest dici inchoata ad ista duo munia et accedente delegatione ad illa extendi."

⁸⁸ Diekamp, *Theologiae Dogmaticae Manuale*, vol. 4, De Sacramento Confirmationis, sect. 21, n. 2; Billot, *De Ecclesiae Sacramentis*, vol. 1, De Confirmatione, th. 34; Hugon, *Tractatus Dogmatici*, vol. 3, De Confirmatione, a. 5, n. 7; Doronzo, *De Baptismo et Confirmatione*, p. 400.

For other theologians who follow these but who teach that the episcopate is a distinct sacramental order, cf.: Zubizarreta, *Theologia Dogmatico-Scholastica*, vol. 4, De Confirmatione, a. 5, n. 293; Hervé, *Manuale Theologiae Dogmaticae*, vol. 3, De Confirmatione, n. 683a, 3.

actu primo, or radical, or bound up, or non-activated. It would be better to say that he receives a power complete in itself but impotent to move into act because of the absence of an extrinsic condition required for causality. When the delegation to confirm is granted that power is in no wise intrinsically completed, nor is the sacerdotal character increased, because these can be accomplished only through the repetition of the sacrament [of orders]; nor can they subsequently be lost, while the presbyter, on the other hand, no longer can confirm once his delegation has expired.

This can be illustrated very well by the example of certain mechanical instruments. Thus, the telephone and the telescope add no intrinsic power to the ear or to the eye, nor are they the cause of hearing and seeing, but they are only requisite conditions for these innate and perfect powers to reach to an unusual object and perform an unusual act; when these instruments have been removed neither is the ear able to hear what it heard nor the eyes able to see what it saw, but the power of hearing or of seeing is not thereby lessened in any way."⁹⁹

⁹⁹Doronzo, *op. cit.*: "Presbyter igitur vi ordinationis accipit, in ipso physico caractere, potestatem ordinis ad confirmandum, Deus autem huic characteri et potestati influxum ad valorem sacramenti requisitum non praebet nisi accedente extrinseca conditione facultatis superioris ecclesiasticae jurisdictionis. Hoc sensu plures theologi dicunt presbyterum accipere tantum potestatem in actu primo, vel radicaliter, vel alligatam, vel potestatem non actum. Melius dicatur eum accipere potestatem simpliciter ac completam, quamvis impotentem transire ad actum propter defectum extrinsecae conditionis ad causalitatem requisitae. Cum ergo facultas confirmandi accedit, nequaquam ea potestas intrinsece completur aut character sacerdotalis augetur, quoniam haec non nisi per repetitum sacramentum fieri possent nec iterum amitti possent dum, recedente facultate, presbyter iterum inhabilis redditur ad confirmandum.

Id non inepte illustrari potest ex analogia rerum naturalium. Ita, instrumentum telephonicum vel telescopicum nullam intrinsecam virtutem addit facultati auditivae vel visivae, nec est causa auditionis vel visionis, sed tantummodo conditio requisita ad hoc ut nativa et in se perfecta potentia applicetur ad peculiare objectum et transeat

Of the Thomistic School's two solutions this last, that the pontifical delegation is nothing more than a requisite extrinsic condition, is the more common and also the more satisfactory. It would seem to be also more in conformity with the thought of St. Thomas¹⁰⁰ that not all functions of the episcopal office can be delegated to all inferior ministers, but only certain functions to certain ministers, such as the delegation of confirmation and minor orders to simple priests. This would then presuppose that in the simple priest there is already the divinely given power for the conferring of these sacraments, but in such wise that it depends upon the jurisdiction of the Pope, who has the plenitude of power in the Church, as upon a *sine qua non* condition.¹⁰¹

in peculiarem actum, ita ut, praedictis instrumentis remotis, nec auris audire possit quod audiebat nec oculus videre quod videbat, quin inde ipsa potentia auditiva vel visiva ullatenus minuatur."

¹⁰⁰ *Summa Theologica*, 3, q.72, a.11, ad 1um: "...Papa in Ecclesia habet plenitudinem potestatis, ex qua potest quaedam quae sunt superiorum ordinum, committere inferioribus quibusdam: sicut presbyteris concedit conferre minores ordines, quod pertinet ad potestatem episcopalem. Et ex hac plenitudine potestatis concessit beatus Gregorius Papa quod simplices sacerdotes conferrent hoc sacramentum [confirmationis]...."

¹⁰¹ Cf. Billot, *op. cit.*

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Thomistic theory on the nature of the episcopate as taught at the present day rests upon a long and constant tradition. Negatively stated that theory teaches that the episcopate is not a sacramental order specifically distinct from and superior to the presbyterate in the same way in which the presbyterate is a sacramental order specifically distinct from and superior to the diaconate. Positively stated that theory teaches that the episcopate is an intrinsic modification of the presbyterate, and therefore a *complement* of the greatest and supreme sacramental order.

Such a precise formulation of the theory of intrinsic extension, however, cannot be credited to one theologian or even to one century of theologians. On the contrary, it represents the continually progressive thought and writing of a number of theologians over many centuries. The greatest and the most prominent theologian associated with this theory, the one after whom it is named, is St. Thomas Aquinas. But he did not originate the theory. What he did was to supply a proper theological framework for a teaching that had been known in the Church for some nine hundred years. It was in his *Commentary on the IVth Book of Sentences* that the Angelic Doctor gave expression to his theological view. His immediate source then (exclusive of his teacher, St. Albert the Great) was Peter Lombard. But as we have endeavored to show in Chapter II the Lombardian teaching can be traced back through Hugh of St. Victor, Yves of Chartres, Peter Damian, Rabanus Maurus, Isidore of Seville, and ultimately to Jerome.

St. Thomas took this age-old teaching, plus that of Dionysius the Areopagite, and drew a sharp distinction between the hierarchical aspects of the episcopate and the sacramental aspects. To use his own expression, one that he constantly insisted upon, it was a distinction between power over the Mystical Body of Christ and power over the Real

Body of Christ. As an hierarchical power the episcopate was *jure divino* superior to the presbyterate. As an hierarchical power the episcopate made the bishop a successor of the Apostles, and the supreme teacher, sanctifier, and ruler of his portion of the Mystical Body. As an hierarchical power the episcopate qualified the bishop to confirm and ordain *ex officio*, sacraments which the simple priest could not confer as ordinary minister.

Despite such acknowledged superiority of the bishop over the presbyter in the hierarchical sphere, St. Thomas did not and could not teach that the episcopate was a distinct and superior order in the sacramental sphere. Why? Because of two basic postulates in his theology of the sacraments: the precise nature of the character of orders, and the precise nature of the Eucharist as a sacrament-sacrifice. The sacramental character of the presbyterate gives the simple priest the power to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ, just as He did at the Last Supper, and there is no power greater than this communicated to man. The Eucharist as a sacrament-sacrifice is a memorial of the Passion and Death of Christ, an unbloody immolation of the Victim of Calvary. In the sacramental re-presentation of this sacred drama the simple priest bears the image of Christ, consecrates in the name, in the person, and by the power of Christ, and uses the very same words as Christ. Therefore, in no other act of orders is the 'characterized' minister more fully configured to Christ the Priest, in no other act of orders is his participation in the priesthood of Christ more fully realized, and in no other act of orders is his instrumental power for bringing about the Christian worship of God more fully exercised.

The Eucharist, containing as It does God Himself, and being the sacramental commemoration of the act by which all divine things have come to man, is the greatest of the sacraments. St. Thomas considered It too as the norm of sacramental orders inasmuch as the power of orders was given either for the consecration of the Eucharist Itself, or

for some ministry ordained to the Eucharist. Those orders then which bore a direct relationship to the Eucharist were numbered among the specifically distinct sacramental orders; any order which did not, was excluded. Thus, St. Thomas taught that the episcopate, since it did not confer any new and direct power over the Real Body of Christ, was not a sacramental order specifically distinct from the presbyterate, that it did not confer a sacramental character specifically distinct from the presbyteral, and that it did not bestow a sacramental grace specifically different from that of presbyteral ordination.

Yet, the episcopate did add something over and above the presbyterate, something that was not only a power of jurisdiction but also a power of orders. It was later Dominican theologians, however, who determined in a positive way what that additional 'something' was. Taking the solid theological principles laid down by the Angelic Doctor, and reaffirming his clear statements as to what the episcopate was not, these theologians perfected the theory of intrinsic extension. According to this view: (a) the episcopate was a complement of the sacramental order of the presbyterate; (b) the episcopal character was an intrinsic modification of and addition to the presbyteral character; and (c) episcopal consecration as the perfection of the sacrament of orders caused an increase of sanctifying grace commensurate with the duties assumed. Such is the theory of intrinsic extension as it grew and developed from the fourteenth through the eighteenth century. Such is the theory, in both its negative and positive aspects, as taught today by the Thomistic School.

In order that an opinion be considered as solidly probable there is required: (a) that it be not opposed to any definition of the Church nor derogate from any definition; (b) that it explain the facts; (c) that it rest upon sound and cogent intrinsic reasons; and (d) that its arguments still retain their force in face of the arguments of the contrary opinion.

It would appear that the Thomistic theory on the episcopate fulfills all four conditions. First, it is not opposed to any definition of the Church nor does it derogate from any definition. On the contrary, it teaches all those essentials that were defined by the Council of Trent in the twenty-third session regarding the episcopate,¹ and thus in no wise minimizes the hierarchical grandeur, position, and authority of the bishop. The theory, moreover, harmonizes very well with the teaching of some of the late Church Fathers and succeeding ecclesiastical writers. And in every century thereafter, up to and including the present day, outstanding and prominent theologians have declared themselves in favor of it. Secondly, it explains the facts, ie., that the bishop, although *de jure divino* superior to the presbyter in the power of orders and jurisdiction, still does not receive at his consecration a sacramental order specifically distinct from that of the presbyter. Thirdly, the theory rests upon sound and cogent intrinsic reasons. These, summarily stated, make the Eucharist the center of Christian worship and define all sacramental orders in function of the Eucharist. Fourthly, its arguments lose none of their cogency by reason of the arguments of the contrary opinion. As a matter of fact, since the essence of the Catholic priesthood consists in an act that is indivisible, the Thomistic concept of a sacramental presbyterate extended in the episcopate seems much more logical than the opposite view of two distinct, separate, sacramental orders or degrees of the priesthood.

In view of the evidence then, both intrinsic and extrinsic, it appears that the Thomistic School's concept of the episcopate is a truly solid and probable opinion, and that the pronouncements of Perrone, Gasparri and others are more biased exaggerations than impartial, objective statements of fact.

¹ Cf. *Mansi* 33, 138 ff.; *DBU* 957 ff.

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