

## *Blackfriars*

MARGARET SINCLAIR. By Mary Rita O'Rourke. (Burns Oates & Washbourne; 1/6 net.)

This book has been published for some time, and I hope it has already been widely circulated, for it is written beautifully and simply about a simple and beautiful girl. She is heroic; she is one of us, but much greater than most of us; and her apparently uneventful life suggests a new spirit of adventure, a new romance and a fresh ideal; for saintliness is always new, and the opinion that Margaret Sinclair is a saint will be shared by others besides those who have received marvellous favours at her hands. Her gaiety in all her ordinary little difficulties is just what we need in ours; her faith and courage in this present-day antagonistic world must inspire us who remain in it; and her magnificent simplicity offers a remedy for most of our ills. 'Within her twenty-five years . . . are compressed experiences so varied that most of us can discover in Margaret's life a touch of similarity with our own,' and 'No moment in life is too small to admit a memory of her.' Catholics and non-Catholics will do well to read this book.

R.R.

ART AND SCHOLASTICISM, WITH OTHER ESSAYS. By Jacques Maritain. Translated by J. F. Scanlan. (Sheed & Ward; 7/6 net.)

There are few contemporary writers on art and letters who do not pretend to some acquaintance with the Thomist philosophy of art. The fact is a remarkable one, for not only did St. Thomas leave no treatise expressly devoted to the subject, but he lived in an age when the status of art was utterly different from that which it occupies to-day. The Renaissance had not yet dawned to proclaim the emancipation of art from its lowly service of priest and people, and the conception of 'art for art's sake' was as yet undreamt of. Still further off was the day when art was to be deemed 'a substitute for everything else,' and the artist to be acclaimed the pontiff of religion and the revealer of the secrets of the universe.

It is to this work of Maritain, now appearing in a second English translation, that this awakening of interest in the Thomist philosophy of art is mainly due. Maritain saw that this philosophy, just because it was so elemental and so inseparably linked to the abiding axioms of the human mind, had a value for all time. He saw, moreover, that the modern stimulation of interest in the whys and wherefores of art, consequent on its more recent pretensions, made imperative a reassertion of those primal

common-sense principles. He collected the dispersed thought of St. Thomas in orderly fashion, added numerous notes which displayed the relevance of the Thomist doctrine to the problems which beset his contemporaries, and in fine wrote a standard text-book of the Thomist philosophy of art.

The French original is to be recommended to such as can and will study it. The book does not translate easily, and the new translation, though often ingenious, is not seldom clumsy and obscure, and occasionally faulty. But the more accessible reappearance of the work in English will have the advantage of attracting further attention to it. Also, it may be hoped, it may remove some not uncommon misunderstandings which have found expression in this country. Those who acclaim (or denounce) St. Thomas as the patron saint of classicism may be led to see that his doctrine was too simple and elemental, and so too universal, to justify his being appropriated to any particular school of technique; and those who would attribute to him a Tolstoyan confusion of ethical and aesthetic values may be convinced that their opinion is a strange inversion of the facts.

Maritain's treatment of this problem of the relation of art to morality and to religion is admirable, but all too brief. We would take this opportunity to recommend an excellent commentary in *Le procès de l'art* by M. Stanislas Fumet. It was published last year in the *Roseau d'or* series, and we hope that it will soon find a translator.

V.W.

CHRISTIANITY AND SEX. By Christopher Dawson. (Criterion Miscellany, No. 13. Faber & Faber; 1/-.)

A sound exposition of the principles which govern the Catholic attitude to 'sex' and to the 'new morality' has long been a crying need. Too often is the Catholic position on particular controversies isolated from those principles and made to appear but ill distinguishable from the most unreasoning obscurantism. In this small pamphlet, which is a masterpiece of profound and concentrated thought, Mr. Dawson shows the intense and consistent reasonableness and sanity of the Catholic position, whether as regarded in itself, or as compared with the disastrous solutions of the 'sex problem' championed by contemporaries. He shows how the Christian 'spiritualisation' of sex rises above the romanticism which sentimentalises it and the puritanism and eugenism which rationalise it. The late Mr. D. H. Lawrence was right in criticising both attitudes as introducing an alien and destructive element; but in thinking to isolate sex from all