

REVIEWS

SCIENCE AND WISDOM. By Jacques Maritain. Translated by Bernard Wall. (Bles; ros. 6d.)

There are two considerable essays here, one on the philosophy of nature, the other on philosophy in faith, or Christian philosophy considered not as a pure essence, but as a rational habit, or complex of habits, in a given historical state. Apart from a slight essay on the synthesis of wisdom within and of wisdom without this world, the remainder of the volume is taken up with reflections on moral philosophy arising from criticisms made by two Dominicans, Fr. Deman and Fr. Ramirez. The point is the degree to which human nature may go abstracting from grace; M. Maritain not going so far as his opponents, playing Cajetan to their Ferrariensis, Michael Angelo to their Bramante. The student will require the context of the controversy, and I fancy this translation could have been slimmed to advantage by the omission of these tangled pages.

The first essay alluded to is of importance to the English reader. It is easier to recognize the need of a philosophy of nature than to define its status. This lies somewhere between a general grammar of the sciences and a particular application of metaphysics. An uneasy position this, an order within changing and corruptible things that does not reach the security of metaphysics. Yet to make the attempt at such an order is one test of being Aristotelean rather than Platonic; the refusal to escape from the dubious world we are inside to an outside world of certainty, the effort to see lasting truth in the things we touch and see and hear.

The first flow expected too much from such a science. M. Maritain notes the intellectual precipitancy of ancient and medieval thinkers who covered the particular sciences with natural philosophy, using its principles as a substitute for their detailed processes. From the time of Francis Bacon the ebb set in, the particular sciences were uncovered, and the whole of nature was given a mathematical reading. Presently natural philosophy was well out of sight.

The result was not unlike the shore above high-water mark, all powdery and blowing about, discomfort and grit. The tide has turned again. It is seen that the particular sciences cannot explain themselves, and that while mathematics may help to arrange them, it cannot explain them. Hence the need of squarely facing the problem of the philosophy of nature. M.

Maritain shows how we may profit from the mistakes of the past, the mistake of expecting rough scientific fact to provide philosophical criteria, the mistake of constructing a natural philosophy independent of refined scientific facts. His essay is worthy of a commentary, as it stands small allowance is made for readers unfamiliar with scholastic terms.

On a point of detail, M. Maritain rules out as unauthentic the use of *scientia* to mean a way of knowing that likes the tang of created things. Yet the *Secunda Secundae*, treating of the Gift of Knowledge, allows for this cast of creatureliness and its penalty, known by Ecclesiastes and comforted by the second Beatitude.

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THE FOURTH GOSPEL. By the late Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, Bart., D.D. (St. Andrews). Edited by Francis Noel Davey, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Two vols. (Faber and Faber; 30s. the set.)

In a long introduction to this work, Hoskyns undertook to expound his central conception of the character and purpose of the Fourth Gospel. It is with this declaration, obviously, that a brief criticism must be concerned. Hoskyns only roughly completed this undertaking; but the Editor has been able to supply a supplementary Essay based on certain of Hoskyns' notes.

One forms the impression that Hoskyns' position is ultimately confused and inconsistent. His general conclusion is that both the theme and also the very subject-matter of the Gospel is 'the non-historical that makes sense of history, the infinite that makes sense of time, God who makes sense of men and is therefore their Saviour.' That is to say, Hoskyns maintains that nothing (or scarcely anything) of what we should simply call historical fact is contained in this Gospel. It is wholly concerned with what faith—and faith alone—can discover in, or through, the facts of the New Testament. It withdraws from the order of humanly observable history, of successive, chronological happenings, in order to set forth the Absolute of the Gospel. Here are no 'episodes,' such as the Synoptic Gospels provide. Indeed, Hoskyns supposes that a principle motive behind the fourth Gospel was one of rescuing the Christian truth from being identified with such 'episodic' material, and thereby nullified.

This broad conclusion is, of course, opposed to the Catholic view of the character of the Fourth Gospel. But the interest