

Here specifically is the value of Father Davitt's book: the principles enunciated should be preached publicly in order to restore to law the prestige it has lost through a subjective interpretation. This book can become the source of a reaction demanding that morality and citizenship be reunited in public life. C.B.

The Theology of the Mystical Body. By Emile Mersch, S.J. Translated by Cyril Vollert, S.J. St. Louis, B. Herder Co., 1951. pp. xviii, 663. \$7.50.

To do justice by way of criticism (in the neutral sense of the word) to Father Mersch's monumental work requires at least a fairly lengthy essay, while a mere review such as circumstances here permit, must of necessity confine itself to general conclusions.

Father Mersch dedicated the intellectual efforts of a life-time to a thoroughly extensive and profound study of the doctrine of Christ's Mystical Body. The present book is a sequel to a previous work, which showed how Sacred Scripture, the Fathers, and later theological tradition explain the nature of the Mystical Body. In this later volume the doctrine is treated, as it were, speculatively, but always based on the tremendous labors of a positive character which went into the earlier work.

The Theology of the Mystical Body is divided into five Books. Book One serves as a theological and philosophical Introduction wherein the foundations for Mersch's long argument are laid. This is really a brilliant lesson in theological methodology by a true master. Mersch sets out to reach an understanding of the supernatural truth of the Mystical Body by its vital connection with other revealed truths. Theology as a true science demands and achieves unity: unity in the supreme formal object of its contemplation. This unity, according to Mersch, may be found in the Whole Christ, which is the author's conception of the Mystical Body. Unfortunately, although he makes a concerted effort, the author does not succeed here in convincing us that his theory is not opposed to the solid and manifest teaching of the Angelic Doctor. His distinction between a formal, interior and a supreme, material object is hardly understandable; nor can Mersch substantiate it by the authority or thought of St. Thomas. Whether or not this initial defect vitiates the entire thesis of the author would be extremely difficult to say; certainly it does not cancel the lofty speculation and deep penetration which pervade the rest of the work.

Book Two studies the Coming of Christ, its preparation in the

primeval Creation, its explicit occasion in Original Sin, and the person through and in whom, on earth, it was accomplished, Our Blessed Lady. Again, Mersch departs from the Thomistic school (and that of most of the greatest Fathers) by postulating an Incarnation, even without the defection of Adam. In the chapter on Original Sin Mersch evidences remarkable familiarity with almost all of the chief theological works of St. Thomas, as well as a keen desire to explain the commonly received notion of transmission by way of incorporation in nature by means of the superior incorporation of all mankind in supernature, in Christ, Head of the Mystical Body. Here, however, he makes the terrible and basic error of speaking of Original Sin in Adam's descendants (merely) as the "privation of grace;" and, in context, in the sense in which the human nature itself, apart from any elevation by God, is *not possessed of grace*. Assuredly, this is not the sense in which Catholic doctrine proposes Original Sin—or the lack of grace which it essentially entails. This inheritance from our first parents is a true, positive sin; a habit in sense of an habitual disposition, really residing in and defiling the soul of the unbaptized! On the other hand, it is gratifying to find in the very next chapter an unequivocal statement of the pre-eminence of Mary's Divine Maternity among her graces and prerogatives.

Book Three comprises a prolonged and richly rewarding study of Christology in relation to the Mystical Body. There is a strange and inexplicable touch of psychological anthropomorphism in the statement that "man . . . naturally conceives of things as having some resemblance to persons . . . he conceives of persons as having the characteristic of things etc." (p. 235). Apart from this and other arresting expressions, Mersch has unfortunately attempted to reconcile the Thomistic and Scotistic positions on the sole revealed motive of the Incarnation thus leaving the reader to suspect his avowed fidelity to St. Thomas' theology. Such suspicion would, however, find little foundation throughout the rest of this magnificent tract on the requisites and nature of the Redemption.

Mersch rises to sublime heights in Book Four on the Blessed Trinity which abounds in *Scriptural*, Patristic, and Thomistic texts. Here, as in the preceding Book, a number of difficult, speculative questions are embodied in clear, warm language, no less inspiring than illuminating. Finally, in almost two hundred pages, Father Mersch outlines in ordered, careful fashion our supernatural life in Christ as members of His Mystical Body. As the translator has noted, the author favors the view (which may no longer be proposed by Catholic teachers since the appearance of Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis Christi*)

that the soul of the Mystical Body is sanctifying grace. However, he does qualify this by insisting that his preference "does not imply a denial that the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church." Other statements must also be clarified in the light of the encyclical, such as: "The mystical body represents the assemblage of those who live or ought to live in Christ," and especially: "'mystical body' connotes the entire multitude of those who live the life of Christ . . . whereas the word 'church' represents the society of the baptized faithful as organized under their lawful pastors."

The Theology of the Mystical Body must be reckoned among the half dozen or so most important works of our century. Some are already speaking of its noble author as the "Doctor of the Mystical Body" (with all due reverence for the living magisterium of the Church, of course). One is, certainly, far the wiser and the more inspired in a truly and deeply Catholic sense for having read this masterpiece of theological wisdom. The citations of points of divergence or puzzlement throughout this review is not at all meant to detract from our wholehearted approval and admiration of the Belgian Jesuit's splendid work. Father Cyril Vollert, a veteran translator of outstanding theological treatises as well as an eminent contemporary writer in his own right, has again given evidence of his mastery of a laborious and, in a large measure, unrewarding art. J.P.R.

The Philosophy of Communism. By Giorgio LaPira and others. New York, Fordham University Press—Declan X. McMullen Co.,—1951. pp. xi, 308. \$5.00.

This book is a symposium, comprising twenty-three papers read at a series of meetings held by the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas in Rome. The authors are well-qualified experts, each distinguished by noteworthy contributions in his special field. Thus the first article is by Signore Giorgio LaPira, the present mayor of the city of Florence, an outstanding leader in Italian Catholic Action. Other contributors include Fathers Charles Boyer, S.J., Gustav Gundlach, S.J., Gustav Wetter, S.J., Cornelio Fabro, C.P.S., Igino Giordani, Gabriele Roschini, O.S.M., and the Dominicans, Garrigou-Lagrange, Eugenio Toccacfondi, and Felix Morlion. The mere citation of names as justly renowned as these is sufficient indication of the book's high excellence.

The subject under discussion is Marxist ideology, its fundamental principles and its logical consequences. The accent is on clear exposition and profound analysis, rather than demagogic denunciation