Marilyn McCord Adams
Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham.
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The Eucharist raises a number of interesting philosophical questions. First, there is the transformation of one substance into another: bread into the Body of Christ, wine into Christ's Blood. This central mystery is complicated further by the stipulation that the previous substance does not remain after the transformation, although its qualities do. Bread is converted into Christ's Body, but the substance that was bread continues to look, smell, and taste like bread. Second, since the two substances are in different places before the conversion—bread on the altar and Christ in heaven—Christ will have to move to the altar to become available to communicants. And if Christ becomes present on one altar, how can he simultaneously be on other altars? Third, if after consecration his Body is truly where the bread was before the consecration, is Christ not vulnerable to causal interaction? Do communicants really bite into Christ's flesh, and can Christ be dropped or spilled on the floor?

If you've ever wondered how theologians of the later scholastic period wrestled with these questions, Marilyn McCord Adams's *Some Later Theories of the Eucharist* is the book you've been waiting for. While she names only the four biggest theologians—Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Scotus, and Ockham—in the subtitle, she also covers a number of lesser-known thinkers who were influential at the time. Adams knows the scholastic landscape well, and she knows too that journeying through it requires some orientation for non-specialists. Accordingly, she begins with a chapter on 'Aristotelian Preliminaries', which aims to set out the philosophical terms and assumptions (e.g. types of change, substantial forms, types of place) that will recur throughout the book. The book is then divided into three parts. The first part, 'Why Sacraments?' (Chapters 2–3), provides some necessary background on Christian sacraments as a form of 'material cult' that uses physical stuff to bring about spiritual effects. Part 2, 'The Metaphysics and Physics of Real Presence' (Chapters 4–10), expounds and analyzes how Aquinas, Giles, Scotus, and Ockham approached the key questions of Eucharistic transformation, multiple location, and causal interaction. As one might expect, these philosopher-theologians agree on some fundamentals but disagree about the details of Eucharistic transformation and real presence. Adams helpfully reminds us throughout of what 'theological consensus' held and how her four authors stood with respect to that consensus. In Part 3, 'What Sort of Union?' (Chapters 11–12), Adams returns to the more purely theological questions of how Christ is received in the Eucharist and why sacraments are not needed by the blessed in heaven.

Medieval debates about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist emerged as early as the ninth century; in the eleventh century Berengar of Tours had raised the

question of how the accidents of bread/wine remain after the consecration; and the term 'transubstantiation' was already in use by the mid-twelfth century. So why does Adams begin as late as Aquinas (1224/6–1274)? Adams answers that her 'interest is in what happens to philosophy and theology when core doctrines are subjected to rigorous analytical attention' (2). This became possible for medieval thinkers only with the translation of Aristotle's major works into Latin, a project not completed until the thirteenth century. The bulk of Adams's study, then, explores how the most prominent scholastic theologians, armed with the tools of Aristotle's logic, physics and metaphysics, sought to explain a change that Aristotle never envisioned.

After the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, theologians were required to use the term 'transubstantiation' of the Eucharistic conversion and Christ's real presence (138), but there was considerable flexibility in its explanation. 'Thomistic transubstantiation', as Adams calls it, addresses the 'movement' of the Body of Christ—normally located in heaven—to where the bread is by 'absolute whole being conversion' (90). Since the term-from-which (bread) and the term-to-which (Body of Christ) differ entirely, this conversion breaks with the Aristotelian model of change, which presupposes a common substrate. Yet the bread substance is not exactly annihilated, and the bread's accidents (qualities and quantity) clearly remain as before. Importantly, Christ's Body is present, but not in the normal and natural way it is in heaven, where the whole Christ—body, soul, divinity, and accidents—resides.

Giles largely accepts Aquinas's account of transubstantiation, but seeks a deeper explanation of the 'no common-constituent' problem (99). His 'daring' suggestion is that God must act directly on the matter's *quiddity*—not the quantified individual matter of this bread, but 'common matter'—in order to reproduce numerically the same form in many hosts and on many altars simultaneously. Giles further proposes that Christ's Body, when sacramentally present, will have no categorial position but only quantitative position, so that while present as a whole under the host (quantitative position), Christ's Body will not be extended in place (categorial position). Since Christ's Body is not naturally present on the altar, it is likewise not causally exposed to acting or being acted on.

While Scotus accepts Giles's categorial/quantitative distinction, he objects that Thomistic transubstantiation should place the bread in heaven rather than Christ on the altar (112). For Scotus real presence is an external relation, so that substance can exist without it. However, Christ's non-natural, 'sacramental' mode of existence, simultaneous as it is with Christ's natural-mode existence in heaven, is itself miraculous. Yet another concern is how to maintain the internal structure of Christ's Body (e.g., head connected to neck and not feet) when it is present without being extended. Ockham parts company from the other three in thinking the categorial/quantitative distinction inadequate and argues instead that divine power must be able to bring about multiple locations of bodies and body parts (163). Scotus and Ockham also reject Aquinas's whole-being conversion approach to transubstantiation, which they propose to explain through a series of gain- and loss-changes—what Scotus calls 'translative transubstantiation'. Christ's Body gains the place that the bread previously had, but the bread's ceasing to exist and Christ's

coming to exist are concomitant. Lateran IV had ruled out the co-existence of bread and Christ's Body ('consubstantiation'), so Scotus and Ockham are left to admit that the bread substance is in some sense annihilated.

Picking up where Gary Macy's *Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period* (1984) left off, Adams's work fills a gap in the literature. Her careful exposition of the four principal authors affords as clear and helpful a guide as anyone could wish for; even so, anyone but the specialist reader will likely need all the help Adams gives. For scholars of medieval theology this book will be indispensable. Those studying medieval philosophy will find much of interest if they are willing to cross over to the theological terrain explored by these philosopher-theologians. Adams is aware that few readers will likely share both her 'twin passions' for Eucharistic piety and scholastic analysis and so has written the book to offer something to each kind of reader. That said, there is far more food here for those seeking philosophy than piety.

There can be little question about the value of this book. Ranging over a central yet under-explored theological topic, Adams combines expert handling of the medieval sources with her well-known philosophical acumen. As promised, she sticks to interpreting the texts rather than providing her own views, though a careful reading will uncover occasional criticisms she offers of each author. The result is a clearly written and penetrating study that will engage interested philosophers and medievalists. I found it unusual, despite the many references to medieval texts, that Adams does not *quote* from her authors at length but instead summarizes their positions by means of numbered propositions. If some readers find the book difficult, it will be due more to the subtlety of the debates under study than to Adams's efforts to expound them. One could hardly ask for a more informed, organized, and even energetic guide—she frequently inserts exclamation marks for emphasis—than Adams.

For readers who persevere, there is plenty of meat here for those desiring a meticulous analysis of what is unmistakably a miraculous, yet perhaps explicable, change. Some philosophers, I suspect, will feel that Aristotle's principles undergo too much contortion in the cause of that explication. For others the appeals to divine omnipotence to achieve Christ's presence without undesirable consequences (e.g., causal exposure in the process of communion) will not satisfy. As Adams remarks repeatedly, the theology here 'provokes' philosophy to extend its considerations beyond what is normally and naturally possible. Yet the medieval philosopher-theologians never despair of explaining the mechanics of the central Christian sacrament, even with tools not designed for the task, and Adams never tires in her project of explaining how they attempted to do so.

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