

THE HOLY COMMUNION. A Symposium by Various Authors. (S.C.M.; 6s.)

The Eucharist is the central religious act of every Christian religion. Where, therefore, there is diversity in Christianity it will be found to be most disjunctive in regard to the worship concerned with bread and wine. It was a bold and constructive idea of the Editor of the S.C.M. Press, the Rev. Hugh Martin, to gather a group of essays from the main Christian bodies as an attempt towards their knowing each other in the most fundamental aspect of their beliefs. The essayists he invited to contribute were very competent, E. C. Ratcliff and Gerald Vann, O.P., for instance; and the book is consequently valuable for the essays in themselves. But whether the whole contributes towards mutual understanding as is intended will appear to many readers doubtful. Father Vann points out the way that Providence has watched over the development of the Mass, using practical things for symbolic purposes; and then in the Anglican Church we are told of 'Cranmer's genius as a maker of liturgies' which is exhibited in the Book of Common Prayer; the Presbyterians, while showing a great fidelity to Scripture are within that field able to make their liturgies as they go along, making a variety according to nationality and temperament; with the Baptists and Congregationalists it is left still more to the choice of the minister and his people, there being no fixed order; and the Society of Friends or Quakers, whom we find to our surprise also included among the Christians with a Eucharist, have no outward liturgy at all. That is only one element in the Eucharistic worship of God, and yet even that represents such uncompromising differences that the reader might well despair of all movements for re-union. But certainly it is right to understand these fundamental divergencies before setting out to bring Christians together. It is merely foolish to re-unite, or rather attempt to re-unite, on the social platform while blinding our eyes to the fact that it is erected over a vast chasm of difference regarding the fundamentals of Christian life. Christian life is social life but social life springing from the Eucharist. This book then is of value at least in a negative way—it is a pity that it has a photograph of an unattractive modern chalice on the jacket.

JOHN HUNSTER

GOD'S AMBASSADRESS. By Hellen M. T. Redpath. (The Bruce Publishing Co.)

This is the life of St Bridget of Sweden, who lived between 1302 and 1373. She was one of those saints who from earliest childhood seem to have been surrounded by the supernatural. She wanted to belong to God only, but at the age of thirteen she was obliged to marry Ulf, who like herself was of the old nobility of Sweden. They had eight children.

In later years when Bridget was about forty-four, both husband and wife made a vow to enter religion. Ulf did not live long enough

to fulfil his vow. Bridget, now a widow, had from henceforth but one wish for herself, to become a nun as she had vowed. But again it seemed that God's will for her was otherwise. He made it clear to her through one of the many revelations of which her life was full that she was to found a new order in the Church. She had to tread the difficult path of religious foundresses. It was not until 1370, three years before her death, that her order received its first confirmation in Rome. It did not get the final confirmation until five years after Bridget's death when her Rule was ratified by Pope Urban VI.

The book is a well written, concentrated account of visions and revelations, of pilgrimages and journeyings made in spite of the almost insurmountable difficulties of travel in those days, and of Bridget's special mission as God's Ambassadors. Like St Catherine of Siena in the same century she never flinched from the task God gave her, even when it entailed sending a severe warning to the Pope himself on the condition of the Church at that time. It may be that other warnings and reprimands she had to give during her life, including the taking to task of her own royal relatives, were even more difficult.

Bridget died in 1373. The last chapters give us shortly the history of the Brigetine order; how it spread from Valstena in Sweden into other lands, being established in England by Henry V, who founded the Syon Monastery at Isleworth. According to the Rule drawn up by St Bridget, her monastery was a double one, consisting of an enclosure for men and an enclosure for women, and the church which was shared by both. An Abbess ruled over the whole monastery. From time to time attempts were made to alter St Bridget's plan of a double monastery, but it was only in the last century that the men were finally done away with, which seems a pity.

FLORENCE ROCH

BEHOLD THIS HEART. By Rev. H. J. Heagney. (P. J. Kenedy and Sons, New York.)

This is the story of the life of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. From the outset, the author captures the reader's interest and holds it throughout. He is never dull. The story is colourful, vivid, fascinating, and told with a charm that grips. In a style that is eminently readable, in words beautiful and eloquent, he paints a picture of happy childhood. The pages as we read seem to grow into flesh and blood and spirit. The woman (as was the child) is real and living.

Here is a record of the emotions of a life which was consumed by one idea, to love God and to adore him in the spirit of reparation in his Sacrament on the altar. The author makes us aware of sanctity lurking behind the pranks and gaiety of the child.

The child who was daring, gay, vivacious and vigorous, tomboyish, exuberant and bubbling over with high spirits, was at the same time deeply conscious of God. The young rock-climber and tight-rope