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Transubstantiation: Rethinking by Anglicans?

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Abstract

This article examines the ways in which Anglican theologians have reflected on the doctrine of transubstantiation. The article notes that there is substantial agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion on the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and that this agreement has been forged by the long established and continuing dialogue of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC). At the same time the article notes that official responses from the Roman Catholic Church, while acknowledging the worth of the dialogue, have insisted on particular theological and philosophical definitions of the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist concerning a change in the substance of the elements. While Anglicans have not accepted this particular definition of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as defined by the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation, they have nonetheless accepted the notion of the real presence and reflected in modern times on transubstantiation. Examples of this reflection on transubstantiation by Anglicans are discussed in the hope of allowing the dialogue to continue at new levels of understanding.

Keywords

transubstantiation, ARCIC, Anglican, real presence, Eucharist.

Future Dialogue and Growing Unity

Prospects for future dialogue and growing unity between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church may be aided by further consideration of points of agreement and difference between the two churches. This has certainly been the experience of the 40 year long dialogue between the two churches known as the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)[1]. One

[1] See the following documents of the Commission: Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, 'Eucharistic Doctrine', in *The Final Report* (London: SPCK and Catholic Truth Society, 1982), pp. 12–16; Anglican-Roman Catholic International

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of the areas where substantial agreement has been reached and concerning which dialogue continues is the nature of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. At the official level, the Anglican Communion through the Lambeth Conferences[2] and the responses of the Provinces[3] has indicated that the ARCIC statements are consonant in substance with the faith of Anglicans and sufficiently express Anglican understanding of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Official responses from the Roman Catholic Church, have however, indicated that certain traditional theological and philosophical interpretations of transubstantiation relating to the substance of the bread and wine being replaced by the substance of Christ's body and blood with the accidents remaining, were obligatory for the acceptance of any ARCIC statement on eucharistic theology by the Roman Catholic Church.[4] Whilst the ARCIC documents did not present such traditional interpretations of transubstantiation, they nonetheless argued that both churches accepted that the real presence of Christ was to be found in the Eucharist, the eucharistic elements and the eucharistic gathering and that the doctrine of transubstantiation in modern Roman Catholic thinking referred to the fact of Christ's presence in the Eucharist rather than a particular technical definition of how Christ was present[5]. The traditional theological and philosophical interpretations of transubstantiation preferred by the official Roman Catholic responses to the ARCIC documents opted for a substance/accidents metaphysic, whereas the ARCIC documents themselves and some other Roman Catholic commentators did not insist on the traditional interpretations of transubstantiation[6].

Commission, 'Eucharistic Doctrine: Elucidation', in *The Final Report* (London: SPCK and Catholic Truth Society, 1982), pp. 17–25; and Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Clarifications of Certain Aspects of the Agreed Statements on Eucharist and Ministry of the First Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission together with a letter from Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy President Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity* (London: Church House Publishing, 1994), pp. 4–8.

[2] *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978* (London: CIO Publishing, 1978), p. 50; *The Truth Shall Make You Free. The Lambeth Conference 1988. The Reports, Resolutions and Pastoral Letters from the Bishops* (London: Church House Publishing, 1988), p. 210; *Lambeth Conference 1998*, 'Resolution IV.23 The Roman Catholic Church', in *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Moorehouse, 1998), pp. 415–416.

[3] 'Church of England Faith and Order Advisory Group on the Final Report of ARCIC I (1985)' in Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold (eds) *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity* (London: SPCK and Catholic Truth Society, 1994), pp. 111–152.

[4] 'The Official Roman Catholic Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I', in Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold (eds) *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity* (London: SPCK and Catholic Truth Society, 1994), pp. 156–166.

[5] Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, 'Eucharistic Doctrine', p. 14, footnote 2.

[6] See Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 'Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I', in Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold (eds) *Anglicans and*

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Anglican eucharistic theology has typically presented a variety of views on the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, based on different philosophical assumptions[7]. The traditional Roman Catholic explanation of transubstantiation based on a substance/accident metaphysic, expressed by Thomas Aquinas, the Council of Trent and more recently in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*[8], has however not been one of these views. Anglican theologians have nonetheless reflected both positively and negatively on transubstantiation in an Anglican context. Some of these views will be examined below as a way of reconsidering transubstantiation in an Anglican context. These views may well be important in any future dialogue between the two churches on the Eucharist in regard to transubstantiation.

Older Anglican Thinking on Transubstantiation and Real Presence

Anglicans have sometimes expressed negative views concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation[9], while at the same time affirming a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The 'how' of Christ's presence in the Eucharist expressed by the traditional scholastic doctrine of transubstantiation[10]has not been central to the thinking of Anglican

Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity (London: SPCK and Catholic Truth Society, 1994), pp. 94–110 and French Roman Catholic Episcopal Commission for Christian Unity, 'Concerning the Holy See's Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I, in Christopher Hill and Edward Yarnold (eds) *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search for Unity* (London: SPCK and Catholic Truth Society, 1994), pp. 171–184.

[7] These different philosophical assumptions are explored in detail in Brian Douglas and Terence Lovat, 'The Integrity of Discourse in the Anglican Eucharistic Tradition: A Consideration of Philosophical Assumptions', *The Heythrop Journal*, 51 (2010) 847–61, especially pp. 856–7. .

[8] See paragraphs 1373–1381 in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Homebush: St Pauls, 1994), pp. 346–348. See especially paragraph 1376, p. 347, where the *Catechism* quotes from the Council of Trent, saying: 'by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change in of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly called transubstantiation'.

[9] See Article XXVIII of the Thirty-Nine Articles which says that 'Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacraments, and hath given occasion to many superstitions'. It should be noted however that this Article seems to refer only to a definition of transubstantiation which overthrows the nature of a sacrament, such as that implied by a fleshy presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Any moderate realist assumptions regarding Christ's presence in the Eucharist, such as a real presence, are seemingly not excluded and some have argued that Anglicans can use the word 'transubstantiation' if it is understood in this sacramental realist manner.

[10] Traditionally defined as a conversion of the substance of the bread and wine into the substance of the body and blood of Christ with the accidents or appearances of bread and wine remaining.

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theologians, even though many affirm the fact of Christ's presence in the Eucharist.

Nicholas Ridley in the debate on the Eucharist in the House of Lords in 1548[11], rejected transubstantiation, and argued that the bread and wine of the Eucharist remain in their natural substances after consecration. At the same time he argued that Christ's body and blood are present in the Eucharist by grace and power. For Ridley a transformation was involved after the consecration, and he argued that: 'besides the natural bread there is an operation of Divinity, for my Senses when they taste and eat, perceive but a figure. . . . In that bread is the communion of the body of Christ in the good. . . . It is transformed, for of the common bread before, it is made a Divine influence.'.[12] Ridley, while denying any change in the natural substance of bread and wine, such as the traditional definition of transubstantiation requires, at the same time argued for a transformation on the basis of Christ's divinity. Ridley when speaking of the Eucharist at Cambridge in 1549 admitted that following consecration 'by the word of God the thing hath a being that it had not before' and that 'there is a mutation of the common bread and wine spiritually into the Lord's bread and wine . . . but I deny that there is any mutation of the substances'[13]. Fleshy realism is excluded and Ridley also distanced himself from transubstantiation[14], however the idea that there was a 'being' after consecration which was not there before suggested a real change or addition to the elements. As Ridley said: 'I grant, . . . the bread to be converted and turned into the flesh of Christ; but not by transubstantiation, but by sacramental converting or turning'[15].

Jeremy Taylor argued that it is a mistake to inquire too deeply into the manner of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and that it is better merely to believe that the 'true body of Christ was present, whether under the consecrated bread or any other way'[16]. For Taylor, transubstantiation was a problem since it attempted to define the manner of the presence too closely and was unnecessary during almost the first thousand years of the church's history. Taylor's preference was to say that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist

[11] See J.T. Tomlinson, *The Great Parliamentary Debate in 1548 on the Lord's Supper. From the Original MS now in the British Museum. With an introduction and notes* (London: Shaw and Co., undated).

[12] Tomlinson, *The Great Parliamentary Debate in 1548 on the Lord's Supper*, pp. 49 and 50.

[13] Nicholas Ridley, 'Disputation at Cambridge', cited in D. Stone, *A History of the Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1909), II, p. 185.

[14] Nicholas Ridley, *Works*, in H. Christmas, ed., (Cambridge: The Parker Society, 1841), p. 171.

[15] Ridley, *Works*, pp. 229–230.

[16] Jeremy Taylor, *The Real Presence and Spiritual of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, proved against the Doctrine of Transubstantiation* (London: Bohn, 1867), II, p. 685.

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was 'real and spiritual'[17]. By this term 'spiritual presence, he meant: 'that it excludes the corporal and natural manner' and that the spiritual presence 'is to be understood figuratively, that is, not naturally, but to the purposes and in the manner of the Spirit and spiritual things. . . . Christ is present spiritually, that is, by effect and blessing; which, in true speaking, is rather the consequent of his presence than the formality.[18]

Similarly, Lancelot Andrewes in his *Response to Cardinal Bellarmine* spoke of the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist, but was not willing to be drawn on the manner of that presence. He did however reject the doctrine of transubstantiation since he argued witness to it cannot be found in the Scriptures. He also affirmed that the presence of Christ, not the sacrament, was to be worshipped in the Eucharist. He says:

> Christ said, 'This is My body'. He did not say, 'This is My body in this way'. We are in agreement with you as to the end; the whole controversy is as to the method. As to the 'This', we hold with firm faith that it is. As to the 'this is in this way' (namely, by the Transubstantiation of the bread into the body), as to the method whereby it happens that it is, by means of In or With or Under or By transition there is no word expressed. And because there is no word, we rightly make it not of faith; we place it perhaps among the theories of the school, but not among the articles of the faith. . . . We believe no less than you that the presence is real. Concerning the method of the presence, we define nothing rashly, and, I add, we do not anxiously inquire, any more than how the blood of Christ washes us in Baptism, any more than how the human and divine natures are united in one Person in the Incarnation of Christ.[19]

Andrewes did not deny that the elements were changed, but he did deny that there was a change in substance of the elements. Speaking of early authorities he said:

> But there is no mention there of a change in the substance, or of the substance. But neither do we deny in this matter the preposition *trans*; and we allow that the elements are changed (*transmutari*). But a change in substance we look for, and we find it nowhere.[20]

The way in which the change was brought about, argued Andrewes, was through the power of God. Andrewes explained this as follows:

[17] Taylor, *The Real Presence and Spiritual of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament*, II, p. 685.

[18] Taylor, *The Real Presence and Spiritual of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament*, II, p. 685.

[19] Lancelot Andrewes, *Works,* in J. Wilson and J. Bliss, ed., (Oxford: Parker, 1841–1854), VIII, p. 13.

[20] Andrewes, *Works*, VIII, p. 262.

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> At the coming of the almighty power of the Word, the nature is changed so that what before was the mere element now becomes a divine Sacrament, the substance nevertheless remaining what it was before . . . There is that kind of union between the visible Sacrament and the invisible reality (*rem*) of the Sacrament which there is between the manhood and the Godhead of Christ, where unless you want to smack of Eutyches, the manhood is not transubstantiated into the Godhead.[21]

Andrewes argued that the presence of Christ in the Eucharist was a kind of hypostatical union between the visible and the invisible, in the same way that the manhood and the Godhead of Christ was united in the incarnation. There was a change in 'nature' such that the reality of the sacrament, as Andrewes called it, that is, the nature of Christ, was united to the visible elements and as such they became divine, not in a fleshy manner, but in the manner of sacramental realism.

Bishop John Bramhall denied transubstantiation but affirmed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Regarding transubstantiation he spoke in adversarial disputation with the Roman Catholic de la Milletiere and said:

> I find not one of your arguments that comes home to Transubstantiation, but only to a true real presence, which no genuine son of the Church of England did ever deny, no, nor your adversary himself. Christ said, 'This is My body'; what He said, we do steadfastly believe. He said not, after this or that manner, *neque con neque sub neque trans*. And therefore we place it among the opinions of the schools, not among the articles of faith.[22]

Bramhall saw transubstantiation as an opinion and one form of sacramental realism but at the same time affirmed the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Bramhall's objection, was the notion of a change of substance implied in the specific metaphysics of transubstantiation.

Modern Anglican Thinking Transubstantiation and Real Presence

Transubstantiation has also been discussed by modern Anglican theologians less constrained by the Reformation controversies as those reviewed above. They argue that the word 'transubstantiation' itself is not the problem, rather the problem is any theological/philosophical schema which insists on involving a change in substance. Will Spens in discussing the idea of change in the bread and wine of the Eucharist by consecration made the point that such change did not result in a physical presence but rather the addition of new properties by the

[21] Andrewes, *Works*, VIII, p. 265.
[22] John Bramhall, *Works*, in A.W. Haddam, ed., (Oxford: Parker, 1842–1845), I, p. 8.

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act of consecration. For Spens there were both the natural properties of bread and wine and the added eucharistic properties, such that the bread and wine became more than they originally were and therefore of more value than before consecration. It was this process that made the symbols effectual signs of Christ's presence. He suggested that the words 'convaluation' and 'transvaluation' were useful to suggest the change in value brought about by consecration where there were new and more valuable properties[23]. This allowed Spens to say that:

> If the doctrine were translated into scholastic terms it would involve the assertion that the substance of the Eucharistic body and blood is the substance of that body and blood which our Lord assumed at His Incarnation; and it is in this sense a doctrine of transubstantiation. But it is not such a doctrine of transubstantiation as is condemned in Anglican formularies, and is neither open to the objections nor presents the difficulties to which those testify. It does not overthrow the nature of a sacrament but is directly based on assigning to a sacrament that nature which Anglican formularies assign, and is deduced from the traditional Anglican view simply by insistence on the significance and implications of the facts that in the Eucharist we have primarily a symbolism of objects, and that the effectual symbolism of a sacrament is based on, and determined by, the divine will.[24]

Spens was refiguring the doctrine of transubstantiation in a way linked to the incarnation, such that the substance of Christ's body and blood present in Jesus Christ was the same substance now present in the eucharistic bread and wine, but at the same time he was excluding any idea of a change of substance in the bread and wine. Instead he spoke, in scholastic terms, of additional properties or a transvaluation. Such a view was different, in his view, from the one condemned by the *Thirty-Nine Articles*[25] regarding overthrowing the nature of sacrament through the affirmation of a physical presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and therefore, in Spens' view, not condemned by the Articles. For Spens the bread and wine remained signs in their own substance but effectual signs in that they conveyed what they signified through the addition of new properties and the changing value of the bread and wine. For Spens this meant that the bread and wine of the Eucharist became 'a direct expression of our Lord's being and nature' which 'enable us not only to participate in the blessings of His sacrifice but to be strengthened with His life, thus

[23] Will Spens, 'The Eucharist', in Edward Selwyn, ed., *Essays Catholic and Critical. By Member of the Anglican Communion* (London: SPCK, 1926), pp. 442–443.

[24] Spens, 'The Eucharist', p. 443.

[25] See Article XXVIII.

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affording a relation to Him even more intimate than that which His natural body made possible'[26].

William Temple developed this idea of 'value' further in relation to transubstantiation arguing that the concept of 'value' was one of the chief characteristics of reality[27]. Reality, for Temple, included both the spiritual as well as the material, and he argued that the spiritual was no less real than the material simply because it could not be quantified in the same way as material realities could be quantified. For Temple, this means that 'existence' and 'value' are both substantive, and value is not merely adjectival[28]. This lead Temple to an examination of 'Substance' and he suggested that it might be possible that Substance be used for Real Thing, such that this equation followed:

'Substance = Value + Experience'[29]

But, argued Temple, this is too simplistic, since 'according to one familiar use of the word[30], the Substance of a thing is something other than the whole real thing, as, for example, from the Accidents'[31]. If this line of thought was followed then:

> Substance is and can be nothing but Value. Value is the element in real things which both causes them to be, and makes them what they are, and this is thus fitly called Substance in so far as this is other or less than their totality. But in this sense Substance is to be distinguished from actuality. Eternally all Values are realised in God; but in the process of time all Values are actual here and now.[32]

The equation above could therefore be modified, so that sometimes it read:

'Substance is and can be nothing but Value'[33].

This was an important statement for sacramental theology. For Temple, substance in the sacraments could be its Value, without the actuality of experience in the material sense. Substance therefore did not imply a dependence on a theory of substance and accidents, nor did it involve a material or carnal presence, but implied sacramental realism, where Reality was not dependent on a material presence but rather the presence of the divine, instantiated in material objects,

[26] Spens, 'The Eucharist', p. 444.
[27] William Temple, *Christus Veritas: An Essay* (London: Macmillan, 1924), p. 3.
[28] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 13.
[29] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 15.
[30] Presumably the scholastic concepts of substance and accidents.
[31] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 15.
[32] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 15.
[33] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 15.

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such as the nature of Christ, instantiated in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. Temple expressed this saying:

> Now if the structure of Reality is such as we described, and if the problem of Metaphysics is to be approached along the lines now indicated, we begin to see a great unification take place. The lower grades, we said, only attain to the fullness of their own being so far as they are indwelt and dominated by those above them. They exist then, ultimately, to embody or symbolise what is more than themselves. The universe is sacramental. Everything except the Creative Will exists to be the expression of that Will, the actualisation of its values.[34]

Temple described this process as 'transvaluation' and claimed that such a 'theory is the only true transubstantiation'[35]. By speaking of 'lower grades' and the indwelling of a 'fullness' in them, Temple was adopting a sacramental realist view and this had particular relevance to eucharistic theology. The lower grades (bread and wine) were indwelt by the fullness of Christ and as such were transvalued or transubstantiated in the sense that their substance possessed a new value. Another way of describing this state of affairs would be to say that 'the accidents are the same; the substance is changed'[36]. By saying this Temple is not arguing for some form of carnal realism such as the equation:

$$\text{Substance} = \text{Value} + \text{Experience}$$

implied, where 'experience' meant a material or carnal reality. Rather Temple was arguing for transvaluation and transubstantiation in the sense of the equation:

$$\text{Substance} = \text{Value}.$$

The first equation involved the carnal realism of direct physical experience and the second implied sacramental realism without the physical experience. It was in the sense of the second equation that the terms transvaluation and transubstantiation were used by Temple in a state of affairs based on sacramental realism. The value attributed to or instantiated in the bread and wine of the Eucharist was the nature of Christ. This presence or instantiation was a reality, but it did not exist in the sense of material experience or carnal presence, nor did it exist in the sense of the substance of the bread and wine being replaced by the substance of Christ, that is, transubstantiation in its traditional interpretation, with the accidents remaining. The form of philosophical reasoning involving a change in substance had little place in modern philosophical thinking and therefore Temple

[34] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, pp. 16–17.
[35] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 17.
[36] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 17.

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attempted to find a new way of describing the state of affairs which is the Eucharist and which used modern philosophical assumptions.

Temple in continuing his consideration of the eucharistic presence did not imply a solely objective value for eucharistic presence, completely apart from experience, but acknowledged that it did involve a subjective element. Subjective value for Temple was a 'constituent'[37]of value and 'Value, in short, is actual in experience'[38]with the objective and the subjective being held together with any division between subject and object being 'bridged in the very moment of its appearance'[39]. This happened, Temple argued, because 'in actualised Value subject and object are united on equal terms'[40]. This bridging of subject and object involved such theological concepts as 'spiritual' and by 'faith', since it was by faith that the communicant was aware of the real spiritual presence of Christ in the Eucharist. For Temple, this idea of a real and spiritual presence bridged the gap between object and subject and equated well with what he termed 'transvaluation' or 'transubstantiation' in the sense in which he defined it. The bread and wine became the body and blood of Christ in the sense that they were indwelt (instantiated) with a higher value (the nature of Christ) and as such were transvalued or transubstantiated without the necessity for any removal of the substance of the elements and their replacement with another substance. Temple affirmed this in the principle 'that to be a true or an essential symbol, a thing must be itself an individual instance of what it symbolises'[41].

Eric Mascall sought to develop the eucharistic theology of Thomas Aquinas and apply the notion of transubstantiation in an Anglican context. The doctrine of the incarnation was central to his work and he applied the same philosophical scheme to the eucharistic context. Mascall spoke of an 'organic relation' between the order of nature and the order of grace, where it was in the order of nature that the order of grace worked[42], such that it was through the bread and wine, as elements of the order of nature, that the body and blood of Christ, that is, the order of grace, were present. Nature, he argued, was perfected not destroyed in this relationship to the degree that the material became the efficacious means of grace[43]. He therefore argued in relation to and in agreement with the eucharistic theology of Thomas Aquinas, that there was no annihilation of the bread and

[37] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 18.
[38] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 18.
[39] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 19.
[40] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 18.
[41] Temple, *Christus Veritas*, p. 17.
[42] Eric Mascall, *Corpus Christi – Essays on the Church and the Eucharist* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1953), pp. 40–41.
[43] Mascall, *Corpus Christi*, p. 41.

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wine, but rather their conversion. In saying this he nonetheless took issue with any notion of conversion of substance, arguing that any theology of the Eucharist based on a conversion of substance was inadequate[44]. He said:

> It is not, I suggest, an adequate description of the consecrated elements to say simply that the accidents of bread and wine continue to exist by divine power though the substance of bread and wine is no longer there, while the substance of the Body and of the Blood are there although by divine power their accidents are not manifested. We must add that the substance of the Body and of the Blood are there under the appearance of the bread and of the wine because God ordained that the bread and wine shall no longer have the status of substance but shall be the sacramental signs of the Body and the Blood. The Body and Blood are there not simply by a direct and unmediated act of divine power, but by a mediated act of divine power using sacramental causality as secondary cause. The bread and wine are thus not destroyed by ceasing to have the status of substance nor when they cease to have the status of substance has anything been withdrawn from them. On the contrary, something has been added to them, namely the status of being the sacramental signs of the Body and Blood. The Body and the Blood themselves have not undergone any change by becoming the substance of the Eucharistic gifts, nor have they on the other hand lowered the metaphysical status of the bread and wine by doing so. On the contrary, they have elevated it, for, if sacramental signification is a metaphysical, and not merely a physical or moral fact, bread and wine have a higher and not a lower metaphysical reality if they have the status of sacramental signs of the Body and Blood of Christ than if they have the status of substance.[45]

Mascall's position resembled that of Temple in that he argued for an increased 'value' of the bread and wine, such that they were transformed or transvalued into an elevated metaphysical state, becoming by sacramental signification the body and blood of Christ. This position of transformation or transubstantiation was not dependent on the taking away of substance and the replacing of it with another higher substance, but rather dependent on a change in value, such that the bread and wine were elevated to a higher value, not in a natural or carnal sense of realism but in the sense of sacramental signification or sacramental realism. Mascall observed that he had no wish to detract from anything Aquinas has said, 'but in order to complete it and save it from metaphysical absurdity'[46]. When Mascall came to 'ask whether St Thomas's Eucharistic theology is adequate', he replied, 'I feel bound to answer No', not in the sense:

[44] Mascall, *Corpus Christi*, p. 135.
[45] Mascall, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 135–136.
[46] Mascall, *Corpus Christi*, p. 136.

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> That in its main assertions, St Thomas's doctrine is demonstrably erroneous, but only that it does not go far enough. Both in his doctrine of the Eucharistic sacrifice and in his doctrine of the Eucharistic Presence St Thomas seems to me to have paid far too little attention to the nature of sacramental signification and in consequence to have come up against a brick wall.[47]

Mascall, like Temple, was not criticising Aquinas or the doctrine of transubstantiation as such, but the version of that doctrine that depended on change of substance at the expense of sacramental signification. The notion of transformation such that the signs have a higher value is the key to understanding what Mascall was arguing. 'Change' in the signs did not mean that they were changed in substance, but that they acquired a higher value by transformation, becoming the efficacious symbols of Christ's presence and sacrifice in the Eucharist.

John Macquarrie argued that transubstantiation as a long established doctrine to explain eucharistic presence 'has much to commend it' and that 'it ruled out all magical theories of presence'[48] but that 'transubstantiation is concerned primarily with a presence understood as presence at a particular time in a particular place'[49] rather than with Christ's personal presence with his people. It was this spatio-temporal emphasis, together with magical and superstitious overtones, that failed to appeal to the Reformers, and it was the whole notion of substance that caused difficulty for modern philosophers who no longer worked with this philosophical category. It was for this reason, Macquarrie argued, that some Roman Catholic theologians have opted for additional means of explaining Christ's presence in the Eucharist. He cited the Dutch theologian Schoonenberg, for example, who speaks of 'transignification', which replaces the language of substance and accidents with the language of phenomenology and existentialism[50]. Macquarrie, acknowledging his debt to Heidegger, explained this by saying that:

> things within the world are constituted not merely by substance . . . but also by signification, by the way they are incorporated into the personal, historical world of mankind. Everything gathers around itself an aura of meaning. If we come up against something that is utterly strange to use, we immediately begin to try to relate it to the whole field of meaning'[51].

[47] Mascall, *Corpus Christi*, pp. 136–137.
[48] John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (London: SCM Press, 1992), p. 88.
[49] Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality*, p. 89.
[50] Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality*, p. 89.
[51] Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality*, p. 89.

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In relation to the Eucharist, there are meanings surrounding the bread and wine giving them significations. Transignification, as Macquarrie explained it, 'indicates "a change of meaning", "a shift of meaning", perhaps even "a new depth of meaning"'[52]. The bread and wine were transignified as 'they receive the meaning of the body and blood of Christ'[53]. Macquarrie rejected the idea that transignification was a subjective receptionist doctrine and argued that Christ:

> Is present in and through the transignified elements; and though their meaning is *for us*, it is he, not we, who confers it. Meaning is not some sort of subjective colouring which we project on to things that are neutral in themselves. Meaning or signification belongs to the being of things, it constitutes them part of a world and so constitutes them in their thinghood or reality.[54]

Macquarrie also considered transubstantiation from the time of the Council of Trent to the present, arguing that 'transubstantiation has become a word rather than a theory concerning the nature of the change in the eucharist'[55]. Transubstantiation has lost its meaning of how the presence of Christ was to be found in the Eucharist and stood instead 'for the view that there is in the eucharist a real abiding presence of Christ as against any view that denies this'[56]. This accords with the footnote in the 1971 Statement *Eucharistic Doctrine* in *The Final Report* which argued that in the Roman Catholic Church transubstantiation 'is seen as affirming the *fact* of Christ's presence' and 'not understood as explaining *how* the change takes place'[57]. What Macquarrie was arguing here was that: 'any materialistic way of understanding the change or conversion is excluded – as indeed it was by Aquinas – but a real and abiding presence of Christ is asserted as a common belief of Anglicans and Roman Catholics'[58]. The common belief was that of sacramental realism.

Macquarrie went on to ask a crucial question. He wondered if: 'perhaps in terms of modern philosophical thinking, it is possible to think out a theory which will throw some light on the mystery, and do for our day what transubstantiation did for a former age.'[59] This question, he suggested, may well be answered by reference not only to some Anglican theologians, such as Will Spens, William Temple

[52] Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality*, p 90.
[53] Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality*, p. 90.
[54] Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality*, p. 91.
[55] John Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments* (London: SCM Press, 1997), p. 131.
[56] Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, p. 131.
[57] Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission, *Eucharistic Doctrine*, p. 14, footnote 2.
[58] Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, p. 131.
[59] Macquarrie, *A Guide to the Sacraments*, p. 132.

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and Eric Mascall, but also by reference to the work of modern Roman Catholic theologians such as Edward Schillebeeckx[60] who speak of the transvaluation and transignification of the meaning of signs based on philosophical reflection not dependent on scholastic notions of substance.

Another modern theologian who works with the doctrine of transubstantiation is Catherine Pickstock. Her work attempts to rediscover premodern themes, such as transubstantiation, making them viable once again, 'by showing how they were not so trammelled by dogmatic "metaphysics" as both modernists and postmodernists have tended to assume'[61]. This rediscovery is based on a sacramental realism, with Pickstock arguing that 'the coincidence of sign and body is most manifest in the event of the Eucharist', such that, 'the event of transubstantiation in the Eucharist is the condition of possibility for all human meaning'[62]. It is exactly at this point however that Pickstock departed from the more traditional definition of transubstantiation since in speaking of the accidents she said:

> And yet the substantiality of the bread is not so much destroyed as more utterly constituted by being taken up into God, who is more truly 'substance' . . . since they are now directly sustained by their participation as particular, contingent created things in the *esse* of the divinely transfigured human body to which they are conjoined.[63]

This sacramental realism was based on the idea of what she calls non-identical repetition, where although the sign, the bread for example, conveyed the signified, the body of Christ, no recognisable body appears in the bread. The body then and the bread have some discontinuity or non-identical nature in the sacramental realist scheme where the 'body' remained a 'secret' in that it was not a fleshy realist presence, but a real and divine presence nonetheless. Pickstock expressed this as 'the contradictory conditions of the beneficent secrecy of every sign (certain/uncertain, continuous/discontinuous, iconic/arbitrary, present/absent)'[64].

The accidents were not secret but the divine power was, in that it cannot be seen directly. As Pickstock said:

> In the articulations of the Eucharistic body, the sign is not left behind. Indeed, this is so extremely the case that it is possible to argue that the theological body turns *everything* into sign, in such a way that the distinction between thing and sign can no longer be sustained. This

[60] Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Eucharist* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1977).
[61] Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: The Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. xiii.
[62] Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. xv.
[63] Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. 260.
[64] Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. 263.

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> can be seen in the assimilation of sense and referent in the words 'This is my body'. . . . If Jesus had said 'This is my bread', we could have consulted the physical bread and understood the sense of the word by looking at the object. But this is impossible here, for we cannot look at the elements in order to expand the meaning of the phrase, which suggests that the levels of sense and referent are fused together, since a bare indication of sense has to do all the referential work. The words underline that things are only ever present in the mode of sign, that there is no leaping over language, for at the beginning of the phrase, the word 'This' seems to indicate bread, but where bread is simply referred to, 'body' is signified, or evoked as a sense, which assimilates the sense to the referent, or rather, effaces the stage of reference altogether. . . . It allows there to be something hidden which we do not know about. By thus leaping over the stage of indication or reference, we allow things to exceed their appearance, for things are never here in terms of an enclosed, exhaustive arrival.[65]

Pickstock suggested that there is another, earlier way or 'logic' of looking at the Eucharist which lay in a consideration of mystery, where following patristic and indeed Platonic models, signs participate in but do not exhaust the mystery 'by virtue of a transcendent plenitude which perfectly integrates absence and presence' such that there 'is an ontological coincidence of the mystical and the real' which 'lies at the heart of medieval Eucharistic theology'[66]. In Pickstock's analysis:

> If this coincidence [between the mystical and the real] becomes fissured, the Eucharistic signs perforce become either a matter of non-essential, *illustrative* signification which relies upon a non-participatory and conventional (if mimetic) similitude between the bread and the Body, and the wine and the Blood, or else the site of an extrinsicist miracle which stresses the alienness of bread from Body, and wine from Blood.[67]

Pickstock opted for transubstantiation as the preferred way of describing what happened in the Eucharist. She says:

> Transubstantiation seems to collude with the sceptical notion that the ways things *appear* to be is no guarantee as to how they really are. For here, it seems, we have an absolute denial of the apparent presence of bread and wine, and an affirmation, by faith, of the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ, despite the fact that none of the normal sensory indicators of such phenomena is present at all.[68]

[65] Pickstock, *After Writing*, p. 262.

[66] Catherine Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', in Sarah Beckwith, ed., *Catholicism and Catholocity: Eucharistic Communities in Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 51–52.

[67] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', p. 52.

[68] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', pp. 52–53.

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This state of affairs Pickstock described as a 'collapsing together of sense and reference' such that they:

> Can be brought together with . . . a faithful trust in the bread and wine as disclosing an invisible depth of Body and Blood. . . . It can now be seen that 'this is my Body' – as said while pointing to the bread – means that a missing sense for Body (how can it be bread?) and a missing identifying reference for Body (we do not see it) are both simultaneously supplied when we take the bread as symbolically disclosing an inexhaustible Body (or wine as disclosing the Blood); in other words, when we re-understand Christ's divine-human body as what nourishes our very being.[69]

The realism on which this scheme depended is the same as that which functions in the incarnation of Christ as divine and yet human. How can the divine be human? The seemingly sceptical response is resolved in the person of Jesus Christ, just as the sceptical response about how can bread be the body of Christ is resolved in the collapsing together of sense and reference. This is sacramental realism and it depends on the participation of the sign in the signified. It is also the sense in which Pickstock seems to be using the word 'transubstantiation', without the substance/accident metaphysic.

For Pickstock, this means that 'if we say that the real sense and reference of this bread and wine are the Body and Blood of Christ, then since the latter are ultimately mysterious, sense and reference here are only supplied in being simultaneously withheld'[70]. This means then that: 'sense and reference are *never* discrete' and 'instead of the referent being confirmed by our glance towards the bread, it is confirmed by Jesus' phrase itself ['This is my body'], uttered with a simple authority which kindles our trust.'[71]

This leads to the view that 'God conjoins Himself with the seemingly most base forms of sensory delighting in the form of bread and wine' where 'there is a tasting of God through direct physical apprehension, conjoined with a longing for the forever absent'[72]. This meant that 'in the Eucharist, God is only made apparent in a sensual fashion which involves the mediation of all human physical interactions' where the 'exaltation of the sensual runs parallel with the glorification of the accidents' and where 'it might seem that if bread and wine are reduced from substance to accident, that their natural materiality is thereby degraded'. But 'God causes the accidents to

[69] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', p. 54.
[70] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', p. 54.
[71] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', pp. 54–55.
[72] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', p. 61.

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act *as if* they were substantive. This means that here the operation of matter in a *normal* fashion has been rendered miraculous'[73]. It is because they are miraculous 'that the remaining accidents exceed the contrast of substance and accident' and 'are now promoted to a character that most essentially reveals the condition of createdness, and they are accorded the honour of directly subsisting in Being which is the most immediate divine created effect'[74]. The partaking of the body and blood of Christ under the species of bread and wine is a means of deification and 'it becomes not absurd to adore a mere piece of bread'[75]. The full significance of this thinking is to be found in the *Logos*. Pickstock explained this by saying that: 'The bread and wine which persists as accidents, have become always and essentially *food* – figurative food which shapes our imitative humanity – and, in this way, they are the appropriate vehicles of the Logos, since like the Logos, they now exist in a pure passage or relationality.'[76]. The eucharistic food is not therefore incorporated into our being, but we are incorporated into the food, since the food is the mediation of God.

Pickstock's achievement was to use the notion of transubstantiation in a context which was not dependent on a substance/accident metaphysic such as the traditional interpretation of transubstantiation demanded. Her work argued instead for a coincidence of sign and body in the event of the Eucharist where the sign was taken up into the divine and conjoined with it. Such a form of non-identical repetition did not involve the replacement of one substance with another but rather a fusing or collapsing together of sense and referent or sign and signified such that the sign becomes conjoined with God and thus deified and of a higher value.

Conclusion

One of the main objections to the ARCIC statements on the Eucharist from some sections of the Roman Catholic Church[77] seems to be that consensus between Anglicans and Roman Catholics is lacking on important aspects of eucharistic theology such as the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and specifically in regard to transubstantiation. These official objections seem to be based on particular theological and philosophical notions of a change in substance

[73] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', p. 62.
[74] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', p. 63.
[75] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', p. 63.
[76] Pickstock, 'Thomas Aquinas and the Quest for Catholicity', p. 63.
[77] As expressed in the *Official Response*.

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of the elements such that the substance of the elements is changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood.

The time may be right for further Anglican investigations on the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and indeed the use of the term transubstantiation within an Anglican context to see if progress towards overcoming these objections can be made. Several Anglican theologians, reviewed above, have argued that Christ is really present in the Eucharist and that there can be a change in the value or substance of the bread and wine, although such transvaluation, or transubstantiation as some call it, does not involve the removal of the substance of the bread and wine of the Eucharist but a change in the inner reality of the elements. For these Anglicans there is indeed a change in substance of the bread and wine of the Eucharist, in that following consecration they have a new and greater value, but no removal of their natural substances. The crucial difference seems to be in relation to the philosophical analysis employed to describe the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and this in turn influences the way that transubstantiation is defined. The Anglican theologians discussed above present arguments suggesting other ways of understanding the doctrine of transubstantiation and the nature of change in the elements which rely on modern philosophical reflection. Whereas the traditional Roman Catholic philosophical analysis, favoured in the official Roman Catholic responses to the work of ARCIC, insists on a particular scholastic explanation involving the removal of one substance, that of the bread and wine, and its replacement with another, that of Christ's body and blood, alternative philosophical analysis is possible, and some Roman Catholic interpreters have distanced themselves from the scholastic philosophy and remain open to other philosophical analyses. This work is suggested as a useful development in any future dialogue on the Eucharist.

Further work on the nature of the Eucharist between the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches may benefit from the exploration of other philosophical analyses in relation to the Eucharist. The distinction between 'real presence' and 'carnal presence' based on notions of identical and non-identical or moderate and immoderate realism and the discussion of change in substance interpreted as change in value may be useful in allowing both churches to explore the doctrine of transubstantiation in ways other than the scholastic metaphysic. For both churches there would need to be a preparedness to step aside from their own traditions in order to reflect more critically on the doctrine of transubstantiation. Anglicans would need to understand more clearly the difference between a real presence and a carnal presence of Christ in the Eucharist and to acknowledge more fully the usefulness of philosophical analysis in the service

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of eucharistic theology[78]. Roman Catholics would need to understand more clearly other theological and philosophical schemes which speak of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and to appreciate more fully some of the insights of modern philosophical reflection. Such an exploration of new ways of speaking of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist has been explored by some modern Roman Catholic theologians[79] and indeed mentioned by ARCIC itself in the *Clarifications* of 1994. Here reference is made to the Encyclical of Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*[80] where Pope Paul VI refers to the fact that Church can seek 'a new and solemn declaration'[81] of the faith, as was the case in Vatican II, and that the formulas of the Church 'can, it is true, be made clearer and more obvious; and in so doing this is of great benefit. But it must always be done in such a way that they retain the meaning in which they have been used, so that with the advance of an understanding of the faith, the truth of faith will remain unchanged'[82]. Whilst the Pope presents a traditional scholastic understanding of transubstantiation[83], his words suggest that other ways of understanding are possible. This leads *Clarifications* to say in its discussion of transubstantiation that 'Paul VI in *Mysterium Fidei* did not deny the legitimacy of fresh ways of expressing the change even by using new words, provided that they kept and reflected what transubstantiation was intended to express'[84]. This is exactly the point which the *Final Report* made regarding transubstantiation[85] and which some other Roman Catholic interpreters have put. It also seems to coincide with the thinking of the Anglican theologians discussed above who point to connections between the doctrine of the incarnation and eucharistic theology. These connections may well be worthy of fuller discussion and dialogue.

Dialogue of the type undertaken by ARCIC over many years may therefore be further facilitated when there is a willingness to seek new understandings on such a crucial matter as Christ's presence

[78] See Douglas and Lovat, 'The Integrity of Discourse in the Anglican Eucharistic Tradition: A Consideration of Philosophical Assumptions'.

[79] See Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 'Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I' and French Roman Catholic Episcopal Commission for Christian Unity, 'Concerning the Holy See's Response to the Final Report of ARCIC I'.

[80] Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei. Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Holy Eucharist, September 3, 1965*, Online at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_03091965_mysterium_en.html. Accessed 2 November, 2010.

[81] Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, paragraph 1.

[82] Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, paragraph 25.

[83] Pope Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, paragraph 46.

[84] Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, *Clarifications on Eucharist and Ministry*, p. 7.

[85] Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, 'Eucharistic Doctrine', p. 14, footnote 2.

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in the Eucharist and transubstantiation. It is to be hoped that future dialogue between the two churches will be able to proceed on the basis of seeking such new understandings.

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