

which ignores the underlying message of the prophets and the importance of the theme of the Bride of God which runs through the Old Testament writings.

In the light of the liturgical revival this book seems very dated. There is an entire chapter on the eucharist which only mentions the mass once in passing and which ignores the sharing by the faithful in the sacrifice culminating in the union with God through the people's communion. Indeed the bulk of the chapter deals with the Holy Hour. This reflects the trend, now reversed, which in the past few centuries came near to making benediction more important than the mass.

One of the strongest points of the book is the emphasis laid on the action of the Holy Spirit. The aim of this 'retreat' is to make the reader more flexible and responsive to the promptings of the Spirit, and Mgr Knox points out that the Spirit works in us not merely at times of vital decision but all the time. He is concerned that we should live by the law of the Spirit and abandon the attitude of mind that is anxious to discover what is the least one can do and still ensure salvation. Despite its deficiencies there is much in this book that is helpful and stimulating.

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THE WAY TO BLESSEDNESS, by Thomas Traherne; The Faith Press, 18s.

Traherne's *The Way to Blessedness* was originally printed in 1675 and was the only book which this elusive writer designed for the general public. His other, and better known, work—the *Centuries* and the *Poems*—was, despite its wonderful accessibility and zest, never intended for a wide audience. The reader, however, would never have guessed that Traherne's writings, and his prose in particular, were really a private matter, simply an overflow of his love and vision of God; Traherne always gives the impression of wishing to share and to communicate. Even when he is speaking of mystical experiences that can never be completely ensnared in words, he nevertheless seems always to be implying that the fullness and clarity of a wordless vision is somehow being held and passed on in the medium of language.

In her useful Introduction to *The Way to Blessedness*, Margaret Bottrall rightly points out that 'All Traherne's writings insist that it is only the man who possesses imaginative discernment who is able to reach full human stature'. She also indicates that for Traherne every human movement or response was an act of worship, a kind of prayer. As he himself said in one of the marvellous *Centuries*: 'You never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars'. Yet Traherne is far from 'nature-mysticism'; he is remote from that kind of absorption in natural objects which Wordsworth made into a religion and which Aldous Huxley has, in recent years, attempted to make accessible through the medium of drugs. Traherne is wholly orthodox, fully aware of the hierarchy of things. His view of life is innocent, yes, in the sense that it is far removed

from neurotic introspection, but it is a view which accommodates and indeed demands the Christian conception of sin and evil.

If *The Way to Blessedness* lacks the brilliance and soaring quality of the *Centuries*, this is because Traherne is at great pains to explain in *The Way* what he was content simply to celebrate in the *Centuries*. *The Way* is more loaded with aphorisms, more eager to give advice, though the book is by no means wholly didactic. Traherne writes of the proper end of man's life, of wisdom, virtue, and so on; but, as in the *Centuries*, his prose seems most at ease and completely relaxed when he talks about God rather than about men. Thus in the chapter entitled *Of Magnificence in God*, the reader might almost imagine that he is reading the *Centuries of Meditations*—"The creation of the universe was a great and magnificent work, because the lustre and beauty of the world is a sublime and wonderful gift imparted to millions. The bounty of God in adorning all ages with cities and empires, for the benefit and enjoyment of all the world, is another piece of his royal magnificence. The infusion of a soul so divine and everlasting into the body of a man is an act of love transcendently greater than all the aqueducts and trophies in the world'.

This is the familiar Traherne, the man who can combine, with the utmost ease, the high and the low styles. Grandeur and simplicity are here perfectly mingled. But *The Way to Blessedness* is more sparing of such moments than the *Centuries*; it is a book of instruction primarily but, fortunately for us, Traherne often forgets that he is teaching and is content simply to praise and glorify.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS.

## Notices

Burns Oates are to be congratulated on giving us the new German catechism (in English simply called *A Catholic Catechism*) in the form of three paper-back booklets. At its first appearance it was justly acclaimed as a great advance on anything of the kind we have shown any signs of producing in England. The style is intelligible and the theological approach sane, firmly based on Scripture, though there are still major faults, such as the extremely conservative general arrangement, in which moral theology remains out on a limb, under the heading 'life in accordance with God's commandments'. But it deserves to be used wherever young Catholics are struggling to learn the faith, and this new edition will be of real value to schools.

While we are slowly turning the great Jerusalem Bible into English, the indefatigable French continue to turn out thoroughly revised editions of the fascicles. Two valuable recent ones are P. Benoit's *S. Matthieu*, with its fine