

## REVIEWS

*To the Editor of BLACKFRIARS,*

Sir,—As a humble student of St. Thomas and St. Antoninus, I should like to make an observation upon the subject of Father White on Mr. Robbins. It is perfectly clear that the Fathers and Doctors of the Church advocated a certain type of society, basically agricultural, with commerce a very secondary factor, individual and responsible craftsmanship implied, expressly self-sufficient, and of a not unpleasant frugality. This ideal corresponds very closely with that of the classical writers, and approximates to the Galilee of the parables. Mr. Robbins, it would seem, stands in the line of the strict interpretation of St. Thomas. Father White, if one may compare this sociological disputation with the theological arguments of the Counter-Reformation period, I must regard as standing in the place of the deviationists—the Molinists and Suarezians. He is a kind of sociological Molina!

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### THEOLOGY

**THE WHOLE CHRIST, The Historical Development of the Doctrine of the Mystical Body in Scripture and Tradition.** By Emile Mersch, S.J. Translated by John R. Kelly, S.J. (Coldwell; 21s.)

*Le Corps Mystique du Christ* of Père Mersch should by this time be too well known and treasured to need any commendation. Praise would be an impertinence: it is the standard work on this most sublime of subjects. It is neither a speculative nor a devotional treatise; it is before all things a collection and chronological systematisation of sources, tracing and scrutinising the revelation in Scripture of the mystery of our redemption "in Christ," and the development of the doctrine by Christian thinkers, contemplatives and preachers from the Apostolic Fathers to the present day. Without depreciating the immense skill and erudition with which the author displays the successive stages in that development, the book will be valued above all else as a superb anthology of quotations from the great minds which, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, have done most to mould the tradition of the Church in the gradual unfolding of her consciousness of her own identity.

Of particular value and interest (because less familiar) is the author's treatment of the revelation of the mystical Body in the synoptic Gospels—especially in St. Mark—and the section of eight chapters which treat of the *Doctrine of the Mystical Body in the Greek Fathers*. Particular emphasis is here laid on the importance of the contribution of St. Irenaeus's expansion of St. Paul's idea of *anakephalaisosis* ("recapitulation"), which gives added significance to the contemporary Papal behest to "restore all things in Christ," and on the contribution of St. Cyril of Alexandria whose realisation of the function of the Eucharist in effecting the real ("physical") union of the faithful with one another in their Head provided the key to what St. Hilary's central idea of "incorporation" and St. Athanasius's "divinisation" had left obscure. In the section on Western tradition, full justice is done to the synthesis achieved by St. Thomas and Cajetan. But perhaps of wider appeal than these more strictly theological contributions are the stirring sermons of St. John Chrysostom with their acutely agonised realisation of the Christian implications of social injustice, (e.g., "Your very dog is gorged with food while Christ faints from hunger.").

All leads—or rather shows that the unanimous witness of Scripture and tradition leads—to the triumphant and dazzling conclusion that,

"In the Church, which is the continuation of Christ, there exists between the Incarnate Word and each Christian more than any bond of love, however ardent, more than a relation of resemblance, however close, more than the bond of total dependence that binds to their one Saviour all men who have received the grace of pardon and sanctification. There is something more than the union of subjects to any king, more than the insecure incorporation of members in an organism, more than the closest possible moral union. There is a "physical" union, we should say, if the very term itself did not appear to place this bond in the category of mere natural unions. At all events it is a real, ontological union, or, since the traditional names are still the best, it is a mystical, transcendent, supernatural union whose unity and reality exceed our powers of expression; it is a union that God alone can make us understand, as He alone was able to bring it into being."

In this English edition, the work has been shorn of most of its valuable critical and exegetical notes, many quotations in their original Greek and Latin, and the various appendices. Table of Contents and Index have been considerably shrunk. These are sacrifices which the scholar will readily make if they have the effect of giving the book a less intimidating appearance to the

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general reader whom it is hoped to reach. Less understandably, Père Lebreton's fine preface has had to give way to some trite hackwork from the General Editor of the *Religion and Culture Series* in which the edition appears. But the translation is good, unpretentious and thoroughly readable.

We hope that it will soon be followed by translations of the author's subsequent magnificent studies on the moral and social implications of our incorporation into the Whole Christ, and on our assumption thereby into the mystery of the Life of the Trinity of Persons.

VICTOR WHITE, O.P.

A RABBINIC ANTHOLOGY, selected and arranged with Comments and Introductions by C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe. (Macmillan; 18s.)

Unless it is held—according to what seems an unlikely opinion—that Rabbinic religion underwent a profound change during the period in question, it remains to accept the evidence provided by this anthology as forming a genuine, although an incomplete, record of Pharisaism as it was taught and held at the time of Christ, or somewhat earlier, and onwards until about the fifth century.

As Montefiore acknowledges, the characterisation is rendered very imperfect through the complete omission of *Halakah* material—that is to say, of all that body of Rabbinic teaching that was formed of their scholastic, casuistic elaborations and interpretations of the Law. Nevertheless it is their more purely spiritual moral and religious life that should properly be taken as finally characteristic of the whole; it is by the soul of their religion that the body must be judged, scarcely the reverse.

A tremendous depth, sincerity, purity are the marks of the religion that reveals itself here. At least it is hard to think that an unprejudiced mind should judge otherwise. All that is noblest (if not most sublime) in the religion of the 'Old Testament (its Christian promise apart) is here carried on and in some points even developed. (As, for example, in the working out of the great conception of the *Shechinah*, of the conception and practice of *Kawwanah* and of *Kiddush ha-Shem*.) And through the homely, spontaneous form of the *Haggadah* teaching it is possible to make contact with the Rabbis themselves and discern the noble character of their personal religion.

It cannot be said that, in view of Christ's denunciation of Pharisaism, it is disloyal in a Christian to submit to such impressions as these. For, supposing it is thought that Christ's denunciation was in part directed against essential Pharisaism, and not merely against an abuse of real Pharisaism, it highly