

**Objection 1.** It seems that a character is not a spiritual power. For “character” seems to be the same thing as “figure”; hence (Heb. 1:3), where we read “figure of His substance, “for “figure” the Greek has *charakter*. Now “figure” is in the fourth species of quality, and thus differs from power which is in the second species. Therefore character is not a spiritual power.

**Objection 2.** Further, Dionysius says (Eccl. Hier. ii): “The Divine Beatitude admits him that seeks happiness to a share in Itself, and grants this share to him by conferring on him Its light as a kind of seal.” Consequently, it seems that a character is a kind of light. Now light belongs rather to the third species of quality. Therefore a character is not a power, since this seems to belong to the second species.

**Objection 3.** Further, character is defined by some thus: “A character is a holy sign of the communion of faith and of the holy ordination conferred by a hierarchy.” Now a sign is in the genus of “relation,” not of “power.” Therefore a character is not a spiritual power.

**Objection 4.** Further, a power is in the nature of a cause and principle (Metaph. v). But a “sign” which is set down in the definition of a character is rather in the nature of an effect. Therefore a character is not a spiritual power.

**On the contrary,** The Philosopher says (Ethic. ii): “There are three things in the soul, power, habit, and passion.” Now a character is not a passion: since a passion passes quickly, whereas a character is indelible, as will be made clear further on (a. 5). In like manner it is not a habit: because no habit is indifferent to acting well or ill: whereas a character is indifferent to either, since some use it well, some ill. Now this cannot occur with a habit: because no one abuses a habit of virtue, or uses well an evil habit. It remains, therefore, that a character is a power.

**I answer that,** As stated above (a. 1), the sacraments of the New Law produce a character, in so far as by them we are deputed to the worship of God according to the rite of the Christian religion. Wherefore Dionysius (Eccl. Hier. ii), after saying that God “by a kind of sign grants a share of Himself to those that approach Him,” adds “by making them Godlike and communicators of Divine gifts.” Now the worship of God consists either in receiv-

ing Divine gifts, or in bestowing them on others. And for both these purposes some power is needed; for to bestow something on others, active power is necessary; and in order to receive, we need a passive power. Consequently, a character signifies a certain spiritual power ordained unto things pertaining to the Divine worship.

But it must be observed that this spiritual power is instrumental: as we have stated above (q. 62, a. 4) of the virtue which is in the sacraments. For to have a sacramental character belongs to God’s ministers: and a minister is a kind of instrument, as the Philosopher says (Polit. i). Consequently, just as the virtue which is in the sacraments is not of itself in a genus, but is reducible to a genus, for the reason that it is of a transitory and incomplete nature: so also a character is not properly in a genus or species, but is reducible to the second species of quality.

**Reply to Objection 1.** Configuration is a certain boundary of quantity. Wherefore, properly speaking, it is only in corporeal things; and of spiritual things is said metaphorically. Now that which decides the genus or species of a thing must needs be predicated of it properly. Consequently, a character cannot be in the fourth species of quality, although some have held this to be the case.

**Reply to Objection 2.** The third species of quality contains only sensible passions or sensible qualities. Now a character is not a sensible light. Consequently, it is not in the third species of quality as some have maintained.

**Reply to Objection 3.** The relation signified by the word “sign” must needs have some foundation. Now the relation signified by this sign which is a character, cannot be founded immediately on the essence of the soul: because then it would belong to every soul naturally. Consequently, there must be something in the soul on which such a relation is founded. And it is in this that a character essentially consists. Therefore it need not be in the genus “relation” as some have held.

**Reply to Objection 4.** A character is in the nature of a sign in comparison to the sensible sacrament by which it is imprinted. But considered in itself, it is in the nature of a principle, in the way already explained.