

The *Adoro Te Devote* of St. Thomas Aquinas

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The *Adoro te devote* is perhaps the most well-beloved Eucharistic hymn of our time, popularly attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, the medieval Dominican friar known for his theological treatises as well as his Eucharistic hymnography. Unlike most of Aquinas's work, the poem reveals the intensely personal side of his faith. Rich in theological content and inspiring deep Eucharistic devotion, this poem amply repays a closer investigation. We will look first at the questions of authorship, background, and structure before moving on to a discussion of the text itself.

The “Disputed Question” of Authorship

While the *Adoro te* has traditionally been attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, the Thomistic authorship of the text was contested in the twentieth century, with two main objections being raised. The first claims that the content of the poem contradicts Thomas's own teachings and cannot have flowed from the same pen. The second objection is historical, claiming that a lack of evidence makes Thomistic authorship improbable.

The first objection, claiming that the content of the poem is irreconcilable with Thomistic authorship, takes objection to a line in the poem which seems to claim that sense perception is unreliable and inaccurate, at least with regard to the Eucharist. The text of the *Adoro te* uses the word *fallitur* (deceived) with reference to the senses: “Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur”—“Sight, touch, taste in you are *deceived*.” Some scholars have claimed that this line contradicts the teaching of Aquinas that the senses are

infallible in regard to their proper sensibles.¹ Robert Wielockx addresses this charge in his study of the *Adoro te*, arguing that “the text does not contradict the continuous teaching of Thomas according to which the senses are not wrong when they judge their proper object, which as far as the Eucharist is concerned, is only the sacramental species.”² The substantial presence of Christ in the Eucharist is a mystery which is not knowable by the senses, and as Paul Murray, O.P., observes: “That’s surely the point St. Thomas is making.”³ However, the Thomistic insistence that all knowledge comes through our senses is not missing even here. While sight, touch, and taste fall short of comprehending the truth before them, the *Adoro te* itself proclaims that it is another sense—hearing—which reveals the mystery: “sed auditu solo tute creditur”—“but by hearing alone it is safely believed.”⁴

Thus there is no solid objection to Thomistic authorship based on the poem’s content. But what about the historical evidence? Dom André Wilmart published a comprehensive study of the manuscript tradition in 1929. Noting that there were no extant copies of the text dating to Aquinas’s lifetime and that the biography of Aquinas written by his own Dominican confrere and contemporary, William of Tocco, made no mention of the *Adoro te*, he considered it most probable that the poem was authored at a later date and ascribed to Aquinas.⁵

However, Dom Wilmart did not know that he was not working with William of Tocco’s final version of his work. The publication of a critical edition of William of Tocco’s *Ystoria Sancti Thome de Aquino* in 1996 demonstrated that Tocco published his work in four successive redactions. The fourth and final version of his text (unknown to Dom Wilmart) was finished just before his death in 1323, and in this final version, Tocco includes the text of the *Adoro te*, attributing its authorship to St. Thomas.⁶

¹ Paul Murray, O.P., *Aquinas at Prayer: The Bible, Mysticism and Poetry* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 242.

² Robert Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology in the Adoro Te Deuote: Thomas Aquinas on the Eucharist and Christ’s Uniqueness,” in *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans: Representations of Christ in the Texts and Images of the Order of Preachers*, ed. Kent Emery and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 157–74, at 158.

³ Murray, *Aquinas at Prayer*, 243.

⁴ Jan-Heiner Tück, *A Gift of Presence: The Theology and Poetry of the Eucharist in Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Scott G. Hefelfinger (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 230.

⁵ F. J. Raby, “The Date and Authorship of the Poem Adoro Te Deuote,” *Speculum* 20, no. 2 (1945): 236–38, at 236.

⁶ Enrique Alarcon, “Advances in Our Historical Knowledge about Thomas Aquinas,”

Furthermore, Wielockx published a study of the *Adoro te* in 1998; his investigation of the manuscript tradition found that, of fifty-one sources, forty-four explicitly cite St. Thomas as their author. The remaining sources simply lacked any attribution. We may thus conclude with Wielockx: “External evidence, which must be given priority in sound criticism, wholly favors Thomas Aquinas’s authorship of the poem.”⁷

Background

With the attribution of the poem to St. Thomas Aquinas on secure footing, we now move to the background of the poem. Unlike Aquinas’s Eucharistic hymns such as the *Pange Lingua* or the sequence *Lauda Sion*, the *Adoro te* was originally composed as a prayer for private devotion and was not intended to be used as a liturgical text.⁸ This circumstance is perhaps what allows the personal and intimate nature of the text to shine through.⁹ The most telling indicator is the *Adoro te*’s unique use of the first person. It begins with the phrase “I adore you devoutly,” and this intimate, personal, explicitly first-person character runs through the entire poem. Over and over we find such phrases as “I believe,” “I confess,” and “I beg.” As perhaps another sign of the poem’s personal nature, the only two named persons in the poem are Jesus and Thomas.¹⁰ The Thomas referred to is the apostle, but it is nonetheless significant that it is Aquinas’s own shared name.

Wielockx suggests that Aquinas originally used the poem as a private prayer which he would recite to himself at his second Mass of the day, the one he attended after he had celebrated his own. We know from other sources that Aquinas had the practice of reciting the second half of the *Te Deum* during the canon of the Mass. Wielockx believes that Aquinas may have used his *Adoro te devote* to replace the first half of the *Te Deum* with a text more explicitly Eucharistic and Christocentric, before resuming the *Te Deum* at the phrase “Tu rex gloriae Christe”—“You, Christ, are the king of glory.”¹¹

Thomism Today 39, no. 2 (2006): 371–99, at 373 (also available at dadun.unav.edu/bitstream/10171/16166/1/4.ALARCON.pdf [space included]).

⁷ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 157. Wielockx also notes that the best and oldest manuscripts originate around Naples. The convent in Naples had a number of connections to St. Thomas and held his personal effects after his death.

⁸ Murray, *Aquinas at Prayer*, 245. Murray notes that, in the manuscript tradition, the text is not found set to music until the seventeenth century (241).

⁹ As observed by Murray, *Aquinas at Prayer*, 241.

¹⁰ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 162.

¹¹ Robert Wielockx, “La preghiera eucaristica di s.Tommaso: analisi testuale e testimonianza storica (Atti del convegno: l’anima eucaristica di san Tommaso d’Aquino

Critical Text and Structure of the Poem

Wielockx's detailed research into the manuscript tradition has allowed him to publish a critical text of the poem, found below in full in the appendix, alongside which I have provided a literal translation. While Wielockx's critical text proposes a number of changes to the traditionally known text of the poem, the majority are substitutes of synonyms with little or no real change in meaning. The first significant difference in the critical text is found in the first line. Traditionally, we know the first line as "Adoro te devote, latens Deitas." However, the first line originally read, "Adoro te devote, latens *veritas*."¹² Translated, this changes the first line from "I adore you devoutly, hiding Divinity" to "hiding *truth*." The second difference concerns a change not of wording, but of arrangement. Wielockx's research reveals that the original form of the poem consisted simply of fourteen two-line couplets or distichs, rather than the seven verses of four lines each with which we are familiar today.¹³

The fourteen distichs are composed of two lines each, where each line can be subdivided into two phrases. The first is always six syllables, while the second is five. The first line is the one notable exception, beginning with a seven-syllable phrase.¹⁴ Wielockx has observed that the rhyme scheme of the poem divides it neatly into two sections. The first half of the poem (lines 1–14) has rhymes which end in consonants. The second half (lines 15–28) has rhymes which end in vowels.¹⁵ This clear shift in rhyme schemes can be interpreted as reflecting an overall change in focus of the poem, where the first half of the poem is a prayer of contemplative adoration, while the second half is a prayer of earnest petition.¹⁶

[Conference proceedings: the Eucharistic soul of Saint Thomas Aquinas]]," *Frontiere: Rivista di filosofia e teologia* 7 (January–December 2011): 333–37; cited in Murray, *Aquinas at Prayer*, 241.

¹² Wielockx, "Poetry and Theology," 172.

¹³ Wielockx, "Poetry and Theology," 157.

¹⁴ Henk J. Schoot, "Eucharistic Transformation: Thomas Aquinas' Adoro Te Devote," *Perichoresis* 14, no. 2 (2016): 67–79, at 69. Interestingly, as Schoot notes earlier (68n1), in other published research, Wielockx has proposed as a variant for this first half-line "Te devote laudo" instead of "Adoro te devote." This phrase is six syllables, like the rest of the poem, and would make the first line consistent with the rest of the text. This has been followed by The Aquinas Institute, which gives the first line as "Te devote laudo, latens veritas" in the text published online (aquinas.cc/la/en/~Adoro.3).

¹⁵ Wielockx, "Poetry and Theology," 158.

¹⁶ Murray, *Aquinas at Prayer*, 252; Schoot, "Eucharistic Transformation," 70.

Contemplative Adoration: The First Half of the Text

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | Adoro te devote, latens veritas, | I adore you devoutly, hiding truth, |
| 2 | te quae sub his formis vere latitas. | You who under these figures are truly hidden. |
| | | |
| 9 | In cruce latebat sola deitas | In the Cross, only the Divinity was hidden, |
| 10 | sed hic latet simul et humanitas. ¹⁷ | But here, humanity lies hidden too. |

The first half of the poem opens with two lines with an end rhyme of *-itas*, matching lines 9–10 which share this same end rhyme. Wielockx proposes that these two couplets are meant to form a sort of bracket or frame around the lines contained within, lines 3–8.¹⁸ Each of the bracketing distichs refers to the hiddenness of God,¹⁹ while the distichs included within the bracketing verses refer to the insufficiency of our natural powers unaided to perceive the mystery, followed by a great declaration of faith.²⁰ In the pair of bracketing distichs, forms of the word “hidden” or “hiding” are repeated four times, once in each line (*latens, latitas, latebat, latet*).²¹ This emphasis on the hiddenness of God in this sacrament brings out more clearly the message of the lines contained within: because God is hidden from our senses, it is only by faith that we can know his presence.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | Tibi se cor meum totum subicit,
quia te contemplant totum deficit. | To you my whole heart subjects itself,
Because contemplating you, it wholly falls short. |
| 5 | Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur,
sed auditu solo tute creditur. | Sight, touch, taste in you are deceived,
But by hearing alone it is safely believed. |
| 7 | Credo quicquid dixit dei filius,
nihil veritatis verbo verius | I believe whatsoever the Son of God has said,
Nothing is truer than this word of truth. |

These six lines (3–8) comprise the framed section set off by lines 1–2 and 9–10. In lines 3–4, Thomas seems to be indicating that, in contemplating this mystery, the higher powers of our faculties “totum deficit”—wholly fail or fall short.²² Then, in line 5, he emphasizes that our sense powers of sight, touch and taste by which we perceive reality in ordinary circumstances are

¹⁷ Latin text as given by Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 172 (trans. mine). The poem is given in full in the appendix.

¹⁸ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 159.

¹⁹ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 161.

²⁰ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 164.

²¹ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 161.

²² Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 164.

here unable to see beyond the sacramental accidents: “in te fallitur”—“in you [each] is deceived.”²³ But, by hearing the words of Christ, this mystery may be “safely believed,” because Christ speaks as the Son of God, Truth himself, and Thomas knows that “nothing is truer than this word of truth.” Thus, Thomas emphasizes that it is by faith that man attains to the highest truth, supernatural truth which is beyond our natural capacity to know.

- 11 Ambo vere credens atque confitens, Truly believing and confessing both,
peto quod petivit latro paenitens. I ask what the repenting thief asked.

The “both” (*ambo*) which Aquinas believes and confesses in this distich are the humanity and divinity of Christ in the Eucharist, the subject of the distich which precedes it, lines 9–10. In that second framing distich, Aquinas links the Eucharist to the Cross, but notes a difference. On the Cross, Jesus’s humanity was clearly visible; only his Godhead remained hidden. But in the Eucharist, the entire Jesus is hidden—both his humanity and his divinity hide under forms of bread and wine. In this distich, he draws a parallel of personal faith, comparing his response to the Eucharist to the response of the good thief to Jesus on the Cross. St. Thomas says that, “truly believing and confessing both, I ask what the repenting thief asked.” What did the repenting thief ask? According to the Gospel, he begged, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:42–3).²⁴ In the Office for Corpus Christi which St. Thomas was tasked with composing, he refers to the Eucharist as a “pledge of future glory,”²⁵ and in the *Summa theologiae*, he writes that “it belongs to this sacrament to cause the attaining of eternal life.”²⁶ When Thomas begs for what the good thief requested, it is the Eucharist itself which the Lord gives as pledge and promise in reply. Like his presence in the sacrament, the promise is more hidden, but it is no less real or efficacious.

- 13 Plagas sicut Thomas non intueor, Wounds, as Thomas, I do not see,
deum tamen meum te confiteor. Still I confess you as my God.

²³ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 164.

²⁴ Unless otherwise noted, scriptural quotations are from the New American Bible Revised Edition. The Douay-Rheims is also used to provide translations when the Vulgate is referenced, and these are noted in the text.

²⁵ From the *Magnificat* antiphon “O Sacrum Convivium” of the Office of Corpus Christi.

²⁶ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 79, a. 2, resp.

After comparing himself to a Gospel figure present at the crucifixion, Aquinas turns to another Gospel figure, this time a witness to the Resurrection. Here too, faith asks more from us than it did from “doubting Thomas,” the apostle who refused to believe until he had seen the Lord with his own eyes. While Thomas the apostle was shown the wounds of Christ and then believed, Thomas Aquinas proclaims the Eucharistic Lord as his God without seeing Jesus at all. The obvious reference here is to the Lord’s words in John 20:9: “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” Aquinas claims this blessing by professing his faith in the Lord and God he cannot see, concluding the first section of the poem.

Earnest Petition: The Second Half of the Text

The structure of the second half of the poem mirrors that of the first, according to Wielockx. Noting that lines 15–16, 19–20, and 23–24 all end in the rhyme of *-ere*, he sees here another set of inclusios, this time framing off lines 17–18 and 21–22.²⁷ The two distichs contained within each refer to one of the Eucharistic species—the first refers to the living bread, and the second refers to the blood of the pelican.²⁸ The poem concludes with a pair of distichs expressing a thirsting desire to see the Lord face to face in glory.

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 15 | Fac me tibi semper magis credere,
in te spem habere, te diligere. | Make me always more to believe you,
To hope in you, to love you. |
|----|--|---|

Immediately we note the change of tone, as this distich shifts from contemplation and adoration to petition, begging for an increase in the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. In praying for these gifts, the petition ties together the two halves of the poem, drawing up the thread of contemplated faith in the first section and shifting into a more petitionary focus. In the first half of the poem, faith is described as coming from what is heard: “sed auditu solo tute creditur”—“but by hearing alone it may safely be believed.”²⁹ This echoes the words of St. Paul: “Faith therefore comes by hearing; and that which is heard, through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). Commenting on this verse, St. Thomas writes: “Two things are required for faith: one is the inclining of the heart to believe; and this does not come from hearing, but from the gift of grace; the other is a decision about what

²⁷ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 159.

²⁸ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 164.

²⁹ Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 165.

to believe, and this comes from hearing.”³⁰ If hearing comes in line 6, then this “decision” of complete and total assent immediately follows in line 7: “Credo quicquid dixit dei filius”—“I believe whatsoever the Son of God has said.” Now here, recognizing that the “inclining of the heart to believe” is something which can only be received, a “gift of grace,” Thomas asks for an increase of faith, as well as an increase of hope and charity.

The growth in virtue is a proper effect of the reception of the Eucharist, according to St. Thomas. The proper effects of each sacrament correspond to the signification of the matter of that sacrament. The sacramental matter of bread and wine signifies nourishment and growth; however, while in regular human eating and drinking, the body changes the food into itself, the Eucharist, “is not converted into the one eating it, but converts him to itself. And this is why the proper effect of this sacrament is a man’s conversion into Christ. . . . And for this two effects follow: increase of spiritual quantity in the increase of virtues, and restoration of what has been lost in the remission of venial sins, or the reparation of any previous defects.”³¹ Foremost among the virtues increased by this sacrament is charity, since it is proper to this virtue “for the lover to be transformed into the beloved.”³²

- 17 O memoriale mortis domini, O memorial of the death of the Lord,
panis vivus vitam praestans homini. Living bread granting life to men.

It is here in the memorial of the death of our Lord that we receive “panis vivus”—“living bread.” In one sense, the bread is living because it is the living flesh of Jesus Christ. But it goes further and deeper than this. “Living” is an attribute which is predicated primarily of God and only analogously of creatures (including Christ’s created humanity), because it refers to what God is in his essence.³³ We participate in an analogous way, imperfectly, and it is only through him as source that we receive life. Life himself is contained under these appearances of bread, and so, more than simply *being* living, this bread also *causes* living—it is truly the living bread which grants life to men, because the fullest participation in the life of God comes through supernatural grace, received in this sacrament.

³⁰ Aquinas, *Super Rom* 10, lec. 2.

³¹ Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 12, q. 2, a. 1, qa. 1, resp.

³² Aquinas, *In IV sent.*, d. 12, q. 2, a. 1, qa. 1, ad 3.

³³ See *ST I*, q. 13, aa. 5–6, for Aquinas’s discussion of divine attributes and their analogous predication of creatures.

- 19 Praesta mihi semper de te vivere, Grant to me always to live by you,
et te mihi semper dulce sapere. And always to taste you by your sweetness.

Unlike the *inclusio* of the first half of the poem, the framing section of the second half has not two, but three framing distichs, with this distich acting to separate the two distichs which are framed off. In this middle distich, Thomas prays: “Grant to me always to live by you, / And always to taste you by your sweetness.” *Sapere* (“to taste”) comes from the same root as *sapientia*, wisdom. It refers to an experiential knowing—an understanding that comes from taste, from sense. While it is “by your sweetness” that he asks to taste the Lord, the emphasis nonetheless is on tasting *te*, “you,” the Lord.

Aquinas’s use of the phrase “te mihi semper” (“you to me always”) appears to be alluding to the prophet Hosea, where the same uncommon phrase “te mihi” (“you to me”) is repeated three times, in connection with a derivative of the adverb *semper*, meaning “forever.”³⁴ There, the Lord promises Israel: “And I will espouse thee to me for ever [te mihi in sempiternum]: and I will espouse thee to me [te mihi] in justice, and judgment, and in mercy, and in commiserations. And I will espouse thee to me [te mihi] in faith: and thou shalt know that I am the Lord” (Hos 2:19–20; Douay-Rheims).³⁵ The spousal imagery of this passage with promises of the Lord’s faithfulness and mercy are richly fulfilled in the Eucharist, which is itself a foretaste and promise of an even deeper union with God in the beatific vision of heaven.

- 21 Pie pellicane, Iesu domine, Faithful Pelican, O Lord Jesus,
me immundum munda tuo sanguine. Cleanse my uncleanness by your blood.

According to ancient legend, if a pelican was unable to feed its young, it would pierce its breast with its beak and literally pour itself out, dying to save its offspring by nourishing it with its lifeblood. While we know today that this is not factually accurate, the legend is nonetheless a beautiful image of what Christ has truly done for us. Thomas prays to the Lord as the “Faithful Pelican”—the adjective could also be translated as “holy,” “loving,” “pious,” or “dutiful,” all evoking the image of the mother pelican lovingly and faithfully fulfilling her duty to her offspring even to the point of death, with overtones of fidelity not only to family, but also to God in piety and holiness.

³⁴ This allusion to Hosea has been noted by Wielockx, “Poetry and Theology,” 167, and Murray, *Aquinas at Prayer*, 254.

³⁵ Hos 2:19–20 in the Vulgate: “Et sponsabo te mihi in sempiternum; et sponsabo te mihi in iustitia, et iudicio, et in misericordia, et miserationibus. et sponsabo te mihi in fide; et scies quia ego Dominus.”

The precious blood of Jesus, the mystical pelican, nourishes the thirsting souls of those who partake of this sacrament. But what Aquinas draws attention to in this distich is its cleansing power, begging the Lord to “cleanse my uncleanness” with his blood. This thought is completed in the next distich, which is also the final framing distich of the second half.

- 23 Cuius una stilla saluum facere, One drop of which is able to save,
totum mundum posset omni scelere. The whole world from all sin.

The blood which Christ pours out for us is so precious that even “one drop” has the power to save not just one sinner, but the whole world (lines 23–24). This idea is taken from a quote which Aquinas elsewhere attributes to St. Bernard: “The smallest drop of Christ’s blood would have been enough to have redeemed all humankind.”³⁶ St. Thomas cites this quote as his authority in the *sed contra* of an article in a *Quodlibet* on Christ which asks whether any suffering on the part of Christ would have been enough to save us if he had not also died. He explains that Christ’s dignity of person was so infinitely great that any suffering on his part would have been more than sufficient as a price for our redemption. Christ’s death remained necessary nonetheless because God had deputed that human salvation should come through death, for three reasons. First, so as not only to match the price with infinite satisfaction, but to match in kind: death ransomed by death. Second, to give us an example that we might not be afraid to suffer even death for the sake of Christ. Finally, so that the death of Christ might be a sacrament of salvation: the power of the death of Christ both signifies and effects our own death to sin and to carnal concupiscence and its affections.³⁷

The reference to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus is placed immediately before the poem’s final petition: to see the Lord face to face in glory. In the beatitudes, we learn that it is the pure in heart who will see God. In line 22, Aquinas prays, “me immundum munda”—“cleanse my uncleanness,” or more literally, “cleanse unclean me.” The verbal allusions that Thomas is making in this set of distichs become more obvious when we look at the Vulgate text of Matt 5:8: “Beati mundo corde: quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt.” The Douay-Rheims translates this verse: “Blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God.” The power of Christ’s blood to cleanse our hearts of the impurity of sin prepares us for the goal of every Christian heart: to see the face of God.

³⁶ As observed by Murray, *Aquinas at Prayer*, 253n41. Aquinas references this quote of St. Bernard’s twice in his works: *In III sent.*, d. 20, a. 3, obj. 4; *Quodlibet* II, q. 1, a. 2.

³⁷ *Quodlibet* II, q. 1, a. 2.

- 25 Iesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio, O Jesus, I gaze on you now concealed,
quando fiet illud quod tam sitio? When will that be, what I thirst for so?
- 27 Ut te revelata cernens facie, That seeing you with face revealed,
visu sim beatus tuae gloriae. I may be blessed in the vision of your glory.

The poem opened with a gaze of adoration on Christ hidden beneath the sacramental forms of bread and wine. In these final two distichs, the gaze of the eyes remains fixed on the sacrament while the gaze of the heart turns upwards, thirsting with longing to see God face to face. St. Thomas's anthropology centers around the rational creature as ordered towards an ultimate end which all men instinctively desire: beatitude, or happiness. But this beatitude, this happiness, cannot be perfectly found in this life on earth, marred by the effects of original sin. Rather, "man's ultimate beatitude consists in the vision of God"³⁸ in heaven. Seeing God as he is will be such a delight to the soul that its joy will overflow into the resurrected body, so that the body, too, will share in the delights of seeing God face to face in love.³⁹

Conclusion

While it is impossible to be certain, it seems most probable that the *Adoro te* was in fact composed by St. Thomas Aquinas, originally as a prayer of private devotion. It is common monastic wisdom that the repetition of the Psalms shapes the monk or nun who prays them, conforming their way of thinking and feeling to the inspired words they chant. In a similar way, whether recited as a prayer or sung as a hymn, in public or in private, with the original text or the slightly modified form that has come down to us, the *Adoro te* has the power to shape the mind and heart of the one who prays it, conforming them to the theological and saving truths it expresses—the real presence of Christ hidden under sacramental forms, the Eucharist as source of grace, making present the sacrifice of Calvary, the cleansing power of this sacrament and its promise of the beatific vision in heaven. St. Thomas writes in the *Summa theologiae* that "the attaining of glory is an effect of this sacrament."⁴⁰ And so, as we pray with the *Adoro te*, "when will that be, what I thirst for so?," longing for the fulfillment of all our desires in the vision of God, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches us that it is through the Eucharist itself that we reach this goal.

³⁸ *In IV sent.*, d. 49, q. 1, a. 2, qa. 3.

³⁹ *ST I-II*, q. 4, aa. 5–6.

⁴⁰ *ST III*, q. 79, a. 2, sc.

Appendix: Critical Text of the *Adoro Te Devote*⁴¹

- | | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | Adoro te devote, latens veritas,
te quae sub his formis vere latitas. | I adore you devoutly, hiding truth,
You who under these figures are truly hidden. |
| | Tibi se cor meum totum subicit,
quia te contemplans totum deficit. | To you my whole heart subjects itself,
Because contemplating you, it wholly falls short. |
| 5 | Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur,
sed auditu solo tute creditur. | Sight, touch, taste in you are deceived,
But by hearing alone it is safely believed. |
| | Credo quicquid dixit dei filius,
nihil Veritatis verbo verius. | I believe whatsoever the Son of God has said,
Nothing is truer than this word of truth. |
| | In cruce latebat sola deitas,
10 sed hic latet simul et humanitas. | In the Cross, only the Divinity was hidden,
But here, humanity lies hidden too. |
| | Ambo vere credens atque confitens,
peto quod petivit latro paenitens. | Truly believing and confessing both,
I ask what the repenting thief asked. |
| | Plagas sicut Thomas non intueor,
deum tamen meum te confiteor. | Wounds, as Thomas, I do not see,
Still I confess you as my God. |
| 15 | Fac me tibi semper magis credere,
in te spem habere, te diligere. | Make me always more to believe you,
To hope in you, to love you. |
| | O memoriale mortis domini,
panis vivus vitam praestans homini. | O memorial of the death of the Lord
Living bread granting life to men: |
| | Praesta mihi semper de te vivere,
20 et te mihi semper dulce sapere. | Grant to me always to live by you,
And always to taste you by your sweetness. |
| | Pie pellicane, Iesu domine, me
immundum munda tuo sanguine. | Faithful Pelican, O Lord Jesus
Cleanse my uncleanness by your blood, |
| | Cuius una stilla salvum facere,
totum mundum posset omni scelere. | One drop of which is able to save
The whole world from all sin. |
| 25 | Iesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,
quando fiet illud quod tam sitio? | O Jesus, I gaze on you now concealed,
When will that be, what I thirst for so? |
| | Ut te revelata cernens facie,
visu sim beatus tuae gloriae. | That seeing you with face revealed,
I may be blessed in the vision of your glory. |

N.V

⁴¹ Latin critical text as given by Wielockx, "Poetry and Theology," 172 (I have standardized spelling by changing some uses of *u* to *v*, some uses of *e* to *ae*, and some uses of *c* to *t*), while the English translation is my own.