

QUESTION 62

The Principal Effect of the Sacraments [of the New Law], viz., Grace

Next we have to consider the effect of the sacraments [of the New Law]: first, the principal effect, which is grace (question 62); and, second, the secondary effect, which is the character (question 63).

On the first topic there are six questions: (1) Are the sacraments of the New Law a cause of grace? (2) Does sacramental grace add anything over and beyond the grace of the virtues and of the gifts [of the Holy Spirit]? (3) Do the sacraments contain grace? (4) Does a power to cause grace exist in the sacraments? (5) Does power of this sort in the sacraments flow from Christ's passion? (6) Did the sacraments of the Old Law cause grace?

Article 1

Are the sacraments [of the New Law] a cause of grace?

It seems that the sacraments [of the New Law] are not a cause of grace (*sacramenta [novae legis] non sint causa gratiae*):

Objection 1: It seems not to be the case that the same thing is both a sign and a cause, because the character of a sign seems to fit better with its being an effect. But a sacrament is a sign of grace. Therefore, it is not a cause of grace.

Objection 2: Nothing corporeal can act on a spiritual entity, because, as Augustine puts it in *Super Genesim ad Litteram* 12, "An agent is more honorable than its effect." But the subject of grace is a man's mind, which is a spiritual entity. Therefore, it is not the case that sacraments can cause grace.

Objection 3: What is proper to God should not be attributed to any creature. But causing grace is proper to God—this according to Psalm 83:12 ("The Lord gives grace and glory"). Therefore, since the sacraments consist in certain created words and entities, it does not seem that they can cause grace.

But contrary to this: In *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, "The baptismal water touches the body and cleanses the heart." But the heart can be cleansed only by grace. Therefore, the baptismal water causes grace and, by parity of reasoning, so do the other sacraments of the Church.

I respond: It is necessary to claim that the sacraments of the New Law in some way cause grace (*per aliquem modum gratiam causare*). For it is clear that through the sacraments of the New Law a man is incorporated into Christ (*Christo incorporatur*)—in the way that in Galatians 3:27 the Apostle says of baptism, "All of you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." But a man is made a member of Christ only through grace.

Nonetheless, some claim that the sacraments are not a cause of grace by *doing anything actively* (*operando*), but that when the sacraments are applied, it is God who effects grace in the soul (*Deus in anima gratiam operatur*). And they propose the example of a man who, upon presenting a denarius made of lead, receives a hundred Roman pounds by the king's ordinance—not that the denarius did anything actively to secure the amount of money in question, but that instead it was the king's will alone that did this. Hence, in a sermon on the Lord's Supper, Bernard says, "Just as a canon is invested with his office by means of a book, an abbot by means of a crozier, and a bishop by means of a ring, so by means of the various sacraments different types of grace are conferred."

However, if one considers the matter correctly, this mode does not go beyond the character of a sign. For the denarius made of lead is nothing other than a sort of sign of the king's ordinance concerning the fact that money is to be received for it. Similarly, the book is a sort of sign by which the canon's office is handed on. Therefore, according to this account, the sacraments of the New Law are nothing more than *signs* of grace—even though we have it on the basis of many citations from the saints that the sacraments of the New Law are not only *signs* of grace, but also *causes* of grace (*ex multis sanctorum*

auctoritatibus habeatur quod sacramenta novae legis non solum significant sed causant gratiam).

And so we have to reply in another way that there are *two active causes* (*duplex est causa agens*), a *principal* cause and an *instrumental* cause. To be sure, a principal cause acts through the power of its own form, to which the effect is assimilated, in the way that fire gives warmth through its own heat. And only God can cause grace in this way, since grace is nothing other than a sort of participated likeness of God's nature—this according to 2 Peter 1:4 (“He has granted us the very great and precious promises, so that ... we might be partakers of the divine nature”). By contrast, an instrumental power does not act through the power of its own form, but instead acts only through the movement by which it is moved by the principal agent. Hence, the effect is assimilated not to the instrument but to the principal agent, in the way that a bed is assimilated not to the cutting tool, but to the craft that exists in the mind of the carpenter. And it is in this latter way that the sacraments of the New Law are causes; for they are applied by God's ordinance to causing grace in [the recipients]. Hence, in *Contra Faustum* 19 Augustine says, “All these things”—viz., things pertaining to the sacraments—“are done and pass away, but the power”—viz., God's power—“remains forever.” And this is what is properly called an instrument through which someone acts. Hence, Titus 3:5 likewise says, “He saved us through the bath of regeneration.”

Reply to objection 1: Even if a principal cause is itself manifest and can be sensed, it cannot properly be called a sign of the effect, even of a hidden effect. By contrast, if an instrumental cause is manifest, it can be called a sign of a hidden effect, because it itself is not only a cause but in a certain sense an effect insofar as it is moved by the principal agent. Accordingly, the sacraments of the New Law are causes and signs. And this is why, as is commonly said, they effect what they are a figure of (*efficiunt quod figurant*). From this it is likewise clear that they possess the character of a sacrament completely, insofar as they are ordered toward something sacred not only in the manner of a sign but also in the manner of a cause.

Reply to objection 2: An instrumental cause has two actions: (a) it has one *instrumental* action, insofar as it acts not in its own power but in the power of the principal agent, and (b) it has another *action which is proper to it* and which belongs to it by its proper form—in the way that it belongs to a cutting tool to cut by reason of its sharpness, whereas it manufactures a bed insofar as it is an instrument of the carpenter. And it does not complete its instrumental action except by exercising its proper action; for it is by cutting that it manufactures a bed.

Similarly, through their proper operation, which they exercise with respect to the body that they touch, corporeal sacraments effect their instrumental operation by God's power with respect to the soul—in the way that the water of baptism, through washing the body by its own power, washes the soul insofar as it is an instrument of the divine power; for something unified is made up of the soul and the body. And this is what Augustine is saying, viz., that [the baptismal water] “touches the body and cleanses the heart.”

Reply to objection 3: This argument goes through with respect to what causes grace in the manner of a *principal* agent; for as has been said, this is proper to God.

Article 2

Does sacramental grace add anything over and beyond the grace of the virtues and of the gifts [of the Holy Spirit]?

It seems that sacramental grace does not add anything over and beyond the grace of the virtues and of the gifts [of the Holy Spirit] (*gratia sacramentalis non addat aliquid supra gratiam virtutum et*

donorum):

Objection 1: As is clear from what was said in the Second Part (*ST* 1-2, q. 110, aa. 3-4), through the grace of the virtues and of the gifts the soul is sufficiently perfected both with respect to the *essence* of the soul and with respect to its *powers*. But grace is ordered toward the perfection of the soul. Therefore, sacramental grace cannot add anything over and beyond the grace of the virtues and of the gifts.

Objection 2: The defects of the soul are caused by sins. But all sins are sufficiently excluded through the grace of the virtues and of the gifts, since there is no sin that is not contrary to some virtue. Therefore, since sacramental grace is ordered toward removing the defects of the soul, it cannot add anything over and beyond the grace of the powers and of the gifts.

Objection 3: As *Metaphysics* 8 explains, in the case of forms, addition or subtraction changes the species. Therefore, if sacramental grace adds anything over and beyond the grace of the virtues and of the gifts, it follows that it is being called grace equivocally. And so nothing definite is proven by the claim that the sacraments cause grace.

But contrary to this: If sacramental grace does not add anything over and beyond the grace and of the gifts, then it is useless for the sacraments to be conferred on those who have both the virtues and the gifts. Therefore, it seems that sacramental grace adds something over and beyond the grace of the virtues and of the gifts.

I respond: As was explained in the Second Part (*ST* 1-2, q. 110, aa. 3-4), grace, considered in itself, perfects the essence of the soul insofar as the soul participates in a certain likeness of the divine *esse*. And just as the powers of the soul flow from its essence, so certain perfections flow from grace to the powers of the soul, and these perfections are called the virtues and gifts by which the powers are perfected in their ordering toward their own acts (*quibus potentiae perficiuntur in ordine ad suos actus*).

Now the sacraments are ordered toward certain special effects that are necessary in the Christian life; for instance, baptism is ordered toward a sort of spiritual regeneration by which a man dies to sin and becomes a member of Christ, and this effect is something special over and beyond the acts of the powers of the soul. And the same line of reasoning holds in the case of the other sacraments. Therefore, just as the virtues and the gifts add, over and beyond grace generally speaking, a certain perfection ordered determinately toward the proper acts of the powers, so sacramental grace adds, over and beyond grace generally speaking and over and beyond the virtues and gifts, a certain sort of divine assistance for attaining the end of the sacrament. And it is in this sense that sacramental grace adds something over and beyond the grace of the virtues and of the gifts.

Reply to objection 1: The grace of the virtues and of the gifts sufficiently perfects the essence and powers of the soul with respect to the general ordering of their acts. But sacramental grace is required for certain special effects that are required in the Christian life.

Reply to objection 2: Vices and sins with respect to the present and the future are sufficiently excluded by the virtues and the gifts insofar as a man is impeded from sinning by the virtues and the gifts. But with respect to past sins, which are past as regards their act and remain as regards their guilt, the remedy is applied to a man specifically through the sacraments.

Reply to objection 3: The character of sacramental grace is related to grace speaking in general as the character of a species is related to its genus. Hence, just as 'animal' speaking in general is not used equivocally for a man, so grace taken generally and sacramental grace are not called 'grace' equivocally.

Article 3

Do the sacraments of the New Law contain grace?

It seems that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain grace (*sacramenta novae legis non continent gratiam*):

Objection 1: What is contained seems to exist in what contains it. But grace does not exist in a sacrament, either as in a *subject*, since the subject of grace is not a body, but a spirit; or as in a *vessel*, since, as *Physics* 4 says, “a vessel is a moveable place,” whereas it is not fitting for an accident to exist in a place. Therefore, it seems that the sacraments of the New Law do not contain grace.

Objection 2: Sacraments are ordered toward men obtaining grace through them. But since grace is an accident, it cannot pass from one subject to another subject. Therefore, there would be no point to grace’s existing in the sacraments.

Objection 3: What is spiritual is not contained by what is corporeal, even if it exists in it; for instance, the soul is not contained in the body, but instead it contains the body. Therefore, it seems that since grace is something spiritual, it is not contained in a corporeal sacrament.

But contrary to this: Hugo of St. Victor says, “Because it is sanctified (*ex sanctificatione*), a sacrament contains grace.”

I respond: There are many ways in which one thing is said to exist in another, and among them there are two ways in which grace exists in the sacraments:

(a) In one way, as grace exists in *signs* [of it], since a sacrament is a sign of grace.

(b) In a second way, as grace exists in a *cause* [of it]; for as has been explained (a. 1), a sacrament of the New Law is an instrumental cause of grace. Thus, grace exists in a sacrament of the New Law—not, to be sure, because of a likeness of species, in the way that an effect exists in its univocal cause; nor, again, because of any proper and permanent form that is proportioned to the effect, in the way that effects exist in their non-univocal causes, e.g., generated entities in the sun; but, instead, as will be explained below (a. 4), because of a sort of instrumental power that exists as transient and incomplete in the *esse* of its nature (*secundum quandam instrumentalem virtutem quae est fluens et incompleta in esse naturae*).

Reply to objection 1: Grace is not being claimed to exist in a sacrament either as in a subject or as in a vessel insofar as the vessel is a particular place; instead, grace is being claimed to exist in a sacrament as in a vessel insofar as the vessel is called an instrument of some work to be done—this in the sense of Ezekiel 9:1 (“Each one has a vessel of destruction in his hand”).

Reply to objection 2: Even though grace does not pass from one subject into another subject, it nonetheless passes in some way through the instrument into a subject—not that it exists in the same way in both of them, but that it exists in each of them according to their own proper natures.

Reply to objection 3: A spiritual entity that exists completely in a thing contains that thing and is not contained by it. But grace exists in a sacrament as something transient and incomplete. And so it is not unfitting to say that the sacrament contains grace.

Article 4

Does the power to cause grace exist in the sacraments?

It seems not to be the case that the power to cause grace exists in the sacraments (*in sacramentis*

non sit aliqua virtus gratiae causativa):

Objection 1: The power to cause grace is a spiritual power. But a spiritual power cannot exist in corporeal thing, either (a) in such a way as to be proper to the corporeal thing, since power flows from an entity's essence and so cannot transcend it, or (b) in such a way that the corporeal thing receives it from another, since that which is received from something exists in [the recipient] in the mode of the recipient. Therefore, no power to cause grace can exist in the sacraments.

Objection 2: Everything that exists is traced back to some genus of being and to some degree of goodness. But the power to cause grace cannot be found in any genus of being, as is clear from running through the individual genera. Nor, again, can any such power be traced back to any degree of goodness; for it is not found among the least goods, since the sacraments are necessary for salvation; or among the intermediate goods like the powers of the soul, which are certain natural powers; or among the greatest goods, since it is neither grace nor a power of the mind. Therefore, it seems that in the sacraments there is no power to cause grace.

Objection 3: If a power of the sort in question exists in the sacraments, it is caused in them only by being created by God. But it seems unfitting for such a noble creature to cease to exist when the sacrament is completed. Therefore, it seems that there is no power in the sacraments to cause grace.

Objection 4: The same thing cannot exist in diverse [subjects]. But diverse things come together for the sacraments, viz., words and entities, whereas there can be only one power for one sacrament. Therefore, it seems that there is no [such] power in the sacraments.

But contrary to this: In *Super Ioannem* Augustine says, "What is this great power of water that it touches the body and cleanses the heart?" And Bede says, "Our Lord conferred a power to regenerate on the waters by the touch of His most clean flesh."

I respond: Those who say that the sacraments do not cause grace except through a sort of concomitance claim that (a) there is no power in a sacrament that acts to bring about the sacrament's effect (*non sit aliqua virtus quae operetur ad sacramenti effectum*), but that (b) it is the divine power present with the sacrament (*sacramento coassistens*) that causes (*operatur*) the sacramental effect.

However, when we claim that a sacrament is an instrumental cause of grace, we have to claim at the same time that there is a certain instrumental power in the sacrament for bringing about the sacramental effect—a power that is, to be sure, proportioned to the instrument. Hence, this power is compared to the absolute and complete power of a given entity in the way that an instrument is compared to a principal agent. For, as has been explained (a. 1), the instrument acts only insofar as it is moved by the principal agent, which acts in its own right (*quod per se operatur*). And so the principal agent's power has permanent and complete *esse* in the agent's nature, whereas the instrumental agent's power has *esse* that passes from one thing into another and is incomplete—just as a movement is likewise an incomplete act passing from the agent into the thing acted upon (*sicut et motus est actus imperfectus ab agente in patiens*).

Reply to objection 1: As the objection proves, a spiritual power cannot exist in a corporeal entity in the manner of a permanent and complete power. Yet there is nothing to prevent an instrumental spiritual power from existing in a corporeal entity (*in corpore*), viz., insofar as the corporeal entity is moved by a spiritual substance in order to induce some spiritual effect—just as in an audible sound there is likewise a certain spiritual power to stimulate a man's intellect, insofar as that sound proceeds from a mental conception. And it is in this way that a spiritual power exists in the sacraments, viz., insofar the sacraments are ordered by God toward some spiritual effect.

Reply to objection 2: Just as a movement, because it is an incomplete act, is not properly speaking in any genus but is instead associated with the genus of [the corresponding] complete act (*sed reducitur ad genus actus perfecti*)—in the way that an alteration is associated with the genus *quality* (*sicut alteratio*

ad qualitatem)—so, too, an instrumental power is not properly speaking in any genus, but is instead associated with the genus and species of [the corresponding] complete power.

Reply to objection 3: Just as an instrumental power is acquired by an instrument because it is being moved by the principal agent, so, too, a sacrament obtains its spiritual power by the blessing of Christ and by being applied by the minister to the exercise of the sacrament. Hence, in a sermon on the Epiphany Augustine says, “It is no wonder that we say that water, i.e, a corporeal substance, attains to cleansing the soul. It clearly does attain to this, and it penetrates every hiding-place of the conscience. For even though the water is subtle and clear, the blessing of Christ makes it more subtle, so that it passes like a subtle dew through the hidden causes of life to the secret places of the mind.”

Reply to objection 4: Just as the same power of the principal agent is found instrumentally in all of the instruments that are ordered toward a given effect, so that all of them are [united as] one within some ordering, so, too, the same sacramental power is found in the words and the entities, so that one sacrament is brought to completion from the words and the entities.

Article 5

Do the sacraments of the New Law have their power from Christ’s passion?

It seems that the sacraments of the New Law do not have their power from Christ’s passion (*sacramenta novae legis non habeant virtutem ex passione Christi*):

Objection 1: The power that belongs to the sacraments is for causing in the soul the grace through which one lives spiritually. But as Augustine explains in *Super Ioannem*, “The Word, as He existed with the Father in the beginning, vivifies souls, whereas insofar as He is the Word made flesh, He vivifies bodies.” Therefore, since Christ’s passion belongs to the Word insofar as He has been made flesh, it seems that it cannot cause the power of the sacraments.

Objection 2: The power of the sacraments seems to depend on faith, since, as Augustine says in *Super Ioannem*, the Word of God brings the sacrament to completion “not because it is spoken, but because it is believed in.” But our Faith looks not only to Christ’s passion, but also to all the mysteries of His humanity and, even more importantly, to His divinity. Therefore, it seems that the sacraments do not have their power specifically from Christ’s passion.

Objection 3: The sacraments are ordered toward the justification of men—this according to 1 Corinthians 6:11 (“You have been washed, and you have been sanctified”). But justification is attributed to the resurrection—this according to Romans 4:25 (“He rose again for our justification”). Therefore, it seems that the sacraments have their power from Christ’s resurrection rather than from His passion.

But contrary to this: In commenting on Romans 5:14 (“... after the likeness of the transgression of Adam, etc.”), a Gloss says, “The sacraments through which the Church has been saved flowed from the side of the dormant Christ.”

I respond: As has been explained (a. 1), a sacrament acts to cause grace in the manner of an instrument. Now there are two types of instrument: (a) the one is a *separated instrument*, like a walking stick, and (b) the other is a *conjoined instrument*, like a hand. And a separated instrument is moved by a conjoined instrument, in the way that the walking stick is moved by the hand.

Now the principal efficient cause of grace is God Himself, and Christ’s human nature is related to God as a conjoined instrument, whereas a sacrament is related to Him as a separated instrument. And so it has to be the case that the salvific power flows from Christ’s divinity through His humanity into the

sacraments themselves. But sacramental grace is ordered mainly toward two things, viz., (a) removing the defects belonging to past sins, insofar as they have passed away in their actuality but remain in their guilt, and (b) perfecting the soul in those things that pertain to the worship of God in accord with the religious practice of the Christian way of life (*secundum religionem Christianae vitae*).

Now it is clear from what has been said above (q. 48, aa. 1-2 and 6, and q. 49, aa. 1 and 3) that Christ liberated us from our sins mainly through His passion, not only as an efficient cause and a meritorious cause, but also as a cause of satisfaction (*non solum efficienter et meritorie, sed etiam satisfactorie*). Similarly, through His passion He likewise initiated the rite of the Christian religion, delivering Himself “as an offering and a sacrifice to God,” as Ephesians 5:2 puts it. Hence, it is clear that the Church’s sacraments have their power in a special way from Christ’s passion, the power of which is in some way joined to us through the reception of the sacraments. As a sign of this, what flowed from the side of Christ as He hung on the cross were water and blood, one of which pertains to baptism and the other of which pertains to the Eucharist, the two most important sacraments.

Reply to objection 1: It is as a *principal* agent that the Word, insofar as He existed in the beginning with God, vivifies souls, but His flesh, along with the mysteries accomplished in that flesh, operates as an *instrumental cause* of the life of the soul (*operatur instrumentaliter ad animae vitam*). And, as was explained above (q. 56, a. 1, ad 3), His flesh operates for the life of the body not only as an instrumental cause, but also as a sort of exemplary cause (*non solum instrumentaliter sed etiam per quandam exemplaritatem*).

Reply to objection 2: As Ephesians 3:17 explains, through faith Christ dwells in us. And Christ’s power is joined to us through faith. Now the power to forgive sins belongs in a special way to His passion. And this is why it is through faith in His passion that men are specifically liberated from their sins—this according to Romans 3:25 (“... whom God has set forth as a propitiator through faith in His blood”). And the power of the sacraments that is ordered toward the forgiveness of sins comes mainly from faith in Christ’s passion.

Reply to objection 3: Justification is attributed to the resurrection by reason of justification’s *terminus ad quem*, which is newness of life through grace. By contrast, justification is attributed to the passion by reason of justification’s *terminus a quo*, i.e., as regards the remission of sin.

Article 6

Did the sacraments of the Old Law cause grace?

It seems that the sacraments of the Old Law caused grace (*sacramenta veteris legis gratiam causarent*):

Objection 1: As has been explained (a. 5, ad 2), the sacraments of the New Law have their efficacy from faith in Christ’s passion. But faith in Christ’s passion existed in the Old Law, since, as 2 Corinthians 4:13 says, “... we have the same spirit of faith.” Therefore, just as the sacraments of the New Law confer grace, so, too, the sacraments of the Old Law conferred grace.

Objection 2: Sanctification is effected only by grace. But men were sanctified by the sacraments of the Old Law; for Leviticus 8:31 says, “When he”—viz., Moses—“had sanctified them”—viz., Aaron and his sons—“in their vestments, etc.” Therefore, it seems that the sacraments of the Old Law conferred grace.

Objection 3: In a homily on the [feast of the] Circumcision Bede says, “Circumcision effected the same assistance of salvific care under the Law against the wound of original sin that baptism has become

accustomed to effect in the time of revealed grace.” But baptism now confers grace. Therefore, circumcision conferred grace. And, by parity of reasoning, so did the other sacraments of the Law, since just as baptism is the gateway to the sacraments of the New Law, so circumcision was the gateway to the sacraments of the Old Law—for which reason the Apostle says in Galatians 5:3, “I testify to every man who circumcises himself, that he is bound to observe the whole Law.”

But contrary to this: Galatians 4:9 says, “How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements?” A Gloss remarks, “That is, to the Law, which is being called weak because it does not justify one completely.” But grace justifies one completely. Therefore, the sacraments of the Old Law did not confer grace.

I respond: One cannot claim that the sacraments of the Old Law conferred justifying grace in their own right (*per seipsa*), i.e., *by their own power*, since if that were so, then Christ’s passion would not have been necessary—this according to Galatians 2:21 (“If justice came from the Law, then Christ died in vain”).

But neither can it be claimed that it was *by Christ’s passion* that the sacraments of the Old Law had the power to confer justifying grace. For as is clear from what was said above (a. 5 and q. 48, a. 6, ad 2, and q. 49 a. 1 ad 4 and 5), the power of Christ’s passion is joined to us through faith and the sacraments, though in different ways, since the connection that comes through faith is effected by an act of the soul, whereas the connection that comes through the sacraments is effected through the use of external things. Now nothing prevents what is later in time from effecting a movement before it exists, insofar as it exists ahead of time in an act of the soul—in the way that a final cause or end, which exists later in time, moves an agent insofar as that end is apprehended and desired by the agent. But that which does not yet exist in reality does not effect a movement with respect to the use of external things. Hence, an *efficient* cause cannot exist later in being in the order of duration in the way that a *final* cause can. So, then, it is clear that the justifying power fittingly flows from Christ’s passion, which is the [efficient] cause of human justification, to the sacraments of the New Law, but not to the sacraments of the Old Law.

Still, the ancient fathers were justified by faith in Christ’s passion, just as we are as well. Now the sacraments of the Old Law were, as it were, professions of that faith, insofar as they signified Christ’s passion and its effect. So, then, it is clear that the sacraments of the Old Law did not have within themselves any power by which they might *act to confer* justifying grace; instead, they only *signified* the faith through which [the ancient fathers] were justified.

Reply to objection 1: The ancient fathers had faith in the *future* passion of Christ, and this faith, insofar as it existed in their souls’ apprehension, was able to justify them. But we ourselves have faith in Christ’s *already accomplished* passion, which, as has been explained, is able to effect justification through the real exercise of the sacramental realities.

Reply to objection 2: The sanctification in question here was a prefigurement, since they were said to be sanctified by the fact that they were being dedicated to divine worship according to the rite of the Old Law, which was as a whole ordered toward prefiguring Christ’s passion.

Reply to objection 3: There have been many opinions about circumcision.

Some have claimed that through circumcision it was only the case that sin was taken away and not that grace was conferred. But this cannot be, since a man is justified from sin only through grace—this according to Romans 3:24 (“They are justified freely by His grace”).

And so others have claimed that through circumcision grace was conferred with respect to its [privative] effect of removing sin, but not with respect to its positive effects. But this, too, seems to be false. For through circumcision children are given the ability to attain glory, which is the ultimate positive effect of grace. And, in addition, in accord with the ordering of *formal* causes, the positive effects are naturally prior to the privative effects, even though the opposite is the case in the ordering of

material causes; for the form excludes the privation only by informing the subject.

And so others claim that circumcision confers grace even with respect to one positive effect, viz., to make [the subject] worthy of eternal life, but not with respect to repressing the excessive sentient desire (*concupiscentiam*) that impels him to sin.

At one time this is the way it seemed to me. But to one who considers the matter more carefully, this position seems not to be true, since the smallest amount of grace is able to resist any instance of excessive sentient desire and to merit eternal life.

And so it seems better to claim that circumcision was a *sign of justifying faith*. Hence, in Romans 4:11 the Apostle says that Abraham “received the sign of circumcision, the seal of the justice of faith.” And so, as will be explained below (q. 70, a. 4), in circumcision grace was conferred insofar as circumcision was a sign of Christ’s future passion.