

endeavour to bring each other to the state of perfection, may in a true sense be called as the Roman Catechism calls it, the primary cause and reason of matrimony, so long as marriage is considered not in its stricter sense, as the institution destined for the procreation and education of children, but in the wider sense as a complete and intimate life-partnership and association. The same charity must rule and regulate all the other rights and duties of husband and wife; and so in the prescription of the Apostle: "Let the husband render the debt to the wife, and the wife in like manner to the husband", we must see a rule of charity as well as a law of justice.'

So it is that after every epoch of controversy and development in the precision of doctrine we should return to fundamental teaching such as this in order to keep our new elaborations in perspective, integrated in the fulness of the Christian life which is one of charity fed by the Body of Christ. Fr Bede Jarrett's book will go far to help us in this work of synthesis through his insistence on the primacy of love.



## REVIEWS

THE IMAGE OF GOD IN SEX. By Vincent Wilkins, S.J. (Sheed and Ward; 6s.)

Within the limits of less than twenty thousand words the author handles a difficult subject at four levels of consideration. He starts with God—sex considered 'in its vanishing point of infinitude, the eternal and infinite fecundity of God'—and for a few pages discusses the notions of generation and fatherhood in the Godhead. He then takes in turn three successive and descending orders of created being, from the divine and supernatural to the human and merely natural. Firstly, there is the theme of Christ and the mystery of the Incarnation, the union between the Son of God and human nature. Then we have the theme of the Mystical Body and the mystery of the union between Christ and the Church. And lastly, the theme of Christian marriage and the mystery of the union between husband and wife. At each of these levels one element in the mysterious union is represented as the male, the other as the female: *Son of God, Christ, and husband*, on the one hand, and *human nature, Church, and wife* on the other. The whole, we learn from a diagram (p. 19), is a theology of sex.

The author claims that too little has been written by theologians on this important subject of sex. But that depends on what we mean by 'sex' and what we understand by the phrase 'a theology of sex'. Fr Wilkin sees sex as something which ought not to be confined to the

physiological level—by ‘physiological’ he clearly means ‘physical’ or ‘material’. The physiological marks the *lesser* manifestations of sex; the higher manifestations are to be found at the levels of the Mystical Body, the Incarnation, and, ultimately, in God himself.

There seems to be some confusion of thought here between the genus and the species: between fecundity, union, and fruitfulness, in general, and that particular kind of fecundity, union, and fruitfulness which we call sexual. The triangle which emerges from God, with its male and female sides, and whose base represents reproduction at the level of plant life—why did the author stop short at animal reproduction in his diagram?—marks, if you like, a descending order of fecundity and union, but not a descending order of sex. Sex begins and ends at the material level, with the union of distinct but complementary male and female elements: plant, animal and human life is the sphere of sex.

Within this sphere, and in particular within the human set-up, non-Catholic writers tend to give exclusive attention to the physiological aspects of sex—taking ‘physiological’ now in its narrower and more technical meaning of one feature within the physical male-female union. They show a sad confusion of thought between sexual union and sexual desire, and fail to appreciate the distinction between seeking sexual desire in sexual union and seeking sexual union in order to satisfy bodily desires. Here is a sphere in which theologians, using theology in its practical function, can do much to correct and properly orientate what is good and useful in non-Catholic technical works about sex. It is right that the instruments of science—contrary to the feelings of the author?—should be engaged in the attempt to get to the bottom of the mystery of sex. And it is right that any such research should be downwards into matter, for that is where sexual reproduction takes its rise. And this descent into matter does not mean that mud need be stirred; nor that sex is something low and base that needs to be sublimated. As someone has wisely written on human sexual union, the Church does not ask us to raise our eyes up to heaven, nor exhort us to rise above our animal nature and redeem our passions in the high spiritual purposes of the Divinity; but asks us to turn our attention to our lower and in fact to our lowest nature.

There is, however, no lack of literature on the kind of approach to the subject of sex made in the book under review—what may be called using theology in its purely speculative role. It is a valid and very necessary treatment of the subject, and no author should be criticized for limiting himself in this aspect of the theology of sex. But it should be presented for what it is: a partial account of the matter. The author tells us of a young girl, very much in love, who went to a mission sermon eager to hear about courtship and marriage. ‘She came home

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