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Brett Salkeld, *Transubstantiation: Theology, History, and Christian Unity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2019), 288 pp. Pbk. €29.99. ISBN 978–1–5409–6218–8.

In all Christian denominations it is believed that, in eucharistic worship, a change is effected in or through the elements of bread and wine. Understandings of this differ widely. Some Roman Catholics have regarded the change to originate in the elements, with change in the recipient necessarily following. Conversely, some Congregationalists have considered the change to be wholly in recipients, with the elements having a solely functional role in enabling memorialization or remembrance. Perhaps more common has been the view that a change takes place in both the elements and the recipients. A change in the recipients that isn't merely a function of a change in the elements is due to 'spiritual' communion, which was much invoked during the coronavirus pandemic. While church buildings were closed, eucharistic worship continued online, with leaders receiving on behalf of their people. At the time of communion, leaders and people were united in prayer and devotion even though the people didn't themselves physically receive the bread or wine.

In this lucid study, the Roman Catholic lay theologian Brett Salkeld presents three major theologies of eucharistic conversion: those of Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther and John Calvin. Through admirably close attention to primary texts and exacting critical analysis, he distils complex ideas and traces shifting terminology, boldly building a case that the positions of these theologians, to which the Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Reformed Churches respectively make frequent reference, are reconcilable.

Salkeld recognizes that his own Church's eucharistic theology has contributed to ecumenical divisions. 'If there is to be any rapprochement on the question of eucharistic presence', he writes, 'the issue of transubstantiation must be tackled head-on' (p. 29). Via a close reading of Aquinas, Salkeld suggests that his Church's position has been simplistically construed by both members and external critics. Aquinas is presented as reconciling the emerging medieval polarity between those who described Christ's eucharistic presence using strongly physical and sensual language, which to some

detractors verged on suggesting cannibalism, and those who presented this presence figuratively, which seemed to critics to reduce the host to nothing more than ordinary bread. Salkeld explains that the concept of substance, on which the theory of transubstantiation depends, must, if correctly understood, be clearly distinguished from that of matter. Transubstantiation doesn't indicate a change in the matter of the bread and wine but a change in substance, that is, in the underlying reality that sustains them and which they communicate. The appearances, or accidents, of bread and wine do not change, and these are what is most closely identifiable with the modern concept of matter. Aquinas, Salkeld argues, was able to reconstruct Aristotle's eternal substances as mutable because of his doctrine of creation, by which everything that exists is given its being by God and individual things become symbols when God uses them to disclose his presence. This enabled Aquinas to articulate a theory of conversion that recognizes Christ's real presence in the elements while accepting that, due to the resurrection, Christ's body is no longer physically on earth and so cannot be sensually eaten. Rather, in the Eucharist, the bread and wine become pure signs of Christ's presence that are kept in existence by him.

Aquinas rejected the theory that later became known as consubstantiation—that the substances of Christ's body and blood become present alongside the substances of bread and wine—primarily because it suggests that Christ can be locally moved. Luther, in contrast, became closely associated with this theory, which presents Christ's eucharistic presence in strongly incarnational terms. Just as, in the hypostatic union that constitutes Christ's person, his divine and human natures are present together, so, in the Eucharist, Christ's body and blood are present alongside the bread and wine. Luther supposes an Alexandrian-type christology, in which personal unity is emphasized, in contrast with Zwingli's concern to distinguish the natures. He was more Catholic than Zwinglian, rejecting the notion that the Eucharist is a sign. Salkeld argues that Luther thereby opened the way to an unsacramental nominalist physicalism that was unknown to Aquinas, which crystallized in the language of consubstantiation. Salkeld affirms Pope Benedict XVI's view that consubstantiation is

ultimately no different from transubstantiation if what it conveys is that the elements' physical and chemical properties are unchanged (p. 150).

With his theology fundamentally shaped by the ascension, Calvin is seen by Salkeld as closer to Aquinas than to Luther. There has been progress in redemptive history, with Christ no longer physically on earth but in glory in heaven. For Calvin, Christ in the Eucharist descends in signs but not in body. Because his use of the term substance was 'inconsistent and elusive' (p. 201), it cannot be used to locate Calvin in the same way that it has been used, rightly and wrongly, to understand Aquinas and Luther. Essential for Calvin is the reality of the bread and wine for the sacrament: one thing cannot serve as a sign of another thing if isn't itself what it appears to be. Calvin's ascensional theology, it might be added, supports a Platonic prioritizing of spirit over matter and an understanding of communion as fundamentally spiritual rather than physical.

Most ecumenical dialogues of recent decades, even those concerned with the Eucharist, have avoided the topic of eucharistic conversion, assuming it to be so divisive that no positive agreement could result. Any full consideration of the Eucharist needs to address the major issue of church order, which encompasses questions of ministry, oversight, gender and sexuality. This falls beyond Salkeld's remit and often appears intractable. Even so, Salkeld shows that if Christian churches were to spend more time relearning their theologies of conversion by returning to their sources, the Eucharist could become a new locus of ecumenical convergence. The Eucharist shows forth and brings about a measure of earthly union with Christ that is yet to be fully realized. The eschatological horizon it opens serves as hope and challenge to all Christians, especially the ecumenically engaged.

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