

Eucharistic Adoration in the Personal Presence of Christ: Making Explicit the Mystery of Faith by Way of Metaphysical Contemplation¹

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No one eats that flesh without first adoring it. . . Not only do we not commit a sin by adoring it, but we do sin by not adoring it.

—ST. AUGUSTINE²

Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us.

—ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI³

Introduction

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC Church in the United States and elsewhere has in recent years experienced nothing less than quite a remarkable

¹ An earlier version of this essay was presented on May 22, 2008, the eve of the Solemnity of Corpus Christi (according to the Roman liturgical calendar) at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, during the conference “Philosophy and Liturgy: Ritual, Practice, and Embodied Wisdom.” The essay is dedicated to the blessed memory of the heroic witness of St. John of Cologne, O.P. and his Companions.

² Cited by Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter *Mediator Dei* (1947), §130: “[N]emo autem illam carnem manducat, nisi prius adorauerit . . . , et non solum non peccemus adorando, sed peccemus non adorando” (CCL 39, 1385, lines 23–26). This passage from Augustine’s *Ennarationes in Psalmos* 98:9, as famous as it is difficult, has been invoked at least twice by Pope Benedict XVI in the context of encouraging the practice of Eucharistic adoration. First in his address to the Roman Curia on December 22, 2005 (*AAS* 98 [2006], 44–45) and then again in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), §66.

³ *Visite al SS. Sacramento e a Maria Santissima*, Introduction: *Opere Ascetiche*, Avelino 2000, 295, as cited in Pope John Paul II’s 2003 encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §25.

resurgence of devotion to the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament outside of the celebration of the Mass. In this essay, I will, first, attend to the liturgical practice of Eucharistic adoration; second, adumbrate the intentionality inscribed in the liturgical practice itself; and third, undertake a re-reading of the Thomist doctrine of Eucharistic transubstantiation. I intend to submit this doctrine as one profound proposal of a philosophical hermeneutics in the service of theology, a proposal that offers a comprehensive interpretation of the mystery of Christ's lasting, real, substantial and hence personal presence in the reserved Blessed Sacrament. Two introductory caveats are called for.

First, there is a fundamental assumption I will *not* argue for in this article, but simply will presuppose: in the Catholic Church it is an ancient,⁴ venerable, and universally held principle that the Church's living tradition of prayer serves as a genuine guide for her faith⁵ as authentically interpreted by the Church's Magisterium.⁶ Hence, in the following I take the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to be an *authentic* liturgical practice of the Catholic Church and, furthermore, since it has been embraced, affirmed, regulated, and encouraged by the Church's Magisterium, not only to be *licit*, but indeed surpassingly *commendable*. The following consideration is therefore neither apologetic—that is, interested in defending this particular instantiation of the Catholic faith and practice against possible Protestant criticism and likely secular detraction; nor is the following consideration ecumenical in nature—that is, intended to contribute to a possible future consensus on the matter of Eucharistic adoration. Rather, my intention here is strictly *hermeneutical*, roughly along the lines of *fides quaerens intellectum*. Like any other Christian liturgical practice, Eucharistic adoration can and indeed should become the topic of faith seeking understanding. Every person encountering or involved in this liturgical practice might want to ask, what is going on and how does one make explicit its most central implication, Christ's abiding substantial and hence personal presence in the reserved Blessed Sacrament?

⁴ The famous formula “ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi”—later abbreviated into “lex orandi, lex credendi”—is first to be found in the anti-Pelagian “Indiculus” (chapter) that was probably put together by Prosper of Aquitania in Rome some time between 435 and 442. See Denzinger-Hünemann §246 (Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 40th ed., ed. Peter Hünemann [Freiburg: Herder, 2005], 118).

⁵ See Vatican II, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, §10 and §33; in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Volume II (Trent–Vatican II)*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (London: Sheed & Ward; Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 823 and 827.

⁶ See Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* (1947), *AAS* 39 (1947), 540f.

Now, the second caveat. Because Christ's abiding and lasting presence in the Eucharistic elements has been affirmed by the Catholic Church's Magisterium often and in manifold ways, and at the same time has been regarded as integral to the mystery of faith, any theological interpretation of this mystery that draws upon philosophical categories or a comprehensive metaphysics, that is, a comprehensive philosophical interpretation of all that exists, nevertheless remains nothing but a way of making explicit what remains antecedently and inexhaustibly the mystery of faith.⁷ An interpretation of this mystery is, hence, fundamentally different from "making sense" of it along the lines of resolving a philosophical puzzle—an attempt that a genuine mystery of the faith will always and consistently frustrate. Consequently, even the most profound instantiation of making philosophically explicit what the act of faith assents to about the mystery of faith ever makes exhaustive or even indisputable sense of the mystery so that the act of faith might become a redundant add-on. For the intentionality of the liturgical practice, as well as the act of faith entailed in it, *essentially* transcends the scope of making philosophically explicit this mystery of faith.⁸

In the following paragraphs I wish to reconsider one particular tradition of philosophical interpretation that makes explicit Christ's lasting substantial and hence personal presence in the reserved Blessed Sacrament—the Thomistic account. While the majority of contemporary philosophers might disqualify the metaphysical approach taken by the Thomist tradition as simply not being "à jour," hermeneutically re-considered, this philosophical interpretation makes explicit the liturgical practice's most central

⁷ Cf. the explicit emphasis on the mystery of faith in the opening pages of Pope Benedict XVI's post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, §6: "The mystery of faith!" With these words, spoken immediately after the words of consecration, the priest proclaims the mystery being celebrated and expresses his wonder before the substantial change of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, a reality which surpasses all human understanding. The Eucharist is a 'mystery of faith' par excellence: 'the sum and summary of our faith' [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1327]."

⁸ I am drawing here upon a most helpful distinction employed by Gabriel Marcel, Jacques Maritain, and Thomas G. Weinandy: "Maritain states that where there is mystery 'the intellect has to penetrate more and more deeply the *same* object.' The mystery, by the necessity of its subject matter, remains. . . . Many theologians today, having embraced the Enlightenment presupposition and the scientific method that it fostered, approach theological issues as if they were scientific problems to be solved rather than mysteries to be discerned and clarified. However, the true goal of theological inquiry is not the resolution of theological *problems*, but the discernment of what the *mystery* of faith is." Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M. Cap., *Does God Suffer?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 31–32 (emphasis in the original).

implication and at the same time remains invulnerable to the single most frequently raised charge against the liturgical practice itself—namely, that it reflects and promotes a misplaced focus on some kind of “thing-like” presence of Christ and consequently perpetuates a reductive reification, and hence a disconcerting distortion of Christ’s personal Eucharistic presence.

I shall proceed by offering first a brief word on the history of the slow emergence of the practice of Eucharistic adoration in the life of the Catholic Church; second, a rough adumbration of the practice itself together with its intentionality; third, a reconsideration of some central tenets of Aquinas’s metaphysical way of making explicit the substantial presence of Christ presupposed by and entailed in Eucharistic adoration; and fourth, by way of a methodological postscript, an initial consideration of the proper relationship between theology, philosophy, and liturgy.

The Emerging Liturgical Practice of Eucharistic Adoration⁹

While the real presence of Christ in the Eucharistic species has arguably been recognized since apostolic times, and while we find early witnesses to the practice of the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament with the desert fathers and with St. Basil, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament may have begun only in the sixth century in the Cathedral of Lugo, Spain. Certainly, from the eleventh century on, we can observe an increasing prevalence in devotion to the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the tabernacle, and we know that by the twelfth century, St. Thomas Beckett is known to have prayed for King Henry II before the “majesty of the Body of Christ.” The feast of Corpus Christi, instituted by Pope Urban IV in 1264, gathered much of the emerging Eucharistic piety into one feast that gave it focus and expression, and in the fourteenth century, in many monastic communities, the custom emerged to pray the Liturgy of the Hours in front of the exposed Blessed Sacrament.

A new development beyond the feast of Corpus Christi, namely the widespread regular worship by the laity of the Holy Eucharist outside of Mass, arose from the traditional Forty Hours Devotion which originated in the early sixteenth century in Milan, Italy, and was probably a commemoration of the forty hours Christ’s body lay in the tomb between his death and resurrection. In 1592, Pope Clement VII gave formal recognition to the devotion and decreed it to be observed in the churches of Rome. In

⁹ In the following section I rely on the useful works of John A. Hardon, S.J., *The History of Eucharistic Adoration: Development of Doctrine in the Catholic Church* (Oak Lawn, IL: CMJ Marian Publishers, 1997) and of Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R., and James Monti, *In the Presence of Our Lord: The History, Theology, and Psychology of Eucharistic Devotion* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1997).

various stages it spread throughout the Catholic Church: There were Perpetual Eucharistic Associations starting in seventeenth century France and Men's Nocturnal Adoration Societies beginning in Rome in 1810 that both spread internationally. In 1857, the Forty Hours Devotion was first approved for the diocese of Baltimore, and in 1868 it was extended to all the dioceses of the United States. Most recently, the worship of the Holy Eucharist outside of Mass has been reaffirmed in the documents of liturgical reform issued subsequent to Vatican II. Analogous to the development of doctrine, we can witness in the case of Eucharistic adoration the slow, but organic development of a particular liturgical practice. Although the historical development of this practice is much richer and more complicated than the outline I have provided here, what does seem indisputable is the fact that the contemporary liturgical practice of Eucharistic adoration emerged from an early practice of reserving the consecrated elements. From there it developed through various stages into an increasingly widespread liturgical practice in the Catholic Church, a practice¹⁰ that has been repeatedly encouraged and promoted by the Magisterium.¹¹

Explicit Magisterial Confirmation of Eucharistic Adoration

Because an integral component of the ongoing *traditio* of any liturgical practice in the Catholic Church is the way the Church's Magisterium theologically interprets and thus doctrinally confirms the liturgical practice, we would be in error if we were to regard the magisterial interpretation as somehow simply *extrinsic* to a proper understanding of the liturgical practice itself. The single most significant doctrinal confirmation in recent times of Eucharistic adoration was the last encyclical letter of the late Pope John Paul II from 2003, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*. Allow me to indulge in a somewhat longer citation from this encyclical letter as

¹⁰ In the following, I understand "practice" roughly along the lines that Alasdair MacIntyre introduced the concept as being a distinct, describable, and inherently meaningful matrix of actions that are ordered to and regulated by an end that is intrinsic to the practice. I extend this concept analogically to a liturgical rite in order to capture its characteristics as distinct from *poiesis* (where the activity is a means to an end extrinsic to it) and from *theoria* or contemplation (where the activity is one essentially of the intellect alone).

¹¹ In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* from February 22, 2007, Pope Benedict XVI explicitly states: "With the Synod Assembly . . . I heartily recommend to the Church's pastors and to the People of God the practice of eucharistic adoration, both individually and in community" (§67). More recently, on May 7, 2008, when at the end of the general audience Pope Benedict XVI greeted the sisters of the Order of Sisters of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, he renewed his call for Eucharistic adoration (www.zenit.org/article-22517?|=english).

section 25 is utterly essential for an understanding of the doctrinal signpost that any authentic philosophical hermeneutics of Eucharistic adoration will need to respect:

The worship of the Eucharist outside of the Mass is of inestimable value for the life of the Church. This worship is strictly linked to the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The presence of Christ under the sacred species reserved after Mass—a presence which lasts as long as the species of bread and wine remain—derives from the celebration of the sacrifice and is directed toward communion, both sacramental and spiritual. It is the responsibility of Pastors to encourage, also by their personal witness, the practice of Eucharistic adoration, and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in particular, as well as prayer of adoration before Christ present under the Eucharistic species.

It is pleasant to spend time with him, to lie close to his breast like the Beloved Disciple (cf. Jn 13:25) and to feel the infinite love present in his heart. If in our time Christians must be distinguished above all by the ‘art of prayer,’ how can we not feel a renewed need to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament? How often, dear brothers and sisters, have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!

This practice, repeatedly praised and recommended by the Magisterium, is supported by the example of many saints. Particularly outstanding in this regard was Saint Alphonsus Liguori, who wrote: “Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us.” The Eucharist is a priceless treasure: by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass we are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of grace. A Christian community desirous of contemplating the face of Christ in the spirit which I proposed in the Apostolic letters *Novo Millennio Ineunte* and *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* cannot fail also to develop this aspect of Eucharistic worship, which prolongs and increases the fruits of our communion in the body and blood of the Lord.¹²

This whole understanding of Christ’s Eucharistic presence builds upon two further fundamental aspects of the Church’s doctrine. The first pertains to the meaning of the Eucharist itself:

“The Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed” (1 Cor 11:23) instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his body and blood. The words of the Apostle Paul bring us back to the dramatic setting in which the Eucharist was born. The Eucharist is indelibly marked by the event of the Lord’s

¹² Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §25.

passion and death, of which it is not only a reminder but a sacramental re-presentation. It is the sacrifice of the Cross perpetuated down the ages. . . . The Church has received the Eucharist from Christ her Lord not as one gift—however precious—among so many others, but as the gift par excellence, for it is the gift of himself, of his person in his sacred humanity, as well as the gift of his saving work. Nor does it remain confined to the past, since “all that Christ is—all that he did and suffered for all men—participates in the divine eternity, and so transcends all times.” When the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the memorial of her Lord’s death and resurrection, this central event of salvation becomes really present and “the work of our redemption is carried out.”¹³

The second pertains to the particular kind of Christ’s presence under the sacramental species:

Every theological explanation which seeks some understanding of this mystery, in order to be in accord with Catholic faith, must firmly maintain that in objective reality, independently of our mind, the bread and wine have ceased to exist after the consecration, so that the adorable body and blood of the Lord Jesus from that moment on are really before us under the sacramental species of bread and wine.¹⁴

Arguably, the most salient aspect to be made explicit by way of a philosophical hermeneutics of the mystery of the Eucharistic sacrifice and the ensuing Eucharistic adoration is the unique presence of Christ “under the sacramental species of bread and wine.”

An Instance of the Contemporary Practice of the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

In order to get a better sense of what is entailed in this practice, let us turn to one particular contemporary instantiation of it. Very soon after his installation in the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina, Bishop Michael F. Burbidge instituted a “First Friday Vocations Holy Hour” in Sacred Heart Cathedral in Raleigh. Since I have regularly taken part in this holy hour I would like to offer a brief description of this particular instantiation of the liturgical practice of the exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The structure of the liturgical rite is simple and straightforward: exposition, liturgy of the word, Litany of the Holy Eucharist and Lord’s Prayer, benediction, and reposition.

¹³ *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §11.

¹⁴ *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, §15, citing Pope Paul VI’s *Solemn Profession of Faith* from June 30, 1968.

After the entrance procession into the cathedral nave of the bishop and the clergy, the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place. In a solemn act of transferal, the bishop, wearing cope¹⁵ and humeral veil,¹⁶ carries the Blessed Sacrament, also covered by the humeral veil, from the tabernacle to the altar and places it in the monstrance¹⁷ on the altar while the congregation kneels. Then the bishop kneels before the altar. After incense¹⁸ has been placed in the thurible,¹⁹ the bishop incenses the Blessed Sacrament while the congregation sings two stanzas of the hymn “*Verbum Supernum Prodiens*” (“The Word from Heaven Now Proceeding”),²⁰ a hymn composed by Thomas Aquinas for the office of the feast of Corpus Christi.²¹ A period of silent prayer concludes the opening part of the liturgy of exposition.

A communal prayer opens the subsequent liturgy of the word, which includes a first reading from Scripture, the recitation of the responsorial

¹⁵ A cope is an ornate, cloak-like vestment that clergy wear over a white alb and a stole at Benediction and processions.

¹⁶ A humeral veil is a scarf-like liturgical garment about eight or nine feet long and two or three feet wide. It is worn over the shoulders. The presiding minister covers his hands with the ends of the veil so that it, not his hands, touches the monstrance at Benediction or during procession of the Blessed Sacrament.

¹⁷ A monstrance is a sacred vessel used for the exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

¹⁸ Incense is granulated or powdered aromatic resin that, when sprinkled on glowing coals in a thurible (censer), becomes a fragrant cloud of smoke that symbolizes prayer rising to God.

¹⁹ See footnote 18.

²⁰ The two stanzas sung are:

O salutaris Hostia
Quae coeli pandis ostium.
Bella premunt hostilia;
Da robur, fer auxilium.

Uni trinoque Domino
Sit sempiterna gloria:
Qui vitam sine termino,
Nobis donet in patria.
Amen.

O sacrifice for our salvation
Heavenly Gates You open wide.
Our enemies press hard around us.
Give us strength; our help provide.

To the One and Triune God,
Be glory and eternal praise.
May He grant us life forever
And to our home our souls upraise.

The English translation here provided is taken from *The Aquinas Prayer Book: The Prayers and Hymns of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. and ed. Robert Anderson and Johann Moser (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2000), 99.

²¹ See “Officium de Festo Corporis Christi ad mandatum Urbani Papae IV dictum Festum instituentis,” in Thomas Aquinas, *Opuscula Theologica*, vol. 2 (Rome: Marietti, 1954), 275–81; 279.

psalm, and a period of silent prayer and meditation with subsequent Gospel acclamation, Gospel reading, and a homily. An extended period of silent prayer and meditation is concluded by communal intercessions that complete the liturgy of the word.

The following major part of the rite is called the Litany of the Holy Eucharist. It comprises a litany in which Christ is addressed with many attributes that name central aspects of his life, death, and resurrection, and in which he is beseeched with the words “Lord, have mercy,” “Christ, hear us,” and “Christ, graciously hear us.” The litany is concluded with the following prayer:

Most merciful Father,
 You continue to draw us to Yourself
 Through the Eucharistic Mystery.
 Grant us fervent faith in this Sacrament of love,
 in which Christ the Lord Himself is contained, offered and received.
 We make this prayer through the same Christ our Lord.

Then the Lord’s Prayer follows. At its conclusion the bishop approaches the altar, genuflects, and then kneels while the congregation also kneels. As the bishop kneels, the congregation sings two stanzas of the hymn “*Pange, Lingua, Gloriosi*” (Acclaim, My Tongue, This Mystery)²² (also composed by Thomas Aquinas for the office of the feast of Corpus Christi)²³ and the bishop incenses the Blessed Sacrament. After the hymn the bishop rises and offers the following prayer:

²² The two stanzas are:

Tantum ergo Sacramentum	So great a sacrament, therefore,
Veneremur cernui:	Let us revere while kneeling down.
Et antiquum documentum	Let old laws yield
Novo cedat ritui:	To this new rite.
Praestet fides supplementum	Let faith, not sense,
Sensuum defectui.	Conviction ground.
Genitori, Genitoque	Praise and jubilation to the Father
Laus et iubilatio,	Honor, virtue, blessing to the Son;
Salus, honor, virtus quoque	And to the One
Sit et benedictio:	Who proceeds from both
Procedenti ab utroque	In equal measure may praise be sung.
Compar sit laudatio.	
Amen.	

The English translation here provided is taken from *The Aquinas Prayer Book*, 91.

²³ Thomas Aquinas, “Officium de Festo Corporis Christi,” 275f.

Lord Jesus Christ, you gave us the Eucharist as the memorial of your suffering and death. May our worship of this sacrament of your body and blood help us to experience the salvation you won for us and the peace of the kingdom where you live with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

After the prayer the benediction takes place. The bishop puts on the humeral veil, genuflects, covers his hands with the ends of the veil so that, once again, the veil, not his hands, touches the monstrance, then takes it and makes the sign of the cross with the monstrance over the congregation, in silence.

After the benediction the reposition of the Blessed Sacrament takes place. The bishop returns to the front of the altar, kneels, and leads the assembly in the Divine Praises,²⁴ after which he removes the Blessed Sacrament from the monstrance, covers it with the humeral veil, and by way of a solemn transferal from the altar, reposes the sacrament in the tabernacle. The bishop and the clergy bow to the altar and leave the cathedral while the congregation sings the hymn “Holy God, we praise thy name.”²⁵

²⁴ The Divine Praises are as follows:

Blessed be God.
 Blessed be His Holy Name.
 Blessed be Jesus Christ, true God and true man.
 Blessed be the name of Jesus.
 Blessed be His Most Sacred Heart.
 Blessed be His Most Precious Blood.
 Blessed be Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.
 Blessed be the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
 Blessed be the great Mother of God, Mary most holy.
 Blessed be her holy and Immaculate Conception.
 Blessed be her glorious Assumption.
 Blessed be the name of Mary, Virgin and Mother.
 Blessed be Saint Joseph, her most chaste spouse.
 Blessed be God in His angels and in His Saints.

²⁵ This somewhat detailed description of one particular liturgical instantiation of Eucharistic adoration seems to be warranted in light of the fact that even in this ecumenical day and age most non-Catholic Christians are in grave danger of misunderstanding or misconstruing this liturgical practice. John Henry Newman made famous an egregious case of misconstrual in mid-nineteenth century Birmingham, England. In his rightly acclaimed *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England Addressed to the Brothers of the Oratory in the Summer of 1851*, he has made immemorial in the sixth lecture the observations that a “young Protestant Scripture Reader” gathered from attending a single time the liturgy of Eucharistic benediction at the Oratory chapel in Birmingham. Instead of citing the outlandish misconstrual itself—quite worthwhile to read—I will offer Newman’s own brief description of the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. For his account bears

In the course of participating in this particular liturgical rite of Eucharistic adoration for more than a year, I must admit it has become second-nature and is, next to the Eucharistic liturgy itself, undoubtedly the most important communal liturgical practice I am involved in. Over time, it has taught me to appreciate more deeply the Eucharist itself, and in and through it the unfathomable personal presence of Christ in his Eucharistic self-giving by way of his body and blood. Furthermore, the regular participation in this rite of Eucharistic adoration has tangibly increased my desire for sacramental communion and encouraged an ever deeper contemplation of the salvation wrought by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Also, having been drawn ever deeper into the intentionality of

eloquent witness to the organic continuity between one particular form of the liturgical practice of Eucharistic adoration in the 1850s at the Oratory chapel in Birmingham and another, though more elaborate, instantiation of this liturgical practice at the Cathedral of Raleigh, N.C., in the years 2006/07: "I need hardly observe to you, my Brothers, that the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is one of the simplest rites of the Church. The priests enter and kneel down; one of them unlocks the Tabernacle, takes out the Blessed Sacrament, inserts it upright in a Monstrance of precious metal, and sets it in a conspicuous place above the altar, in the midst of lights, for all to see. The people then begin to sing; meanwhile the Priest twice offers incense to the King of heaven, before whom he is kneeling. Then he takes the Monstrance in his hands, and turning to the people, blesses them with the Most Holy, in the form of a cross, while the bell is sounded by one of the attendants to call attention to the ceremony. It is our Lord's solemn benediction of His people, as when He lifted up His hands over the children, or when He blessed His chosen ones whom He ascended up from Mount Olivet. As sons might come before a parent before going to bed at night, so, once or twice a week the great Catholic family comes before the Eternal Father, after the bustle or toil of the day, and He smiles upon them, and sheds upon them the light of His countenance. It is a full accomplishment of what the Priest invoked upon the Israelites, 'The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord show His face to thee and have mercy on thee; the Lord turn his countenance to thee and give thee peace.' Can there be a more touching rite, even in the judgment of those who do not believe in it? How many a man, not a Catholic, is moved on seeing it, to say 'Oh, that I did but believe it!' when he sees the Priest take up the Fount of Mercy, and the people bent low in adoration! It is one of the most beautiful, natural, and soothing actions of the Church—not so, however, in the judgment of our young Protestant Scripture Reader, to whom I now return." John Henry Newman, *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*, ed. Daniel M. O'Connell, S.J. (New York: The America Press, 1942), 195f. If the cryptic reference to the "young Protestant Scripture Reader" does indeed arouse the reader's desire to know what he thought was going on, I can only say: "*Tölle, lege!* Pick it up and read it!" The reader will encounter a rather bizarre instance of anti-Catholic prejudice, not all together untypical for nineteenth century England and, I fear, not completely beyond the range of possibilities even in this ecumenical era.

this liturgical practice, I increasingly realized that it was I who was being re-focused while the liturgy unfolded. Why? Because the intentionality inscribed into the liturgical practice is its utter transparency to Christ's real, substantial, and hence personal presence.

**Three Kinds of Christ's Presence:
By Way of the Divine Essence, by Way of the Mission
of the Holy Spirit, and by Way of Christ's Substantial
Personal Presence, Body, Soul, and Divinity**

The nature of Christ's real, substantial, and personal presence presupposed in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament can be distinguished from two other kinds of presence of Christ, two kinds of presence that indeed are both implicitly entailed in the practice of Eucharistic adoration. However, neither one of these two kinds of presence are definitive of the adoration of the reserved sacrament—though skeptics of and opponents to this kind of liturgical practice would accept at most only these two kinds of presence to obtain in it. However, the liturgical rite of the solemn exposition of the Holy Eucharist has inscribed in the very structure of its intentionality²⁶, its constitutive liturgical gestures and words of adoration—especially the genuflecting, the kneeling, and the particular set of liturgical actions around the solemn exposition and reposition of the Blessed Sacrament, the prayers, and hymns—a quite unique kind of Christ's presence (one that is specifically different from the other two kinds of presence).

There is, first, the general presence of the triune God in all creatures by way of the one divine essence.²⁷ This kind of presence can in principle,

²⁶ While the intentionality of the rite is embedded in its structure, that is, in the words of the prayers and litanies, as well as in all the gestures and liturgical actions from the side of the presiding minister and the congregation, for this intentionality to be properly effective, it depends upon the intentional submission to it by each participant in this liturgy. That is, as—and to the degree to which—the participants, by way of the act of faith, intentionally conform themselves to the liturgical rite, so does the structural intentionality embedded in the rite come into effect. In short, representing the intentionality of the rite in the context of a classroom demonstration in a seminary course on liturgy or in the context of a movie or theater play does not bring per se the structural intentionality embedded in the rite into effect.

²⁷ For a classical formulation and defense of this kind of presence of the Creator in the creature, see Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 8, a. 1: "God is in all things; not, indeed, as part of their essence, nor as an accident; but as an agent is present to that upon which it works. For an agent must be joined to that wherein it acts immediately, and touch it by its power; hence it is proved in *Physic.* vii that the thing moved and the mover must be joined together. Now since God is very being by His own essence, created being must be His proper effect; as to ignite

however rarely *de facto*, be recognized by way of a sustained act of metaphysical contemplation, that is, without an explicit act of faith.²⁸ There is, second, the presence of Christ where two or three are gathered in his name, a presence arguably mediated by the mission of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. This kind of presence is recognized by way of an explicit act of faith, that is, the intellect's assent, prompted through grace by the will, to embrace Christ's promise to be thus present. And, of course, the liturgical practice of the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament includes both of these kinds of presence. For it involves obviously the being and activity of creatures, and it is at the same time quite obviously a gathering of the faithful in Christ's name. However, while undoubtedly essential to this liturgical practice, neither kind of presence is the characteristic and defining feature of Eucharistic adoration. Rather, the structural intentionality embedded in the specifics of the liturgical actions, prayers, and hymns surpasses both kinds of presence. For the intentionality of the liturgical practice in all its components is solely focused by the Blessed Sacrament itself. I shall briefly elaborate this claim. The liturgical gestures, actions, prayers, and hymns indicate two things.

One, divine worship ("before whom every knee shall bend") of the unique personal presence of Christ is essentially connected to his Eucharistic self-gift, a presence that is not limited to or by the liturgy of Eucharistic adoration itself, but antecedes it and continues after its completion (entailed in the sacrament's exposition and reposition). Pope Benedict XVI puts the matter succinctly in *Sacramentum Caritatis*: "In the Eucharist, the Son of God comes to meet us and desires to become one with us; eucharistic adoration is simply the natural consequence of the eucharistic celebration, which is itself the Church's supreme act of adoration. . . . The act of

is the proper effect of fire. Now God causes this effect in things not only when they first begin to be, but as long as they are preserved in being. . . . Therefore as long as a thing has being, God must be present to it, according to its mode of being. But being is innermost in each thing and most fundamentally inherent in all things since it is formal in respect of everything found in a thing. . . . Hence it must be that God is in all things, and innermost." All citations from the *Summa theologiae* (ST) in English are taken from the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, *Summa theologiae* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948). The Latin original offered in the notes is taken from Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Summa theologiae*, 3rd ed. (Turin: Edizioni San Paolo, 1999), which offers an improved version of the Leonine edition.

²⁸ For a defense of such a possibility and the severe limitations of its *de facto* realization, see the discussion in my essay "The Directedness of Reasoning and the Metaphysics of Creation," in Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hütter, eds., *Reason and the Reasons of Faith* (London/New York: T. & T. Clark International, 2005), 160–93.

adoration outside Mass prolongs and intensifies all that takes place during the liturgical celebration itself.”²⁹

Two, the Blessed Sacrament is, indeed, utterly central in this act of worship. For the Blessed Sacrament provides the proximate focus of the liturgical practice. However, “focus” may not be understood along the lines our intellectual gaze usually operates.³⁰ For the liturgical rite does not engender a focused intellectual gaze upon the Eucharistic host as a distinct, integral “object” or “thing” that arrests the intellectual gaze, as any other small, distinctly discernible sensible object at mid-range distance might do. For such an arresting of the intellectual gaze, the Eucharistic host, as we will see later, lacks the necessary substance. Rather, precisely as “the natural consequence of the eucharistic celebration,”³¹ the liturgical practice by way of faith alone produces a transportation of the intellectual gaze beyond the range of what is perceptible to the senses to Christ’s substantive personal presence in his Eucharistic self-gift. The proximate focus of what is accessible to the senses, then, by holding the senses in suspense, directs the intellectual gaze to the substance of the sacrament, that is, the undiminished personal identity of Christ, body, soul, and divinity. However, the very substance of Christ, body, soul, and divinity, does not allow the intellectual gaze to arrest at some distinct point “behind” what is perceptible to the senses, but rather, the intellectual gaze is aided by the assent of faith. This then continues to draw the intellectual gaze further and further into the luminous night of an ineffable and surpassing substantial presence that the intellect, in virtue of the assent of faith, can darkly apprehend but never fully comprehend.

What kind of philosophical hermeneutics is able to make explicit the characteristic feature of this particular kind of divine presence that is definitive of Eucharistic adoration? Eucharistic adoration seems to call for a philosophical interpretation that is able to conceive of the particular kind of presence that is definitive of this liturgical practice as one essentially independent of the liturgical rite of adoration itself; that is, a kind of presence that antecedes and hence gives rise to the liturgical practice and also continues after its conclusion. Moreover, Eucharistic adoration seems to require also a philosophical interpretation that is capable of making explicit the genuine sign-character of the Blessed Sacrament, as well as the

²⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, §66.

³⁰ For an astute phenomenological analysis of the intellectual gaze, for which I have great sympathy and from which I have learned considerably, see Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

³¹ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, §66.

abiding personal somatic presence of Christ integral to the sacrament in such a way that even the slightest intimation of idolatry is absolutely avoided. That is, what is worshipped in the liturgical practice of Eucharistic adoration must need be *essentially* divine, and the intention of the worshippers must need be focused by and drawn into the abyss of Christ's abiding *personal* presence itself—body, soul, and divinity—and not be arrested by the visible features of the material object. Hence, the intellect of the worshippers must somehow behold, not what is materially constitutive of the creaturely sign, but—precisely by way of the sign—the very substance of the One who is worshipped in the liturgical practice. I would like to submit that Thomas Aquinas's metaphysical way of making Christ's Eucharistic presence explicit fulfills all of these requirements.³²

Thomas Aquinas: Metaphysical Contemplation in Service of Making Intellectually Explicit a Mystery of Faith

For Thomas Aquinas, sacramental conversion in the Eucharist is a mystery of faith in the strict sense. That is, it depends completely on divine revelation as unfolded by way of *sacra doctrina*. And *sacra doctrina*, according to Thomas, is constituted by nothing else than the simplicity of faith that rests on divine authority and embraces the truth as proposed in *sacra pagina*, Scripture. This fundamental understanding of revealed truth being essentially a participation in the *scientia Dei et beatorum* finds a terse expression in *Summa theologiae* III, q. 75, a. 1, the opening article of the question on sacramental conversion:

The presence of Christ's true body and blood in this sacrament cannot be detected by sense, nor understanding, but by faith alone [*sola fide*], which rests upon Divine authority. Hence, in Luke xxii, 19: *This is My body, which shall be delivered up for you*, Cyril says: *Doubt not whether this be true; but take rather the Saviour's words with faith; for since He is the Truth, He lieth not.*³³

³² I regard Jean-Luc Marion's profound and stimulating reflections on the Eucharist and on Eucharistic adoration in the *Horse-texte* of his *God Without Being* (161–97) as compatible with my re-reading of Thomas and the Thomist tradition. The issues of difference pertain to matters of dispute between a phenomenological approach indebted to Husserl's idealist turn and an approach indebted to what some have termed the “*philosophia perennis*.” For an excellent recent introduction to the latter from which I have learned much, see Benedict M. Ashley, OP, *The Way toward Wisdom: An Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Introduction to Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

³³ ST III, q. 75, a. 1: “[V]erum corpus Christi et sanguinem esse in hoc sacramento, non sensu deprehendi potest, sed sola fide, quae auctoritati divinae innititur. Unde super illud *Luc. 22*, [19], *Hoc est corpus meum quod pro vobis tradetur*, dicit

It is deceptively simple but profoundly significant what Thomas is doing here: first, he is alluding to Christ's words of consecration according to the Gospel of Luke.³⁴ The dominical words themselves, taken in the *sensus literalis*, constitute the initial point of departure.³⁵ Second, this point of departure is itself received, since it represents the Church's own understanding of the *sensus literalis*. In order to make this crucial point plain, Thomas cites St. Cyril of Alexandria, who enjoins the readers of his own commentary on the Gospel of Luke to take Christ simply at his word, because he is the truth: "Doubt not whether this be true; but take rather the Saviour's words with faith; for since He is the Truth, He lieth not."³⁶ That is, Thomas lets the one authority among the Fathers who is most intimately associated with the dogma of Chalcedon make the fundamental point about Who is speaking about Himself. Third, we can observe here how Thomas displays what he calls the subalternate character of *sacra doctrina* as *scientia* in *ST I*, q. 1, a. 2:

[S]acred doctrine is a science, because it proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science, namely, the science of God and the blessed [*scientia Dei et beatorum*]. Hence, just as the musician accepts on authority [*tradita*] the principles taught him by the mathematician, so sacred science is established on principles revealed by God.³⁷

Consequently, in our instance, the first move of *sacra doctrina* as the subalternate *scientia* of us wayfarers short of the beatific vision is, by way of the

Cyrillus: *Non dubites an hoc verum sit, sed potius suscipe verba Salvatoris in fide: cum enim sit veritas, non mentitur.*"

³⁴ "And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And likewise the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood'" (Lk 22: 19–20 [RSV]).

³⁵ Aquinas's point here is far from unreflectively naïve, as in some regrettably "premodern" sense which we see ourselves forced to transcend toward some higher, critical perspective. Rather, the Church's understanding, that is, *traditio* itself, reads this text as *Deus ipse loquitur*. Hence, when modern historical-critical exegetes are intent upon reconstructing the words of consecration as early post-Easter tradition and not as the words of the "historical" Jesus himself, their work is to be gratefully received into a deeper theological understanding of the very apostolic *paradosis* whence arose the New Testament. For this is precisely what *traditio* is all about: the reception of God's Word in the Church that is Christ's body.

³⁶ *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 72, p. 92.

³⁷ *ST I*, q. 1, a. 2: "Et hoc modo sacra doctrina est scientia: quia procedit ex principiis notis lumine superioris scientiae, quae scilicet est scientia Dei et beatorum. Unde sicut musica credit principia tradita sibi ab arithmetico, ita doctrina sacra credit principia revelato sibi a Deo."

Church's understanding—*traditio*—the reception of a truth (that is, of a communication of the *scientia Dei et beatorum*) that is not to be interpreted in light of some other more authoritative, profound, or illuminating text of Scripture itself. Rather, Christ Himself speaks, *Christus ipse locutus est*. While God, being Scripture's ultimate author,³⁸ surely speaks by way of and through all of Scripture, so the dominical words are exceptional, since they directly appeal to the immediate assent of faith. Remember that Thomas understands faith as adhering to the First Truth. In *ST* II–II, q. 5, a. 3, ad 2 he states:

[F]aith adheres to all the articles of faith by reason of one mean, viz., on account of the First Truth proposed to us in the Scriptures, according to the teaching of the Church who has the right understanding of them.³⁹

According to the Church's right understanding of the first truth, that is, according to the *doctrina Ecclesiae*, in Luke 22:19 "the First Truth proposed to us in the Scriptures" speaks Himself, and St. Cyril's theological judgment (together with St. Hilary's and St. Ambrose's teaching as adduced in the *sed contra*) represents for Thomas paradigmatically "the teaching of the Church that has the right understanding of [the Scriptures]."

Hence, in the third part of the *Summa theologiae*, in the opening article on the question of the conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, Thomas asserts up front that *sacra doctrina* is first and foremost the *act*⁴⁰ of faith adhering to the First Truth in the concrete instance of its self-communication as apostolically mediated and interpreted by the *doctrina Ecclesiae*. It is this divinely revealed, and doctrinally received and mediated, *principium* that forms the indispensable starting point for the subsequent metaphysical contemplation. Hence, the truth of faith is emphatically *not* established by the ensuing metaphysical contemplation; rather, having been established by the First Truth Himself as taught by the *doctrina Ecclesiae*, metaphysical contemplation *solely* makes explicit the mystery of faith. For Thomas and the Thomist tradition, the truth of faith does not depend on a successful metaphysical defense or even proof; rather the revealed truth itself elicits the metaphysical contemplation which makes explicit the truth's

³⁸ *ST* I, q. 1, a. 10: "[A]uctor sacrae Scriptura est Deus."

³⁹ *ST* II–II, q. 5, a. 3, ad 2: "[O]mnibus articulis fidei inhaeret fides propter unum medium, scilicet propter veritatem primam propositam nobis in Scripturis secundum doctrinam Ecclesiae intellectis sane."

⁴⁰ For *doctrina* not as a "thing" but an act, see Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, "That the Faithful Become the Temple of God," in *Reading John with St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Michael Dauphinais and Matthew Levering (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 293–311.

inherent intelligibility as a mystery of faith and contributes to a more comprehensive and penetrating intellectual reception of it.

Making Explicit: Metaphysical Contemplation

An elucidation of the metaphysical contemplation in Aquinas is in order here. Referring to Thomas's commentary on the Neoplatonic *Liber de causis*, Ralph McInerny identifies three "disarming assumptions" that capture Thomas's understanding of philosophy in a nutshell. They are:

(1) that all philosophers are in principle engaged in the same enterprise; (2) that truths he has learned from Aristotle are simply truths, not "Aristotelian tenets"; and (3) consequently that such truths as one finds in Neoplatonism or anywhere else must be compatible with truths already known. This is the basis for saying that Thomism is not a *kind* of philosophy.⁴¹

Hence, it would be profoundly wrong, although not at all uncommon, to assume that Thomas submits a "theory" of the Eucharistic conversion. Rather, always proceeding conceptually from what is easier to what is more difficult to understand, Thomas analogically extends the "natural hearing," the inquiry into material being and subsequently into immaterial being as undertaken in Aristotle's *Physics* and extended in his *Metaphysics*, in order to guide the metaphysical contemplation into what remains irreducibly a mystery of faith, the *intellectus*, however, inevitably having to take departure, by analogical extension, from the world we know.⁴²

Consequently, in the present intellectual context one can never recall often enough that—as John Wippel aptly put it—Thomas holds first and foremost in his theory of knowledge that "the order of thought is based upon the order of reality and reflects it. Because words in turn reflect thoughts, by attending to distinctive modes of predication we may ultimately discern different modes of being."⁴³ Differently put, "supreme and

⁴¹ Ralph McInerny, *Praeambula Fidei: Thomism and the God of the Philosophers* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 175, n. 6.

⁴² In its document "On the Interpretation of Dogmas," the International Theological Commission reminds us unequivocally that this very procedure is indeed of an enduring importance for the interpretation of the mysteries of faith: "It was already the First Vatican Council which taught that a deeper insight into the mysteries of faith may be possible in considering them by way of analogy with natural knowledge and relating them to the ultimate goal of human beings (DS 3016)." *Origins* 20/1 (17 May, 1990), 13.

⁴³ John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 216.

diverse modes of predication (as expressed in the predicaments) . . . follow from and depend upon supreme and diverse modes of being.”⁴⁴ Hence, according to Thomas, we discover these supreme modes of being precisely by attending to the diverse modes of predication.⁴⁵

The classical locus where Thomas exposit on this fundamental insight of Aristotle is in his commentary on Book III of Aristotle’s *Physics*, in lecture 5 (#322):

[Being] is divided according to the diverse modes of existing. But modes of existing are proportional to the modes of predicating. For when we predicate something of another, we say this is that. Hence the ten genera of being are called the ten predicaments. Now every predication is made in one of three ways. One way is when that which pertains to the essence is predicated of some subject, as when I say Socrates is a man, or man is an animal. The predication of substance is in this way.⁴⁶

The predicament “substance” connotes what subsists in itself. Differently put, of any existing thing, substance connotes nothing apart from the thing, but the thing itself. Every finite substance has need of further perfections, called accidents, which are connoted by the remaining nine predicaments of Aristotle’s list. That is, substance and accident must be treated in mutual relation, since accident is a principle that complements

⁴⁴ Ibid., 211.

⁴⁵ “The mode or way in which words signify does not immediately follow upon the mode of being of such things, but only as mediated by the way in which such things are understood. To put this another way, words are likenesses or signs of thoughts, and thoughts themselves are likenesses of things, as Thomas recalls from Bk I of Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*” (Wippel, op. cit., 211). That is, “Thomas follows Aristotle in singling out being as it exists outside the mind and is divided into ten predicaments. . . . Therefore, in whatever ways being is predicated, in so many ways is esse signified, that is, in so many ways is something signified to be” (Wippel, op.cit., 212). For an excellent analysis of this complex matter, see also John P. O’Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

⁴⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Physics*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell, Richard J. Spath, and W. Edmund Thirlkel (Notre Dame, IN: Dumb Ox Books, 1999), 160 (#322): “Ad horum igitur evidentiam sciendum est quod ens dividitur in decem praedicamenta non univoce, sicut genus in species, sed secundum diversum modum essendi. Modi autem essendi proportionales sunt modis praedicandi. Praedicando enim aliquid de aliquo altero, dicimus hoc esse illud: unde et decem genera entis dicuntur decem praedicamenta. Tripliciter autem fit omnis praedicatio. Unus quidem modus est, quando de aliquo subiecto praedicatur id quod pertinet ad essentiam eius, ut cum dico *Socrates est homo*, vel *homo est animal*; et secundum hoc accipitur praedicamentum substantiae” (*In III Phys.*, lectio 5 [#322]).

substance and together with it, through their common existence, constitutes the individually existing thing. In short, substance is not a separable thing by itself, but a metaphysical co-principle in composition with all its attributes. Hence, substance cannot be without at least *some* accidents.

If we were to consider substance in general, this would suffice. But in Eucharistic conversion we deal with the conversion of *material* substances.⁴⁷ And because of this, we need to attend to the one accident necessarily proper to any material substance: *quantity*. Quantity is a determination of being which gives extension to a material substance, hence “dimensive” quantity. Without quantity, a material substance would have no distinguishable parts, no parts outside of parts (*partes extra partes*). Everything would “flow into each other” in the sense that there would be no spatial relationship anymore between the parts.⁴⁸ While quantity gives to material substance its dimensions, its intrinsic measure by way of the order of parts, the parts themselves are constituted and sustained by the substance itself.⁴⁹ The latter circumstance reminds us that, indeed, quantity modifies the being of substance by giving it the extension of space and hence relates intrinsically to the substance. Consequently, quantity is not something apposed into the closest proximity to substance. Rather, quantity is of the substance as the first of the other accidents that inhere by way of quantity in the substance. We can begin to see now the central role the predicamentals substance and quantity play in Thomas’s metaphysical elucidation of the theological truth that indeed nothing less than the whole Christ is contained under this sacrament.

However, might Thomas’s concentration on the predicamentals substance and quantity in the elucidation of the Eucharistic mystery not be ever so

⁴⁷ Immersing myself seriously in the arresting details of Thomas’s demanding metaphysical contemplation of the Eucharistic conversion as a trans-substantiation in the strict metaphysical sense would go far beyond the scope of this particular essay. For a penetrating analysis of the metaphysical details of transubstantiation as well as a superb defense of Aquinas’s position on this matter, one I completely concur with, see Stephen Brock, “St. Thomas and the Eucharistic Conversion,” *The Thomist* 65 (2001): 529–65.

⁴⁸ Leo J. Elders, S.V.D., *Die Naturphilosophie des Thomas von Aquin* (Weilheim-Bierbronn: Gustav-Siewerth-Akademie, 2004), 75. He is drawing his image from John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus* I, Log., p. II, q. XVI, art. 1, 466: “In sententia S. Thomae propria et formalis ratio quantitatis est extensio partium in ordine ad totum, quod est reddere partes formaliter integrantes. Unde remota quantitate, substantia non habet partes integrales formaliter in ratione partis ordinatas et distinctas.”

⁴⁹ John of St. Thomas, *Cursus Philosophicus* I, Log., p. II, q. XVI, art. 1 (Paris: Vivès, 1883), 464: “[Q]uantitas dicitur praebeere partes integrales substantiae, non constituendo illas, sed ordinando inter se. Et haec ordinatio accidentaliter est.”

subtly reductive in that such a concentration ultimately distracts from the fact that Christ's sacramental presence is a fundamentally personal presence? Might not the focus on "substance" and "quantity" give rise to a Eucharistic "essentialism" that obscures the fact that Christ's presence is irreducibly personal?

In order to address this question we must realize first of all that the terminus of the Eucharistic conversion is the substance of Christ's body in its respective present state. At the Last Supper, Christ was present to the twelve apostles in his natural mode as the incarnate Son of the Father instituting the Eucharist and thereby marking the very beginning of "his hour," his self-oblation to the Father on the Cross for the sake of "the many." His substantial, corporeal presence in the sacrament was that of his natural body in its concrete state at the beginning of his passion. At each subsequent celebration of the Eucharist after Christ's resurrection and ascension, Christ's sacramental presence is that of his glorified bodily existence in heaven. Christ's body and blood are accompanied (*concomitari*) by all that is really associated with them in his everlasting glorified state: in virtue of Christ's human nature, his human soul, and in virtue of the hypostatic union, the divinity of the Logos. Through real concomitance, due to the integral subsistence of the risen Christ in heaven, nothing less than the whole person of Christ is in the Blessed Sacrament. Because Thomas is absolutely unequivocal on this matter, it is worth citing him at length on this crucial point:

It is absolutely necessary to confess according to Catholic faith that the entire Christ is in this sacrament. Yet we must know that there is something of Christ in this sacrament in a twofold manner: first, as it were, by the power of the sacrament; secondly, from natural concomitance. By the power of the sacrament, there is under the species of this sacrament that into which the pre-existing substance of the bread and wine is changed, as expressed by the words of the form, which are effective in this as in the other sacraments; for instance, by the words—This is My body, or This is My blood. But from natural concomitance there is also in this sacrament that which is really united with that thing wherein the aforesaid conversion is terminated. For if any two things be really united, then wherever the one is really, there must the other also be: since things really united together are only distinguished by an operation of the mind.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ ST III, q. 76, a. 1: "[O]mnino necesse est confiteri secundum fidem Catholicam quod totus Christus sit in hoc sacramento. Sciendum tamen quod aliquid Christi est in hoc sacramento dupliciter: uno modo, quasi ex vi sacramenti; alio modo, ex naturali concomitantia. Ex vi quidem sacramenti, est sub specibus huius sacramenti id in quod directe convertitur substantia panis et vini praexistens, prout significatur per verba formae, quae sunt effectiva in hoc sacramento sicut et in ceteris:

Since the body, blood, soul, and divinity of Christ are really united and only distinguished from each other by an operation of the human mind, it would be theologically misguided from the very outset to drive a wedge—and thus create a false dichotomy—between the *substantial* and the *personal* presence of Christ in the sacrament. The presence in the sacrament of the substance of Christ's body and the substance of Christ's blood entails by way of real concomitance the real substantial presence of Christ's undiminished humanity, body and soul; and the real presence of the undiminished substance of Christ's humanity, in virtue of the hypostatic union with the Divine Word, entails the personal presence of the Logos; and the latter, by way of a mediated concomitance, indeed entails, due to the circumincession of Father, Son, and Spirit, also the personal presence of the Father and the Spirit.⁵¹ Hence, all that is intrinsic to Christ's personhood in virtue of the incarnation (his undiminished concrete humanity, body and soul) as well as all that is constitutive of his personhood in virtue of the divine Sonship (the subsistent Trinitarian relations) is present in the sacrament.

On the basis of the principle of real concomitance, Thomas holds that the whole Christ is contained under each species of the sacrament; however, in each case differently. Under the species of the wine, by the power of the sacrament, only the substance of Christ's blood is present, and because of real concomitance, his body, soul, and divinity. Under the species of the bread, by the power of the sacrament, only the substance of his body is present, and because of real concomitance his blood, soul, and divinity. Let us be mindful at this point that none of this is, of course, to be misunderstood, and hence all too quickly dismissed, as the allegedly typical way of the "scholastics" carrying matters to the extreme, but rather as a faithful and straightforwardly literal interpretation of Christ's word's of consecration at the Last Supper.

The explanatory power of the predicamentals "substance" and "quantity" becomes surpassingly evident when in the third article of question 76 Thomas discusses the way in which it is to be taken that the whole

puta cum dicitur, Hoc est corpus meum. Hic est sanguis meus. Ex naturali autem concomitantia est in hoc sacramento illud quod realiter est coniunctum ei in quod praedicta conversio terminatur. Si enim aliqua duo sunt realiter coniuncta, ubicumque est unum realiter, oportet et aliud esse: sola enim operatione animae discernuntur quae realiter sunt coniuncta."

⁵¹ This latter extension of concomitance is, I think, rightly held by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. in his *De Eucharistia accedunt De Paenitentia quaestiones dogmaticae Commentarius in Summam theologicam S. Thomae* (Rome: Marietti, 1943), 148, a position that in principle we can find also in Matthias Joseph Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, trans. Cyril Vollert, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Herder, 1951), 479–82.

Christ is entirely under every part of the species of bread and wine. Consider the second objection in order to feel the full force of the issue at stake, for this objection presses quite appropriately what the real presence of the concrete physical nature of Christ's body does indeed entail:

[S]ince Christ's is an organic body, it has parts determinately distant; for a determinate distance of the individual parts from each other is of the very nature of an organic body, as that of eye from eye, and eye from ear. But this could not be so, if Christ were entire under every part of the species; for every part would have to be under every other part, and so where one part would be, there another part would be. It cannot be then that the entire Christ is under every part of the host or of the wine contained in the chalice.⁵²

In his response, Thomas properly extends his use of the principle of real concomitance. By the power of the sacrament, the substance of Christ's body is in the sacrament; because of real concomitance, the dimensive quantity of Christ's body is also there—the latter, as we came to understand earlier, indeed being indispensable for the proper constitution of a material substance. Consequently, Christ's body is in this sacrament *per modum substantiae*, substantially, that is, “not after the manner of dimensions, which means, not in the way in which the dimensive quantity of a body is under the dimensive quantity of a place.”⁵³ The explanatory power of the metaphysical principle of substance and its ontological precedence in relation to all the accidents, including dimensive quantity, carries far. Let us consider Thomas's response to the second objection:

The determinative distance of parts in an organic body is based upon its dimensive quantity; but the nature of substance precedes even dimensive quantity. And since the conversion of the substance of the bread is terminated at the substance of the body of Christ, and since according to the manner of substance the body of Christ is properly and directly in this sacrament; such distance of parts is indeed in Christ's

⁵² ST III, q. 76, a. 3, obj. 2: “[C]orpus Christi, cum sit organicum, habet partes determinate distantes: est enim de ratione organici corporis determinata distantia singularum partium ad invicem, sicut oculi ab oculo, et oculi ab aure. Sed hoc non posset esse si sub qualibet parte specierum esset totus Christus: oporteret enim quod sub qualibet parte esset quaelibet pars; et ita, ubi esset una pars, esset et alia. Non ergo potest quod totus Christus sit sub qualibet parte hostiae vel vini contenti in calice.”

⁵³ ST III, q. 76, a. 3: “[C]orpus Christi est in hoc sacramento per modum substantiae, idest, per modum quo substantia est sub dimensionibus: non autem per modum dimensionum, idest, non per illum modum quo quantitatis dimensiva alicuius corporis est sub quantitate dimensiva loci.”

true body, which, however, is not compared to this sacrament according to such distance, but according to the manner of its substance. . . .⁵⁴

In an additional step of deepening his argument, Thomas shows in which way we can understand that indeed the whole dimensive quantity of Christ's body is in the sacrament. We find the crucial axiom he applies already in the *sed contra* of article four of question 76:

The existence of the dimensive quantity of any body cannot be separated from the existence of its substance. But in this sacrament the entire substance of Christ's body is present. . . . Therefore the entire dimensive quantity of Christ's body is in the sacrament.⁵⁵

In his response, Thomas draws upon the by now familiar distinction between what is present by the power of the sacrament and what is present because of real concomitance. *Vi sacramenti*, the conversion is terminated at the substance of Christ's body and clearly not at the dimensions of the body for, after all, the dimensive quantity of the bread clearly remains after the consecration. Applying the axiom of the *sed contra* that the existence of the dimensive quantity of any body cannot be separated from its substance, he then adds the following: "Nevertheless, since the substance of Christ's body is not really deprived of its dimensive quantity and its other accidents, hence it comes that by reason of real concomitance the whole dimensive quantity of Christ's body and all its other accidents are in this sacrament."⁵⁶ In the response to the first objection he puts the decisive point even more succinctly:

Since, then, the substance of Christ's body is present on the altar by the power of this sacrament, while its dimensive quantity is there concomi-

⁵⁴ ST III, q. 76, a. 3 ad 2: "[I]lla determinata distantia partium in corpore organico fundatur super quantitatem dimensivam ipsius; ipsa autem natura substantiae praecedit etiam quantitatem dimensivam. Et quia conversio substantiae panis directe terminatur ad substantiam corporis Christi, secundum cuius modum proprie et directe est in hoc sacramento corpus Christi, talis distantia partium est quidem in ipso corpore Christi vero, sed non secundum hanc distantiam comparatur ad hoc sacramentum, sed secundum modum suae substantiae. . . ."

⁵⁵ ST III, q. 76, a. 4, *sed contra*: "[Q]uantitas dimensiva corporis alicuius non separatur secundum esse a substantia eius. Sed in hoc sacramento est tota substantia corporis Christi. . . . Ergo tota quantitas dimensiva corporis Christi est in hoc sacramento."

⁵⁶ ST III, q. 76, a. 4: "Quia tamen substantia corporis Christi realiter non denudatur a sua quantitate dimensiva et ab aliis accidentibus, inde est quod, ex vi realis concomitantiae, est in hoc sacramento tota quantitas dimensiva corporis Christi, et omnia alia accidentia eius."

tantly and as it were accidentally, therefore the dimensive quantity of Christ's body is in this sacrament, not according to its proper manner (namely, that the whole is in the whole, and the individual parts in the individual parts), but after the manner of substance [*per modum substantiae*], whose nature is for the whole to be in the whole, and the whole to be in every part.⁵⁷

The presence of the dimensive quantity of Christ's body *per modum substantiae* is possible because dimensive quantity relates intrinsically to substance. Hence, in order to obtain after the manner of substance, dimensive quantity does not require what is the manner of dimensive quantity, namely the relation to a place. In the body of the fifth article of question 76 Thomas gives a somewhat less condensed description of dimensive quantity realized according to its proper manner: "Every body occupying a place is in the place according to the manner of dimensive quantity, namely, inasmuch as it is commensurate with the place according to its dimensive quantity."⁵⁸ And it is quite obvious that according to the proper manner of dimensive quantity it is impossible for two dimensive quantities naturally to be in the same subject at the same time. But it is not impossible at all for the dimensive quantity of the bread after the consecration to remain commensurate with the place it occupies while the dimensive quantity of Christ's body is present *per modum substantiae*, after the manner of substance.

Eventually the Thomist school had to unfold Thomas's teaching by developing a more explicit answer to the question of how one can metaphysically account for dimensive quantity to subsist solely *per modum substantiae*. Unfolding the tacit entailments of Thomas's teaching became necessary in light of different philosophical conceptualities giving rise to variant theological doctrines that emerged and spread in the centuries subsequent to Aquinas's death, conceptualities that in one way or another would identify substance itself with its property of quantitative extension and, in consequence, had strongly to compromise the genuine, whole presence of the dimensive quantity of Christ's body.

⁵⁷ ST III, q. 76, a. 4, ad 1: "Quia igitur ex vi sacramenti huius est in altari substantia corporis Christi, quantitas autem dimensiva eius est ibi concomitanter et quasi per accidens, ideo quantitas dimensiva corporis Christi est in hoc sacramento, non secundum proprium modum, ut scilicet sit totum in toto et singulae partes in singulis partibus; sed per modum substantiae, cuius natura est tota in toto et tota in qualibet parte."

⁵⁸ ST III, q. 76, a. 5: "Omne autem corpus locatum est in loco secundum modum quantitatis dimensionis, in quantum scilicet commensuratur loco secundum suam quantitatem dimensionis."

The late medieval school of the *via moderna*—largely indebted to the thought of William of Ockham and eventually identified by its opponents simply as the “Nominalists” (Nominales)—came to regard material substance to be extended per se and not by way of being informed by the absolute accident of quantity. For Ockham there obtains no real distinction between substance and quantity. Quantity, rather, has a purely nominal status; that is, quantity is a connotative term that stands for substance in its aspect of extension.⁵⁹ Consequently, Ockham has to explain how after the consecration, the substance of Christ’s body becomes present without being *quanta*, without parts outside of parts and the consequent natural order of parts (*ordo partium*). This is his solution: Because “quantity” is a notion purely connotative to substance it can be removed without any real change in the underlying subject. And so, while the connotative notion of quantity is removed, Christ’s body is nevertheless definitively present under the host and each of its parts. Hence, the natural parts of Christ’s body have to interpenetrate each other and, consequently, the natural order of parts (*ordo partium*) is dissolved. From the point of view of Thomas’s teaching, the Ockhamist position fails to maintain the integrity of the dimensive quantity of Christ’s body in the sacrament and consequently fails to make explicit the presence of the whole Christ in the sacrament.⁶⁰

While substance was a key notion in René Descartes’s swiftly spreading philosophy, the notion underwent a profound transmutation in his doctrine. Inspired by the clarity and certainty of mathematics, Descartes searched for a new philosophy whose foremost criterion was the clarity and distinctness of ideas. Disregarding in a not all together unproblematic way the long tradition of metaphysical inquiry on this matter, he defined substance as a thing that exists in such a way that it needs no other thing for its existence. In light of this criterion he identified two kinds of substance: one intellectual, the other material. Thought constitutes the

⁵⁹ See Gordon Leff, *William of Ockham: The Metamorphosis of Scholastic Discourse* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975), 207–13.

⁶⁰ For an extensive analysis of the excruciatingly detailed discussion Ockham provides on this matter in his philosophical and theological works, see Erwin Iserloh, *Gnade und Eucharistie in der philosophischen Theologie des Wilhelm von Ockham: Ihre Bedeutung für die Ursachen der Reformation* (Steiner: Wiesbaden, 1956), 174–283, esp. 186–202 for the discussion of the problem in Ockham’s commentary on Lombard’s *Sentences*, and 202–53 for a discussion of his position in his later *De sacramento altaris*. For a discussion of Ockham’s doctrine more sympathetic than Iserloh’s highly—and I think rightly—critical commentary, see Gabriel Buescher, O.F.M., *The Eucharistic Teaching of William Ockham* (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute; Louvain: E. Nauwelaerts, 1950), esp. 65–93.

nature of the intellectual substance, and spatial extension (length, breadth, depth) the nature of corporeal substance.⁶¹ The consequent identification in reality of substance and quantity does not come as a surprise: "There is no real difference between quantity and the extended substance; the difference is merely a conceptual one, like that between number and the thing which is numbered."⁶²

Cartesian theologians, especially in France and Italy, began to apply this deceptively simple, but indeed radically changed notion of substance to the doctrine of Eucharistic conversion.⁶³ According to Descartes's new understanding of corporeal substance, Christ's substantial presence in the

⁶¹ René Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), Bk. 1, sections 48–53. Cf. esp. the following paradigmatic statements: "I recognize only two ultimate classes of things: first, intellectual or thinking things, i.e. those which pertain to mind or thinking substance; and secondly, material things, i.e. those which pertain to extended substance or body" (*Principles of Philosophy*, Bk. 1, section 48, p. 208). "A substance may indeed be known through any attribute at all; but each substance has one principal property which constitutes its nature and essence, and to which all its other properties are referred. Thus extension in length, breadth and depth constitutes the nature of corporeal substance; and thought constitutes the nature of thinking substance" (op. cit., section 53, p. 210).

⁶² *Principles of Philosophy*, Bk. 2, section 8, p. 226. In this particular work of Descartes, one can observe without difficulty the shift from a metaphysical consideration of the principles of reality as modes of being to the philosophical analysis of conceptions or ideas that take on the character of mental images. Such a transformation of metaphysical principles of being into univocal mental conceptions guided by the criterion of "ocular clarity" leads unavoidably to the loss of the metaphysical principle of substance itself in relationship to the accidents, and with it to a profound lack of understanding of the nature and function of predicamentals, as well as the real distinction between substance and quantity in a sensible thing. "When they make a distinction between substance and extension or quantity, either they do not understand anything by the term 'substance', or else they simply have a confused idea of the incorporeal substance, which they falsely attach to corporeal substance; and they relegate the true idea of corporeal substance to the category of extension, which, however, they term an accident. There is thus no correspondence between their verbal expression and what they grasp in their minds" (op. cit., Bk. 2, section 9, p. 226f).

⁶³ For details of this intricate and theologically not at all unproblematic position, see Jean-Robert Armogathe, *Theologia cartesiana: L'explication physique de l'Eucharistie chez Descartes et dom Desgabets* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1977); idem, "Cartesian Physics and the Eucharist in the Documents of the Holy Office and the Roman Index (1671–76)," in *Receptions of Descartes: Cartesianism and anti-Cartesianism in early modern Europe*, ed. Tad M. Schmaltz (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 149–70; and Tad M. Schmaltz, *Radical Cartesianism: The French Reception of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. 34–74.

sacrament is conceived the following way: after the consecration, the dimensive quantity of the bread and the wine cannot remain (and with it none of the other accidents of bread and wine), for two corporeal substances cannot, of course, occupy the same space at the same time. According to the Cartesian theologians, what is present after the consecration is nothing but the glorious body of Christ *per se*. In order to veil the surpassing holiness of Christ's bodily presence and also in order not to deter the faithful from communion, God provides the sensible effects of bread and wine to the sensory organs. According to a different view defended by other Cartesian theologians, it is Christ's body that provides the sensible effects of bread and wine by taking on new surfaces similar to those of bread and wine. Furthermore, the Cartesian theologians hold that in virtue of being a corporeal substance, after the consecration Christ's body has to be locally extended. Consequently, by way of some mode of contraction or condensation it must be reduced to the circumscriptive extension of what has the visual appearance of a host or wine in a chalice.

In light of these alternative positions, one might begin to appreciate in hindsight the profundity of Thomas's teaching that the dimensive quantity of Christ is in the sacrament by way of natural concomitance after the manner of substance. In view of the considerable metaphysical and theological problems entailed in the Nominalist and the Cartesian positions, the Thomist school engaged in a deeper metaphysical investigation. Very much by way of extrapolating Thomas's metaphysical principles, Thomist theologians inquired how it is possible and what it means for dimensive quantity to be there by way of natural concomitance after the manner of the substance. The resulting metaphysical development of Thomas's teaching comprises three central elements: (1) Because there obtains a real distinction between the principles of substance and quantity, material substance requires quantity as its absolute first accident. (2) Because local extension presupposes some distinction of parts from other parts, it is possible to distinguish between the essence of quantity, which is to have parts that are different from other parts, that is, "outside of other parts," and the specific property of quantity, which is local extension. The Thomist commentators tended to identify the former as the *ratio formalis*, or the *primary formal effect of quantity* (*ordo partium in toto*), and the latter as the *secondary formal effect of quantity*, the *ordo partium in loco or ubi et situs*. (3) Substance as such is indivisible, and hence a substantial form or a separate substance (angel) has no capacity of local extension. Every material substance, however, has intrinsically—that is, in virtue of being a material substance—parts that are different from and hence outside of other parts, as well as a specific order among the parts, and consequently the capacity to be divided into parts and

to be locally extended. While really distinct as a co-constitutive principle, in reality this essence of quantity is inseparable from a material substance. For quantity is the absolute accident of material substance. Hence the essence of quantity obtains in virtue of its relation to substance alone, that is, it obtains always *per modum substantiae*, after the manner of substance. In its normal, locally extended existence, the manner of dimensive quantity always already presupposes the essence of quantity to obtain *per modum substantiae*, that is, the distinction of parts from other parts and the intrinsic (though not yet locally realized) order between them to obtain after the manner of substance. And hence it is not intrinsically impossible for what is ontologically a distinct (though not independent) principle of the constitution of material substances in virtue of divine first causality to subsist solely after the manner of substance.

By unfolding one aspect of Thomas's teaching in this particular way, the Thomist school was able to continue to hold (contrary to the Nominalist position) that the *whole* Christ, including his undiminished dimensive quantity, is indeed in the sacrament, and (contrary to the Cartesian position) that the Eucharistic species maintain their properly realized dimensive quantity in their local space, while Christ's body has its properly realized quantitative dimension in Christ's glorified state in heaven alone.

In summary: According to John of St. Thomas and other Thomist commentators, the primary formal effect of quantity, *ordo partium in toto*, specifies the order of distinguishable parts as a whole. This order (in which consists the essence of quantity) gives rise to a really distinct determination, the secondary formal effect, the *ordo relationis*, that is, the *ordo partium* according to their relative position or situation to other parts in space (*ubi et situs*).⁶⁴ Because the *ordo partium in toto* can be considered

⁶⁴ Josephus Gredt, O.S.B., *Elementa Philosophiae Aristotelico-Thomisticae*. Vol. 1: *Logica/Philosophia Naturalis* (Freiburg/Barcelona: Herder, 1961), 145–46: “Definitio quantitatis . . . stricte autem sumpta pro quantitate praedicamentali definitur: ordo partium in toto. In qua definitione ‘ordo’ positionem significat partium extra partes, ita ut quantitas etiam definiri possit: accidens tribuens subiecto habere partes extra partes quoad se. Ordo, in quo consistit quantitatis essentia, non est relatio ordinis, sed fundamentum huius relationis; est ordo fundamentalis, i.e., fundamentum relationis secundum prius et posterius. Quantitas igitur duo continet: multitudinem partium, et huius multitudinis ordinem secundum positionem, quatenus partes ponuntur extra partes secundum prius et posterius. . . . Quare quantitas praedicamentalis multitudini superaddit ordinem positionis secundum prius et posterius.” Ibid., 252: “THESIS X: *Effectus formalis primarius* quantitatis seu eius ratio formalis est ordo partium in toto, effectus formalis secundarius est ubi et situs seu ordo partium in loco. Hic effectus secundarius distinctus est realiter et separabilis a primario.” Ibid., 252, §315: “Effectus formalis primarius seu ratio formalis est constitutivum metaphysicum quantitatis. Quantitas enim utpote accidens definitur

indeterminately, there obtains the logical separability and consequently the separability of modes of being between the primary formal effect of dimensive quantity and its secondary formal effect.

At this point, we can mark two vital results of this all too sketchy account of the predicaments “substance” and “quantity” in the teaching of Thomas and the Thomist tradition. First, substance is not a mere conceptual name in the modern, nominalist sense—that is, a sheer linguistic pointer of the intellect’s intentionality to some “Ding an sich.” On the contrary, substances connote entities that subsist in their own existence—“unde solae substantiae proprie et vere dicuntur entia”⁶⁵—entities that address the intellect, and are formally received by it.

Second, Thomas’s teaching on material substance allows for the real distinction between the primary formal effect of quantity (*ordo partium in toto*) and its secondary formal effect (*ordo partium in loco*). That is, even under the sacramental species of bread and wine, it is by way of the primary formal effect of quantity that the substance of Christ’s body and the substance of Christ’s blood are really present in their concrete particularity as *this* substance and as *that* substance. This substantial presence does, however, emphatically *not* pertain to the *ordo partium in loco* (*ubi et situs*).⁶⁶ While the substance of Christ’s body and blood are present without deficiency of substance (which includes the primary formal effect of quantity, the *ordo partium in toto*), no further accidents need to be realized for the substantive, real presence of Christ’s body and blood to obtain. On the other hand, the Eucharistic species maintain their dimensive quantity,

per ordinem ad subiectum, ad substantiam. Quare indicando, quid *primo* faciat in substantia formaliter (per modum causae formalis), indicatur eius essentia metaphysica.” Ibid., 254, §318: “ordo partium in toto potest considerari indeterminate, et tunc est *effectus formalis primarius* quantitatis.” I am indebted to Romanus Cessario, O.P., for introducing me to the distinction between the first formal effect of quantity and its second formal effect.

⁶⁵ *ST* I, q. 90, a. 2: “Illud autem proprie dicitur esse, quod ipsum habet esse, quasi in suo esse subsistens: unde solae substantiae proprie et vere dicuntur entia. Accidens vero non habet esse, sed eo aliquid est, et hac ratione ens dicitur; sicut albedo dicitur ens, quia ea aliquid est album. Et propter hoc dicitur in VII *Metaphys.*, quod accidens dicitur ‘magis entis quam ens.’ Et eadem ratio est de omnibus aliis formis non subsistentibus.”

⁶⁶ Hence, it is crucial to remember that, when he distinguishes between substance and quantity in *ST* III, q. 76, a. 1, ad 3, Thomas is concerned with the specific entailments of the *ordo partium* in space, that is, the secondary formal effect of quantity, the *ordo partium in loco* (*ubi et situs*). Because of the increasing identification between substance and quantity in later Scholasticism, the Thomist tradition had to emphasize increasingly the distinction between the primary formal effect of quantity (*ordo partium extra partes*) and the secondary formal effect of quantity, dimensive quantity.

that is, their specific *ordo partium in loco*, as sustained by the primary formal effect of the quantity of bread and the quantity of wine. And because quantity is not identical with substance, the logical separability of the two allows for the possibility that the primary (*ordo partium in toto*) as well as the secondary (*ordo partium in loco*) formal effects of quantity are sustainable without the substance in which quantity inheres.⁶⁷ Since all the other accidents inhere in substance by way of dimensive quantity, their sustainability is consequent upon the separate sustainability of dimensive quantity.⁶⁸

What tangible difference does this distinction make? Consider the following argument advanced by Sylvester of Ferrara, the profound commentator of Thomas's *Summa contra Gentiles* (*ScG*) on Thomas's discussion of how the body of Christ (as a proper material substance) can be in multiple places. Here is Thomas's text from *ScG* IV, ch. 64, par. 5:

[T]he body of Christ in His own dimensions exists in one place only, but through the mediation of the dimensions of the bread passing into it its places are as many as there are places in which this sort of conversion is celebrated. For it is not divided into parts, but is entire in every single one; every consecrated bread is converted into the entire body of Christ.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *ST* III, q. 75, a. 5, ad 1: “[S]icut dicitur in libro *De causis*, effectus plus dependet a causa prima quam a causa secunda. Et ideo virtute Dei, qui est causa prima omnium, fieri potest ut remaneant posteriora, sublatis prioribus.” See also John of St. Thomas, *Cursus philosophicus* I, Log., pt. II, q. XVI, a. 1; p. 463: “Caeterum oppositum hujus manifestavit nobis sacrosanctum Eucharistiae mysterium, in quo manet quantitas, quae antea erat panis, ut oculis videmus, et non manet substantia panis, ut fides docet: distinguitur ergo et separatur quantitas a re quanta. Respondent Nominale quantitatem substantiae non manere, cum ipsa enim evanuit; sed manere quantitatem qualitatum caeterorumque accidentium extensorum. Sed contra est, quia ibi sunt plura accidentia. Vel ergo unumquodque habet suam quantitatem distinctam, vel datur aliqua communis omnibus. Si datur aliqua communis omnibus, illa distinguitur etiam a substantia, quae ibi non est; ergo distinguitur quantitas a re quanta.” For a detailed discussion of this particular aspect of Thomas's doctrine and of the sustainability of Thomas's teaching on the *accidentia sine subiecto remanentia*, see the instructive essay by Petrus Sedlmayr, O.S.B., “Die Lehre des hl. Thomas von den *accidentia sine subiecto remanentia*—untersucht auf ihren Einklang mit der aristotelischen Philosophie.” *Divus Thomas* (F) 12 (1934): 315–26.

⁶⁸ Cf. Thomas's nuanced discussion of this complex matter in *ST* III, q. 77, a. 2.

⁶⁹ Translation from Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles. Book Four: Salvation*, trans. Charles J. O'Neil (Notre Dame/London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 262. (“Corpus enim Christi per suas proprias dimensiones in uno tantum loco existit: sed mediantibus dimensionibus panis in ipsum transeuntis in tot locis in quot huiusmodi conversio fuerit celebrata: non quidem divisum per partes, sed integrum in unoquoque; nam quilibet panis consecratus in integrum corpus Christi convertitur.”)

Advancing a succinct version of the distinction between the two effects of quantity, Sylvester of Ferrara comments thus:

The effect of quantity is twofold. The one effect is completely intrinsic to that which has quantity [as it pertains to the *metaphysical order* of the constitution of a material substance; R.H.], that is, quantification [*esse quantum*], divisibility into parts, and the order of parts as a whole. The other effect is in some manner extrinsic [as it pertains to the *physical order* of material substances relating qua quantity to other material substances; R.H.], namely insofar as quantity pertains to the thing in the outward order, that is, insofar as it corresponds to another distinguishable quantity and the parts of the one correspond to the location of the parts of the other quantity. The first effect is necessarily and per se proper to quantity. The second effect, however, only pertains to quantity if it is ordered principally and per se to a place and toward extrinsic dimensions. Consequently, in the sacrament of the altar, the quantity of Christ's body, existing under the dimensions of the bread, has the first effect. For the body of Christ is in itself divisible and has an order of parts as a whole. It does not, however, have the second effect. For the parts of Christ's body do not correspond to the dimensive parts of the bread nor to the location of these parts, but the whole is under whatsoever part. Consequently it can be said that the body of Christ is under the dimensions of the bread in a divisible as well as an indivisible way, divisible insofar as it has in and of itself divisible parts; indivisible, however, because its parts do not correspond to the parts of those dimensions, but rather the whole corresponds to whatsoever part, as is the soul as a whole in each part [of the body].⁷⁰

⁷⁰ My translation from *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Doctoris Angelici Opera Omnia iussu edita Leonis XIII P.M.*, vol. 15 (Rome: Leonine Commission, 1930), p. 208: "[D]uplex est quantitatis effectus. Unus est omnino intrinsecus subiecto quanto; scilicet esse quantum, et divisibilitas in partes, atque ordo partium in toto. Alius est aliquo modo extrinsecus, in quantum scilicet convenit subiecto in ordine ad extrinsecum; scilicet condividi alteri quantitati, et partes eius partibus loci correspondere. Primum convenit quantitati necessario et per se: secundum vero sibi non convenit nisi quando habet primo et per se ordinem ad locum et ad extrinsecas dimensiones. In sacramento Altaris quantitas corporis Christi, sub dimensionibus panis existens, habet primum effectum, quia ipsum corpus Christi est in seipso divisibile, et habet ordinem partium in toto: non autem secundum effectum habet, quia partes corporis Christi non correspondent partibus dimensionis panis neque partibus loci, sed totum est sub qualibet parte. Ex quo sequitur potest dici corpus Christi esse sub dimensionibus panis et divisibiliter et indivisibiliter; divisibiliter quidem, quia in seipso divisibilitatem partium habet; indivisibiliter autem, quia partes eius non correspondent partibus illarum dimensionum, sed totum cuilibet parti, sicut anima est tota in qualibet parte." I am indebted to John F. Boyle for pointing me to this pertinent discussion of the matter in Sylvester of Ferrara's commentary.

Sylvester of Ferrara's commentary allows us to see with greater clarity what indeed is entailed in Thomas's own teaching. The full, undiminished identity of Christ's body and blood are present under the dimensions of the Eucharistic species, yet without their proper dimensive parts spatially and hence locally realized. While the substance penetrates the whole, spatiality and locality pertain only to the dimensive parts of the Eucharistic species. Christ's surpassing personal presence in the Eucharist has its indispensable anchor in the substantial presence of his body and his blood under the Eucharistic species. For, according to Thomas, nothing less and nothing more than Christ's very humanity constitutes God's surpassingly efficacious instrument of the salvation of humanity.⁷¹ Hence it is not only fitting, but necessary that Christ's salvific presence in the Eucharist comes about by way of his crucified humanity—the incarnate Son's utter self-giving to the Father in love, obedient to the point of death—sacramentally signified by His body and blood being separated from each other in the one Eucharistic sacrament.⁷² However, as already elaborated above, since Christ's body and blood after the Eucharistic consecration are perfectly identical with Christ's body and blood in heaven, they indeed are surrounded (*concomitari*) by all that surrounds them in the person of Christ in heaven, Christ's human soul as well as His divinity. Through real concomitance, due to the integral subsistence of the risen Christ in heaven, nothing less than the whole person of Christ is in the Blessed Sacrament. Furthermore, Christ's sacrificial self-gift "for the many" constitutes the unfathomable personal relation of Christ to everyone who desires to adore and receive him under the Eucharistic species of bread and wine. In short, because the Eucharistic presence of Christ in the sacramental form of his sacrificial self-gift is really substantial, it is surpassingly personal—the abyss of God's love, given "for you."

The Integrity of the Sacramental Sign

Lest the Thomist deployment of substance become seriously lopsided, that is, be wrongly received along the lines of a crude, non-sacramental

⁷¹ For an extensive discussion of this crucial aspect of Thomas's Christology, see Theophil Tschipke, *Die Menschheit Christi als Heilsorgan der Gottheit unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Lehre des heiligen Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg: Herder, 1940). Cf. the recent French translation: *L'humanité du Christ comme instrument de salut de la divinité* (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2003).

⁷² On this utterly central element of a proper understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice, see the arguably two most profound as well as accurate twentieth century Eucharistic monographs *secundum mentem S. Thomae*: Abbot Vonier, O.S.B., *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (Bethesda: Zacheus Press, 2003–4) and Charles Cardinal Journet, *The Mass: The Presence of the Sacrifice of the Cross*, trans. Victor Szcurek, O. Praem. (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2008).

realism, I must hasten at this point to emphasize that in Thomas's doctrine of Eucharistic conversion, the substantial presence of Christ in the sacrament does not at all occlude or thwart the abiding *sacramental* signification of the Eucharistic species. On the contrary, and contemporarily put, the Eucharistic species remain signs "all the way down." Rather than arresting the intellectual gaze upon themselves, as things with a proper substance would do, they direct the intellectual gaze beyond themselves, because faith, in assent to the dominical words, forbids the intellect to follow the path of the senses by way of the Eucharistic species to absent substances. For, as Thomas reminds us,

substance, as such, is not visible to the bodily eye, nor does it come under any one of the senses, nor under the imagination, but solely under the intellect, whose object is *what a thing is*. . . . And therefore, properly speaking, Christ's body, according to the mode of being which it has in the sacrament, is perceptible neither by the sense nor by the imagination, but only by the intellect, which is called the spiritual eye.⁷³

Accordingly, Thomas stresses that indeed Christ's body "can be seen by a wayfarer through faith alone [*sola fide*], like other supernatural things."⁷⁴ "For," as Thomas argues, "the accidents which are discerned by the senses are truly present. But the intellect, whose proper object is substance . . . is preserved by faith from deception . . . because faith is not contrary to the senses, but concerns things which sense does not reach."⁷⁵

Hence the character of the sacrament as a sign abides from beginning to end. It is by way of the instrumental causality inherent in sacramental signification that bread and wine constitute the irreplaceable and indispensable starting point for the sacramental conversion, and that after the consecration, the remaining sacramental species continue to carry the sacramental signification of the Eucharistic conversion.

In short, after the Eucharistic consecration, the sacramental sign—as long as it is able to signify, that is, as long as the modes of appearance of

⁷³ ST III, q. 76, a. 7: "Substantia autem, in quantum huiusmodi, non est visibilis oculo corporali, neque subiacet alicui sensui, neque imaginationi, sed soli intellectui, cuius obiectum est *quod quid est*, ut dicitur in III *de Anima*. Et ideo, proprie loquendo, corpus Christi, secundum modum essendi quem habet in hoc sacramento: neque sensu neque imaginatione perceptibile est, sed solo intellectu, qui dicitur oculus spiritualis."

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ ST III, q. 75, a. 5, ad 2 et 3: "[I]n hoc sacramentum nulla est deceptio: sunt enim secundum rei veritatem accidentia, quae sensibus diiudicantur. Intellectus autem, cuius est proprium obiectum substantia, ut dicitur in III *de Anima*, per fidem a deceptione praeservatur."

bread and wine persist—continues to signify the real substantial presence of Christ. Hence, if the Eucharistic elements are reserved, Christ's real substantial presence remains also. For the ending of the Eucharistic liturgy is without efficacious impact upon the substantial constitution of the reserved Blessed Sacrament.

By way of the genuine sign-character of the enduring Eucharistic species the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament remains intrinsically linked to the Eucharistic liturgy and by way of the latter to the whole economy of salvation as it is symbolically gathered in the Eucharistic liturgy.⁷⁶ Further, by way of Eucharistic conversion, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is inherently linked to Christ's abiding and lasting personal presence in the sacrament. Adoration simply means to come and give him personally and communally homage, to commune spiritually.

At this point it would be most opportune to reconsider a set of traditional distinctions well established by Aquinas's time that developed in a complex process of early medieval theological discourse: *sacramentum tantum*, the sign only; *res et sacramentum*, the thing and the sign; *res tantum*, the thing only. Thomas employs these terms consistently in his sacramental theology in the *Summa theologiae*. The first, the sign only, refers to what we know as the signification, that is, the species of bread and wine. The second, the thing and the sign, refers to the body and blood of Christ substantially present at the term of the Eucharistic conversion. Now, this is called *res et sacramentum* because not only is it the *res* which is signified by the *sacramentum tantum*, but the signified thing itself, Christ's true body and blood, point beyond themselves and signify the *res tantum*, the spiritual effects of Eucharistic communion, that is, the specific sacramental grace of further incorporation into the mystical body of Christ, which is the perfect union of charity between the head and the body. Hence, rightly understood, Eucharistic adoration is nothing but a proper expression of the union of charity between Christ, the head, and the Church, his body, be it communally or individually.

Aquinas's interpretation makes explicit what the Church's practice entailed long before: Christ's abiding personal presence in the consecrated

⁷⁶ On the mystery of the liturgy in relationship to the economy of salvation as it is gathered in the "eternal liturgy," see Jean Corbon, O.P., *The Wellspring of Worship*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), and on the liturgy as a world of effective signs, see Cyprian Vagaggini, O.S.B., *Theologie der Liturgie*, trans. August Berz (Zurich/Cologne: Benziger, 1959). For an excellent and exhaustive study on Thomas Aquinas's own interpretation of the Eucharistic liturgy, see Franck Quoëx, "Thomas d'Aquin, mystagogue: *L'expositio missae* de la *Somme de Théologie* (IIIa, q. 83, a. 4–5), *Revue Thomiste* 105 (2005): 179–225 and 435–72.

sacrament transcends the boundaries of space and time of each particular Eucharistic celebration. However, Thomas's metaphysical contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery—as well as its conceptual development in the Thomist tradition—remains just that, a contemplation. The mystery is not replaced by “explanation.” The metaphysical contemplation of “making explicit” is never reduced to a merely analytic, puzzle-solving “making sense of.” For what is being attended to remains irreducibly a mystery. Hence a metaphysical contemplation such as the one advanced by Thomas is not a strictly probative argument for the truth of this mystery of faith, but a defensible—and possibly even the most apt—philosophical hermeneutics of the mystery. For Thomas's metaphysical meditation makes explicit what the mystery entails ontologically, offers an account for its logical consistency, and defends its coherence as a supernatural reality. The normative interpretation of the mystery of Eucharistic conversion does not rest, however, with such a metaphysical contemplation, but with *sacra doctrina*, and that in the twofold way of “*lex orandi, lex credendi*,” in the organic unity of the development of the Church's liturgy and the Church's doctrine, both normatively inscribed in and traditioned by the canon of Scripture, the former, like the saints, emerging from the bosom of the Church's life of prayer and the latter finding its proper expression in the Church's teaching, properly determined by the Church's Magisterium (the *determinatio Ecclesiae*). What a metaphysical contemplation like Thomas's tends to make ontologically explicit remains conceptually rightly underdetermined by the liturgy itself, as well as by its magisterial definition. For not even the most profound metaphysical contemplation is ever able exhaustively to make explicit the *mysterium fidei*.

Coda

Hence it should not surprise us that Eucharistic adoration finds its most beautiful expression when metaphysical contemplation gives rise to doxological adoration, when the philosopher bursts out into praise:

Adoro te devote, latens Deitas,
Quae sub his figuris vere latitas:
Tibi se cor meum totum subicit
Quia te contemplan totum deficit.

Visus, tactus, gustus, in te fallitur;
Sed auditu solo tuto creditur.
Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius.
Nil hoc verbo veritatis verius.

Jesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio,
 Oro fiat illud, quod tam sitio,
 Ut te revelata cernens facie,
 Visu sim beatus tuae gloriae.⁷⁷

A Methodological Postscript: Making Explicit the Operative Understanding of Catholic Theology, Philosophy, and Liturgy

By way of a brief methodological postscript I would like to submit what I take to be the proper relationship between theology, philosophy, and the liturgy. This postscript is an attempt at clarifying some vital distinctions that are in grave danger of being disregarded in the recent interest that Anglo-American philosophers began to show in “liturgy,” most widely conceived, as a topic worthy of philosophical attention and analysis. Far from exhaustive, the following observations and theses merely serve as a first *Denkanstoß*.

1. **“Liturgiology.”** Traditionally in Catholicism, as well as in Protestantism, the interpretation of the Christian liturgy has been the proper task of theology (and in Orthodoxy it still is—Orthodox theology at its core being nothing else than a doctrinal unfolding of and contemplation on the divine liturgy) and that meant traditionally (before the fateful Protestant, “Berlin” type divisions into subfields—a development all too happily emulated by Catholic theology in the twentieth century) the task of what now is called “dogmatic” or “systematic” theology. Only in the early twentieth century, based on certain developments in the nineteenth century, did “liturgiology” (*Liturgik/Liturgiewissenschaft*) emerge as a distinct field of the study of Christian liturgies, a subfield that

⁷⁷ Thomas Aquinas, “Adore te devote,” in *The Aquinas Prayer Book*, 68–71:

Devoutly I adore you, hidden Deity,
 Under these appearances concealed.
 To You my heart surrenders self
 For, seeing You, all else must yield.
 Sight and touch and taste here fail;
 Hearing only can be believed.
 I trust what God’s own Son has said.
 Truth from truth is best received.
 Jesus, Whom now I see enveiled,
 What I desire, when will it be?
 Beholding Your fair face revealed,
 Your glory shall I be blessed to see.

- a. unsurprisingly comprises only very few, if any, Quakers and not all too many Pentecostals, but is dominated by Roman Catholic and Anglican scholars, and then well populated by those of Lutheran, Calvinist, or Methodist convictions; and
 - b. operates methodologically in an eclectic way by historical, phenomenological, and anthropological approaches. I think it is fair to say that liturgiology as a distinctive, relatively recent subdiscipline of what is currently called “practical theology” finds itself still in an ongoing internal debate about the exact circumference and the inner coherence of its subject matter, the coherence of its various methodological approaches, and last but not least, the question of to what degree the descriptive, constructive, practical, and normative aspects of the discipline relate to each other.
2. **Philosophy and Christian Liturgy.** When philosophers turn to the liturgy as a topic of inquiry and analysis, we must reasonably assume that philosophy has a *sui generis* approach to the Christian liturgy, an approach *formally* distinct from that taken by theology (and/or from liturgiology). This assumption entails the need for the prior clarification of how theology and philosophy might differ *essentially* in regard to what is constitutive of them as distinct intellectual inquiries. In this essay, I proceeded on the basis of the Thomist understanding that theology proper as *sacra doctrina* is formally constituted by the *scientia Dei et beatorum* as primarily conveyed by Scripture and apostolic *paradosis*. However, it seems not completely clear to me whether there presently exists or ever existed significant agreement among philosophers about the nature and task of philosophy. It might indeed just be the case that various philosophers for various reasons—most likely recognizable and laudable, but implicit, *theological* reasons (and possibly from variant, incompatible perspectives)—make the Christian liturgy a topic of intellectual inquiry—which would in that case be a tacit version of *fides quaerens intellectum*. And as long as one is not able to settle on the proper *formal* objects constitutive of theology and of philosophy as distinct modes of inquiry, these implicit theological motives and interests behind such philosophical inquiries into the Christian liturgy will, in the best of all senses, make these philosophers theologians of sorts (which, of course, is not a bad thing at all). But this circumstance simply raises in a sharper way the fundamental question of what might be the distinct contribution of a properly philosophical inquiry into the Christian liturgy.

3. **Catholic theology, liturgy, philosophy.** Now, for the Catholic theologian—understood here in the precise sense of the vocation of the ecclesial theologian—the situation is somewhat different. For there is a relatively clear (albeit from time to time individually questioned and contested) understanding of how theology relates to Scripture, tradition, and the Magisterium. The task of a fruitful philosophical investigation in relationship to the faith and its proper interpretation by theology is not absolutely prescribed but properly circumscribed in the late Pope John Paul II's encyclical letter *Fides et Ratio*. What *Fides et Ratio* has in mind and wants to encourage is a philosophizing in the full metaphysical range of an inquiry in principle open to the transcendent, a philosophizing that complements the faith in that it supports the *intellectus fidei*; in short, a Christian philosophizing in proper independence from the nature and task of theology proper as *sacra doctrina*.
4. **A normative conditional.** It seems to me that the only way for a Catholic theologian to envision a fruitful philosophical inquiry into the Christian liturgy is on the basis of the following conditional formulated by Ludwig Wittgenstein: "If Christianity is the truth, then all the philosophy about it is false."⁷⁸ I would like to submit that any philosopher who wants to focus on the Christian liturgy as a proper subject matter of inquiry needs to assume the truth of this conditional. In other words, as soon as philosophy is "about" the Christian liturgy in the sense that the latter must needs be "explained" in light of some comprehensive theory that allegedly conveys the presently closest approximation to the truth (let us say, "evolution"), such "philosophy about" is indeed false from the very outset. Only on the assumption that, in Wittgenstein's words, "Christianity is the truth," does it make sense for the Christian liturgy to become a possible topic of philosophical inquiry. Why? For if, on the one hand, Christianity were inherently false, philosophy would lose a proper subject matter for sustained inquiry (because the Christian liturgy would quickly be unmasked as a collective act of self-deception or as a ruse). On the other hand, if the truth of Christianity could be bracketed in the very mode and procedure of inquiry, philosophy as an inquiry *sui generis* would simply disappear, because, after all, *Religionswissenschaft* for quite some time has been studying all kinds of religious convictions, practices, and rituals without any, even hypothetical,

⁷⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 89 (noted in 1949).

commitment to whether what is studied indeed obtains in the way the religions investigated in such ways claim it to obtain.

Hence, the Catholic theologian faced with these alternatives can do at least two things meaningfully. The Catholic theologian can (1) search for and draw upon a philosophical school that (a) is inherently open to the truth—claims of Christianity; that (b) allows for a clear differentiation between the theological and the philosophical task; yet also (c) allows for a proper constructive relationship between the two. (For the Catholic theologian the search for such a philosophy is properly circumscribed most recently by the encyclical *Fides et Ratio*). Furthermore, the Catholic theologian can (2) simply observe and analyze what philosophers say about the liturgy by (a) drawing theologically upon it as helpful forms of interpretation and clarification; or (b) rejecting it theologically as illegitimately reductive; or (c) engaging it philosophically as incoherent, unconvincing, or besides the point.

5. **“Liturgy:” An equivocal, univocal, or analogical term?** Next, the Catholic theologian will have to clarify the use of the notion of “liturgy.” When one looks at the extant variety of Christian worship across the full spectrum of Christian communions, the unavoidable question arises whether the notion “liturgy” simply is an equivocation, or whether it can at all be applied univocally across the board, or whether the only way to use it meaningfully is in an analogical way. Consider the following: For Quakers, on the one hand, there can be a proper communal worship without formal sermon or homily, without the singing of hymns, without formal, communal prayer, without communion. For the Catholic Church, on the other hand, the Christian liturgy in the full, proper, and legitimate sense is the celebration of the Mass, presided over *in persona Christi* by a validly ordained priest, a celebration that takes place in the visible, structural unity of the Church, which finds its concrete expression in the unity of the local church with the bishop, with all bishops, and with the see of Peter. Are these latter normative aspects intrinsic to the essence of Christian liturgy in its proper integrity and plenitude—as it indeed is a “given” to the Catholic theologian? Or are these aspects merely accidental and hence extrinsic to some univocal concept of “liturgy” that could yield an essence in light of which both of the above examples could be equally grasped as particular instantiations of “liturgy” and hence critically assessed over against the shared essence of liturgy? If philosophers were to assume such, Quaker theologians and practitioners as well as Roman Catholic theologians and practitioners

would rightly take umbrage at such a suffocating Hegelian embrace by a univocal concept (*Begriff*), and Wittgenstein would rightly decry such a notion as a dangerous approximation to the “philosophy about” that can only be false. For some such univocal concept of “liturgy” equally applicable to the Quaker meeting, as well as the Catholic Mass would render not only the concrete, incompatible points of each particular way of worship meaningless, but also the theological axioms, underlying each, vacuous. But then, “liturgy” obviously cannot be a pure equivocation either, because clearly intelligible disagreement seems to be possible between various Christian communions about the form, scope, and content of Christian worship. And intelligible disagreements always presuppose some prior agreements (and in the wake of ecumenism, indeed, a growing convergence on a variety of matters). These prior agreements, however, cannot have their root simply in a shared act of stipulation (“Let us agree to call the following a ‘liturgy’ . . .”), but in an indispensable, shared point of reference: the person and work (in late modern lingo, the “identity”) of Jesus Christ.

Hence, any sound philosophical inquiry into Christian liturgy will have to acknowledge the priority of certain theological norms that cannot be philosophically adjudicated, settled, or put aside without simply destroying the proper subject-matter of inquiry and consequently turning into a false “philosophy about.” Moreover and more importantly, since “liturgy” does not seem to be used equivocally across its variety of instantiations, but since a univocal use of the term also does not seem to be defensible, for the Catholic theologian and philosopher, “liturgy” is unavoidably understood in an analogical way, that is, in the precise sense of the analogy by reference to a primary instance of Christian liturgy. This primary instance is nothing less than the heavenly liturgy as symbolically instantiated in the Eucharistic liturgy, the worship of “the Lamb who was slain,” in which together with the angels Christ’s body, the Church, participates, a body that comprises the living, the martyrs and saints in heaven, all the righteous *ab Abel*, as well as the souls in purgatory: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev 6:12) This heavenly liturgy shines forth from the Orthodox iconostasis, presents itself sacramentally in each celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy, and is continued prayerfully in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ See Jean Corbon, O.P., *The Wellspring of Worship* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005).

6. **Catholic theology, philosophy, and the Eucharist.** If it indeed obtains, as the Catholic Church holds, that at its core and in its essence Christian liturgy is identical with the Eucharist, and if indeed it obtains that it comprises the mystery of faith *per se*, the following also obtains:
- a. Any philosophical inquiry will need to rely upon the prior guidance of the apostolic *paradosis*, the canon of Scripture, tradition (comprising dogma and the Church's living Magisterium), and theology in order to be able to even approximate the subject matter properly instead of severely distorting or simply missing the very topic from the outset.
 - b. An inquiry into a mystery of faith means that there are severe limitations to conceptual comprehension.
 - c. Any inquiry into the mystery of faith proper will at best be a hermeneutic of making proximately explicit what is unfathomably entailed in the mystery. However, such an inquiry can never be expected exhaustively to "make sense" of the mystery of faith—as if it were a conceptual problem or puzzle open to some eventual resolution.
 - d. For the Catholic theologian it is not insignificant that the Church's Magisterium has over a long time privileged a particular philosophical tradition (comprising various schools, though) of inquiry and analysis in the Church's proximate *ontological* interpretation of this mystery of faith (transubstantiation). Hence, in the reception and engagement of other philosophical approaches to and interpretations of the Eucharistic mystery, and especially of the Eucharistic conversion, the Catholic theologian will assess the best of the recent interpretive efforts submitted as analogous approximations by reference to a primary instance, this primary instance being what the Fourth Lateran Council termed as "transubstantiation" and what the Council of Trent reaffirmed to be *aptissime* expressed in the notion of "transubstantiation." NV