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David Nussman

**Classical Style and Catholic Theology: A Multi-Faceted Analysis of
the Eucharistic Hymns of Saint Thomas Aquinas**

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Abstract:

Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote five Eucharistic hymns, and four of them are included among the liturgical texts for the Feast of Corpus Christi. This essay seeks to analyze these five hymns using a classical methodology. In short, this classical methodology consists of paying close attention to rhetorical devices—especially the micro-level details of diction, syntax, and word-order. The first chapter argues that Saint Thomas Aquinas approached his hymns with a mindset comparable in some respects to that of the ancient Roman poets. The essay then analyzes the stylistic features in the second chapter. Lastly, the third chapter shows that certain teachings emphasized in the Summa Theologiae receive similar emphasis in the hymns.

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A Brief Introduction

The five Eucharistic hymns attributed to Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) were written for the introduction of the Feast of Corpus Christi to the liturgical calendar of the universal Church in 1264 AD. By name, the hymns are the following; *Adoro Te Devote*; *Lauda Sion*; *Pange Lingua*; *Sacris Solemniis*; and *Verbum Supernum*. Pope Urban IV—the reigning pontiff at the time—wanted a new liturgy to be composed for the feast-day, wishing that all would celebrate the feast, and that all would use the same liturgical texts. In the years leading up to 1264, Urban IV had become acquainted with the Angelic Doctor (as St. Thomas Aquinas is often called). The Holy Father charged Aquinas not only with writing the hymns for Corpus Christi, but also with composing and/or selecting all the ‘propers’ for the feast. The term ‘propers’ here refers to elements of the liturgy which change throughout the various liturgical seasons, feast days, and the like. For instance, most modern Catholics will notice that the Reading(s) and Gospel at Mass vary from day to day—and in the modern calendar,¹ even from year to year.

This essay discusses the five hymns² that St. Thomas wrote for the Feast of Corpus Christi. The main goal of the essay is to analyze these hymns through the lens of classical stylistic analysis. In other words, the intention is to apply to these hymns the same general analytical methodology as a classicist would be prone to apply to ancient Roman poetry.³ The motives behind the present essay are the following: to draw attention to the beauty and

¹ I am referring here to the form of the liturgy which is also known by the following names; “the Ordinary Form of the Roman rite,” *Novus Ordo*, and “the Mass of Pope Paul VI.” It is the most common form of the Mass, the one with which nearly all church-going Catholics are familiar nowadays. In brief, it has a three-year cycle of readings for Sunday Mass and a two-year cycle for Weekday Mass.

² For the purposes of this essay, it is also acceptable to refer to these hymns as ‘poems,’ and they therefore will occasionally be called such. The term ‘hymns’ is given preference, but solely for the sake of clarity.

³ The phrasing of this sentence is borrowed from an earlier paper of mine which applied similar analytical methods to just one of the hymns: the *Pange Lingua*. That earlier paper is listed in the Bibliography under my name, and will be referenced in footnotes as “Nussman 2016.”

theological depth of these hymns; to encourage greater appreciation for the writings of the medieval era in general; and to provide yet more evidence confirming St. Thomas' authorship of these five Eucharistic hymns.

Therefore, there is much more to be discussed in this essay besides a stylistic analysis of St. Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic hymns. Chapter I shall compare Aquinas' view on the purpose of poetry with the views of classical poets. That first chapter will also show how the classical view is exhibited in the stylistic techniques that classical poets often employed. However, the stylistic techniques employed by Aquinas in his Eucharistic poetry is a topic that will be saved for Chapter II, which will provide a full analysis of all five hymns. Chapter III of this paper will summarize Aquinas' Eucharistic theology, and show how this theology is reflected in the theological statements contained in Aquinas' hymns.

Chapter I: The Classical Poets Compared to St. Thomas Aquinas

Before analyzing St. Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic hymns through a quasi-classical lens, it seems necessary to show that Aquinas' view on the function of poetry is comparable (at least roughly) to the views held by the ancient Romans, especially the ancient Roman poets.⁴ This seems necessary because a classical stylistic analysis would not be reasonable without understanding the similarities and differences between Aquinas' mentality toward poetical style while writing his hymns and the mentality of the ancient Roman poets in writing their verses.

This chapter will therefore discuss and define the Roman attitude about poetry, as described both in secondary scholarship and in statements by the poets themselves. After that, it will be illustrated how that set of general cultural attitudes is reflected in the ancient poets' usage of certain stylistic features.⁵ Next, the discussion of St. Thomas' thoughts on poetry will begin with some discussion of his own literary and historical context, then will look to certain epistemological statements found in the *Summa Theologiae* and use these passages to shed some light on a few brief statements by Aquinas about the function of poetry. We will then compare and contrast Aquinas' perspective with the classical perspective, and at last conclude the chapter with a discussion of ineffability as addressed by St. Thomas Aquinas, in response to comments on ineffability by the famous poet Dante Alighieri.

⁴ Although the Romans largely saw themselves as culturally rooted in the Greeks who came before them, the views of the ancient Greeks on the purpose of poetry are beyond the scope of this essay. Some information on Greek views of poetry nonetheless is found in the following: Gentili 1988 and Sikes 1969. For a Greek primary text about poetry, see Aristotle's *Poetics*. English translations can be found in Dorsch 1969:29-75 and McKeon 2001:1453-87.

⁵ For the sake of brevity, both of the sections pertaining to Roman poetry will be slightly limited to the most illustrative elements, as well as the elements that are most relevant to the comparison with Aquinas. This may seem like circular logic; but "Roman poetry" is such a broad topic that it is necessary to be selective.

Classical Poetics: Ancient Romans' Teleology of Poetry

In discussing the ancient Roman attitude toward the purposes of poetry, it is perhaps necessary to begin by noting general points about the role of poetry in (Greco-)Roman culture.⁶ In discussing both the role of poetry and what was understood to be the goal of poetry, there will be comments from scholarly sources as well as statements from the Roman poets themselves. The general points about poetry in classical culture are largely (but not entirely) derived from a section in Michael Grant's *Roman Literature* that is entitled "Attitudes to Poetry."⁷ As far as primary sources go, passages from Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* are mainly what will be cited in this discussion.

There is, first of all, the fact that the typical Roman citizen in the Republic or the Empire possessed far greater exposure to and awareness of poetry than the typical modern Westerner. As Michael Grant wrote, "*In the ancient world, poetry usually played a far more important part in daily life than it does today. In our own time, most people, even literate people, do not regard poetry as an integral part of their lives, or of life.*"⁸ Publishing poetry in ancient Rome really did put it into the public sphere to be encountered by the masses—whereas publishing poetry today usually makes it available to a selective niche, a comparatively tiny portion of the general population. The closest analogue in the 21st century to the popularity of poetry among the ancients might be contemporary pop music.⁹

⁶ As discussed in a footnote above, the Romans saw themselves as heavily influenced by Greek cultural traditions—in a sense, almost as the inheritors of those traditions. Given all of that, term Greco-Roman is only accurate from the Roman perspective—not the Greek. The implications that this Greek influence had for Roman poetry are discussed in Clausen 1987, Johnston 1983, and O'Hara 1996, plus several of the articles featured in Harrison 2008.

⁷ Grant 1954:133-52.

⁸ Grant 1954:133. (Italics in the original.) If this was true of the contemporary world when Grant was writing, how much truer it must be of Western culture today. Modern technologies provide countless hours of free entertainment with just a few clicks of a button, which seems to further diminish the role of literature (especially poetry) in the everyday lives of ordinary people.

⁹ The fact that "pop" is short for "popular" is meant to emphasize the point rather than create redundancy.

For the ancient Romans, poetry was not only a common source of entertainment (especially in the form of oral recitation¹⁰), but also a major part of their shared cultural identity. In other words, poetry served two purposes for the Romans: entertainment and education.¹¹ As Grant writes:

Many are likely to be equally surprised by another ancient view about poetry. *Greeks and Romans often had a strong belief that the aim of poetry was not only to please or excite, but to teach and improve people.* Greek and Roman literary critics very often believed that poetry had a mission to instruct. Its purely artistic qualities were regarded as indissolubly merged with moral considerations.¹²

What Grant wrote in this passage is very important. The ancient Romans had a broad, expansive view of poetry that incorporated the two dimensions of enjoyment and edification. The Roman poets themselves expressed this train-of-thought in several places in the extant literature.

For example, the Roman poet Horace (65 BC-8 BC) said something akin to this in his *Ars Poetica* (a piece of Latin poetry proscribing how to write good poetry). It is stated clearly in the following lines: “*omne tulit punctum, qui miscuit utile dulci / lectorem delectando pariterque monendo*” (Hor.*Ars.*343-4).¹³ A literal translation would be as follows: “he has taken the whole point, who has mixed the useful with the sweet, / in order to delight the reader, and equally to admonish him.”¹⁴ To make better sense in English, here is a more interpretive translation: “The man who has managed to blend profit with delight wins everyone’s approbation, for he gives his reader pleasure at the same time as he instructs him.”¹⁵ Hence, this passage from Horace clearly

¹⁰ See Grant 1954:138-9.

¹¹ For the Romans, these two purposes seem closely intertwined in other areas of life as well. For instance, the Latin word “*ludus*” can be translated as both “game” and “school.”

¹² Grant 1954:134-5. (Italics in the original.)

¹³ Found in Wilkins 1950:72-3.

¹⁴ Translation mine, as it will usually be unless noted otherwise.

¹⁵ Dorsch 1969:91.

affirms the common Roman belief in the twofold nature of poetry. For Horace wrote that excellent poetry both “delights” the reader and “admonishes” (or “instructs”) him.

Lucretius (c.99-55 BC) presents a similar idea in his *De Rerum Natura*, a philosophical and scientific treatise written in dactylic hexameter (and consisting of thousands of lines of hexameter, separated into six books). The *De Rerum Natura* would be considered a piece of didactic poetry, because it seeks to use the entertaining and engaging qualities of poetry as a facet for imparting doctrines on the audience.¹⁶ Lucretius speaks about his purpose for writing about Epicureanism in poetry at the beginning of Book Four:

Nam veluti pueris absinthia taetra medentes
cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore
ut puerorum aetas improvida ludificetur
labrorum tenuis, interea perpotet amarum
absinthii laticem deceptaque non capiatur,
sed potius tali pacto recreata valescat,
sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur
tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque
vulgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi suaviloquenti
carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle,
si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere
versibus in nostris possem, dum percipis omnem
naturam rerum ac persentis utilitatem.
(Lucr.*DeRer.*4.11-25)¹⁷

One translator renders this passage in the following manner:

For just as doctors, when they try to give
Children a dose of bitter-tasting wormwood,
First coat the rim of the cup on all its edges
With sweet amber essence of honey, so that
The unsuspecting young things may be fooled
By the taste on their lips and drink right down

¹⁶ As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, didactic poetry is one of the genres of classical Latin poetry. Didactic poetry is organized as a logical series of syllogisms, with concrete imagery and other such sensory appeal being used to emphasize and expand upon specific parts of the syllogisms. Lyric poetry, on the other hand, is structured as a series of sensory stimuli roughly strung together.

¹⁷ This version of the text found in Bailey 1959.

The bitter dose of wormwood, and so be lured
Into being cured and having their health restored—
So now I, since this doctrine often seems
Rather bitter to those who have not practised it,
And since most men generally shy away from it,
Have wished to lay our doctrine out before you
In the sweet-toned sounds of the Pierian Nymphs,
To coat it, as it were, with the Muses' honey
To see whether by chance in such a way
I might train your attention on my verses
Until you grasp the whole nature of things
And sense the usefulness of knowing this.¹⁸

Hence, it is clear the Lucretius also saw that poetry had the twofold capacity to entertain and to educate. But Lucretius' understanding of the relation between these two poetic purposes differs from Horace's understanding in the following respect: for Horace, it is something of a balanced equilibrium; but for Lucretius, the entertainment is subservient to the instruction.

In contrast to the twofold function of poetry that the ancient Romans believed in, modern thoughts about the matter tend to be overly narrow and exclusive. This difference between ancient literary criticism and modern Western literary criticism is worthy of some further articulation. Among modern scholars in general, a given school of thought typically has its own narrow, incomplete way of viewing literature and the arts. In the words of one classicist, Tenney Frank, "Horace's broad definition of poetry, which included 'utility' as well as emotional stimulus, is not now generally accepted. ... [E]ach critic insists on restricting its scope to conform to his own theory."¹⁹ Modern critics often pick a school of thought and mechanically apply the interpretive methods thereof; in so doing, they besmirch the multi-faceted nature of artistic expression. Furthermore (and perhaps worst of all), artists who create their works

¹⁸ Bovie 1974:110. For an alternate translation, see Stallings 2007:169-70.

¹⁹ Frank 1935:167. What is meant here by "Horace's broad definition of poetry" is made evident in our analysis above of a brief passage in the *Ars Poetica*.

according to the overly simplistic definitions created by modern schools of thought are in fact severely limiting their expressive capacity:

The painters, composers, and poets who today insist on producing “pure art” are often thin-souled men and women who work dryly at a mental formula that would never have appealed to men of rich endowments like Vergil, Shakespeare, Beethoven. ... What we need is a *Gestalttheorie* of art that permits a whole soul to operate with all its wealth of mind and spirit.²⁰

Hence, modern methods of overly narrow interpretation might work for bland modern creations, but they bear little fruit—says the classicist—for interpreting older works of literature, music, and art: works that have stood the test of time because they speak to the souls of the audience with an incomparable depth and complexity.

In addition to the greater presence of poetry in everyday life for ancient Romans and the twofold purpose of poetry recognized in classical culture, there is a third general idea about classical Latin poetry that must be conveyed here: “The poetry of the ancients reflects an *infinitely more careful study of style* than is habitual today. ... In particular, *ancient poetry was strongly influenced by rhetoric.*”²¹ Grant was writing many years before now, and contemporary scholarship, training, etc. concerning poetry is not necessarily lacking in its appreciation of stylistic techniques. Hence, this contrast that Grant made between ancient and contemporary attitudes about poetic style might not be as applicable in the 21st century as it was in the 1950s. However, the point still remains that style was studied very carefully in the ancient world and was associated with rhetoric. One of the consequences of this is the fact that classical poetry was absolutely filled with rhetorical devices.²²

²⁰ Frank 1935:169. (Italics in the original.)

²¹ Grant 1954:136.

²² This observation about Roman poetry is immensely relevant to the present paper, and will be treated at great length under the next section-heading.

Along with the essential points articulated above, there are many other observations that one could make about Roman poetry. Only one of these other observations is particularly relevant to the present task: *the ancient Roman poets all thought of themselves as members of and contributors to a living, continuous tradition* handed down to them by prior generations of poets. As Grant words it, “Ancient poetry observed a far keener devotion to tradition than is ever the case, at least in the West, today.”²³ And again he writes, “In other words, a poet, like any other writer—it was said [by the Romans]—must devote himself to unremitting study of his predecessors.”²⁴ A strong sense of tradition is evident all throughout the extant poetry of the ancient Romans.²⁵ But one of the strongest indicators of it—as will be discussed in the next section—is the frequency with which Roman poets made verbal allusions to their predecessors.

Certain Stylistic Features Observed in Roman Poetry

The ancient Romans’ attitude toward the purpose of poetry—one would rightly imagine—was closely associated with how poetry was written. In simpler terms: *why* Romans wrote poetry affected *how* Romans wrote poetry. As briefly mentioned at the end of the previous section, Roman poetry was strongly associated with rhetoric and stylistic detail: or in simpler terms, with rhetorical devices. The present section shall elaborate on this point by discussing three rhetorical devices in particular: wordplay, verbal allusion, and imagery. It will be argued that wordplay and verbal allusion are used to enhance the development of rich imagery. Each of these rhetorical/stylistic devices will be explained briefly, and accompanied by a few examples. These examples are meant to illustrate the devices, rather than prove how common they are.

²³ Grant 1954:139.

²⁴ Grant 1954:139.

²⁵ For more secondary scholarship on the sense of poetical tradition among the Roman poets, see Clausen 1987, West 1979, Wheeler 1934, and Williams 1968.

Nonetheless, some proof of how common these rhetorical devices were in classical poetry can be found in the secondary sources cited in the footnotes throughout.

Before beginning, it seems wise to state briefly that the precise function of poetic imagery tended to vary from genre to genre. However, as one scholar pointed out, “The contrast between [a didactic poet like Lucretius and a lyric poet like Horace] is not in the quality or texture of their thought but in the technique of exposition.”²⁶ Didactic poetry, as a genre, typically exposes its teachings in clear and logical terms, but often digresses into imagery and sensory appeal in order to defend, strengthen, exemplify, and/or clarify particular points in the train of thought. In contrast, lyric poetry is generally written as a series of images that flow together to express certain ideas and themes. Lyric poetry might convey a very logical idea, but the mode of expression veils the message in mystery. Paradoxically, sensory appeal in poetry does not just veil the message in mystery, but also makes the message more tangible and moving for the audience. Having made that clarification, it is necessary now to begin discussing rhetorical devices and imagery in the extant poetry of the ancient Romans.

Wordplay is a rhetorical device in that it often serves the function of catching the audience’s attention—sometimes by being clever, witty, and humorous, and sometimes by conveying a sense of irony or paradox. When the term “wordplay” is used in this essay, it is used in perhaps the broadest sense of the word. Wordplay has to do with the careful and intentional choice and arrangement of particular words in a sentence. It can be anything from a *chiasmus* to a *figura etymologica* to a *zeugma*. Rather than trying to come up with a clearer, more technical definition of ‘wordplay,’ it will be more fruitful to give examples of the commonest types of wordplay in classical Latin poetry: the *chiasmus*; the *zeugma*; the *transferred epithet*; the *figura*

²⁶ Tracy 1948:106.

etymologica; and auditory devices such as *alliteration*. Now there will be some definitions, descriptions, and illustrative examples of each of these types of rhetorical devices.

Of the many stylistic devices used in Latin poetry, many of them have to do specifically with word-order. The *chiasmus* was fairly common among rhetorical devices involving word-order,²⁷ and is discussed here as a prime example of how word-order was used with stylistic effect in Latin poetry. A chiasmus is an arrangement of four words in the manner of A-B-B-A. The chiasmus is so named because it is thought to resemble the Greek letter ‘chi:’ X.²⁸ This rhetorical device was most common in dactylic hexameter. One example can be found in the following line from the “mini-epic”²⁹ of Catullus: “*Nunc iam nulla viro iuranti femina credat*” (64:143).³⁰ (“From now on, may no lady ever trust a man when he makes promises.”)³¹ In many instances in classical poetry, the use of a chiasmus contributes to hyperbaton, or severe displacement of word-order, which can help foster a chaotic and grotesque atmosphere. This chiasmus situated in the middle of the line, serves to heighten the sense of disorder and misery resulting from being abandoned by one’s lover—a tragic³² pathos which Ariadne’s lament as a whole³³ conveys with tremendous emotional force. Countless more examples of chiasmus can be found all throughout Latin poems, especially those written in hexameter: but for the sake of brevity, we will leave it at this one.

²⁷ The term “chiasmus” could refer to a similar arrangement at larger scale, but will be used in the strict sense of chiasmatic word-order for present purposes. Chiasmatic structure—as distinct from mere word-order, which is the topic at hand—is also commonly noted in Vergilian scholarship. For instance, see Quint 2011.

²⁸ It takes on the “X” shape when it is represented spatially like this: **A B**

B A.

²⁹ From the “Notes” on Catullus 64 found in Garrison 2004:134.

³⁰ Found on pg. 55 of Garrison 2004.

³¹ The phrase “from now on” was chosen because of a note on this line in Garrison 2004:138 associates the phrase with “a sense of finality.” Here is how this line is a chiasmus: “*nulla viro iuranti femina*”

nominative-dative-dative-nominative.

³² Both in the modern sense of “sad, dramatic, and pitiable” and in the literal sense of “derived from or associated with the theatrical genre of tragedy.”

³³ Catullus 64:132-201.

A *zeugma* is a grammatical construction in which two nouns are connected to the same verb, but the verb has to be taken in two different senses in order to be intelligible with both nouns. It comes from a word for “yoke,” referring to a specific type of yoke meant for a pair of bulls (or other type of animal). Some would argue that it is only *truly* a zeugma if one of the nouns makes sense with the verb while the other does not,³⁴ however, this essay will not comment on such debates, because they are irrelevant to its purpose, and will stick with the broad sense of the word. An example of a zeugma is found in Vergil’s *Aeneid*, in the following clause: “*crudelis aras trajectaque pectora ferro / nudavit*” (Verg.*Aen.*1:355-6).³⁵ (Translation: “he laid bare the bloodied altar, and his breast pierced by a sword.”) This line is found in Venus’ speech to Aeneas. It describes Dido’s dream in which the ghost of her deceased husband, Sychaeus, appeared to her and warned her about the treachery and deceit of her brother Pygmalion. This phrase could be considered a zeugma because the ghost showing Dido the altar that was defiled by his murdered corpse is a very different gesture from showing the mortal wound in his chest.³⁶ Hence, the verb “*nudavit*” takes on two senses at once, one for each direct object.

Next is the transferred epithet. A transferred epithet is when an adjective or adverb (usually an adjective) modifies a different word than would be expected, with the expected word being also present in the sentence. It is hard to describe, and it is better just to cite an example: “*atque altae moenia Romae*” (Ver.*Aen.*1.7). In English, this literally means, “and the walls of lofty Rome.” However, one would expect the *walls* to be described as lofty, not the city. More

³⁴ Lussky 1953 makes this argument.

³⁵ Lussky 1953:

³⁶ It is unclear whether the ‘defiled altar’ refers to a literal presentation of an image of the bloodied altar to Dido’s dreaming mind. For it could also be true that this phrase is a poeticism, and that Sychaeus’ ghost “laid bare the defiled altar” in the sense that he verbalized the murder to his wife, then showed her his wound to prove it. Either way, exposing the altar was a very different gesture from exposing the wound.

than just a mishap demanded by meter, this transferred epithet causes the audience to ponder in what sense the city of Rome could be considered lofty.³⁷ Thus, though the phrasing might strike the audience initially as rather odd, the audience is then provoked to ponder in what ways this odd syntax bares some truth.

The *figura etymologica* is a rhetorical device in which the author uses two words that are closely related to one another etymologically. There is something rather clever and attention-grabbing about it. Sometimes it is even used with a sense of irony. One example of a *figura etymologica* is contained in the following lines from Lucretius: “*nec poterat quemquam placidi pellacia ponti / subdola pellicere in fraudem ridentibus undis*” (Lucr. *De Rer.* 5.1004-5). In translation: “Nor was the deceitful seduction of the peaceful ocean able to seduce any man into its delusion by means of its laughing waves.”³⁸

The above quotation also exhibits alliteration: “*placidi pellacia ponti*.”³⁹ Auditory devices such as alliteration were very, very common in Roman poetry. The three sound-devices of alliteration, consonance and assonance are very easy for the contemporary English-speaker to grasp, largely due to how common they are in English-language literature. Despite the lack of any need for explanation, these devices are so incredibly common in and important to Latin poetry that they are at least worth mentioning here.

At this point, it has been made sufficiently evident that the broad set of rhetorical devices loosely defined as “wordplay” had a very important role in ancient poetry.⁴⁰ The next type of rhetorical device to be discussed here is allusion. In ancient Rome, the strong sense of poetical

³⁷ For instance, perhaps it means that the people of the city have attained great accomplishments.

³⁸ For better English, cf. Bovie 1974:171, where these lines are translated as follows: “her smiling quiet surface / Could cleverly entice no man to doom / Among her laughing waves.”

³⁹ The commentary in Leonard & Smith 1970 points refers back to a different line in *De Rerum Natura* in which this phrase is used, and it is in the commentary on that other, earlier line that the alliteration is noted.

⁴⁰ For more on wordplay in classical poems, see Boyd 1983, Hendry 1992, O’Hara 1996, and Lussky 1953.

tradition (discussed above) brought with it many ramifications, one of which is the fact that the Roman poets frequently included in their works allusions to their predecessors (both Greek and Roman). As will be shown in the next few paragraphs, the Roman poets often alluded to the writings of earlier poets by echoing their predecessors' verbiage and syntax. These "verbal echoes" often suggest a shared idea, theme, context, or emotion. Of course, the re-working of an earlier poet's phrase into a very different context would also be considered a form of allusion. However, any further discussion about the various specific forms and purposes of allusions that are manifest in the extant portions of ancient Roman poetry would be largely unrelated to the task at hand.⁴¹ For the time being, this section shall simply feature an example of allusion.⁴²

Many verbal allusions to Vergil's poetry—especially the *Aeneid*, and especially Book Six—can be found in Ausonius' "Crucified Cupid."⁴³ There is, for example, the fifth line of the poem: "*errantes silva in magna sub luce maligna.*" This line, describing deceased spirits "wandering in a great forest beneath an opaque light" down in Hades, echoes a phrase from Aeneas' trip to the underworld: "*errabat silva in magna*" (Verg.*Aen.*6.451).^{44,45} Vergil had written that Dido "was wandering in a great forest" in the underworld; this is identical in meaning to what Ausonius wrote (several centuries later) about all the victims of Cupid's arrows who have been condemned to that region of the netherworld.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Such discussions can be found in Boerma 1958 and Thomas 1986.

⁴² For more on allusion and imitation in ancient Roman poetry, see (in addition to the two above) the following articles; Ahl 1985, Johnston 1983, Kyriakou 1996, McCallum 2015, Smith 1930, and Williams 1983. For books related to the topic, see Hinds 1998 and Williams 1968.

⁴³ The full text of this can be found in Harrington 1997:88-93. This 'epyllion' (of sorts) was written during the 4th century AD. The question of whether or not Ausonius is too late to be a properly 'classical' poet is irrelevant; Ausonius saw himself as writing in the tradition of the classical poets, Vergil and Horace and Catullus and the like. The tradition is what matters for the purposes of this paper.

⁴⁴ Found on pg. 336 of Pharr 1998.

⁴⁵ It should also be noted that the two phrases, "*errabat silva in magna*" and "*errantes silva in magna,*" are wholly identical in their scansion.

⁴⁶ Hypothetically speaking, it is possible that Vergil and Ausonius were both hearkening back to some earlier author, or that Ausonius meant to echo some intervening author who in turn was echoing Vergil. However, the fact that the parallel phrases are found in nearly identical contexts would suggest otherwise; but it is possible nonetheless.

Having thus discussed both word-play and allusions, it is necessary to discuss sensory appeal in general, and imagery in particular. As mentioned elsewhere, the importance and centrality of imagery (and other forms of sensory stimuli) in classical poetry could not be overstated.⁴⁷ Classical poetry's dependence on sensory stimulus hinges on the fact that the ancient Romans thought of poetry both as entertainment and as education (as discussed earlier). Imagery in classical Latin poetry is arguably too common to have to be demonstrated, even for the sake of illustration; there are innumerable poems and passages and such to choose from. Therefore, this section will seek to show a few examples from classical poems in which wordplay and allusion contribute to the development of stimulating imagery, and/or enable the poet to convey his message in a more persuasive manner.⁴⁸

Wordplay contributes to the implementation of imagery in various ways. One shining example of this is what is called *embedded word-order*. Embedded word-order is when the words in a given line or phrase are arranged in a particular ordering and present a sort of visual reinforcement of the phrase's actual meaning. We will cite an example taken from the *Aeneid*: “*Dividimus muros et moenia pandimus urbis*” (Verg.*Aen.*2.234).⁴⁹ Aeneas, while describing how the Trojans led the Trojan Horse into their city, says in these line, “We split apart the city-walls and we spread open the city's turrets.” The two verbs and the two direct objects form a chiasmus (as defined above). The two opposite halves of the chiasmus have one and the same meaning, and the two halves can be thought of, therefore, as essentially mirror images of each other.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Scholarship on imagery in classical poetry includes the following: Newton 1957, Steele 1918.

⁴⁸ As will be indicated in a later portion of this chapter, imagery has persuasive force because belief in something tangible is much stronger than belief in a purely intellectual idea. This attitude toward sensory engagement is one of the essential arguments to be found in Newman 1958.

⁴⁹ This line found on pg. 99 of Pharr 1998.

⁵⁰ For clarity's sake; the line is arranged in the following manner: verb—direct object—direct object—verb.

Hence, this *chiasmus* calls to mind the image of a set of twin doors or twin gates being thrust open—which is precisely the kind of activity that this line is referring to.⁵¹

Much like wordplay, verbal allusions can also contribute to the development of vivid imagery. When a Roman poet was trying to write with particularly fierce emotional force, he might look to his predecessors and to the similar scenes that they wrote, and borrow phrases from them. The phrasing that the later poet borrows from the earlier poet is expressive enough in and of itself; but if the borrowed phrasing reminds the audience of the earlier poem, then that only further augments the later poem's emotional power. One example of this is the intertextual parallels between Ariadne's lament against the distant Theseus in Catullus 64 (also mentioned above)⁵² and Dido's two speeches of lament during her dialogue with Aeneas in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*.⁵³ Regarding this pair of parallel scenes,⁵⁴ Vergil's text shares with Catullus' text the use of the word "*perfide*"⁵⁵ and the structure of repeated rhetorical questions.⁵⁶ For a reader of the *Aeneid* who was already familiar with Catullus 64, Vergil's usage of the word would call to mind the situation in which Ariadne used the word, thus associating Aeneas' obedient decision to leave Carthage with Theseus' cruel abandonment of Ariadne. However, even an audience totally unfamiliar with the earlier work of Catullus is still able to appreciate the striking emotional impact of Vergil's language in this scene in the *Aeneid*.

The parallels between Ariadne and Dido go even deeper. For instance, there is a very distinct verbal echo involving marital vocabulary. Ariadne's lament contains in it the following

⁵¹ This instance of embedded word-order seems even more beautiful and impressive when one considers the fact that in the active voice the subject enacts the action of the verb on the direct object much like a person acts on doors with the action of the hinges.

⁵² Cat.*Carm.*64:132-201.

⁵³ Verg.*Aen.*4:305-30 and 365-87.

⁵⁴ The commonalities between these two scenes are discussed in Boerma 1958:59-60.

⁵⁵ Cat.*Carm.*64:132 and 133; similar to Verg.*Aen.*4:305 and 366.

⁵⁶ Cat.*Carm.*64:132-8,164-6; similar to Verg.*Aen.*4:305-14 and 368-71.

line: “*sed conubia laeta, sed optatos hymenaeos*” (Cat.*Carm.*64:141).⁵⁷ Compare that with a line spoken by Dido in one of her addresses to Aeneas: “*per conubia laeta, per inceptos hymenaeos*” (Verg.*Aen.*4.316).⁵⁸ There is obviously an allusion here. In both passages, the female character is portraying notions of a happy wedding and marriage in sharp contrast with the sad reality in which she finds herself presently. The difference is that Ariadne speaks of an image that was merely hoped-for, while Dido speaks of a reality. Ariadne’s wedding-hymns merely constitute a dream, a hope—as indicated by the word “*optatos*”—while Dido’s wedding-hymns have already begun—as indicated by “*inceptos*.”⁵⁹

Lastly, there is one very powerful bit of imagery from Ariadne’s long lament against Theseus that is very closely imitated by a passage from one of Dido’s several short speeches against Aeneas. Firstly, here are the lines of Catullus:

Quaenam te genuit sola sub rupe leaena,
quod mare conceptum spumantibus exspuit undis,
quae Syrtis, quae Scylla rapax, quae vasta Charybdis,
talìa qui reddis pro dulci praemia vita? (Cat.*Carm.*64:154-7)

For what lioness begot you under a lonely crag,
What sea with spitting waves spat you, having been conceived,
What Syrtis, what predatory Scylla, what vast Charybdis [begot
you], you who return such rewards as these for a pleasing life?

Secondly, compare the above lines with the following lines from Vergil: “*Nec tibi diva parens generis nec Dardanus auctor, / perfide, sed duris genuit te cautibus horrens / Caucasus Hyrcanaeque admorunt ubera tigres*” (Verg.*Aen.*4.365-7).⁶⁰ “The goddess is not your parent, nor is the Trojan founder / —you unfaithful one—but on its rough cliffs the wind-blown Caucasus

⁵⁷ English: “but the happy marriages, but the wedding-songs hoped-for.”

⁵⁸ English: “through happy marriages, through wedding-songs already begun.”

⁵⁹ After all, Dido was convinced that her relationship with Aeneas constituted a marriage, at least in some sense.

⁶⁰ This passage is found in Pharr 1998:224. As pointed out in Boerma 1958:61, Vergil echoes these lines again in *Aen.*7.302-3: “*Quid Syrtes aut Scylla mihi, quid vasta Charybdis / profuit? ...*” (The latter can be found in Williams 2010:10.)

mountain-range / begot you, and tigresses from Hyrcania gave you suck.” We see here that each woman ponders the possibility that the man abandoning her was born and raised in the wilderness by supernatural monsters and wild predatory beasts. In both cases, it is a rhetorically impactful way of accusing the respective man of being cruel and uncivilized. In echoing Catullus’ phrasing, Vergil is also echoing his imagery, not to mention giving his own verses in this passage a greater emotional force and expressive power. Hence, reworking ideas from an earlier poet is a form of allusion, as well as a way to produce particularly stimulating imagery.

It has been shown that wordplay in all its various forms was extremely common in ancient verse, and the commonest forms were briefly described. It was also pointed out that allusions were quite common, too, and some examples of allusions were presented. Thirdly and lastly, it was argued that these two types of rhetorical devices can contribute to the development of imagery and the strengthening of the poetry’s emotional force.

Saint Thomas Aquinas’ Context: Latin Liturgical Tradition

Having thus devoted numerous pages to discussing the ancient Roman perspective on poetry, it is fitting now to begin discussing Saint Thomas Aquinas’ perspective. It seems requisite to begin this discussion by putting Aquinas’ hymns into their proper historical and cultural context. This will add a great deal of nuance to the essay. In an effort to provide that context, it needs to be said that St. Thomas saw himself as a part of the Roman Catholic liturgical tradition, and did not see his hymns as part of the tradition of the ancient Roman poets.

Although to some it may be obvious, there is need to clarify that St. Thomas Aquinas was not consciously striving to imitate the classical poets. Such a supposition is in no way equivalent to the argument of this paper. Aquinas seems to have cited a few lines of Horace in a few places in his works; but other than a scattered handful of poem, it is doubtful that Aquinas possessed

much familiarity with classical Latin poetry. It should also be noted that many of the classical texts available today—such as the *Carmina* of Catullus and the *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius—were considered lost in Western Europe in the 13th century. It seems that St. Thomas’ inspiration for his quasi-classical manner of writing came from his predecessors in the tradition of Roman Catholic liturgical poetry, and not from the ancient Roman poets.

Given that, a summary of the history of Latin liturgical poetry seems requisite. In their earliest, primordial roots, Christian hymns seem to have had some connection to the tradition of classical Latin poetry: “It has always been noted that the Church hymns probably derived their rhythmical form from the popular poetry of the Romans.”⁶¹ However, it has also been written that “Medieval Latin poetry may be said to begin in the middle of the fourth century By the side of this learned poetry [namely, the “Medieval Latin poetry” above] the Christian hymn was making its appearance in the Latin West. It was introduced from the East.”⁶² Although the cultural and literary influences of the earliest Latin liturgical poetry may be unclear, the history of the tradition once it had been established as such is easier to discern.

The major players in the early history of Latin Christian hymns included Saint Hilary of Poitiers (c.310-367 AD) and Saint Ambrose of Milan (c.337-397 AD). In fact, St. Ambrose’s hymns “were to form the core of Western hymnaries.”⁶³ Also of importance were the contributions of Prudentius (348-c.413 AD):⁶⁴ and, several centuries later, the verses of Venantius Fortunatus (c.530-c.600 AD)—known as Fortunatus for short.⁶⁵ Hymns written by these men became a part of monastic Offices,⁶⁶ and therein were perpetuated.

⁶¹ Clark 2015:41.

⁶² Raby 1959:x-xi (in the Introduction).

⁶³ Raby 1959:xi.

⁶⁴ For more on Prudentius and for an example of his poetry, see Harrington 1997:101-10.

⁶⁵ Raby 1959:xi. Examples of Fortunatus’ verses in the original Latin can be found in Harrington 1997:158-68.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

After those initial players, the next major phase of development in the tradition of Roman Catholic liturgical poetry encompassed the Sequence. The Sequence was a hymn sung before the Gospel, often paired with the Alleluia. In its earliest conceptions, the Sequence consisted of was a brief piece of prose fitted to a chant melody. Later on, it became common for the Sequence to be written in verse. The list of individuals responsible for the development of the Sequence is too long to enumerate here. However, it is worth noting that the most pivotal shaper of the Sequence was Adam of St. Victor. The 12th century marked a grand flourishing of liturgical poetry; and Adam of St. Victor can be credited with some of the most fundamental changes in Latin liturgical poetry during the 12th century;

On the one hand, much of the poetry of the period represents a rebirth of classical poetic practice, while on the other, a body of poetry develops that is experimental and innovative, especially in terms of rhyme. Adam of St. Victor represents this latter development and is generally credited with perfecting what came to be called the "second sequence style" characterized by the accentual-syllabic, strophic forms, and types of rhyming that would become prevalent in later medieval poetry.⁶⁷

Thus, Adam of St. Victor was extremely influential on the development of Latin liturgical poetry during the Middle Ages. Despite his immense impact, very little of his biographical information is actually known; this was true for even his earliest biographers.⁶⁸

Adam of St. Victor was a major source of inspiration for Saint Thomas Aquinas in his five Eucharistic hymns. It seems wise to cite here the observations of scholar F. J. E. Raby (1888-1966)—who specialized in the study of Medieval Latin hymns and poetry. Raby once wrote the following about St. Thomas' Eucharistic hymns: "severity of form, economy of expression, [and] scholastic exactness of doctrinal statements[,] are joined to a metrical skill

⁶⁷ Cunnar 1987:394.

⁶⁸ For more on this, see Fassler 1984.

which owes as much to the genius of the poet as to *a study of predecessors like Adam of St. Victor*.^{69,70} Thus, the liturgical poetry of Adam of St. Victor was the chief literary influence, the main role-model, for St. Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic hymns.

As a hymn-writer, Saint Thomas saw himself as part of a tradition reaching far above and beyond himself. Broadly speaking, this is parallel to the strong sense of poetic tradition exhibited by the Greco-Roman poets. However, the natures of these traditions, as understood by their respective participants, differ immensely. The tradition of classical Latin poetry—though often admitting and alluding to supernatural aid, mainly from the Muses⁷¹—was recognized by its participants nonetheless as a human endeavor. On the other hand, the tradition of liturgical Latin poetry was recognized by its participants as connected to something instituted by Christ: namely, the Church and the Sacraments. This difference might explain why the Latin liturgical poetry of the Middle Ages—although some examples of it are astonishingly beautiful—generally tended to be less stylistically ornate than the poems of the ancient Romans. It also helps to explain why authorship of hymns is frequently rather difficult to pinpoint, as has been noted by many scholars. For instance, one author notes, “Liturgical compositions rarely circulate under the name of their author or compiler, but rather as a ‘practice’ of some Church, diocese, religious Order, or locality.”⁷² The Church and the Sacraments were instituted by Christ, and the Church is the mystical Body of Christ; given these theological tenets, it is natural for there to have been a lack of emphasis on individuals' contributions.

⁶⁹ Raby 1953:405. Raby 1953 is a voluminous piece of historical scholarship about Christian Latin poetry in the Middle Ages, while Raby 1959 is a compilation of Medieval Latin poems and hymns.

⁷⁰ St. Thomas' debt to Adam of St. Victor is evidenced on several occasions in Chapter Two below.

⁷¹ Think of Vergil's invocations of the Muse at the beginning of Book One of the *Aeneid*, and again at the beginning of Book Six.

⁷² Weisheipl 1983:176.

Saint Thomas Aquinas' Epistemology

The focus of our gaze now shifts onto St. Thomas' philosophical perspective on poetry's purpose, which will begin with Aquinas' epistemology, especially concerning the importance of sensory stimulus. The section after this will proceed to grapple with various statements in St. Thomas' writings about poetry and its function. Aquinas wrote at length about epistemology and human knowledge in Questions 78-87 of Part One of the *Summa Theologiae*.⁷³ Among these, Question 84, entitled "How the Soul While United to the Body Understands Corporeal Things Beneath It," and Question 85, entitled "The Mode and Order of Understanding," are of particular relevance to the present subject.⁷⁴ The paragraph below summarizes much of what is taught in Questions 84 and 85.

St. Thomas held that human knowledge necessarily begins with the senses, with the physical world. Human beings use their senses to form phantasms—mental representations of sensory stimuli. Phantasms can be explained as follows: "by seeing a horse and hearing verbally what a horse is (and is not), we form a sensory-based image in our minds that Aquinas refers to as a 'phantasm.'"⁷⁵ These phantasms are what are stored in memory.⁷⁶ It should be noted here that everything described thus far is associated with a bodily organ, which modern science recognizes as the brain. However, humans also possess an "agent intellect," which is the faculty that enables us to abstract from the particularities of memory and experience to the universalities of forms.

⁷³ Large portions of this selection from the *Summa* can be found in Pegis 1948:321-428.

⁷⁴ Found in Pegis 1948:376-422.

⁷⁵ Maciejewski 2014:34.

⁷⁶ Modern neurology indicates that when a person recalls an event, he or she is actually representing images of it in the mind. This is why two persons can have vastly different memories of the same event. A rather odd example of this in contemporary pop culture is the following television-show cliché: two characters get into a heated fight that leads to something absurd; then a third, neutral character hears both sides of the story afterward; and the two versions humorously contradict each other on every point.

The account of St. Thomas Aquinas on this matter still has some need for further clarification. How exactly do humans come to know the immaterial, if phantasms can only represent sensible objects? Aquinas answers this in the following passage: “Incorporeal beings, of which there are no phantasms, are known to us by comparison with sensible bodies, of which there are phantasms” (*ST* I,q.84,a.7,contr.obj.3). In simpler terms: if there is something non-physical, then we cannot imagine that thing *per se*; but we can still arrive at *some* understanding of it by comparing it to something perceivable through the senses.

In order to arrive at a more complete understanding of Thomistic epistemology, it seems profitable to turn briefly to some comments on the matter by Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), a scholar of Thomistic philosophy. Maritain’s explanation of the agent intellect is accurate, insightful, and fairly readable:

The intellect, as perennial philosophy sees it, is spiritual and, thus, distinct in essence from the senses. Yet, according to the Aristotelian saying, nothing is to be found in the intellect which does not come from the senses. Then it is necessary to explain how a certain spiritual content, which will be seen and expressed in an abstract concept, can be drawn from the senses.... It is under the pressure of this necessity that Aristotle was obliged to posit the existence of a merely active and perpetually active intellectual energy, νοῦς ποιητικός, the intellect agent, let us say the Illuminating Intellect, which permeates the images with its pure and purely activating spiritual light and actuates or awakens the potential image intelligibility which is contained in them. Aristotle, moreover, added few and sometimes ambiguous indications about the Illuminating Intellect, which he only described as superior in nature to everything in man, so that the Arab philosophers thought that it was separate, and consequently one and the same for all men. The Schoolmen anterior to Thomas Aquinas also held it to be separate, and identified it with God’s intellect. It was the work of St. Thomas to show and insist that ... the Illuminating Intellect cannot be separate, but must be an inherent part of each individual’s soul and intellectual structure, an inner spiritual light which is a participation in the uncreated divine light, but which is

in every man, through its pure spirituality ceaselessly in act, the primal quickening source of all his intellectual activity.⁷⁷

Maritain's summary is straightforward enough, and gives a very good context for understanding what Aquinas says on the matter. Aquinas' comments on the agent intellect, as Maritain says above, were in response to interpretations of Aristotle by Muslim scholars like Averroës, and similar interpretations by Christian scholars after Averroës. More will be said about this later.

In summary, St. Thomas states that when human beings take in sense-experiences, they develop "phantasms," or mental representations, of their sense-experiences. All parts of this process, Aquinas also held, are associated with a bodily organ.⁷⁸ However, Aquinas also believed that every human being possesses an agent intellect; that is, a non-corporeal faculty that enables one to engage in abstraction, to come to know the universal by abstracting from the particular—in other words, to come to know form by abstracting from matter. Aquinas further teaches that even after a man learns about universals by means of abstraction, he still needs (and in fact always needs) to rely on phantasms in order to think. Said more bluntly, man cannot think without phantasms.

St. Thomas Aquinas on Poetry

Having thus discussed St. Thomas Aquinas' epistemology, let us now move on to his specific comments on poetry, and make sense of these statements in conjuncture with his epistemology (as explicated in the section above). The starting-point for this discussion is Aquinas' comments on the presence of imagery-rich language in Sacred Scripture. Near the

⁷⁷ Maritain 1955:96-7.

⁷⁸ As mentioned earlier, modern studies of the brain seem to support St. Thomas' view. For instance, Alzheimer's patients typically struggle to remember the concrete and the particular (such as their friends' names or their children's faces), but they are often still able to use their agent intellect.

beginning of the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas made the following remarks about the fact that imagery and metaphors are often found in the Bible:

It is befitting Holy Scripture to put forward divine and spiritual truths by means of comparisons with material things. For God provides for everything according to the capacity of its nature. Now it is natural for man to attain to intellectual truths through sensible things, because all our knowledge originates from sense. (*ST I,q.1,a.9,Resp.*)⁷⁹

In other words, the senses are necessary for men to acquire new knowledge, so it is proper for parts of the Bible to use sensory appeal, so that mankind can learn supernatural truths by analogy to natural phenomena. As Aristotle describes in Book One of his *Metaphysics*, the pursuit of higher forms of knowledge and/or higher mental activities begins *by necessity* with the usage of lower ones.⁸⁰ Human beings can learn about intangibles, Aristotle and Aquinas would say, even though we lack innate knowledge of the forms.

At another place in Question One of the *Summa*, St. Thomas wrote the following: “Poetry makes use of metaphors to produce representation, for it is natural to man to be pleased with representations” (*ST I,q.1,a.9,contr.obj.1*).⁸¹ This statement closely parallels a remark made in Aristotle’s *Poetics*; when commenting on the origins of poetry, Aristotle wrote that, in addition to men’s natural desire to *create* works of imitation, “it is also natural for all to *delight in* works of imitations” (Ch.4:1448b).⁸² Aquinas makes a comment similar to Aristotle’s in the beginning of his exposition on Book One of Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*: “The poet’s vocation is to guide us towards what is virtuous by representing it as attractive.”⁸³ Or, to use a different

⁷⁹ Found in Pegis 1948:16.

⁸⁰ This is in reference to Aristotle’s outline of the progress from Sensation to Memory, from Memory to Experience, from Experience to Art, from Art to Science, and from Science to Wisdom—in *Metaphysics I,1:980a-982a* (found in McKeon 2001:689-91).

⁸¹ Found in Pegis 1948:16-7. This same sentence is quoted (from a different translation) in Murray 2013b:64.

⁸² Found in McKeon 2001:1457. Emphasis mine.

⁸³ Berquist 2007:3.

translation, “The poet’s task is to lead us to something virtuous by some excellent description.”⁸⁴

In other words, poetry is meant to stimulate men’s imagination in a manner that inspires men to engage in virtuous pursuits. Hence, St. Thomas attributed to poetry two purposes: sensory entertainment and the cultivation of virtue. This seems a very positive view of poetry, and not unlike the “*miscuit utile dulci*” of Horace.⁸⁵ Thus, the Angelic Doctor, much like the poets of ancient Rome, felt that poets have a twofold charge of delighting and instructing their audiences.

However, St. Thomas also wrote, “Poetic knowledge is about things which because of their deficiency of truth cannot be laid hold of by reason.”⁸⁶ This statement seems overly negative, especially since in other places Aquinas affirms that “poems partake of reason—by which man is man—to a greater degree than other mechanical works.”⁸⁷ These two statements seem to be in direct contradiction, at least on the surface level. How can something whose subject-matter is “deficient of truth” also be described as “partaking of reason?”

In response to this concern, a Dominican named Paul Murray once wrote the following:

To answer this question it will be helpful to understand the context in which the phrase *defectum veritatis* occurs. In the Summa, for example, when Aquinas employs the phrase, his concern is to compare poetic knowledge and expression with sacred knowledge and expression. And he is impressed by the fact that poetry, unlike theology, tends by its very nature to resist abstraction. In that sense, it remains inaccessible to speculative thinking. ...

...
It is true that he thinks of it as occupying a place below that of the logic of scientific demonstration, and below even that of dialectic and rhetoric. Nevertheless, the

⁸⁴ This quote taken from Murray 2013b:64. Murray cites in an endnote “*In Primum librum posteriorum analyticorum Aristotelis expositio*, ch. 1, lect. 1, 6, Leonine vol. 1, 140” (endnote found on pg. 71).

⁸⁵ See above.

⁸⁶ Murray 2013b:65 uses this quote, and gives the following citation in an endnote on pg. 71: “Prologue, *In Primum librum Sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, q.1, a.5 ad 3, Parma vol. 6, 9.”

⁸⁷ Murray 2013b:66 uses this quote, saying in the corresponding endnote (on pg. 71), “See *Sententia libri ethicorum*, bk. 9, lect. 7, 1167 b 33, in *Opera Omnia*, Leonine edition, vol. 47/2 (Rome, 1969), 525.”

art of poetry, he maintains, is still somehow within the domain of reason and logic.⁸⁸

Thus, Aquinas' view of poetry is ultimately positive; he esteemed poetry above "other mechanical works," as was said above. But it is also true that Aquinas places poetry in a lower station than intellectual discourse; for poetry's manner of expression, after all, is the concrete and the stimulating. Poetry conveys phantasms and resists abstractions, while the more intellectual pursuits use the process of abstraction from phantasms to reach at forms, universals, species. Poetry does not lend itself to expressing the kinds of nuances needed for logical discourse. Hence, poetry's heavy reliance on concrete imagery, its tendency "to resist abstraction,"⁸⁹ makes it a lower form of expression, while also giving it a certain level of clarity, and an ability to impact and inspire.

When one compares St. Thomas Aquinas' perspective on poetry with a classical perspective on poetry, one finds that they are in agreement on several important points. Firstly, there is the importance of sense-appeal in poetry. As was shown in this chapter, St. Thomas and the Roman poets both associated poetry with imagery. Secondly, both Aquinas and the ancients recognized in the writing of poetry a two-fold purpose; entertainment and education. Lastly, both the Angelic Doctor and the ancient Roman poets would agree to the claim that the sensory strength of poetic imagery is largely what gives poetry its persuasive force.

In fact, it could even be argued that Saint Thomas' view of poetry gives life and meaning to it, because it makes a case for both the perceptive faculties and the creative faculties of the human mind. Such was the view of G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), who wrote a biography of the Angelic Doctor that was simply entitled *St. Thomas Aquinas*. At one point in this book,

⁸⁸ Murray 2013b:65. For more writings on issues pertaining to poetry and Thomistic philosophy, see also: Murray 2013a; Slattery 1957; and Swanston 1989.

⁸⁹ See above.

Chesterton makes several broad yet insightful remarks about St. Thomas' philosophy that are relevant to the present discussion:

That *strangeness* of things, which is the light in all poetry, and indeed in all art, is really connected with their otherness; or what is called their objectivity. ... According to St. Thomas, the mind acts freely of itself, but its freedom exactly consists in finding a way out to liberty and the light of day; to reality and the land of the living. In the subjectivist, the pressure of the world forces the imagination inwards. In the Thomist, the energy of the mind forces the imagination outwards, but because the images it seeks are real things. ...

Note how this view avoids both pitfalls; the alternative abysses of importance. The mind is not merely receptive, ... absorb[ing] sensations like so much blotting-paper.... On the other hand, the mind is not purely creative, ... paint[ing] pictures on the windows and then mistak[ing] them for a landscape outside.⁹⁰

Thus, according to Chesterton, Aquinas' understanding of the human intellect has two strengths: firstly, it puts the human mind in its proper place, viewing it in a sensible and well-balanced manner; secondly, it gives expression to the broad range of intellectual activities in which humans are able to engage.

One place of disagreement is the status of poetry (and the arts in general) in comparison to and in relation with other intellectual and creative endeavors. The ancient Roman poets obviously considered their art very important, and some would even have placed it above all other pursuits.⁹¹ Aquinas, on the other hand, places poetry below pursuits that required clear rational discourses, such as dialectic, philosophy, and theology.

⁹⁰ Chesterton 1933:577-8.

⁹¹ For example, at the end of *Odes* 1.1 (found in Shorey 1962:1-2), Horace writes to his patron Maecenas, "*Quod si me lyricis vatibus inseris, / sublimi feriam sidera vertice.*" (Shorey 1962 capitalizes the beginning of each line, but that was avoided here because it is slightly unconventional and excessively modern.) These lines (viz.,35-6) are at the close of this dedicatory poem. The rest of the poem up to that point basically describes numerous other pursuits that other men engage in, thus associating with Horace's poetry an immense height above those other pursuits. See Tracy 1948:106-7.

The explanation for this divergence is, ultimately, that St. Thomas Aquinas wanted to distance himself from Latin Averroism, a school of thought which took after the Muslim philosopher Averroës. The Latin Averroists taught that the stories contained in the Bible were simply fictional stories meant to impart moral lessons to the uneducated and unintelligent. Those who were smart and educated, the Averroists professed, did not have to believe religious myths, but were obligated to avoid publicly proclaiming their disbelief, lest they scandalize the faithful and the less intelligent. As a devout Catholic, St. Thomas disagreed sharply with the Averroists on this point. The Scripture do not tell false fables, according to Aquinas, because the Scriptures were inspired by God; and God, being all-good and all-perfect, is incapable of telling lies—no matter how useful or inspiring certain lies may allegedly be.⁹²

In contrast with St. Thomas Aquinas and in agreement with the Averroists, many Greco-Roman authors seem to have associated poetry, especially epics and tragedies, with some combination of religion, mythology, and/or fiction. In addition to the religious qualities associated with certain poems and certain genres of poetry, there is also the fact that, from Plato onward, religious myths had the potential to be interpreted as purely symbolic tales, intended for the education of those who lacked the intellectual strength to handle good philosophy. Hence, the classical association of poetry with religious myth—and thus also with fiction—had a fair amount in common with the view of the Averroists. Hence, St. Thomas Aquinas, in distinguishing religious poetry from the divinely-inspired Scriptures, was also distancing himself in some respects from the classical mentality toward poetry.

⁹² Perhaps if the Scriptures presented themselves as mere fables, then maybe that would change things; but the Scriptures present themselves as the truth.

Conclusion: Aquinas versus Dante

St. Thomas Aquinas is well-known even to this day as a philosopher and a theologian.⁹³

In fact, he is exceptionally well-known for his contributions to those fields. As one scholar put it,

Aquinas' position as a major philosopher, both in the medieval and the modern worlds, needs little amplification. There may be room for doubts as to whether he is the most characteristic medieval Christian philosopher, but there is no doubt that he has made the greatest mark in the world.⁹⁴

However, in contrast with the popular knowledge of St. Thomas' scholarly contributions, his hymns are not as widely known—at least not outside of some circles of devout Catholics, who might be familiar with the *Tantum Ergo Sacramentum* and the *O Salutaris Hostia*.⁹⁵ Written scholarly discourse on Aquinas' Eucharistic poetry is much harder to find than written scholarly discourse on Aquinas' prose—by which is meant his philosophical and theological academic writings. This may partly be due to how much of the contemporary interest in the Angelic Doctor is secularized, tending to distance itself subtly from Catholicism. It is also partly due, perhaps, to the common dichotomy in contemporary Western culture between the academic and the creative; the laborious and the artistic; the scholarly and the expressive; the scientific and the poetic. Hence, to the modern mind it seems like an oxymoron for a philosopher—especially a thorough, logical one such as St. Thomas Aquinas—to be responsible for writing poetry.

It certainly would have seemed a bit strange to Dante Alighieri. On the one hand, Dante paid great respect to the Angelic Doctor; for the structures of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven in Dante's *Divine Comedy* were largely based on the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of

⁹³ Sound introductions to St. Thomas' various writings of various sorts can be found in Pegis 1948 and McInerny 1998, as well as Hyman et al. 2010:447-538.

⁹⁴ Hyman et al. 2010:450. Quoted in a footnote in Nussman 2016.

⁹⁵ These are excerpts from *Pange Lingua* and *Verbum Supernum*, respectively. Each consists of the last two stanzas of the respective hymn.

Saint Thomas Aquinas.⁹⁶ But on the other hand, there is a scene in Canto XIII of the *Paradiso* where Dante describes a sort of singing-match between himself and St. Thomas. In this scene, Dante wins against Aquinas because Dante is a poet, and therefore can stretch human language past its normal limits in pursuit of the ineffable;⁹⁷ “Dante does rise to speak of the ultimate vision of God, while Aquinas remains sunken in silence.”⁹⁸ It seems worthwhile to conclude this chapter by imagining how St. Thomas Aquinas would have responded to Dante, if given the chance to defend his theology against Dante’s poetry.

St. Thomas might have responded that there are two ways in which something is called “ineffable” or “mysterious.” Firstly, there is a complicated, profound, and/or multi-faceted experience which overwhelms the senses and the imagination. Such is what secular literature and arts ought to do; create representations of reality that strive to convey the richness of experiencing something in-the-moment.⁹⁹ Secondly, there is a supernatural mystery which surpasses human language because it does not compare to anything in normal human experience. Such are the mysteries of divine revelation, like the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation.

Even poetry, St. Thomas would argue, cannot describe something ineffable, other than simply by stating that it is ineffable; which is about as much as rational discourse can do, too. In Dante’s *Paradiso* (the third part of the *Divine Comedy*), the narrator repeatedly admits his own inability to describe his fictional experience of Heaven. For example, in the following passage from Canto XXX of *Paradiso*, the poet tells of the ineffability of Beatrice’s beauty in Heaven:

If that which has been said of her so far 16
were all contained within a single praise,
it would be much too scant to serve me now.

⁹⁶ For a brief discussion of this, see Miles 1911.

⁹⁷ This can be found in Mandelbaum 2000:110-7 of *Paradiso*.

⁹⁸ Boyle 2000:12.

⁹⁹ This in-the-moment sensory stimulus is opposed to the phantasms stored in memory; memory is narrower in its focus, and is therefore incomplete, in a way. See the discussion of Thomistic epistemology above.

The loveliness I saw surpassed not only 19
 our human measure—and I think that, surely,
 only its Maker can enjoy it fully.
 I yield: I am defeated at this passage 22
 more than a comic or a tragic poet
 has ever been by a barrier in his theme;
 for like the sun that strikes the frailest eyes, 25
 so does the memory of her sweet smile
 deprive me of the use of my own mind.
 From that first day when, in this life, I saw 28
 her face, until I had this vision, no
 thing ever cut the sequence of my song,
 but now I must desist from this pursuit, 31
 in verses, of her loveliness, just as
 each artist who has reached his limit must.¹⁰⁰

Hence, as Dante admits here, poetry, just like rational discourse, is limited in its expressive capacity; it is unable to represent supernatural realities, except by comparing and contrasting them with corporeal experiences. Dante describes as ineffable a fictional experience of Beatrice's beauty in Heaven. At first, it seems that this could be ineffability in either sense of the word given above, since it describes an overwhelming experience and, in some sense, divine revelation. The fact that it is a *fictional* supernatural experience complicates things even more.

However, when one considers that Dante's account of Beatrice's beauty is not a divinely revealed truth, but a fictional story meant to convey a religious message, it seems clear that it is an ineffable experience rather than an ineffable doctrine. But no matter which type of ineffability it is, the point remains that some realities are beyond what we can faithfully represent, no matter what medium, form, art, or style is used for representation.

Human language can use analogies to describe supernatural truths, as long as one specifies the point at which the analogy breaks down. Poetry has the special gift of being able to emphasize paradoxes—such as God's great love for sinners and sinners' unworthiness of His

¹⁰⁰ Taken from Mandelbaum 2004:270-2 of *Paradiso*. Mandelbaum's bilingual version is divided into three volumes, in accord with the poem; however, it is listed in the bibliography below as a single entity.

love—and to point out the limits of human language, so as to venture past the limits of human language while of course still using human language (which is itself a paradox, of course).¹⁰¹ However, it is the task of the scholastic theologian to investigate, ponder, and clarify these paradoxes in Divine Revelation, to show that they are in fact simply paradoxes rather than factual contradictions. Good liturgical poetry, St. Thomas Aquinas might have argued, uses paradoxes to urge the faithful to ponder the truths of divine revelation.

¹⁰¹ For more on Christianity and paradoxes, see Chapter VI of G. K. Chesterton's *Orthodoxy*. (This can be found in *The Everyman Chesterton*, which is cited in the bibliography in connection with Chesterton's *St. Thomas Aquinas*, since an excerpt from the latter is featured elsewhere.)

Chapter II: Analysis of the Hymns

In the introduction to this paper, the structure and thesis of the essay were presented, and the historical context surrounding St. Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic hymns was discussed. Then Chapter I sought to compare St. Thomas' view of poetry's purpose with the views of classical poets, so as to defend this essay's goal of analyzing the stylistic features of St. Thomas' hymns using a classical methodology (while also defining said methodology). This present chapter, meanwhile, entails a classical stylistic analysis of the five Eucharistic hymns that St. Thomas Aquinas wrote for the feast of Corpus Christi.¹⁰²

Some scholars hold low opinions of Aquinas' style in these hymns. One such critic says: "St. Thomas makes little attempt to capture *poetic* faith in the mystery of the Eucharist. His interest is confined to the religious dogma."¹⁰³ Along similar lines, a translator of Aquinas' *Adoro Te Devote* wrote the following:

St. Thomas's hymns to some appear doggerels. And certainly they are severely stript [sic] of all adventitious ornament or poeticism. But there is one merit that cannot be denied to them by the most envious critic: an immense significance. They are so crowded with meaning that they may each be called a little Summa of Eucharistic theology ... Eucharistic theology reduced within the strict dimensions of verse, and, more particularly, of 'singing-verse.'¹⁰⁴

Thus, some critics argue that the Eucharistic hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas are little more than discourses on Sacramental theology put into meter and given a rhyme-scheme. Since the hymns

¹⁰² Full Latin texts of one or multiple (or all) of these hymns appear in each of the following sources: Anderson 1993:88-109, Bell 1993:183-5, Raby 1959:398-404, and Walsh 2012:353-69. (However, Walsh's text includes some major typos.) Moreover, the full text of the Office (and Mass) of Corpus Christi can be found in Spiazzi 1954:275-81, listed among Aquinas' *Opuscula Theologica*. (As one may expect, the parts of the Mass included in this text are only the 'Propers' for the Feast, such as the Gospel and the Postcommunion, which St. Thomas was responsible for choosing, compiling, and/or writing.) Lastly, full texts of all five hymns can be found online, listed under '*vide etiam*' on the '*Devotio Eucharistica*' page from the Website '*Preces Latinae*' (see Works Cited for hyperlink).

¹⁰³ Nelson 1956:326. Italics in the original. Nelson's argument is that Aquinas' poems are not in the genre and style of mystic poetry, which is obvious; but Nelson's treatment of Aquinas' hymns as unpoetic is to be contradicted.

¹⁰⁴ Phillimore 1924:345.

expound doctrine, it is supposed that they convey no depth of expression, no rich metaphor, no vivid imagery—so the critics claim.

This paper takes issue with these critiques, and joins the great hymnologist Ruth Ellis Messenger in saying the following about Aquinas' hymns: "They illustrate the ideal blending of doctrinal expression and mystic fervor of which the author was the perfect exponent."¹⁰⁵ In agreement with this more positive view of the hymns' style, the medieval historian Maurice Hélin said the following (as translated by Jean Chapman Snow):

The famous sequence *Lauda Sion Salvatorem* and the hymn *Pange Lingua Gloriosi* are still sung in our churches. Here again we should note that the exposition of doctrine was never sacrificed for lyricism. On the contrary, the later was only raised so high because the dogmatic contents of each stanza, formulated with as much precision as an article of the *Summa*, furnished a solid base for the lyric transport of the next.¹⁰⁶

In other words, St. Thomas managed to achieve a precarious balance of theological clarity and expressive flair. Thus, this paper joins a number of scholars in arguing that St. Thomas' Eucharistic hymns balance theological precision with poetical expression. The current chapter addresses the poetic style, while the chapter after this shall focus on the theological significance.

In further response to the more negative criticism, it must be said that these hymns were not written for "poetical" reasons in any particularly shallow, modern sense—which is to say that they are not long lists of sentimental phrases, largely deprived of overarching structure or objective significance.¹⁰⁷ From the classical perspective, a sense of structure contributes to a poem's beauty. Furthermore, in addition to their theological depth, these hymns really do have

¹⁰⁵ Messenger 1928:115. For more of her work on Medieval hymns and their liturgical usage, see also Messenger 1950. The concept of 'mystic fervor' is understood, per Nelson's usage (above), as practically interchangeable with 'poetic faith.'

¹⁰⁶ Hélin 1949:116.

¹⁰⁷ See the quotations from Frank 1935 found in Chapter I above.

stylistic merit, and this merit is made evident when the hymns are analyzed using the classical methodology, wherein—as stated in the previous chapter—special attention is paid to the stylistic technique in the form of rhetorical devices.

As one final way of prefacing the analyses, let us address possible objections by enumerating the differences between medieval hymns and classical poems, then showing how these differences do not render our analysis invalid. In doing so, I will use my own remarks from an earlier paper in which I conducted a fairly similar analysis of only the *Pange Lingua*:

The first of these differences is the difference in meter. Medieval hymns generally operate under a different understanding of meter than classical poetry,¹⁰⁸ and many of them—including all five of Aquinas’—follow strict rhyme schemes, something never seen in classical Latin poetry.¹⁰⁹ There is also the issue of historical context. Medieval hymns were, by definition, written for liturgical functions, while classical poems were written for primarily secular purposes—and when they were written for religious purposes, the religion was generally Greco-Roman polytheism. That brings us to the last distinction: medieval hymns are about matters of Christian faith, while classical poems are obviously not about Christianity, being written by non-Christians prior to the Christian era. Despite these obvious, massive differences, one can still believe that analytical methods used for studying classical poetry are also applicable to the *Pange Lingua*, as long as the analysis stays within the realm of style. After all, none of the differences listed above are stylistic in nature, strictly speaking...¹¹⁰

In addition to what is said above, a further and more nuanced qualification needs to be made: there are certainly differences in style between classical poetry and medieval hymns that result from the vast differences in context; however, these differences do not discredit the idea that

¹⁰⁸ The original text includes here a reference to an endnote. The note says the following: “Medieval hymns often use accentual metrics, as opposed to the rhythmic metrics of classical poetry. The *Pange Lingua* is written in Trochaic Tetrameter.” The more usual vocabulary for classical Latin’s ‘rhythmic’ meters is to say that the meters are based on *rhythmic quantity*. For a more detailed and nuanced description of the shifts in Latin poetry (and prose) from the Augustan era to the High Middle Ages, see Clark 2015, Harrington 1997, Hélin 1949, and Raby 1959.

¹⁰⁹ This is, admittedly, a mild hyperbole, but the point remains. The transition from rhythmic quantity to meter based on stress is related briefly in Myers 1927.

¹¹⁰ Nussman 2016:3.

authors of these two genres employed the same basic attention to the details of grammar, word-choice and the like, using them as crucial facets of poetical expression.

Analysis of *Adoro Te Devote*

Although *Adoro Te Devote* was one of the hymns written by Saint Thomas Aquinas, it did not make the cut for the Office and Mass for Corpus Christi. Instead, it is “found in the Roman Missal (*In gratiarum actione post missam*) with 100 days’ indulgence for priests,”¹¹¹ which was “subsequently extended to all the faithful.”¹¹² There appear to be some alternate readings of the manuscript tradition.¹¹³ This paper will use the version of the text that appears to have been found in the Roman Missal.¹¹⁴ “It did not find its way into the Breviary, and, after appearing in various collections of popular devotions, it was rightly inserted by Pius V in 1570 in the Roman Missal among the prayers of Preparation and Thanksgiving.”¹¹⁵ Some sources hold that Saint Thomas Aquinas actually wrote this hymn on his death-bed; but this seems like an unlikely fable.¹¹⁶

In the first stanza, there appears to be a *figura etymologica*, with the words “*latens*” in line one and “*latitas*” in line two. This rhetorical device emphasizes the point that Christ Jesus is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament but is “*hidden*” beneath the sacramental species (cf. the phrase “*sub his figuris*”). There is also an anaphora in the latter half of the stanza, where the word “*totum*” is repeated. Thus, the totality of the heart’s submission before Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is compared with the *totality* of the heart’s failure to comprehend Him.

¹¹¹ Henry 1907. The parenthetical Latin translates to the following: “in the giving of thanks after Mass.”

¹¹² Ibid. Furthermore, a portion of *Adoro Te* can even be found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1381.

¹¹³ See Walsh 2012:366-8. The text in this book differs in many respects from the more common version of the hymn. Some of these differences are explained in the book’s endnotes; but some are not explained, which would suggest that they are errors. For instance, the editors make no attempt to justify why the first line begins “*Adoro devote*” instead of “*Adoro te devote*.” However, Raby 1945:236 features a brief explanation for this.

¹¹⁴ For further clarification: we are using the version found in texts which cite the Roman Missal as their source.

¹¹⁵ Raby 1945:238.

¹¹⁶ This claim is briefly summarized and doubted in Raby 1945:236.

In the second stanza of *Adoro Te Devote*, St. Thomas begins with a tricolon of bodily senses which fall short of leading us to the truth: “*Visus, tactus, gustus*” or “*sight, taste, and touch.*” But, he goes on, “*only hearing*” (“*auditu solo*”) can be trusted, in the sense of hearing and believing “whatever the Son of God said” (“*quidquid dixit Dei Filius*”).¹¹⁷ It seems that Aquinas chose the perfect-tense “*dixit*” (rather than the present-tense “*dicit*”) to clarify that he is referring to hearing and believing the proclamation of the Gospel message which Christ announce and which His Church hands down to us, rather than physically hearing Christ’s literal voice (either during His earthly life or through some mystical experience).

Furthermore, the second stanza ends with a stylistically rich expression: “*nil hoc verbo Veritatis verius.*” (Translated roughly, “nothing is truer than this, the word of Truth Himself.”) First, one might notice the alliteration, assonance, and consonance: “*verbo Veritatis verius.*” Secondly, there is something of a chiasmatic word-order, with “*nil*” and its adjective “*verius*” encompassing the rest of the line. Thirdly, one might recognize the *figura etymologica* with the words “*Veritatis*” and “*verius*,” the point emphasized by this *figura etymologica* is that nothing is truer or more trustworthy than the teachings of Jesus Christ, because He is the Truth. This brings us to the last point: referring to Christ as “Truth” echoes a rather well-known verse from Sacred Scripture: “*dicit ei Iesus, ‘ego sum via et veritas et vita. Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me’*” (Vulgate, John 14:6).¹¹⁸ Interestingly enough, Christ says this in John’s Gospel shortly after His Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, which makes it very fitting that an allusion to *this* Gospel verse should be found in a hymn honoring the Eucharist.

¹¹⁷ Raby 1945:237 discusses a later poem (in Italian, it seems) that includes an allusion to this phrase.

¹¹⁸ In English: “Jesus saith to him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me.” (Douay-Rheims Version.)

Next, the third stanza opens by echoing the first stanza, specifically its discussion of the hiddenness of Christ (“*latebat*”). This stanza clarifies that, while Christ’s divinity was hidden by His humanity during His earthly life, both His divinity and His humanity are hidden in the Eucharist. St. Thomas also develops imagery of Christ’s crucifixion in this stanza; it begins with a reference to the Holy Cross (“*In cruce latebat sola Deitas*”), and ends with a reference to the Good Thief (“*peto quod petivit latro paenitens*”).¹¹⁹ Contrition/atonement and supplication are traditionally listed among the four main purposes of prayer and of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, along with adoration and thanksgiving. Thus, St. Thomas compares in these lines the prayers of the Good Thief with the prayers of the priest and the faithful at Mass.

In the fourth stanza, we see another rich allusion to a Gospel passage. It refers to the passage where Christ, after the Resurrection, appears to some of His Apostles in the upper room, but Thomas is not with them. When the others tell Thomas about the appearance, Thomas says he will not believe the others until he sees Jesus with his own eyes and touches His wounds with his own hands. So, Christ appears to them again, this time with Thomas present, and Christ bids Thomas to touch the holes in His hands and the wound in His side.¹²⁰ It is from this story that the Apostle Thomas is sometimes referred to as “Doubting Thomas.”

In the fifth stanza, we see a *figura etymologica* with the following expression: “*vivus, vitam praestans homini*.” or, translated into clear English, “*both living and providing life to man*.” This poetical notion of the Blessed Sacrament as both living and life-giving is a recurring theme throughout St. Thomas’ Eucharistic poems. It is a paradox of sorts, one could argue. On a different note, this stanza rhymes the word “*Domini*” with the word “*homini*” to emphasize the vast contrast between God and mankind. Arguably, this juxtaposition of God and men also

¹¹⁹ This translates to “I seek what the penitent thief sought.” Cf. Luke 23:39-43.

¹²⁰ John 20:19-29.

clarifies that the word “*homini*” is not meant to include Jesus, since He is the “*Dominus*” referred to in the line prior.

In the sixth stanza, St. Thomas addresses Jesus as “*Pie pellicane,*” meaning “faithful pelican.” This would seem to be an allusion to an image found in the Psalms: “*Similis factus sum pellicano solitudinis.*”¹²¹ Furthermore, as one scholar comments,

“[This] could be interpreted as an image describing Christ’s victory over Satan, for there was a tradition (see Paulinus of Nora, *Ep.* 40.6) that the [pelican] batters snakes into submission and devours them. But more influential here is the medieval tradition that the mother bird draws off her own blood with which to feed her young; this is seen as symbolizing Christ’s gift of his blood in the Eucharist.”¹²²

In agreement with the latter, another writer noted: “Christ as the Pelican was a favourite subject of medieval art.... The bird was supposed to feed its young with its life-blood.”¹²³ Thus, just as a pelican allegedly feeds its young with its own flesh and blood, in like manner does Jesus Christ feed His followers with His own Flesh and Blood in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Hence, St. Thomas managed to express rich imagery with just one word: “*pellicane.*”

This sixth stanza also has a rather straightforward *figura etymologica*: “*me immundum munda tuo sanguine,*” meaning, “cleanse my unclean self with Thy blood.” This pairing of a word “cleanse” with what is essentially its negative (“unclean”)¹²⁴ helps emphasize how dramatic a transformation Christ can enact on a faithful soul. It reminds one of the opening words of the “*Asperges,*” a liturgical ceremony often preceding High Mass on Sundays which involves the sprinkling of Holy Water. In its origin, the *Asperges* predates St. Thomas; and it is

¹²¹ From Psalm 101:7 in the Vulgate. In the Douay-Rheims translation, “I am become like to a pelican of the wilderness...”. This allusion is cited in the note on ‘6.1’ of the *Adoro Te Devote* in Walsh & Husch 2012:500 (This book, as mentioned in an earlier footnote, oddly renders the hymn’s title and opening line as ‘*Adoro Devote*’ instead of ‘*Adoro Te Devote.*’)

¹²² Walter & Husch 2012:500 (cf. above).

¹²³ Raby 1953:410-1 (footnote #4 on pg. 410).

¹²⁴ Etymologically speaking, not grammatically speaking—since the one is a verb and the other is an adjective.

still used today in the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite. The Antiphon of the *Asperges* is the following: “*Asperges me, Domine, hyssopo, et mundabor. Lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.*”¹²⁵ Although there are no verbal intertexts between the hymn and the prayers of the *Asperges*, it still seems possible that St. Thomas might have had the *Asperges* in mind when he wrote this part of the poem.

In the seventh and final stanza, St. Thomas concludes the hymn with a plea to Jesus for entrance into eternal life:

Iesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,
oro fiat illud quod tam sitio;
ut te revelata cernens facie,
visu sim beatus tuae gloriae. Amen.

Jesus, at whom, veiled, now I gaze,
May that be done, I pray, for which I thirst so much;
That observing Thee with Thy countenance revealed,
I may be blessed to see Thy glory. Amen.

A similar petition is found in the latter part of St. Thomas Aquinas’ “Prayer After Mass.”

In commenting on the *Adoro Te Devote*, one translator noted its “devout personal effusion,”¹²⁶ which is said to make it stand out against the other Corpus Christi poems. In a similar manner, another scholar has commented the following:

It is, indeed, a personal prayer or pious meditation, and was never intended to be used as a hymn. ... Hence the *Adoro te devote* does not possess the 'objective' character of the Sequence and the Hymns for Corpus Christi, and any attempt at a critical comparison must be made with this in mind.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Psalm 50:9 in the Vulgate. The beginning of the Antiphon is intoned by a priest wearing a cope, and the rest is sung by the choir as he sprinkles the altar, the clergy and servers, and the congregation. The psalm-verse above (viz., 50:9) is the Antiphon, then the first half of 50:3 is recited, followed by the doxology and the repetition of the Antiphon. There are then some more prayers, after which the Priest vests for Mass. However, during Eastertide the text of the “*Asperges*” is replaced by the “*Vidi Aquam.*” This ritual was suppressed following Vatican II. The ritual is meant to cleanse those present from venial sin, that they may better serve Our Lord during Holy Mass.

¹²⁶ Phillimore 1924:345.

¹²⁷ Raby 1945:238.

We must offer our consensus to much of this assessment. Grammatically speaking, this poem tends to address Jesus in the second person, while the others (as we shall soon see) tend to speak about Jesus in the third person. The petitions expressed in *Adoro Te Devote* have some similarities with St. Thomas' Prayer Before Communion, as well as his Prayer After Communion.¹²⁸ For example, all three end by asking for entrance into eternal life in Heaven. In fact, this poem seems to have more in common with those prayers than it does with the hymns of Corpus Christi.

Analysis of *Lauda Sion*

Lauda Sion is the Sequence for the Feast of Corpus Christi, and is one of the five Sequences still in use today:

The “Lauda Sion” is one of the five sequences (out of the thousand which have come down to us from the Middle Ages) still retained in the Roman Missal. Each of the five has its own special beauty; but the “Lauda Sion” is peculiar in its combination of rhythmic flow, dogmatic precision, [and] phrasal condensation.¹²⁹

A Sequence is a hymn that gets sung on a given feast-day. In the Tridentine Order of Mass, the Sequence is situated between the Epistle and the Gospel—thus replacing the Gradual (and Tract)—on select feast-days.¹³⁰ The hymn could be said to have 12 stanzas or 24 stanzas, depending on how one divides the lines. For the purposes of this essay, it will be said that there are 24 stanzas. In comparison to Aquinas' other Eucharistic poems, the *Lauda Sion* stands out for its length, as well as the amount of theological teachings it conveys. Because of the latter attribute, it seems the most scholastic and the most catechetical of St. Thomas' five hymns.

¹²⁸ See the Appendix below.

¹²⁹ Henry 1910.

¹³⁰ The Gradual is perhaps best compared to the Alleluia verse in the Novus Ordo—or, during the season of Lent, the ‘Verse Before the Gospel.’

The first stanza of this Sequence addresses the faithful as “*Sion*,” or “*Zion*”—thus alluding to the Old Testament—and calls on them to give praise to their Lord. There is anaphora with the imperative “*Lauda*,” which is used at the beginnings of lines one and two. There are some nice doublets in this stanza, too: “*ducem et pastorem*” and “*hymnis et canticis*.”

The second stanza begins with an expression which is simplistic at first glance: “*Quantum potes, tantum aude*.”¹³¹ further studying reveals that it seems to be a sort of doublet, in continuation with the doublets in the first stanza. Then, in the second line, St. Thomas tells us that Jesus Christ, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament, is “*major omni laude*,” or “greater than all praise.” The use of the word “*laude*” can be considered a *figura etymologica* of sorts, when taken with the double appearance in the previous stanza of the related word “*lauda*.” These two rhetorical devices establish more clearly the logical connection between the first and second stanzas: the first stanza says that all should praise the Lord; and the second stanza says that all should praise Him as much as they can, even though no amount of praise will ever be as much as He deserves. (In fact, that is all the more reason to praise Him.)

In the third stanza, the opening word “*Laudis*” continues the *figura etymologica* from the previous two stanzas. One can also see a *figura etymologica* in the phrase, “*panis vivus et vitalis*,” which translates to “living and life-giving bread.” This phrase alludes to the Bread of Life Discourse in John’s Gospel.¹³² It also summarizes the two main points of the Discourse: that Jesus is the living Bread which came down from Heaven (hence “living”); and that consuming Christ’s flesh is necessary to gain eternal life (hence “life-giving”).

The fourth stanza of *Lauda Sion* exhibits several textual parallels to the third stanza of another of Aquinas’ Eucharistic hymns, *Pange Lingua*. Compare these lines from the Sequence:

¹³¹ In good English, “Dare, as much as you are able.”

¹³² John 6:22-59.

“*Quem in sacrae mensa cenae, / turbae fratrum duodenae / datum non ambigitur,” with the following lines from *Pange Lingua* (analyzed below):*

In supremae nocte cenae
recumbens cum fratribus
observata lege plene
cibis in legalibus,
cibum turbae duodenae
se dat suis manibus.

Notice especially how St. Thomas uses vaguely similar vocabulary, but artfully avoids any excessive redundancy between the two poems. The ability to express the same idea using multiple diverse phrasings is essential to writing poetry.

Next, there is the fifth stanza, which features an anaphora with the fourfold appearance of the subjunctive verb “*sit*.” The first two instances of “*sit*” are paired with adjectives predicating the noun “*laus*,” while the latter two are paired with adjectives predicating the noun “*jubilatio*.” It may seem to some that the two nominative nouns at the beginning and end of this stanza should be taken in apposition with one another. However, that would betray the meaning of these lines, wherein the poet seems to be seeking to call attention to the distinction between the audible praise of singing hymns to Jesus and the even higher form of praise given to Him in the form of mental prayer and contemplation. There is something rather aesthetically pleasing about the way this sentence is constructed. There is a sense of spontaneity and immediacy, evoking the joy with which the whole Church ought to give as much honor as possible to Our Lord Jesus Christ, truly present beneath the Sacramental veils. On a different note, let it also be pointed out that some form of either the noun “*laus*” or the verb “*laudare*” has appeared once or more in four of the first five stanzas, thus making the call to praise very emphatic.

In lines one and two of stanza six, St. Thomas Aquinas switches to a different meter. Then, in the seventh stanza, the adjective “*novus, -a -um*” appears three times, each with a

different ending.¹³³ The repetition of a word, but in differing grammatical forms, is a rhetorical device known as polyptoton. The usage of the device seen in these lines draws attention to the fact that when Christ instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice, he was establishing a new covenant. St. Thomas continues to address this point in the eighth stanza. In these lines, there is a tricolon of subject-object pairs. But where we normally would expect either one verb or three, the author gives us two. The verb “*fugat*” is to be taken with the first two subject-object pairs; the verb “*eliminat*,” with the third. Given the meaning of all these words, this unique phrasing seems to have a sort of building tension; it repeats the same basic exhortation, but does so in increasingly dramatic terms.

In the ninth stanza, the only stylistic feature to note is that the preposition “*in*” appears twice: paired with the ablative noun “*coena*,” and with the accusative noun “*memoriam*.” Thus, there would appear to be a little bit of word-play on different uses of the word “*in*.” Next, the tenth stanza demonstrates asyndeton (or the absence of conjunctions): “*panem vinum in salutis / consecramus hostiam*.” There should be a conjunction between the words for “*panem*” and “*vinum*,” but the Latin has none.¹³⁴ This asyndeton, and the hyperbaton (or highly jumbled word-order) of lines two and three,¹³⁵ serve to complicate the grammar and elevate the style of stanza 10, making it one of the more difficult portions of this hymn.

The eleventh stanza has some alliteration with the first two words: namely, “*Dogma datur*.” The second and third lines of the stanza appear to form a sort of chiasmus: “*quod in carnem transit panis / et vinum in sanguinem*.”¹³⁶ Notice the order of the nouns, because that is

¹³³ In fact, each appearance is in a different case and gender.

¹³⁴ The conjunctions ‘et’ and ‘ac/atque’ and the enclitic ‘-que’ could all have been used—any one of them.

¹³⁵ Notice especially the separation between the preposition “*in*” and its object “*hostiam*,” as well as the separation of “*hostiam*” from “*salutis*.”

¹³⁶ In English: “that into flesh the bread is transformed, / and the wine, into blood.”

what forms the chiasmus: “*in carnem ... panis / et vinum in sanguinem.*” This chiasmatic word-order seems to serve the simple purpose of emphasizing the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

Stanza 12 begins with an anaphoric doublet: “*Quod non capis, quod non vides.*” After that, stanza 13 has a fair amount of alliteration and consonance: “*Sub diversis speciebus, / signis tantum et non rebus, / latent res eximiae.*” The consonance in lines one and two is especially noteworthy. This stanza also appears to have some grammatical ambiguity, focused around the second line; it is unclear whether the words “*signis*” and “*rebus*” are in apposition with “*speciebus*” or whether they are ablatives of manner connected to the adjective “*diversis.*” In other words, the stanza could be translated, “Beneath the differing guises, / the appearances rather than the natures, / incredible things lie hidden:” or it could instead be translated, “Beneath guises differing / in their appearances but not their natures, / incredible things lie hidden.” Both interpretations of the grammar are valid, since the respective meanings resulting thereby both make sense. Perhaps it was the case that St. Thomas Aquinas intended to create this ambiguity, to cause readers to think about the meaning of these lines more deeply and thus draw attention to the message therein.

Stanza 14 begins with a little bit of alliteration: “*Caro cibus.*” Despite the simplicity and subtlety of this alliteration, one can still argue that it was intentional. For there are many other pairs of disyllabic nouns that could have been used in lieu of the phrase “*Caro cibus*” without significantly altering the meaning of this line,¹³⁷ or destroying the doublet-structure (viz., the fact that this line is four nouns, arranged to form a pair of noun-pairs). On a similar note, the second line of the stanza features rich consonance and assonance, especially in the phrase “*manet*

¹³⁷ Such as ‘*corpus panis,*’ for example.

tamen.”¹³⁸ The third line of the stanza, “*sub utraque specie,*” gives additional theological clarity by echoing the beginning of the previous stanza—namely, “*Sub diversis speciebus.*”

The fifteenth stanza has a tricolon of perfect passive participles modifying the implied subject, Jesus Christ. The message of this stanza is that Christ is fully present in every part of the consecrated host, even when the host is fractured, no matter how small the pieces are. The repetition of the prefix “*con-*” is noteworthy. Furthermore, there appears to be a sort of contrast between the “*con-*” prefix in the word “*confractus*” and the “*di-*” prefix in the word “*divisus.*” The ideas connoted by the prefixes “*con-*” and “*di-*” are virtually opposites. For, when attached to the stem of a verb, the prefix “*con-*” typically suggests a certain ‘togetherness,’ usually of the verb’s subject; while the prefix “*di-*” at the beginning of a verb usually suggests some sort of “separation” or “splitting-apart” of the direct object. Aquinas uses these differing prefixes in words that are practically synonymous. Thus, there would seem to be some word-play here.

Stanza 16 of *Lauda Sion* was written with some rather obvious doublets in lines one and two: “*Sumit unus, sumunt mille, / quantum isti, tantum ille.*”¹³⁹ This stanza is perhaps best understood as building on the “*integer assumitur*” in the last line of stanza 15. Thus, it clarifies that all who receive Holy Communion receive Jesus Christ in His entire nature (Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity), no matter how many people come forward and receive on any given occasion.

The seventeenth stanza continues the discussion about the reception of Holy Communion. It begins with a doublet much like the stanza above: “*Sumunt boni, sumunt mali.*” The stanza then states that those who receive Holy Communion merit for their own eternal souls an

¹³⁸ If in this instance I were to underline all the repeated letters as per usual, that would require underlining both of these words in their entirety.

¹³⁹ In English: “[Whether] one receives or a thousand receive, the many [receive] as much [of Christ] as the one.”

“unequal fortune” (“*sorte... inaequali*”): either “life or destruction” (“*vitae vel interitus*”). Next, stanza 18 elaborate on this point. Unrepentant sinners in a state of mortal sin who receive Holy Communion only add to their own guilt, while repentant sinners in a state of grace who receive Holy Communion will find that it helps them greatly along their path to eternal life with God. On a very different note, let it briefly be recognized that there is a little bit of alliteration and assonance shared by the words “*vita*” and “*vide*.”

Stanza 19 introduces a shift in metrical construction. The stanzas are now four lines long instead of three, with the metrical pattern AAAB in lieu of the usual AAB. Furthermore, the rhyme-scheme is now AAAB-CCCB instead of AAB-CCB. On a different note, this nineteenth stanza of the Sequence seems to feature a *figura etymologica* with the words “*fracto*” and “*fragmento*.” This *figura etymologica* is carried into the subsequent stanza (number 20) with the word “*fractura*.” Another commonality between stanzas 19 and 20 is the appearance of the word “*tantum*.” Stanza 20 also has two *figurae etymologicae* of its own: the one, with “*signi*” and “*signati*,” the other, with “*status*” and “*statura*.” Overall, even though their content is largely a re-hash of earlier portions of the Sequence,¹⁴⁰ stanzas 19 and 20 have a rather grand, bold tone; and these rhetorical devices are what make for the tone.

In the twenty-first stanza of *Lauda Sion*, St. Thomas writes in an even more elevated style than in the previous two stanzas. In the midst of his pious exclamations, he also manages to provide a sort of poetical summary of Eucharistic theology:

Ecce panis Angelorum,
factus cibus viatorum,
vere panis filiorum,
non mittendus canibus.

Behold the bread of Angels,
Made into a meal for pilgrims,

¹⁴⁰ Viz., stanza 15.

Truly the bread of the sons [of God],
Not to be given to dogs.

The expression “Bread of Angels” is a common title for the Eucharist. In part, the expression builds upon Christ’s words in the Bread of Life Discourse: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven.”¹⁴¹ It seems that the phrase ‘from heaven’ in particular was the inspiration for the title “Bread of Angels.” Meanwhile, the second line in stanza 21 refers to those who receive Holy Communion as “travelers” or “pilgrims” (“*viatorum*”). The earthly life of a Christian is a journey toward Heaven, and the Eucharist helps the Christian along the way to eternal life (as suggested above in stanzas 17 and 18). Furthermore, the third line of stanza 21 refers to those who receive Holy Communion as the “sons” (“*filiorum*”) of God the Father. As St. Paul wrote, “For you are all the children of God by faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ.”¹⁴² Lastly, the fourth line of stanza 21 indicates that Holy Communion ought not be given to those outside the Church. We see in the New Testament that the Gentiles were sometimes called ‘dogs’ by the Jews of Jesus’ day:¹⁴³ here a Christian is using the word “dogs” (“*canibus*”), referring to unrepentant sinners and/or to the unbaptized. In other words, St. Thomas finds a rather poetical way to convey the rather doctrine that only baptized Catholics are able to receive Holy Communion, and only practicing Catholics living in a state of grace will obtain grace and not guilt by receiving.

After that, stanza 22 speaks quite directly about the things in the Old Testament that prefigured the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.¹⁴⁴ Specifically, St. Thomas cites the

¹⁴¹ John 6:51 (Douay-Rheims translation).

¹⁴² Galatians 3:26-7 (Douay-Rheims).

¹⁴³ Cf. Matthew 15:26.

¹⁴⁴ See our analysis (below) of St. Thomas’ *Pange Lingua* for more on this understanding of the Old Testament as symbolically foreshadowing the New Testament.

unblemished lambs slain at Passover and the manna sent to the Israelites in the desert as “figures” (“*figuris*”) of the Eucharist.

The latter half of Aquinas’ *Lauda Sion* builds in intensity. One of the ways that he managed to achieve this effect was by using metrical changes, such that the stanzas gradually get longer. Thus, the last two stanzas of the hymn (numbers 23 and 24) are each five lines long. The metrical arrangement is AAAAB, and the rhyme-scheme is AAAAB CCCCCB (both exactly as expected, given how all the other stanzas are arranged). These two stanzas express yet again, and in even more beautiful terms, the author’s plea that his reception of Holy Communion may lead him into everlasting life.¹⁴⁵

Many of the features of the *Lauda Sion* are said to be modeled after Sequences written by Adam of St. Victor: “It may be said, then, that the ‘Lauda Sion’ owes not only its poetic form, but much also of its spirit and fire, and not a little even of its phraseology, to various sequences of Adam.”¹⁴⁶ The “rhythmic and stanzaic variations”¹⁴⁷ of the *Lauda Sion* are identical to those of Adam of St. Victor’s *Laudes Crucis*, as well as “Adam’s Easter sequence, ‘Zyma vetus expurgetur.’”¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, as mentioned above, there are some verbal parallels between St. Thomas’ *Lauda Sion* and the sequences, hymns, etc. written by Adam of St. Victor:

Thus, for instance, the two lines (rhythmically variant from the type set in the first stanza) of the “Lauda Sion”:

Vetustatem novitas,
Umbram fugat veritas,

¹⁴⁵ *Lauda Sion* seems to put great emphasis on this petition. In the Tridentine Order of Mass, the Priest, while doing the Sign of the Cross, says to every individual recipient at the altar-rail, “*Corpus Domini nostri Iesu Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam. Amen.*” Furthermore, prayers touching on the same theme are said by the Priest before and after Communion. Similar prayers—if not exactly the same—were certainly commonplace in the Middle Ages; after all, it was the same Roman Canon. The Roman Canon’s emphasis on being preserved from sin, strengthened in holiness, and led closer to Paradise through the reception of Holy Communion would partly explain the same emphasis being evidenced in the *Lauda Sion*.

¹⁴⁶ Henry 1910.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

were directly borrowed from another Easter sequence of Adam's, *Ecce dies celebris*, in which occurs the double stanza:

Laetis cedant tristia
Cum sit major Gloria
Quam prima confusio.
*Umbram fugat veritas,
Vetustatem novitas,
Luctum consolatio—*

While the “Pascha novum Christus est” of the Easter sequence of Adam, and the “Paranympi novae legis Ad amplexum novi Regis” of his sequence of the Apostles, find a strong echo in the “Novum pascha novae legis” of the “Lauda Sion”.¹⁴⁹

Hence, we see that St. Thomas Aquinas, in writing the *Lauda Sion* as well as his other Eucharistic hymns, drew much inspiration and influence from Adam of St. Victor: “Indeed it was to him that St. Thomas Aquinas looked for the model of his magnificent Communion hymn, the *Lauda Sion*.”¹⁵⁰ This is evident in various places throughout Aquinas’ hymns; but the strongest proof is contained in the Sequence *Lauda Sion*, which—it was shown above—shows rich, unquestionable parallels to Sequences written by Adam of St. Victor.

In sum, the *Lauda Sion* of St. Thomas Aquinas is comparable in some respects to the ancient Roman genre of didactic poetry. As discussed in Chapter One above, didactic poetry such as Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* contains an overarching logical pattern, and the poet often pauses the syllogisms, so to speak, in order to flesh out some particular claim, typically using concrete examples and rich sensory appeal. *Lauda Sion* exhibits something roughly similar.

Analysis of *Pange Lingua*¹⁵¹

The verbal allusions or ‘intertexts’ contained in St. Thomas’ *Pange Lingua* begin as early as the hymn’s very first line: “*Pange, lingua, gloriosi*”—which is a word-for-word intertext with

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Donohue 1923:217.

¹⁵¹ Copies of this hymn’s lyrics can be found in the following sources: Anderson & Moser 1993:88-91; Raby 1959:401-2; Spiazzi 1954:275; and Walsh & Husch 2012:362-5.

the opening line of a much earlier hymn, penned by Venantius Fortunatus.¹⁵² The opening stanza of Fortunatus' hymn is as follows: "*Pange, lingua, gloriosi proelium certaminis / et super crucis tropaeo dic triumphum nobilem, / qualiter redemptor orbis immolatus vicerit*" (*Carm.2.2:1-3*).¹⁵³ "Sing, tongue, about the battle of the glorious war / And relate the noble triumph upon the trophy of the cross, / How the world's redeemer won victory by being sacrificed." Thus, to those who have encountered Venantius' hymn prior to encountering Aquinas' hymn, the opening line of Aquinas' *Pange Lingua* hearkens back to the original *Pange Lingua*. Thus, Aquinas' hymn immediately brings to mind Venantius' description of the Crucifixion.¹⁵⁴

The first stanza is also where the word-play begins. (As stated previously, 'word-play' is intended to have a very general meaning, referring to any type of rhetorical device that consists of the choice usage of individual words.) In the *Pange Lingua*, Saint Thomas Aquinas begins the word-play in the middle of the first stanza, with the appearance of the words '*pretiosi*' and '*pretium*.' However, this *figura etymologica* is not simply word-play for its own sake. The adjective '*pretiosus*' is also found modifying the noun '*sanguis*' in a stock phrase in the Latin rite: viz., 'precious blood'—referring to the Eucharist.

Given the prominence of this phrase in the Order of Mass, therefore, the mental images that this phrase would espouse in the minds of the audience are images of the celebration of

¹⁵² This allusion is noted in Henry 1911 and Messenger 1950:190. Oftentimes, a classical Latin text (at least informally, if not also officially) was assigned a title taken from its opening line: a practice which carried over through Medieval Times, in which this was often done to hymns and prayers. Thus, both of these hymns are often called "*Pange Lingua*" and "*Pange Lingua Gloriosi*." (Fortunatus' hymn is listed in Harrington 1997 as "*Pange Lingua Gloriosi*."") In cases like this, some scholars lengthen the titles to distinguish between hymns with the same opening line and/or phrase; that would make Fortunatus' hymn "*Pange Lingua Gloriosi Proelium*" and St. Thomas' hymn "*Pange Lingua Gloriosi Corporis*."

¹⁵³ Harrington 1997:167.

¹⁵⁴ It is at least worth mentioning that, although *Medieval Latin* (i.e. Harrington 1997) presents it in a different format, Venantius' hymn is in essentially the same meter as Aquinas' hymn. As noted in Henry 1911, this pattern of accentual metrics is traditionally attributed to the troops of Julius Caesar, who allegedly sang praises to their "*imperator*" in this meter as they marched through Gaul.

Mass. But then, the word “*pretium*” in the subsequent line creates a seamless transition from the Mass to the Cross. This certainly makes sense, considering how Aquinas held that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is, by means of participation, one and the same with the Sacrifice at Calvary.¹⁵⁵ The line after this—which reads “*fructus ventris generosi*”—echoes Elizabeth’s greeting to the Virgin Mother in Luke 1:42: “*Benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui!*”¹⁵⁶ Thus, Aquinas briefly alludes to one of the earliest events recorded in the New Testament—the Visitation.¹⁵⁷

This allusion could rightly be called a foretaste of the allusions in the subsequent stanza: as a more direct reference to the beginnings of Jesus’ early life appears in the very first line of the second stanza: “*Nobis datus, nobis natus.*” This line, of course, refers very explicitly to the birth of Jesus—a fitting subject for a phrase that possesses such tender simplicity, such graceful balance. The line strikes the reader as an emotionally charged interjection, as a shout of praise and thanksgiving. Despite its simplicity, this line still has a level of stylistic intentionality; there is not only some mild alliteration with the repetition of the letter “n,” but also a combination of consonance and assonance in the words “*datus*” and “*natus.*”

This same stanza also features a very interesting pair of lines: “*et in mundo conversatus, / sparso verbi semine,*” which translates to, “and having dwelled in the world, with the seed of the word having been sown.” The one line is reminiscent of the opening to John’s Gospel,¹⁵⁸ while

¹⁵⁵ *Summa Theologica* III, Q.83, Art.1.

¹⁵⁶ As found in the Vulgate and the *Ave Maria*. Translates to, “Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!” The beginning of Elizabeth’s greeting here overlaps with the end of Gabriel’s greeting in Luke 1:28 to form the words of the *Ave Maria*.

¹⁵⁷ The phrase also somewhat alludes to the Annunciation, as is indicated in the footnote above. This allusion might also be meant, perhaps, to invoke images of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the foot of the Cross during her Son’s Crucifixion, since it is coupling images from the beginning of her motherhood with the worst sorrows she experienced as Jesus’s mother. However, that connection is a little more of a stretch.

¹⁵⁸ This is noted in Bryce 2011:. See especially John 1:10 (Vulgate): “*In mundo erat, et mundus per ipsum factus est, et mundus eum non cognovit.*”

the other line alludes to the parable of the sower.¹⁵⁹ The usage of the word “*conversatus*” is rather peculiar. Although it makes sense to interpret it as the perfect participle of a deponent verb for ‘dwelling,’ it could just as likely be understood (as it sometimes is in English translations¹⁶⁰) as the perfect passive participle of the verb meaning ‘to discuss.’ This added layer of meaning—which is added, in quasi-classical fashion, by exploiting an ambiguity in the Latin tongue¹⁶¹—would go naturally with the subsequent line, “with the seed of the word having been sown.” Some might object that this means false assuming St. Thomas intended the ambiguity, arguing that it was just a happy accident. However, there is a massive number of Latin words that end in “-atus,” meaning Aquinas had countless alternative ways to render this line. It can therefore be reckoned that Aquinas must have picked this wording over a seemingly endless list of alternatives for a reason—perhaps to play on the twofold meanings of “*conversatus*.”

The line “*sparso verbi semine*” not only suggests a possible play-on-words in the line before it (as mentioned above); the line also has rhetorical significance of its own. This turn-of-phrase is not just a metaphorical summary of Jesus’s public ministry; it is also an allusion to Jesus’s Parable of the Sower (found in Matthew 13:1-9, Mark 4:3-9, and Luke 8:4-8). The next two lines after this, meanwhile, are by far the opaqueness lines in the entire hymn: “*sui moras incolatus / miro clausit ordine*.” A literal rendering into English might read as follows: “His habitation ended his delays in marvelous order.” It is quite unclear what the author meant by this. (These lines bare immense richness of expression, but the richness seems to obscure the meaning a little too much.) Perhaps the phrase means that Christ brought an end to His people’s waiting

¹⁵⁹ More on this in the paragraph that follows.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. the translation featured in Henry 1911.

¹⁶¹ ‘Exploiting an ambiguity in the Latin tongue’ is exemplified by the classical poets’ use of the zeugma. (One might also include zeugma-like constructions, as there seems to be some dispute over the exact definition of a zeugma, as seen in Lussky 1953. See Chapter I of this essay for more on zeugmas.)

for the Messiah. However, one could also understand the lines as referring to Christ allowing Himself to be crucified, in which case ‘ending his delays’ would refer to how Jesus stayed away from the city of Jerusalem until His ‘hour’ had come.

The second stanza seems to be a brief summary of Jesus’s earthly life leading up to the Last Supper; the third stanza, meanwhile, primarily describes the Last Supper. It even has as its opening line “*In supremae nocte cenae*” or “On the night of the Last Supper.” Such a clear establishment of context really helps the audience to picture the scene in their heads. The second line in the stanza, “*recumbens cum fratribus*” (“reclining at table with his brethren”) features mild assonance and consonance (i.e., “*recumbens cum*”). Furthermore, the presence of the word “*fratribus*” in this line echoes what Christ said in Luke 8:21: “My mother and my brethren are they who hear the word of God and do it.”¹⁶² This appearance of the word for ‘brothers’ in Aquinas’ Eucharistic hymn thus reflects the intimacy Christ shared with his Apostles at the Last Supper. However, it can also be understood as conveying the intimacy which Christ still desires to have with all His followers on earth by means of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

In the subsequent lines, a *figura etymologica* is formed by the words “*lege*” and “*legalibus*.” This rhetorical figure appears to have been included simply for reasons of emphasis. The repetition of words involving ‘law’ makes it very clear that Christ did “not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”¹⁶³ This meaning becomes more clear with the double-usage of “*cibis*” and “*cibum*.” The first is in reference to the rituals of Passover, while the latter is in apposition (grammatically speaking) with “*se*”—that is, with Christ “Himself.” The first was established as a foreshadowing of the latter, and the latter fulfills the former. Then there is the final line of the

¹⁶² According to the Douay-Rheims translation.

¹⁶³ Matthew 5:17: “Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” (Douay-Rheims)

stanza: “*se dat suis manibus.*” This translates to the following: “He gave Himself with His own hands.” This phrase echoes with great artistry a famous quotation from Saint Augustine: “For Christ was carried in His own hands, when, referring to His own Body, He said, ‘This is My Body.’ For He carried that Body in His hands” (*Exposition on the Book of Psalms*: Psalm 33:1:10).

Next, there is the fourth stanza. The fourth stanza of *Pange Lingua* is perhaps the richest of the hymn’s six stanzas, theologically for certain and perhaps stylistically as well. A literal translation of the fourth stanza into English would read as follows: “The Word-flesh makes true bread into flesh by His word: and wine becomes the blood of Christ, and if sense fails, faith alone is enough to strengthen the sincere heart.” This stanza has an abundance of rhetorical devices, especially in the first two lines. There is, for instance, the repetition of “*Verbum*” and “*verbo*” together with the similar-sounding “*verum*,” which makes for some nice alliteration and consonance and assonance.¹⁶⁴ This heavy layering of rhetorical devices enhances the combined imagery in the phrase “*Verbum caro panem verum / verbo carnem efficit.*” This phrase thus combines a description of the Incarnation¹⁶⁵ with a description of Transubstantiation. Such intensity of expression serves to convey a sense of supernatural, unimaginable beauty contained invisibly in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

¹⁶⁴ If there is any single umbrella term meaning “the use of similar-sounding syllables,” this essayist would be very eager to learn it, rather than having to list alliteration, consonance and assonance every time they show up together in Latin poetry—which is actually a very frequent occurrence. In fact, I would argue that the use of similar-sounding syllables is so frequent in good classical Latin (poetry and prose alike) that scholars take it for granted (especially as it appears in prose) and do not generally consider it something worth writing about. What else could explain the general deficiency of scholarship on the matter? When one starts really looking for the repetition of sounds in Latin texts, it shows up everywhere. The only other reasonable contributing factor to the lack of scholarship on the matter would be that modern classicists do not read texts aloud as a crucial aid to interpreting—as this set of rhetorical devices is recognized most easily by someone who can read the text aloud with relative ease.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. John 1:14: “*Et Verbum caro factum est*” (Vulgate).

The fourth stanza blends rhetorical sophistication with theological precision, thus creating a transition between the stylistic richness of the third stanza and the somewhat lower register of the fifth stanza. The fifth stanza has some typical assonance and consonance in the first line (“*Tantum ergo Sacramentum*”) and again in the second line (“*veneremur cernui*”).¹⁶⁶ The third and fourth line echo back to the Last Supper, in which the “covenant of old” (“*antiquum documentum*”) did in fact “yield to the new rite” (“*novo cedat ritui*”). Thus, Aquinas is repeating the theme from stanza three of exploring the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament.¹⁶⁷ The final two lines of this stanza are basically a re-statement of the final three lines of the previous stanza: contrasting “faith” (“*fides*” in both places) with “sense” (“*sensus*” in stanza four) or “the senses” (“*sensuum*” in stanza five).¹⁶⁸

The sixth and final stanza brings the hymn to its end in the way that many good Catholic hymns end: with an invocation of the Most Blessed Trinity. Furthermore, this closing stanza repeatedly echoes “the first two strophes of the second sequence of Adam of St. Victor for Pentecost.”¹⁶⁹ More specifically, there are verbal echoes contained in the following phrases: “*Genitori, Genitoque*” and “*compar sit laudatio.*” The *congeries verborum*¹⁷⁰ in the line “*salus, honor, virtus quoque*” serves to indicate an emotional intensity, the sort of thing that—in some sense—one ought to try to bring out of one’s self before the Real Presence of Christ.

¹⁶⁶ In response to doubts that the assonance and consonance were intentional, we should note the plethora of disyllabic words that could have been used instead of ‘*tantum*’ which would not achieve the same [auditory] effect: such as ‘*unum*,’ ‘*summum*,’ ‘*illud*,’ or ‘*bonum*.’

¹⁶⁷ Aquinas taught that there are four senses of Scripture (cf. *Summa Theologica* I,Q.1,Art.10, found in Pegis 1948:17). One of them is the Allegorical sense, in which the Old Testament is viewed as a foreshadowing of the New Testament.

¹⁶⁸ However, as noted by Henry 1911, some readers have also inferred a contrast between ‘the senses’ and ‘sense,’ in which ‘the senses’ refer to the five bodily senses while ‘sense’ refers to an intellectual faculty.

¹⁶⁹ Henry 1911. For a full text of said hymn by Adam of St. Victor, see Wrangham 1881:100-9.

¹⁷⁰ Literally “piling-up of words,” this bit of terminology refers to a rhetorical device consisting of a series of words, similar in meaning, that are listed off for rhetorical emphasis.

The most significant conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis is that Saint Thomas Aquinas manages to achieve a grand portion of stylistic flair as well as a grand portion of theological rationale. What is perhaps most fascinating about the *Pange Lingua* is that the peak of style and the peak of theology seem to coincide with one another so harmoniously in the third and fourth stanzas. In fact, the stylistic contrast between the simplicity of the third stanza and the complexity of the fourth really plays into the theological ideas expressed all throughout this hymn, indicating both the glory and the humility contained in Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross, the Sacrifice of the Mass, and the Institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper, all of which are one and the same miraculous mystery.

Analysis of *Sacris Solemniis*¹⁷¹

This hymn is sung at Matins on Corpus Christi. The first line of this hymn is notable because of its alliteration and consonance: "Sacris solemniis." One could argue that there is also assonance, in the recurrence of the vowel 'i;' however, that recurrence is practically demanded by the principles and rules of Latin grammar and inflection. Elsewhere in the first stanza, we see some word-play involving the 'prae-' prefix: "*et ex praecordiis / sonent praeconia.*"¹⁷² Soon after that, St. Thomas writes, "*recedant vetera, / nova sint omnia, / corda, voces, et opera.*" In English, this means, "may old things draw back, / and may all things be new: / hearts, voices, and works." These lines refer to Our Eucharistic Lord transforming the faithful through grace and conforming them to Himself.

The second stanza introduces the Last Supper. With the word "*novissima*" in line two, the poet builds on the 'old-vs.-new' vocabulary of the lines prior, and connects the Eucharist's

¹⁷¹ The text of this hymn can be found in Anderson & Moser 1993:92-5; and Spiazzi 1954:276.

¹⁷² In English: "and from the depths of the heart, may proclamations sound out."

transformative power with Christ's establishment of the New Covenant.¹⁷³ The Old Testament and Covenant yielding to the New Testament and Covenant is a recurrent theme in St. Thomas' Eucharistic poems.^{174,175} Thus, St. Thomas' discussion of the old and the new in the previous stanza was in fact a reworking of the theme of contrasting the old and the new, in which he applied the same concept and language to a different subject-matter than usual.

On a different note, this second stanza also exhibits a lot of consonance with the "soft c" sound, as is shown here: "*Noctis recolitur / cena novissima, / qua Christus creditur.*" There is also the alliterative line "*agnus et azyma;*" and similarly, "*priscis indulta patribus.*" Alliteration, consonance and assonance—as stated in Chapter One above—are common in classical Latin literature across many authors, genres, and generations. These auditory devices give the language a certain finesse; they produce a formal impression and a lofty style. Thus, the presence of these devices in this stanza would seem to suggest a grand, lofty atmosphere.

The next stanza (number three in the hymn) describes how, after observing the rituals of the Old Law, Christ instituted the Eucharist and gave His own flesh to His disciples for them to consume. With the opening line, "*Post agnum typicum,*"¹⁷⁶ Saint Thomas continues the theme of Old Covenant vs. New Covenant and the Allegorical Sense of Scripture.¹⁷⁷ This stanza also builds upon the auditory devices from the previous stanza, especially with the phrases "*expletis epulis*" and "*datum discipulis.*"

¹⁷³ This calls to mind the Prayer of Consecration of the Precious Blood in the Roman Canon, the biblical sources of which are Matthew 28:28, Mark 14:24, and Luke 22:20. Also, the association of Christ's blood with the establishment of a New Covenant is discussed *passim* in St. Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews.

¹⁷⁴ See stanzas seven and eight of *Lauda Sion*, and stanza five of *Pange Lingua*.

¹⁷⁵ As stated in an earlier footnote (in the section devoted to *Pange Lingua*), this is called the 'Allegorical Sense.'

¹⁷⁶ Notice especially the word "*typicum.*" Things in the Old Testament which foreshadow things in the New Testament are often referred to as 'types.' Thus, the Allegorical Sense can also be called the Typological Sense.

¹⁷⁷ See footnote above.

The fourth stanza continues the account of Christ's Institution of the Blessed Sacrament. St. Thomas tells us that the Apostles were sad and downtrodden at the Last Supper. These lines feature anaphora, with the repetition of the verb "*dedit*;" as well as a hint of alliteration and consonance, found in the words "*fragilibus*" and "*ferculum*." Near the end of the stanza, St. Thomas puts into verse a phrase from the Roman Canon. After the Consecration of the Host, the Priest leads into the Consecration of the Chalice with the phrase, "*Accipite, et bibite ex eo omnes*." (English: "Receive, and drink from it, all of you.") Compare that with St. Thomas' poetic rendering: "...*Accipite / quod trado vasculum; / omnes ex eo bibite*." ("Receive / the small cup which I hand over; / drink from it, all of you.")

Next, the fifth stanza states in no unclear terms that Jesus Christ's intention at the Last Supper was to institute the Eucharist and teach His Apostles to celebrate it. Saint Thomas uses still further 'auditory devices,' as can be best seen in the first two lines of the stanza: "*Sic sacrificium / istud instituit*." Christ's will, the Angelic Doctor affirms here, was that a Priest would say Mass; consecrate the sacred species; receive Holy Communion; and then distribute Holy Communion to the faithful.¹⁷⁸ Put simply, as one writer commented, "This fifth stanza is interesting for its own sake, as it calls attention to the plan of the Eucharistic sacrifice."¹⁷⁹

Stanza six of *Sacris Solemnis* "is sometimes employed as a separate hymn at Benediction."¹⁸⁰ It begins with the expression, "*Panis angelicus / fit panis hominum*." ("The angelic bread / is made the bread of men.") This parallels a phrase from the Sequence *Lauda Sion* that was discussed prior: "*Ecce Panis Angelorum, / factus cibus viatorum*." ("Behold the

¹⁷⁸ Back when the Tridentine Mass was the norm, the Priest would face the tabernacle rather than the congregation; and would recite many prayers, including almost the entirety of the Canon, in a hushed tone. This gave the Priest a certain intimacy with Christ during the Mass, which is proper to the priestly vocation.

¹⁷⁹ Henry 1912a.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Bread of Angels, / made the food of pilgrims.”) Aquinas managed to express the same thought with very different verbiage—a hallmark of a good poet. The next two lines in the *Sacris Solemniis* are the following: “*dat panis caelicus / figuris terminum.*” (“The bread from heaven gives / an end to figures.”) The word “*figuris*” here seems to the ‘types’ in the Old Testament foreshadowing the Eucharist. Thus, St. Thomas returns to the theme of typology contained in earlier parts of this hymn. One should also notice the tricolon at the end of this stanza: “*pauper, servus et humilis.*” In terms of its construction, it is reminiscent of the closing line of stanza one: “*corda, voces, et opera.*” This would all seem to suggest a ring-composition.

The seventh and final stanza of *Sacris Solemniis* invokes the Holy Trinity, much like the closing stanza of *Pange Lingua* (as stated above). St. Thomas addresses the “triune Godhead” (“*trina Deitias*”) and asks Him to visit His people who are worshipping Him, and to lead them into everlasting life. It is unclear whether the visitation that St. Thomas had in mind was the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, or something more mystical or abstract.

Analysis of *Verbum Supernum*¹⁸¹

The opening line of this hymn has some consonance and assonance (almost enough to call it a rhyme¹⁸²): “*Verbum supernum prodiens.*” The three ‘r’ sounds—each one a part of a consonant blend—make the pronunciation of this line more emphatic, thus hinting at an atmosphere of importance and grandeur. However, the auditory genius of this phrase should not be attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas: it comes from an earlier hymn celebrating the Nativity of

¹⁸¹ Copies of this hymn can be found in the following: Anderson & Moser 1993:96-9; Raby 1959:402-3; Spiazzi 1954:279; and Walsh & Husch 2012:360-3.

¹⁸² Viz., because “*Verbum*” almost rhymes with “*supernum.*”

Christ.¹⁸³ Its authorship is unknown, but the hymn was in the Breviary until it was changed by “the correctors of the Breviary under Urban VIII.”¹⁸⁴

Next, in line two of the first stanza, there is a disproportionate number of consonants in comparison to the number of syllables and/or vowels. Stated more directly, there is an unusually high number of closed syllables and, more importantly, of consonant blends: “*nec Patris linguens dexteram.*” Much like the consonant blends in line one, these also help to make the hymn’s opening sound rather grand, formal, and emphatic. Thus, although St. Thomas was not the original author of the opening line, he did a very good job of replicating its style in the second line of his hymn, lest there be a break in stylistic continuity.

Stanza two of *Verbum Supernum* also has some interesting verbal and stylistic features. For instance, the first and last line of the stanza both end in some form of the word “*discipulus.*” That seems to be intentional, as there is further word-play in this line that would suggest: namely, one should notice the words “*tradendus*” and “*tradidit.*” This figura etymologica does two things: it establishes dramatic irony between Judas’ betrayal and Christ’s love for His disciples; and it also suggests unity between the Last Supper and Christ’s Crucifixion. The reasoning for this is that the Eucharist was instituted at the Last Supper and is a participation in Christ’s Sacrifice on the Cross.

In the third stanza, St. Thomas uses some creative phrasing and word-choice. Firstly, let us note that he uses the phrases “*bina specie*” and “*duplicis substantiae,*” which are synonymous. Furthermore, in describing how Christ feeds the faithful with His very self, Aquinas uses the phrase “*totum cibaret hominem.*” The verb “*cibaret*” is rather unusual; and, what is more, St.

¹⁸³ Henry 1912b.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

Thomas successfully articulates a rather redundant point throughout his hymns without using any redundant phrasing or terminology at all.

Stanza four has several notable stylistic features. All four lines have a present active participle. Instead of an ABAB rhyme scheme, all four lines rhyme with each other.

Furthermore, there is a *figura etymologica* with the verb-forms “*dedit*” and “*dat.*” The purpose of this device is to emphasize the message of this stanza:

Se nascens dedit socium,
convescens in edulium,
se moriens in pretium,
se regnans dat in praemium.

Being born, He gave Himself as our ally;
Sharing a meal, as our Food;
Dying, as our ransom-price;
And reigning, He gives Himself as our reward.

Thus, Christ gave (“*dedit*”) of Himself for the good of mankind all throughout His earthly life, and now He gives (“*dat*”) Himself to His followers, both to the Church Militant (via the Eucharist) and to the Church Triumphant (in Heaven).¹⁸⁵

The last two stanzas of the *Verbum Supernum* are probably familiar to many faithful Roman Catholics, as they are traditionally recited during Eucharistic Adoration. The second-to-last stanza (number five) begins by invoking Christ as the “Saving Victim”—or, slightly more literally, “Savior-Victim.” Later in the stanza, St. Thomas Aquinas draws on imagery of spiritual warfare: “*bella premunt hostilia.*” After thus describing the situation of the Christian soul in this world, he then asks Jesus for assistance: “*da robur, fer auxilium*” (“give strength, bring help”). Aquinas’ usage of the word “*robur*” is of particular interest from a linguistic and philological perspective. The noun ‘*robur*’ originally meant ‘oak tree’ or ‘oak wood.’ The ancient Romans

¹⁸⁵ As for the Church Suffering (i.e. the Holy Souls in Purgatory), let it be said that Christ gives Himself to them as the promise for which they hope, the hope for which they suffer and strive.

thought of oak as a rather strong, tough, and knotty hardwood; and over time it became increasingly common for the noun “*robur*” to be used figuratively for “toughness” or “strength.” The same applied to the related adjective “*robustus*,” which came to be the origin of the English word “robust.”

It is theoretically possible that this figure of speech had partly faded away along with classical culture and the Roman Empire; if so, then St. Thomas deserves some credit for this artful, learned, and creative expression which revisits the ancient metaphor. But it seems much more likely, given the way St. Thomas uses it, that by the 13th century A.D. using ‘*robur*’ to mean ‘strength’ had been so commonplace for such a long time that it was no longer considered a metaphorical expression. If so, then St. Thomas deserves no credit for poesy here, as he was simply using a dead metaphor. When a figurative expression becomes a common figure of speech, and over many years becomes so hackneyed that what used to be the figurative usage is now practically a literal meaning, that expression is known as a *dead metaphor*. It is ‘dead’ because it no longer invokes the image that was originally intended. For instance, the English verb ‘darting’ originally referred to the literal movement of small, pointed projectiles; but the figurative usage has become so incredibly commonplace that the verb ‘dart’ now simply means ‘move really fast;’ it no longer invokes the image of an actual dart flying through the air.¹⁸⁶

The sixth and final stanza of the *Verbum Supernum* is reminiscent of the sixth and final stanza of the *Pange Lingua* (discussed above). Both closing stanzas refer to the Holy Trinity in the dative case, and both stanzas express the poet’s desire that proper respect be given to the God

¹⁸⁶ Another example: the English word ‘talent’ is a dead metaphor (and Biblical allusion). In its original usage, it was an allusion to the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30, in which a master gives the Greek coins called ‘talents’ to his servants before his departure; when the master returns, he rewards the servants who used their talents to make a profit, but punishes the servant who had been given only one talent, because he just hid his talent away and did nothing productive with it. However, that original symbolism is lost on the modern reader. The metaphor has been employed so frequently, and with such consistency in meaning, that what was previously understood as a figurative expression is now considered the literal meaning by most English-speakers.

in Three Persons. However, the final stanza of *Pange Lingua* focuses in on that point in dramatic fashion; while the final stanza of *Verbum Supernum* says it in only two lines, then devotes the remaining two lines to Heaven. St. Thomas describes Heaven as “life without end” (“*vitam sine termino*”) “in our homeland” (“*in patria*”). Heaven is our “homeland” not in the sense of being the land of our birth, but rather because it is the ‘Promised Land’ of the New Covenant.

In our analysis of Aquinas’ *Pange Lingua* (above), we noted a balance between a tone of grandeur and a tone of simplicity. A similar remark could be made about Aquinas’ *Verbum Supernum*; in fact, the relative brevity of the individual lines in *Verbum Supernum*, and the brevity of the stanzas, seems to make the shifts in tone exceptionally pronounced. The tone in Aquinas’ *Pange Lingua* is at times ambiguous, at least in comparison. Both hymns end with a tone of reverence and mild simplicity, which might explain why the last two stanzas from both hymns are traditionally recited during a Holy Hour: *O Salutaris Hostia* and *Tantum Ergo Sacramentum*.

Closing Remarks on the Stylistic Analyses

This chapter has analyzed the Eucharistic poetry of Saint Thomas Aquinas, giving special attention to style, particularly in the form of rhetorical devices. The very length of this chapter seems to prove that St. Thomas invested copious artistic energy into these hymns. In a passage quoted in Chapter One, G. K. Chesterton argued that St. Thomas’ philosophy lends itself to good poetry and good art, because the Thomistic view of the human intellect in relation to the outside world is proper and healthy. Perhaps that has something to do with the stylistic quality of these hymns. It certainly seems to challenge common cultural dichotomies between rational discussion and artistic expression. It is a paradox of sorts, because it takes two seemingly opposing things

and balances them, not by minimizing each one's tug, but by letting each one be as great and powerful as it can be.¹⁸⁷

One of the interesting fruits of these analyses has been the recognition of parallels and intertexts between the five hymns. On the one hand, actual word-for-word intertexts between Aquinas' hymns proved somewhat scarce. This speaks well of St. Thomas' abilities as a poet, since using the same phrase over and over in all his hymns would be considered dull and lazy. In contrast, we have seen a number of instances where a line from one hymn conveys the same message as a line from one or two of the others—but with significant differences in verbiage. This is noteworthy because, as was mentioned on at least one occasion already, the ability to develop multiple phrases that express one and the same idea is a hallmark of a good poet.

In like manner, the third and final chapter below will discuss Saint Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic theology as articulated in the *Summa Theologiae*, and how the hymns reflect this theology. In other words, it will show how these five pieces of liturgical poetry have common messages, ideas, and themes which they express in diverse manners.

¹⁸⁷ Chesterton used similar language in several places in his book *Orthodoxy*.

Chapter III: Eucharistic Theology in the Hymns, and Concluding Remarks

St. Thomas Aquinas' faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist did not in any way make him unusual for his time. It is, after all, the official teaching of the Church. Furthermore, Eucharistic devotion as we know it today was growing and emerging during Aquinas' lifetime: Eucharistic Adoration and the Feast of Corpus were both introduced to the universal Church in the 1200s. Aquinas contributed to the development of the Church's official Eucharistic theology. The development of Catholic theology on the Eucharist is perhaps the best lens through which to view St. Thomas' articulation of Eucharistic theology in Part III, Questions 73-83 of the *Summa Theologiae*.¹⁸⁸ For clarity's sake, let it be briefly stated that official Church doctrine can grow and become clearer over time, but can never *really* "change" in the sense of contradicting itself.

Among the countless tenets concerning the Eucharist from the *Summa Theologiae*, there are several of these teachings that are likewise expressed in St. Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic poetry. In comparing the Eucharistic teachings of the *Lauda Sion* to the Eucharistic teachings of the *Summa*, scholar Thomas J. Bell writes the following:

As we have seen, the two works have a common emphasis on Christ's presence in the sacrament. They explain this presence in terms of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Both works are clear that the Mass commemorates Christ's passion and mediates His saving presence to all who participate in His passion through the signs of bread and wine. While the Eucharist is understood in both works to have this past dimension, it also has present and future significance. In the present, Christ is in the bread and wine communicating His life-giving substance to the faithful. This substance strengthens the pilgrim as he or she journeys toward heaven. There, in heaven, the pilgrims will sit at table with Christ and the other saints and partake of the ultimate banquet.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ See the Appendices for a summary of this excerpt from the *Summa*.

¹⁸⁹ Bell 1993:183. Let it also be noted here that Bell's counting of the stanzas differs from what is used in this paper.

Bell's assessment of the parallels between the Sequence and the *Summa* can be reduced to five theological points: (1) the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist; (2) the Doctrine of Transubstantiation; (3) that the Mass is understood as both a Sacrifice and a Sacrament;¹⁹⁰ (4) that the Eucharist is a memorial; (5) that the Eucharist is a source of spiritual nourishment and strength for faithful Christians, preparing them for Heaven.

The intention for this present portion of the essay is to explore how these doctrinal points are expressed in each of the five of the Eucharistic hymns attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas. In other words: whereas Bell was solely focused on the *Lauda Sion* and its parallels to the *Summa*, we shall apply Bell's general methodology to all five hymns. One fruit of this analysis, as will be seen, is further evidence in favor of Aquinas' authorship of these hymns.

The Theology of *Adoro Te Devote*

The first theological commonality that Bell mentions is an emphasis on the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The entirety of the *Adoro Te Devote* affirms the Real Presence continually. By way of example, here is the opening stanza:

Adoro te devote, latens Deitas,
quae sub his figuris vere latitas:
tibi se cor meum totum subiicit,
quia te contemplans totum deficit.

I adore thee devoutly, hidden Godhead,
who beneath these figures art truly hidden:
my whole heart subjects itself to thee,
because in contemplating thee it is wholly insufficient.

The second line of this stanza above is clear about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. This same line also affirms the doctrine of Transubstantiation. As noted in the previous chapter, this is one of many instances where *Adoro Te Devote* refers to Christ as "hidden" in the Blessed

¹⁹⁰ For more on this point, see Marshall 2009.

Sacrament beneath the accidents of bread and wine—a notion which is completely on-par with the way Saint Thomas articulates Transubstantiation in the *Summa*.

Thus far, it has been shown how *Adoro Te Devote* expresses the Real Presence as well as Transubstantiation. Now it must be shown how this hymn conveys the understanding of the Eucharist as both a Sacrifice and a Sacrament. For evidence of sacrificial language, we can look to the sixth stanza, where addresses Christ as “*Pie pellicane.*” As stated in the previous chapter, this conveys a notion of self-sacrifice, because the pelican was said to feed its offspring with its own blood. As for understanding the Eucharist as a Sacrament, there is no language that specifically speaks to that; however, the poet’s request that Christ purify him of iniquity (in stanza six) seems to suggest it vaguely.

It also needs to be shown that the *Adoro Te Devote* supports the understanding of the Eucharist as the memorial of Christ’s Crucifixion. This is made quite obvious when the hymn includes the following exclamation: “*O memoriale mortis Domini!*” “Oh, memorial of the death of the Lord!” The fifth and final teaching is that Eucharist strengthens the faithful in Christian virtue and readies them for Heaven. Such is the humble petition in the final stanza of *Adoro Te Devote* (as discussed in the previous chapter):

Iesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,
oro fiat illud quod tam sitio;
ut te revelata cernens facie,
visu sim beatus tuae gloriae.
Amen.

Jesus, whom veiled I now gaze upon,
May that be done, I pray, for which I thirst so much;
That seeing Thee with Thy face uncovered,
I may be blessed with seeing Thy glory.
Amen.

The Theology of *Lauda Sion*

The first thing to be shown is that the *Lauda Sion* affirms the Real Presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. It does so in countless places and in various ways throughout. However, it will be useful to cite an example or two here:

Dogma datur christianis,
quod in carnem transit panis,
et vinum in sanguinem.

Quod non capis, quod non vides,
animosa firmat fides,
praeter rerum ordinem.

The dogma is given to Christians,
That bread changes into the flesh,
And wine into blood.

What you grasp not, what you see not,
A zeal-filled faith affirms,
Beyond the normal ordering of things.

Lauda Sion also expresses the Doctrine of Transubstantiation most clearly in the above stanzas.

Aquinas' choice to use the verb "*transit*" especially connotes his articulation of Transubstantiation in the *Summa* as a literal transformation of substance from bread and wine into flesh and blood. The latter of the above stanzas is a reminder that the accidents of bread and wine still remain, even though the substances of bread and wine are no longer present.

As for the third Eucharistic teaching listed above, *Lauda Sion* also reflects Aquinas' twofold understanding of the Eucharist as both a Sacrifice and a Sacrament. This Sequence addresses at length a wide variety of issues surrounding the reception of Holy Communion, thus identifying the Eucharist as a Sacrament. This Sequence also identifies the Eucharist as a Sacrifice by associating it with Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac: "*cum Isaac immolatur.*"¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Genesis 22:1-19. As those familiar with the story know, it is perhaps better described as a "near-sacrifice."

The fourth theological teaching being discussed here is that the Eucharist is the memorial of the Passion of Christ. *Lauda Sion* gives voice to this dimension of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the following lines: “*Quod in coena Christus gessit, / faciendum hoc expressit / in sui memoriam.*” As for the final Eucharistic tenet, that the Eucharist prepares faithful Christians for Heaven, let it be shown that the final stanza of *Lauda Sion* asks for admittance into eternal life:

Tu qui cuncta scis et vales,
qui nos pascis hic mortales:
tuos ibi commensales,
coheredes et sodales
fac sanctorum civium.
Amen. Alleluia.

You who are knowing and capable of all things,
Who are a shepherd to us mortals here,
Make your people the banquet-sharers there,
The coinheritors and members
of your holy citizenry.
Amen. Alleluia.

The Theology of *Pange Lingua*

The *Pange Lingua* emphasizes the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist in the phrase “*se dat suis manibus.*” The Real Presence is also emphasized in the rather eloquent fourth stanza:

Verbum caro panem verum
Verbo carnem efficit,
fitque sanguis Christi merum,
etsi sensus deficit,
ad firmandum cor sincerum
sola fides sufficit.

The Word-made-flesh truly makes bread
into His flesh with his word,
and wine is made into the Blood of Christ,
and if sense is deficient,
faith alone is enough
to strengthen the sincere heart.

In addition to affirming the Real Presence, these lines also articulate the Real Presence in a manner that describes the mystery of Transubstantiation, whereby Christ “makes bread / into His flesh... and wine is made into the Blood of Christ” (as translated above). The latter half of the stanza seems to strengthen this affirmation of Transubstantiation by

The notions of Sacrifice and Sacrament are both present in the *Pange Lingua*. Saint Thomas alludes to the notion of Sacrifice in the first stanza:

Pange, lingua, gloriosi
Corporis mysterium,
Sanguinisque pretiosi,
quem in mundi pretium
fructus ventris generosi
Rex effudit gentium.

Describe, oh tongue, the mystery
of the glorious body,
and of the precious blood
which, as the price for the world,
the fruit of the generous womb,
the king of the nations, poured out.

It was noted in the previous chapter that the first line, “*Pange, lingua, gloriosi,*” is identical to the opening of line of a hymn about the Crucifixion. This reinforces the sacrificial imagery by connecting the Sacrifice of the Mass with the Sacrifice on the Cross. As for understanding the Eucharist as also being a Sacrament, Aquinas specifically refers to the Eucharist as a “*Sacramentum*” in the second-to-last stanza of the *Pange Lingua*.

The *Pange Lingua* does not specifically refer to the Eucharist as the Memorial of the Passion and Death of Christ on the Cross. However, the imagery in stanza one (see above), of Jesus Christ pouring out His blood to purchase the salvation of the world, seems to invoke something of this connection. The notion of the Eucharist readying faithful souls for Paradise likewise seems to be absent from the *Pange Lingua*.

The Theology of *Sacris Solemniis*

The hymn *Sacris Solemniis* speaks at length about Our Lord's Real Presence in stanzas three, four, and five. Notice especially stanza three:

Post agnum typicum,
expletis epulis,
Corpus Dominicum
datum discipulis,
sic totum omnibus,
quod totum singulis,
eius fatemur manibus.

After the typological lamb,
With the feasting completed,
The Body of the Lord
To all His disciples
(Just as much to all
As to each one individually)
Was given, we say, with his hands.

Although the hymn is rather clear about the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, *Sacris Solemniis* does not speak about the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, because it does not speak of the transformation of bread and wine into Christ's self, nor of how Christ is hidden beneath the mere appearances of bread and wine.

In *Sacris Solemniis*, St. Thomas associates Christ with the Paschal Lamb (see above), and even refers to the Eucharist specifically as a "*sacrificium*." Thus, sacrificial theology is present in this hymn. The hymn also says the following about the Eucharist: "*Panis angelicus / fit panis hominum*." ("The angelic bread / is made the bread of men.") This refers to the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Thus, the hymn *Sacris Solemniis* speaks of the Eucharist as both a Sacrifice and a Sacrament.

Sacris Solemniis does not seem to speak of the Eucharist as the memorial of Christ's suffering and death on the Cross, which was fourth among the theological tenets listed above.

However, the closing stanza of *Sacris Solemniis* asks God for admittance into Heaven after death, which is in accord with the fifth Eucharistic doctrine being searched-for in the hymns:

Te, trina Deitas
unaque, poscimus:
sic nos tu visita,
sicut te colimus;
per tuas semitas
duc nos quo tendimus,
ad lucem quam inhabitas.
Amen.

Thee, triune Deity,
Yet one Being, we implore:
Do thou visit us thus,
Such as we worship Thee;
Along Thy ways
Lead us where we strive,
To the light which Thou dost inhabit.
Amen.

The Theology of *Verbum Supernum*

It first must be shown that Saint Thomas' *Verbum Supernum* is focused on the Real Presence. At one point in the hymn, Aquinas writes the following to describe what Our Lord Jesus Christ did at the Last Supper: "*se tradidit discipulis*," "he handed Himself over to His disciples." Hence, the Real Presence is articulated briefly here. The *Verbum Supernum* also says that Jesus gave His flesh and blood to His disciples "beneath a twofold species"—which is suggestive of St. Thomas' vocabulary in the *Summa*—in the following lines; "*Quibus sub bina specie / carnem dedit et sanguinem*." This refers to the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. Thus, the hymn *Verbum Supernum* refers to the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and articulates it in terms of the way Transubstantiation is articulated in the *Summa Theologiae*.

Verbum Supernum speaks of the Eucharist as both Sacrifice and Sacrament. This hymn speaks of the Eucharist as a Sacrament in its third stanza and speaks of the Eucharist as a Sacrifice in its fourth stanza:

Quibus sub bina specie
carnem dedit et sanguinem;
ut duplicis substantiae
totum cibaret hominem.

Se nascens dedit socium,
convescens in edulium,
se moriens in pretium,
se regnans dat in praemium.

Beneath a twofold species
He gave them His flesh and blood;
That each many consume the whole man
of a duplex substance.

Being born, He gave Himself as our ally;
Sharing a meal, as our Food;
Dying, as our ransom-price;
And reigning, He gives Himself as our reward.

The earlier of the two stanzas above refers to Transubstantiation and to the reception of Holy Communion. This is another way of say that it discusses the Eucharist as a Sacrament. The latter of the two stanzas above mentions that Christ gave Himself over “as a ransom-price.” This reinforces the understanding of the Eucharist as a Sacrifice. Thus, the Eucharist is treated as both a Sacrifice and a Sacrament in the text of *Verbum Supernum*.

The fourth theological teaching to be discussed is the understanding of the Eucharist as the memorial of Christ’s Passion and Death on the Cross. The hymn *Verbum Supernum* does not seem to express this aspect of Eucharistic doctrine explicitly. Lastly, it must be revealed whether or not this hymn refers to the Eucharist as readying faithful Christians in a state of grace for eternal life with God in Heaven. This idea is conveyed and/or alluded-to in various phrases

throughout the hymn; for example, the last two lines of the sixth and final stanza—the closing lines of the entire hymn—mention God’s promise of eternal life: “*qui vitam sine termino / nobis donet in patria.*” (English: “who will give life without end / to us in the fatherland.”)

Conclusion of Theological Analyses

All things considered, it seems that the theological content of the Eucharistic hymns of Saint Thomas Aquinas largely reflects the Eucharistic theology of the *Summa Theologiae*. As Thomas J. Bell did with his article cited above, perhaps the theological analyses presented in this chapter can be used as a supporting argument in favor of the traditional view that St. Thomas penned these five hymns.

This argument is strengthened by several observations: each of the five hymns approaches different elements of Eucharistic theology; when taken as a whole, the hymns accurately represent much of the Eucharistic theology contained in the *Summa*; however, there are still many details from the *Summa* that the hymns do not even try to represent. It should be clear to most that the author of the five Eucharistic hymns written for the Feast of Corpus Christi was comfortable articulating theological tenets in a variety of ways. If a later student of Saint Thomas had written any of the hymns in a conscious attempt to convey Thomistic theology, one would expect a certain mundane rigidity in the hymns’ overarching structures and phrasing. In other words, a student of Thomistic theology would be hesitant to use his creative license to alter the vocabulary, phrasing, and so forth. On a similar note, if the hymns’ author had drawn some influence from St. Thomas’ theology but had not been consciously imitating it, then it would be exceedingly strange indeed that some of the hymns—especially the Sequence *Lauda Sion*—grapple with theological issues in an order closely resembling the ordering of “Questions” and “Articles” in Part III, Questions 73-83 of the *Summa Theologiae*.

Some Concluding Remarks on the Paper as a Whole

The purpose of this essay has been to compare ancient Romans' attitudes toward poetry with Saint Thomas Aquinas' attitude; to apply classical criticism to Aquinas' Eucharistic hymns; and to briefly sum up the theological significance of the Eucharistic hymns by comparing them to the *Summa*. All things considered, this study seems to bridge two gaps. Firstly, it bridges the gap between classical studies and medieval studies. Secondly, it bridges the gap between the dry logic of philosophy and the expressive capacity of poetry. Both of these are common dichotomies in contemporary academia and contemporary culture, respectively; it is my sincere hope that this essay has provided a serious challenge to these dichotomies.

Some might ask why St. Thomas Aquinas' hymns were chosen for this paper rather than the hymns of Venantius Fortunatus, or Adam of St. Victor, or St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153 AD), or perhaps some later author who wrote Latin liturgical poetry. I chose to write about St. Thomas because he was chiefly a teacher of theology and philosophy; his *Summa Theologiae* and other such works are widely-read; and finding copies of his works involves no major struggle. As a result of these things, St. Thomas' comments on the purpose of poetry were the easiest to discover, and the easiest to study at-length. Aquinas' philosophical popularity also made his thoughts on poetry much easier to articulate to my readers than the thoughts of a figure who is more obscure. Lastly, St. Thomas' hymns are familiar to a much wider audience than most other hymns from the Middle Ages, given their universal usage in the Roman Catholic Church during Holy Hours and Eucharistic Adoration; on the Feast of Corpus Christi; and during the Eucharistic procession on Holy Thursday.¹⁹² This meant that the hymns needed less introduction and explanation than would be necessary for most other Latin hymns written in the

¹⁹² *Pange Lingua* is typically chanted during this procession. It is also typically chanted during the Eucharistic procession on Corpus Christi.

Middle Ages; it also meant that this paper had the ability to enable readers to view something familiar in a completely new light. I hope that it has succeeded in doing so.

Appendix A: Latin Texts of Saint Thomas Aquinas' Eucharistic Hymns

Adoro Te Devote

Adoro te devote, latens Deitas,
quae sub his figuris vere latitas:
tibi se cor meum totum subiicit,
quia te contemplans totum deficit.

Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur,
sed auditu solo tuto creditur;
credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius:
nil hoc verbo Veritatis verius.

In cruce latebat sola Deitas,
at hic latet simul et humanitas;
ambo tamen credens atque confitens,
peto quod petivit latro paenitens.

Plagas, sicut Thomas, non intueor;
Deum tamen meum te confiteor;
fac me tibi semper magis credere,
in te spem habere, te diligere.

O memoriale mortis Domini!
panis vivus, vitam praestans homini!
praesta meae menti de te vivere
et te illi semper dulce sapere.

Pie pellicane, Iesu Domine,
me immundum munda tuo sanguine;
cuius una stilla salvum facere
totum mundum quit ab omni scelere.

Iesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,
oro fiat illud quod tam sitio;
ut te revelata cernens facie,
visu sim beatus tuae gloriae.

Amen.

Lauda Sion

Lauda Sion salvatorem,
lauda ducem et pastorem,
in hymnis et canticis.

Quantum potes, tantum aude:
quia maior omni laude,
nec laudare sufficis.

Laudis thema specialis,
panis vivus et vitalis
hodie proponitur.

Quem in sacrae mensa cenae,
turbae fratrum duodenae
datum non ambigitur.

Sit laus plena, sit sonora,
sit iucunda, sit decora
mentis iubilatio.

Dies enim solemnus agitur,
in qua mensae prima recolitur
huius institutio.

In hac mensa novi Regis,
novum Pascha novae legis,
phase vetus terminat.

Vetustatem novitas,
umbram fugat veritas,
noctem lux eliminat.

Quod in coena Christus gessit,
faciendum hoc expressit
in sui memoriam.

Docti sacris institutis,
panem, vinum in salutis
consecramus hostiam.

Dogma datur christianis,
quod in carnem transit panis,
et vinum in sanguinem.

Quod non capis, quod non vides,
animosa firmat fides,
praeter rerum ordinem.

Sub diversis speciebus,
signis tantum, et non rebus,
latent res eximiae.

Caro cibus, sanguis potus:
manet tamen Christus totus
sub utraque specie.

A sumente non concisus,
non confractus, non divisus:
integer accipitur.

Sumit unus, sumunt mille:
quantum isti, tantum ille:
nec sumptus consumitur.

Sumunt boni, sumunt mali:
sorte tamen inaequali,
vitae vel interitus.

Mors est malis, vita bonis:
vide parvis sumptionis
quam sit dispar exitus.

Fracto demum sacramento,
ne vacilles, sed memento
tantum esse sub fragmento,
quantum toto tegitur.

Nulla rei fit scissura:
signi tantum fit fractura,
qua nec status, nec statura
signati minuitur.

Ecce Panis Angelorum,
factus cibus viatorum:
vere panis filiorum,
non mittendus canibus.

In figuris praesignatur,
cum Isaac immolatur,
agnus Paschae deputatur,
datur manna patribus.

Bone pastor, panis vere,
Iesu, nostri miserere:
Tu nos pasce, nos tuere,
Tu nos bona fac videre
in terra viventium.

Tu qui cuncta scis et vales,
qui nos pascis hic mortales:
tuos ibi commensales,
coheredes et sodales
fac sanctorum civium.
Amen. Alleluia.

Pange Lingua

Pange, lingua, gloriosi
Corporis mysterium,
Sanguinisque pretiosi,
quem in mundi pretium
fructus ventris generosi
Rex effudit Gentium.

Nobis datus, nobis natus
ex intacta Virgine,
et in mundo conversatus,
sparso verbi semine,
sui moras incolatus
miro clausit ordine.

In supremæ nocte cenæ
recumbens cum fratribus
observata lege plene
cibis in legalibus,
cibum turbae duodenæ
se dat suis manibus.

Verbum caro, panem verum
verbo carnem efficit:
fitque sanguis Christi merum,
etsi sensus deficit,
ad firmandum cor sincerum
sola fides sufficit.

Tantum ergo Sacramentum
veneremur cernui:
et antiquum documentum
novo cedat ritui:
praestet fides supplementum
sensuum defectui.

Genitori, Genitoque
laus et iubilatio,
salus, honor, virtus quoque
sit et benedictio:
procedenti ab utroque
compar sit laudatio.
Amen.

Sacris Solemniis

Sacris solemniis
iuncta sint gaudia,
et ex praecordiis
sonent praeconia;
recedant vetera,
nova sint omnia,
corda, voces, et opera.

Noctis recolitur
cena novissima,
qua Christus creditur
agnum et azyma
dedisse fratribus,
iuxta legitima
priscis indulta patribus.

Post agnum typicum,
expletis epulis,
Corpus Dominicum
datum discipulis,
sic totum omnibus,
quod totum singulis,
eius fatemur manibus.

Dedit fragilibus
corporis ferculum,
dedit et tristibus
sanguinis poculum,
dicens: Accipite
quod trado vasculum;
omnes ex eo bibite.

Sic sacrificium
istud instituit,
cuius officium
committi voluit
solis presbyteris,
quibus sic congruit,
ut sumant, et dent ceteris.

Panis angelicus
fit panis hominum;
dat panis caelicus
figuris terminum;
O res mirabilis:
manducat Dominum
pauper, servus et humilis.

Te, trina Deitas
unaque, poscimus:
sic nos tu visita,
sicut te colimus;
per tuas semitas
duc nos quo tendimus,
ad lucem quam inhabitas.
Amen.

Verbum Supernum

Verbum supernum prodiens,
nec Patris linquens dexteram,
ad opus suum exiens,
venit ad vitae vesperam.

In mortem a discipulo
suis tradendus aemulis,
prius in vitae ferculo
se tradidit discipulis.

Quibus sub bina specie
carnem dedit et sanguinem;
ut duplicis substantiae
totum cibaret hominem.

Se nascens dedit socium,
convescens in edulium,
se moriens in pretium,
se regnans dat in praemium.

O salutaris hostia,
quae caeli pandis ostium,
bella premunt hostilia;
da robur, fer auxilium.

Uni trinoque Domino
sit sempiterna gloria:
qui vitam sine termino
nobis donet in patria. Amen.

Appendix B: The Eucharistic Theology of the *Summa Theologiae*

In the *Summa Theologiae*—or, as it is sometimes called, the *Summa Theologica*—Saint Thomas Aquinas writes about the Eucharist in Part III, Questions 73-83. This appendix summarizes the questions and articles in order.¹⁹³

In Question 73, St. Thomas Aquinas affirms that the Eucharist is a Sacrament in Article One. Article Two states that the Eucharist is one Sacrament rather than multiple, and Article Three, St. Thomas says that one can still be saved even if he never received the Eucharist, as long as he was Baptized. Article Four states that the Eucharist can also be called a Sacrifice, or Communion, or Viaticum. Article Five says that the Sacrament was fittingly instituted at the Last Supper by Christ Jesus, and that it was fitting for three reasons: (1) He left us the Sacrament which commemorates the Sacrifice that He was about to undergo; (2) He instituted the New Law immediately after fulfilling the Old Law; and (3) since people best remember their last moments with a person, instituting it shortly before His Passion meant that His disciples would be especially mindful of the Eucharist. Article Six argues that the Paschal Lamb was the chief prefiguration of the Holy Eucharist.

Question 74 deals with the bread and wine which become transformed into Christ's Body and Blood. Article One says that bread and wine are the proper matter of the Sacrament, rather than any other type of food or drink. Article Two states that the quantities of bread and wine to be consecrated do not have to be certain amounts. Article Three says that the bread must be made from wheat rather than any other grain (such as barley). In Article Four, St. Thomas says that Christ used unleavened bread, but the bread can be either leavened or unleavened and the

¹⁹³ A more detailed summary of this section from the *Summa Theologiae* can be found in McDermott 1989:568-89. McDermott's work, though identified as a "*Concise Translation*," is more accurately described as a *summary* of the *Summa*. But if one is looking for an *especially brief* summary of Aquinas' Eucharistic theology, such can be found in Gratsch 1985:251-7.

Sacrament will still be valid. St. Thomas also writes in this Article that it is wrong for a Priest to violate the disciplines of his own liturgical rite; for most Priests, this means that unleavened bread is required. It is stated in Article Five that grape-wine must be used at Mass, and trying to use any substance other than grape-wine would render the Sacrament invalid. Article Six says that water should be mixed with wine, while Article Seven says that a lack of water would not make the Sacrament invalid. On the same subject, Article Eight says that it is best to avoid adding too much water, because if too much water is added, then the wine might cease to be wine and become tainted water instead, which cannot be transformed into the Precious Blood.

In Question 75, St. Thomas writes about the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. In Article One, he says that the Eucharist is the Body of Christ truly, *not* figuratively, and that His Presence cannot be detected by bodily senses, “but by faith alone.”¹⁹⁴ In Article Two, he writes that the substance of the bread and wine cease to remain after consecration, and only their accident remains. In Article Three, he writes that the substance of bread and wine is not annihilated and then replaced by Christ’s Body and Blood, because God does not annihilate things; instead, it is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. In Article Four, St. Thomas again says that bread is transformed into Christ’s flesh, and the wine into Christ’s blood. In Article Five, he points out that the accidents of bread and wine still remain, even though their substance has been transformed into Christ’s Body and Blood. Article Six says that just as the substance of bread does not remain, neither does the “substantial form.”¹⁹⁵ In Article Seven, Aquinas writes that this unseen change of bread and wine into Christ’s Flesh and Blood happens instantaneously. Lastly, Article Eight says that it is acceptable to say that the Body of Christ is made out of bread, as long

¹⁹⁴ Knight 2016.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

as it is in reference to the change from bread into Body (rather than claiming that Christ's Body consists of bread).

Next, Question 76 addresses the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Articles One, Two and Three state that Christ is truly and fully present in the Eucharist, under both species, and under even the smallest portion of the accidents of bread and wine. Article Four states that “the whole dimensive quantity of Christ's body”¹⁹⁶ is in the Holy Eucharist. Article Five states that Christ being ‘in’ the Eucharist is not meant in the sense of a person being ‘in’ a place; but rather that the Eucharist is Christ Himself. Article Six teaches that Christ is present so long as the accidents of bread and wine remain. Article Seven states that the body of Christ in this Sacrament is hidden from view, such that even if “the glorified eye,”¹⁹⁷ which sees Him face-to-face in Heaven, were to look at the Celebration of Mass on earth, one still would only see the accidents of bread and wine. Article Eight teaches that Christ is present in the Eucharist during Eucharistic miracles and visions just like He normally is; what makes the miracles different is only the change in the physical appearance. God causes this miraculous change to happen as a rough representation of what the Eucharistic sacrifice actually is, to encourage the faithful and strengthen their devotion to the Eucharist.

Question 77 deals with the accidents of bread and wine. Article One says that the accidents are without subject, which is a nuanced strengthening of his point that the substance of bread and wine are no longer present after Transubstantiation. Article Two says that the “dimensive quality is the subject of the accidents which remain in this sacrament,” which further explains Aquinas' account of Transubstantiation. Article Three points out that the sacramental species—meaning the sensory appearances of bread and wine—still have exactly the same

¹⁹⁶ Knight 2016.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

effects on external bodies that bread and wine have—even though the Holy Sacrament of the Altar is not bread and wine. Article Four states that the sacramental species can experience corruption—referring to decay, aging, and so on. The substance of Christ’s body and blood will cease to be there if this corruption is such that it loses the *species*—the ‘look’, so to speak—of bread or wine, respectively. Article Five reinforces this point, saying that when it decays, the Body and Blood of Christ is turned into dust, or mold, or dirt, or what-have-you, in the exact manner of bread and wine. Article Six says that the sacramental species gives bodily nourishment just like bread and wine would, because the body gains nourishment by breaking down its food, hence the Body and Blood of Christ cease to be present when the accidents of bread and/or wine are digested beyond recognition. Article Seven states that when the host is fractured, the sacramental species alone is broken—and *not* the substance of Christ’s Body and Blood. Lastly, Article Eight of this Question defends the practice of mingling water and wine, pointing out that the wine is still wine, unless so excessive a quantity of water is used that mixing the two produces dirtied water, so to speak, rather than wine.¹⁹⁸

Question 78 is about the form of this Sacrament. Article One says that the words of consecration, “This is My body” and “This is My blood,” are in fact the form of the Sacrament. Article Two says the phrase “This is My body” is the proper form for the consecration for the bread, rather than, for instance, saying something like ‘This becomes My body.’ Article Three states that the proper form for the consecration of the wine is ‘This is the chalice of My blood...’. Article Four says that the words of Consecration have been given the power of Transubstantiation by God, and Article Five elaborates on and emphasizes that point. Finally, Article Six refutes the idea that the bread does not undergo Transubstantiation until both bread

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Q.74,a.8 above.

and wine have been consecrated. St. Thomas tells us that when the bread is consecrated, it becomes the Body of Christ, and then the wine become Christ's Blood once it gets consecrated.

Question 79 is about the effects of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Article One says that this Sacrament bestows grace. Article Two says that the attainment of eternal glory is an effect of the Sacrament. Article Three says that the Eucharist does not cause the forgiveness of Mortal Sin, and that receiving Holy Communion in a state of Mortal Sin is itself another Mortal Sin. Article Four states that the forgiveness of Venial Sins can be obtained through the Eucharist. Article Five says that the Eucharist does not remove all guilt and punishment, but rather that, both as a Sacrament and as a Sacrifice, it removes guilt and punishment according to the fervor and devotion of the one receiving the Sacrament and offering the Sacrifice. Article Six shows that worthy reception of Holy Communion helps preserve the recipient from sin, both because of Christ's unity with the recipient and because of the demons' fear of Christ's Real Presence. Article Seven says that the Eucharist as a Sacrament benefits the recipients, but that as a Sacrifice it benefits even those who do not receive it, "inasmuch as it is offered for their salvation."¹⁹⁹ Article Eight shows how it is that Venial Sin can hinder the effect of the Sacrament.

In Question 80, St. Thomas discusses the reception of Holy Communion in general. Article One says that the distinction between receiving Christ 'sacramentally' and receiving Him 'spiritually' is proper and true, since not all are properly disposed to receive and be 'spiritually' nourished by it. Article Two clarifies that only humans can consume this sacrament spiritually, but neither angels nor beasts can do so. Article Three clarifies that an unworthy recipient is still receiving a valid Sacrament, but is profaning it; in other words, Christ is always present in the

¹⁹⁹ Knight 2016.

Blessed Sacrament, even when someone who is unworthy receives Him sacramentally but not spiritually. Article Four says that a soul in a state of Mortal Sin who nonetheless receives Our Lord in Holy Communion commits another Mortal Sin by doing so. Article Five says that this act of blasphemy, though a Grave Sin, is not the gravest of all sins. Instead, St. Thomas writes, “the greatest of all sins appears to be . . . the sin of unbelief.”²⁰⁰ Article Six states that a Priest should only deny Holy Communion to notorious, unrepentant, public sinners. Article Seven discusses whether a man who experiences nocturnal emissions should receive Holy Communion. St. Thomas proposes that, although only Mortal Sin *requires* a man to refrain from receiving, the bodily defilement and the impure thoughts which sometimes result from nocturnal pollution may make it wise to avoid receiving out of a sense of respect. Article Eight says that those who have broken the Eucharistic fast should not receive the Eucharist, barring special circumstances such as bodily illness. Article Nine discusses the issue of giving Holy Communion to those who are mentally handicapped, and argues that it is only lawful if the person is capable of exhibiting proper devotion to the Eucharist. Article Ten states that it is lawful to receive Holy Communion daily, so long as the reception is lawful in other respects. Article Eleven says that it is not lawful for a Christian to refrain altogether from receiving Holy Communion. Lastly, Article Twelve defends the practice of the laity receiving the host and while only the Priest receives the chalice.

Next, in Question 81, St. Thomas again addresses the reception of Holy Communion; but this time, he is concerned with the reception by the disciples at the Last Supper. In Article One, St. Thomas writes that Christ consumed the Eucharist, consumed Himself, when He instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. In Article Two of this Question, St. Thomas argues that Judas Iscariot received the Eucharist at the Last Supper. Article Three states that the Body of Christ

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

present in the Eucharist at the Last Supper was not ‘impassible’ because it was the same Body as Christ had at that time; and at that time, He was preparing for His Passion. Lastly, Article Four argues that if the Eucharist consecrated at the Last Supper had been preserved in a pyx, then Jesus Christ would die in the Eucharist at the moment of His death on the Cross, since it is the same Jesus in both places. (St. Thomas also writes in this Article that the same is true if an Apostle had consecrated the Blessed Sacrament on Good Friday and stored the sacred species in a pyx during the Crucifixion and Death of Jesus Christ.)

In Question 82, the ministering of Holy Communion is discussed. Article One says only a Priest can validly consecrate the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Article Two says that several Priests can consecrate the same host together. Article Three says that the Priest alone should distribute the Blessed Sacrament, explaining the rich theological significance behind this Church discipline. Article Four says that the Priest who consecrates the Sacrament is obligated to partake of it. Article Five says that even a wicked Priest can validly consecrate the Eucharist. In Article Six, St. Thomas says that the holiness or wickedness of the Priest affects the efficaciousness of the prayers offered during Mass. Article Seven says that even heretical, schismatic, and excommunicated Priests can validly offer the Sacrifice of the Mass. Article Eight says that even a ‘degraded’ Priest can perform valid Consecration of the Blessed Sacrament. Article Nine says that it is not lawful to attend the celebration of Holy Mass by a heretical, schismatic, excommunicated, or sinful Priest. Lastly, Article Ten says that it is especially unlawful for a Priest to refrain completely—(meaning, presumably, for a very long time)—from offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Lastly, there is Question 83, which concerns the celebration of Holy Mass. Article One says that Christ is the Victim of the Sacrifice of the Mass. Article Two defends the daily

celebration of Mass. Article Three says that the celebration of Holy Mass indoors and using sacred vessels is appropriate. Article Four discusses and defends the Order of Mass. Article Five explains the liturgical customs of Holy Mother Church, especially those customs which resemble the rituals observed under the Old Law. Last of all, Article Six explains how to deal with various ‘defects’—referring to human errors and unusual natural occurrences—that may arise in the celebration and ministering of the Eucharist.

Appendix C: Saint Thomas Aquinas' Prayers Before and After Mass

Oratio Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Ante Missam

Omnipotens sempiterne Deus, ecce accedo ad sacramentum unigeniti Filii tui, Domini nostri, Iesu Christi; accedo tamquam infirmus ad medicum vitae, immundus ad fontem misericordiae, caecus ad lumen claritatis aeternae, pauper et egenus ad Dominum caeli et terrae. Rogo ergo immensae largitatis tuae abundantiam, quatenus meam curare digneris infirmitatem, lavare foeditatem, illuminare caecitatem, ditare paupertatem, vestire nuditatem; ut panem Angelorum, Regem regum et Dominum dominantium, tanta suscipiam reverentia et humilitate, tanta contritione et devotione, tanta puritate et fide, tali proposito et intentione, sicut expedit saluti animae meae. Da mihi, quaeso, Dominici Corporis et Sanguinis non solum suscipere sacramentum, sed etiam rem et virtutem sacramenti. O mitissime Deus, da mihi Corpus unigeniti Filii tui, Domini nostri, Iesu Christi, quod traxit de Virgine Maria, sic suscipere, ut corpori suo mystico merear incorporari, et inter eius membra connumerari. O amantissime Pater, concede mihi dilectum Filium tuum, quem nunc velatum in via suscipere propono, revelata tandem facie perpetuo contemplari: Qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti, Deus, per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen.

Oratio Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Post Missam

Gratias tibi ago, Domine sancta, Pater omnipotens, aeternae Deus, qui me peccatorem, indignum famulum tuum, nullis meis meritis, sed sola dignatione misericordiae tuae satiare dignatus es pretioso Corpore et Sanguine Filii tui, Domini nostri Iesu Christi. Et precor, ut haec sancta communio non sit mihi reatus ad poenam, sed intercessio salutaris ad veniam. Sit mihi armatura fidei et scutum bonae voluntatis. Sit vitiorum meorum evacuatio, concupiscentiae et libidinis exterminatio, caritatis et patientiae, humilitatis et oboedientiae omniumque virtutum augmentatio: contra insidias inimicorum omnium, tam visibilium quam invisibilium firma defensio; motuum meorum, tam carnalium quam spiritualium, perfecta quietatio: in te uno ac vero Deo firma adhaesio; atque finis mei felix consummatio. Et precor te, ut ad illud ineffabile convivium me peccatorem perducere digneris, ubi tu, cum Filio tuo et Spiritu Sancto, Sanctis tuis es lux vera, satietas plena, gaudium sempiternum, iucunditas consummata et felicitas perfecta. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

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