

and wept all night, the promise of her bright world broken.' One wonders why. Perhaps she was given the impression that the Church does after all exhort us to rise above our animal nature and redeem our passions in the high spiritual purposes of the Divinity.

There are a number of statements throughout the book which a trained mind can understand, and appreciate and sympathize with in view of the dangers of over-simplification inherent in any popular presentation. But that only raises the question of the advisability of sketchy treatments of important and difficult matters, unless as an introduction to a fuller development. To take one example, the theme of *The Single Girl* deserves much more than three short pages.

It is not easy to see how the notion of virginity, on which the author has a few remarks, fits into his general scheme of things. Surely a discussion of virginity can find a place in a work on *sex* only by way of negation. The virgin turns away from sex and sexual union, sublimates sexual desires, in order to achieve something positive: a closer and *higher* kind of union, but a union which is precisely not sexual.

MURDOCH SCOTT, O.P.

LIFE TOGETHER. By Dietrich Bonhoeffer. (S.C.M. Press; 4s. 6d.)

This is the English translation from the German of a Lutheran's account of what it means to be a Christian. It begins with a discussion of the basic notion of community life. The remaining four chapters are an account of the Christian's response and responsibility to the community, both as a member of that community and as a person in his own right. Chapter two—'A Day with Others'—discusses the life of common devotion: the word of Scripture, the hymns of the Church, and the prayer of fellowship. In the chapter entitled 'The Day Alone' a more personal and private note is struck with some thoughts on solitude and silence, meditation, and prayer. The last two chapters are concerned with the social aspects of living together as Christians. Here we are reminded of our social duties towards our neighbours: of the need for holding one's tongue more, of being meek, of being more ready to listen to and accept the opinions of others, of being helpful, of being patient and of bearing with the weaknesses and shortcomings of other people. That particular kind of helpfulness which is the giving of absolution to another Christian brother who confesses to one is the subject of the final chapter.

From this brief summary it will be seen that the book touches upon many important matters, and matters which the Catholic needs to appreciate and to be reminded of. But the whole account is decidedly off-key; the handling of the subject is vitiated from the start by a false notion of the relationship between grace and nature. As this point is

fundamental to the whole issue it is of little value to criticize the details of the theme of *Life Together*. But to take one instance, the notion of 'community' as it is developed here is the very antithesis of the catholic theology of the Mystical Body. *All* men are members of the Mystical Body of Christ—at least potentially in so far as they are all *capax Dei et gratiae*. All men are, then, members of the Church—again, at least potentially; and of those who are *actually* in union with Christ and the Church many are not and never will be visibly so. Hence *all* men are to be loved with the charity whereby we love God: there is no elect body of those who are predestined to heaven—in the Lutheran sense. As will be expected, there is no place for the sacrifice of the Mass, the sacraments and the priesthood in this analysis of the Christian life. A number of statements are contrary to Catholic teaching—the most obvious being that of the validity of absolution by the laity.

MURDOCH SCOTT, O.P.

A NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY FOR ENGLISH READERS. By Ronald A. Knox; Vol. II: The Acts of the Apostles, St Paul's Letters to the Churches. (Burns Oates; 18s.)

The second volume appears just a year after the first (September, 1953), the review of which appeared in *THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT* for May 1954. In that volume, on the Gospels, 'a companion commentary on the rest of the New Testament' had been promised. The promise was made in July 1952 (date of preface), but by October 1953 (preface of Vol. II), Mgr Knox had decided that he would go only as far as Thessalonians, and continue the rest in a third volume.

The treatment of Acts and the Epistles to the Churches follows that of the Gospels: the text is taken in sections, whose meaning is studied in relation to the context and the historical circumstances. When we read St Paul, it is especially important to be aware all the time of the main lines of his argument—so often St Paul takes a loop line, with fascinating implications, only to return to the main line miles further on. Monsignore has provided most illuminating introductions to each epistle: for instance on Romans: '. . . Why did he write? You get the impression that he did so with some reluctance. . . It is a natural conjecture that he had been asked to write; asked by somebody who knew, and was concerned about, the situation there. Not impossibly by St Peter. . . .' And original suggestions like that abound. And Monsignore's commentary is always linking the text, especially of St Paul, with the probable circumstances; a method which makes the commentary singularly alive.

In some ways, this commentary is a book to read alongside the