

CORRESPONDENCE

A NEW THEORY OF THE EUCHARISTIC SACRIFICE.

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

DEAR REV. SIR,

The question at issue between Père de la Taille and the present writer is much more serious than the right interpretation of one or two passages from the Doctor Eucharisticus. Much as we revere our Angelic Master, we should not allow ourselves to prolong a discussion beyond a year merely to justify our reading of this or that passage from his works. Our readers will therefore dispense us from any further attempt to show that Père de la Taille has failed to understand the meaning of St. Thomas.

The real point between us is that Père de la Taille has failed to understand the meaning of the Council of Trent, and of that tradition which the Council of Trent has infallibly summarized and authenticated. This main issue between us is implicit in his letter to *Blackfriars*. Thus he writes that

'the Mass, although a real and actual Sacrifice, yet does not entail a *real* [as distinct from a figurative] immolation or mactation or destruction of Christ to be performed by us, but only a *figurative* [as distinct from a real] immolation or mactation, etc. Whereas the Passion did contain that *real* [as distinct from a figurative] immolation the likeness of which, a sacramental likeness, is enacted by us at Holy Mass in the very Body and Blood of Him Who on His eternal altar is an ever-ready-made victim to be offered up by us in the same rite that dedicated Him in the Last Supper.' [*Blackfriars*, Dec., p. 551.]

(A)

1. We have here Père de la Taille's confusion between, on the one hand, Real Immolation and, on the other hand, Mactation, Destruction, Deterioration—and of course Crucifixion.

2. Père de la Taille is right in holding that Jesus did not *really* mactate, destroy, deteriorate or crucify Himself

Père de la Taille is wrong in holding that Jesus did not *really* immolate Himself.

But we will publicly withdraw this criticism of Père de la Taille when he brings forward any authoritative statement that 'Jesus did not *really* immolate Himself.'

(B)

3. Père de la Taille implicitly repeats his opinion that 'the Last Supper and the Cross are complementary. At the Last Supper was begun that sacrifice which was to be consummated on the Cross. . . . Nor must it be reckoned a preliminary sacrifice at the Supper; and another subsequent on the Cross. But in the Supper-room was made the unbloody Oblation of the Bloody Immolation to be made on the Cross. . . . Of these, one, *viz.*, the Oblation, is after the manner of the determining form; the other, *viz.*, the Immolation, is after the manner of the matter which carries and is subject to the formal part.' [*Mysterium Fidei*, pp. 101, 102.]

It is this doctrine which Père de la Taille implicitly repeats, and which we explicitly deny.

4. We have already argued that by making the Last Supper the formal part of the sacrifice and the Passion the material part of the sacrifice, Père de la Taille has made neither of them the sacrifice!

5. Moreover, he has explicitly written as follows:—

Nec proinde absolvebatur statim post consecrationem [et transubstantiationem] sacrificium in coena litatum, sed decurrebat usquedum Christus moreretur.

E contra, statim post consecrationem absolvitur nostrum sacrificium missae: quia praecessit immolatio.

[*Mysterium Fidei*, p. 104.]

Hence the sacrifice offered up at the Supper was not completed immediately after the Consecration [and Transubstantiation], but it went on until Christ died.

On the other hand, our sacrifice of the Mass is completed immediately after the consecration; because the immolation has gone before.

It was not difficult for Père de la Taille to fall into the error, by an ambiguous use of the word 'absolvere,' or *to complete*. It would seem accurate to say that the Last Supper was not a complete sacrifice without the Passion. Here the word *complete* is ambiguous because we are dealing with an absolute [the Passion and Death] and a relative [the representation of the Passion and Death in the double Consecration.]

It is inaccurate or misleading to say that the relative is not complete without the absolute. It is accurate to say that the relative is not complete without its relation to the absolute. If we say that the relative is not complete without the absolute we are led, as Père de la Taille is led, to look upon the relative and the absolute as two constituents of one whole. In the

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same way some modern philosophers, having considered Creation as the relative and God, the Creator, as the absolute, and having considered the relative as completed by the absolute, conclude from this that God and Creation form one whole. This amounts to saying that not only is the relative really related to the absolute, but the absolute is really related to the relative. Père de la Taille has fallen into a kindred error when he holds that the Death of Jesus, if unrelated to the Last Supper, would not have been the visible redemptive sacrifice.

A necessary conclusion from this would be that, as the Mass is—and the Last Supper is not—the redemptive sacrifice, therefore Jesus Christ did not offer up Holy Mass.

Bishop Macdonald, who has hitherto been looked upon as the originator of Père de la Taille's theory, has explicitly taught this in his latest work, *The Sacrifice of the Mass*, wherein he writes :—

'The Last Supper is commonly regarded as the First Mass. But the First Mass was not celebrated till after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord into Heaven. And so by a gulf as deep as death and hell, the death He underwent on Calvary and the hell He descended into after death, is the Supper divided and differentiated from the Mass. . . . When He said "This do for a commemoration of Me," He instituted the Commemorative Sacrifice, which we call the Mass. He instituted it; He *did not offer it.*' [pp. 122, 125.]

This is a plain statement. We feel that it is wrong. Moreover, we feel that it is implicit in the doctrine of Père de la Taille.

But now at length Père de la Taille has begun to dissociate himself from Bishop Macdonald. For us this concern of the pupil to dissociate himself from his leader is dramatically satisfactory. In Père de la Taille's reply to me he wrote :—

'Nor do I propose to deal with Bishop Macdonald . . . because I happen to have already expressed my opinion of his book which is to appear shortly in the *Gregorianum.*' [*Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, p. 310.]

To this article in *Gregorianum* the present writer turned, hoping to find some precise information about the points of difference between the two champions of the new theory. But all that could be gathered from Père de la Taille's article in the *Gregorianum* was the following :—

'Il faut se souvenir que l'auteur (Bishop Macdonald) en même temps que théologien est volontiers poète. . . . On a parfois l'impression que les chevaux de notre poète

théologien, bien que conduits par une main nullement débile, mais pleins de sang, mais pleins de jeunesse, aspirant à pleines bouffées l'air boréal des plaines Canadiennes, avec je ne sais quelle brise lointaine qui vient des montagnes d'Ecosse, impatientes de toutes les lisières et de tous les circuits, se jettent de droite et de gauche à travers champs, defonçant ici une culture et culbutant ailleurs un piéton; mais c'est pur jeu; bientôt on les voit reprendre sagement la route au terme de laquelle, d'une allure impeccable ils passeront la borne et s'engageront sous l'arche triomphale.

De fait, il y a des moments où l'auteur, plutôt que de nous donner une analyse froidement méthodique se laisse aller à évoquer une vision, où se retrouvent assurément les traits de la vérité, mais non isolés, non dégagés de tels entours, qui, en se fondant avec eux, peuvent altérer leur pureté. C'est pourquoi tout en accordant avec lui sur les vérités maîtresses qui font l'objet et l'intérêt de son livre, on gardera la respectueuse liberté de différer d'avis sur certains points secondaires, sur certaines pièces accessoires de sa théorie.' [*Gregorianum*, Sept., p. 464.]

The gist of this is that the united front of the new theory is now broken. Père de la Taille 'will keep the respectful liberty to differ' from Bishop Macdonald. It is significant that this respectful difference of opinion between the two was not insisted upon—or perhaps referred to—until we had pointed out the extravagance of the new theory.

But for the moment we respectfully ask Père de la Taille to 'give us a coldly methodical analysis' of these points of difference, and to add his reasons for differing. Until this is done we shall not know all the implications of the new theory.

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CORRECTION.—In Père de la Taille's letter, which appeared in the December number of *BLACKFRIARS*, page 554, line 11 from foot, read 'hallow' for 'allow,' a misprint to the serious detriment of the sense.