

ticular moment in the history of Christian Hellenism. St John, at least in his longer and more studied letters, is deeply under the influence of what may be called the Stoic-rhetorical moral tradition. In studying his dealing with it, how it at times overmasters him and at times is subdued to an authentically Christian thought and expression, we can form some idea of the complexity of the situation of a Christian brought up in the ancient culture (itself a very complex thing). It is something which always has to be kept in mind when assessing the degree of authority to be given to the teaching of any particular Father, and the study of it can often be of great value in many ways to us in our still more complicated intellectual situation.

A. H. ARMSTRONG

THE MYSTICAL BODY AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE. By Fr M. Eugene Boylan, O.C.R. (Mercier; 5s.)

The author of this essay has already made a well-deserved name for his spiritual writings. For that reason the book, of which the subtitle is 'The Foundation of the Spiritual Life', is rather disappointing and gives the impression of a successful author who is pushed forward too rapidly. The subject is of paramount importance and there is little in English to supply what the book sets out to provide. But the Papal Encyclical on the mystical body, often quoted at length, does not receive very much elucidation, and considerable space is occupied by the endeavour, so frequently made before, to describe the nature of the unity of Christ in his member, a unity called 'ontological' by Mersch, 'quasi-formal' by Mura. It would have been more in conformity with the title, as well as with the desire to convey the nature of the unity, had the author given far more space to the effect of the unity in the individual Christian who 'puts on' Christ, lives by *Christian* virtues, and suffers in the death of Christ on the cross. The identification of Christ with his members could in fact be traced in its spiritual effects right up to the transforming union of the highest and holiest Christian life. However, there are good things in the book, and the reader must remember that it is the first of a series edited by the capable theological learning of Fr James, O.F.M.Cap., so that it is designed to open the subject and raise the problems rather than to provide a complete guide to the spiritual life in terms of the mystical body. And there is a unique feature in the book in the *Publisher's* introduction; for the director of the Mercier Press takes the opportunity of stating the aims of his firm in recalling men to the spiritual life.

JOHN HUNSTER

LA SYNTHÈSE THOMISTE. Par P. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. (Desclée; n.p.)

The interest of this tremendous contribution to the *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique* (here only slightly enlarged into a book of 740 pages) for readers of LIFE OF THE SPIRIT lies in its synopsis of the

moral teaching, and therefore the spirituality, of St Thomas. The distinguished author, whose work in this field will probably merit his immortality in the history of theology, shows how the spiritual teaching of the Angelic Doctor is based firmly in the whole theological doctrine of the *Summa*, and he sketches the entire structure beginning in this section with Beatitude and ending with Christian Perfection and the Charismata, touching unfortunately by name only the pleasant social virtues of respect, veracity, affability and liberality. As a synthesis the book is exceptionally competent, as we should expect; but the author naturally intrudes his own interpretation from time to time as for example in the question as to whether Christ offers actually or only virtually in the Mass (p. 401). Thomists are to be found on both sides in this dispute, as indeed also in the most recent dispute on the nature of theology on which he adds an appendix.

JOHN HUNSTER

GOD THE FATHER. By Emile Guerry. Translated by A. H. C. Downes. (Sheed and Ward; 12s. 6d.)

Mgr Guerry's book, now made available to English readers in an excellent translation, is a series of meditations designed to foster devotion to God the Father, not in isolation from or to the exclusion of the other Persons of the Trinity, but as the One from whom they receive life; as the origin of all divine life, including sanctifying grace, the life of the soul. The spiritual life of the Christian is presented as an ascent towards the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, a participation in the life of the blessed Trinity. We came forth from God as creatures; we return to him as sons, adopted into the family of God, brethren of him who was the Son of God by nature, having received the Spirit of the Son into our hearts crying 'Abba, Father'. The Christian virtue of religion must not only recognise God's right to be worshipped as Creator but also his right to be loved as a Father. Unfortunately for many Christians the Fatherhood of God remains a mere metaphor or abstraction having little or no influence on their spiritual lives, even though they may say the 'our Father' every day. Or the Father is only the terrible Judge, unapproachable except in fear; he whom an evilly-inspired art would depict to their childish imaginations as a formidable Ancient throwing an angry glance at them from a cloudy heaven! Those who may have been thus unhappily estranged from the Father either by thoughtlessness or as a result of 'childish imaginations' will find in these meditations the 'true face' of the Father as revealed to us by our Lord in the Gospels, not only in his power and majesty but more especially in his goodness, his mercy and his infinite goodness. Not that there is any wishy-washy sentimentality about the work. Both the plan and the treatment are strictly theological. Part I, Our Divine Family, is saturated through and through with Trinitarian doctrine while Part II, which outlines a spirituality based on devotion to the Father, treats of the theological virtues, the Mass, prayer, the Mystical Body.