

5-1-1993

Luther and the Spirituality of Thomas Aquinas

Joseph Peter Wawrykow

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus>

Recommended Citation

Wawrykow, Joseph Peter (1993) "Luther and the Spirituality of Thomas Aquinas," *Consensus*: Vol. 19 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/consensus/vol19/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in Consensus by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.

Luther and the Spirituality of Thomas Aquinas

Joseph Wawrykow

University of Notre Dame

Great strides have been made in the comparative study of the leading figures of the Catholic and Protestant theological traditions. Even a few generations ago, comparative study of authors from different traditions was relatively rare, and the work of the few engaged in such research often had a sharp polemical edge. The principal aim usually was the demonstration of the deficiencies of one of the authors, the result of the inquiry having been determined, as a rule, by a scholar's own confessional allegiance.¹ Today, however, scholarship has attained a new maturity, and outright prejudice has increasingly become unacceptable in scholarly circles. Their interest undoubtedly fostered by a more favourable ecumenical climate,² more and more scholars have turned in particular to the comparative study of Luther and Aquinas, producing a whole range of studies which genuinely illumine both theologians.³

While the success of such scholars as Pesch and Pfürtner is heartening, it nevertheless remains true that comparative study of Thomas and Luther, and especially the comparison of their spiritualities, remains a tricky undertaking. Quite apart from the ambiguity inherent in the word "spirituality",⁴ much conspires to hamper research into Luther and Aquinas. For one thing, Luther and Aquinas are separated by centuries, and scholars remain uncertain even about the nature and extent of Luther's knowledge of the thomistic corpus. On balance, it seems safest to conclude that while Luther may have read some Thomas, his knowledge of Aquinas more frequently was mediated by the reports of contemporary thomists, thinkers whose own knowledge of important features of Thomas's theology has been put in question.⁵ Thus, even when Luther includes

Thomas in his broadsides against the scholastics, one must ask whether Luther's criticism in fact extends to Thomas; it may be applicable only to his contemporary opponents.⁶

Similarly, an especially beguiling temptation in comparative research seems to be to forget context, to reduce Thomas and Luther to sets of propositions that can be placed alongside each other in simple juxtaposition. It is obvious to the historian that this is grossly to oversimplify. Luther and Thomas worked in rather different situations and accordingly favored different styles of theologizing. While the thirteenth century is not without its controversy,⁷ as compared with the sixteenth century there was a greater serenity, which unquestionably affected theological writing. In the theological works of the high scholastics, formal and pedagogical considerations, not polemic, predominate. With Luther, things are otherwise. The sixteenth century was a much more exciting time, and there is an intensity and immediacy in the writing that is simply lacking in the treatises of the high scholastics. But the highly-charged, polemical character of much of Luther's work, while aesthetically stimulating, also hinders the comparison with Aquinas. Luther's problems are not Thomas's, and what Luther says in the heat of various polemical campaigns can be compared only with great difficulty with Thomas's more measured comments. A full comparison would thus presuppose the hard historical work of recreating the actual situations in which Thomas and especially Luther originally advanced their claims.

To my mind, however, the most serious impediment to meaningful comparison has to do with the way that readers have traditionally approached Thomas Aquinas. The pronounced tendency in the scholarship has been to focus almost exclusively on what Thomas says, on his material claims. Accordingly, a principal motif in Thomas studies has been the problem of development: does Thomas change his mind on important issues from writing to writing? There has, on the other hand, been hardly any interest in the form of Thomas's argument, on the way in which he presents his ideas on important theological matters. This is rather unfortunate. Without doubting the fruitfulness of the customary approach, inattention to structure and procedure has contributed to an imperfect understanding of Thomas—of his full teaching in some cases, even more so of his peculiar genius as a scholastic theologian.

Thomas returns to a given topic in work after work. Quite often, the material claims remain constant. What does change, however, is the way in which Thomas structures his presentation of these claims: he will alter the order of procedure; he will cite different authoritative texts to undergird his analysis; he will pursue different tasks in his different writings, in the interest of achieving different pedagogical goals. In a word, the customary approach has the unfortunate effect of obscuring Thomas's innovativeness and his distinctive contributions as a scholastic theologian.

That closer attention to questions of form and procedure can vastly improve our appreciation of the *spirituality* of Thomas Aquinas is the special argument of this article. There is no dearth of introductions to Thomas's spirituality, and we can learn much from them. The work of Principe on Thomas's teaching about affectivity; Tugwell on prayer in Aquinas; Torrell on Thomas's spiritual orientation—all these are perceptive on what Thomas proclaims on issues important to spirituality.⁸ But, I would contend, they are not entirely satisfactory precisely because with the rest of the scholarship they tend to bracket Thomas's distinctive practices as a scholastic and so do not contemplate the extent to which Thomas's work as a scholastic intersects with his spirituality. By examining Thomas's procedure in his handling of an important theological doctrine, it should be possible to see more fully how his scholasticism is in the service of his spiritual life.

To focus this analysis, I have chosen Thomas's treatise on the eucharist in the *Summa theologiae*. That the eucharist was important to Thomas is beyond doubt: the ascription of the hymns used at the newly-instituted feast of Corpus Christi indicates that his contemporaries recognized his special devotion to the eucharist; some of the more intriguing stories in his otherwise uneventful life suggest the same.⁹ But the choice is prudent on other grounds as well. The treatise on the eucharist in the *Summa* is a microcosm of Thomas's work as a scholastic: the treatise on the eucharist acutely reveals the interests and tasks and resourcefulness of Thomas Aquinas as a scholastic theologian. By following him as he examines the eucharist in its various dimensions, we shall gain a much greater sense of the possibilities of scholastic theology; we shall also, I am convinced, come to know his spirituality that much better. Only

when we have depicted the main features of Thomas's scholastic activity and limned the connections between his spirituality and his activity as a scholastic will we be in position to engage Luther meaningfully; thus only toward the end of this article will I turn to Luther, offering on the basis of the more adequate reading of Thomas some suggestions about the genuine continuities between the spiritualities of Aquinas and Luther.¹⁰

Actually, Luther is not entirely absent from the following discussion of Aquinas. Luther offered many detailed criticisms of the scholastics, including Thomas Aquinas, and objected to what he understood to be Thomas's positions on a whole range of discrete issues. But, as Denis Janz reminds us, Luther had a more fundamental objection to Thomas, one that emerged from what he perceived as the flawed orientation of the thomistic theological enterprise. Luther was convinced that Thomas was simply oblivious to the experiential dimensions of Christian faith.¹¹ That the objection has an initial plausibility is clear enough from a simple contrasting of Luther's and Thomas's normal theological practice: unlike Luther, Thomas's theological work does not return explicitly at each moment to his experience of justification by faith in Christ; the thematized reflection on the act of justifying faith is not the principal or sole factor in the formulation of Thomas's theology.¹² But, I think, the objection ultimately fails; in issuing this objection, aimed at once at Thomas's theology and his spirituality, Luther has probably been victimized by the faulty reading practices of his contemporary thomist opponents. In effect, then, by drawing attention to the connections between Thomas's work as a scholastic theologian and his spirituality, his experience and knowledge of God in Christ, I wish in this article to call into question this most basic of Luther's criticisms.¹³

Summa Theologiae III 78–83: The Treatise on the Eucharist

The discussion of the eucharist in the *Summa theologiae* covers eleven questions (III 73–83), which address seven major topics.¹⁴ In III 73, Thomas provides an "overture", as it were, to the entire treatment. Resuming his comments earlier in the *Summa* about the sacraments in general (III 60–65), he shows in the present question that as both cause and sign (the

principal characteristics of "sacramentality"), the eucharist is a sacrament; he also distinguishes the eucharist from the other Christian sacraments (on the basis of Christ's real presence), identifies the place of the eucharist in the spiritual life (here likening our earthly life to a journey whose goal is life with God, in the next life, in heaven), and establishes the connections between the Old Testament figures and the New Testament accounts of this sacrament. Thomas then devotes four questions to his next main topic, the "matter" of this sacrament, employing "matter" in both a broad and a more technical sense. As in III 74, in asking about the "matter" of the eucharist, Thomas can be thinking simply of the stuff employed in this sacrament: hence, he asks about the kind of bread (a.3) and wine (a.5) that should be employed in this sacrament, and about the proper amounts (a.2); similarly, in light of controversies with eastern Christians, Thomas asks (a.4) which is preferable, leavened or unleavened bread. In III 75–77, Thomas inclines to a more specialized usage, thinking as an "Aristotelian" of matter in terms of "potential". The principal interest of these questions, as announced in III 75, 1, is Christ's real presence in the eucharist after the consecration of the bread and wine. The remaining articles of III 75 focus directly on the change of the bread and wine, designated as "transubstantiation",¹⁵ which renders Christ's presence in the sacrament possible; III 76 discusses the final term of the conversion, the Christ who becomes present through the conversion of bread and wine; and, III 77 looks at what is common to the two terms of the conversion, the accidents of the bread and wine which remain after the substances of the bread and wine have been converted into those of Christ's body and blood. In III 78, Thomas shifts to his third main topic, the "form" of the sacrament. His principal claim here is that the sacramental formulae ("This is my body", "This is the chalice of my blood...") affect the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ by virtue of the divine power that works through these words; Christ has promised his presence when the formulae are spoken on his behalf by his authorized representatives.¹⁶

The remaining questions of the treatise on the eucharist build on this teaching about real presence and the manner of Christ's presence. III 79, on the fourth topic of the treatise, looks in detail at the principal "effects" of this sacrament, the

increase of grace and the theological virtues, and the spiritual refreshment and joy that the encounter with the eucharistic Christ can bring.¹⁷ III 80 and 81 examine the “use” made by various possible recipients of the consecrated host, the fifth main topic of the treatise. In terms of the fruitful reception of the eucharist, III 79 and III 80 should be seen as complementary; even in discussing the “effects” of the reception of the eucharist in III 79, Thomas insists that only those who are properly disposed, by their faith and charity, will benefit from the encounter with the eucharistic Christ.¹⁸ Thomas repeats and deepens this teaching in III 80, by contemplating more thoroughly what is involved in the “spiritual eating” of this sacrament.¹⁹ III 79 and 80 are complementary as well in their warnings: those who are not correctly disposed (e.g., because of their mortal sinning) will not benefit from the physical reception; to the contrary, they bring condemnation upon themselves by so boldly approaching this sacrament.²⁰ The second question devoted to the fifth main topic (the “use” of the eucharist) looks at the special circumstances associated with the first celebration of the eucharist; while the specific issues examined here may seem somewhat arcane,²¹ III 81 is nevertheless useful in reinforcing the teachings of the previous questions on real presence, the effects of the sacrament and its present use. In the final two questions of the treatise on the eucharist, Thomas discusses the “role of the ministers” of this sacrament, establishing that they act as secondary, instrumental causes in the eucharistic conversion,²² and in III 83 looks at the “ritual” (the seventh and final topic of his comprehensive examination of the eucharist) connected with the celebration of this sacrament.

Although Thomas does not explicitly make the point, it is possible that the seven topics of the treatise on the eucharist can be further subdivided into three main groups. One of Thomas’s ambitions in the treatise is to distinguish the eucharist from the other sacraments; he returns repeatedly to the point throughout the treatise.²³ The distinctiveness of the eucharist is grounded in the real presence: while the other sacraments convey Christ’s power, this sacrament conveys Christ himself. To show the difference, Thomas will refer to the “perfection” of the different sacraments: the coming to completion of the other sacraments lies in the application by the minister

of their material elements to the recipient; in the eucharist, on the other hand, the perfection of the sacrament comes in the consecration of the matter, by which Christ becomes truly present. Yet, Thomas adds, it is acceptable even in the case of the eucharist to speak of a "perfection" that is attained in the application of the consecrated material of this sacrament to its recipients. While the consecration of the eucharistic matter constitutes its primary or first perfection, the actual reception of the consecrated species entails the secondary perfection of the eucharist.²⁴ In this light, it would seem legitimate further to group the seven topics of the treatise into the following three major parts. After his introductory comments in III 73, Thomas considers in the opening questions (III 74–78) the first perfection of the eucharist, Christ's real presence and the way in which Christ comes to be present through transubstantiation. In III 79–81, on the effects and use of the sacrament, Thomas addresses the second perfection of this sacrament. In the concluding questions (III 82–83), Thomas returns to the first perfection of the sacrament, now addressing in turn the minister through whose instrumental power God, the chief agent of the change, works the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and the ritual aspects of the actual celebration of this sacrament. The distribution of the discussion of the first perfection of the eucharist into two parts of the treatise, separated by the middle part devoted to the second perfection constituted by effects and use, effectively makes a rather subtle point about the minister and ritual. By relegating to the end of the treatise the discussion of the instrumental power of the minister and the details of the current performance of the eucharist, Thomas underscores a major claim of the opening questions of the treatise, that it is by divine agency that Christ becomes present in this sacrament; the contribution of the minister, while real and necessary, is undoubtedly thoroughly subordinate to God's. The structure of the treatise, with the discussion of effects and use in the second place, may also indicate the relative importance of these topics: once he has discussed Christ's real presence, he turns immediately to the benefits derived from this presence by worthy recipients of this sacrament, leaving for a later consideration the role of human agents in effecting the change. In other words, the structure of the treatise itself proclaims

Thomas's greater interest in the spiritual possibilities of this sacrament.

Despite Thomas's organizational cues, the treatise on the eucharist can on first approach be quite bewildering. With its plethora of topics and even sub-topics (some of which at first glance seem somewhat obscure) and barrage of claims and counter-claims, the treatise can be overwhelming and confusing, leaving the reader, especially one unschooled in scholastic discourse, with the impression that the discussion is fundamentally chaotic and haphazard. In this case, at least, first impressions are misleading. Not only in its overall structure but in the composition of the articles that constitute its questions, the treatise on the eucharist is a work of subtle artistry. Perhaps the most effective way of depicting Thomas's skill in constructing the treatise, and so of rendering his discussion of the eucharist more manageable, is to consider two basic issues, having to do with the *material* that Thomas has treated, and the *tasks* that he seeks to accomplish in the treatise on the eucharist.

In terms of his material, Thomas displays a profound interest in texts. Thomas's can correctly be termed an "authoritative" theology in the sense that Thomas respects the comments of earlier authors and tries to be faithful to their insights in the construction of his own theology. Although it may not be immediately apparent, the authoritative texts treated in these questions are not of equal status. At the very beginning of the *Summa*, Thomas has articulated a hierarchy of authorities in sacred doctrine; in his detailed theological work, Thomas closely adheres to this hierarchy. Thus, in *ST* I 1,8 ad 2, the greatest authority is, as one would expect, granted to God: what God says must be held with certainty and must shape our convictions. The locus of God's revelation is the Bible. Hence, Thomas continues, what is written by the human authors of Scripture, to whom God's revelation has been made, shares the intrinsic authority proper to God. At the lower end of the hierarchy of authorities are the doctors of the church. Their authority is lesser because God's revelation has not been made to them. Yet, they do have authority, for they have shown themselves—and have been so recognized by subsequent generations of Christians—to be skilled readers of Scripture. In this light, theirs is a probable authority, stemming from their

ability to apprehend and re-state God's word in Scripture. The final, in the sense of "lowest", authority mentioned by Thomas in *ST* I 1,8 ad 2 belongs to the philosophers. No revelation has been made to them, and so they fall far short of the authority of the human authors of Scripture. And, the field of their inquiry, in which they have worked out their ideas, is not the canonical Scriptures. Thus, their authority is not intrinsic to sacred doctrine, as is that of the doctors of the church. Yet they have spoken correctly about some matters—the things of this world. And so the Christian may call on their expertise to help in the theological enterprise; this is why Thomas here says that their authority is merely extrinsic and in fact only probable. It is taken from outside of sacred doctrine and applied to the rather different questions that confront the interpreter of God's word.²⁵

The expectations created by *ST* I 1 are fulfilled in *ST* III 73–83. Scripture holds center stage. Thomas insistently points to the scriptural roots of contemporary eucharistic belief and practice. While explicitly eucharistic passages—the accounts of the institution (especially Matthew's), 1 Corinthians 11²⁶—are Thomas's favorite scriptural texts in III 73–83, others as well are employed to great effect: thus, he refers to the Old Testament to show the prefiguring of this sacrament and sacrifice;²⁷ he quotes Jesus' self-descriptions to settle details of eucharistic practice;²⁸ he alludes to passages on doctrinal issues of related significance (e.g., on the passion).²⁹

Post-scriptural authors also figure prominently in this treatment of the eucharist. Christian authors such as Augustine, Ambrose, Pseudo-Dionysius, and John of Damascus contribute to Thomas's argument in two related ways. As skilled interpreters of Scripture, their words are often taken as sure guides to the correct interpretation of oblique scriptural verses. But individual sayings taken from their writings can themselves be problematic, introducing notes that, at least at first glance, seem contrary to the truths of the eucharist. In the scholastic article, such sayings appear most frequently in the objections. Thomas handles such sayings in a variety of ways, in the process clarifying correct doctrine. He may simply deny that a problematic saying is authoritative—the author in question may have been speaking hypothetically, or may have later retracted the particular claim that poses difficulty. Or, Thomas

can offer a more complete interpretation of the saying—by restoring the difficult saying to its more complete original context, Thomas can demonstrate that the objector has employed the saying inappropriately, distorting the author's intention.³⁰ At any rate, Thomas's underlying assumption in dealing with these authorities is that there is a basic agreement among post-scriptural authorities cherished by the believing community, an agreement grounded in their correct apprehension of God's word in Scripture.

Other authors, including pagan authors, are quoted as well in the treatise on the eucharist. Our attention is quickly captured by the use of Aristotle at strategic moments in the treatise; Aristotle, it would seem, is a useful guide to the eucharist. Are Thomas's critics, those who see in scholasticism the reduction of theology to (pagan) philosophy, correct? Thomas, in fact, is faithful to his programmatic statement in *ST* I 1,8 ad 2. The "authority" enjoyed here by Aristotle differs in kind from that of God and of Scripture and even of the skilled Christian readers of Scripture. Aristotle and the other non-Christian philosophers who make their appearance in the treatise on the eucharist have spoken correctly and insightfully on some matters (having to do with the things of this world); the terms that they have devised and the rigor with which they have engaged in theoretical discussions can serve the Christian well, can be taken over and imitated and employed for Christian ends. Aristotle, of course, had no inkling of Christ or of the eucharist; what he says about "substance" and "accident", terms originally employed of "earthly things", the things of the world that can be grasped and analysed by the philosophers, can, however, be fruitfully used by the Christian in the exploration of Christian faith. This appropriation of Aristotle, however, is rather far from the "synthesis" much beloved in some of the literature on Thomas. "Faith" and "reason" are not equal partners in Thomas, each supposedly contributing much of importance to the scholastic enterprise. Rather, what we have here is a critical appropriation of non-Christian work, done in the perspective and on the basis of the full commitment to Christian truth.

While primarily so, the material examined in *ST* III 73–83 is not exclusively textual. Especially in the final question of the treatise, Thomas reflects on eucharistic gestures and on

the ecclesiastical practices that are associated with the celebration of this sacrament. Thomas's approach to gesture and practice mirrors his handling of the key texts. Gesture is warranted only inasmuch as it proclaims the passion whose power is conveyed through this sacrament or exhibits the reverence owed to the sacrament that contains Christ himself or serves to stimulate the devotion of those who will receive Christ.³¹ The pageantry of the mass, in other words, is directly geared to religious ends. Thomas also insists on the antiquity of these gestures and practices. The repetition throughout the mass of the sign of the cross, and the frequent incensing, are no recent innovation; rather, they go back, at least in Thomas's rendering, to the eucharist as celebrated by the apostles. Thomas is aware that there is little or no written evidence for such apostolic practice, and so he has recourse to the notion of an "oral tradition": that these gestures are to be performed has been transmitted by the apostles through verbal instruction to their successors.³² In a Reformation perspective, of course, this is rather suspicious. But, the main point here is that oral tradition, which in Aquinas deals exclusively with subsidiary matters of practice, not with the chief items of the faith (which are revealed in the canonical Scriptures), does and must go back to the apostles themselves. In Aquinas, there is no notion of an oral tradition that is later than the apostles; nor is his oral tradition elevated to the level of Scripture itself. Rather, there is a single "tradition" (the preferred word is "doctrine") of Christ's words and instructions to the present, one that goes back to Christian origins. For the most part and certainly on the crucial issues, this doctrine has been passed on in written form. In other, secondary matters (especially the details of ritual performance) the apostles passed on Christ's instructions in merely verbal form.³³

As revealing as the materials incorporated into the treatise are the tasks that Thomas seeks to accomplish in *ST* III 73–83. His ambitions are in fact vast and varied. His most basic goal is the proclamation of the principal truths associated with the eucharist. Coursing throughout the treatise is the twofold insistence that by the promise of Christ at the Last Supper and through the divine power, Christ is truly present in the sacrament, and that this presence facilitates the deepening of Christian life. In articulating eucharistic truth, Thomas is

the beneficiary of the work of twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholastics. In particular, he utilizes in his analysis a threefold sacramental formula developed by previous scholastics through systematic reflection on various comments of Saint Augustine. As can the other sacraments, the different aspects of the eucharist can be distinguished according to the *sacramentum tantum* (literally, the "sacrament only"), the *res et sacramentum* ("thing and sacrament"), and the *res tantum* ("the thing only").³⁴ In the eucharist, the bread and wine serve as the *sacramentum tantum*: the Christian sacrament is both cause and sign. Hence, the bread and wine signify, point to, the first "thing" or truth of the sacrament, the body and blood of Christ which come to be under the consecrated species; this corporeal food and drink signify the spiritual food that is Christ. But the consecration of the bread and wine also cause Christ's real presence: when the sacrament is correctly performed, administered by the priest and employing the words supplied by Christ, Christ really does become present. Thomas has various ways of putting the *res et sacramentum* of this sacrament: he can speak simply, for example, of the "true body" of Christ. Probably the most revealing designation of what becomes present, however, is "the crucified Christ".³⁵ In the treatise on the eucharist, Thomas does not tire of linking this sacrament to the passion; the one and the same Christ who has suffered and died for our sins on the cross becomes present, and conveys the fruit of this suffering, in the eucharist. In turn, Thomas can speak of the Christ really present not only as *res* but as sacrament (*res et sacramentum*) in order to indicate that by the encounter with Christ one can benefit spiritually: the true body of Christ points to and "causes" the *res tantum*, the spiritual effects of the eucharist. Again, Thomas can describe the *res tantum* in various ways: as the increase of grace and of charity, as the inebriation of spiritual joy. But these all can be reduced to his favorite gloss of the *res tantum*, "the mystical body of Christ".³⁶ Through the encounter with the true body of the crucified Christ, one's membership in the church, the mystical body of Christ, is deepened; one receives ever more of the grace and charity that link people to Christ as to their Head. These considerations about the mystical body of Christ permit as well the completion of the description of the *sacramentum tantum* of this sacrament: the bread and wine are

signs as well of the *res tantum*, for just as bread is made of many grains, so there are many members in Christ's mystical body.³⁷

Complementing this proclamation is the effort to safeguard eucharistic truth. In order to maintain Christ's real presence in the eucharist Thomas introduces his account of transubstantiation. Christ is present *secundum veritatem* ("according to truth") in the eucharist because by the divine power attached to the words of consecration reported in Scripture, the substances of the bread and the wine have passed into the substances of the body and blood of Christ. The manner of this introduction of transubstantiation is noteworthy. It is not that he wishes to engage in speculation for its own sake. Rather, he ties this theory to the words of institution. Christ has promised his presence to those who celebrate the eucharist. But for a variety of reasons Christ cannot become present by a local movement (that is, by leaving heaven and entering the sacrament).³⁸ Rather, the only plausible explanation of presence is to speak of the change of an existing substance (that of the bread) into that of Christ's body. In other words, Thomas invokes transubstantiation on exegetical grounds; doing justice to Christ's promise of presence requires speaking of the change of substance into substance.³⁹

The desire to safeguard the truth of real presence also issues in Thomas's consideration and elimination of inappropriate ways of speaking about the eucharist. Hence, in terms of the becoming present of Christ's true body, Thomas rejects competing theories that had emerged in scholastic circles.⁴⁰ Some had spoken of Christ becoming present after the annihilation of the substance of the bread; here, Christ's substance would substitute for the former substance of the bread. Among the reasons for rejecting this view is that it needlessly increases the work of God and moreover fails to account for Christ's substantial presence. The theory requires God first to destroy a substance and then to introduce Christ's; rather than implicating God in such destruction, it is preferable to speak of the one substance passing into another. Thomas also knows a version of consubstantiation, of the coupling of Christ's substance to the remaining substance of the bread. Thomas rejects this theory of the change for a variety of reasons. It is contrary to the practice of the church, which adores the consecrated

host; adoration of the remaining bread would involve idolatry. More tellingly, consubstantiation fails because it contradicts the words of institution. By this theory, at least in Thomas's reading, "This is my body" would have to be read "This bread is my body", which is simply not true: bread is not Christ.⁴¹

Thomas is in fact quite thorough in his efforts to free the reader from inappropriate speech; it extends to unacceptable interpretations of the real presence itself. The opening article of III 75, in which Thomas turns for the first time in the treatise to the concentrated analysis of eucharistic presence and the manner in which Christ becomes present, is telling. He asks here whether Christ is present in the eucharist *secundum veritatem* or is present as in a sign or a figure. While he argues against a merely symbolic presence, Thomas also argues here and in the subsequent questions against an illegitimate version of presence *secundum veritatem*. The body of Christ may be present in the manner of a body, or in the manner of a substance. The former version is untenable. If Christ were present after the consecration in the manner of a body, this would require that Christ's body quit its present place in heaven, and be located in the host. But, then, there would be a whole range of unacceptable consequences. Christ could be present in only one place; what then would happen if the eucharist were celebrated at the same time in many places throughout the world?⁴² And if Christ is present in the manner of a body, then Christ would be extended in space, by Christ's dimensive quantity. How, then, could the big Christ fit under the little host?⁴³ And if the consecrated host were subsequently broken, would Christ's body then be shattered as well?⁴⁴ By these and other such considerations, Thomas is able to show the preferability of glossing *secundum veritatem* as presence "in the manner of substance".⁴⁵ Substance and accident must be distinguished. It pertains to substance to exist in itself; accidents are (usually) rooted in a subject. Moreover, accidents modify and announce their substance: we know that a thing is a certain sort of thing by the evidence provided by the accidents. As for substance, it does not belong to substance as substance to be extended or related to place; such occur through the corporeal substance's accidents. Since in the eucharist we have a transubstantiation—substance passes into substance; what was bread is after the consecration the body

of Christ—and not a transaccidentation, a supposed passing of accidents into accidents, Christ's body is present in the eucharist but not as mediated by the accidents of this body. It is present in the manner of substance. Thomas's way of proceeding may be termed "therapeutic" in the sense that he at once advances an account of presence and sharpens our sense of the pitfalls of less sophisticated positions, thus helping us secure our own grasp of the truth.

While the proclamation and safeguarding of eucharistic truth hold center stage, Thomas engages in other tasks as well. For one thing, in this treatise he shows himself a good disciple of Augustine and Anselm. In his faith Thomas too "seeks understanding". Thomas's underlying assumption is that God and Christ have acted in wise and appropriate ways. Thus whole stretches of the treatise are devoted to showing the meaning and appropriateness of the different aspects of eucharistic practice and belief.⁴⁶ In compiling these lists that portray the wisdom of Christ's institution, Thomas can draw on many sources. Hence, in speaking of the appropriateness of the use of bread and wine in this sacrament, Thomas observes that this sacrament is designed to be spiritual food and thus it was best to employ the corporeal food and drink in most common use.⁴⁷ For the most part, however, Thomas offers specifically Christian observations to establish the meaningfulness of this or that feature of the eucharist. Thus he will refer to the setting of the Last Supper or to some scriptural claim about God's activity in Christ to make his case; he will call as well on the doctors of the church who in their own study of the word of God have pondered the deeper reasons for the present dispensation. The overall effect of this search for meaning is to disclose more fully the connections between the eucharist and the other key elements of the Christian religion.⁴⁸

Finally, Thomas also attempts to locate the eucharist in its appropriate contexts. Reference has already been made to his repeated efforts to relate the eucharist to the other sacraments. With the other sacraments of the Christian religion, the eucharist is a sacrament because it is both cause and sign. But the eucharist differs from the other sacraments in a crucial respect: while all the sacraments are rooted in the passion and are the means by which God conveys the fruits of the passion, this sacrament contains the crucified Christ himself. For this

reason, Thomas can refer to the eucharist as the culmination of all the sacraments.⁴⁹ Thomas also locates the eucharist in the broader context of the spiritual journey. For Aquinas, life is a journey, one that has a definite goal (life with God in heaven) and the appropriate path to this goal—conformity to Christ in this life, including the reception of the sacraments that proclaim Christ and communicate Christ's spiritual power. The eucharist is central to this movement to God. It is the chief sacrament, the perfection of the others, precisely because it contains Christ himself and so makes fully available the spiritual power, achieved in the passion, that is needed to come to God. Thomas is also concerned to stress that the eucharist serves as a foretaste of the beatific end. In heaven, we shall see God and Christ face to face; in the eucharist, we anticipate this vision, by encountering the Christ rendered present through the medium of the sacramental species. In turn, this encounter impels us on the journey; as Thomas likes to put it, the eucharist is a *viaticum* ("food for the way"), giving to us (*viators*, "people on the way") the nourishment and strength to continue on our journey to God.⁵⁰

The Spirituality of Thomas Aquinas

Through the close reading of the treatise on the eucharist, the contours of the spirituality of Thomas Aquinas have begun to emerge. The following features of Thomas's eucharistic spirituality seem especially worthy of comment:

First, this approach to the eucharist reveals the importance of "church" for Aquinas. A rich ecclesiology underlies III 73–83 and renders possible the analysis of the eucharist. Foremost in his understanding of the church is the recognition of its primarily spiritual nature. Thomas, of course, does not deny the institutional or juridical aspects of the church. But, in Aquinas, these always remain secondary; as in the discussion of the *res tantum* of the eucharist, Thomas prefers to think of the church as the "mystical body of Christ". The term is rather suggestive, indicating the main notes of the church for Thomas. On the one hand, membership in this spiritual community, sealed and furthered by the external reception of the sacraments, is primarily achieved through spiritual action, by the acts of faith and charity by which people are joined to Christ as to their

Head. On the other hand, Christ clearly provides the focus to this community: it is the mystical body of *Christ*, and the reception of the *res et sacramentum*, the true body of Christ, has as its culmination the deepening of membership in Christ's mystical body. Thomas also insists on the thoroughly "trans-historical" elements of the mystical body. Thirteenth-century Christians are not, of course, the first Christians, but rather stand in continuity with those who have gone before them. Throughout this discussion of the eucharist, Thomas returns to this continuity: hence, he grounds present eucharistic beliefs and practices in their institution by Christ; he turns to post-scriptural Christians (Augustine or Ambrose, for example) for help in interpreting these beliefs and practices. We, of course, would likely chide Thomas for being a rather faulty historian, for simply assuming that what occurs in his church is in fact identical in all the details not only of belief but religious experience as well, and for being oblivious to the variety of forms in which the eucharist has been celebrated at different times and in different places. This, however, would be to miss the larger point. In Thomas's view, it is Christ and the accounts of Christ that must always shape Christian sensibility and belief; the present church thus stands as one with all those who have tried to live in conformity with the Scriptures.⁵¹

Second, Thomas's handling of Christ in this discussion reveals much about his spirituality. That Christ enjoys a great prominence in these questions is not in itself altogether surprising; the distinctiveness of this sacrament is after all established by the real presence of Christ. It is, instead, the way in which he portrays Christ that demands comment. Throughout these questions, the emphasis is put squarely on the Christ who has suffered and died for our sins. As with the other sacraments, the eucharist derives its spiritual power from the passion; this sacrament bestows grace and the increase of charity inasmuch as it conveys the spiritual gifts that Christ has won on the cross. In similar fashion, Thomas's treatment of the "sacrifice" of the mass is founded on the connection between the eucharist and the passion.⁵² It is not as if Christ were sacrificed anew each time the eucharist is celebrated. Rather, the eucharist is a sacrifice because it recalls in a distinctive and powerful way the single sacrifice on the cross; it is sacrifice because it contains and makes present anew the Christ who has offered

himself once-for-all for our sins on the cross.⁵³ In the cross, therefore, Thomas recognizes both God and humanity. Before the cross, Thomas recognizes himself and therefore his sin; but he meets as well the love of God, recognizing in Christ's death the forgiveness and power here made available by God.⁵⁴

Third, Thomas insists on a living, spiritual relationship with his Christ. Thomas offers a nuanced account of sacramental efficacy, lapsing neither into mere subjectivism nor into an overly mechanistic view of the eucharist. In terms of the *res et sacramentum*, real presence is not dependent on the personal morality of priests and certainly not on that of the recipients. Whether the mass is celebrated by a morally good or bad priest, Christ becomes present in the consecration, provided that the minister is duly ordained and says the words provided at the institution by Christ and with the intention of doing as Christ has intended.⁵⁵ Hence, all those who receive the sacramental species receive the Christ substantially present. The attractiveness of this part of Thomas's answer is that it frees recipients from Donatist qualms: they can count on the encounter with Christ in this sacrament without having to worry about the moral qualities of their priest. In terms of the *res tantum*, however, moral quality is not a matter of indifference. Thomas returns to the point repeatedly in the treatise on the eucharist. Positively put, only those who receive the sacrament in faith and charity (that is, only those who are spiritually alive), receive the *res tantum*, the deepening of their faith and charity and further inclusion into the mystical body of Christ. We may state Thomas's teaching as follows: the (true) body of Christ is offered to and received by all who eat the sacrament; only those correctly disposed accept the concomitant offer summarized under the *res tantum*, the eating of the (true) body of Christ to their spiritual benefit.⁵⁶ Thomas can make the same point in more negative terms. When grievous sinners—those who have sinned mortally and are aware of their sin, and are attached to it—receive the sacrament, they receive the (true) body of Christ, but reject the offer of grace (the *res tantum*). To the contrary, the eucharist becomes for them an occasion for condemnation, for further sin, for in approaching the sacrament, they have feigned membership in the mystical body of Christ, thus insulting its Head.⁵⁷

Thomas's recognition of the need for a suitable spiritual disposition in the recipients of the eucharist receives further expression in his discussion (in *ST* III 80, 10–11) of a question that would attain a certain urgency during the Reformation, that of the frequency of reception. Again, Thomas's position is rather complex, although entirely consistent. In the first place, in light of what is offered in the sacrament, Christ and Christ's grace, members of the church should receive the sacrament as frequently as possible. We always stand in need of God's grace. But, in the second place, fruitful reception of the eucharist (not only receiving Christ's true body but entering more firmly into Christ's mystical body) requires the appropriate spiritual disposition—in III 80, 10c, Thomas singles out for mention the fervor and desire that arise from formed faith. When this fervor is lacking or tempered, one should refrain from receiving; one should first seek renewed fervor. In the response to the third objection of III 80, 10, Thomas completes his teaching by examining the reverence owed to this sacrament, noting that due reverence emerges from a combination of sources, from fear associated with love, and that in some people, one or the other, fear or love, can predominate.⁵⁸ For some, reverence emerges more from fear and humility, from a sense of personal unworthiness. In this case, reception of the eucharist will be less frequent: in their humility, such Christians are fearful of offending the Christ eucharistically present and so will receive only rarely. For others, reverence for the sacrament is rooted more in love and hope; and, since one hopes for what is loved and wants to possess it, this reverence will issue in frequent reception. Christ, after all, is the object of Christian hope; one hopes to come into the immediate presence of God and Christ in the next life; one cherishes the opportunity to anticipate this full encounter now, in the eucharist. While he allows that each attitude is acceptable and has much to recommend it, Thomas himself ultimately argues against over-scrupulosity: since hope and love are preferable to fear, it is preferable to show due reverence by receiving the sacrament as frequently as possible. The teaching of *ST* III 80, 10 ad 3 has, of course, a special resonance for students of Thomas and Luther. In his groundbreaking study in the early 1960s, Pfürtner had shown the importance of hope for Thomas Aquinas.⁵⁹ Hope, in fact, plays the same role for Thomas as

faith does for Martin Luther: by hope, one can be confident of salvation, for through hope one expresses one's dependence on the God who is able to bring people to the transcendent end of life with God in heaven. Indeed, the present teaching on hope and frequency of reception completes the analysis of hope offered in the treatise on hope in the *ST* II– II.⁶⁰ There, Thomas had rooted the confidence of hope in the grace of God, in the *auxilium* (“aid”) that makes the attainment of salvation possible; here, Thomas reminds us that hope has as its object the Christ, rendered eucharistically present, who is the principal expression of God's saving grace.

Fourth, Thomas's work as a scholastic is inextricably bound to spirituality. It is tempting to compartmentalize religious life in the middle ages, to think of monks working on their salvation (and so deepening their spirituality through their theological work) while scholastic theologians are engaged in more speculative, ultimately empty, endeavours. Whatever value this might have as a general characterization, it undoubtedly falters in the case of Aquinas. Thomas's scholastic activity is in the service of his spirituality; Thomas pursues his scholastic tasks precisely to give expression to his most important spiritual insights. Apart from his spiritual commitments, the treatise on the eucharist would be simply impossible. And Thomas writes for the benefit of those who share the same religious commitments. The treatise on the eucharist, as with the rest of the *Summa*, is very much an in-house document; Thomas's ideal reader is one who agrees with him about real presence and the fundamental importance of the eucharist. While discrete arguments of the *Summa* can be, and have been, extracted for use in debate with others, with those who do not share these convictions, this is not how Thomas intends his argument. Rather, the rhetoric of these questions is directed to fellow believers to urge them to retain correct belief, to help them to understand their belief ever more adequately, to free them from gross and, in the long run fatal, distortion.

In turn, this scholastic exercise not only emerges from and presupposes a living, Christ-shaped spirituality; it will also promote and hone an authentic Christian spirituality. What Thomas is doing here is not spiritually-vacuous or pointless. While the exercise does not have the immediate or obvious

payoff of monastic ruminations on the faith—or, for that matter, of Luther's insistent proclamation of the gospel message—Thomas's work as a scholastic will, in the event, issue in a more profound spirituality, both his own and that of his readers. Only if we think that beliefs and action are divorced, operating in their autonomous spheres, only if we suppose that beliefs do not shape practice, and vice versa, only then will we conclude that Thomas's scholastic work will not contribute profoundly to Christian spirituality. The result of working through with Thomas these questions on the eucharist and pursuing his tasks is an everkeener sense of God in Christ and of the real possibilities for spiritual growth provided by Christ in this sacrament. In this light, we perhaps may even wish to complete the list of tasks enumerated in the previous section by adding that in the treatise on the eucharist (as elsewhere) Thomas has also (perhaps especially) sought to inspire in his fellow Christians a more sustained and refined Christian behavior, one expressing a gratitude for all that God has done for us, as epitomized in the sacrament of the eucharist.

The Spiritualities of Luther and Aquinas: A Provisional Comparison

These doubts about the accuracy of Luther's judgment about the importance of spiritual experience for Thomas cannot, however, stand as the final word. On the contrary, on the basis of this reading of Thomas's treatise on the eucharist, the direct comparison of Luther and Aquinas has at last become feasible. Unable to engage in a like close reading of an eucharistic text by Luther, these final comments must by necessity remain somewhat tentative. My only consolation is that the readers of this journal, familiar with Luther's corpus, are more than ready to supply for this deficiency.

Yet it would be regressive to make this comparison revolve around specific points of eucharistic doctrine. No one can doubt that Luther and Aquinas disagree about a number of discrete issues: Luther prefers consubstantiation to transubstantiation; he is uneasy with talk of eucharistic sacrifice; he challenges a range of practices—private masses, reservation, and adoration of hosts—that Thomas, if not exactly champions, does not himself question.⁶¹ These disagreements are real

and must be respected. But it is possible to conclude this essay on a more hopeful note by bringing to the surface the broader patterns of conceiving the relations of God and people that inform the teachings on the eucharist offered by these theologians. By reflecting on two principal underlying motifs characteristic of their theologies and spiritualities, we shall grasp the profound and genuine bonds that unite Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther.

One of these motifs should by now be obvious, the centrality of the passion for their understanding of God and of Jesus Christ and of the human person. Luther and Aquinas alike argue for discipleship to the crucified Christ as the distinctive mark of the Christian's life: in Christ, God's love is most fully shown; in the death on the cross, human sinfulness is revealed and forgiven. While there is a genuine and overriding agreement, their shared proclamation of the centrality of the cross does not, however, mean that they must agree in every detail. The match between Luther and Aquinas in fact is not absolute. As has been long recognized, the paradoxical character of Luther's way of figuring the relation of Christ and believer, his affirmation of the *simul iustus et peccator*, is somewhat blunted in Aquinas—not because Thomas is too optimistic in his anthropology (he is not), but because he understands God's gracious action in Christ not merely as forgiveness but as transformational power. Albeit by fits and starts, by the grace of God communicated to those who follow the crucified Lord, there is in Aquinas a genuine transformation of the sinner, one that finds its culmination, however, only in the next life in the immediate presence of God.

The second principal motif that unites Luther and Thomas is their shared commitment to the primacy of God in the salvific process. In his influential *Revelation and Theology*,⁶² Ronald Thiemann has argued that among the elements crucial to an authentic Christianity is an insistence on divine prevenience. The Christian life is in every respect dependent on God's call and initiative. While Thiemann is convinced on this score of the Christian character of Luther's theology (indeed, Luther's "promise" is central to Thiemann's own rendering of divine prevenience), his confidence is diminished when it comes to medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas: despite their good intentions, there may in fact be a "Pelagian" cast to their thought in which too great a role has been

granted to autonomous, self-initiating human action.⁶³ The treatise on the eucharist is eloquent testimony to the deficiency of Thiemann's judgment; with Luther, although in different categories, Thomas roots Christian life in the prevenience of God. The motif of divine prevenience, with its insistence on the thoroughly contextualized nature of human response, runs throughout the entire *Summa theologiae*, including the treatise on the eucharist. That people are called to eternal life with God is an unmerited gift of God; God could have left us to more mundane ends. But, in God's infinite goodness, God has freely invited people to share the life proper to God.⁶⁴ God has also mercifully provided the means to this end: Christ himself is gift. And the sacraments, which carry on Christ's work by communicating his spiritual power, are established not by human initiative, but by God's providential will. God in love has provided the means of attaining God.⁶⁵ Thomas makes this point neatly in the treatise on the eucharist in his discussion of the institution of this sacrament at the Last Supper: knowing that he was about to leave them, Christ wished to comfort his disciples, and so left this remembrance of himself.⁶⁶ Thomas's commitment to the primacy and prevenience of God in the salvific process is total, extending even to the description of the "worthiness" by which people eat Christ not only sacramentally but spiritually. In writing of spiritual eating, Thomas assumes his readers' familiarity with the related discussions of conversion and the attainment of faith and charity. As his striking reworking of the by then traditional *facientibus quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam* ("to those who do their best, God gives grace") discloses, the renunciation of sin and the movement to God in faith and charity are themselves the gift of God; the "doing of one's best" that leads to the infusion of grace and the reception of faith and charity is itself worked in the person by God.⁶⁷ Thus, when he turns in this treatise to "worthiness", Thomas in no way is undercutting his basic commitment to the divine primacy. On the contrary, even our capacity for growth in grace, for accepting the spiritual offer (the *res tantum*) of the eucharist, is itself due to God. In agreement with Luther (and Thiemann), then, Thomas's is an authentically Christian theology, testifying to *God's* work in all its dimensions.

Notes

- 1 As one example on the Catholic side, see H. Denifle, *Die abendländischen Schriftausleger bis Luther über Justitia Dei (Rom. 1.17) und Justificatio* (Mainz: F. Kirchheim, 1905), a work which purports to show the weakness of Luther's grasp of Catholic teachings about the justice of God. On the Protestant side, one might cite W. Link, *Das Ringen Luthers um die Freiheit der Theologie von der Philosophie* (Munich: Kaiser, 1955), which champions Luther's efforts to free theology from the prison of philosophy into which it had been cast by the scholastics.
- 2 Even a conservative pope can describe Luther as an authentic witness to the faith; see S. Pförtner, "The Paradigms of Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther: Did Luther's Message of Justification mean a Paradigm Change?" in H. Küng and D. Tracy (eds.), *Paradigm Change in Theology: A Symposium for the Future* (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 131, for the comments of John Paul II. The resentments, however, occasionally do resurface. See the review of Otto H. Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin: Grenze und Grösse mittelalterlicher Theologie* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1988) in the *Rassegna di letteratura tomistica* 24 (1991) 186–195; the reviewer (p. 187) seems surprised that Pesch can refer to Thomas and Luther in the same breath as "theologians".
- 3 For references to the most important comparative research, see Otto H. Pesch, *Thomas von Aquin*, especially ch. 1. Pesch is best known for his massive theological-systematic comparison of Luther and Thomas on justification; see *Theologie der Rechtfertigung bei Martin Luther und Thomas von Aquin* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1967). S. Pförtner's most notable contribution to their comparative study is the book translated (by E. Quinn) as *Luther and Aquinas on Salvation* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964); I shall return to the central thesis of this book later in the article.
- 4 A relatively straightforward, non-controversial notion of "spirituality" informs this article. Spirituality is a matter of orientation and relationship; Christian spirituality concerns the relation of people with their God through Christ. Hence, one's spirituality is deepened by closer conformity and obedience to God in Christ.
- 5 See, for example, Pesch's comments (with references) about Cardinal Cajetan in "Existential and Sapiential Theology—The Theological Confrontation between Luther and Thomas Aquinas" in Jared Wicks (ed), *Catholic Scholars Dialogue with Luther* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970) 183ff., n.3.
- 6 For a survey of the opinions of the major scholars about the character of Luther's knowledge of Aquinas, see Denis R. Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas: The Angelic Doctor in the Thought of the Reformer* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989) chapter IV. Janz himself thinks that Luther did know Aquinas. In terms of the argument of the present

article, I would observe that Luther's knowledge seems restricted to some material claims and add that this need not entail a direct acquaintance with Thomas's works.

- 7 The present article will focus on the eucharistic teaching of Aquinas in the *Summa theologiae*. Occasionally, contemporary disputes do surface in the treatise on the eucharist. Hence, he considers the differing attitudes of eastern and western Christians towards the use of leavened bread. The stress on the value of material things, and thus the appropriateness of using bread and wine in a sacrament, perhaps also reflects a concern over the resurgence in western Europe of interest in dualism; it should be recalled that Thomas's own Dominican order (technically, the Order of Preachers) owed its origin to the attempt to combat more effectively the dualists of Southern France.
- 8 W. Principe, "Affectivity and the Heart in Thomas Aquinas' Spirituality," in Annice Callahan (ed.), *Spiritualities of the Heart* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990) 45–63; Simon Tugwell (ed. and trans.), *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), especially the introductory comments 271–279; and, Jean-Pierre Torrell, "Thomas d'Aquin," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1991), cols. 718–773. The list of distinguishing notes of Thomas's spirituality offered in the last article differs in significant respects from that which I will propose later in this article.
- 9 Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) offers a thorough account of the new feast, including references to Thomas's role in its development. Among the events of his life that evince a special devotion to the eucharist, one might recall that the dramatic incident (vision? stroke?) that brought his writing career to an end occurred while he was saying mass. See James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1983), especially 320ff.
- 10 Because of limitations of space, it is not possible to offer here an analysis of Thomas's other principal treatments of the eucharist. Most important among these is the discussion in the *Scriptum* on the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard *In IV* distinctions VIII–XIII; Thomas prepared that discussion in the 1250s, well before the treatise on the eucharist in the *Summa* (Ca. 1272–73). A preliminary examination of the treatment in the *Scriptum* reveals, however, significant differences in organization and approach.
- 11 For Luther's sense of Thomas's inattention to experience, see Denis R. Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas*, 14–16.
- 12 The formulation in the text is derived from Otto H. Pesch, "Existential and Sapiential Theology," in Wicks (ed), *Catholic Scholars in Dialogue with Luther*, 61–81, with notes on 182–193; see especially p. 76. The distinction between Luther's more existential and Thomas's more sapiential approach is useful and sheds considerable light on the differences

between the two theologians. However, it abstracts from Thomas's actual scholastic practices, and thus does not provide an orientation to the reading of Thomas. The present article seeks to meet this deficiency, thus making possible a more fruitful reading of Aquinas.

- 13 The following description offers an orientation to Thomas; I wish to make his way of proceeding and arguing more accessible, and so my own account has been shaped by the requirements of responsible reading. However, the description has in fact been prepared in the light of a reading of one of Luther's more important treatises on the sacraments, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Hence, on occasion I will note in my description a point of especial interest to Luther, without, however, turning the description into a debate between Thomas and Luther, or into an evaluation of the quality of Luther's knowledge of Thomas's teaching on the eucharist.
- 14 Thomas enumerates the seven topics in a paragraph that stands at the head of the entire treatise on the eucharist. The *Summa theologiae* is divided into three main parts, the second of which is itself divided into two principal sections. In citing the *Summa*, the Roman numeral designates the Part: "I" designates the Prima Pars, "I-II", the Prima Secundae, "II- II", the Secunda Secundae, and, "III", the Tertia Pars. The treatise on the eucharist is found in the Tertia Pars. Each Part of the *Summa* is composed of many "questions", the numbering of which begins anew with "1" with each new Part. Hence, there are four questions numbered "1" in the *Summa*. In citing a question, therefore, one must indicate the Part. "I 1" refers to the Prima Pars, question 1; "III 1", to the Tertia Pars, question 1. The treatise on the eucharist runs from III 73-83. Each question is divided into articles, which examine the main issue covered in the question from different angles. In a citation, the third number given indicates the article. Hence, "III 73, 1" refers to the first article of the Tertia Pars, question 73. Finally, each article is itself divided into four segments. An article opens with a series of objections (abbreviated as "ob"), which raise considerations that might put in doubt the main claim for which Thomas will argue in the article. In the next segment of the article, the *sed contra*, Thomas notes a consideration that will support his own position, often citing a text of Scripture or of some important post-scriptural author. In the body of the article (the *corpus*, abbreviated as "c"), Thomas argues for his position on the point at hand. The article concludes with responses to the opening objections (abbreviated as "ad"); these responses are made in the light of Thomas's teaching in the corpus. In citing an article, the part of the article must also be indicated. Hence, "III 73, 1 ob 1" refers to the first objection of the first article of the Tertia Pars, question 73; "III 73, 1 ad 1", to the response to that objection; and, "III 73 1c", to the corpus of that article. In this essay, I have employed the edition of the *Summa theologiae* prepared by the members of the Medieval Institute in Ottawa (Ottawa: Piana, 1953). All translations in the text are my own.

- 15 "Transubstantiation" is introduced at *ST* III 75, 4c.
- 16 For the insistence on divine power, see, e.g., *ST* III 75, 2 ad 1; 75, 4c; 75, 7c; 77, 1c; 78, 5c.
- 17 Thomas speaks of the granting of grace through the eucharist in *ST* III 79, 1c, and, 1 ad 1, of the increase of charity in those who eat correctly in III 79, 1 ad 2 and 79, 8c, and of the delight that eucharistic reception can bring in III 79, 1c and 8c.
- 18 For the stress on the need for correct disposition even in this question, see *ST* III 79, 3c, and 6 ad 1.
- 19 See, for example, the discussion in *ST* III 80, 1c.
- 20 The point is made in, e.g., *ST* III 80, 4c.
- 21 Thomas asks, for example, whether Christ received his own body at the Last Supper (a.1), and whether if a consecrated host from the Last Supper had been reserved, the Christ there present would have died on Good Friday (a.4).
- 22 On the instrumental power of the priest, see *ST* III 82, 1 ad 1.
- 23 The following list makes no claim of exhaustiveness regarding Thomas's attempts to differentiate this sacrament from the others of the Christian religion: *ST* III 73, 1 ads 1-3; 73, 3c; 73, 3 ad 3; 74, 2 ad 3; 74, 4 ad 4; 74, 6 ad 2; 75, 2 ad 2; 78, 1 ad 3; 78, 1c; 79, 3 ad 2; 79, 5 ad 1; 80, 1 ad 1; 82, 4 ad 2; 82, 6 ad 2.
- 24 The point is made in *ST* III 78, 1 ad 2.
- 25 For Thomas's further reflections about the relations of philosophy and sacred doctrine and the critical appropriation of philosophy by the practitioners of sacred doctrine, see *ST* I 1, 5 ad 2; 6 ad 2; and, 8c.
- 26 Even a casual perusal of the treatise would make clear that the New Testament accounts of institution constitute the starting-point and ground of all of his reflections. See, e.g., the discussion of the sacramental forms in *ST* III 78, 2 and 3.
- 27 His most comprehensive, although not only, effort to relate the eucharist to its Old Testament figures comes in *ST* III 73, 6.
- 28 Such are quoted, as a rule, in the *sed contra*: see, e.g., *ST* III 74, 3 *sed contra*, where Jesus' reference to himself as a "grain of wheat" is cited in justification of the use of wheaten bread in the sacrament; III 74, 5 *sed contra*, where the plausibility of the use of wine of the grape is related to Jesus' self-description as the "true wine"; and, III 78, 5 *sed contra*, where as the prelude to his own argument in the corpus for the truth of the eucharistic formulae, he recalls that the one who first proclaimed these words is the Truth.
- 29 This is especially the case when Thomas seeks the meaning and wisdom of the present dispensation, one of the "scholastic tasks" to be enumerated below in the text.
- 30 See, e.g., how Thomas handles some sayings by Augustine that had figured in the arguments of those such as Berengar who had denied real presence; see *ST* III 75, 1 ads 1-2.

- 31 See in general *ST* III 83, 5. The points in the text are enumerated in the corpus of that article; its twelve responses tend to focus on one or another of these aspects.
- 32 Thomas refers to an oral tradition extending back to the apostles at *ST* III 83, 4 ad 2; see as well III 78, 3 ad 9. Elsewhere, Thomas will refer to the statutes of the church. In most regards, these differ in no respect from the "institution by Christ and the apostles". However, later, in the discussion of the frequency of reception according to Thomas, I shall note at least one place where the statutes of the church do differ from those of Christ.
- 33 For a fine discussion of Thomas's notion of tradition, see E. Ménard, *La tradition: révélation, écriture, église selon saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Bruges: Desclee, 1964); Ménard cites all the references to oral apostolic tradition in Aquinas.
- 34 The full three-fold formula appears, e.g., at *ST* III 73, 6c; it had already figured, in part at least, in *ST* III 73, 1 ad 3.
- 35 The *res et sacramentum* is so designated in *ST* III 73, 5 ad 2.
- 36 See, e.g., *ST* III 73, 3c, in the discussion of the necessity of this sacrament.
- 37 This relation between the sacramental species and the *res tantum* is observed at *ST* III 79, 1c.

Thomas knows and employs in the discussion of the eucharist other conceptual tools developed by earlier scholastics. He can refer to *ex voto* reception, reception "by desire", in *ST* III 73, 3c and III 80, 1 ad 3; this is the way that those who desire Christ but are prevented from receiving physically attain the *res tantum*. He also speaks of "concomitance", especially in III 76. The substance of Christ's body becomes present as the term of the eucharistic conversion. But Christ is more than body; the *totus Christus* involves not only body, but soul and divinity (and the accidents of body). The latter too become present in the eucharist, not as the term of the conversion, but "concomitantly". What is joined in reality remains joined in the eucharistic Christ. As in III 80, 12, the teaching on concomitance can also be useful in permitting the withholding of the chalice from the laity; they suffer no loss because by the consecration of the bread, the blood of Christ becomes present as well, concomitantly. In turn, in the consecration of the wine, the blood becomes present directly as the term of the conversion; the body, as well as the soul and the divinity, becomes presently anew, concomitantly. The notion of a "substantial presence" will be examined more closely in the text.

38 See in this regard *ST* III 75, 2c.

39 See *ST* III 75, 4c; throughout this question, Thomas is insistent on tying the question of presence to the institution at the Last Supper. It is interesting to observe that Thomas does not advocate transubstantiation on the basis of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), as if the church at that council had determined for this theory of change. Lateran IV does refer to a "transubstantiating". However, in the twelfth and thirteenth

centuries, "transubstantiation" could refer not only to "transubstantiation the theory" but to the eucharistic change in a vague sense. In the latter regard, twelfth-century advocates of annihilation or consubstantiation (see below in the text) could also speak of "transubstantiation". The notion that Lateran IV affirmed the theory of transubstantiation is post-Thomas. See James McCue, "The Doctrine of Transubstantiation from Berengar through Trent: The Point at Issue," *Harvard Theological Review*, 61 (1968) 385-430.

- 40 Thomas refers to the theory of annihilation in *ST* III 75, 3, the theory of consubstantiation in III 75, 2.
- 41 For Thomas's full rejection of consubstantiation as a reading of "This is my body", see *ST* III 78, 5, which is devoted to the examination of the truth of the sacramental formulae. Here, Thomas discusses meaning in terms of complete utterance. Hence, "This is my body" signifies only at the end of phrase; and, since with the completion of the utterance God has worked the eucharistic conversion, the "This" cannot refer to the substance of the bread. Yet, at the moment of the articulation of the "this", Christ is not yet present. Thus Thomas's final reading is that the "this" is in fact a demonstrative pronoun which does point to substance, but not to the specific substance of the bread (because only the complete utterance has meaning and designates the state of affairs at the term of the conversion, when the substance of bread has passed into that of Christ's body), nor to the substance of Christ's body, which does become present at the end of the utterance but is not present when the word "This" is said. Instead, the "This" denotes, in the language of III 78, 5c, "substance in common": there is a substance at the starting-point of the conversion and of the utterance; there is a substance (albeit a different one) at the end.
- 42 Thomas responds to this query in *ST* III 75, 1 ad 3.
- 43 See *ST* III 76, 1 ad 3.
- 44 Thomas considers the question in dealing with the oath of 1059 to which Berengar was forced to subscribe; see *ST* III 77, 7 ad 3.
- 45 The phrase appears, e.g., in *ST* III 76, 1 ad 3.
- 46 With absolutely no claim to exhaustiveness, the following may be cited: *ST* III 73, 5c, where he notes three reasons why the institution of the sacrament at the Last Supper was fittingly done; 74, 1c, where he offers four reasons why the use of bread and wine, rather than some other food, is best; 74, 4c, where he cites good reasons for the use of leavened and unleavened bread in the sacrament; 74, 5c, where three reasons for the use of wine of grape are examined; 74, 6c, where he lists three reasons why Christ should be really present in the eucharist; 75, 5c, in which he explains, on three grounds, why it was best that the accidents of the bread and wine not be changed into the accidents of Christ's body and blood; 76, 2 ad 1, where he advances three reasons why the wine should be consecrated even though Christ's blood is already present by concomitance after the consecration of the bread; and, 78, 3c, where

Thomas notes three reasons why the form for the consecration of the wine is appropriate.

- 47 See *ST* III 74, 1c. But Thomas notes that since bread and wine are the most common food, it is most likely that Christ used them at the Last Supper in instituting this sacrament; and, of course, Christ's pattern should be followed.
- 48 However, given his rejection of consubstantiation, Thomas cannot draw an exact parallel between incarnation and eucharistic presence. The closest that he can come is in *ST* III 79, 1c, where he likens *our reception* of the eucharistically-present Christ for our spiritual benefit to the incarnation.
- 49 See *ST* III 73, 3c.
- 50 Thomas locates the eucharist in the spiritual journey in the opening article of the treatise; see *ST* III 73, 1c. The name "viaticum" is justified in III 73, 4c. For the notion of the eucharist as foretaste of the beatific vision, see III 79, 2c; see as well III 76, 7c.
- 51 Thomas, in fact, is conscious of one major departure from earlier Christianity. There has been a regrettable loss of fervor among Christians over time; instead of frequent reception, people receive Christ less and less. In this light, it has been necessary for the Church (at Lateran IV) to legislate that Christians receive at least once a year. See *ST* III 80, 10 ad 5. In the historiography, this statute of Lateran IV has received alternate interpretation, as if the church were trying to inculcate in Christians the belief that less frequent is preferable to more frequent reception. In Thomas, at least, the statute instead tries to make the best of a bad situation, attempting to stem the decline in fervor.
- 52 Thomas discusses the eucharistic sacrifice at various points in the treatise. See, e.g., *ST* III 79, 5 and 7; 82, 4c; and, 83, 1.
- 53 Thomas discusses Hebrews 10 in *ST* III 83, 1 ob 1 and ad 1.
- 54 See *ST* III I, 2 ad 3, where Thomas refers to the increase in our knowledge of God through the Son's incarnation and death. The *corpus* of this article contemplates, among other things, the love that God has shown for people, a love that should elicit our own.
- 55 For the claim that the personal morality of the officiating priest has no effect on real presence, see, e.g., *ST* III 82, 5c.
- 56 Thomas refers to the need for correct spiritual disposition on the part of recipients in *ST* III 79, 3c and 80, 1c.
- 57 The point is made in *ST* III 80, 4c.
- 58 The following comments in the text summarize *ST* III 80, 10 ad 3.
- 59 S. Pfürtnner, *Luther and Thomas on Salvation* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964).
- 60 The treatise on hope covers *ST* II-II 17-22.
- 61 For an overview of Luther's teaching on the eucharist, see Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, translated by R.C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966) ch. 27; Egil Grislis, "The Manner of Christ's Eucharistic Presence according to Martin Luther," *Consensus: a Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology* 7 (1981) 3-15, describes Luther's

developing ideas about the mode of Christ's presence in the sacrament; Denis Janz, *Luther on Thomas Aquinas*, 46–50, has organized Luther's comments about Thomas's teaching about the eucharist.

For Thomas's discussion of private masses, see, e.g., *ST* III 83, 5 ad 12; he touches on devotion to the consecrated host in III 75, 2c and mentions the reservation of hosts in III 83, 5 ad 11.

62 Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985).

63 See pp. 96–97.

64 Thomas in fact opens the *Summa* with the observation that God has called people to a transcendent end; see I 1, 1c. See as well the comments about divine goodness in I 22, 1c (on God's providence), and, I 23, 1c (on the part of providence called "predestination").

65 See the prefatory comments at the beginning of *ST* I 2, and, at the beginning of the *Tertia Pars*.

66 See, e.g., *ST* III 73, 5c.

67 Thomas re-interprets the *facientibus quod in se est* in the treatise on grace, *ST* I–II 112, 2–3. For a recent argument that even the affirmation of "merit" (a good work that is deserving of reward from God) can be employed by Thomas to proclaim the sovereignty of God, see my "On the Purpose of 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas," *Medieval Philosophy & Theology*, 2 (1992) 97–116.