

TRAHERNE'S IDEAS OF INFINITY AND 'GODLIKENESS':

HIS "PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY"

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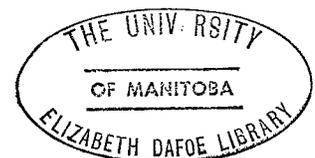
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## ABSTRACT

The brighter lights in the metaphysical school, Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne are bound together by their Anglican faith, as well as by their wit, bold paradoxical thinking, and use of the conceit. They individualize themselves not only by their varying and felicitous poetical expressions, but also by their religious sensibilities, which are, after all, the occasion of their verse. Because there is little biographical material on Traherne, very little can be done to define his religious and ecclesiastical affinities. That he is Anglican is admitted; but it is not sufficient! And, just as the use of traditional beliefs, doctrines and ideas, and of sacramental imagery, can help to define Donne's, Herbert's and Vaughan's position within the Anglican Church (they are as different ecclesiasts as they are poets) so, too, an examination of Traherne's major works helps to make his position more clear. Much has been done by scholars, in this respect, on Traherne's notion of Felicity, but little has been done to establish the central ideas which give rise to his Felicity. Only until quite recently has the idea of infinity drawn much attention in this way, and then nothing has been said of its possible influence on his theological position. This study establishes the idea of infinity and the idea of 'godlikeness' as of central importance to his religious vision, and as a significant influence on his theological position. Chapter I introduces an authentic portrait of Traherne's ecclesiastical tendencies, and then seeks to modify this

by the introduction of the ideas of infinity and 'godlikeness.' It suggests, as a result, that his Anglicanism can best be described under the title of "Primitive Christianity." Chapter II investigates the importance and the influence of these ideas on his thinking as it appears in his poetry. And, by considering them at the level of poetical expression, it appears to be true as Schopenhauer says, that style reveals physiognomy! Further, this chapter reveals how these ideas become an integral part of his intellectual development, and how they modify his religious vision in the light of the views current in his time. Chapter III considers the relationship of these ideas to the central ideas of Love and Enjoyment in the Centuries of Meditation in order to define further Traherne's position within the Anglican Church, and within the religious scene with which he was involved. Chapter IV indicates what new and surprising notions arise because of these ideas, and shows how his ecclesiastical standing is thereby affected. This study, therefore, casts a new light upon the overall elucidation of Traherne's central and inspiring ideas, and in so doing, suggests a new interpretation of his religious vision and of his theological position within the Anglican tradition.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In the unsigned preface, TO THE READER, of Traherne's Christian Ethicks, its writer hopes that the book will aid in retrieving "the Spirit of Devotion, and the sacred Fires of Primitive Christianity."<sup>1</sup> Further, he describes how Traherne, as a "Divine of the Church of England," avoided the "Confusion" and the "Enthusiasme" which accompanied the fall of the Church of England during the rule of Cromwell, and, as a consequence, "became much in love with the beautiful order and Primitive Devotions of this our excellent Church."<sup>2</sup> We are given a picture of an Anglican ecclesiast who values the rituals and the ceremonies of the Church as a protection against the chaos created within the Catholic Church by the ranting and enthusiastic sects of Puritan dissent. We are shown, too, that Traherne is attached to the customs and the ceremonies that belong essentially to the celebration of Christ, the Bride of the Church. By "Primitive" the writer is suggesting Traherne's love for the original and traditional ordinances of the Church, and his condemnation, perhaps, of the glittering array of pomp and circumstance attending the Church on the restoration of Charles II. We hear from him, also, that Traherne "never failed any one day either publicly or in his private closet, to make use of her publick Offices, as one part of his devotion, unless some very unavoidable business interrupted him."<sup>3</sup> From this portrait, painted with some rare biographical touches from Traherne's life, we might have in mind a Church Divine firm and constant in his

sacramental duties, as well as quiet and untroubled in his spiritual beliefs. However, the object of this study is to show, by an examination of his writings, that such a description is not wholly accurate, and that the ecstatic in Traherne exerts a considerable influence on the ecclesiastic.

Traherne, in all his works, speaks as he is inspired by Felicity. To ask Traherne, "Absent thee from felicity awhile!" is to be cruel without the excuse of being kind. Just as they are thought mad, or at least, quite out of the ordinary, who rave with the insights they have been granted in an inspired moment of intuition, so Traherne, as if anticipating suspicion of eccentricity, or of unorthodoxy, says for the benefit of the Reader in the Christian Ethicks (the only work he intended for publication):

Perhaps you will meet some New Notions; but when they are examined the author hopes that it will appear to the reader that it was the actual knowledge of true Felicity that taught him to speak of Vertue; and moreover, that there is not the least tittle pertaining to the Catholick Faith contradicted or altered in his papers. For he firmly retains all that is established in the ancient Councils, nay, and sees cause to do so, even in the highest and most transcendent Mysteries; only he enriches all, by farther opening the grandeur and glory of Religion, with the interior depths and Beauties of Faith.<sup>4</sup>

While he is not departing from the established tradition, or from the "Catholick Faith," he has some "New Notions" which will, in effect, appear to run counter to the more orthodox path. He has an "Enthusiasme" all of his own, because of his "actual knowledge of true Felicity," and this, too, will seem to create a little waywardness in his theological position.

On the whole, we have to consider Traherne and his Felicity--his

enjoyment of an immediate participation with the Creator, his ecstasies over this unmediated communion, his joys over possessing knowledge of hitherto transcendent Mysteries, and his raptures with respect to God's Love for man--in order to assess his ecclesiastical affinities. It is Traherne's intense thirst and longing for a unity with God, and, indeed, his actual enjoyment of this unity, which leads to a transcendent and visionary movement in his writings, and which, therefore, indicates a wish for the simplicity and purity that characterizes this unity with God. To speak of Traherne's "Primitive Christianity" will be to use this expression, though in a slightly unusual light, for its convenience in conveying his overall desire for simplicity and purity in the manner of his devotion to God. For it will be found that beneath the eye of Traherne's Felicity there is a decline in the significance of the customs and ceremonies of the Church in both his religious and his poetical sensibility. Though Traherne never denies their essential part in Christian devotion, he has, himself, aspired to such ecstatic heights that they become for him less an institution than an inspiration. In the ultimate relation with God, in moments of Felicity, devotions and duties are transcended as is everything except that intellectual and inward perception which brings about the final end of all endeavour. In the heated pursuit of Felicity, if means other than devotions to duties are stressed, if other notions come to the fore, then some shift in the religious sensibility must be apparent.

It is with this last thought in mind that the ideas of 'godlikeness' and infinity come into play. Traherne is inspired by the paradoxical

potentiality of these ideas, and it is in his unique treatment of them that we may consider them as the "New Notions" leading to a different way of apprehending the features of the Christian Religion. Both of these ideas have always been a part of traditional belief; but they are 'seen' in Traherne's writings in an entirely different light. A knowledge and enjoyment of Felicity has put them into a new context for him, and, as a consequence, they act as a touchstone for his other religious beliefs, not only assuming a central and emphatic position in his thought and expression, but also exerting an influence upon his religious devotion. Both of these ideas, furthermore, contain the germ of an exalted vision of man, with the result that they inspire Traherne into considering new and different possibilities for man's relationship with God. On the whole, both of these ideas are a stimulus for Traherne's movement towards simplicity and purity, and as such, they will be considered as cornerstones for his "Primitive Christianity."

This study will simply undertake to examine, first, the Poems of Traherne, since they are reputed to be his earliest outpourings, in order to show the degree to which these "New Notions" are significant in his early thought and expression, and to indicate what kind of influence they may be expected to have upon his religious devotion. Second, the study will consider the role of these notions in his Centuries of Meditation to see whether they have preserved their central significance for Traherne, and to see how, in relation to the ideas of Love and Enjoyment in the Centuries, they exert a formative influence on his Christianity. Finally, his last work, the Christian Ethicks (published in 1675,

just after Traherne's death--the above works were never published and their date of composition remains open for speculation) will be examined in the same way, but with special attention to the relation of these notions to what might be called his ethics of enjoyment so that we might discover his need to prepare us for these "New Notions." In short, this thesis will weigh the importance of these aspects in Traherne's works against what facts there are in elucidating the degree of Traherne's attachment to the "Offices" of the Church, or rather, the nature of his attachment to them. Even though his constancy is vouched for, even though he "became much in love" with them, his position within the Anglican tradition, in the light of his soaring and intoxicated spirit, has not been fully assessed. By considering Traherne's enjoyment with respect to the customs and ceremonies of the Church, it is hoped that a new light will be cast upon his position within the Anglican Church.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>T. Traherne, Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgivings, ed., and intro., H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. xxxi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. xxxi-xxxii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. xxxii.

<sup>4</sup>T. Traherne, Christian Ethicks, ed., C. L. Marks and G. R. Guffey (New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 5.

## CHAPTER II

### POEMS: SYNTHESIS AND SIMPLICITY

In Holy Sonnet V, Donne declares, "I am a little world made cunningly." He despairs of regaining the simplicity he once enjoyed, and of the nearness he once had to God and the realm of Grace. "Black sinne" makes him horrified at his fallen state. His style, too, is complex. By trying to "yoke by violence together" the disparate and contradictory elements of his existence, Donne seeks a new unity, and therefore, a new wholeness and purity. The "tough reasonableness" of his metaphysical conceits is at once a symptom of his distance from God, and an indication of his renewed efforts to retrieve his tarnished image. This awareness applies to the other metaphysical poets as well, except for Traherne. Traherne can boldly claim at the end of Admiration, "What is Man that he/Is thus admired like a Deity!" (l. 44). Man's image remains as bright as ever. Even in his "apostasy," Traherne never experienced the horror, the loss of grace, in the manner of Donne. "Simplicity/Was my Protection when I first was born" (Eden, ll. 38-9) and simplicity remains with him till he dies. Traherne's style, too, is a deliberate pursuit of the "Naked Truth." Simplicity unfolds itself with "Simple Light, transparent Words." (The Author to the Critical Peruser, l. 3) For his own poetry, Traherne confesses:

An easy Stile drawn from a native vein,  
A clearer Stream than that which Poets feign,  
Whose bottom may, how deep so'ere, be seen,  
Is that which I think fit to win Esteem. (ll. 17-20)

On the whole, his style is nothing if not ejaculatory! If there is

anything, then, that Traherne can declare, it is: I am a little world made marvellously!

Two central features of Traherne's thought as revealed in the poetry provide a foundation for his declaration of the marvellous. First of all, at the core of all his beliefs, is the belief that man is made in the image of God. The innocence and simplicity of childhood readily lend themselves to the expression of this, and Traherne, in Silence, exclaims:

O happy Ignorance of other Things,  
Which made me present with the King of kings!  
And like Him too! All Spirit, Life and Power  
All Lov and Joy, in his Eternal Bower.  
A World of Innocence as then was mine,  
In which the Joys of Paradice did shine  
And while I was not here I was in Heaven,  
Not resting one, but evry Day in Seven. (ll. 43-50)

Second, coming hand in hand with this belief, is the view that man, and Creation at large, are pervaded by the presence of God--His Omnipresence--while, at the same time, man is able to be present with God and the whole of Creation. Traherne indicates this reciprocal relationship in Thoughts IV, by making this testimony of God's presence in creation:

His Omnipresence is an Endless Sphere,  
Wherein all Worlds as his Delights appear.  
His Bounty is the Spring of all Delight,  
Our Blessedness, like his, in infinit.  
His Glory Endless is and doth Surround  
And fill all Worlds, without or End or Bound. (ll. 29-34)

Likewise, earlier on in the poem, Traherne had taken the startling view that, as for man's presence in Creation:

The Soul is present by a Thought; and sees  
The New Jerusalem, the Palaces,  
The Thrones and feasts, the Regions of the Skie,  
The Joys and Treasures of the DEITIE. (ll. 9-12)

These two features of his poetry are, in part, responsible for sustaining the effervescence in all his writings. They also give the first indication of a sufficient basis for Traherne's "Primitive Christianity."

This idea of 'presence' emphasizes, on the one hand, the immediate relation to God. In its effect, it shows why Traherne tends in his poetry to leave his lines barren of the significance of the Church, with respect to images referring to its ceremonies and rituals, and also of the significance of Christ as the Sufferer and Saviour of man, for which the ceremonies and rituals are chiefly designed to celebrate. When the closeness of man to the love of God is emphasized, the innocence, the purity, and the enjoyment man once originally possessed comes to the fore. While the ordinances of the Church may promote this intimacy with God, the flesh for Traherne offers no real impediment to the 'presence' of man's thoughts everywhere in Creation. It is immediately evident that the Passion of Christ, his suffering for the sins of the flesh, does not assume the same vitality in Traherne's poetical expression as it does for Herbert and Vaughan, who feel distant from God because they both have a heavy burden to bear owing to their own sins of the flesh.

In addition, this idea of 'godlikeness' is given its fullest and most audacious scope by Traherne. Even as the idea of 'presence' may be treated as a 'new notion,' the idea of 'godlikeness,' more especially, is one of these "New Notions" evident in Traherne's writings, because it carries the full weight of traditional belief along with it, and has the potential to be pushed to the most heretical limits of thought. Man's 'godlikeness,' now, on the other hand, emphasizes the immediate identity

of man with God. It leaps over the many obstacles that lie between man and God, in particular man's "fleshly dress." Moreover, it does not accent the role Christ assumed by taking the flesh in order to help man overcome the great depths into which he imagines his spiritual heritage has sunk because of his betrayal of his divine origins through an obedience to the flesh. Christ, like the Church, represents for Traherne more the spirit of unity and wholeness in man. Traherne's felicitous participation in the likeness of God means that Christ, the Son of God, represents and lives in the Image of the Father's Mercy and Love. Traherne has no recourse to the imitations of Christ the Redeemer, or to the full sacramental richness of the Church as did Herbert and Vaughan before him. If his poems are taken in isolation for the moment, it is apparent that in the way in which he enjoys the likeness and presence of God Traherne reveals more affinities to Adam than to Christ! Traherne prefers to dance attendance on the temple within the mind, and on the temple of God's original Creation, than on any temple of man's creation and the external observances that go with it.

Some reappraisal must, therefore, be made of Traherne's position in the Anglican tradition in the light of the "Primitive Christianity" suggested by the "New Notions" of 'presence' and 'godlikeness.' It appears that his own insuppressible originality accounts for his waywardness. Its effect is a tempering of the ecclesiastic with not a little of his ecstatic enthusiasm.<sup>1</sup> In Holy Images, Bevan gives us a glimpse of the kind of position finally taken by Traherne. What he says of worship for Clement and Origen in the following passage applies fairly

closely to the primitive manner of worship for Traherne:

When early Christian writers want to contrast with the pagan's direction of his worship to the image of a god, the true mode of worship, it is never the direction of worship to a Christian manufactured symbol which is shown as the antithesis; it is the elevation of mind to the invisible Reality direct. The only image of God to which reverence of a kind should be paid is the image made by God Himself in man: "It is we, we who carry about the similitude of God in this living, moving image, Man, an image which always dwells with us, counsels us, bears us company."<sup>2</sup>

The direct participation of man in God is emphasized. The central belief governing the manner of worship is the belief that since man is made in the image of God, he must live in his likeness.

This immediacy, stressed by the early Church Fathers, which finds its way into Traherne's poetry by the idea of 'presence,' also works, as has been mentioned, against the significance in his poetical expression of the doctrines and ceremonies of the Church. The Eucharist, in particular, as one of the doctrines of the Church, is celebrated for the purpose of making God present among men. What M. Ross, in Poetry and Dogma, says about the role of the Eucharist in seventeenth century poetical expression is invaluable for casting light on Traherne's ecclesiastical position. "We shall find," he says,

that the decisive movement of the period at the level of poetry is the movement of traditional symbol from the centre to the periphery of expression and experience, a movement in other words from sacrament to ornament, the declension of symbol into metaphor. This is a movement which, at the level of poetic expression, accompanies the distortion and eventual destruction of central Eucharistic dogma.<sup>3</sup>

When this movement is extended to Traherne, his "easy Stile" comes as no surprise. Symbol and metaphor are put aside for ecstatic affirmation and ejaculatory statement. The Omnipresence of God, and likewise of Traherne, throughout Creation over-rides and transcends the many individual instances,

such as in the practice of the ceremony of the Eucharist. The central significance for Traherne of dogma is thus dimmed by these "New Notions." While this implies no disbelief or destruction of the dogma in his own mind (it is there as an essential part of his Christianity to inspire him to greater heights), the Passion, the Incarnation of Christ is, however, moved to the periphery of his poetical expression, as well as of his religious sensibility. Dogma and doctrine appear to give way to his unique and original response to Creation. His individual experience and temperament assert themselves, and consequently, ethics and private expressions of devotion become prominent. The different way taken, as suggested by such titles and works as "Serious and Pathetical Contemplations," "Thanksgivings," "Centuries of Meditation," and "Christian Ethicks" represents at once Traherne's inward manner of devotion, and his place in the movement indicating the decline in significance of Church dogma and doctrine at the level of poetical and meditative expression. A closer look now is required at Traherne's poetry to reveal how these "New Notions" are central to his thought and expression, and influential in determining the degree of importance of the dogma and the customs and ceremonies of the Church within the realm of his Christianity.

In one of his rare moments of invocation, Traherne makes an appeal directly to God:

O give me Grace to see thy face, and be  
 A constant Mirror of Eternitie.  
 Let my pure Soul, transformed to a Thought,  
 Attend upon thy Throne, and as it ought  
 Spend all its Time in feeding on thy Lov,  
 And never from thy Sacred presence mov. (Thoughts IV, ll. 95-100)

Traherne strives continually for a spiritual perfection which completes itself as a "Mirror of Eternitie." Urging himself along with the Aristotelian belief that Nature works all things to perfection, Traherne seeks to perfect his essence, which is capacity, by containing in thought God and the whole of Creation. To have the same thoughts as God is at once his humble and seemingly heretical end. It is the end, he believes, for which God has created man. God would be infinitely pleased if he could have man, as it were, knocking on his door-step! Manifestly:

This Sight which is the Glorious End  
Of all his Works, and which doth comprehend  
Eternity, and Time, and Space,  
Is far more dear,  
And far more near  
To Him, then all his Glorious Dwelling Place.  
It is a Spiritual World within.  
A Living World, and nearer far of Kin  
To God, then that which first he made.

(Thoughts II, ll. 37-45)

How confidently Traherne claims this closeness to God, how boldly he can face his Maker! And how different is this from Vaughan, who, in his Dwelling Place, fancied that God visited, but only on occasions, his creatures, and perhaps only then to retrieve them out of the dark and bring them back into the light of his likeness:

What happy, secret fountain,  
Fair shade, or mountain,  
Whose undiscover'd virgin glory  
Boasts it this day, though not in story,  
Was then thy dwelling... (ll. 1-5)

My dear, dear God! I do not know  
What lodged thee then, nor where, nor how;  
But I am sure, thou dost now come  
Oft to a narrow, homely room,  
Where thou too hast but the least part,  
My God, I mean my sinful heart. (ll. 11-16)

Traherne's "Heavenly Avarice" keeps his thoughts from straying very far from God. With each thought of God, the "Spiritual World within" of man becomes more and more like the Spiritual World without of God.

This "Spiritual World within" which Traherne speaks of, reveals that he interprets his 'godlikeness' through the old form of the micro-cosmic-macrocosmic relation between man and God. Only for him all the correspondencies are in thoughts, miraculously discovered within himself, of each and every object in Creation. The thought contains all that there is:

It is the only Being that doth live.  
Tis Capable of all Perfection here,  
Of all his Love and Joy and Glory there. (Thoughts III, ll. 54-6)

Through thought man perfects his capacity. Through thought man actualizes his capacity and makes his essence like God's, Whose essence is all Act:

The Best of Thoughts is yet a thing unknown,  
But when tis Perfect it is like his Own:  
Intelligible, Endless, yet a Sphere.  
Substantial too: In which all Things appear.  
(Thoughts III, ll. 67-70)

Traherne takes to heart this world of thought which man possesses. It is the very fibre of his being.

But thoughts do more than bring worlds together, and enable Traherne to achieve an identity with God. They make him present and accounted for! Since he is curious and pries with avaricious eyes into the mysteries of God's Creation, he believes that with:

A Thought my Soul may Omnipresent be.  
For all it toucheth which a Thought can see.  
(Thoughts III, ll. 75-6)



Traherne, however, treads a humble path; he knows his divine paradox! In the Thanksgivings for the Body, speaking of the Rewards and Punishments God sets out for man, he reveals:

Thou hast hidden thy self  
                     By an infinite miracle,  
 And made this World the Chamber of thy presence; the  
 ground and theatre of thy righteous Kingdom.  
 That putting us at a distance  
                     A little from thee,  
 Thou mayest satisfie the Capacities  
                     Of thy righteous Nature... (ll. 178-185)

Thou hast seated us at a little distance from thee  
 Not in respect of thy Ubiquity, but degree of Knowledge. (ll. 191-2)

As in the Platonic and Plotinian epistemological scheme of things, the more man knows of the Absolute, the closer he approaches the realm of Grace, and the closer he approaches 'godlikeness.' All that is required is this mystical and maddening insight wherein all becomes known, and all becomes unified in God. Only man's ignorance hinders him. God has given man all, given man godlike capacities to learn with ease all that there is to be known. In Thanksgivings for the Soul, Traherne bursts out:

                    O my King,  
 Thou hast made me like thee,  
                     To measure Heaven with a span,  
                     Comprehend a thousand Ages as one day,  
                     See Infinity before and after.  
 Thine Infinity is abused  
                     By the ignorance of men. (ll. 151-7)

Unlike Donne, or Vaughan, or for that matter, any of the metaphysical poets, Traherne does not consider man's flesh and blood to admit a serious impediment, to prevent man from becoming the Bride of God. If Creation, including man's flesh, is rightly apprehended, then both man

and God are exalted, and man achieves godliness. Ignorance of the true worth of the beast in man, ignorance flying the face of an "Heavenly Avarice" makes the two worlds drift apart. As long as there is, as Vaughan expresses it, a "white Celestiall thought," there can be felicity on earth as there is in Heaven.

This world of thoughts, forming the microcosmic universe within man, is the vehicle whereby Traherne so audaciously asserts his likeness with God. But the fuel for his fires is not exclusively derived from this particular inheritance of the "Elizabethan World View." It is evident that Traherne has come to grips with the "new philosophy." His discovery of D escartes did not call all in doubt and reduce his universe to chaos and perplexity. His sensibility is modified, but in such a way, that the importance which D escartes gave to thoughts, and to the world within, only adds to the confidence and assurance of Traherne in that he is made in the image of God. His response to the new philosophy, and the modification which subsequently occurs in the microcosmic-macrocosmic relation between man and God, is recorded in the poem Dreams.

Dreams is a reflection upon the two major implications of the dream of D escartes. First of all, the dream implies that there is no correspondence between what lies within the mind, and what lies outside the mind. Doubt is cast upon the capacity of the senses to transmit reliably the outside world to the inside world. Second, the dream implies that what was thought to be the outside world is nothing but a world within the mind, an entirely subjective phenomenon. The mind of



When Traherne goes into ecstasies, as he frequently does, over the beauties of God and Creation, when Traherne's religious vision can be interpreted as an ecstatic "Beautifick Vision," there is little likelihood that the natural order "has no beauty and no life." Only by perceiving everything as an end in itself does felicity arise. Nothing in Traherne is reduced to "merely a means of communication between man and God." Traherne has just indicated in Dreams, that the one world is as 'there,' and as 'real,' as the other. Only insofar as Berkeley's "essence is perception" is likened in the writings of Traherne to the centrality of perception, viz., the "infant-ey" and to the subsequent basis of all correspondencies in thought, can these two be lumped together. There is no indication in the writings of Traherne of Berkeley's notion that until the object is perceived, it does not exist. Traherne's idea of 'presence' is a standing refutation of any closer parallels that can be made between the two.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, no where does Traherne more affirm the 'real' correspondence between the microcosm of man, and the macrocosm of God than in Thoughts II. He explains that:

A Delicate and Tender Thought  
 The Quintessence is found of all he Wrought.  
 It is the fruit of all his Works,  
     Which we conceive,  
     Bring forth, and Give,  
 Yea and in which the Greater Value lurks. (ll. 1-6)

It is because they possess the "Greater Value," Traherne concludes in Dreams, that "Thoughts are the Reall Things" (l. 55). The "Spiritual World within" is as real as its paradigm. His 'godlikeness' has only been enhanced and enlarged by this synthesis between the dream of

Déscartes and the microcosmic-macrocosmic relation which he inherited. And it is probably the audacity inherited from the metaphysical poets that spurs Traherne's criticism of Déscartes' reduction of the natural order to a machine in Thoughts I:

Ye Machines Great,  
Which in my Spirit God did Seat,  
Ye Engines of Felicitie;  
Ye Wondrous Fabricks of his Hands... (ll. 4-7)

To these "Wondrous Fabricks" Traherne attributes his Felicity. From these he gains that "Paradise within thee/Happier far," since:

A good Man's Thoughts are of such price  
That they create a Paradise... (The Review, ll. 25-6)

But where Milton's Adam had to take comfort within by the expectation of the "Divine Comedy," the Redemption of man by Christ, because death and suffering were brought into the world, Traherne's Adam needs only these delicate and tender thoughts, or perceptions into the "Reall" to create within himself an innocence and happiness like unto the Garden of Eden before the Fall. Man's thoughts of the true worth of each object are sufficient to make the "Spiritual World within" a real paradise. It is these that become the focus for Traherne of his pursuit of perfection, and thereby, his unity with God.

This last comment brings the discussion around to the significance for Traherne of the Incarnation and the Redemption. In the doctrine of the Incarnation, God, in his mercy sends His Son to sacrifice Himself and suffer for the sins of man. Christ mediates between man and God, overcoming the tremendous gulf which exists for man between his sinful flesh and his spiritual heritage. Christ as the Son of God,

and the second Adam, overcomes man's distance from God by showing man that though he is made of flesh and blood, he is also made in the image of God. Man can take refuge in the sufferings of a divine human being. Further, by this act, God humbles Himself to assume the fleshly dress of man, and this can only be to the infinite exaltation of man. Hence, as Bevan says in his Symbolism and Belief:

The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation is not another way of saying what the Indian means when he asserts the essential identity of man and God. The doctrine of the Incarnation has its point solely in the Hebraic presupposition of the otherness, the transcendence of God. It is because God is infinitely above the world that His coming down into the world is wonderful.

The doctrine at once inspires man in his humble lot, and elevates and comforts man in the depths of his despair. It brings company to a "narrow homely room." But though Traherne takes a part of his inspiration from this, he reveals in his poetry that he every day enjoys the Acts of God which make him present throughout the whole of Creation. The Incarnation, though indicative of God's Mercy to fallen man, is but one Act among His many Acts, and the Eucharist is but one celebration of the Church designed to make God present among us, where the entire universe is a celebration of God's presence. It is precisely this aspect of Traherne's thinking which is in part responsible for the loss in central significance of the dogma. His participation in the plenitude of God's presence is the most striking feature of all his thoughts in the poetry.

In addition, the Incarnation and the Redemption are in Traherne's religious vision "occasioned by the Fall." They were not originally a part of Creation, or of man's original felicity. They are necessary and

efficacious in the fallen state to promote an innocence and purity which belonged to man in Eden. Traherne continually likens his Felicity to the estate of man before the Fall, and his desire is to transcend everything in order to regain this original simplicity. His movement is away from the "outer trappings and the suits of woe" to the nakedness of Eden. This shift in importance takes the weight off the dogma's institutional significance, and therefore off its actual celebration. What occurs in Traherne's thinking is a treatment of Christ and the celebrations of Christ more as an example of God's Mercy and Love to man. Christ is mainly a "white celestial thought" wherein God's Love and Compassion are revealed. Christ's significance and essential role in Traherne's Christianity lies in His becoming an indication of how great a degree of knowledge and apprehension Traherne must reach in his pursuit of perfection and Felicity. The more Traherne can contemplate Christ's Incarnation and Redemption of man, the more can he realize his omnipresent communion with God, and the more can he live in the presence of God. But Traherne's Christianity is of the primitive variety because his unique emphasis upon the "Spiritual World within," upon thoughts, undermines his easy identification with the Passion of Christ. He has no suffering to identify with in Christ, and feels no need for the celebration of this kind of imitation. Traherne's "Primitive Christianity" has for its basis the "right apprehensions" which in themselves are sufficient for his communion with God.

Traherne claims that the presence of God can be immediately experienced if rightly apprehended:

It enters in, and doth a Temple find,  
 Or make a Living one within the Mind.  
 That while God's Omnipresence in us lies,  
 His Treasures might be all before our Eys:  
 For Minds and Souls intent upon them here,  
 Do with the Seraphims abov appear:  
 And are like Spheres of Bliss, by Lov and Sight,  
 By Joy, Thanksgiving, Prais, made infinite. (Thoughts IV, ll. 87-94)

No special act, or any special ceremony is required before man can enjoy the "Treasures" of God. If we merely:

Giv but to things their tru Esteem,  
 And those which now so vile and worthless seem  
 Will so much fill and please the Mind,  
 That we shall there the only Riches find.

(Right Apprehension, ll. 1-4)

Giving things their "tru Esteem" is the way of understanding. It is the way, as Traherne himself calls it, of the philosopher-divine. It is the way of those who are not possessed of a penitential spirit which seeks its salvation in a mystical union with God through the imitations of Christ. Trial and suffering are not necessarily man's lot. In his poetry, Traherne considers the flesh as enhancing the soul's vision of God rather than clouding it. Instead of being an impediment:

Each Toe, each finger, framed by thy Skill,  
                   Ought Oynments to Distill  
 Ambrosia, Nectar, Wine should flow  
                   From every Joynt I owe,  
 Or things more Rich; while all mine Inward Powers  
 Are Blessed, Joyfull, and Eternal Bowers. (The Estate, ll. 23-28)

Traherne does not see suffering as necessary. Rather than his "Joynts" yielding up pain:

They ought, my God, to be the Pipes,  
 And Conduits of thy Praise.  
 Mens Bodies were not made for Stripes,  
 Nor any thing but Joys. (The Estate, ll. 29-32)

Hence, the enjoyment which comes from the "right apprehension" of Creation is found at the centre of Traherne's Christianity, rather than the imitations of the suffering Christ. The estate of innocence is uppermost in his mind's eye, and the images of the Child and of Adam assume the most central position. Christ is significant in that He points the way to our becoming a child again, and He contains the Innocence and Purity of a second Adam. Traherne's Christianity is primitive because the contemplation of the whole of God's Creation is entirely open to man. "If you cannot contemplate high and heavenly things," says Thomas a Kempis in the Imitation of Christ, then,

take refuge in the Passion of Christ, and love to dwell within His Sacred Wounds. For if you devoutly seek the Wounds of Jesus and the precious marks of His Passion, you will find great strength in all troubles.<sup>8</sup>

This is the kind of refuge taken by Herbert, and in his turn, Vaughan. Herbert's way is the imitation of Christ:

Shall thy strokes be my striking? Thorns my flowers?  
 Thy rod, my posy? Cross my power?  
 But how then shall I imitate Thee, and  
 Copy Thy fair though bloody hand? (Thanksgiving, ll. 13-16)

And Vaughan, painfully aware of the sins of his "fleshly dress," remarks in the Resolve:

there is  
 An ancient way  
 All strewd with flowres and happiness  
 And fresh as May  
 These turn and turn no more  
  
 But who weeping sits  
 Hath got the Prize. (ll. 21-28)

Clearly, the way taken by Traherne is unlike the way taken by the metaphysical poets before him. Herbert and Vaughan are more easily interpreted

as following in the more orthodox Anglican tradition. They follow the sacrament and ceremony. Their devotions centre on the Passion of Christ. Their imagery reflects an adherence to a traditional ritualistic pattern, and Herbert's imagery, more than Vaughan's, is closer to the Anglo-Catholic tradition. Up to this point, on the basis of the thought and imagery examined in his poems thus far, Traherne has taken an eccentric path. The relative falling off of dogmatic thought and expression is noticeable. Unless Traherne's poems were written quite early in his career, there appears a great difference, judging from their poetical expression, between the clergyman at Credenhill and the clergyman at Bemerton. At times, they appear not only different in their degree of orthodox Anglicanism, but different in kind! What Thomas a Kempis says in the following passage is appropriate for distinguishing Traherne at this juncture:

He who knows all things at their true worth, and not as they are said or reputed to be, is truly wise, for his knowledge comes from God, and not from man. He who walks by an inner light, and is not unduly influenced by outward things, needs no special time or place for his prayers. For the man of inner life easily recollects himself, since he is never wholly immersed in outward affairs.<sup>9</sup>

When Traherne's enjoyment and delight is interrupted, when he experiences his "apostasy," it is significant to find where he takes his refuge. He recovers by finding out at last, that he is made in the image of God. The sequence of poems, from The Apostasy to The Bible, trace Traherne's fall, and his return to his natural ebullience.

Rejecting the idea of original sin, and the belief that man is prone to evil, Traherne attributes his fall to "Custom only vicious"

(Innocence, l. 38). He blames, essentially, neither himself nor God; rather, he blames others. He "fell by others," having "Grown mad with customary Folly." (The Apostasy, l. 50). Until his fall, Traherne modelled his innocence on the pattern of Adam:

All Bliss  
Consists in this,  
To do as Adam did;  
And not to know those superficial Joys  
Which were from him in Eden hid... (The Apostasy, ll. 37-41)

Such a model is unique among the poets of the metaphysical tradition. Adam is the image of Traherne's innocence before the fall, and towards which he spurs himself after the fall. This image is not entirely unique for his time. Traherne is not the only one to use it, as Cragg tells us in From Puritanism to the Age of Reason:

A disorderly and chaotic 'enthusiasm' cannot lead us to an intelligent comprehension of the truth, and to grasp the truth is 'the most natural perfection of the rational soul.' (Stillingfleet) It was to this end that man was made, and one of the curious features of the religious discussion of the period is the free appeal to an hypothetical Adam, an ideal creature in complete possession of perfect rational powers.<sup>10</sup>

Quite frequently Traherne refers in his poetry to Adam as the epitome of his innocence and intuitively divine knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the entire universe is the Eden which this Adam inhabits; but when he falls, this universe is telescoped until "Walls only me surround/Or worthless Stones or Earth." (Dissatisfaction, ll. 38-39) Once his "infant-ey" pried into all the round earth's imagined corners, but having fallen, Traherne confesses:

I lift mine Ey  
Up to the Wall,  
And in the silent Hall

Saw nothing mine  
 But som few Cups and Dishes shine  
 The Table and the wooden Stools  
 Where Peeples us'd to dine. (Poverty, ll. 4-10)

This is quite a falling off from what was described in Dumnesse of his previous existence:

Then did I dwell within a World of Light,  
 Distinct and Separate from all Mens Sight,  
 Where I did feel Strange Thoughts, and Secrets see  
 That were, or seemd, only revealed to Me,  
 There I saw all the World Enjoyed by one;  
 There I was in the World my Self alone... (ll. 31-36)

The fall is simply a fall from perception, as it were, a temporary loss of vision! The corruptions of the flesh have had little play in the picture, for the fall has concerned the qualities of his spiritual faculties. He made an error of choice, and he experiences as a result a good fit of the Melancholick! His thoughts are not the same. Traherne asks for "Eas of Mind," and he finds it in the Bible. Where Herbert and Vaughan found a refuge from their pain in the imitations of Christ, the Son of God, Traherne makes a surprising, but not unexpected leap, and declares in The Bible, that he took refuge in that book, and found that:

There I was told  
 That I the Son of God was made,  
 His Image... (ll. 1-3)

And, tho we're cloath'd with mortal Skin,  
 Are Inward Cherubins; how Angels Wings;  
 Affections, Thoughts, and Minds within,  
 Can soar throu all the Coasts of Hev'n and Earth;  
 And shall be sated with Celestial Mirth. (ll. 8-12)

His belief that he is made in the image of God restores him, and brings his flights back on schedule! He is convinced that he is the Son of God, and because of this, he feels capable of regaining his old and pristine

position. He has identified with Christ only with respect to the purity and wholeness which the Son of God represents. The Incarnation and the Redemption have not played either a central or significant part in the thought and expression of this sequence of poems from the Apostasy to The Bible. After all is said and done, when he comes to the end of the prolonged series of ejaculations in Love, Traherne testifies to the most central rock and pillar of support: "I am his Image, and his Friend./His Son, Bride, Glory, Temple, End." (ll. 39-40) Traherne has not recoiled in horror at the loss of his image. He does not appear to feel so corrupt as to imagine a great gulf separating him from God. His distance from God does not seem to have invoked the ceremonies of the Church. The strength taken from being made in His Image brings to Traherne a confidence in his closeness with God. The need to cultivate his inward powers and the thoughts of his temple within the mind become of central importance. The emphasis upon the perceptions, rather than the Passion of Christ, appear responsible for the "Primitive Christianity" of Traherne's belief and devotion to God.

In the process of his description of the fall Traherne also sheds some light on the importance of the Church during his "apostasy." He mentions that:

...Churches are a place  
That nearer stand  
Than any part of all the Land,  
To Hev'n... (Solitude, ll. 68-69)

But, in seeking refuge from his unhappiness, Traherne turns to the Church, and discovers:

...People can yield no Relief  
 In publick sort when in that Court they shine,  
 Except they mov my Soul with Lov divine.

Th'External Rite  
 Altho the face be wondrous sweet and fair,  
 Will never sate my Appetit  
 No more than empty Air  
 Yield solid Food. (Solitude, ll. 86-93)

The rituals, customs and ceremonies of the Church appear to have no real saving grace for Traherne. They are merely external acts which carry through an idea or perception. In his melancholy, they appear more mechanical than spiritual. He seeks an inward solace, and it is the inward acts of grace which appear more wonderful to Traherne. They are not "unduly influenced by outward things" said Thomas a Kempis, who walk by an "inner light." Traherne is inclined to emphasize the inward sanctity which the idea of the Church of Christ inspires, rather than the performance of the sacraments in the Church, for in Silence, he states explicitly:

The Inward Work is the Supreme: for all  
 The other were occasioned by the Fall.  
 A man, that seemeth Idle to the view  
 Of others, may the Greatest Business do.  
 Those Acts which Adam in his Innocence  
 Performed, carry all the Excellence.  
 These outward Busy Acts he knew not, were  
 Things of a Second or a lower Sphere.  
 Building of Churches, giving to the Poor... (ll. 3-11)

Just as piety is not measured by the founding of a few Churches, nor by the number of visits to Church in a day, so works alone are not sufficient for salvation. The measure of a man is in his genuinely earnest and avaricious endeavour to fill up the temple within with these "right apprehensions." The external observance of the sacraments is not the

most important feature in Traherne's Christianity. The garnering of truths for the "thoughtful Mind" is the most important.<sup>12</sup> And God prefers it so. Once this is understood, Traherne exclaims in the Inference:

How glorious, how divine, how great, how good  
 May we becom! How like the Deity  
 In managing our Thoughts aright! A Piety  
 More grateful to our God than building Walls  
 Of Churches, or the Foundling of Hospitalls... (II, 11. 25-29)

If these statements of his appear a little disturbing, if not harsh, it only remains to consider that if there is anything he wages war against under the banner of "Primitive Christianity," it is the "Wall"! His "Heavenly Avarice," his 'presence' with God, prompts him to toss aside impatiently all that interposes between himself and God. Having burst the bonds of the "outer trappings," Traherne bursts out in the first stanza of Hosanna:

No more shall Walls, no more shall Walls confine  
 That glorious Soul which in my Flesh doth shine:  
 No more shall Walls of Clay or Mud  
 Nor Ceilings made of Wood,  
 Nor Crystal Windows, bound my Sight,  
 But rather shall admit Delight.  
 The Skies that seem to bound  
 My Joys and Treasures,  
 Or more endearing Pleasures  
 Themselves becom a Ground:  
 While from the Centre to the utmost Sphere  
 My Goods are multiplied evry where. (11. 1-12)

Just as in Poverty, where Traherne equated his fall with being pent up within four walls, so here in Hosanna, he seems to epitomize the limitations of the material world in the wall. When he loses his spiritual wholeness, he is confined to the perception of his physical being. His "infant-ey" sees all: his physical eyes cannot see beyond a wall. Hence, the "Wall" is the symbol for the fallen world of man. Traherne,

consequently, is eager to be everywhere present in order to enjoy the Omnipresence of God. His resultant form of "Primitive Christianity" resembles the manner of worship envisaged by Milton in the 'Morning Hymn' of Book V of Paradise Lost. Adam and Eve pour forth pure and spontaneous thanksgivings for the beauty and glory of Creation. All ye need to know is God and His Creation, and all ye need to give is joyful and grateful praise.

Traherne, as an ecclesiastic, is no doubt aware of his ambiguous attitude towards the Church. The sequence of poems, from On Christmas Day to Bells, and finally to Churches, is an attempt on his part, to put his view of the Church on a little more solid ground.

In On Christmas Day, he speaks of a sloth and a melancholy deterring him from attending Church to celebrate the day of Christ. He knows it is the Bride of Christ, and he knows, too, that it is a part of God's design since the fall to enable man to draw near unto God; but though he cannot but praise and treasure the Church, Traherne considers it helpful more for the less learned and the less disciplined. He acknowledges:

My Treasure, Lord, thou mak'st thy Peeple be  
That I with pleasure might thy Servants see.  
    Ev'n in their rude external ways  
    They do set forth my Savior's Prais,  
    And minister a Light to me. (On Christmas Day, ll. 101-5)

There is no denying the value and the example of the Church, yet its ceremonies are but "rude external ways." Traherne reveals his attachment to the Church, but at the same time, he regards it less as an institution than as an inspiration.

In Churches, Traherne laments that "we/Those blest Abodes neglected

see," (ll. 39-40) and complains how "Ungrateful We with slower haste do com/Unto his Temple, 'cause 'tis nearer home." (ll. 47-48) He may be reflecting upon his own inward and solitary way and his neglect of the Church. He may, of course, be thinking of the circumstances of the time when the Puritans disdained the ceremonies of the Church, and where corruptions crept in with the Restoration. M. Ross suggests that only

an inward faith offers any support in a churchless kingdom without a king. And, it must be remembered, it is precisely this impulse towards an utterly interior faith which marks the poetry of Herbert and Vaughan and other Anglicans whose spiritual integrity will permit no flirtation with trappings turned to tinsel.<sup>13</sup>

More than Herbert and Vaughan, Traherne is supported by this "interior faith." He is aware of its condition and of its cause. From the perspective which this "interior faith" gives, he considers this Church more from the unity of all men in Christ according to the earliest views of the Church, rather than from the importance that must be attached to it because of its ritual. Traherne envisions a single Church transcending differences brought about by varying views of Church ceremony.

He thus imagines in Churches:

Were there but one alone  
 Wherin we might approach his Throne,  
 One only where we should accepted be,  
     As in the Days of old  
 It was, when Solomon of Gold  
 His Temple made; we then should see  
 A numerous Host approaching it,  
 Rejoicing in the Benefit:  
     The Queen of Sheba com  
     With all her glorious Train,  
         The Pope from Rome,  
     The Kings beyond the Main;

The Wise men of the East from far,  
 As guided by a Star,  
 With Rev'rence would approach unto that Ground,  
 At that sole Altar be adoring found. (II, ll. 1-16)

Churches, in themselves, as representing the unity of men, are a celebration of their Bride, Jesus Christ. They are reminders of the original purpose of Christ, that all men were to be brought into a unity amongst themselves and into a unity with God, providing they believed in Him. Traherne is brought to exclaim, then, in Bells, that:

...His Fame  
 Is gon through-out the World, who dy'd  
 Upon the Cross for me: And He  
 That once was basely crucify'd  
 Is own'd a Deity.  
 The Higher Powers  
 Hav Built these Towers  
 Which here aspiring to the Sky we see. (ll. 59-66)

It is this distinct lack of any rich and intense sacramental association with Christ and the Church, therefore, which most characterizes the nature of his "Primitive Christianity."

On the whole, Traherne is struck with the simplicity involved with the "New Notions" of 'godlikeness' and 'presence.' He enjoys with an "interior faith" of a "thoughtful Mind" an unmediated communion with his God. He likens the simplicity of this manner of devotion to the estate of purity and innocence of Adam before the fall. In a passage from An Infant-Ey, he reveals how his Felicity is bound up with an enjoyment of God in a more simple and primitive way:

O that my Sight had ever simple been!  
 And never faln into a grosser state!  
 Then might I evry Object still have seen  
 (as now I see a golden Plate)  
 In such an hev'nly Light, as to descry  
 In it, or by it, my Felicity. (ll. 19-24)<sup>14</sup>

In spite of his regret over the fall, and, in spite of his earnest desire to regain the estate of Adam before the fall, Traherne recognizes the essential value of the Church and Christ, and thereby, all the virtues and practices "occasioned by the Fall." He accepts them on the simplest, yet profoundest terms, welcoming their assistance in regaining his innocence, and taking them within the realm of simplicity which the final vision of Felicity cannot but inspire.

There is also another "New Notion" in Traherne's poetry. His Felicity is a question of limits. His "Heavenly Avarice" cannot be satisfied by enjoying only a part of God and Creation. Nothing less than the whole will satisfy his thirst. The universe is too small for his pursuit and enjoyment of God. An Infinite Creator has given an infinite amount throughout an infinite Creation. Only with a perfect freedom, with a likeness unto God, and with an enjoyment of the immediate presence of God, can Traherne be capable of true Felicity. He must be an infinite as God in order to contain His infinite bounty. He views man not as he is limited, but as he is infinite in capacity. The notion of infinity becomes the focus for Traherne's innermost yearnings and theological leanings. It is the central attribute of his 'godlikeness'; it is the only qualification imposed upon his 'presence' and the amount of his enjoyment in Creation, and finally, it is the most influential factor for determining Traherne's waywardness theologically, and discovering the nature of his Christianity.

Traherne's uniqueness amongst the metaphysical poets is attributable to the audacious and paradoxical limits towards which he pushes the



spirit only! In the oft-quoted lines from Wonder, Traherne uses the image of infancy to convey the idea of this spiritual being:

A Native Health and Innocence  
 Within my Bones did grow,  
 And while my GOD did all his Glories shew,  
 I felt a Vigour in my Sence  
 That was all SPIRIT. (ll. 17-21)

And then, from this, the "SPIRIT" takes the form of perception, or the "infant-ey":

Then was my Soul my only All to me,  
 A Living Endless Ey,  
 Far wider then the Skie  
 Whose Power, whose Act, whose Essence was to see.  
 I was an Inward Sphere of Light,  
 Or an Interminable Orb of Sight... (The Preparative, ll. 11-16)

A Naked Simple Pure Intelligence. (Ibid., l. 20)

Traherne, therefore, telescopes his flesh and blood self into the "Meditating Inward Ey."<sup>16</sup> He imposes no limits upon the reach of man's perception, or rather no limits upon the extent of man's thought. Infinity is the limit!

Having defined the limit, Traherne indicates the scope of man's 'presence' in the universe. Now, with "endless Liberty," he asserts:

The Thoughts of Men appear  
 Freely to mov within a Sphere  
 Of endless Reach; and run  
 Tho in the Soul, beyond the Sun.  
 The Ground on which they acted be  
 Is unobserv'd Infinity. (Consummation, ll. 1-6)

Since like is known by like, man is capable of containing this infinity-- providing he keeps his eyes open! Traherne affirms that having been made with "A vast and Infinit Capacity," the perfecting or actualizing of his capacities will "make by Bosom like the Deitie." (Ibid., l. 76) The

consequence of this affirmation is a reinforcement of his "Primitive Christianity."

As the idea of infinity emphasizes the "SPIRIT," so the relative significance of the flesh waxes and wanes in proportion. The enjoyment stemming from this spiritual communion over-rides the suffering resulting from an intense consciousness of the sins of the flesh. Finitude, for example, weighs heavily upon Herbert and Vaughan. Both seek refuge in the comfort which Christ offers. The doctrine of the Incarnation and the Redemption is writ large in their poetry, and each line is a celebration of their devotion to the sacraments. They have a strong sense of identity with Christ because He assumed the likeness of man in the flesh, and suffered for the sins of the flesh. Traherne does not have this kind of identity with Christ as a central feature of his religious vision. His identity with Christ is undeniable; but since the idea of infinity lessens the significance of the frailties of the flesh, much of the sacramental quality of the identity with Christ is lost. The less rich the association, the more simple, or primitive, is the nature of the relation with the Son of God. The celebration of the redemption from sin is not so important as the more simple realization of the sacrifice. The idea of infinity only adds an impetus to Traherne's ramblings in thought throughout the universe, and thereby, to the sense of the presence of himself with God in Creation. The central importance of the ceremonies and rituals of the Church decline, and this feature characterizes the primitive turn of Traherne's Christianity.

The idea of infinity is not such a "New Notion" for Traherne,

any more than the idea of his 'godlikeness.' He reveals that a sense of infinity has always been with him. In the Centuries of Meditation, he describes how, when he was four years old:

I thus reasoned with my self. Sitting in a little Obscure Room in my Fathers poor House. If there be a God, certainly He must be infinit in Goodness. And that I was prompted to, by a real Whispering Instinct of Nature. And if He be infinit in Goodness, and a Perfect Being in Wisdom and Love, certainly He must do most Glorious Things; and giv us infinit Riches... (III.16.1-7)

From a "real Whispering Instinct of Nature," Traherne reveals how the notion of infinity has been part and parcel of his sensibility. But it is due to a kind of perception which this "Instinct" suggests, and, hence, sheds light on the particular quality of Traherne's intelligence.

Stace, in Time and Eternity, gives an illuminating account of the idea of infinity in man. He says that the

"finite mind of man" means the concept generating intellect. It is finite because it cannot grasp the infinite and will not grasp the infinite because it is conceptual. It follows that by an "infinite" mind we do not mean a conceptual intellect which knows everything, and which is an enlargement ad infinitum of ordinary conceptual thinking. We mean an intuitive mind.<sup>17</sup>

The intuitive, if not mystical, quality of his intellect, or of his "infant-ey," appears a satisfactory explanation for Traherne's audacious assertion of the infinity of man. He has spoken of himself as a "Naked Simple Pure Intelligence." He writes that, "It was with Cleerer Eys/To see all Creatures full of Deities:/Especially One's self." (Dumnesse, ll. 39-40). Apparently, Traherne has gleaned the inner mysteries of Creation, and the notion of infinity seems to describe not only the extensive, but also the penetrating quality of his perceptions.

Arguing along the same lines as Stace, John Smith, the Cambridge

Platonist, a more contemporary figure for Traherne, concludes in a passage from his sermon, Existence and Nature of God:

...[W]hen we find that we cannot attain to Science but by a Discursive deduction of one thing from another, that our knowledge is confined, and is not fully adequate and commensurate to the largest Spheare of Being; it not running quite through it nor filling the whole area of it; or that our knowledge is Chronical and successive, and cannot grasp all things at once, but works by intervals, and runs out into Division and Multiplicity; we know all this from want of Reason and Understanding, and that a Pure and Simple Mind and Intellect is free from all these restraints and imperfections, and therefore can be no less then Infinite.<sup>18</sup>

Surprisingly, Smith has tied the Infinite to a quality of the Intellect, in a manner remarkably similar to that of Traherne. And, in the same sermon, he has also brought the Infinite into relation with Traherne's "Heavenly Avarice":

We always find a restless appetite within ourselves which craves for some Supreme and Chief good, and will not be satisfied with any thing less than Infinity it self...<sup>19</sup>

The same quality of the intellect is suggested by Smith.<sup>20</sup> The idea of infinity strengthens Traherne's close community with God. It enables him, by giving vitality to his idea of 'presence,' to transcend all possible limitations of the intellect, and of his essence. The mystical, or noetic, quality of his perceptions is thus heightened, and accordingly he speaks of his soul in this way:

It Acts not from a Centre to  
 Its Objects as remote,  
 But present is, when it doth view,  
 Being with the Being it doth note. (My Spirit, ll. 18-21)

The idea of infinity and the 'presence' idea of perception go hand in hand.

In the course of his "apostasy," however, Traherne speaks of a

change in his perception. The fall marks the change from the 'child' to the 'man.' In an ecstatic moment, he describes the limitation, or the degree of knowledge, which was attained by the "infant-ey" of the child:

But Oh! the vigor of mine Infant Sence  
 Drives me too far: I had not yet the Eye  
 The Apprehension, or Intelligence  
 Of Things so very Great Divine and High.  
     But all things were Eternal unto me,  
     And mine, and Pleasing which mine Ey did see.  
(The Improvement, 11.67-72)

But, after the fall, the degree of knowledge attained is increased:

Now clearer Reason doth improv, my View:  
     By Novelty my Soul was taught  
 At first; but now Reality my Thought  
                     Inspires: And I  
                     With clarity  
     Both ways instructed am; by Sense  
 Experience, Reason, and Intelligence.  
(Right Apprehension, 11. 34-40)

Traherne confidently declares that he perceives "Reality." New realms are thereby added to his vision. What was infinity before is now an "Infinity of infinity." Now that his "infant-ey" resembles a kind of "intellectual intuition," Traherne says, that henceforward:

My better Sight  
 Was infinit,  
 New Regions I must see. (Sight, 11. 28-30)<sup>21</sup>

Since Traherne possesses this "infinit Capacity," and since he can now, with "clearer Reason," apprehend infinitely more than before, he claims a perfection of his nature as a 'godlikeness' wherein the infinity of man participates in the Infinity of God. His "Spiritual World within" is as infinite as God's Creation without. His Omnipresence is similar

to his Creator's. Through the idea of infinity, Traherne exalts man above and beyond anything imagined by the earlier poets of the metaphysical tradition.

The idea of infinity, furthermore, appears to have been a special experience for Traherne in the same way as the dream of Descartes. In the course of his lifetime, Traherne had to deal with the effects of the new science as well as the effects of the new philosophy. Even though the idea of infinity was a childhood perception, it comes to Traherne as a "New Notion" that must give pause for some reflection. He confesses in Sight:

I know not well  
 What did me tell  
 Of endless Space: but I  
 Did in my Mind  
 Som such thing find  
 To be beyond the Sky  
 That had no Bound... (ll. 37-43)

The "New Notion" of "endless Space," the idea of infinity, was an experience for his age, as well as for himself. The Copernican Revolution, which Miss Nicolson describes as taking place in the seventeenth century in The Breaking of the Circle, bred all kinds of religious disillusion and despair. The old Ptolemaic view of the universe, with man at the centre, was quite put out. Man saw with a "clearer Sight" than before. The infinite horizons were open to him through the use of the telescope and the microscope. New visions of man and the cosmos were born. The idea of infinity was fast becoming common currency, and Traherne confesses:

I own it was  
 A Looking-Glass  
 Of signal Worth; wherein  
 More than mine Eys  
 Could see or prize,  
 Such things as Virtues win,  
 Life, Joy, Lov, Peace, appear'd... (Sight, ll. 49-55)

His universe, however, is not shattered as a result of it, as was the universe of Donne's. The discovery of "endless Space" only enhanced Traherne's ability to see further into God's Creation. Traherne is able to see more than ever before, to his own ravishment, and to the adoration of God.

When he begins to deal with the implications of the idea of infinity, he succeeds in fusing these to his entire outlook in the same way as he did before with the implications of the dream of Descartes. He still keeps as "mine" all that he enjoyed before; he is still the heir of God. And in what is his most brilliant paradox with respect to the new science he is still at the centre of the universe despite the "New Notion." Though the idea of infinity displaced him from one centre, he is still the centre of God's attention, the apple of His eye! In the Dialogue, Traherne writes:

Yet all his Beams of Light on thee do tend:  
 For thee they shine and do themselves display;  
 For thee, they do both make and gild the Day;  
 For thee doth rise that glorious Orb of Light;  
 For thee it sets, and so givs way for Night... (ll. 14-18)

This is a bold stroke to convince himself that he is still at the centre of things.

It may not be that Traherne entirely believes that "endless Space" has displaced man from the centre of the universe. Just as the dream of

Descartes modified, yet enhanced the microcosmic-macrocosmic relation of man to God, so, too, the idea of infinity does likewise. Traherne retains the spheres of the old cosmology but 'enlarges' them with the admission of the idea of infinity. The circle, as a symbol of the infinite, is not entirely broken, for he pushes the idea of a sphere and "endless Space" together in a proper and ultimate philosophical paradox.

In the first place, Traherne believes that God is Act, and, at the same time, Infinite. God is the "actually infinite." Aristotle believes this cannot be, since Being and Infinity are mutually exclusive. (Physics, 206a, 5)<sup>22</sup> Further, Traherne argues, no doubt, as does St. Anselm, that if God was not infinite, He would not be perfect, and, if God was only potentially infinite, then something more potentially infinite could be thought to exist. In the second place, Traherne believes that man is of "infinite Capacitie," perfecting himself by making the potentially infinite actually infinite. While he holds that man is still perfecting himself, he satisfies the Aristotelian definition of the infinite. The little world of man is able to contain all the infinite number of gifts from God. His sphere is always able to contain "endless Space." (Physics, 204a, 8) His sphere is expanded to the limit. It is not broken. At this point, Traherne confidently claims that his 'godlikeness' participates in Infinity. When he is full of the 'presence' of God, he declares that he is:

An eternal sphere of infinite Knowledge,  
 In every Centre:  
 Expanded everywhere,  
 Yet indivisible.

The similitude of thine Infiniteness

I see printed in it.

(Thanksgivings for the Soul, ll. 106-111)

Paradoxically, therefore, Traherne asserts that God is likewise an infinite sphere that contains all within Himself, "His Omnipresence is an Endless Sphere." (Thoughts IV, l. 29) But man's soul is yet an infinite sphere, just beginning to contain the fulness of God:

The Soul a Vessel is

A Spacious Bosom to Contain

All the fair Treasures of his Bliss

Which run like Rivers from, into the Main,

And all it doth receiv returns again. (The Circulation, ll. 80-84)

It is evident from this view of man and God, that Traherne achieves a synthesis between the old and the new. The microcosmic-macrocosmic relation adds to it the dimension of the infinite. There is still the spheres. Man is "A Spiritual World Standing within,/An Univers enclosd in Skin;" (Fullnesse, ll. 7-8) but he is more exalted because he is an infinite "Univers enclosd in Skin." R. L. Colie, in *Thomas Traherne and the Infinite: The Ethical Compromise*, has expressed admirably the paradoxical relation which Traherne has engendered between man and God, and the Infinite:

Infinity of space was his image of the spiritual infinity of God's goodness; only by understanding and accepting infinite space could man approach ultimate union with the infinitely infinite God. In logic, Traherne's tautology may be nonsense, but in the language of the imagination his notion could be expressed in no other way. He insisted with heroic fury upon his paradoxical logic until even the infinity with which he began was not enough to satisfy him. His aspirations carried him not only beyond all physical but beyond all logical boundaries into his final mystical proclamation of God.<sup>23</sup>

Infinity becomes not only a central idea for Traherne, but becomes a familiar element in his poetical language.

The idea of infinity, finally, is important for its effect on Traherne's style. Because it is chiefly responsible for his ecstasies over the exaltation of man, and because it allows him confidently to claim kinship with his Creator, it stimulates Traherne to effect a spontaneous and ejaculative outpouring. Every perception of the exaltation of man is an occasion for a momentary exultation. These oft-quoted lines from Hamlet are but an anticipation of Traherne, not only in thought, but in expression:

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form, in moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! (Act. II.ii, ll. 303-7)

Miss Nicolson has called this effect upon Traherne's thought and expression the "aesthetics of the infinite." Tracing the effect of the new science on Traherne, she says that it

released him from the limits of a finite world and universe, gave mind and spirit space to expand, afforded room to those thoughts that wander through eternity. Pondering upon vastness, the soul of man became vast. Its essence was "capacitie." Man was discovering a new aesthetics--the aesthetics of the infinite.<sup>24</sup>

As long as Traherne is not viewed as being swept off his feet by the new science, and, as long as the "aesthetics of the infinite" are seen as being contained within his encompassing divine aesthetics, the effect of this "New Notion" is seen in its proper place. For the beauties of God and Creation claim priority in Traherne's religious vision. In an ecstatic moment, Traherne bursts out:

...His Love doth take Delight  
To make our Glory Infinite  
Our Blessedness to see  
Is even to the Deitie  
A Beatifick Vision! (The Recovery, ll. 5-9)

Traherne's poetry, on the whole, is a constant endeavour to find less an aesthetic apprehension than a "right apprehension."

His style, then, constituted, as it is, in shape and substance by the "right apprehensions" of the infinite mind, reflects the influence of this "New Notion." His infinite mind goes beyond concepts to the "Reality." And, passing beyond concepts, the infinite mind gives way to intuitions or "right apprehensions" indicative of a closer, more intimate communion with God. When Traherne is struck, thus, with the 'presence' of God, the "right apprehensions" are represented best by the spontaneous outburst of delight and wonder. The effect achieved, and desired thereby, is immediacy. Since there is no mediation between man and God in the presence of a right apprehension, then its representation implies, and indeed involves, a rejection of the 'in-between-ness' of symbols, metaphors and images. When Traherne is present with and enjoying the bounty of his infinite Maker, he prefers the stark, simple and ecstatic affirmations of the attributes of God.

The analysis Bevan gives in Symbolism and Belief is most useful in interpreting the stylistic movement in Traherne's poetry:

So far as the intellectual concept stands for a Reality which differs from it, it is a symbol only. So far as it corresponds to the Reality it is not a symbol, but the actual truth. All our effort to think true thoughts about God is an effort to get rid of the symbolic character of our conceptions, to change them from symbols into precise apprehensions.<sup>25</sup>

The movement away from symbols to "precise apprehensions" in Traherne's poetical style is aptly represented by this series of ejaculations in

Love:

O Nectar! O Delicious Stream!  
 O ravishing and only Pleasure! Where  
 Shall such another Theme  
 Inspire my Tongue with Joys, or pleas mine Ear!  
 Abridgement of Delights!  
 And Queen of Sights!  
 O Mine of Rarities! O Glorious Bride!  
 O God! O Bride of God! O King!  
 O Soul and Croun of evry Thing! (ll. 1-10)

Traherne's immediate unity with God, inspired by the "New Notion" of the infinite, stimulates a movement towards a simplicity of style.<sup>26</sup> And conversely, it must be remembered that the simplicity of style reflects the nature of the relation between himself and God.

For Traherne, infinity enjoyed means that man's sense of finitude does not exclude him from God, or keep him very far from God. Infinity reflects the range and intensity of the 'presence' of man in God, and of God in man. The relation is immediate, and the acknowledgement pours forth in seemingly unmeditated "precise apprehensions." Traherne ejaculates because he is in ecstasy. His poetry is barren of the Eucharistic imagery, of all imagery reflecting the centrality of the Incarnation and the Redemption of Christ. Both the dogma and its sacramental celebration are not of central significance. In poets like Donne, Herbert and Vaughan, there is a painful sense of man's finitude. They have sinned, and they feel penitent and removed from the presence of God. They all, necessarily tend to interpret their distance from God by means of images and conceits. In thought and expression, Christ is not only essential but central for Donne. This emerges in his poetry, for example, in a straight-forward manner, as in Holy Sonnet XV:

The Sonne of glory came downe, and was slaine,  
 Us whom he'had made, and Satan stolne, to unbinde.  
 'Twas much, that man was made like God before,  
 But, that God should be made like man, much more. (ll. 11-14)

His humility is quite a change in tone from Traherne's audacity. Donne uses the traditional doctrinal imagery. His measure as a poet is seen in his ability to surprise us with the novelty and ingenuity of his conceits. Holy Sonnet XIV, beginning "Batter my heart three person'd God," is choked with conceits! He uses images of the battlefield and the seige, as well as the image of a blacksmith. All of these are important for describing his relation with God! How complex it is! Herbert, too, uses the traditional imagery. In Redemption, he uses the tenant and lord image, and images taken from the legal world. Vaughan varies from them both in his use of natural imagery such as found in The Timber and The Cock-Crowing. The overall movement from Donne through Herbert and Vaughan to Traherne, is distinguished by a lessening consciousness of sin, and by an increasing consciousness of the Divine Comedy. On the whole, it appears that the further away Donne, Herbert and Vaughan imagine themselves to be from God, the more intense and intricate is their use of the conceit. Donne's style reflects the incessant questioning and trials through which this Anglican Dean put his faith. Herbert's style reflects the Anglo-Catholic nature of his Christianity, and Vaughan's style, in turn reflects his more quiet, less troubled Anglican faith. When Traherne's turn comes, he is found exploding with:

O Wondrous Self! O Sphere of Light,  
 O Sphere of Joy most fair;

O Act, O Power infinit;  
O Subtile, and unbounded Air!  
O Living Orb of Sight!  
Thou which within me art, yet Me! Thou Ey,  
And Temple of his Whole Infinitie!  
O what a World art Thou! a World within! (My Spirit, ll. 103-110)

The inevitable conclusion is that his style reflects his own form of  
Anglican faith--his "Primitive Christianity."

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This reappraisal is designed to qualify Miss Wade's view of Traherne as High Church Anglican. She maintains that Traherne went through a "transformation from scepticism through an indifferent Puritanism to the ardent Anglo-Catholicism that was Traherne's final theological position." G. I. Wade, Thomas Traherne (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 64. While his poetry is no doubt earlier than the Centuries of Meditation and Christian Ethicks, he nevertheless reveals that the primitive or puritan vein is very much with him. There is rather a fluctuation within a position than a transformation evident in his writings.

<sup>2</sup>E. Bevan, Holy Images (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1940), p. 107.

<sup>3</sup>M. Ross, Poetry and Dogma (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1954), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>H. G. Ridlon's, "The Function of the Infant Eye in Traherne's Poetry," Studies in Philology, LXI, 1964, 627-640, traces the source of this 'presence' idea of perception to passages in the Enneads of Plotinus.

<sup>5</sup>S. L. Bethell, The Cultural Revolution of the Seventeenth Century (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1951), p. 157.

<sup>6</sup>Wade has placed Traherne and Berkeley together; but she has not sufficiently distinguished their differences. Others have taken her cue, but they have only yoked the two by violence together! See Wade's Thomas Traherne, op. cit., pp. 173-4.

<sup>7</sup>E. Bevan, Symbolism and Belief (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1938), p. 76.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas A. Kempis, The Imitation of Christ (Harmondsworth, Essex: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 68.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>10</sup>G. R. Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), pp. 65-6. Cragg, furthermore, cites Glanville's Vanity of Dogmatizing and some treatises of Stillingfleets as illustrating this appeal. If Traherne's imagination was fired by Milton, his poetry

would have to be ascribed to a later date, since Paradise Lost, in ten Books, was not published until 1667. Traherne's later works have undoubtedly been influenced by Milton.

<sup>11</sup>In C. E. Whiting's Studies in English Puritanism (New York: F. Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968) we are informed of the religious setting of Traherne's time. It is interesting to note that closely allied to the outrageous and enthusiastic Ranters and Familists was another sect:

[T]here had been some people called Adamites in Amsterdam; that they prayed in a state of nudity, and that they called their meetings paradise...Pagitt spoke of them as though they existed in this country. The Adamites were mentioned in 1683 as professing to be disciples of Adam in his first innocence. Lord Halifax referred to them as a still existing sect, while Henry More spoke of them as looking on it as a piece of perfection to go naked...(p. 284). Perhaps Traherne was aware of them also! Traherne's belief in the perfection of man also finds expression in a sect of the time, like the Adamites, called the Perfects, or the Perfectists! (Whiting, op. cit., p. 321).

<sup>12</sup>C. G. Jung, in Psychology and Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), states that:

The dogma, on the contrary, expresses aptly the living process of the unconscious in the form of the drama of repentance, sacrifice, and redemption (p. 57).

At the centre of Traherne's consciousness is the belief in the innocence of man, accompanied by a rejection of original sin. Therefore, in Traherne's case, the outward drama is not really of central importance, and consequently, it is kept to the inward acts.

<sup>13</sup>M. Ross, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>14</sup>Again, it is of interest to put Traherne's view in the perspective of the radical sects of his time. The meaning which Christ and Adam had for the Familists, Whiting tells us, is that there is no other Christ but holiness, and no other Anti-Christ but sin. Adam was all that God was, and God all that Adam was. The Family of Love had attained the perfection of Adam which he had before the fall (p. 286).

<sup>15</sup>The significance of the idea of infinity for Traherne has been given deserved attention by M. H. Nicolson, in The Breaking of the Circle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), and by R. L. Colie, in her excellent article, "Thomas Traherne and the Infinite: The Ethical Compromise," Huntingdon Library Quarterly, XXI, 1957, pp. 69-82. Both of these writers have done some much needed spadework in this area of Traherne.

<sup>16</sup>This strangely Oriental thought is found also in Sight. Traherne describes how his "infant-ey" made him see "Two Sights in me,/Three Eys adorned my Face" (l. 5-6). There are the two physical eyes, and the "infant-ey" which knows no bounds. Whether Traherne read any Oriental literature is open to speculation. What was the extent of Laud's gifts to Oxford of Oriental manuscripts? And further, what was the scope of the Oriental studies which Laud initiated? See H. R. Trevor-Roper's Archbishop Laud (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1962). Perhaps Traherne dabbled; if not, then the likeness is coincidental and surprising.

<sup>17</sup>W. T. Stace, Time and Eternity (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 48.

<sup>18</sup>E. T. Campagnac, The Cambridge Platonists (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), p. 164.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>20</sup>See C. L. Marks, "Thomas Traherne and Cambridge Platonism," Publications of the Modern Library Association, Vol. 81, 1966, pp. 521-534. A much fuller treatment of Traherne's affinities with this school of thought is presented in this article.

<sup>21</sup>Margoliouth finds difficulties with the change remarked upon in Sight. He says that the third or intellectual eye is not the 'Infant-Ey' which is practically a technical term for what I have for many years been accustomed to describe to myself as 'simple seeing'...(p. 381). And he goes on to say that rather, Traherne's third eye is intuitive in that it perceives the invisible, but it is intellectual in that it perceives relations, e.g., lines 69-70 (Ibid.).

If the degree of knowledge increases after the fall, then the "infant-ey" remains the same, essentially, only it sees more than before. Just as the faculty for seeing does not change, though its perceptions do, so the "infant-ey" is characterized by a stark, intuitive, almost instinctual knowledge, and then by an "intellectual intuition" of "Reality."

<sup>22</sup>Aristotle says that Parmenides spoke better than Melissus on this point (Physics, 207a, 15), for the infinite is "potential, never actual" (Physics, 207b, 13).

<sup>23</sup>R. L. Colie, "Thomas Traherne and the Infinite: The Ethical Compromise," Huntingdon Library Quarterly, XXI, 1957, pp. 69-82.

<sup>24</sup>M. H. Nicolson, The Breaking of the Circle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 202.

<sup>25</sup>Bevan, *Symbolism and Belief*, op. cit., p. 295.

<sup>26</sup>Traherne's desire for simplicity can have at least a fourfold source. From the mystic strain in him, St. John of the Cross' words seem appropriate, namely that we receive this mystical knowledge of God clothed in none of the sensible representations, which our mind makes use of in other circumstances... This is the peculiarity of the divine language. The more infused, intimate, spiritual, and super-sensible it is, the more does it exceed the senses, both inner and outer, and impose silence upon them. W. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Crowell-Collier Co., 1967), p. 320.

From the puritans comes an influence demanding purity and plainness. "Nakedness," for one Puritan, "is the best garnishing, and Ornament the truth can have." (Whiting, p. 140). From the new science comes an influence, which, as Sprat describes, demands a return back to the primitive purity and shortness, when men delivered so many things in an almost equal number of words. They have exacted from all their members a close, naked natural way of speaking...bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness as they can...J. E. Spingarn, ed., Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, 3 Vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908-9), p. 118, Vol. 2.

There is finally Traherne's own desire for an "easy Stile." This no doubt complements the above influences. How different is Traherne's desire for simplicity to the desire of Herbert in the Forerunners:

Farewell sweet phrases, lovely metaphors.  
 But will ye leave me thus? when ye before  
 Of stews and brothels onely knew the doores,  
 Then did I wish you with my tears, and more,  
 Brought you to Church well drest and clad:  
 My God must have my best, ev'n all I had. (ll. 13-18)

### CHAPTER III

#### CENTURIES OF MEDITATION: LOVE AND ENJOYMENT,

#### THE READY AND EASY WAY

Unlike many of his age, Traherne succeeds in keeping man at the centre of the universe, and in recognizing him as the mirror of nature. His achievement comes not from any stubborn and perverse doctrinal adherence to the old philosophy, or to the old "Elizabethan World View," but from a synthesis which modifies the old by the addition of the new. His writings indicate that instead of man being removed from the centre of the universe, man becomes the centre of God's attention, the centre of His 'Universe,' and, furthermore, that instead of man being reduced to a mere atom, a mere point in the universe, he mirrors the new infinity or eternity. Man is a creature capable of containing an infinite amount of God's infinite treasures. Man and God are still held fast by the micro-cosmic-macrocosmic relation; but now the little world of man, the "Spiritual World within," is as infinite as the infinite World of God. As the "Mirror of Eternitie," man assumes a 'godlikeness' more potent and rapturous than ever before. He lives in the presence of God in new and unexpectantly different ways, and, consequently, different ways of worshipping and adoring God are manifest. It is evident from Traherne's writings that his 'godlikeness,' in association with the ideas of presence infinity, leads him towards a form of "Primitive Christianity." The synthesis he has achieved must have some corresponding effect on his manner of devotion. We "will meet some New Notions." While there is not the

"least tittle" of the Catholic Faith or Church doctrine contradicted or denied, there is an emphasis less upon a sacramental richness than upon a primitive or simple plainness of worship.

Traherne's poems reveal how these "New Notions" affect his thought, expression, and manner of devotion. His Centuries of Meditation reveal that he is more inspired by the "actual knowledge of true Felicity." He brings to the fore a new emphasis upon the love and enjoyment which exists in the relation between man and God. He "enriches all" by colouring his synthesis with what may be called the "New Notions" of Love and Enjoyment. The ideas of 'godlikeness' and infinity are seen in their union with love and enjoyment, and where the former precipitated a movement towards the primitive, the latter are found to complement this particular movement. Traherne's Christianity is almost of a unique sort because of the signal emphasis upon the love and enjoyment that exists in man's participation with God.

With his "infant-ey" and intuitive sense of God, Traherne appeared in his poetry as a curious soul, possessed of three eyes and a sixth sense, in full pursuit of his Creator! In the Centuries of Meditation, he appears treading even more audaciously along the narrow path between humility and heresy, because he is convinced that all his end is enjoyment. Distinguishing between two sorts of Christians, he says in the Fourth Century:

There are Christians, that place and desire all their Happiness in another Life, and there is another sort of Christians that desire Happiness in this. The one can defer their Enjoyment of Wisdom till the World to com: And dispence with the Inceas and Perfection of Knowledg for a little time: the other are instant and impatient of

Delay; and would fain see that Happiness here, which they shall enjoy hereafter. (IV.9.1-8)

Traherne, of course, is of the latter sort, "instant and impatient of Delay." From his divine and sublimated "carpe diem" perspective, he adds:

[T]hey that put off felicity with long delays, are to be much suspected. for it is against the Nature of Love and desire to defer. Nor can any reason be given, why they should desire it at last, and not now. (IV.9.16-19)

His justification for enjoying felicity now comes easily to hand as the Centuries set forth in a systematic manner the idea in The Recovery that "God enjoyed is all his End." (1.11) God makes Creation for the enjoyment of man, and man, likewise, for the enjoyment of Creation.

It is through the "infant-ey," the eye of understanding, through "clearer Reason" that Traherne takes his "Real" enjoyment. These "right apprehensions" are the means of prizing, the source of possession and presence, and the spring, therefore, of his enjoyment. Accordingly, Traherne declares:

All Things were made to be yours. And you were made to Prize them according to their value: which is your Office and Duty, the End for which you were Created, and the Means whereby you Enjoy. The End for which you were Created is that by Prizing all that God hath don, you may Enjoy yourself and Him in Blessedness. (I.12.5-10)

He sees two things resulting from giving to objects their "true Esteem." First, the startling and paradoxical thought that if God is "despised and defied," then He is "Undeified almost if once denied;" (The Recovery, 11. 19-20) and second, the belief that man must be made in the image of God if he is to enjoy Creation and God to the fullest.

Traherne's 'godlikeness' is enriched in the Centuries of

Meditation by its association with the "New Notion" of enjoyment.

Traherne gives strength to his enjoyment of life in the here and now by declaring:

In Discovering the Matter or Objects to be Enjoyed, I was greatly aided by remembering that we were made in God's Image. For thereupon it must of Necessity follow that GODs Treasures be our Treasures, and His Joys our Joys. So that by enquiring what were GODs, I found the Objects of our felicity Gods Treasures being ours. for we were made in his Image that we might liv in His similitud. (III.58.1-7)

Further, turning from the matter to the manner of enjoyment, Traherne argues:

The Image of God implanted in us, guided me to the maner wherin we were to Enjoy. for since we were made in the similitud of God, we were made to Enjoy after his Similitud...To Enjoy therfore the Treasures of God after the similitud of God is to Enjoy the most perfect Treasures in the most Perfect Maner. (III.59.1-3 & 7-9)

The microcosmic-macrocosmic relation between man and God, while founding itself on man's similitude with God, is vivified by the idea of perfect enjoyment. Just as this relation was, as it were, enlarged by the idea of infinity, so the extent and the degree of enjoyment within the relation is described as being infinite. Traherne exclaims in the First Century:

He is infinity Happy in Evry one, as many Times therefore as there are Happy Persons He is infinity Happy. Evry one is infinity Happy in evry one, Evry one therfore is as many Times infinitly Happy as ther are Happy Persons. He is infinitly Happy abov all their Happiness in Comprehending all. And I Comprehending His and theirs, am, Oh how Happy! Here is Lov! Here is a Kingdom! Where all are Knit in infinit Unity. all are Happy in each other. all are like Deities. (I.74.5-13)

The idea of infinity defines the limit of his enjoyment.

This enjoyment, it must be noted, goes hand in hand with comprehension. If it is to be an infinite enjoyment, then the perception into

the "Reall" must be present. The "right apprehensions" into the realms beyond the limits of the flesh and the concept which characterize the infinite mind must accompany this prizing or "tru Esteem." Recognizing this necessity, Traherne maintains:

That infinit Worth shut up in the Limits of a Material Being, is the only way to a Real Infinity. (III.20.10-11)

Moreover, anticipating Blake's well worn "eternity in a grain of sand," Traherne also declares:

You never Enjoy the World aright, till you see how a Sand Exhibiteth the Wisdom and Power of God: And Prize in evry Thing the Service which they do you, by Manifesting His Glory and Goodness to your Soul, far more then the Visible Beauty on their Surface, or the Material Services, they can do your Body. (I.27.1-5)

The whole of his enjoyment occurs on the spiritual level. It is, after all, his thoughts, wherein "The Quintessence is found of all he Wrought," (Thoughts II, 11.1-2) that best reflect his likeness to God. "We pleas God," he says:

[W]hen we are most like Him. we are like Him when our Minds are in Frame. our Minds are in Frame when our Thoughts are like his. And our Thoughts are then like his when we hav such Conceptions of all objects as God hath, and Prize all Things according to their value. For God doth Prize all Things rightly. (I.13.3-9)

The association between 'godlikeness,' infinity and enjoyment is responsible for Traherne's more effervescent manner in the Centuries of Meditation. He is carried away with the idea that the whole end of Creation is Enjoyment. This end gives substance to his confidence, and in a metaphysical fashion, he pushes to their paradoxical limits the presumptions hinging upon this confidence. He confesses that:

It seemeth Arrogance to pretend to the Knowledg of his Secret Thoughts. But how shall we hav the Mind of God, unless we Know his Thoughts? Or how shall we be led by his Divine Spirit, till we hav

his Mind? His thoughts are Hidden: but he hath revealed unto us the Hidden Things of Darkness. By his Works and by his Attributes we know His Thoughts. And by Thinking the same are Divine and Blessed. (I.13.10-16)

This "Arrogance," however, does not prevent him from engendering and expressing all manner of audacious and optimistic thoughts. As a "Mirror of Eternitie," Traherne asserts:

We are to be Conformed to the Image of His Glory: till we become the Resemblance of His Great Exemplar. Which we then are, when our Power is Converted into Act, and covered with it we being an Act of KNOWLEDG and Wisdom as He is. When our Souls are Present with all Objects, and Beautified with the Ideas and figures of them all. For then shall we be Mentes as He is Mens. (II.84.17-23)

Following hard upon this, he boldly adds:

When you prepare your self to Speak to Him, be all the KNOWLEDG and Light you are able, as Great as Clear and as Perfect as is Possible. So that at length shall you appear before GOD in Sion and as GOD convers with GOD for evermore. (II.86.10-14)

Traherne has a little more than his toe stuck in the door of Eternity! He stands on an equal footing in Knowledge and Perfection with his Creator. H. C. White claims that his exuberance "suggests the audacity of the mystic rather than the arrogance of the rationalist..."<sup>1</sup> His exuberance contains both, and suggests more--the enthusiasm of the Celestial Epicure!

Not only has the idea of enjoyment reinforced Traherne's belief that he is made in the image of God, it has also reinforced and enhanced the synthesis which left man at the centre of things. Traherne writes the Centuries of Meditation filled with the sense of the exaltation of man, because the end for which God made man is enjoyment, and, since this is so, with a sense also of elation because man is the focus of

God's concern. All this attention proves overwhelming at times, and Traherne can only say how God

Tendereth Thee as the Apple of His Ey. He hath set his Heart upon Thee. Thou art the sole Object of His Ey, and the End of all His Endeavours. (I.70.13-15)

There is no doubt that man is at the centre, for the "WORLD is but a little Centre in Comparison of you." (I.19.7-8) From this centre, man takes in all with his thoughts, and is present everywhere through them. The Centuries set out a little more concisely than the Poems how being made in the image of God takes into a centre all that God has created:

Man is made in the Image of God, and therefore is a Mirror and Representative of Him. And therefore in Himself He may see GOD, which is His Glory and Felicitie. His Thoughts and Desires can run out to Everlasting. His Lov can extend to all Objects, His Understanding is an endless Light, and can infinitely be present in all Places, and see and Examine all Beings, survey the reasons, surmount the Greatness, exceed the Strength, contemplat the Beauty, Enjoy the Benefit, and reign over all it sees and Enjoys like the Eternal GODhead.  
(I.23.7-15)

Hence, the idea of enjoyment strengthens the notion that the centre of all Traherne's relations with God is the Temple of his own mind, and the notion that man is at the centre of God's attention. The effect of this is important with respect to his "Primitive Christianity." The central significance of suffering and the sacraments in celebration of it is lessened, and assumes a more peripheral role, when the idea of enjoyment is emphasized or appears as such a prominent part of his thinking.

When Traherne perceives the end of man as enjoyment, and the image of God in man as expressly designed for enjoyment, he has before his mind's eye the happiness and pleasures intended for his lot, not its trials and sufferings. His whole duty is the garnering of "precise

apprehensions" in his understanding, such that the joy of his present estate likens itself to the estate of innocence which Adam enjoyed in Eden. His raptures mostly expend themselves upon the marvellousness of his present spiritual estate. Enjoyment is originally intended; but suffering is merely occasioned by the fall. The former is a necessity: the latter is an accident. The image of the child becomes appropriate for the expression and focus of these particular thoughts. Considering the relation existing between enjoyment and the understanding Traherne urges:

[A]ll our Thoughts must be Infant-like and Clear: the Powers of our Soul free from the Leven of this World, and disentangled from mens conceits and customs...And therefore it is requisit that we should be as very Strangers to the Thoughts, Customs and Opinions of men in this World as if we were but little Children. (III.5.9-11, & 13-15)

The significance which Christ assumes, therefore, appears to be this:

Our Saviours Meaning, when He said, He must be Born again and become a little Child that will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: is Deeper far then is generally believed. (III.5.1-3)

Less emphasis is placed upon the refuge sought in the Passions of Christ. Traherne places more emphasis upon the purity and unmediated union with God that Christ enjoyed. He can take refuge in Christ's sufferings, and celebrate Christ's sacrifice in the ceremony of the Eucharist. This can stimulate him to achieve the purity and perfection he desires. Within the Temple of his own mind, however, he can endeavour to reach the purity and simplicity which Christ represents by being present with God through these "right apprehensions." Especially when joy rather than suffering is designed for man, Traherne seeks the early, more primitive modes of worship, the praises and thanksgivings commonly associated

with man's pure and innocent beginning rather than the rites and the sacraments that celebrate the Incarnation and Redemption of Christ. To this effect, Traherne says of Christ in the Fourth Century:

That we are naturally the Sons of GOD, (I speak of Primitiv and upright Nature) that the Son of GOD is the first Beginning of evry Creature, that we are to be Changed from Glory to Glory into the same Image, that we are Spiritual Kings, that Christ is the express Image of His Fathers Person, that by Him all Things are made, whether they are Visible or Invisible, is the Highest Philosophy in the World...(IV.4.7-14)

Speaking of Christ as the "first Beginning of evry Creature," and thereby identifying him with man's "Primitiv and upright Nature," Traherne emphasizes the ideal of Christ for the spirit of man, not the example of Christ for the flesh. To him, Christ is the representative of the high degree of knowledge and comprehension he must seek before he can confidently claim that he is the Son of God, or even the image of his Creator.

Taking Christ more as an inward principle of the Understanding, Traherne reminds us in one of his meditations:

Rather we should remember that Jesus Christ is the Wisdom of the father, and that since our life is hid with Christ, in GOD; we should spend our Days in Studying Wisdom, that we might be like unto Him: that the Treasures of Heaven are the Treasures of Wisdom, and that they are hid in him As it is written In Him are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledg. (IV.4.21-27)

We are not to forget that in his movement towards an "inward Faith," Traherne shifts to the periphery of his religious vision the ceremonies and the customs pertaining to the Passion of Christ. Just as his poetical expression reflects a distinct lack of sacrament in his devotional moments, so his meditative expression reflects the same. It is this relative absence which leads to the view that Traherne inclines to the

simplicity of "primitive Devotions," and of a "Primitive Christianity." The Centuries have merely stressed a little more the fact that there are some "New Notions" to be found in his writings.

The idea of enjoyment has given some basis for considering Traherne's religious vision in a new light. There is, however, another influence stemming from this idea, and deserving of our consideration, an influence which is responsible for making Traherne's religious vision different from any other to be found in the metaphysical tradition.

In its association with the Temple within, the idea of enjoyment leads Traherne to take Heaven and Hell as images, not as concrete places. Heaven and Hell become symbolic representations of the varying felicitous states which he has attained. In the beginning of the Centuries of Meditation, Traherne declares that he will "open my Mouth in Parables." (I.3.1) Just as the Child and Adam are the parabolic expression of his innocence, so Heaven and Hell are the parabolic expression of his Felicity. In the First Century, Traherne ponders:

That while Others lie in a Golgotha or Prison, we should be in Eden, is a very Great Mystery. And a mercy it is that we should be Rejoycing in the Temple of Heaven, while they are Toyling and Lamenting in Hell, for the World is both a Paradise and a Prison to different Persons. (I.36.8-12)

He calls attention to the difference "right apprehensions" make in a man's spiritual pursuit. For some they create a "Paradise within thee/ Happier far;" for others they create the opposite. By making Heaven and Hell simply spiritual states within man, Traherne has not so much anticipated Berkeley, as he has mirrored the movements already occurring in his own time, and adopted some of the changing views and practices brought

about within the Church and Christianity as a result of these movements.

Jones, in Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, while describing the changes in thought precipitated by the mystical tendencies of the "Spiritual Reformers," also tells us that:

Heaven and Hell cease, therefore, to be eschatological in the true sense of the word; they become present realities, tendencies of life, ways of reacting toward the things of deepest import. Heaven, whether here or in any other world, is the condition of complete adjustment to the holy will of God; it is joy in the prevalence of His goodness; peace through harmonious correspondence with His purposes; the formulation of a spirit of love, the creation of an inward nature that loves what God loves and enjoys what He enjoys.<sup>2</sup>

This is true of Traherne. Of all the metaphysical poets, he is the least concerned with eschatological matters. The more he strives for godliness, the more he enjoys felicity upon earth. If he rightly apprehends the end of enjoyment, and if he contains the infinite attentions of God, he passes with little trouble or terror from the state of grace to the state of glory. Traherne does not concern himself with the 'leap' he has to make to overcome the distance between himself and God, because the 'presence' he enjoys is paradise enough. Heaven and Hell are not, therefore, some sinister re-creation of God's World within the mind, but simply the subjective state of being Traherne enjoys after being ravaged on the spot by God!<sup>3</sup>

Heaven is thus the effect of having the "right apprehensions," of prizing, and therefore of understanding the thoughts of God. It is the effect, too, of conforming the individual will to the Will of God. In the final analysis, Heaven and Hell are in the degree of understanding, and not, as it might be with Berkeley, in the nature of the understanding. Traherne puts the entire matter very simply and emphatically:

And how will you be the Son of God, but by having a Great Soul like unto your Fathers. The Laws of God command you to live in His Image, and to do so, is to live in Heaven. (I.39.7-10)

As with Christ, Heaven and Hell represent inward states of being achieved by man in his pursuit of God. Most certainly, with such a view of Heaven and Hell, Traherne cannot be placed very easily into the Anglo-Catholic tradition! He assumes a more wayward position within the Anglican tradition which reflects somewhat the movement towards a purer form of worship desired by such persons as the "Spiritual Reformers."

No less an influence on Traherne's thought and theological position is the idea of Love. It drives Traherne to ecstatic heights as much as the idea of enjoyment. Love, however, is special. "Lov," he says in the Second Century, "is the true Means by which the World is Enjoyed." (II.62.1) As we were made to enjoy in the likeness of God, so

We were made to lov: both to satisfy the Necessity of our Activ Nature, and to answer the Beauties in evry Creature. By Lov our souls are married and soddered to the creatures: and it is our Duty like GOD to be united to them all. We must lov them infinitely but in God, and for God: and God in them: namely all His Excellencies Manifested in them. (II.66.3-8)

Thought, Infinity, Enjoyment, and now Love, form the substance and foundation for Traherne's 'godlikeness.' The idea of love, as much as the idea of enjoyment, animates the nature of the relation which exists between man and God. The microcosmic-macrocosmic relation is not simply drawn up in precise likenesses or parallels, but it is suffused in or rather affected by a love relation. Traherne, very touchingly, declares:

Lov is an infinit Treasure to its Object, and its Object is so to it. GOD is LOV, and you are His Object. You are Created to be his

Lov: and he is yours. He is Happy in you, when you are Happy:  
 as Parents in their Children. He is Afflicted in all your Afflic-  
 tions. And whosoever toucheth you toucheth the Apple of His Ey.  
 (I.52.2-7)

The idea of love, likewise, reinforces the comforting notion that man is at the centre still of God's Universe, as the "Apple of His Ey." Through this idea, Traherne retains the importance of man in the changing scheme of things during his time.

Similarly, the idea of love conveys the closeness and the intimacy between man and God. It renders an extremely vivifying quality to the idea, or the nature of this particular 'presence' of man in God, and God in man. On the one hand:

GOD is present by Lov alone. By Lov alone He is Great and Glorious. By Lov alone He liveth and feeleth in other Persons. By Love alone He enjoyeth all the Creatures, by Lov alone He is Pleasing to Him self. By Lov alone He is Rich and Blessed. (II.50.1-4)

And on the other hand, like his Creator, man is present to all by similar means:

By Loving a Soul does Propagat and beget it self. By loving it does Dilate and Magnify it self. By Loving it does Enlarge and Delight it self. By Loving also it Delighteth others, as by Loving it doth Honor and Enrich it self. But above all by Loving it does attain it self. (II.48.4-8)

As with the idea of enjoyment, the idea of love tempers the possible inference of cold rationalism resulting from the belief that it is by thoughts that man is in unity with his God. Traherne envisages a relation with God that takes into consideration not only the aspirations of his intellectual being, but all the thirsts and longings of his passionate being. And since only the assertion of man's omnipresent love can adequately define the extent of his own involvement with God, Traherne

fancies the universe as a plenum--a plenum of Love.

The idea of love, then, is essential for defining the full extent of Traherne's 'godlikeness.' It adds yet another dimension to his participation in divinity. Furthermore, it is fully bound up with the other fundamental idea of his--the idea of infinity, the only idea that can ever be considered as qualifying the range and the depth of his love for God. In the Second Century, Traherne says of man's love:

Thy Lov is illimited. Thy Lov can extend to all Objects. Thy Lov can see GOD and Accompany His Lov throughout all Eternity. Thy Lov is infinitely Profitable to thy self and others, to thy self for therby mayst thou receiv infinit Good things: to others, for therby thou art prone to do infinit Good to all. (II.51.8-13)

As the unity of love and infinity excites his being, Traherne argues for the importance of his love less in a logical manner than in a manner which hinges on the significance of words such as "infinity" to describe new ideas and new states hitherto beyond any normal experience. His excited meditative expression might be said to take the form of a logic of infinity. For instance, he argues:

[T]o lov what is Lovly is a Righteous Thing. To make it infinitely Amiable is a Righteous Thing to infinit Lov: and to lov it infinitely being infinitely Amiable. For therby infinit Lov doth right to it self and its Measure: yea to it self and its Object. (II.27.4-7)

The argument goes around in a circle; but at least the circle is infinite!

In addition, Traherne revives the idea of the "infinit Capacitie" of man in the Centuries to state again that with respect to Love, God "made us in Capacity infinit Creatures." (II.82.3-4) He believes that the more man's capacity to love is perfected, the more he acts in the infinite and omnipresent similitude of God. To this effect, he states:

Infinit Lov cannot be Expressed in finit Room: but must hav infinit Places wherin to utter and shew it self. It must therefore fill all Eternity and the Omnipresence of God with Joys and Treasures for my Fruition...for my Soul is an Infinit Sphere in a Centre. By this you may know that you are infinitely Beloved: GOD hath made your Spirit a Centre in Eternity Comprehending all: and filled all about you in an Endless maner with infinit Riches: Which shine before you and surround you with Divine and Heavenly Enjoyments.  
(II.80.7-12)

Thus Traherne indicates that this love, like enjoyment, resides in the understanding and in the infinite depths gained by the "right apprehensions" of the infinite mind. The Socratic unity of love and knowledge finds its expression here, and so too does the individual and isolated path required by the pursuit of the Absolute. Revealing, perhaps, one of his characteristic traits, Traherne asserts that, "by its Understanding," the soul or mind is:

a Temple of Eternity, and GODs Omnipresence. between which and the whole World there is no Proportion. Its Lov is a Dominion Greater then that which Adam had in Paradiſe: And yet the fruition of it is but Solitary. (II.70.6-10)

Enjoyment, and the "true Means by which the World is Enjoyed," Love, place such an emphasis upon this inward and solitary path of devotion that it is difficult not to see Traherne as pursuing a way relatively unincumbered by the weight of the external sacramental rituals and practice. If Traherne can be likened to Socrates, then there is a moving away from, or transcending of, the temporal duties required to unite man to the Absolute. Indeed, with Love and Enjoyment characterizing the relation between himself and God, Traherne feels that there is less to overcome, and less required to facilitate his communion with God. His possession of felicity in the here and now, his frequent

maddening and ecstatic states wherein the Love of God is experienced influence his approach to God, and accent a simplicity which bespeaks of an intimate union with God.

On the whole, the ideas of Love and Enjoyment illustrate the ecstatic more than the ecclesiastic in Traherne. It is no doubt the mystical vein in him which prompts him on his "Solitary" path of love to declare in the Fourth Century:

It is a Good Thing to be Happy alone. He is better to be Happy in Company, but Good to be Happy alone. (IV.14.1-2)

Miss Underhill, in The Essentials of Mysticism, says that this trait is typical of the mystic, for he

speaks with God as a person with a Person, and not as a member of a group. He lives by an immediate knowledge far more than by belief; by a knowledge achieved in those hours of direct, unmediated intercourse with the Transcendent when, as he says, he was "in union with God."<sup>4</sup>

Traherne follows suit fairly closely. He enjoys an "unmediated intercourse with the Transcendent," he places little emphasis upon belief and faith, and he casts into the shade the rituals which would allow him to participate as a "member of a group." However, like the mystics, he is guilty of the accusation which Miss Underhill levels at the mystics. They suffer from a certain narrowness of vision because they:

have not always remembered that Christ Himself, the supreme pattern of all mystics, lived a balanced life of clear personal vision, unmediated intercourse with God on the one hand, and gentle submission to the corporate consciousness on the other hand.<sup>5</sup>

It is evident that Traherne assumes a likeness unto Christ because of his "unmediated intercourse with God," and focuses most of his attention upon this fact. He has taken the meaning of Christ in such a way as to

stress the inner discipline represented by His "personal vision" to the detriment of any accent upon the participation in the "corporate consciousness" through the celebration of the Eucharist.

Traherne is aware of the kind of path that he has chosen, and of the sins of omission that go with it. He knows that his solitary way is marked out by such private forms of devotion as Meditations, Contemplations, Thanksgivings and Prayers. "All these relate to Enjoyment," he says in a moment when he is conscious of their value, and of their limitation, "but those Principles that relate to Communication are more Excellent." (IV.18.1-2) But, catching himself up in the following meditation, he confesses:

Conversation is full of Dangers, and Friendships are Mortal among the Sons of Men. But Communion with GOD is infinitely Secure, and He my Happiness. (IV.19.17-20)

One is led to believe from this that Traherne was not a little eccentric in his theological position within the Established Church. Certainly he is not as Miss Underhill describes him, a "convinced institutionalist." His relative distance from the institutional value of the ordinances lead one to suspect a "Primitive Christianity." The inevitable question might be to ask, finally, What kind of an ecclesiastic was Traherne at Credenhill?

Marshalling all the implications of Traherne's mystical and solitary path, Miss Wade declares that the

essence of Traherne's mysticism is emphasis in the "personal and experimental," none the less real and vital, because in contrast with the Quakers and so many of the spiritual sects of the time, it found no opposition in itself to the forms of the Church, but on the contrary support and control and inspiration in those very forms.<sup>6</sup>

The difficulty with Miss Wade's declaration is in finding any evidence either in Traherne or in her treatment of him in support of this! While Traherne's mysticism, or religious disposition, has apparently no opposition to the forms of the Church, it has not attached too much central significance to them. They have not found an integral place either in his thought or his expression. While it is entirely possible to agree that Traherne takes his inspiration from them, it is not so easy to agree that he took "support and control" from them. Miss Wade is trying to argue for Traherne's "ardent Anglo-Catholicism," but his sensibilities appear to have led, in our examination thus far, another way. His thought and expression have taken a different direction, for example, from that taken by the other poets of the metaphysical tradition. In this respect it is important not to underestimate Traherne's awareness of the Protestant sects, or perhaps the influence of the sects upon him, or, again, the influence of the religious climate of the time upon him. His primitive form of Christianity no doubt might find its source of inspiration in the assertions of the "Spiritual Reformers," and, in particular, of the group called the Cambridge Platonists.

Consider, for example, some of the characteristics of the sect which Miss Wade has mentioned, the Quakers. Whiting tells us in his Studies in Puritanism, that the Quakers

believed in the Inward Light that shines in every man's soul, in the voice of the word of God within them, and the inward communion with God which Christian men enjoy if they are really Christian. In outward life they should observe their duty to their fellow-men, and should be merciful, liberal and compassionate...Their lives

should be characterized by moderation and temperance; in the management of their business they should be mild and moderate; in their outward deportment they should be grave, in speech slow and guarded and they should preserve a serious countenance and avoid frivolity. As for their ecclesiastical position, they believed that all the churches had become corrupt in doctrine, discipline, worship, life, and manners, and a new church was being raised up by the influence and in the power of the spirit of God.<sup>7</sup>

It is possible to cite such isolated references as that to the "Ministry of Inward Light," (Circulation, l. 63), the belief that the "Knowing Man is the friend of God," (Christian Ethics, p. 42) or the thought in the Centuries that, if he is free to please God infinitely, he "might be the friend of God," (IV.43.5) the ethical basis for Traherne and the Quakers is the same. Furthermore, in view of his severe criticism of the "trappings turned to tinsel" of the Established Church with the advent of the restoration of Charles II, Traherne might be said to entertain the same critical view of the Church as did the Quakers.

While it is probably unprofitable to push the analogy too far, consider the likeness between some of Traherne's expressions and this of Fox, the founder of the Quakers, which Whiting quotes:

Now I was come up in spirit, through the flaming sword, into the paradise of God. All things were new; and all the creation gave another smell unto me than before, beyond what words can utter. I knew nothing but pureness and innocency and righteousness, being renewed up into the image of God by Christ Jesus: so that I say I was come up to the state of Adam which he was before he fell. The creation was opened to me: and it was shewed me how all things had their names given them, according to their nature and virtue...I was immediately taken up in spirit, to see into another or more steadfast state than Adam's in innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus that should never fall. And the Lord showed me that such as were faithful to Him in the power and the light of Christ, should come up into the state in which Adam was before he fell...<sup>8</sup>

The illuminated moments of Fox compare closely to those of Traherne.

If it is possible to infer like effects, then would not Traherne's

movement towards a "Primitive Christianity" compare with Fox's movement away from the Church in order to maintain a spirit of simplicity and purity. Though Traherne never moves out of the Church, he does reflect a decline in importance of ceremony and custom as a result of such illumination. The effect of their critical distance and the influence of their "inner light" cannot be overlooked in comparing their theological positions.

In addition, the Quakers, like most Puritans, take the Church to be the overall unity of those believers who are filled with the spirit of Christ. Traherne mainly speaks of the Church in terms of the "Holy Catholick Church." In a revealing passage from the Fourth Century, he says that "Upon the Infinit Extent of the Understanding and Affection of the Soul," there will follow

A Perfect Indwelling of the Soul in GOD, and GOD in the Soul. So that as the fulness of the GODHEAD dwelleth in our Saviour, it shall dwell in us; and the Church shall be the fulness of Him that filleth all in all... (IV.100.12-16)

Traherne is inclined to view the Church in the same way as Christ, as a spiritual and ideal entity, and not as a corporeal and corporate entity.<sup>9</sup>

In this particular view of the Church, Traherne might have been influenced once again by the thoughts of the "Spiritual Reformers."

Jones quotes Sebastian Franck's view of the Church:

The true Church...is not a separate mass of people, not a particular sect to be pointed out with the finger, not confined to one time or one place; it is rather a spiritual and invisible body of all members of Christ, born of God, of one mind, spirit, and faith, but not gathered in any one external city or place. It is a Fellowship, seen with the spiritual eye and by the inner man. It is the assembly and communion of all truly God fearing, good-hearted, new-born persons in all the world, bound together by the Holy Spirit in the peace of

God and the bonds of love--a Communion outside of which there is no salvation, no Christ, no God, no comprehension of the Spiritual, no Holy Spirit, and no Gospel...<sup>10</sup>

As Traherne sees with this same "spiritual eye," perhaps Franck's disregard for the forms of the Church filters through to Traherne, and stimulates an avowal of a "Primitive Christianity."

Traherne might also have been influenced by the writings and translations of Everard, for Everard translated Franck, Trismegistus and others, whose works have undoubtedly been an influence on Traherne's writings. Haller mentions that even in his own writings, there are to be found

utterances, diffuse at times as all such things tended to be, of a genuinely imaginative mind glowing at the thought of the divine presence in man and nature. God, infinite and incomprehensible though he be, has put forth the perfect image of himself in Christ and through Christ in all creation.<sup>11</sup>

Passing beyond this superficial resemblance to Traherne, we find that what Everard says of the customs and ceremonies of the Church is important. His views, even if they were not of much influence, were at least typical of the kind current in Traherne's time. One view of Everard's which Jones gives us is that:

So long as the outward, whether letter or sacrament, is kept in its place and is used as a means or medium for the attainment of a spiritual goal--the formation of Christ within--he approves of its use and warns us against a too sudden transcendence of the outward helps to the soul.<sup>12</sup>

In this view, Everard advocates a kind of treading softly on the use of ritual; in others, he criticizes it for coming between man and God. The climate of opinion, of which Everard is a part, is, on the whole, severely critical of the corruptions or abuse of the ceremonies and customs of the Church, and of its efficacy for bringing man unto God.

It is not impossible that Traherne was influenced by such an atmosphere of dissent.

One group of men that undoubtedly influenced him was the Cambridge Platonists. These "Latitude-Men" as Jones tells us

were Puritan in temper and in intensity of conviction; they were all trained in the great nursery of Puritan faith, Emmanuel College...<sup>13</sup>

The Cambridge Platonists influenced, on the one hand by the Puritans, and on the other, by the Platonic philosophy, were characterized by a spiritual and intellectual pursuit of the Absolute. The way of Socrates, especially, is a pursuit that is purely internal, and, transformed into the Christian scheme, his way would accent the inward acts of grace to the detriment of the "rude external ways."

Dr. Tuckney, a friend of the Cambridge Platonist, Benjamin Whichcote, complained that Whichcote was preaching "a kinde of moral Divinitie, onlie with a little tincture of Christ added."<sup>14</sup> Further, he accused him of dispensing with the ordinances.<sup>15</sup> And indeed, Whichcote gave cause for complaint. Jones describes in the following passage some of the utterances of Whichcote respecting the forms of the Church:

Just as fast as men see that religion is a way to fulness of life, a method of attaining likeness to God, and just as soon as they realize that God can be truly worshipped only by acts and attitudes that are moral and spiritual, i. e., acts and attitudes that attach to the deliberate consent of the inner spirit, Whichcote thinks that "rites and types and ceremonies, which are all veils," will drop away and religion will become one with a rich and intelligent life.<sup>16</sup>

It is not too extravagant to claim that Traherne treads in Whichcote's footsteps, hoping ultimately to put aside rituals of the Church, the

"rites and types and ceremonies," while wishing to distinguish his religious pursuit by the "intelligent life."

Furthermore, Whichcote regards Christ in much the same light as Traherne. While He is to be as essential as the Church itself, it is important to see that "Christ must be inwardlie felt as a principle of divine life within us,"<sup>17</sup> and that Christ must be mainly looked on in this ideal and spiritual sense. Not Christ as the incarnated man or second Adam, but Christ as an inward principle of the understanding is the animating vision for both Whichcote and Traherne. Whichcote is even so bold as to declare that Christ Himself would look askance at the forms and the institutions that are more man's invention than God's, for he says:

Our Saviour...would not draw Truth up into any System, nor would He lay it out in Canons or Articles of Faith, because He was so not careful to stock the world with Opinions and Notions as to make it thrive with true piety, Godlike purity and spiritual understanding...<sup>18</sup>

Whichcote has expressed views towards Christ, and towards the ceremonies in celebration of Christ's sacrifice for the sins of man which may have influenced, and indeed, have found their counterparts in the works of Traherne.

From these particular sources, it is possible to assume that there are trends of religious thought current in Traherne's time which have had an influence on his theological views and position. It is evident, furthermore, from what we have seen in his works, that these trends have engendered the birth of such notions in his poetical and meditative expression that betray a remarkable similarity to their

progenitors. And when the "New Notions" of Love and Enjoyment from the Centuries of Meditation are considered, it cannot but be concluded that there exists in Traherne a movement towards simplicity and purity in thought, expression and devotion.<sup>19</sup> There is a primitive colouring in all his writings, and consequently in his Christianity. Miss Wade errs in thinking that he takes his "support and control and inspiration" from the forms of the Church. From what the Centuries of Meditation have revealed, he can be seen as taking a rather eccentric and wayward position within the Anglican tradition, a position which at once reflects his insuppressible individuality, and moreover, his enjoyment of felicity, not his cultivation of formality.

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>H. C. White, The Metaphysical Poets (New York: MacMillan Co., 1966), p. 352.

<sup>2</sup>R. M. Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Boston: Beacon Press, 1914), p. xlvi.

<sup>3</sup>W. Haller in the Rise of Puritanism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1938) tells us that Everard, a writer and preacher of Traherne's time

took the trouble to translate Sebastian Franck's Tree of Knowledge, wherein it was definitely argued that the temptation of Adam and all that followed thereupon was a picture of what happened within the individual soul, that Christ and Satan, Paradise and Hell, were actually present in the breast of man (p. 212).

Traherne was probably influenced by such writings. Yet he did not go so far as Franck in making all parabolic. Christ is an historical figure for Traherne, as is the garden; but it is difficult to say whether he ever regarded Heaven and Hell as places. He is certainly no Satan who believes that "The mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n" (Paradise Lost, ll.254-5). Traherne's Heaven is not of his own making, but a mirror of all God's attention to man. Satan's Heaven is an independent product, less a mirror than as infernal inversion of Heaven. Satan, in creating his own Heaven, is moving in the "sinister direction of Berkeley," who may have created a Heaven within his own mind because there may not have really been one without! Satan and Berkeley, not Satan and Traherne, would have made strange bed-fellows!

<sup>4</sup>E. Underhill, The Essentials of Mysticism (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Ltd., 1960), p. 25.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>6</sup>G. I. Wade, Thomas Traherne (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 166.

<sup>7</sup>C. E. Whiting, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>9</sup>Dean Inge, in Christian Mysticism (New York: Doubleday & Co., Ltd., 1961) informs us of the early and primitive view of the Church

taken by Paul (Romans xii.5). Paul speaks of Christ and the Church as "unus Christus" (p.68). And further, Paul

has been supposed to sanction an exaggerated form of Mysticism, in his extreme disparagement of external religion-of forms and ceremonies and holy days and the like" (p. 70).

While Inge believes that this is not entirely true of Paul, he does suggest that he did see the "trappings turned to tinsel." Traherne is very similar in sentiment to Paul with respect to the "rude external ways" of devotion. Both of them treat the Church more in its spiritual rather than its corporeal form.

<sup>10</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>11</sup>Haller, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>12</sup>Jones, op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>19</sup>The passages from Traherne's Centuries of Meditation which might alter this view are the series of meditations upon Christ, from approximately meditation fifty to the final meditation of the First Century. These meditations seem an unnatural, though sincere enough outpouring. Between the ecstasies which the ideas of love and enjoyment inspire come this isolated group, reflecting in the manner of Crashaw a baroque and Roman Catholic sensibility towards sin. Perhaps Traherne's sense of finitude and sin creeps out from beneath his ejaculations of joyous confidence and optimism. Perhaps his sense of humility and unworthiness before God comes briefly to the fore. But what can be as likely, is that he is writing these meditations for Mrs. Hopton. She was known to possess, and at one time to profess the Roman Catholic faith. Traherne dedicates the whole of meditation fifty-eight, for example, to the explication of the Cross of Christ lying at the centre of the universe! Later in this series, he confesses:

I admire to see thy Crosse in evry Understanding, thy Passion in evry Memory, thy Crown of Thorns in evry Ey, and thy Bleeding, Naked Wounded Body in evry Soul (I.86.6-9).

And, at another time, he bursts out with a more artificial than affecting series of ejaculations on the Passion of Christ:

Holy Jesus I Admire thy Lov unto me also. O that I could see it through all these Wounds! O that I could feel it in all those Stripes! O that I could hear it in all those Groans! O that I could Taste it beneath that Gall and Vinegre! O that I could smell the Savor of thy sweet Oyntments, even in this Golgotha or Place of a Skull (I.63.10-17).

All these meditations are simply not the "Reall" Traherne! The real Traherne is the "Lover of right reason," the one, who by "Right Reason" discovers "all the Mysteries of heaven," and who "by retiring from all Externals and withdrawing into Him, in the centre of his own Unity, becometh most like unto GOD" (IV.81.1-6).

## CHAPTER IV

### CHRISTIAN ETHICKS: TRAHERNE, THE CELESTIAL EPICURE

Traherne's Christian Ethicks is a reflection of the movements occurring in his time towards a more primitive form of religious devotion. It is an attempt to establish some sort of order out of the considerable religious confusion occasioned by these movements. Changes were being wrought in all areas of doctrine and devotion, the overall result of which, Rufus Jones declares was to bring

man into greater prominence, and the Church as an ecclesiastical system into less prominence; for life, they discovered, was settled in the teaching of Christ by the attitude of the will and by the formation of character rather than by the mediation of a priesthood external to him.<sup>1</sup>

What was occurring was a shift from dogma to life, from doctrine to ethics. Emphasis, accordingly, was placed upon the individual and his response to reality. His response to God, too, assumed an inward, private and solitary communion with God, making evident a movement towards an "interior faith." His whole endeavour was to live in the simplicity of God's likeness, and his teaching was to recommend likewise. In general, the Christian Ethicks is written for this kind of climate, and in this particular spirit.

Some "New Notions" are bound, consequently, to occur. It is in the Ethicks that Traherne especially prepares us for some startling ideas. He is writing each line "as I am inspired by Felicity," and he is setting forth "New Notions" because he possesses "the actual Knowledge of true Felicity." Such a profusion of traditionally

unorthodox beliefs appear that Traherne's religious ecstasy bubbles over into a form of "Primitive Christianity" rather than into an "ardent Anglo-Catholicism." His theological position can be described, as he himself describes it, as "Celestial Epicureanism."

Previously, in the Centuries of Meditation, Traherne revealed that from his reading of the Bible:

I saw Adam in Paradice, surrounded with the Beauty of Heaven and Earth, void of all Earthly Comforts to wit such as were devised, Gorgeous Apparel, Palaces, God and Silver, Coaches, Musical Instruments etc, And entertained only with Celestial Joys.  
(III.67.13-17)

As a result of seeing this, he concludes:

I evidently saw, that the Way to becom Rich and Blessed, was not by heaping Accidental and Devised Riches to make ourselvs great in the vulgar maner, but to approach more near, and to see more Clearly with the Ey of our understanding, the Beauties and Glories of the whole world: and the hav communion with the Deity in the Riches of GOD and Nature. (III.67.19-25)

And now, in the Christian Ethicks, he elaborates an Aristotelian schematization and explication of the various virtues designed to encourage man "to see more Clearly with the Ey of our understanding." The effect he desires is to have man convinced that he will be filled with "Celestial Joys." His Christian Ethicks sets forth, with this end in mind, an ethics of enjoyment. From this vantage point of the work, it is easy to see how Traherne departs from traditional notions of Christ, and the customs and ceremonies of the Church, and how he occupies a rather eccentric position within the Anglican Church.

The ethics of enjoyment is founded upon the same central belief which supports the idea of enjoyment encountered in the

Centuries of Meditation. The "New Notion" of man's 'godlikeness' resides at the centre of all his thought in the Ethicks. Man is made in the image of God, and for this reason, he enjoys creation in the similitude of God. In the concluding lines of the Ethicks, this central and inspiring belief is found. Traherne writes:

To be GOD-like is a very sublime and most glorious Perfection: which no man can attain, that is not either curiously satisfied in all those things, or humbly confident of their Beauty and Perfection.<sup>2</sup>

He has diligently sought out his God, pursued spiritual felicity, and thirsted after celestial knowledge. With a knowledge of felicity, he can explain that:

Godliness is a kind of GOD-LIKENESS, a divine habit, or frame of Soul, that may fitly accounted the fulness of the stature of the Inward Man. In its least degree, it is an Inclination to be like GOD, to Please him and to Enjoy him. He is GOD-LIKE that is high and serious in all his Thoughts, humble and condescending in all his Actions, full of love and good-will to all the Creatures, and bright in the knowledge of all their Natures.<sup>3</sup>

Further, he has associated this 'godlikeness' of man with the Infinity, Eternity, and Immensity of God, discussed before in his other writings. Rounding off the Ethicks, he joyously proclaims:

GODLINESS or GODLIKENESS is the cement of Amity between God and MAN. Eternity and Immensity are the sphere of his Activity, and are often frequented and filled with his Thoughts. Nothing less than the Wisdom of GOD will please the GOD-LIKE Man: Nothing less content him than the Blessedness and Glory of his Great Creatour.<sup>4</sup>

Being made in the image of God has prompted Traherne to take comfort in the fact that this is the ready and easy way, as it were, to begin his pursuit of God and Felicity. It has taken away much

of the distance lying between himself and God. It has given him ground and support for his optimism, and hope that his "Heavenly Avarice" will be satisfied.

The first premise for his ethics of enjoyment, then, recognizes that the

best of all possible Means whereby we can acquire his Eternal Treasures, is to imitate GOD in our Thoughts and Actions; to exert our Powers after his Similitude, and to attain his Image, which is after GOD in Knowledg, Righteousness, and true Holiness.<sup>5</sup>

His spiritual endeavour is to bring this 'godlikeness' to perfection, to perfect, or actualize his "infinite Capacitie." His enjoyment of a perfect Felicity amounts to what, "rightly defined," comes out to be "the Perfect fruition of a Perfect Soul, acting in perfect Life by Perfect Virtue."<sup>6</sup> This seemingly dry and dusty Aristotelian definition of Felicity is a description of the state of joy which the "right apprehensions" in the here and now will bring. Characteristically, nothing less than perfection will satiate his "Heavenly Avarice."

Traherne's enjoyment, or Felicity, resting on this belief in the 'godlikeness' of man, depends on the way of seeing things with the "Eye of our understanding." "All men see the same Objects," he said in the Centuries of Meditation, "but do not equally understand them." (III.68.4-5) The "precise apprehensions," needed for the "true Esteem" and vision of the end of things, fill up and perfect his capacity to contain the whole of Creation. Moreover, he said more felicitously in the poem Vision what constituted his Enjoyment:

To see a Glorious Fountain and an End  
                     To see all Creatures tend  
 To thy Advancement, and so sweetly close  
     In thy Repose: To see them shine  
     In Use, in Worth, in Service, and even Foes  
                     Among the rest made thine  
 To see all these unite at once in thee  
     Is to behold Felicity. (ll. 33-40)

These expressions of Felicity, these intimations of how to attain it are all very well; but the direction that Traherne takes in the Ethicks is more down to earth, less grounded in the ecstasies of the Empyrean. In a sober and scholastic fashion, he focuses his attention on the fallen world of men and speaks in the language of men, for there are those who do not live in the immediate presence of God, and those, who unlike himself, cannot live by vision alone.

Leaping off from this initial premise, Traherne writes:

We are to remember that our present Estate is not that of Reward, but Labour: It is an Estate of Trial, not of Fruition: A condition wherein we are to Toyl, and Sweat, and travail hard, for the promised Wages; an Appointed Seed Time, for a future Harvest, a real Warfare, in order to a Glorious Victory...<sup>7</sup>

In a faintly Puritan language, he asserts that for man in the fallen world, Trial and Labour are a part of his lot. He reaches across the distance from his fellow man, where his enjoyment of Felicity places him, to recommend the prescribed way for those who are all too aware that pain is a part of their existence. Though he still feels that man is more corruptible than corrupted by nature, he suggests that the:

Great Reason why GOD has concealed Felicity from the Knowledge of man, is the enhancement of its nature and value; but that which most conceals it, is the Corruption of Nature. For as we

have corrupted, so we have blinded ourselves. Yet are we led by Instinct eagerly to thirst after things unknown, remote and forbidden. The truth is, our Palates are vitiated and our Digestion so Corrupted, that till our Nature be purified by a little Industry, to make Felicity Known, is but to Expose it to Contempt and Censure. It is too Great and Pure for perverted Nature.<sup>8</sup>

Traherne has clearly before him what also may be quite "Reall."

Perhaps it is autobiographical when he speaks of the "Holy Soul of a quiet Man," who, in the present world, has become "surrounded with the howlings of a terrible Wilderness."<sup>9</sup> His criticism of Charles II has already been in evidence with respect to the Church and Court that returned with him, and he does have in mind "the free Pardon, and desire of the Return of vicious and debauched Children."<sup>10</sup> He feels the need in the Ethicks to declare in verse:

Mankind is sick, the World distemper'd lies  
Opprest with Sins and Miseries...

The World's one Bedlam, or a greater Cave  
Of Mad-men, that do alwaies rave.<sup>11</sup>

This is the condition of man as he now sees it. Trial is called for; but Traherne has two different notions of Trial. There was an estate of Trial before the fall, and there is an estate of Trial, now, after the fall. The distinction is important. It will cast considerable light on the nature of his theological position, and hence, upon the character of his Christianity.

Where Milton is concerned in Paradise Lost to "justify the ways of God to men," Traherne in the Christian Ethicks says that "my Design is to reconcile Men to God, and make them fit to delight

in him."<sup>12</sup> He therefore writes that the:

Great End for which GOD was pleased not to seat us immediately  
in the Throne, but to place us first in an estate of Trial,  
was the Multiplication of our Vertues.<sup>13</sup>

Trial was designed by God for our benefit. Through it man might perfect his nature and actualize the capacities which God gave him.

Hence:

[T]he state of Trial, and the state of Glory are so mysterious in their Relation, that neither without the other could be absolutely perfect: Innumerable Beauties would be lost, and many transcendent Vertues and Perfections be abolished, with the estate of Trial, if that had been laid aside...<sup>14</sup>

Traherne imagines, as did Milton, that man is more exalted, and God more pleased, if the only trial is to choose God before all others.

Traherne wrote in the Recovery:

The voluntary Act whereby  
These are repaid, is in his Ey  
More Precious then the very Skie.  
All Gold and Silver is but Empty Dross  
Rubies and Saphires are but Loss  
The very Sun and Stars and Seas  
Far less his Spirit pleas.  
One Voluntary Act of Love  
Far more Delightfull to his Soul doth prove  
And is abov all these as far as Love. (ll. 61-70)

The choice is man's to make.

Furthermore, just as Milton imagines man "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall," so Traherne explains:

TO make Creatures infinitely free and leave them to their Liberty is one of the Best of all Possible Things; and so necessary that no Kingdom of Righteousness could be without it.<sup>15</sup>

Traherne is saying on the one hand that man could not become as perfect as he is capable without trial, and by this he means the

original state of trial in Eden, and on the other hand, he is saying that if man were in Eden, man would practice those original and primitive virtues in a free and easy manner. This is the very "Primitive Devotions" and "Primitive Christianity" we have been trying to ascertain for Traherne. In form it is like the 'Morning Hymn' in Book V of Paradise Lost. There can be no doubt that Traherne has been inspired by Milton when he writes:

In Eden there was no ignorance, nor any Supernatural Verities to be confirmed by Miracles; Apostles therefore and Prophets, Ministers and Doctors were superfluous there, and so were Tythes and Temples, Schools of Learning, Masters and Tutors...For as all would have been instructed by the Light of Nature, so had all been Innocent, and Just, and Regular: Whereupon no Magistrate had been needful to put to Shame, no Courts of Judicature, nor Lawyers in the World...<sup>16</sup>

One cannot help but be seized with the sense of despair at all that has come in between man and God. The uselessness of it all inspires the Puritans and fires the imagination of Milton, and, later, becomes the target for Swift's satire. Obviously caught with this, Traherne goes on to describe further features of Eden:

Nakedness had been the Splendour and Ornament of Men, as it will be in Heaven: the Glorious Universe had been their common House and Temple, their Bodies fitted for all Seasons, no Alien or Stranger, no Want, Distress, or War, but all Peace and Plenty and Prosperity, all Pleasure, and all Fellow Citizens throughout the World...I can see no Use that there had been of Trades and Occupations, only the pleasant Diversion that Adam had in dressing the Garden, and the consequents of that...<sup>17</sup>

From this flight of fancy, it is difficult to find evidence for an "ardent Anglo-Catholicism" at the heart of Traherne! This is a vision of simplicity and purity. This is a vision which revels in the delight of being unencumbered by the gamut of external ways and

means. The primitive bent of Traherne is shown to its advantage in such flights as these!

These remarks are put into a theological perspective for us by Dowden in Puritan and Anglican:

Puritanism maintained as far as was possible that the relation between the invisible spirit of man and the invisible God was immediate rather than mediate. It set little store by tradition, because God had spoken to man directly in the words of revelation. It distrusted human ceremonies, because these stood between the creature and his Creator; the glory of the Christian temple is the holiness of the living temple which rises in the heart of the child of God. The pretensions of an ecclesiastical hierarchy are an estrangement to the adopted son of the Father; every lay Christian is himself a royal priest.<sup>18</sup>

Nothing would be gained by arguing against Traherne's Anglicanism; but it is important to note that especially during Traherne's time, the flux of opinion and argument made the lines between these two traditions rather fluid. The change wrought in his thinking by the Cambridge Platonists and the "Spiritual Reformers" of the time did undoubtedly result in a definite Puritan impulse in his writings. Certain aspects of the Puritans and their beliefs have found their way into the core of Traherne's thought. In particular, the stress upon the unmediated intercourse with God, and the distrust of human ceremonies have exerted a formative influence. And more especially, the emphasis upon the living temple within the mind of Man has certainly become an integral part of his thought. If there is anything to be inferred from the flights inspired by Felicity in the Christian Ethicks, it is the knowledge that there is this desire for a more simplified form of his Anglicanism, for what might be called his

"Primitive Christianity."

There is also to be considered the other state of Trial, which has been "occasioned by the Fall." God's infinite Mercy and Justice bestowed upon man after the fall has meant one thing:

[T]hat we are not immediately translated into Heaven, but restored to a new Estate of Trial, and endowed with Power to do new Duties, as pleasing to him, as those which he required from us in Eden.<sup>19</sup>

Now, in the present state of man, "new Duties" are imposed. Man has brought sin and death into the world, and, consequently, he must choose to exercise these both to expiate his errors and to perfect himself in an entirely new context. Milton has expressed this change in Areopagitica:

As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continence to forbear without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true warfaring Christian.<sup>20</sup>

This is man's predicament; but Traherne is not too happy with this state of affairs. These "new Duties" do not inspire and transport him in quite the same way as does the immediate participation in the presence of God. He declares that these "new Vertues" are "Aequivocal Off-spring of the Fall."<sup>21</sup> Besides this, he declares:

ALL Harsh and Sour Virtues came in by Sin: and we are to look upon them, not as Vertues intended by God and Nature, but occasioned afterwards, because their Use and Existence is accidental.<sup>22</sup>

It will come as a surprise to find out more exactly what these "Harsh and Sour Virtues" are when Traherne imagines once again what

it would be like in the prelapsarian state.

These "new Duties" and "new Vertues" which have been "occasioned by the Fall" are exactly those traditional and orthodox practices and ceremonies of Church worship, those which are immediately involved with the celebration of Christ, the Incarnation and the Redemption of man from sin. Again, from the enviable position of being admitted into the actual knowledge and enjoyment of Felicity, where simple communion with God is experienced, Traherne insists that if only man had not fallen, an entirely different mode of life would be lived:

[T]here had been no Faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God, because no occasion for that Incarnation; no Ceremonial Law of Moses, no Baptism, nor Lord's Supper, because there were no supernatural mysteries to be Typified, but the clear Light of a Diviner Reason, and a free Communion with God in the Right discharge of those Vertues, Divine and Moral, which naturally belong to the Estate of Innocency. All which Original and Primitive Vertues ought now to continue, as it were the Face of Religion beneath that Mask or Vizard of Ordinances and new Duties, which Sin and Corruption hath put upon it; Tho we have forgotten the Vertues of our first Estate, and are apt now to terrifie our selves with that Disguise, wherewith we have concealed their Beauty, by regarding only the Vertues, that were occasioned by Sin and Misery.<sup>23</sup>

These "new Duties" and "new Vertues" are peculiar only to the fallen state of man. They are occasioned, but not necessary. While they have their value, and prove at once essential and inspirational for this state, they have not an eternal justification. They stand in contrast to the "Original and Primitive Vertues" which mark the state of innocence which man enjoyed, and for which he aspires. The relation with God which Traherne rather fancies here might best be

called his 'primitive religion' not his "Primitive Christianity" because the former does not contain the inspiring and central figure of Christ! It is only important to realize that the former exerts a simplifying and purifying influence on the character of his Christianity, so that while he cannot but be caught up in the present state of man, and be discovered in moments of weakness and humility, with the sense of his own sins, he still cannot but look to the spiritual example of Christ.

While Traherne is animated by vision of a 'primitive religion,' he is aware that the ordinances, the customs and ceremonies of the Church must be taken in a severe and critical light. While the Incarnation, the Passion and the Redemption are in themselves miracles, their celebration certainly is not. They exist more as inspirations than institutions. Thus Traherne is led to say in the Ethicks:

For all these Occasional Vertues are but Tempoary, when our Life, and this present World are past and gone as a Dream, Love, and Joy, and Gratitude will be all that will continue for ever, in which Estate, Wisdom and Knowledge, Goodness and Righteousness, and True Holiness shall abide, as the Life and Glory into which the Souls of all that are Blessed will be transformed. Repentance shall be gone and Patience cease, Faith and Hope be swallowed up in fruition, Right Reason be extended to all Objects in all Worlds, and Eternity in all its Beauties and Treasures, seen, desired, esteemed, enjoyed.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, it is not so much that Traherne would have always wished to remain in Eden, or in childhood; but if there are two paths of righteousness offered to him, one of ceremonial worship, and one of "Right Reason" and "right apprehensions" into the "Reall," then the mystic

or the Puritan influence would urge him to choose the latter, and thereby, stimulate him on the way to a spiritual life that is best described by the images of childhood and Eden. There is little change or transformation evident, therefore, in the Traherne of the Poems, and the Traherne of the Christian Ethicks.

Traherne's 'godlikeness' has proved to be the support for his pursuit of perfection. In the Ethicks it has been found in alliance with the idea of Trial to describe the path to perfect Felicity that fallen man must now take in this world. As for the other "New Notion," the idea of infinity, it is equally evident that it is found to be the impulse in the Ethicks whereby Traherne can reach for the Empyrean heights.

In association, once again, with the Aristotelian idea that nature works all things to perfection, perfect Felicity would not be perfect without the idea of infinity imposing the only limit upon it. God's justice would be seriously in doubt if man were not open to the infinite before he began to perfect himself and enjoy the whole of Creation.

The deeper the ethics of enjoyment is looked into, the more does the idea of the infinite appear to have the same role it played in the Centuries with respect to the idea of enjoyment, and the idea of love. Felicity is the end designed for man; but more than this, perfect Felicity is held out to man. Traherne notes in the Ethicks that

PERFECT Felicity is not Dominion, nor Pleasure, nor Riches alone, nor Learning, nor Virtue, nor Honour; but all in Perfection. It requires that every soul should be capable of infinite Dominion, Pleasure, Learning, and Honor for the full and perfect attainment of it.<sup>25</sup>

Traherne argues, supported by his belief in the "infinite Capacitie" of man, that only infinity can impose a limit to man's enjoyment.

By transmuting the Anselmic argument with this bold leap beyond man's limitations, he reinforces the belief in man's ability to perfect himself by affirming that

A Perfect Soul is a Transcendent Mystery. As GOD could not be Perfect, were it possible there could be any Better Essence than he; so neither would the Soul be perfect could any more Perfect Soul be created.<sup>26</sup>

Somewhat in the same fashion as Milton, who thought that man was created perfect, and who allowed his Adam be exposed to the Miracles of God throughout history, Traherne, with the same thought, allows man to have the whole universe present before him for his own enjoyment. Unlike Herbert, who builds his Altar as a leaping off point towards his Creator, Traherne sits astride his perceptions and becomes present everywhere in the infinity of God. Only the infinite can suffice, because the soul of man

is a Soul in which no Defect or Blemish can be discerned; perfect in the variety and Number of its Powers, in the fitness and Measure of every power, in the use and value of every Endowment. A perfect Soul is that whereunto nothing can be added to please our Desire. As all its Objects are perfect, so is it self. It is able to see all that there is to seen, to love all that is Lovely, to hate all that is hateful...If its Power did fall short of any one Object, or of any one Perfection, in any Object, or of any Degree in any Perfection, it would be imperfect, it would not be the Master piece of Eternal Power.<sup>27</sup>

As we see Traherne ranging throughout all Eternity, Infinity and Immensity, it is little wonder that we speak of a person as being "confined" in Hell. Hell for Traherne is to be confined from such transports.

The idea of infinity is fully intended by Traherne to stress the 'epicurean' quality in his ethics of enjoyment. It makes the design of the Ethicks bold, and it continues the note of audacity throughout all his writings. In one respect, the idea of infinity encourages him to refuse to praise a "fugitive and cloistered virtue," and in another respect, it strengthens his conviction in the joys attending the inward and solitary path. His rejection of the ascetic virtue is no mere product of idle speculation:

If the Powers of his Soul are illimited, his Desire infinite, and his Reach Eternal, if he is able to see and enjoy all Worlds, and all that is above all Worlds in the Image of GOD: If his Ambition carry him to be Pleasing to all Angels and Men, and to be Glorious in the Eyes of all Kingdoms and Ages; if his Abilities are indeficient for the fruition of all that is Excellent in eternity it self, it is a token that he is ordained for GOD, and the enjoyment of his Kingdom: and a wicked folly to restrain himself to the miserable Contentment of a Cell, or Cottage, and to delight in nothing but some fragments of the Creation, that in Comparison of the whole are infinitely Defective.<sup>28</sup>

There are indeed some who are "instant and impatient of Delay," of enjoying the riches offered to man in the here and now! Traherne's Christianity has its narrow path in many instances, but the extent of enjoyment leads one to suspect that Traherne built his own broad highway to God! His way is certainly all "strewed with flowres and happiness."

Likewise, it is no mere idle speculation on his part that the idea of infinity, in conjunction with the idea of enjoyment, prompts man to take delight in the expectation of an immediate union with God. He reasons thus:

NOW if all Objects be infinitely Glorious, and all Worlds be fit to be enjoyed, if GOD has fitted Heaven and earth, and all the Spaces about the Heavens with innumerable pleasures, if his infinite Wisdome, Goodness, and Power be fully Glorified in every Being, and the Soul be created to enjoy all these in most perfect Manner; we may well conclude with the Holy Apostle, that we may be also glorified together. That our light Affliction, that is but for a Moment, worketh out for us, a far more exceeding and external Weight of Glory: That beholding us in a Glass the Glory of the Lord, we shall at last be transformed into the same Image from Glory to Glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.<sup>29</sup>

From the infinite perspective open to him, Traherne fully affirms that this union with God is characterized by man's whole duty of esteeming and understanding God. This transforms us into the similitude of God. Contrition, penitence, the drama of the dogma have no ultimate and final role in this transformation. They inspire the fallen man to triumph from the estate of trial to the estate of grace; but from the estate of grace to the estate of glory, they give way to the "Right Reason," to the "infant-ey" of our understanding. Traherne himself is on this later stage of the pursuit of God. His devotions and spiritual endeavours have a correspondingly different cast. "A Mind in Frame," he says, regarding the priority of our "intellectual perceptions," "is a Soul clothed with Right Apprehensions."<sup>30</sup> The "precise apprehensions" of the infinite mind concern and transport him most. He is to be found in the Ethicks emphasizing

that

man can see, and know, and love any object, in any Age or Kingdom in the World. He can look into any Region, tho it be never so far removed and be as familiarly conversant with any Person or Transaction there, when represented once in a clear Light, as with any Object in his own country. He can look into Eden, consider Adams Dust in its first Creation, survey the Procedure of God in his Six Dayes Works, pass out of Time into Eternity it self, run up to the Original and fountain Head of all existence, ponder the nature of GOD, search in his Bosom for his Eternal Counsels, pierce into the Centre of the Earth, and survey the Circumference of all Immensity. His Love can follow his Knowledg in all its flights, while in spirit he can be present with all the Angels.<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, the Divine Services which God Himself has provided for man lay hold on Traherne's imagination and intellect more than the external services through which man can pay tribute to God. It is this difference in emphasis, not of omission, which enables us to attribute the name of "Primitive Christianity" to his religious vision.

The perception and plumbing of infinity is task enough for Traherne. He works out, as it were, from the centre of the universe, and ranges beyond the regions of normal experience. When he ponders the infinity of the Worlds and Works of God, and the privileged position of man at the centre of all this, he is transported by this ecstatic epiphany:

[T]he whole Earth is but one invisible Point, where a man soareth to the height of all Immensity, and beholdeth and compasseth its everlasting Circumference, which is infinite every way beyond the Heavens. It is the true and proper Immensity of the Soul: Which can no more rest in the Childishness of all the noise and Interests of Men, be no more satisfied with its Earthly Glories, than the SUN can be shut up in a Dark-Lanthorn.<sup>32</sup>

Participating in the similitude of God's Immensity, Eternity and Infinity, partaking in so much of the felicity to come, Traherne leaves backstage the preparation for the life to come. Eschatological matters fall from his concern as joy seems to be the thing in life. The drama of the ceremonies, ordinances and rituals of the Church, indicative of man's guilt and misery, exist more for his contemplation of God's Mercy to fallen man than for his assiduous performance of them. The readiness does not have to be all! He does not have to take his book of works from his back pocket to show his Creator! On the whole, Earle's expression of the death of a child, in his Microcosmographie, applies most aptly to Traherne: "Could he put off his body with his little coat, he had got eternity without a burden, and exchanged but one heaven for another."<sup>33</sup>

The ethics of enjoyment has taken its substance and direction, then, from the two "New Notions" of man's 'godlikeness' and infinity. Consequently, it has given birth to new and eccentric views on the practice of Church ritual, and on man's devotions to God. There seems to be at one time a desire for utter simplicity, and at other times a real need for the established ordinances. The ecstatic appears to be at variance with the ecclesiastic. The Philosopher, Christian and Divine in him appears a more heterogeneous than homogeneous mixture. This might not necessarily be so because it is important to remember the perspective from which Traherne writes the Ethicks. It is essential to recognize the state that he is now in, the state of felicity, and the state that man is now in, the fallen

state. Traherne enjoys the unmediated union with God; but poets like Donne, Herbert and Vaughan need a mediated communion with Him so that they can attach themselves to something which will at least enable them to draw closer to Him. This is not to say that Traherne has achieved absolute purity and piety, but through his "Heavenly Avarice" he enjoys a very privileged position. The uncomplicated unity he has with God is that which all men desire, and that towards which all men aspire. There must be this movement, finally, towards simplicity, towards a more unmediated relation with God. And besides, the visions which Traherne has of a possible paradise on earth, of conditions similar to those Milton imagined for Adam and Eve in Eden, only make him "instant and impatient" of enjoying these things. His "Primitive Christianity" is merely indicative of this ultimate movement, and of his "Celestial Epicureanism."

This pursuit of Traherne's, as seen in the Ethicks, is similar to the way which Dean Inge, in Christian Mysticism, attributes to the religious mystics. Their pursuit, he says, is:

the attempt to realize the presence of the living God in the soul and in nature, or more generally, as the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal.<sup>34</sup>

And this pursuit, the end of which is an enjoyment of the presence of God, is contingent upon three propositions, two of which prove integral for Traherne's "Celestial Epicureanism." The first proposition is that "the soul (as well as the body) can see and perceive,"<sup>35</sup> and the second is that "man in order to know God, must be a partaker

of the Divine nature."<sup>36</sup> The third proposition, that "Without holiness no man may see the Lord"<sup>37</sup> applies equally well, but it does not involve the surprising consequences of the other two. Traherne has developed the first two in a way peculiar to his own ecstatic response to God and Creation, and to his own pursuit of Felicity. He has used the perceptions of the "infant-ey" and his belief in man's godliness to underline the purity and simplicity which all religious mystics have claimed as the end of the long and narrow road. The felicitous position which Traherne now enjoys is characterized simply by the apprehension of the ends for which everything has been created, and not by the application of means which are designed to achieve that end!

Yet the fall has occurred. "Mankind is sick," and "new Duties" and "new Vertues" have to be practised. Traherne indicates in the Ethicks that these are essential and efficacious for the state that things are now in. He himself is by no means above them, and as if in qualification of the excesses in his "Primitive Christianity," he mentions in one place in the Ethicks:

In this Life, our Enjoyment of GOD is more imperfect; more compleat and perfect in the Life to come. Here upon Earth we desire to converse with Him in his Ordinances; in Prayer, Meditation, hearing his Word, in receiving the Sacrament; which are intended all for this purpose, to bring us into a neerer Intimacy, and familiarity with GOD by speaking so to him, and hearing him speak, and shew himself to us.<sup>38</sup>

And, following hard upon, he writes:

We shall delight in all the Means of approaching to him as often as possible, and use them diligently, to the End of uniting us more and more unto him, who is the Object of our Desire and the

Life of our Souls. And for as much as there is another Enjoyment of GOD which is more compleat and perfect, we shall groan earnestly, desire to be dissolved and be with Christ, where we may see no more in a Glass, but Face to Face, and Know as we are Known.<sup>39</sup>

It is absolutely indispensable that both he and his fellow man enjoy even those duties and virtues of God's World which will aid in the salvation from sin.

Even though Traherne has apprehended and gone beyond the usual facets of religious devotion, even though, from his transcendent position, he may still claim

REPENTANCE is a Soure and Austere Kind of Vertue, that was not created nor intended by GOD, but introduced by Sin, made fair by Misery, in remitting the offence, and pardoning the Sin,<sup>40</sup>

he has still not contradicted the "least tittle" of the "Catholick Faith," and he never denies this belief:

...[T]hat Human Nature is infinitely exalted by the Incarnation of the Son of GOD is confessed by all those, that believe the Article of our Saviour's Incarnation: that the Earth how base soever it seem is the Bride of Heaven, in its own quiet, and the embrace of the Skies, that make it the Centre of all their Revolutions, sufficiently demonstrate; though few have observed that the Sun. and Moon, and Stars dance attendance to it, and cherish it with their Influences, while the Earthly Globe is crowned with the fruits of all their secret Endeavours...<sup>41</sup>

Traherne strikes out at the new science and the new philosophy for seducing men from Christianity. He wholly entertains "New Notions," but not a "New Doctrine":

[I]t would seem a New Doctrine, to affirm that there are Works done here upon Earth, that are by Nature above the Heavens. Yet all the Operations of the Holy Ghost, and all the Good Works of the Holy Men, especially the Meekness and Patience of the Saints, which are founded on the greatest Miracle in all Eternity, the Love of GOD to Sinners, and his stupendious Humiliation and

Passion for them, are set upon a higher Basis than all Nature, except that of the Deity, can afford unto us.<sup>42</sup>

Traherne shows, then, that he reaps from the new what will enhance the old, thereby bringing about a "Primitive Christianity;" but he shows, too, that he rejects from the new what will endanger the old, thereby preserving the world from the dissolution of Christianity.

On the whole, however, Traherne shows this ability to achieve some "golden mean," some synthesis of the old and the new, a balance from the best of both worlds. As much as he entertains the vision of Paradise on Earth, as much as he condemns the works of man in comparison to the Works of God, Traherne even gives us a vision of an enjoyment in the beauties of the poor fallen world which gives a more comprehensive scope to the ethics of enjoyment in the Christian Ethicks. In a more realistic than visionary moment, he writes:

Were all other men removed out of the World to make room for one, the empty Theatre would remain, but the Spectacle would be lost, all the Cities, and Kingdoms, and Ages would be removed, with all that was lively, and rare, and Miraculous in their Occurrences...The World had been a Wilderness overgrown with Thorns, and Wild Beasts, and Serpents: Which now by the Labor of many hands, is reduced to the Beauty and Order of Eden. It is by Trades and Occupations that a man gets him Corn, and Wine, and Oyl, etc. all which he would have been without had he never seen any Company but himself; condemned to Idleness and melancholly...the mysteries of Religion and Piety, all the speculations of Wisdom, for want of Education had been lost, at least the Sence and Exercise of these Bright and Glorious Things, for want of Conversation: Corrupted Nature being prone to afford no other fruits but Barbarism and Ignorance in that Solitary Condition. For the Powers of the Soul are improved by Tradition: and it is by the Information of others that our minds are awakened to perceive the Dignity of our own Nature, the Value of all the Creatures, and our Interest unto them.<sup>43</sup>

Thus Traherne reveals a part of the visions and values which he enjoys

in the present world. More largely, he reveals in the Ethicks the virtues and the 'Edenic' visions which he cherishes for the communion with God. He takes joy in the promise of perfection, revels in man's "infinite Capacitie," and goes into ecstasies of happiness over his immediate presence with God. Animated by all the attention which God gives him, he rests confident in a Paradise gained for the "Spiritual World within." He takes in everything, as befitting the "Celestial Epicure." While on the one hand he takes "the reality of Religion" to consist "in the solid practice of it among the Sons of men that are daily with us,"<sup>44</sup> on the other hand, perhaps more indicative of his own especial joys in the "actual knowledge of Felicity," he states:

[H]e that is thoroughly Happy, has so much work to do in Contemplation and Thanksgiving, that he cannot have while to be concerned with other mens disorders, he loves his Employment too well to be disturbed, and will not allow himself the thoughts of Revenge or Anger.<sup>45</sup>

Traherne, throughout all his writings, seems too caught up with "visionary gleams" ever to be the conscientious clergyman in the pattern of Herbert. He entertains always this "busy commerce" between himself and God. And as a result, he speaks with a knowledge of Felicity that brings "New Notions" into play. Carried off towards new pastures of devotion, he appears at once as an ecstatic mystic, and an ecclesiastical maverick! His unmediated union with God leads him finally to the "primitive Devotions" of a "Primitive Christianity."

When Traherne's uncomplicated intimacy with God and his soaring flights of Felicity pass before the mind's eye in perspective, these lines on King Solomon from a poem in the Centuries of Meditation serve, by way of a convenient summary, as a good indication of his own religious disposition:

He had a Deep and perfect Sence  
Of all the Glories and the Pleasures  
That in Gods Works are hid, the Excellence  
Of such Transcendent Treasures  
Made him on Earth an Heavenly King,  
And filld his Solitudes with Joy;  
He never did more Sweetly Sing  
Then when alone, tho that doth Mirth destroy.  
Sence did his Soul with Heavenly Life inspire  
And made him seem in Gods Celestial Quite. (III.69.51-60)

It is precisely the sense of his elevation above the world of man which convinces us that Traherne has transcended all the "tinsel things" binding us to our fallen estate. He is envious of David who needs but to sing psalms in praise of his Creator. He would have simply this form of devotion. He would delight in having but to sing, as a part of "Gods Celestial Quire," of God's Justice and Love to mankind. The song would be his only sacrament. His strains of verse, and even his flights of fancy, barren as they are of sacramental richness and intensity, place him at a distance from the High Church Anglican position. It is the Puritan spirit and not the Roman Catholic tradition that has captured his imagination. And, on the whole, his religious sensibility is founded upon his own unique response to God and Creation. The doctrines and discipline of devotion may be a constant feature of his religious duties, but

they are far from his fancies! Nevertheless, delighted by all of God's Work, inspired by His Mercy, and exalted by His Love, Traherne-- the Philosopher, Christian, and Divine--is at once the ecstatic mystic, the devout believer, and the excitable ecclesiastic!

FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>R. M. Jones, Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Boston: Beacon Press, 1914), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>T. Traherne, Christian Ethicks, ed. C. L. Marks & G. R. Guffey (New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 286.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 70. Traherne's reiteration of the "best of all possible" throughout the Ethicks tempts one, and perhaps not without justification, to bring together the names of Traherne and Leibniz. Traherne was writing his Ethicks shortly before his death in 1675. Now, H. W. Carr, in his biography, Leibniz (New York: Dover Pub., Inc., 1960), mentions that when

Leibniz visited London for the first time in 1672, he brought with him an introduction to Henry Oldenburg, the first secretary of the Royal Society, the friend of Spinoza, and through him, he came to know the intellectual leaders of the time (p. 48).

R. L. Colie, in Light and Enlightenment (Cambridge: University Press, 1957), also mentions that Oldenburg frequented the circles of the Cambridge Platonists, which included such figures as Whichcote and Henry More. It remains to discover whether or not the familiarity between Traherne and these Platonists went beyond their writings to personal intercourse. And then, perhaps through Bridgeman, Traherne may have met Leibniz. Since Bridgeman was on the Bench, he may have been interested in meeting Leibniz, since the latter had distinguished himself by his early treatises on jurisprudence. Traherne, at this time, was Bridgeman's private Chaplain. Though this possible meeting occurs in the early years of Leibniz, before the Monadology, and the Discourse on Metaphysics were written, there is evidence that Leibniz had the "best of all possible" already in mind. In a letter to Magnus Wedderkopf, in 1671, Leibniz makes mention of the belief that God wills the things which he understands to be best and most harmonious, and selects them, as it were, from an infinite number of all possibilities. (Philosophical Papers and Letters, ed. L. E. Loemaker, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1956). Perhaps Leibniz infected Traherne. Finding certain affinities is not difficult. Both of them have a notorious optimism, and both of them stress very strongly the idea of perception in an individual, whether it be the monad or the "infant-ey." The possibility of their meeting might, in addition, give a more definite date to Traherne's Thanksgivings. Both the Thanksgivings for the Blessedness of the Laws, and the Thanksgivings for God's Attributes make mention of this phrase. In the latter it appears

in line 168, and in the former, it is found thus:

O Lord, they be  
The best of Laws,  
Command the best of all possible Works,  
Lead us to the highest of all possible Rewards,  
Teach us to live in the Similitude of God (l. 193-7).

And see also lines 16-27 from the Appendix to the former Thanksgiving.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 196. Marks and Guffey, in their notes to the edition of Christian Ethicks, mention that in his Church's Yearbook, Traherne complained of the loss of "Primitive Devotion" with the overthrow of Cromwell and the restoration of Charles II. He said that "it hath Scarce room to be remembered...To do it is branded with Superstition and Hypocrisie" (p. 367). Traherne is either criticizing the corruptions of the Church that came with Charles, or the Roman Catholic, if not High Anglican influence on Church ceremony.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 90-1.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-4.

<sup>18</sup>E. Dowden, Puritan and Anglican (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench & Trübner, & Co., Ltd., 1901), p. 11.

<sup>19</sup>T. Traherne, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>20</sup>J. Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. M. Y. Hughes (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1957), p. 728. Any extensive comparison between Milton and Traherne might prove of interest, though their differences are appreciable, and, finally, over-riding. Their differences of temperament are considerable. L. L. Martz, in The Paradise Within (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964) has attempted some parallels, but the criticisms of A. Stein in "The Paradise Within and the Paradise Without," Modern Language Quarterly, XXVI, 1965, 586-90, are not without justification.

<sup>21</sup>T. Traherne, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>33</sup>J. Earle, Microcosmographie (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1928)  
p. 6.

<sup>34</sup>W. R. Inge, Christian Mysticism (New York: Doubleday & Co. Ltd., 1961), p. 5.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>T. Traherne, op. cit., p. 142.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 59-60.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

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