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DOES THE DOCTRINE OF TRANSUBSTANTIATION INVOLVE A MATERIAL CHANGE ?

THE Rev. T. C. Hammond, who took a first in Metaphysics in T. C. D., has written an able pamphlet on the above subject.¹ It is a logical and courteous analysis of certain statements on the subject of Transubstantiation by Rev. B. J. Kidd, Dr. Headlam (Bishop of Gloucester) and Sir Henry Slessor. All three concur in reading into Transubstantiation a non-materialistic view. Mr. Hammond joins issue with them on this point, and has no difficulty whatsoever in exposing the erroneous character of their statements, and disposing of their arguments. His essay is a model of restrained reasoning, form and thought being under complete control. But for a delicate sarcasm occasionally scintillating in a passage of condensed matter one would not perceive that it was a controversial pamphlet. It is couched in the language of a professor, but it is easily followed as Mr. Hammond glances through the principal passages in Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas that bear on the subject.

The statements he confutes so signally are briefly these : (1) Dr. Headlam's "The substance in Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophy does not mean the material constituent of a thing, but the essence or idea of it—that which makes it to be what it is—and it is not, therefore, in itself a material term. The doctrine of Transubstantiation was introduced [*sic*] by St. Thomas Aquinas, in order to correct the materialistic views then prevailing, and, at the same time, find a justification for the cult of the Sacrament which was at that time developing. I have no doubt that it is often interpreted by less instructed persons in a material sense."

(2) Rev. B. J. Kidd's (writing on the statement forced from Berengarius) "It was a crude attempt to secure some real meaning to our Lord's words of institution by the doctrine of a *physical* transubstantiation or change. But the Schoolmen now came forward with a subtler defence in their philosophy of Reality. Using 'substance' not of the material thing as it affects our senses, but as the equivalent of 'essence,' the Realists held that the 'substance' of a thing is not only that which makes it to be what it is or gives it reality, but also that which exists independently of its outward manifestations. Hence the doctrine of a *metaphysical* transubstantiation was adopted."

(3) Sir H. Slessor's "The doctrine of Transubstantiation, which received its final form at the Council of Trent, was not an affirmation that the properties in the Sacrament suffered any material change on consecration, but was in reality directed against that view."

¹ *Does the Doctrine of Transubstantiation involve a Material Change?*
T. C. Hammond, M.A. Church Book Room. Price 6d.

We shall allow, for argument, that the Aristotelian philosophy (adopted by Schoolmen) underlies the theory of Transubstantiation. But where did Bishop Headlam get the idea that "substance" in Aristotle means the "idea" of a thing? It was not in Aristotle. See Ritter and Prellers' (*Greek Philosophy*) note (p. 315) on a passage in his "Metaphysics." "There are two things in definition, the genus and the differentia; two things in substance, matter and form." See also Schwegler's *History of Philosophy* (p. 107). "Pure form exists not in the kingdom of definite being: every given being, every individual substance, everything that is a *this* is a compound rather of matter and form." Aristotle used a word meaning "combination" (i.e., of matter and form) as the equivalent of "substance." Since "form" is the pure "idea," apart from matter, when it is combined with "matter" and forms a "substance," "substance" cannot be defined logically as an "idea." "Matter" is not so easily got rid of by Bishop Headlam. A change of substance which Roman Catholic theologians,¹ well qualified to speak on this subject, assert takes place in transubstantiation, implies of necessity (if the Aristotelian metaphysics is followed) a change of the "matter," and is therefore a material change, and this involves a materialistic manducation.

Thomas Aquinas follows Aristotle. "Matter," he writes, "is potential being, while form is the actualization of that being, and the *substance composed of the two*, is actually existent through the form." Discussing the use of "substance" by the Schoolmen, Mr. Hammond states that the word "substance" is never used for a concept or idea by them. "Substance," in either sense of primary or secondary substance, is applied to actual existences only.

"Flesh" surely is not an "idea." Thomas Aquinas used the word "flesh" in connection with the Sacrament. In his *Summa Theologica* (Q. 73, 4) he quotes with approval the statement of John of Damascus: "For the Damascene says that it is called a communion because we communicate by it (the Sacrament) with Christ (*Orth. Fid.*, ix. 14), and because *we share in His flesh* and divinity." The same Damascene wrote, "this body and blood of our God of which we partake is broken, poured out, eaten and drunk." By endorsing the statement of the Damascene that "we participate in the *flesh* of Christ" Aquinas admits a manducation other than spiritual.

Again Thomas said: "There is no *matter* underlying the sacramental species except that of Christ's body" (S., III, Q. 77, 5), and illustrates the change by the change of material parallels, air and fire. He also said, "matter is part of substance." According to Dr. Headlam this would mean that "matter" was a part of an "idea," or of its "form"! Being "formless," according to Aristotle and the Schoolmen, we are curious to know how it developed "form" and became an "idea."

Again Thomas distinguishes natural or "formal conversions" from the conversion of bread into the body of Christ. In the former

¹ E.g., Dr. Di Bruno, *Catholic Belief*, p. 70.

the subject remains, and in that subject different forms succeed each other. But in this "subject passes into subject," while the accidents remain, and hence this conversion is termed "substantial." By the Divine Power, which does not presuppose matter but produces it, this matter is converted into that matter and consequently this individual into that. "The change takes place in the primary subject (i.e., in the matter), which is the principle of individuation" (*God and His Creatures*, IV, 63).

Accordingly, transubstantiation is the change not of one "idea" into another but of one material substance into another material substance (*pace* Bp. Headlam).

Again, Thomas excludes the soul from his theory. The whole substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the Lord's Body, the soul being present only by the doctrine of concomitance. He even contemplates the absence of the Lord's soul, if the elements were consecrated while the Lord is supposed to be in the tomb. He also speaks of the *dimensions* of the Lord's Body in the transubstantiated bread (*God and His Creatures*, IV, 63). Thomas Aquinas had a very material idea of the resurrection body. "While the corruption shall be taken away, the substance of flesh and blood remains." "The corporeal matter of original creation cannot be annihilated and therefore must be subject to changes" (*God and His Creatures*, IV, 63). If Dr. Headlam is right in regarding substance as an "idea" and saying that "transubstantiation does not imply any belief in a physical or material change of the elements," what has become of the substance, the corporeal matter of the Lord's flesh and blood into which the corporeal matter of the bread is changed? Has it become an "idea"? And what then of the corporeal matter of the bread; has it too been spiritualized away? Assuming that the theory is correct, how do the accidents retain their nourishing qualities? Not by Scholastic philosophy, but by the miraculous power of God, according to Thomas. "The power of God can produce the effects of any secondary causes whatsoever without the causes themselves."

It is certainly news that Thomas Aquinas, who was born in 1224, introduced the doctrine of Transubstantiation, which was established by the Lateran Council of 1215.

The position of Aquinas on the subject of "material substance" may also be ascertained by his allusion to a passage in Augustine, where he speaks of the "corporeal substance" of the water of baptism penetrating to and purifying the soul (*S.T.*, Q. 73, 4). So he would, by analogy, speak of the "corporeal substances" of the bread and of the Body into which that bread was changed. Speaking here of the spiritual force in the two sacraments, he says, "A virtue consists in *material* and form together."—"Virtus constat in materia et forma simul." Can it be possible that he was able to drop the matter so completely out of his system as Dr. Headlam would have us believe, when he has to employ it in an efficacy?

Cardinal Cajetan, who wrote a commentary on the "Summa" of Thomas, gives a spiritual interpretation of John vi. 23. But he takes

the eating in a threefold sense: spiritualiter, sacramentaliter and *realiter* (actually). "Unless ye shall *actually* (realiter) have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man in the Sacrament of the host, and have drunk His blood in the Sacrament of the cup, you have not the life of the Spirit in you." The Council of Trent, which met twenty-one years after his death, in its VIIIth Canon on the Eucharist, declared, as its answer to the Reformers' positions, that "if anyone said that Christ is only eaten in the Eucharist in a spiritual way (spiritualiter) and not also in a sacramental and real (realiter) manner, he was to be anathematized." *Realiter* is opposed to *spiritualiter* and implies in the true being of its corporeal substance. Berengar declared that the very mention of the *spiritual* feeding on the body of Christ excited the Roman people to fury. "Really" is opposed to "virtually" by Scotus. "The sacraments do not contain grace *realiter* but *virtualiter*," he declared (XI, ii, 3, p. 566). Durandus, writing after Aquinas, says, "at the utterance of these words (of institution) the bread is divinely transubstantiated into the *flesh*." Nicolas de Lyra still later says, "the bread is the true body which came from Mary which is made by divine power by the conversion of the substance of the bread into the true body of Christ." Is it not absurd to say that such a body cannot be eaten in a corporeal or material way? and that there is not a material change when the bread passes into a real and not a *docetic* body? And it must be eaten in a material fashion unless that body passes into spirit—a change which Aquinas says is impossible. Very reasonably Mr. Hammond concludes his article by declaring that he has "shown that the alleged contrast between a 'physical' and a 'metaphysical' theory of Transubstantiation is a figment of the Anglo-Catholic mind, and therefore the view of a non-material change by which the consecrated elements are removed into the spiritual realm, if it is attributed to the Schoolmen, is nothing more than a deduction from false premises" (p. 41). Rev. B. J. Kidd's statement that Cranmer did not oppose metaphysical transubstantiation but physical transubstantiation cannot stand examination. Cranmer opposed the prevailing Roman theory of transubstantiation.

His words in his preface to his Reply to Gardiner on the "roots" of error in the doctrine of Transubstantiation are well known. They were written in 1550. In that reply he says: "The papists do teach that Christ is in the visible signs. The truth is, He is *corporally* neither in the bread nor wine . . . but is *corporally* in Heaven, and *spiritually* in his lively members" (p. 54). "They say that Christ is corporally under or in the forms of bread and wine. We say that Christ is not there corporally nor spiritually." So we do not see how Dr. Kidd can say that Cranmer held that He was there "metaphysically." In their canons on the subject the Council of Trent anathematized designedly the views of Cranmer (Sess. XIII, 1551). "If anyone denies that the *whole Christ* is contained under both forms and under every part of each form, in the venerable Sacrament, let him be anathema." The whole Christ implies His complete humanity as well as His divinity. We have referred to

Roman authorities as better qualified than Doctors Headlam and Kidd to interpret the Roman doctrine of Transubstantiation. Dr. Di Bruno, in *Catholic Belief*, p. 70, says: "There are two things in all bodies, the outward qualities, such as smell, taste, shape, colour; and the *substance*, wholly imperceptible to our senses. We know that in each body there must be the substance, or that underlying thing upon which the accidents rest, and that the substance is the essential part in a body; but of the nature of substance itself we have only a very imperfect knowledge."

Now it is this theory of substance and accidents that underlies transubstantiation. Modern metaphysics rejects that theory. But modern writers have no right to read modern views of substance into the writings of Aquinas, the Schoolmen, Cranmer or Roman Catholic divines, who are bound to hold the view as stated by Di Bruno. And it is transubstantiation based upon such a view of "substance" that we have to consider. We cannot idealize away the supposed substrate of any perceptible quality such as smell. Has "thought" a smell? Has an "idea" a taste? Metaphorically they have; but metaphysically they have not. To say that a smell exists only in an idea is to say that it only "exists in imagination." Without calling in the aid of philosophy, the experience of every-day life or common sense shows the fallacy of such an assumption. The antithesis of mind and matter will always remain, no matter what we do to identify them. And Cranmer did not attempt to identify them as far as we know. Thus we may fairly say that this attempt to spiritualize or idealize away the "matter" of the Sacrament as conceived and expressed by the Roman Church in order to make it more acceptable to members of the Anglican Church is doomed to defeat itself and may be likened to the attempt to weave spiritual ropes out of metaphysical sand.

F. R. M. H.

LIVES ENSHRINED IN LANGUAGE. By the Rev. T. Stenhouse, Ph.D.,
Vicar of Mickley. *Newcastle-on-Tyne: Andrew Reid & Co.,
Ltd.* 5s. net.

This is the second and a considerably enlarged edition of an interesting study in the sociological aspect of words. In most languages, ancient and modern, there are certain words in general use which have been derived from the name of some person and the name has come in some cases into quite general use, throwing many sidelights on history, as well as on manners and morals. As Dr. Stenhouse reminds us, the number of such words is constantly increasing. A glance at the Indices shows in how many broad fields the author has ploughed, and how much he has turned up will be seen by looking up the names in the body of the work. Those who are interested in such subtle studies will revel in these pages.

S. R. C.