

15th November 2020

NEW

**“All appeared new, and strange at first,
inexpressibly rare and delightful and beautiful ...
My knowledge was divine.”**

Thomas Traherne, Centuries of Meditation

A family is being shown round a historic Country House filled with artefacts from all over the world, many of which are rare and invaluable. A child bumps into a plinth on which rests a Ming vase, which falls and is smashed to pieces. The guide is enraged and cries out, “Don’t you realise you’ve just broken something that’s over 500 years old?” To which the father of the party responds, “That’s OK then. It’s just as well it wasn’t new.”

While we might value what’s old over what’s new, new things have their place. Thomas Traherne, the 17th century English poet, clergyman and theologian, knew that. A scholarly and spiritual writer, the work for which he is best known, *Centuries of Meditations*, wasn’t discovered till 1898 and was published ten years after that. It’s a collection of reflections exploring life and ministry, touching on themes of philosophy, happiness and desire, from his childhood onwards. Did Traherne have anything new to say? Yes he did! Did it have less of an impact having remained undiscovered for nearly 200 years? No, it did not. “All appeared new, and strange at first”, he wrote. But in his wise and spiritual hands, what mattered could be presented in “a rare and delightful and beautiful” fashion, even pointing to something divine. In his hands, the old was made new.

The hymn-writer, John Keble, wrote in 1827,

*New every morning is the love
Our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.*

The Love of our God is as old as time itself. Yet we thank this God that it is always new every morning. *There’s* newness for you, the opportunity to find God’s love in a new way, and for old love to be renewed in our hands.

A prayer for today

*Restore me to life today, Lord; return me to love today, Lord;
enable me to serve today, Lord; enrich me with newness, Living God. Amen.*

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon
Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>