

## CORRESPONDENCE

### 'PERE DE LA TAILLE AND THE LAST SUPPER.

To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS.

DEAR REVEREND SIR,

In itself there would be nothing but pleasure in explaining to your readers that *immolo*, apart from its etymological signification, which cannot apply to the sacrifice of the Lord, has in its current acceptation two principal meanings, which an author has to define before he makes use of either of them: the first being *rei divinae causa macto*, and the second, *sacrifico* (see Forcellini, *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon*, 1855, tom. 3, p. 387, or M.F., p. 11-12): either a *mactation* in connection with an offering, or a *sacrificing*; that in this latter sense Christ obviously was on the Cross immolated not by others, but by Himself; but in the former sense most certainly He was not on the Cross immolated by Himself, but by His enemies. Again, that if by the Mass is meant the bloodless oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ under the species of bread and wine by the Priests of the Church in memory of Christ's death till He come ('sub signis visibilibus immolandum in memoriam transitus sui ex hoc mundo ad Patrem,' *Conc. Trid.*, sess. 22, cap. 1), which is the generally accepted sense, then there was in that sense no Mass celebrated in the Cenacle; although there Christ certainly did offer *virtually* all our Masses; which are now offered by us in virtue of that one offering of His, to which He *actually* conjoins and subjoins our own offerings, as particular agencies to a universal cause. But if you choose to mean by the Mass any bloodless oblation of the Body and Blood of Christ under the species of bread and wine: whether performed by the Priests of the Church in union with Christ, or by Christ alone; whether intended to commemorate Christ's death, or to dedicate Christ to His death; whether having no further continuation in view, or having still to be carried on and pursued unto death; then in that indeterminate sense, which is not the current one, you will have to say that there was a Mass said in the Cenacle. And many other things of like import might it be pleasant to discourse about. Only there is a difficulty.

Father McNabb has written in *Blackfriars* two articles to which I had to reply. One in September, 1923, under the title, *A New Theory of the Eucharistic Sacrifice*; and another, under the title *Père de la Taille and the Last Supper*, in October, 1924. The first I answered in the *Ecclesiastical Review* of July and August, 1924 (articles now republished in my pamphlet, *The Last Supper and Calvary*). The reply to the second was my letter of November 13th, 1924, which appeared in your December issue, with the title prefixed to it of the article under

examination, '*Père de la Taille and the Last Supper*.' So far, so good. Now, much to my surprise, I see in your January issue of this year a letter of Fr. McNabb's, under the heading, *A New Theory of the Eucharistic Sacrifice*, where, waiving aside with a superb gesture my reply to his latest production, he simply goes back to his original line of attack, marshalling against me the same old arguments which have already done service for him the first time, exactly as if they were still unimpaired, as if they had never been met and encountered. No indication whatever is vouchsafed to the readers of *Blackfriars* of what my answers in the *Ecclesiastical Review* may have been; much less any discussion of them attempted. Were I to write a reply, I should have to resume the same discussion *ab ovo* again, with the same result in view, of never having a single counter-argument of mine considered even by my opponent. Sir, there is a limit even to my simplicity.

But there is also something else. My letter of November 13th was intended as an exposure of certain methods calculated (I do not say designed) to cast doubts on my literary honesty, and as a protest against a censure, which makes of my doctrine something worse even than a merely heretical view, a 'blasphemous idea' (October, 1924, p. 399), that is, according to St. Thomas (2-2, 13, 3), the worst kind of heresy. Now I have looked in vain through Fr. McNabb's recent letter for some expression of regret at this remarkable outburst. That being so, I find it impossible, Sir, to carry on the discussion with him any further. My humility, I am afraid, has also its limits; but anyhow, I am satisfied that in this case they are marked out for me clearly by an imperative duty of self-respect.

One point only I wish to clear up before taking leave, because it is one of mere fact, and involving a personal element, which is of interest not only to me, but also to a revered and beloved friend, whose name has been dragged into this discussion in *Blackfriars* with what seems to me questionable taste. Your correspondent apparently has thought that there was something to gain for him by turning me into a 'pupil' of Bishop Macdonald, and the Bishop into my 'leader' and the 'originator of Père de la Taille's theory' (January, p. 52). I would consider it an honour to have sat at the feet of Bishop Macdonald. But, as a matter of fact, I had never heard of His Lordship, much less (I am ashamed to say) come across any of his writings till January—February, 1919, when I was staying in London, to be demobilised. But by that time, not only had my book been written, and the preface signed and dated (March 19th, 1915), not only had the censors' work been

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completed (the *Nihil Obstat* is of November 13th, 1916), but the manuscript had already been two years in the hands of the publishers. I was able, however, to get two extracts from Bishop Macdonald's article in the *Ecclesiastical Review* of December, 1905, inserted at page 75 and 106 of *Mysterium Fidei* (same pages in the second edition, which is just out). This is my indebtedness to the Bishop of Hebron: not a trifling one, since I consider that these extracts are some of the best pieces collected in my book. But there is a far cry from this to the fanciful report of leadership and discipleship, and 'united front,' and 'broken front' (*Blackfriars*, loc. cit.), and somebody's remarkable share in this dramatic course of events. The true origin of my book may be found by those who care to know in *Catholic Belief in the Holy Eucharist* (p. 126). As for the Bishop's latest work (*The Sacrifice of the Mass in the Light of Scripture and Tradition*, London, 1924), I consider it to be of a highly distinguished quality; and if I here and there happen to disagree on some point of detail, I am only using the same freedom of which His Lordship gave me the wholesome example in his criticism of *Mysterium Fidei*, as early as February, 1922 (*Ecclesiastical Review*). Our mutual independence is of equally long standing with our acquaintance; nor can it be surpassed except by our mutual respect.

I thank you, Sir, for having corrected the misprint which had crept into my preceding letter. May I express a regret that in his transcriptions of certain passages of mine your correspondent should not have respected my text? I did not write in the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* (p. 310): 'Nor do I propose to deal with Bishop Macdonald' (as quoted in *Blackfriars*, January, p. 52); which would hardly be courteous. I wrote: 'Nor do I propose to speak for Bishop Macdonald': there is more than a shade of difference. Nor did I write: 'I happen to have already expressed my opinion of his book which is to appear shortly in the *Gregorianum*': which would not be English, beside being hardly intelligible. As for the barbarisms and solecisms introduced into a French passage of mine, which appears on page 53, I leave them out of account, as I trust no one will be tempted to accuse me of ignorance of my own native language.

I beg to remain, dear Reverend Sir, with true regard,

Your obedient servant,

ROME,

M. DE LA TAILLE, S.J.

January 24th, 1925.

[As both Father Vincent McNabb and Père de la Taille have had an opportunity of stating at some length their respective positions, this correspondence may now cease.—Ed.]