

Jacques Maritain Lecture Caps Culture Series

By HELEN MACCHIA

"If a moment of general catastrophe should befall civilization, I would still not despair of civilization, for this country will give some of its generosity, good will, confidence in the future and courage, to things contemplative, to contemplation overflowing in action, when a few in America come to realize better the value of contemplative activity which will lead to a gradual modification of the general scheme of values."

These were the ringing words of Jacques Maritain, the leading living philosopher of today, who spoke on Action and Contemplation in the last lecture of the Christian Culture Series presented at Aquinas Institute on Sunday evening, Apr. 12.

The debate between action and contemplation not only concerns each of us personally, but is also of vital importance to human culture and to the destiny of civilization.

"In philosophical language," the speaker continued, "the problem of action and contemplation is that of transitive (or productive) and immanent activity (immanent activity in its most typical and purest function). Now, transitive activity is that which one being exercises upon another, imparting to it movement or energy. Concerning an agent of this activity, we find the agent does good primarily for himself, hence the rise of 'egotism.' Immanent activity, on the other hand, is of quite a different order; it is the characteristic activity of life and spirit. In this form of activity, action does not achieve itself in another being, but within the agent's soul. Acts of knowing and of loving are not only within the soul but are for the soul, an active superexistence, as it were, superior to the merely physical act of existence."

SPECIALISTS CITED
In studying the Greeks' view on this matter, we find Aristotle's conclusion, that life according to the intellect is better than a merely human life. In this belief, there follows an error of what this assertion really meant to the Greeks. It meant that mankind lives for the sake of a few intellectuals. This seems to give rise to a category of specialists—the philosophers—who lead a superhuman life; the second and lower category including those who serve these philosophers, those who lead an ordinary human life; these, in turn, served by those leading a sub-human life, or the life of a slave. "The high truth of superiority of the contemplative life," the speaker explained, "was bound up with the contempt of work and the plague of slavery."

What innovations did Christianity introduce on the subject with which we are dealing? Maritain believes that they are four-fold:

1. Christianity teaches us that love is better than intelligence—to love things that are superior to man is better than to know them. It is better to love God than to know Him.

2. The notion of contemplation has been transfigured by Christianity; it has been endowed with a



Courtesy Rochester Times-Union
GREETINGS LECTURER—The Rev. Hugh J. Haffey, C.S.B., Director of Christian Culture Series with Jacques Maritain, famed philosopher, who climaxed series with lecture Sunday at Aquinas

new meaning. The contemplation of philosophers is concerned with the perfection of the contemplator having intellectual knowledge as their end; while the contemplation of the saints is concerned with the love of the one who is contemplated—of God.

3. Action has been given a new meaning. Man's labor in its first and humblest stages is a cooperation with God the Creator and, in the moral order, it is bound up with the revelation of creation ex nihilo.

4. Contemplation is the business of all. As Maritain said, "That wisdom calls all, it clamors in the public places and in the roadways." All are called, not to the contemplation of the philosophers but to loving and crucified contemplation—to the feast of divine love and divine wisdom. The universality of this appeal is one of the essential features of Christianity's catholicity.

FRUIT OF WORK

Contemplation, it must be remembered, is not work in fact, but a fruit of work. It is not an ordinary leisure; it is a leisure coinciding with the very highest activity of the human substance. In concluding his lecture, Jacques Maritain said, concerning slavery, that Christianity has annihilated its functional necessity in the human conscience. For the Christian conscience, there do not exist two categories in humanity, homo faber, whose task is to work, and homo sapiens, whose task is the contemplation of truth. The same man is both faber and sapiens, and wisdom calls us all to the freedom of the children of God. The Christian Doctors tell us that contemplation is supernatural; it is achieved by the gifts which Sanctifying Grace brings to the soul.

Supernatural contemplation achieves and fulfills a natural desire or aspiration to contemplation, which is consubstantial to man and to which the sages of India and Greece bear witness. "St. Thomas says," quoted Maritain, "that primarily, absolutely speaking and in itself, contemplative life is better than active life. The second point of doctrine to be considered is that contemplation, being the highest degree of the life of the soul, cannot be an instrument of the moral virtues and the operations of active life, but the end to which those things have to be directed as means and dispositions."

We say that to wish paradise on earth is stark naivete. This however is better than not to wish any paradise at all. To aspire to paradise is man's grandeur and the individual must begin to realize this state here below. "Contemplation is paradise on earth, a crucified paradise."

After the lecture, Bishop Kearney commended Father Hugh Haffey, C.S.B., the director of the Lecture Series. His Excellency pointed out that such a Series is both needed and appreciated by the people of Rochester. A program for another lecture Series was submitted; this program will probably include Lord Halifax, A. J. Cronin, Fr. Farrell, Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, Walter Lippman and several others.

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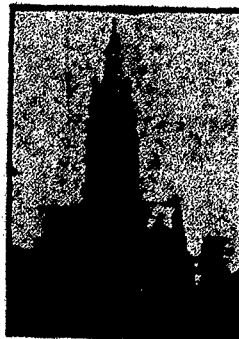
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Bishop Wade Held War Prisoner in South Sea

SYDNEY, Australia.—The Most Rev. Thomas Wade, S.M., Vicar Apostolic of the North Solomon Islands, who refused an opportunity of transportation to a place of safety with other residents of Kieta when a Japanese warship arrived outside that undefended harbor, is held a prisoner of war by the Japanese, according to official word received by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. James Hannan, of Sydney, Australian Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

Interned with Bishop Wade at Rabaul, Island of New Britain, according to word received by Monsignor Hannan, are two American priests whose names are given as Hennessy and Connelly.

(NOTE: At the time of the Japanese invasion of Bishop Wade's Vicariate in the North Solomon Islands, the Rev. James Hennessy, a priest of the Archdiocese of Boston, was listed as doing missionary work under Bishop Wade and conducting a native training school at Buhi Passage. A list of American Marxist missionaries in the territory included that of Father John Conley, also at Buhi Passage, but no priest named Connelly.)