

Ontology, Theology and the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham¹

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The present paper argues that while Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham disagree about the metaphysical status of 'quantity' as articulated in their respective eucharistic theologies, they agree about the theologically more significant issue regarding the metaphysical status of the real substantial presence of Christ's body. The essay proceeds by first examining Thomas's account of eucharistic presence, eucharistic change, and eucharistic accidents before considering Ockham's argument against Thomas's account of quantity. The paper subsequently turns to the agreements between Thomas and Ockham, before concluding that while Thomas's account of transubstantiation is a historically significant contribution to eucharistic theology, Ockham's interpretation of eucharistic transubstantiation is also a valuable resource for modern theologians investigating the relationship between ontology and the Lord's supper.

Since the sixteenth century the Eucharist has been an unfortunate point of division between Protestants and Catholics, with perhaps the greatest divisions persisting as internecine disagreements among various Protestant groups. This year's colloquium theme—i.e., the metaphysical implications of the *Catholic* doctrine of the Eucharist—would, with the exception of the qualifier 'Catholic,' be a good point of departure for a discussion between Protestant and Catholic theologians. For, as is well known, the debate about the ontological status of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist was a central point of disagreement between theologians such as Huldrych Zwingli (1531), Johannes Oecolampadius (1531) and John Calvin (1564) on the one hand, and Thomas Aquinas or the canons of Lateran IV or Trent, on the other.² That is, the disagreement between theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and Huldrych Zwingli could profitably be analyzed as a disagreement about the ontological status of the substance of Christ as present, or not, on the eucharistic table (i.e., as a debate about substantial real presence).

Lamentably, the sixteenth-century Reformation of the Western Latin Church produced significant collateral damage. By collateral damage I do not mean here martyrs who died for the faith; but, instead, intellectual and theological collateral damage that resulted from the debates of the sixteenth century. To give some sense of what I have in mind, it is instructive to consider

¹ The present paper was given at the 2013 *Metaphysics Colloquium* held at Saint Anselm College. As a respondent to Professor Bruce D. Marshall's paper, I took the liberty of engaging in the "ecumenical possibility/implications" that he suggests in the close of his paper. Thus, while the present essay does not engage with his argument formally, it is inspired by both his meticulous scholarship and (more importantly) his broader theological sensibilities. I thank Bruce for suggestions (bibliographic and otherwise) that have improved this essay. I am also grateful to Kevin McMahan for inviting me to participate in the 2013 *Metaphysics Colloquium*.

² The literature on sixteenth-century eucharistic theology is immense. For a useful introduction, see Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), and her edited volume, *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Reformation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2014). Further, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

Denys Turner's discussion of the Eucharist in his recent work *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait*. Turner argues that the era of sixteenth-century reform led to the unfortunate situation in which Protestant and Catholic eucharistic theology tended to be divided by means of an artificial distinction between the presence of a thing as a "sign" or the presence of a thing as a real "thing."³ This division between *signum* and *res*—to use Augustine's language—was foreign to the medieval mind; medieval theologians understood both as essential to eucharistic theology such that Thomas would define a sacrament as a "sign that effects what it signifies."⁴ Expanding a bit on Turner's claim, consider Peter Lombard's organization of the four books of the *Sentences* which followed Augustine's distinction in *De doctrina Christiana* between things (*res*) and signs (*signum*), and applied that language to eucharistic theology in book IV (i.e., all signs are things, but not all things are signs).⁵ In short, I think Turner is correct to note that one unintended consequence of the sixteenth-century debates was an artificial division between an emphasis on "signs" versus "things" in the development of Protestant and Catholic eucharistic theologies respectively. This, I would argue, is one significant and unintended consequence of those heated sixteenth-century debates. But there are others.

With respect to eucharistic theology one can note that as a result of the sixteenth-century debates a strong antipathy developed in response to fourteenth-century theories. One reason, perhaps, is because Ockham's eucharistic theology has often been linked with the theology of Martin Luther. For example, the great German historian of Dogma, Adolph von Harnack, argued that in his eucharistic theology, Martin Luther "called in the aid of Occam's Scholasticism... [and] adopted [the] hypothetical speculations of the Nominalists."⁶ Whatever the truth of such statements, one unfortunate implication of the sixteenth-century reformation of the Church is that Ockham's eucharistic theology is linked with the Protestant Reformation in such a way that it is considered "un-Catholic" in a problematic and, without a doubt, anachronistic way.⁷

³ Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 242. Turner writes: "Why make the distinction between real presence and presence in a sign into a polarized opposition unless, on some epistemic grounds derived otherwise than from a decent eucharistic theology, the lines of connection between 'presence,' 'reality,' and 'sign' have been fractured, the joints dislocated, such that presence as sign and real presence must needs be opposed to each other? We will, however, get nowhere with Thomas on the Eucharist unless we can bracket out what, for him, would have been an entirely misleading way of construing 'the real' and 'the sign' as terms of contrast standing in such mutual exclusion" (pp. 245-46).

⁴ Turner, *Thomas Aquinas*, p. 239.

⁵ See Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in IV Libris Distinctae*, ed. I. Brady, in 3 vol. (Spicilegium Bonaventurianum IV-VI) (Grottaferrata: Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1971 and 1981), book IV, dd. 8-13 (Brady II, pp. 280-315).

⁶ Adolph von Harnack, *History of Dogma*, trans. Neil Buchanan, 7 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1905), vol. 7, pp. 262 and 264.

⁷ The collateral damage produced by the era of sixteenth-century reform is not limited to eucharistic theology. Another unfortunate, and broader sweeping, outcome of the age of reform is the fact that for the past century and a half Protestants and Catholics abandoned fourteenth- and fifteenth-century theology more broadly conceived: Protestant theologians viewing it as a period of decadent scholasticism that represented everything that Luther fought to overturn, while Catholic theologians tended to view it as a theological wasteland that unintentionally produced the Protestant Reformation. Thus, as Heiko Oberman argued throughout his career, the fourteenth century is claimed by no one. On the complex historiography, see John Inglis, *Spheres of Philosophical Inquiry and the Historiography of Medieval Philosophy* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998). Regarding Heiko Oberman's general approach, see *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker

The present paper will discuss some of the collateral damage that originated with the sixteenth-century Reformation. I will do so by attempting to clear some conceptual space: in particular, some conceptual space for fourteenth-century eucharistic theology. My intention in doing so is to encourage theologians of disparate ecclesial affiliations to study in depth the rich theological tradition that flourished during the height of the scholastic project. To achieve this end I will focus on the eucharistic theology of Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham. I begin with a short description of Thomas's eucharistic theology, considering briefly three central aspects: eucharistic presence, eucharistic change and eucharistic accidents. Second, I will summarize William of Ockham's central argument in response to Thomas's account of transubstantiation. Third, having discussed some of the disagreements between the positions of Thomas and Ockham, I will argue that regarding the colloquium topic of 'eucharistic ontology' Thomas and Ockham actually agree about more than they disagree about. Finally, I will conclude with a few remarks on why I think Ockham's theology in particular, and fourteenth-century theology broadly conceived, warrants careful study. In a way, therefore, I am expanding a bit on a theme that Bruce Marshall raised at the end of his paper—the idea of broadening the dialogue partners, as he did through Scotus, as a means of not only opening up ecumenical dialogue, but also the discussion within Catholic theology proper.

I. Eucharistic Presence, Eucharistic Change, and Eucharistic Accidents

Thomas Aquinas developed his theology of the Eucharist in several works, including his *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* and the *Summa theologiae*.⁸ The following discussion is limited to Thomas's account as developed in the *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae* and is selectively focused on the Angelic Doctor's account of eucharistic presence, eucharistic change and eucharistic accidents.⁹

Academic, 2000); and *The Dawn of the Reformation: Essays in Late Medieval and Reformation Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992).

⁸ The *Scriptum* is published as: *Scriptum super libros sententiarum magistri Petri Lombard Episcopi Parisiensis*, 4 vols., ed. P. Mandonnet and M. F. Moos (Paris: 1929-1947). The *Summae Theologiae* is found in: *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, doctoris angelici Opera Omnia iussu Leonis XIII. O.M. edita., cura et studio fratrum praedicatorum* (Rome: 1882-1996), vols. 4-11. I have used throughout the online edition of the *Summa Theologiae* found at: www.corpusthomicum.org. I have also cited the English edition published as, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols., trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1981). For citations of the *Summa* I give the part, question and article, followed by the page number for the English edition in parentheses.

⁹ The literature on Thomas's eucharistic theology (and medieval eucharistic theology more broadly) is immense. Regarding Thomas, see: Edward Schillebeeckx, *L'économie sacramentelle du salut : réflexion théologique sur la doctrine sacramentaire de saint Thomas, à la lumière de la tradition et de la problématique sacramentelle contemporaine*, trans. Benoît-Dominique de la Soujeole (Studia Fribourgensia 95) (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004). For shorter pieces, see Reinhard Hütter, "Transubstantiation Revisited: Sacra Doctrina, Dogma, and Metaphysics," in *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, & the Moral Life*, ed. Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America, 2010), pp. 21-79; Bruce D. Marshall, "The Whole Mystery of Our Salvation: Saint Thomas Aquinas on the Eucharist as Sacrifice," in *Rediscovering Aquinas and the Sacraments: Studies in Sacramental Theology*, ed. Matthew Levering and Michael Dauphinais (Chicago, IL: Hillenbrand Books, 2009), pp. 39-64.

For studies on Medieval eucharistic theology, see: (early medieval) Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period: A Study of the Salvific Function of the Sacrament according to the*

Eucharistic Presence

In question 76 of the third part of the *Summa Theologiae* Thomas Aquinas defends the thesis that the entire Christ (*totus Christus*) is present in the sacrament of the Eucharist. According to Thomas, Christ is present in the Eucharist in a twofold manner: (1) first by the power of the sacrament (*ex vi sacramenti*); and (2), second, by natural concomitance (*ex naturali concomitantia*). By means of the power of the sacrament, Thomas argues that “there is under the species of this sacrament that into which the pre-existing substance of the bread and wine is changed.”¹⁰ Thus, the words of institution—*hoc est corpus meum, hic est sanguis meus*—effect a substantial change, *ex vi sacramenti*, such that the substance of the bread and wine are converted into the body and blood of Christ. The substance of the bread and wine—both their substantial form and their matter—are converted and cease to exist. Second, Thomas argues that by natural concomitance there is a real union between the substance of Christ and the accidental properties of the host (e.g., the quality and quantity of the host etc.). Thus, the accidents of the host—which, subsequent to the words of institution, persist without the substance of the host—now persist by means of natural concomitance ‘over’ the substance of Christ.

Thomas argues that as a logical consequence of the claim that the substance of Christ’s body is present in the sacrament by the power of the sacrament (*ex vi sacramenti*) and that the accidental property of Christ’s dimensive quantity is present by means of natural concomitance (*ex vi realis concomitantiae*), it follows that Christ’s body is present substantively but not dimensionally.¹¹ That is, Christ is substantially present but not accidentally present in terms of the accidents’ relation to space: i.e. Christ is not physically present in the same way that a person is normally present in a room. This fact allows Thomas to claim that Christ can be substantially present on the eucharistic table simultaneously in Churches throughout Christendom.

Theologians c. 1080-c. 1220 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); (late medieval) Paul J. J. M. Bakker, “La Raison et Le Miracle: Les Doctrines Eucharistiques (c. 1250- c. 1400.)” PhD Dissertation, Nijmegen, 1999. See also the article by Stephen E. Lahey that follows closely the work of Bakker, “Late Medieval Eucharistic Theology,” in *A Companion to the Eucharist in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ian Christopher Levy, Gary Macy, and Kristen Van Ausdall (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2012), pp. 499-540. For a discussion of the Eucharist in the medieval culture, see Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 76, a. 1 (p. 2449): “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 speciebus huius sacramenti id in quod directe convertitur substantia panis et vini praeexistens, prout significatur per verba formae, quae sunt effectiva in hoc sacramento sicut et in ceteris, 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.”

¹¹ Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 76, a. 3 (p. 2451): “Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut ex supra dictis patet, quia in hoc sacramento substantia corporis Christi est ex vi sacramenti, quantitas autem dimensiva ex vi realis concomitantiae, corpus 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 quantitas dimensiva alicuius corporis est sub quantitate dimensiva loci.”

Clarifying precisely how Christ is substantively present in the Eucharist, Thomas argues that Christ is neither circumscriptively (circumscriptive) present nor definitively present (*definitive*).¹² Circumscriptive presence is the presence that an ordinary body consisting of form and matter has with respect to a given place (e.g., the presence of a tree), whereas definitive presence is the presence that a non-extended body has with respect to a given place (e.g., the presence of an angel). Thomas argues that Christ is clearly not circumscriptively present in the way that a normal object is present in a place. Further, Thomas argues that Christ is not definitively present because, if He were, He would only be “on a particular altar” when the sacrament was performed. Therefore, Thomas concludes that Christ is neither circumscriptively nor definitively present on the eucharistic table.

As Paul Bakker has discussed, theologians such as the Dominican Peter Tarantaise († 1276) and the Franciscan Nicholas of Ockham (†c. 1320) were sympathetic with this account of eucharistic presence, while others such as John Peckham († 1292), William of Mare (†c. 1285) and Peter John Olivi († 1298) were highly critical.¹³ Thus, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century there was a lively and ongoing debate about the philosophical and theological aspects of Thomas’s account of eucharistic presence.

Eucharistic Change

The second topic that must be discussed with respect to Thomas is his account of eucharistic change. In his analysis of eucharistic presence Thomas stated that the substance of the bread and wine were *converted* into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. This posed a potential problem, because according to Aristotle change must occur to a substance. As Stephen Lahey explains,

Aristotle’s conception of substance is of a union of *form* and *matter*, which provides the ontological basis for qualities, quantity, relation, and changes that affect the being of the substance. So any change that occurs in a thing requires substance in which the change takes place.¹⁴

The implication is that for any change to take place there has to be an underlying substance that is the object of change. To take a common example, if a red house is painted white, the change in color must happen to a substance: there must be a substance (i.e., a union of matter and form) that is in fact changed, in this case a house. The problem, as one can anticipate, is that according to the doctrine of transubstantiation the substance of the bread and wine cease to exist and are transformed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. But, if the substance of the bread

¹² Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 76, a. 5, ad 1 (p. 2453): “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod corpus Christi non est in hoc sacramento definitive, quia sic non esset alibi quam in hoc altari ubi conficitur hoc sacramentum; cum tamen sit et in caelo in propria specie, et in multis aliis altaribus sub specie sacramenti. Similiter etiam patet quod non est in hoc sacramento circumscriptive, quia non est ibi secundum commensurationem propriae quantitatis, ut dictum est.”

¹³ See Bakker, *La Raison et Le Miracle*, pp. 40-49.

¹⁴ Lahey, “Late Medieval Eucharistic Theology,” p. 516.

and wine cease to exist (or are annihilated) there is no persisting medium—i.e., no persisting substance or subject—that is the object of change.¹⁵

Thomas's solution to the problem is that the substance of the bread and wine are not annihilated, but converted into the substance of Christ's body. He explains that the substance of Christ is not immediately present by local motion, but that it is present "by change of the substance of bread into [Christ's body]."¹⁶ This change is not a natural change; this eucharistic conversion, Thomas argues, is entirely supernatural and takes place by God's power alone (*sola Dei virtute effecta*).¹⁷ But, the question remains: is the substance of the bread or wine annihilated? Thomas concludes that the substance of the bread and wine are neither converted into their original matter (i.e., the four elements of air, earth, fire and water) nor annihilated. Thomas rejects the idea that the substance of the bread and wine are converted into their original matter; for, as he notes, if this were the case one would expect to see some aspect of the four elements residually present on the eucharistic table (i.e., the observer would expect to see a little flash of fire, or a little pool of water).¹⁸ Further, Thomas is clear that the substance in question is not annihilated: he writes that "it does not follow that [the substance of the bread] is annihilated . . . for it is changed into the body of Christ."¹⁹ The upshot is that there is a true conversion.

Thomas presents eucharistic change as a bit of a riddle that encourages and invites theological commentary. He states first that after consecration of the host the proposition "The

¹⁵ *Nota bene*: Peter Lombard addressed the problem by arguing that the substance of the bread and wine remains in the consecrated elements (often called remanentism). For a discussion of Peter Lombard's eucharistic theology, see Marcia Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), vol. 2, pp. 551-83. For a broader treatment, see Gary Macy, *The Theologies of the Eucharist in the Early Scholastic Period*. The Lombard's eucharistic theology is developed in the fourth book of the *Sentences*, dd. 8-13 (Brady II, pp. 280-315).

¹⁶ Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 75, a. 2 (p. 2441): "Non autem aliquid potest esse alicubi ubi prius non erat, nisi per loci mutationem, vel per alterius conversionem in ipsum, sicut in domo aliqua de novo incipit esse ignis aut quod illuc defertur, aut quod ibi generatur. Manifestum est autem quod corpus Christi non incipit esse in hoc sacramento per motum localem. Primo quidem, quia sequeretur quod desineret esse in caelo, non enim quod localiter movetur, pervenit de novo ad aliquem locum, nisi deserat priorem. Secundo, quia omne corpus localiter motum pertransit omnia media, quod hic dici non potest. Tertio, quia impossibile est quod unus motus eiusdem corporis localiter moti terminetur simul ad diversa loca, cum tamen in pluribus locis corpus Christi sub hoc sacramento simul esse incipiat. Et propter hoc relinquatur quod non possit aliter corpus Christi incipere esse de novo in hoc sacramento nisi per conversionem substantiae panis in ipsum."

¹⁷ Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 75, a. 4 (pp. 2443-44): "Haec tamen conversio non est similis conversionibus naturalibus, sed est omnino supernaturalis, sola Dei virtute effecta. . . Non igitur solum potest perficere conversionem formalem, ut scilicet diversae formae sibi in eodem subiecto succedant, sed conversionem totius entis, ut scilicet tota substantia huius convertatur in totam substantiam illius. Et hoc agitur divina virtute in hoc sacramento. Nam tota substantia panis convertitur in totam substantiam corporis Christi, et tota substantia vini in totam substantiam sanguinis Christi. Unde haec conversio non est formalis, sed substantialis. Nec continetur inter species motus naturalis, sed proprio nomine potest dici transubstantiatio."

¹⁸ Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 75, a. 3 (p. 2442): "Praeiacens autem materia in quam corpora mixta resolvi possunt, sunt quatuor elementa, non enim potest fieri resolutio in materiam primam, ita quod sine forma existat, quia materia sine forma esse non potest. Cum autem post consecrationem nihil sub speciebus sacramenti remaneat nisi corpus et sanguis, oportebit dicere quod elementa in quae resoluta est substantia panis et vini, inde discedant per motum localem. Quod sensu perciperetur."

¹⁹ Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 75, a. 3, ob. 1 (p. 2443): "Non tamen sequitur quod annihiletur, convertitur enim in corpus Christi."

substance of the bread is something” is false. Conversely stated, after the consecration of the host it is true to state that the substance of the bread and wine are nothing. Further, Thomas states that that into which the substance of the bread is changed into is some thing (*aliquid*). That is, there is some thing—some *res*—that the substance of the bread and wine become. Therefore, despite the fact that the substance of the bread is no longer a thing (*res*), it does not follow that the substance is annihilated (*annihilata*).²⁰ While this seems at first like a distinction without a difference, the theological point here is that the substance of the bread and wine are not annihilated but converted into another substance.

Eucharistic Accidents

As noted above, Thomas argues that eucharistic change consists of a substantial change such that the substance of the bread and wine are converted into the substance of the body of Christ. But, as medieval theologians realized, this posed the particularly difficult problem of explaining how the accidents of the bread and wine are observed, touched and tasted by celebrants. In short, how do the accidental properties of bread and wine persist given that the substance ceases to exist? In distinction 12 of the fourth book of the *Sentences*, Peter Lombard argued that the accidents of bread and wine persist without a subject. He writes:

If it is asked about the accidents which remain, namely species, taste, and weight, in what subject they inhere, it seems to me to be better to profess that they exist without a subject than that they are in a subject; because there is no substance there, apart from that of the Lord’s body and blood, which is not joined to those accidents.²¹

The Lombard’s solution, therefore, was to simply argue that the accidents of bread and wine persist without a subject; in fact, the Lombard is quite specific about it, claiming that the accidents subsist through themselves (*per se subsistentia*).²² This somewhat simplistic, albeit straightforward, solution to the problem was rejected by Thomas.²³

Thomas argues that the subject (*subiectum*) of the accidents (e.g. the color, taste, smell, etc.) of the bread and wine is not the substance of the bread and wine—as the substance of the bread and wine has been converted into the substance of the body of Christ—but instead the

²⁰ Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 75, a. 3, ob. 3 (p. 2443): “Ad tertium dicendum quod, licet post consecrationem haec sit falsa ‘substantia panis est aliquid’; id tamen in quod substantia panis conversa est, est aliquid. Et ideo substantia panis non est annihilata.”

²¹ Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 12, c. 1 (Brady II, p. 304³⁻⁷): “Si autem quaeritur de accidentibus quae remanent, scilicet de speciebus et sapore et pondere, in quo subiecto fundentur, potius mihi videtur fatendum existere sine subiecto, quam esse in subiecto; quia ibi non est substantia nisi corporis et sanguinis dominici, quae non afficitur illis accidentibus.” See the translation by Giulio Silano, *The Sentences, Book IV, On the Doctrine of Signs* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2010), p. 60.

²² Lombard, *Sent.* IV, d. 12, c. 1 (Brady II, p. 304⁸⁻¹¹).

²³ On the question of whether or not the accidents remain in the sacrament without a subject, see Thomas, *ST*. III^a, q. 77, a. 1 (pp. 2456-57).

dimensional quantity (*quantitas dimensionalis*) of the bread and wine.²⁴ Following Aristotle's *Categories*, Thomas argues that the composition of things consists of substance and nine categories of accidental being. Accidents, as Thomas notes, generally inhere in a substance; that said, if the substance of a thing no longer persists, Thomas argues that God can bring it about by an act of his divine power (*virtute divina*)²⁵ that an accident exists by itself such that it functions as the subject of other accidents.²⁶ The accident that functions in this particular way (i.e., as a subject of the other accidents), according to Thomas, is quantity. The upshot is that for Thomas the dimensional quantity of the bread truly subsists and persists while the other eucharistic accidents (e.g., the color, texture, smell, and taste of the bread) inhere in it.²⁷ To borrow a term from Stephen Lahey, according to Thomas the quantity of the bread functions as a 'substance proxy' for the other accidents, such that it is the subject of the other accidents.²⁸

Finally, regarding Christ's accidents, which are not experientially present on the altar, Thomas argues that because the whole Christ is present, his accidents are present by natural concomitance. Thomas will argue that "not only the flesh, but the entire body of Christ, that is, his bones, the nerves, and the like" are present.²⁹ And, as if to clarify the matter explicitly, he writes that "by reason of real concomitance the whole dimensional quantity of Christ's body and all its other accidents (*et omnia alia accidentia*) are in this sacrament."³⁰ Therefore, Christ—the whole Christ (*totus Christus*) consisting of both his substance and all of His accidents—is present on the eucharistic table.

²⁴ Thomas, *ST. III*^a, q. 77, a. 2, sed contra (p. 2458): "Sed contra est quod qualitates non sunt divisibiles nisi per accidens, scilicet ratione subiecti. Dividuntur autem qualitates remanentes in hoc sacramento per divisionem quantitatis dimensionalis, sicut patet ad sensum. Ergo quantitas dimensionalis est subiectum accidentium quae remanent in hoc sacramento."

²⁵ Thomas, *ST. III*^a, q. 77, a. 1 (p. 2457): "Et ideo relinquitur quod accidentia in hoc sacramento manent sine subiecto. Quod quidem virtute divina fieri potest. Cum enim effectus magis dependeat a causa prima quam a causa secunda, potest Deus, qui est prima causa substantiae et accidentis, per suam infinitam virtutem conservare in esse accidens subtracta substantia, per quam conservabatur in esse sicut per propriam causam, sicut etiam alios effectus naturalium causarum potest producere sine naturalibus causis; sicut corpus humanum formavit in utero virginis sine virili semine."

²⁶ Thomas, *ST. III*^a, q. 77, a. 2, ad. 1 (p. 2458): "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod accidens per se non potest esse subiectum alterius accidentis, quia non per se est. Secundum vero quod est in alio, unum accidens dicitur esse subiectum alterius, in quantum unum accidens recipitur in subiecto alio mediante, sicut superficies dicitur esse subiectum coloris. Unde, quando accidenti datur divinitus ut per se sit, potest etiam per se alterius accidentis esse subiectum."

²⁷ Bakker provides a fine overview of Thomas's account. He divides the theory into three parts: (1) Thomas redefines the traditional notions of substance and accident; (2) given the redefined notion of an accident, Thomas argues that one can distinguish between potential inherence and actual inherence (in the case of the Eucharist, potential inherence replaces actual inherence); and (3) Thomas argues that the quantity of the bread and wine really subsists and that the other accidents inhere in it. See *La Raison et Le Miracle*, pp. 294-302.

²⁸ Lahey, "Late Medieval Eucharistic Theology," p. 524.

²⁹ Thomas, *ST. III*^a, q. 76, a. 1, ad. 2 (p. 2449): "Ad secundum dicendum quod ex vi sacramenti sub hoc sacramento continentur, quantum ad species panis, non solum caro, sed totum corpus Christi, id est ossa et nervi et alia huiusmodi."

³⁰ Thomas, *ST. III*^a, q. 76, a. 4 (p. 2452): "Quia tamen substantia corporis Christi realiter non denudatur a sua quantitate dimensionali et ab aliis accidentibus, inde est quod, ex vi realis concomitantiae, est in hoc sacramento tota quantitas dimensionalis corporis Christi, et omnia alia accidentia eius."

II. Ockham's Critique of Thomas's Account of Transubstantiation

William of Ockham is somewhat infamous for his critique of Thomas's account of transubstantiation. Because Ockham left numerous treatises analyzing the Eucharist—and because he was famously willing to examine the theological merits of various positions (e.g., both models of transubstantiation and consubstantiation)—presenting his definitive position is a somewhat complicated matter.³¹ A useful starting point is his brief overview in *quodlibet* IV on the question “whether the substance of the bread remains after the consecration?”³² Ockham argues here that there are basically three options with respect to real presence: (1) the substance of the bread that existed previously is subsequently identical with the flesh of Christ; (2) the substance of the bread and wine cease to exist there, with their accidents remaining, and the body of Christ begins to exist under those accidents; or (3) the substance of the bread and wine remain there and the substance of Christ remains in the same place (together with the substance of the bread and wine).³³

Ockham argues in response to the first position that it is irrational (*irrationabilis*) because any proposition in which the body of Christ is predicated of the bread is impossible.³⁴ His response to the second position, i.e., transubstantiation, is that this is the common opinion of the theologians and that he holds it on account of the determination of the Church (*determinationem Ecclesiae*) and not because of any argument (*non propter aliquam rationem*).³⁵ In response to the third opinion, i.e., consubstantiation, Ockham responds by stating that this position would be very reasonable (*multum rationabilis*) if the determination of the Church were not opposed to

³¹ The best discussion of Ockham's eucharistic theology remains, Gabriel Buescher, *The Eucharistic Teaching of William Ockham* (St. Bonaventure NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1950). See also, Marilyn McCord Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist: Thomas Aquinas, Giles of Rome, Duns Scotus, and William Ockham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 152-176.

³² Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 30 (*OT* IX, p. 448; Freddoso-Kelley, p. 369). Ockham's *quodlibets* are found in *opera theologica* IX of, William of Ockham, *Opera Philosophica et Theologica*, ed. Gedeon Gál, et al., 17 vols. (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1967-88). For all references to the *Opera Philosophica et Theologica* I abbreviate the individual volumes as *OP* and *OT*, followed by the volume number, page number and line numbers in superscript. Further, for the *quodlibets* I have followed the translation (with amendments) of Alfred J. Freddoso and Francis E. Kelley, *Quodlibetal Questions, volumes 1 and 2, quodlibets 1-7* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991).

³³ Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 30 (*OT* IX, p. 449¹⁰⁻¹⁹; Freddoso-Kelley, p. 370): “In ista quaestione sicut recitat Magister Sententiarum, lib. IV, d. 11; et Hostiensis in *Summa, Extravagantes: De consecratione*; et *Glossa, De consecratione*, d. 2, *In sacramentorum*; et *Glossa, Extravagantes: De celebratione missarum, Cum Marthae*, fuerunt antiquitus tres opiniones: prima, quod substantia panis quae praefuit primo, postea est caro Christi; secunda est quod substantia panis et vini ibi desinit esse et manet accidentia tantum, et sub illis incipit esse corpus Christi; tertia, quod remanet ibi substantia panis et vini, et in eodem loco cum illa substantia manet corpus Christi.”

³⁴ Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 30 (*OT* IX, p. 449²¹⁻²²; Freddoso-Kelley, p. 370): “Prima est irrationabilis, quia omnis propositio in qua praedicatur corpus Christi de pane est impossibilis.”

³⁵ Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 30 (*OT* IX, pp. 449-50²³⁻²⁹; Freddoso-Kelley, pp. 370): “Secunda est communis opinio omnium theologorum, quam teneo propter determinationem Ecclesiae et non propter aliquam rationem. Unde dicit Innocentius tertius, *Extravagantes: De Summa Trinitate et fide catholica, Firmiter*, sicut allegatum est in praecedenti quaestione, quod corpus Christi continetur sub illis speciebus, transsubstantiatis pane in corpus et vino in sanguinem potestate divina.”

it.³⁶ Ockham argues that consubstantiation is not only consistent with scriptural teaching—it also avoids the difficulties that follow from the separation of the accidents of the bread and wine from their subject. Ockham gives further justification in question 30 of *quodlibet* IV for the preference of consubstantiation, but it is enough at present to note that Ockham is clearly divided between the determination of the Church on one hand and philosophical and theological argumentation on the other.

As one can imagine, Ockham’s willingness to explore at great length the theological and philosophical aspects of transubstantiation and consubstantiation is often viewed with some disdain. That said, there is really no question that Ockham supports a view of transubstantiation because it is the determination of the Church, while simultaneously arguing that consubstantiation avoids the numerous philosophical problems that, from his perspective, bedevil transubstantiation. But, what exactly does Ockham mean when he states that there are “difficulties that follow upon the separation of the accidents from their subject (*difficultates quae sequuntur ex separationem accidentium a subiecto*)?”

Quantity

William of Ockham’s eucharistic theology presents a substantive critique of Thomas’s account of quantity. As Marilyn McCord Adams writes, “when it comes to accounting for the real presence of Christ’s Body in the Eucharist, [for Ockham] everything depends on quantity.”³⁷ Ockham’s philosophical account of quantity is extensive and discussed at length in numerous works.³⁸ Throughout many of these tracts, his account of quantity is presented first as an interpretation of Aristotle and subsequently applied to a discussion of eucharistic theology. Here I will summarize Ockham’s account of quantity as it relates to the Eucharist as well as consider briefly his methodological approach to this question.

Following Aristotle, Ockham argues that there are substances and nine categories of accidents. A substance is any thing (*res*) that exists and is distinct from other things. The nine categories of accidents are names or concepts that signify a substance in a particular way; e.g., one can say that ‘a rock is under a tree,’ thus signifying by means of the category of relation that one particular substance (i.e. the rock) is relationally found underneath another substance (i.e. the tree). In such a statement, the category of relation is a concept that is used to describe the spatial location of one substance in relation to another substance. Thus, as Ockham understands things,

³⁶ Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 30 (*OT* IX, pp. 450³⁰⁻⁴⁰; Freddoso-Kelley, pp. 370-71): “Tertia opinio esset multum rationabilis nisi esset determinatio Ecclesiae in contrarium, quia illa opinio salvat et vitat omnes difficultates quae sequuntur ex separationem accidentium a subiecto, nec contrarium illius habetur in canone Bibliae. Nec includit aliquam contradictionem corpus Christi plus coexistere substantiae panis quam eius accidentibus; nec repugnat rationi, tum quia tantum repugnat quantitas quantitati sicut substantia substantiae, sed duae quantitates possunt existere simul in eodem loco, sicut patet de duobus corporibus existentibus in eodem loco, tum quia substantia Christi potest esse in eodem loco cum quantitate hostie, igitur eadem ratione cum substantia eiusdem.”

³⁷ Adams, *Later Medieval Theories*, 152. See also Bakker, *La Raison et Le Miracle*, pp. 122-132.

³⁸ Ockham, *Quaestiones in librum quartum Sententiarum*, q. 6 (*OT* VII, pp. 62-109); *Expositio in librum Praedicamentorum Aristotelis*, c. 10-11 (*OP* II, pp. 203-238); *Expositio in libros Physicorum Aristotelis* I, c. 4 (*OP* IV, pp. 47-69); *Summa Logicae* I, c. 44 (*OP* I, pp. 132-139); *Tractatus de quantitate* (*OT* 10, pp. 3-85); *Tractatus de Corpore Christi*, c. 33-36 (*OT* 10, pp. 185-206); and *Quodlibeta septem*, q. IV, qq. 25-28 (*OT* IX, pp. 416-445).

the nine categories are not realities distinct from substances, with one exception. Certain types of quality, Ockham argues, are distinct things (*res*) from substance and exist in a given substance.³⁹

In opposition to Thomas Aquinas, Ockham holds that distinct and real things (*res*) correspond to either the category of substance or quality. Ockham recognizes that the majority of the *moderni* (e.g. Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and Giles of Rome, et al.) hold that quantity was a real thing (*res*) distinct from substance and quality, and that quantity exists in a given substance. Thomas Aquinas, for example, understood substances and qualities as distinct things (*res*); further, he argued that qualities exist in a given substance through quantity. This understanding of quantity enabled it to do some *work* in Thomas's eucharistic theology—e.g., it was noted above that for Thomas quantity functions as a proxy for substance, such that the accidental properties of the bread and wine persist in the quantitative dimension of the bread and wine after the substance was converted. It is this “skin” or “proxy” role of quantity that Ockham rejects.

Ockham argues that quantity is not a distinct or real thing *per se*. Quantity, in fact, is identical with corporeal substance. The example he often uses is that a point, line or surface is not a thing distinct from a material substance or body.⁴⁰ That is, for any given object like a rock, the extended surface of the rock (i.e., the dimensive quantity of the surface area) is not some distinct thing (*res*) from the substance of the rock itself; there is no independent thing that one can point to called quantity distinct from the corporeal substance of the rock. Instead of being a distinct thing, Ockham understood quantity to be a concept that is applicable to substance. Thus, if the rock that David slung at the Philistine Goliath had a surface area of six² inches, one could predicate the dimensive quantity of the surface area to the rock. Of course, Ockham provides significant argumentation in support of his account of quantity,⁴¹ but our focus is not necessarily on those supporting arguments but on how this understanding of quantity impacts eucharistic theology.

In his fourth *quodlibet* Ockham develops a set of four questions that demonstrate his understanding of what it is at stake. It is worth attending to these four questions:

Q. 25: Can it be proved *evidently* that a quantity is an absolute thing distinct from substance and quality?

Q. 26: Can it be proved *sufficiently through the principles of the faith* that quantity is an absolute thing distinct from substance and quality?

³⁹ For a discussion of quality in Ockham's thought, see Adams, *William of Ockham*, vol. 1, pp. 277-285; and Armand Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham in the Light of Its Principles* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), pp. 40-46.

⁴⁰ Ockham, *Summa Logicae*, p. 1, c. 45 (*OP I*, p. 145¹⁶³⁻¹⁶⁶): “Dico igitur quod intention Aristotelis et multorum aliquorum fuit quod omnis quantitas non est aliqua res totaliter distincta a substantia et qualitate, nec punctus, linea, superficies et corpus sunt res inter se secundum se totas distinctae.”

⁴¹ For a discussion of quantity in Ockham's thought, see Adams, *William of Ockham*, vol. 1, pp.169-213; Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham*, pp. 40-46.

Q. 27: Is it the *Philosopher's intention* to posit quantity as something distinct from substance and quality?

Q. 28: Is it the *intention of the Saints* to posit a quantity that mediates between a substance and its qualities?⁴²

The first thing to note is that in these four *quodlibetal* questions Ockham is not attempting to disprove transubstantiation. In fact, Ockham supports a doctrine of transubstantiation that builds on these four questions. The focus of his attack, therefore, is not transubstantiation *per se*, but a particular understanding of transubstantiation that relies explicitly on the claim that quantity is a distinct thing (*res*) from substance and quality, and further that quantity can serve as the subject of the qualities of a given substance.

What is striking about Ockham's four questions is the broad and comprehensive methodology he employs in rejecting the common understanding of quantity (e.g., the position of Thomas and Scotus). The four questions can be divided into two groups: the first two questions (qq. 25 and 26) dealing with two distinct types of reasoning; the second two questions (qq. 27 and 28) dealing with two distinct types of authority.

Question 25 asks whether or not it can be proved evidently (*evidenter*) that "quantity is an absolute thing distinct from substance and quality." For Ockham, evident reason is scientific and philosophical demonstration: in short, evident truths are truths that can be known through demonstrable argumentation and are based on propositions known *per se*. What Ockham is asking, therefore, is whether or not this particular understanding of quantity is grounded in demonstrable reason. In this particular question Ockham treats five separate arguments for the claim that quantity is an absolute thing and concludes that each of the arguments fails. The arguments in question are not arguments from authority, but rely mostly on material taken from the *Physics* (e.g., arguments concerning the relationship between quantity and the processes of condensation and rarefaction).

Question 26 asks whether or not it can be proved through the principles of the faith (*per principia fidei*) that "quantity is an absolute thing distinct from substance and quality." Here, instead of analyzing philosophical argumentation, Ockham turns to the arguments of the theologians. He concludes that the theological arguments in support of the claim that quantity is a distinct thing are, in fact, not necessary according to the faith. In short, Ockham claims that his opinion (i.e., that quantity is *not* a distinct thing) is not itself contrary to the faith; everything that pertains to the faith can be preserved without it.⁴³ Ockham's strategy here is to claim that neither

⁴² Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, qq. 25-28 (*OT IX*, pp. 416-445; Freddoso-Kelley, pp. 343-367): Q. 25: *Utrum possit evidenter probari quod quantitas sit res absoluta distincta a substantia et qualitate*; Q. 26: *Utrum per principia fidei possit sufficienter probari quod quantitas sit res absoluta distincta a substantia et qualitate*; Q. 27: *Utrum de intentione Philosophi sit ponere quantitatem distinctam a substantia et qualitate*; Q. 28: *Utrum intentio Sanctorum sit ponere quantitatem mediam inter substantiam et qualitatem*.

⁴³ Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 26 (*OT IX*, p. 425¹⁰⁻¹²; Freddoso-Kelley, p. 350): "Omnia pertinentia ad fidem possunt salvari, ponendo substantiam et qualitates per partes intrinsecas esse quantas; igitur superfluum est ponere aliam quantitatem mediam."

Scripture nor theological argumentation requires that one hold this particular opinion regarding the ontological status of quantity.⁴⁴

Having argued that neither philosophical reason nor the principles of the faith require one to hold that quantity is a distinct thing from substance and quality, Ockham turns his attention to various authorities that could be employed in such arguments. Question 27 asks whether or not it was Aristotle's intention (*de intentione Philosophi*) to posit quantity as "something distinct from substance and quality." Ockham notes that the common opinion supports the claim that quantity is a distinct thing, but he rejects this opinion presenting his own interpretation of Aristotle. He grounds his arguments in an analysis of the *Categories*, the *Physics*, and the *Posterior Analytics*. Ockham summarizes his position, stating that "the Philosopher's intention, as I see it, is to claim that a continuous quantity is *not* an absolute thing that mediates between a substance and its qualities."⁴⁵

Question 28 turns to the authority of the Saints and asks whether or not it is the intention of the Saints (*intentio Sanctorum*) to "posit a quantity that mediates between a substance and its qualities?" Ockham argues that it is the common opinion that this position is held not only by Aristotle, but by the Saints (i.e., theological authorities/theologians). In particular, Ockham presents two arguments taken from Augustine's *De Trinitate* that seemingly support the common opinion.⁴⁶ Ockham's strategy is to present his own reading of these passages and to argue, as he did above with respect to Aristotle, that Augustine's intention is not to posit quantity as a thing distinct from substance and quality.

Ockham's approach throughout this *quodlibet* is to argue that there are neither demonstrative arguments, nor arguments based on the faith, nor arguments from authority that contradict his interpretation of quantity. Thus, he concludes that his account of quantity is acceptable as part of a true and faithful interpretation of the Eucharist by means of his distinct account of transubstantiation. For Ockham, Christ is truly and substantially present in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine. Thus, he agrees with Thomas that the substance of the bread and wine is transubstantiated into the substance of the body and blood of Christ. When this happens, Ockham argues, the substance of the bread and wine are no longer present; however, following his view of substance and quantity, Ockham argues that the quantity of the bread and wine are also no longer present. Thomas, we can recall, argued that the accidents of the bread and wine persist in a subject (i.e. the dimensive quantity of the bread and

⁴⁴ Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 26 (*OT IX*, p. 433²⁰³⁻²⁰⁶; Freddoso-Kelley, p. 357): "Ad argumentum principale dico quod quantitas quae est substantia panis non manet post consecrationem, sed quantitas quae est qualitas manet, et nulla alia quantitas. *Et oppositum istius non habetur ex Scriptura sacra.*" Emphasis mine.

⁴⁵ Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 27 (*OT IX*, p. 435⁴⁹⁻⁵¹; Freddoso-Kelley, p. 359): "Ideo dico quod sicut mihi videtur, intentio Philosophi est quod quantitas continua non est res absoluta media inter substantiam et qualitatem."

⁴⁶ One of the passages from *De Trinitate* is particularly problematic for Ockham, e.g.: Ockham, *Quodlibet* IV, q. 28 (*OT IX*, p. 441²⁸⁻³³; Freddoso-Kelley, p. 363): "Praeterea V *De Trinitate*, c. 13 [sic, c. 10], dicit sic: 'in rebus quae per participationem magnitudinis magnae sunt, quibus aliud est esse aliud magnas esse, sicut magna domus, magna mons et magna animus, in his igitur rebus aliud est madgnitudo, aliud quod ab ea magnitudine magnum est, et prorus non hoc est magnitudo quod est magna domus'."

wine); Ockham, by contrast, simply states that the accidents of the bread and wine persist without a subject (*sine subiecto*).⁴⁷ Following the approach of Peter Lombard, Ockham argues that by his divine power God brings it about that the accidents of bread and wine persist.

William of Ockham's eucharistic theology is a variant of transubstantiation that rejects the claim that quantity can serve as the subject for the accidents of bread and wine. Beyond this claim, his basic theological view is similar to that of other thirteenth- and fourteenth-century theologians. Ockham argues that the body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered and was buried, and rose again and ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father, and will come to judge the quick and the dead, is contained really and truthfully under the species of bread. Further, the substance of the bread is transubstantiated, converted or changed, in such a way that the substance of the bread does not remain; but only the accidents remain and subsist without a subject. This, Ockham argues, is his faith, because it is the catholic faith.⁴⁸

III. Theological Implications of the Ontology of the Eucharist

Thus far we have noted that Thomas and Ockham disagree about the ontological status of quantity. And, since the topic of our colloquium is the relationship between ontology and the Eucharist, I want to now consider some of the ontological claims that Thomas and Ockham agree about. My focus here will be on the ontological status of the components of eucharistic theology: by ontological status I simply mean an analysis of what there is (i.e., what exists) and the way in which it is (i.e., whether, in Aristotelian terms, something is a substance or an accident?).

Both Thomas and Ockham agree that when discussing eucharistic theology we are dealing with a limited number of substances and accidents. Hence, in our discussion of eucharistic theology the question of ontological status is focused on the following:

- 1) The substance of Christ,
- 2) The accidents of Christ,
- 3) The substance of Bread and Wine, and
- 4) The accidents of Bread and Wine.

⁴⁷ Ockham, *Tractatus de Corpore Christi*, c. 11 (OT X, p. 111⁷⁻¹¹): “Item, sapor ibidem percipitur, et albedo videtur, et qualitates tangibiles sensus tactus apprehendit; sed nullus sensus percipit aliquam qualitatem corporis Christi; remanent igitur qualitates sensibiles quae prius errant in substantia panis, et modo sunt sine subiecto.”

⁴⁸ Ockham, *Tractatus de Corpore Christi*, c. 2 (OT X, p. 91³⁻²²): “Doctores catholici a Romana Ecclesia approbati, qui de sacramento Eucharistiae conscripserunt, hoc intendunt adstruere quod corpus Christi, quod sumptum est de Virgine Maria, quod passum est et sepultum, quodque resurrexit et in caelum ascendit et sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris, et in quo Filius Dei venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos, sub specie panis veraciter et realiter continetur. Quamvis autem realiter lateat sub specie panis, non enim videtur a nobis oculo corporali, sed ipsum operiri specie panis a fidelibus mente creditur et tenetur; in quod substantia panis transubstantiatur, convertitur seu mutatur, ita quod substantia panis non manet, sed remanent accidentia sola per se subsistentia sine subiecto. Et non tantum corpus Christi, quod est altera pars humanae naturae, facta transubstantiatione panis sub specie panis realiter continetur, sed etiam totus Christus integer, perfectus Deus et verus homo, sub tota hostia et qualibet parte eius simul vere et realiter continetur, quamvis proprie sumendo ‘conversionem’ et ‘transubstantiationem’ substantia panis non in deitatem nec in rationale animam nec in aliquod accidens convertatur. Haec est et mea fides quoniam est catholica fides.”

We can begin by noting the obvious agreements between Thomas and Ockham. There is considerable agreement about the accidents in question—i.e. the accidents of Christ’s body and the accidents of the bread and wine. Both Thomas and Ockham agree that the accidents of Christ (2) are not relevant to the discussion of eucharistic theology, except insofar as to state that when Christ’s substance is present on the altar, his accidents are present in a non-perceptible way. This is hardly surprising as no one wants to claim that the accidental properties of Christ’s body are observed, seen, tasted or smelled on the altar. For both theologians, the central theological claim is that Christ is substantially present and not accidentally present in a perceptible way (i.e. it is assumed that Christ’s substantial presence is what is significant).⁴⁹

I turn now from Christ’s accidents to the accidents of the bread and wine. First, we can note that Thomas and Ockham agree that both the substance and accidents of the bread and wine are initially present up until the words of institution: *Hoc est corpus meum*. This is a trivial matter, it seems, but it is worth insisting that medieval theologians agree on the ontological status of the bread and wine up to this point (that is, no one thinks that there never was bread and wine). Second, we can note that both Thomas and Ockham agree that the accidents of bread and wine continue to persist throughout the entire process; from the moment the baker bakes the bread to the mastication and final deglutition by the believer, the accidents of the bread (and wine) are present. This could hardly be disputed though, as any account of the Eucharist must accommodate the believer’s experience of actually seeing and eating bread and wine throughout the entire process. The upshot is that in terms of the ontological status of the accidents of Christ’s body and the accidents of the bread and wine in the Eucharist, there is some significant agreement between Thomas and Ockham.

Turning from accidents to substances, it is important to note that here again there is significant agreement about the ontological status of what is in question. First, consider the substance of Christ’s body. Both Thomas and Ockham—and, we could note, almost all thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century theologians⁵⁰—agree that Christ is substantially present. Thus, amidst the radical disagreement between Thomas and Ockham regarding quantity, it is important to note that when it comes to whether or not Christ is substantially present in the Eucharist from the moment the words of institution are spoken, they agree completely. And, I want to insist, this is the theological point for both theologians. Ockham, as Buescher first emphasized, states that,

⁴⁹ *Nota bene*: it should be observed that while late medieval theologians were willing to de-emphasize the role of the accidents of Christ’s body, eucharistic adoration and popular piety in the late middle ages is somewhat more complicated. While I will not be discussing this aspect of late medieval culture and religion here, Carolyn Walker Bynum’s book, *Wonderful Blood*, is a fine piece of historical scholarship that demonstrates the importance of the accidents of Christ’s body and blood for late medieval piety.

⁵⁰ Although chronologically a bit earlier, the obvious exception here is the case of Berengar of Tours († 1088). For a brief discussion of the controversy that engulfed Berengar, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. The Growth of Medieval Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 184-204.

Not only is the body of Christ . . . really contained under the appearance of bread . . . but also the whole and integral Christ (*totus Christus integer*), perfect God and true man, is truly and really contained under the whole host and under each part.⁵¹

For Ockham, the whole and integral Christ, *totus Christus integer*, is substantially present in the Eucharist. Thomas, in the first article of question 76 of the *tertia pars* makes an almost identical claim: “It is absolutely necessary to confess according to the Catholic faith that the entire Christ (*totus Christus*) is in this sacrament.”⁵² Both theologians, therefore, make an unambiguous claim about the whole Christ (*totus Christus*) being present on the altar. In terms of their respective ontological commitments, both Thomas and Ockham insist throughout their writings that Christ is substantially present. This, I think, is incredibly important for how to interpret their respective eucharistic theologies, particularly when one is comparing Thomas with Ockham. As Joseph Wawrykow helpfully summarizes,

The affirmation of transubstantiation is subject to and in the service of the affirmation of Christ’s substantial eucharistic presence. It is not as if for Aquinas, transubstantiation is a teaching independent of *real presence* or a belief that is held on its own for its own sake. In asserting transubstantiation, he is stating how it is that the eucharistic presence comes about. . . .⁵³

This statement can be equally applied to Ockham. For both Thomas and Ockham the central and nonnegotiable truth is the *real presence* of Christ (i.e. Christ’s real substantial presence). The models that Thomas and Ockham use to explain how this takes place are always subsequent to the realities modeled and proclaimed. Further, from a theological standpoint it is the real substantial presence of Christ on the altar that matters: it is Christ’s presence in the Eucharist that is the necessary prerequisite for a sacramental encounter with Jesus Christ, the one who makes salvation a possibility. The substantial real presence of Christ on the Altar is a *viaticum* for the *viator*; Thomas and Ockham both defended this basic truth.

Finally, it is necessary to say something about the substance of the bread and wine. Thomas and Ockham agree about the ontological status of Christ’s substance in the Eucharist, but the issue of the substance of the bread and wine is more complicated. First, we can note that both Thomas and Ockham agree that the substance of the bread and wine are present at least from the time the baker bakes the bread until the words of institution. That is, both theologians agree that bread and wine are really and substantially present on the table prior to the words of institution. According to Ockham’s official position (i.e. transubstantiation), he and Thomas agree that the substance of the bread and wine cease to exist after the words of institution. In the

⁵¹ See fn. 48 above. Originally quoted in Buescher, *The Eucharistic Teaching of William of Ockham*, p. 9, fn. 22 and p. 10.

⁵² Thomas, *ST. III^a*, q. 76, a. 1 (p. 2449): “Respondeo dicendum quod omnino necesse est confiteri secundum fidem Catholicam quod totus Christus sit in hoc sacramento.”

⁵³ Joseph Wawrykow, *The Westminster Handbook to Thomas Aquinas* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005), p. 159 (emphasis his).

language of Thomas or Ockham, the substance of the bread and wine are either converted into Christ's body or they are annihilated. Thomas, as noted earlier, argued that substance of the bread and wine are converted into the body and blood of Christ through the power of God. And at first glance it seems that Ockham takes a somewhat different path, arguing for a version of annihilation. This became a point of dispute for Ockham, as the chancellor of Oxford University, John Lutterell, accused him of denying transubstantiation because that which is annihilated (i.e. the substance of the bread and wine) is not converted or changed into something else (i.e. the body of Christ).⁵⁴ But, as Buescher convincingly argued decades ago, Lutterell's argument rather overstates the case.⁵⁵ Ockham distinguishes between two sense of annihilation: (1) the first sense indicates that something ceases to exist and is not succeeded by anything else; (2) the second sense indicates that something ceases to exist and is, potentially, succeeded by something else. When speaking of the Eucharist, Ockham argues, we are speaking of annihilation in the second sense.⁵⁶ The point for the present argument is simply that while Thomas and Ockham employ different language to describe the change that occurs to the substance of the bread and wine, theologically speaking both theologians avoid positing a complete annihilation of the substance.⁵⁷ Thus, as the doctrine of transubstantiation implies, there is a change that occurs.

The conclusion is that while Thomas and Ockham disagree about the ontological status of quantity, they agree that the whole Christ (*totus Christus*) is really and substantially present on the eucharistic table. That is, when one investigates the ontological claims of each theologian regarding Christ's body and the bread and wine, they are in substantial agreement about the ontological realities involved.⁵⁸ And, what I want to argue here is that theologically this is the point. Stated differently, both theologians agree with both Lateran IV and Trent with respect to their eucharistic theology.

⁵⁴ See Andrew E. Larsen, *The School of Heretics: Academic Condemnation at the University of Oxford, 1277-1409* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011), pp. 76-91; J. M. M. H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris, 1200-1400* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 14-15.

⁵⁵ See Buescher, *The Eucharistic Teaching of William of Ockham*, pp. 33-36.

⁵⁶ Ockham, *Reportatio* IV, q. 8 (*OT* VII, 148⁸⁻¹²): "Ad septimum dico quod accipiendo adnihilationem sic quod illud quod adnihilatur redigitur in nihil et non convertitur in aliquid aliud, sic panis non adnihilatur. Accipiendo tamen sic quod illud dicatur adnihilari quod reducitur in ita purum nihil sicut fuit ante mundi creationem, sic vere adnihilatur panis." Quoted as *quaestio* 6 in Buescher, *The Eucharistic Teaching of William of Ockham*, p. 34, fn. 16.

⁵⁷ The discussion in Ockham here is quite complex, though it need not detain us unnecessarily. In short, Ockham claims that the substance of the bread is annihilated while also maintaining that the substance of the bread is succeeded by the substance of Christ's body. See Buescher, *The Eucharistic Teaching of William of Ockham*, pp. 34-35.

⁵⁸ It could be objected at this point that I am overstating the similarities between Thomas and Ockham. For example, Marilyn Adams correctly argues that Thomas and Ockham disagree about the type of conversion or change that takes place: Thomas Aquinas and Giles of Rome argue that there is a whole-being conversion of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, while John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham argue that there is a substantial change (i.e., the substance of bread changes into the substance of Christ) but not a whole-being conversion. For a summary of this discussion, see Adams, *Some Later Medieval Theories of the Eucharist*, pp. 241-243. In response, I would just note (as argued above) that Thomas and Ockham agree about the ontology of the individual aspects of the Eucharist, while they disagree about the mode of eucharistic change.

IV. Conclusions

I began this essay by arguing that the sixteenth-century Reformation brought about significant theological-collateral damage. In particular, I argued that one of the unintended consequences of the sixteenth-century division between the Protestant and Catholic Churches is that fourteenth-century eucharistic theology was subsequently viewed with considerable suspicion. What I have argued here is that despite Ockham's bad press, the Venerable Inceptor is in considerable theological agreement with Thomas Aquinas regarding the Eucharist. Ockham's particular philosophical model for explaining transubstantiation differs from Thomas's account, but I think that this type of disagreement is actually a considerable advantage to the church universal if understood in the proper light. Here, I want to conclude by addressing a lingering question posed by Bruce Marshall, while simultaneously suggesting the potential value of Ockham's approach.

Marshall writes in his introduction that "the fact of Christ's presence is now affirmed across old lines of division, but speculation on the way in which Christ is present, on just how it is that this remarkable fact obtains, is not only far less common than it once was, but is often viewed as an obstacle to ecumenical agreement about the fact itself" (p. 2). I agree with Marshall's observation that speculation about how Christ is present is "less common" than it once was, and would like to suggest that perhaps this is the case because too often transubstantiation is linked explicitly to a particular Aristotelian analysis of the Eucharist that one finds in the late thirteenth century. Above I quoted a passage by Joseph Wawrykow that addresses this general point, and I think Marshall agrees. Marshall writes, "The Council of Trent evidently uses the term 'substance' not in a technically philosophical way, Aristotelian or otherwise, but in its most simple and basic sense, what could be called the ordinary language meaning of the term" (p. 17). That is, Trent is not committed to defending a particular metaphysical understanding of transubstantiation. This, I think, is where Ockham is instructive and indeed a productive dialogue partner. So, permit three observations.

(1) The first thing one can learn from a study of fourteenth-century eucharistic theology is that the great scholastic doctors did not agree on how to articulate a change of substance—i.e., transubstantiation—in strictly Aristotelian terms. This is evident above in the discussion of Thomas and Ockham. Both theologians agree about the central theological claims made with respect to transubstantiation; however, Thomas and Ockham disagree about how to articulate in Aristotelian terms precisely how the accidents of bread and wine can persist given that their substance no longer exists. In articulating different views of what can only be called a miracle (i.e., accidents persisting without a substance is not a normal or natural occurrence), Thomas and Ockham defended differing views of the ontological status of Aristotle's category of quantity. What can we learn from this debate? It is instructive that the Church did not condemn Ockham's theology, and that, when in fact it was analyzed and scrutinized in detail, the Church found it consistent with the canons of Lateran IV. This is an important historical lesson, as we have to recognize that even in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there were numerous voices defending various models of transubstantiation. This is significant because many Catholic

theologians approaching the Eucharist today are not Aristotelians, much less Aristotelians of a particular Thomistic variety.

(2) The second point I want to make is a bit more technical. Ockham argues in the 30th question of the fourth *quodlibet* that consubstantiation is perhaps preferable, given that it avoids the difficulties that follow from the separation of the accidents of the bread and wine from their subject. Indeed, the philosophical problems associated with separating the accidents of a thing from their subject are daunting enough for an Aristotelian, but border on nonsense for theologians who reject a philosophical distinction between substances and accidents. Arguably, for theologians working within a variety of non-Aristotelian philosophies the distinction between substances and accidents is particularly problematic. Yet it would seem that such approaches are at least plausible given a generous interpretation of transubstantiation. That said, such views may find it difficult to articulate how Christ's body is suddenly present and yet the host remains looking, tasting, and feeling like bread and wine. For such models, Ockham presents a useful precedent and dialogue partner. In short, following Ockham, one could claim that the look, taste, and feel of the bread persists despite the fact that the body of Christ is present. This can happen, Ockham argues, through the power of God. Thus, I think Ockham possibly provides a model for how to preserve transubstantiation both within an Aristotelian context and outside of one.⁵⁹

(3) Finally, Ockham presents an interesting dialogue partner; the Venerable Inceptor is aware that the Church's official position (i.e., the canons of Lateran IV) is in favor of transubstantiation but that there are serious philosophical objections against it and in favor of other models. Thus, not unlike today, Ockham is negotiating between canonical statements and theological argumentation. His ability to do so is an interesting roadmap for theologians who want to provide alternative theories of the Eucharist that cannot necessarily be defined as transubstantiation. Trent leaves the door open, just a crack, for those who want to pursue alternative theories. For those so inclined, Ockham—and as Marshall noted, Scotus before him—are rich sources for understanding simultaneously the theological limitations of transubstantiation and the positive theological value of other models.

⁵⁹ Certain Thomists (perhaps following Gilson) might object at this point that I am encouraging a bifurcation of theology and philosophy that is located somewhere on the slippery slope to fideism and skepticism. To which I simply want to insist that it is not fideism or skepticism, but theological humility in the face of the incomprehensible nature of the Divine. First, in response to Thomas's position, I do not think it makes philosophical sense to claim that quantity is a thing that persists independent of a substance—such thinking, I would argue, is unintelligible to strict Aristotelians, much less modern theologians and philosophers. In short, I do not know what it means to state that quantity persists when a substance is no longer present. Thus, such a theory perhaps gives the illusion of an explanation while remaining perhaps no more productive in avoiding skepticism and fideism than simply arguing that God brings about such a possibility through his power and ability to do so. That, in short, is Ockham's point I think. Thomas argues that God's divine power brings it about that quantity functions as a 'proxy' for substance, while Ockham argues that God's divine power brings it about that the accidents persist without a subject. Both arguments, it seems, rely explicitly on the claim that God's power brings about such a state of affairs by means of a miracle (i.e., God's divine power). Thus, claims of undermining the intelligibility of the faith must be kept in check. Let us not kid ourselves; all theologians inhabit different places on the slippery slope. Our job is just to make sure we do not end up at the bottom.

The understanding of transubstantiation articulated in the canons of Lateran IV and Trent provides a framework for articulating how Christ is really and substantially present on the eucharistic table. That said, the particular philosophical and theological nuances of precisely how Christ is substantially present are left open to interpretation. What I have argued here is that, as Christian theologians approach this subject today, they would be wise to take seriously the developments of the fourteenth century. Particularly within the discussion of the Eucharist—which has so often been dominated by a Thomistic understanding of transubstantiation— theologians such as John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham can help us think through these technical issues and to see a broader picture than we might have otherwise. The collateral damage of the sixteenth-century reform of the Church has often meant that Catholic and Protestant theologians have worked with a narrow slice of the history of the Church. This, I would argue, is to place artificial limitations on the deposit of faith. The great strength of the catholic Christian tradition is the breadth of its sources and the diversity of its philosophical and theological views. I think it is time the Christian Church embrace the richness and complexity of its history.