In the previous chapter I have incidentally referred to the Natural Piety of Wordsworth while discussing the changes he had introduced in the later version of "The Prelude". In this chapter I shall try to give a further account of this.

In the first chapter, I have discussed at full length the native endowment of Wordsworth, our sources of information being the records left by the poet himself, some of his contemporaries, biographers and critics. We have seen how he was endowed with a supernormal sensibility, keen animal appetites, shrewd practical sense side by side with a penetrating imagination and spirituality. We have also seen how these qualities developed in the soil of his surroundings. In this chapter we shall discuss the full growth of these qualities as a result of the vital contact of his own mind with the spirit of Nature towards which he had almost a reverential attitude.

For a fuller appreciation of the natural piety of Wordsworth we shall do well to discuss first his attitude from the beginning to the religion of his forefathers. Wordsworth's family belonged to the High Church of England. His mother we know, was a good churchwoman, who "once sent him to catechism with a nosegay on his breast, and another time rebuked him for complaining that they had not given him a penny at Church."\(^1\) His maternal uncle with whom Dorothy lived for years was the Rector of Fornsett and a Canon of Windsor. These were the conditions at home in the midst of which he grew up.

The school at Hawkshed as well as the University where he

\[^1\] J.C. Smith. A study of Wordsworth. P.83
studied was a Church of England foundation. So from childhood and manhood he breathed in an atmosphere of Anglican Church. But this does not mean that he was a notably pious child, nor is there any other evidence to show this. In the records relating to his life at this period, there is no mention of religious crises, which are a common feature of adolescence. His passionate love of Nature saved him from all besetting experiences. So we find that from childhood to manhood Wordsworth, in a way, seemed to have accepted the ancestral creed without much reflection. But it deserves mention that even in those early days a deeper faith, more personal in character but as yet vague and undefined was present with him during his solitary excursions to his native mountains. The poet relates a number of such experiences that came to him of which this is one:

"Yes I remember when the changeful earth,
And twice five seasons on my mind had stamp'd
The faces of the moving year, even then,
A child, I held unconscious intercourse
With the eternal Beauty, drinking in
A pure organic pleasure from the lilies
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters colour'd by the clouds of heaven." ¹

He tells us how among the mountains in his school days, Nature clothed his mind with beautiful images. But there is something more that he tells us — he held unconscious intercourse with the Eternal Spirit who reveals Himself through the visible aspect of the universe. But these revelations which very often came to him when he was a child were a usual phenomenon of his life upto the

¹ The Prelude, I, 586-593
age of twenty-one when he visited the Alps. All the elements of scene observed by him during this visit are taken to be the workings of One Mind.

"Characters of the great Apocalypse
The type and symbol of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end."

These visions were clouded for a time by sexual and political emotions which have been traced at full length in the second chapter of this book. Among the causes of the disease which beset him, he has mentioned only his great concern for public and political affairs. But we know from the record of later biographies that his anxieties about his own future and the fate of Annette and her child very likely aggravated the disease, but this episode had nothing to do with the early withering of his genius. This strong disease left its stamp on "Guilt and Sorrow", 'The Borderers' and the first draft of 'The Ruined College'. He was apparently restored to health when he settled down at Racedown. The loving friendship of his sister and Coleridge helped him in his recovery. All these have been fully discussed in the second and third chapters of this book. We have also seen in the beginning of the fifth chapter how with Rousseau, he came to cherish the same opinion that though there was reason to grieve over "what man has made of man", Nature remained uncontaminated and as fresh as when she came from her maker's hand. The real way to happiness was, therefore, a return to Nature, particularly to the life of feeling and instinct. It was in such a mood that most of the poems of the first edition of the "Lyrical Ballads" were written.

But it was not possible for Wordsworth to remain content for long with a life of feeling and instinct in contact with Nature.

1 The Prelude, VI, 570-2
2 Lines Written in Early Spring
As he regained his mental health completely, his former visionary power revived. Through Nature he began to work to Nature's God who is "the wisdom and the spirit of the Universe," and whom he addresses thus:

"Thou soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images of breath,
And everlasting motion, not in vain,
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou entwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul,
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
but with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and nature." 1

Here we find how the poet passed from a life of instinct and feeling or rather senses, to a spiritual life leading to a mystic revelation of God. But a revelation like this was somewhat different from his earlier visions. At that time pain and evil were unknown to him. But since then he had experienced pain and evil. So he had reached his full stature. Moreover, through the metaphysical aid of Coleridge, he had learnt to see the significance of his visionary experiences. Thus the three distinct phases of experience mingled with the main stream of Wordsworth's poetic genius and made his poetry of the one particular decade so great. These are sensationalism, mysticism and transcendentalism.

We shall discuss his sensationalism first, by sensationalism I mean a theory, which regards the senses as the source of knowledge. Chapter V gives the analysis of a few poems of "The Lyrical Ballads" where it has been shown how the poet made the senses the ground-work.

1 The Prelude, I, 429-437
of his poetry. These poems afford examples of pure sensationalism, without any mystical colouring. The gospel of eyes and ears intrudes itself at all points. He thought the eye "the most despotic of the senses" 1 The riches of the poet are -
"The harvest of a quiet eye
That broods and sleeps on his own heart." 2
A passage quoted by Helen Darbishire from the manuscript also illustrates this point:
"There is creation in the eye,
No less in all the senses, powers
They are that colour, model and combine
The things perceived with such an absolute
Essential energy that we may say
That those most godlike faculties of ours
At one and the same moment are the mind
And the mind's ministers." 3
The despotic power of the senses prevents the mind from enjoying the deeper experiences. This is illustrated from a pair of rejected lines from the great "Immortality Ode":
But for those first affections
Those shadowy recollections,
Which be they what they may,
Throw off from us, or mitigate, the spell
Of that strong frame of sense in which we dwell"
We should do well to remember here that it is due to the endowment of his organic sensibility that the external objects of Nature could have such vivid impressions on his mind. The bodily eye as he distinguishes it from the inner eye was extraordinarily

1 The Prelude, XI, 174
2 A Poet's Epitaph
3 Helen Darbishire, The Poet Wordsworth, 105.
sensitive and active in his youth. He tells us of 'The power of a peculiar eye' and says it could find no surface where its power might not sweep. His ear was equally developed. Images of sound meant as much to him as those of the eye. The poem "There was a boy" is an illustration to the point. The bodily eye and the bodily ear did not remain despotic throughout the poet's life. They united at times with the universal life in Nature. In his Preface to the poem which he placed first under the head of 'Poems of Imagination' in 1815, he says:

I have begun with one of the earliest processes of Nature in the development of this faculty. Guided by one of my own primary consciousnesses, I have represented a transfer of internal feelings, cooperating with external accidents, to plant for immortality images of sound and sight in the celestial soil of the Imagination. The boy there introduced, is listening with something of a feverish and restless anxiety for the recurrence of those riotous sounds, which had previously excited, and at the moment when the intenseness of his mind is beginning to remit, he is surprised into a perception of the solemn and tranquillizing images which the poem describes.

And the boy described here is no one other than Wordsworth himself, for, as Helen Darbishire tells us, an early manuscript of the passage is written in the first person.

On one occasion, De Quincey tells us, he along with the poet waited on Dunmail Raise for more than one hour. Several times Wordsworth stretched himself to the ground and applied his ear to it to catch the rumbling sound of wheels at a distance. It happened so that once as he was rising from the ground, his

1. The Excursion, I, 157
eye fell upon a bright star. For a short while he looked intently
upon it and made the following remarks:-

"I have remarked from my earliest days, that if the
attention is energetically braced up to an act of study observation....then if this intense emotion of vigilance should suddenly
release, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object
falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not
known under other circumstances. Just now my ear was placed upon
the ground in order to catch any sound of wheels that might come
down from the Keswick road, at the very instant when I raised my
head from the ground .... when the organs of attention were all
at once releasing, the bright star ........ fell suddenly upon my
eye, and penetrated my capacity of apprehension with a pathos and
a sense of the infinite that would not have arrested me under
other circumstances." ¹

In both these instances we get some clue to Wordsworth's mental
processes involved in the revelation of the Infinity through the
objects of Nature and through the mediation of the senses.

Wordsworth's theories are based upon his own experiences
of sensations. To Wordsworth Man and Nature are two distinct
essences. The mind of man represents the creative energy and
nature the reproductive.

In the Recluse he says:

"For the discerning intellect of Man
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day" ²

Since Mind and Nature are observed by him to be different entities,
he is absolutely free from an expression of sentimentality towards

¹ Quoted by Helen Darbishire in "The Poet Wordsworth" pp.110-11
² Fragment from the Recluse, 52-55
Nature which is a characteristic feature of the romantic poetry. Mind and Nature, though they come from God are independent of each other, but they often join hands to fulfil the purpose of creation. This is the central theme of Wordsworth's poetry.

But the mind in order to have communion with Nature must first be realized by the individual. Here Wordsworth has to say a great deal on the subject and what he says is somewhat similar to the view of David Hartley. Arthur Beatley in his book on "William Wordsworth, his Doctrine and Art in their Historical Relations," has attempted to show how deeply Wordsworth was indebted to this philosopher. Opinions differ in this matter. Beatley declares that "The Prelude" is nothing but an interpretation of Hartley's philosophy in terms of the poet's own experience. Others (A.E. Powell, J.W. Beach and J.C. Smith) hold that though he may have casually read Hartley, or heard about his doctrines from Coleridge, his debt to him was superficial. At deeper levels, they differed greatly from each other. Smith agrees that Wordsworth's conception of the origin of the human mind and God differed radically from ideas on the same subject. To Hartley, the mind at birth is a tabula rasa. But Wordsworth tells us -

"Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.

Moreover Hartley believed that we turn to God in our desire to enjoy the bliss of Heaven and avoid the pain of Hell. But to Wordsworth "God is our home". Again it is said that Wordsworth

1 Ode to Intimations of Immortality, V
learnt his optimism from Hartley. But Wordsworth's optimism was rooted in the divine destiny of the human soul and its power to transmute suffering, whereas the optimism of Hartley originated with an idea of painful and pleasurable sensations, our pleasurable sensations being far more numerous than those which are painful, there is a reasonable ground for optimism in our attitude to life. Whatever opinion is held by Smith and others, I think Wordsworth seems to be substantially in accord with Hartley inspite of the passage quoted above where he seems to hold a contrary view. A close examination of the works of the two writers will make this clear.

In the theory of association, three stages of the development of the human mind have been observed and enunciated by Hartley and his predecessors. The first is the age of sensation, or childhood, second, the age of simple ideas or youth and third, the age of complex ideas or maturity. In the poetry of Wordsworth we find the same mental processes involved in the development of a child from his early years to maturity. This can be illustrated from "The Prelude" or "Tintern Abbey". In that poem, the "glad animal movements" of childhood give way to the "passions" and "appetites" of youth, which in their turn generate "that serene and blessed mood" when we attain to manhood and when we "become a living soul". The three ages of man are interrelated just as there is a link associating the impressions of sensation, simple ideas and complex ideas. In both cases the first leads to the second and the second to the third.

So far Wordsworth is in perfect accord with Hartley. But the crucial point arises when the poet tells us about the visionary power that often came to him when visualising some aspect...
of Nature. He was subject to such visions, he tells us, from his childhood. In Hartley's scheme, there is no place for visions at all. It is at this point that we see the poet's originality. It is this visionary power which reveals to him the glory of a world not seen with human eyes. It is a mystic vision which gives rise to

"a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit which impels
All thinking things, all subjects of all thought,
And rolls through all things".1

What is the nature of this mystic vision about which he tells us and how is it evoked? It is "a sense sublime", he tells us, or rather a supersense which cannot be gained by discarding the visible world, but by embracing all objects within its purview. Those who in their eagerness for communion with the divine give up the visible world enter thereby a region of darkness. They enter the region of darkness as well who pursue the knowledge of the fragmentary for its own sake. Wordsworth like a true visualist is able to reconcile the spiritual world to the world of the senses. It is through the world of the senses, the light of the setting suns, the round ocean, the living air and the blue sky that he gets a clear vision of the supersensuous world. He rises to the supersensuous through the sensuous world and is happy to live in a world where the two merge into each other.

1 Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey.
Like his own skylark he does not soar so high as to lose contact with the real world, nor does he pin down his faith to the visible world which can be apprehended only by the senses. He keeps himself

"True to the kindred points of heaven and home" ¹ ²

Wordsworth looked forward to a time when science shall betouched by the glow of inspiration obtained from a knowledge of eternity:

"For then her heart shall kindle; her dull eye,
Dull and inanimate, no more shall hang
Chained to its object in brute slavery." ²

Science, according to the poet, which deals with bare facts without aiming at the knowledge of the ultimate truth is like a lamp without its light or a lyre without its music. But this does not mean that we should have no regard for scientific facts. The warning that the poet gives to the scientist is that the world as we view it is not the ultimate reality, but part and parcel of it. The external world should not be regarded as a separate entity cut off from the world of infinity and boundless space. He had from his early youth mystical experiences visualising unity in diversity, born out of the contact of his mind with the world. Here is a passage in which Wordsworth states his mystical creed as well as repudiates the discerning intellect of a scientist:

"By such communion I was early taught
That what we see of forms and images
Which float along our minds and what we feel
Of active or recognizable thought,

¹ To a Skylark
² The Excursion, IV, 125-6
Prospectiveness, or intellect, or will,
Not only is not worthy to be deemed
Our being, to be prized as what we are,
But is the very littleness of life
That lives in all things, sacred from the touch
Of that false secondary power by which
In weakness we create distinctions, then
Believe that all our puny boundaries are things
Which we perceive and not which we made".1

This realisation of the existence of an active principle of unity in diversity is the very core of mysticism. There are numerous instances in 'The Prelude' as well as in the other great poems of Wordsworth to show that the poet was frequently a subject to such experiences. And how did this kind of realisation dawn upon him? The poem "There was a Boy" and the "Dunmail Raise" episode related by De Quincey and mentioned in the previous section of this essay afford good illustrations of the method of the mental processes involved in the realisation of such an experience. The poet himself has told us that whenever he came in contact with some external object which deeply stirred his emotions, the removal of the exciting object from his presence by causing a temporary hiatus of his senses, revealed to him at once the invisible, the one inseparable world. This is what he means happens to him when "The light of sense goes out"2 or "we are laid asleep in body." 3

There is one curious fact to be noticed in connection with his mystical experiences, that is, they are almost all connected with mountain scenes. These experiences came to him while actually climbing mountains such as the Alps, The Snowdown, and

1 Quoted by Helen Darbishire in 'The Poet Wordsworth', p-99, which she found in an early manuscript of Book II of "The Prelude" but which was subsequently rejected by Wordsworth.
2 The Prelude, VI, 534-535
3 Tintern Abbey.
the slippery rocks (in the act of stealing birds from the snares of other people) or in the midst of scenes viewed in a background of mountains as we find in the 'The Solitary Reaper', the 'Lucy' poems, 'The Daffodils', 'To the Cuckoo' and "Nutting". Wordsworth was pre-eminently a poet of mountains. Divested of the mountain scene, his 'Michael', his 'Leech Gatherer' his 'Lucy', even he himself as a child depicted in 'The Prelude' would lose half their charm and beauty. If we ask why Wordsworth preferred to depict mountain scenes in his poems, the reply that would be first suggested to the mind is that he was born and brought up among mountain-scenes. But there is also another reply that would be suggested, that is, the poet was born with a mystical bent of mind. The thought of Infinity as suggested by the boundless space and the vastness of the universe haunted his imagination from his early childhood. The solemnity of the mountains, their massiveness and height, their naked beauty unspoilt by the human hand, and their freshness and purity served as an excellent medium of communication between the mysterious forces of the universe and those of the poet's soul. Compared with the immensity of the mountain-ranges human beings and their efforts appear puny and insignificant. We are reminded of our own little fretful selves and this helps us to endure the ills of life with a human courage, and resign our will to the will of Him who is the source of all life. It is on account of this that we find a kind of pathos connected with all such human beings whose emotions we depict in the background of mountain scenes. With their great dignity of character, purity of hearts and poignancy of sorrows, they fuse so well with the landscape-scenery and touch the innermost chords of our hearts. These are mostly solitary figures who have some kind
of sorrow, trying to find amongst the solemen scenes of mountainous regions an anchor of their purest thoughts, seeking a communion with the mysterious forces of the universe. His Leech gatherer, his Michael, his Solitary Reaper, his Wanderer in "The Excursion" are all touched with this spirit.

The point worth noticing in this connection is that the poems describing his mystical experiences among the mountain-scenes and other places abound in words indicating solitude and simplicity. These experiences come to him when he himself or the human figure he depicts is alone on a "Lonely Mountain" or in "The lonesome wild", in a Lonely Valley or Wood. On one occasion when he was alone, he tells us,

"I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of indistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod."  

He speaks of the "Visions of the hills; and scenes of lovely places," and also

"The solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had roll'd
With visible motion diurnal round."  

The Daffodils, he says,

"Flash upon my inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude."  

His Lucy was a nature's child who led a lonely life among "untrodden ways" and who was just like a

"Violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the view."  

1 The Prelude, XIII, 67.  2 Lucy Gray.  3 The Prelude, I, 329-333  
6 I wandered lonely as a cloud.  
7 She dwelt among the Untrodden ways.
A gentle shock of mild surprise came to him when he was standing alone beneath the trees blowing 'mimic hootings of the silent owls'. He tells us,

"I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees and the intruding sky.".

A favourite pleasure with him has been

"From time of earliest youth, to walk alone
Along the public Way, when, for the night Deserted, in its silence it assumes
A character of deeper quietness
Than pathless solitudes."

As he viewed the beauty of the mountain-scenery bathed in moonlight while climbing Snowdown, he says:

"A meditation rose in me That night
Upon the lonely Mountain when the scene
Had pass'd away, and it appear'd to me 'The perfect image of a mighty Mind
Of one that feeds upon Infinity.".

Solitude is the theme of Wordsworth's long life. It is also the keynote of his poetry. In his childhood and youth he was a great lover of solitude and sought it as a means of poetic grace. It is

"On Man, on Nature and on Human life,
Musing in solitude"

that he often perceives "Fair trains of imagery before me rise".

As a boy he tells us,

"Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
Far earlier, and before the vernal thrush
Was audible, among the hills I sate

---

1 There was a Boy. 2 Nutting
3 The Prelude, IV, 364-66 4 The Prelude, XIII, 66-69
5 Fragment from the Recluse.
Alone, upon some jutting eminence  
At the first hour of morning, when the vale  
Lay quiet in an utter solitude.  
Oft in these moments such a holy calm  
Did over spread my soul, that I forgot  
That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw  
Appear'd like something in myself, a dream,  
A prospect in my mind." 1

The crowd has no attraction for him. The busy life of London fails to impress him. He loves to view her when "All the mighty heart is lying still," 2 and she  
"doth like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning, silent bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie  
Open unto the fields and to the sky." 3

"A herdsman on the lonely mountain tops" 4 "in the mountains did he feel his faith" 5.

It may be that because he is the poet of mountains, he is, in a much greater sense, the poet of solitude also. The low breathings among the mountains are hardly audible except in solitude. But apart from mountain scenes, solitude in all places and solitary things had a great fascination for him. Nature does not yield her treasures to one who does not woo her with a single-minded devotion. For this it is necessary to become a solitary and to court solitude. Mystic union with Nature is possible only in an atmosphere of solitude.

All his great poems are the triumphs of solitude and solitaries. The "Lucy" poems particularly afford supreme examples of his love of

1 The Prelude, II, 359-371 2 Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September, 3, 1803.  
3 Ibid.  
4 The Excursion, I, 219  
5 Ibid, 226
solitude. Even the very titles of some of the poems suggest loneliness. One is actually named "Solitude" later on changed to 'Lucy Gray' and 'The Solitary Reaper' was similarly changed to "The Highland Reaper" by the editor of the Golden Treasury. The opening lines of "Solitude" which suggest solitariness are rounded off by the closing lines suggesting the same forlorn feeling giving to the whole poem a visionary touch.

Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind."

The theme of solitude is treated here in the ballad style, the theme which centres round the story of a lovely child. He treats the same theme with a difference in "The Solitary Reaper". The human figure is seen here in a beautiful setting. She is solitary no doubt singing by herself, single in the field, but the whole valley is vibrating with her music.

"Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
0 Listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound".

Love of simplicity is also one of the notable qualities of Wordsworth's character. This notion is conveyed by the frequent use of the word "naked" in his poetry. Anything that is bare, naked or bald is viewed by the poet as being invested by its own glory.
or lowness in its entirety. His great contempt for artificiality in all forms is indicated by the use of words which convey the sense of bareness or simplicity. This is indicative of the deeply mystical import of his nature-poetry. In order to have a true vision of God, the mind is to be divested of all impure and distracting thoughts. It must acquire a state of "blank desertion," so that God's footprints upon it may become recognizable. The mind will then become an abode of sublime thoughts of subtler origin where will reign eternal calm and peace. He had one of those visions or mystic communion with God, he says, when,

"Gently did my soul
Put off her veil, and self-transmuted stood
Naked as in the presence of God." 1

He tells us about himself as a "naked boy" delightfully bathing in a stream on a summer day, 2 and also "Shouldering the naked crag," while he lay suspended by the blast which blew when the moon stood in the heavens, "

"A meditation rose in me that night
That is exalted by an under presence,
The sense of God." 5

He tells us of "naked huts", "naked pools" "naked valleys," "a naked pool," "a naked wall" 10 and "the naked top of bold head land" 11. I have cited here only a few examples of the word as used by the poet to show his love of simplicity in all things as opposed to artificiality and which is the first step towards the attainment of spiritual bliss.

Wordsworth does not belong to the class of mystics who believe

1 The Prelude, IV, 140-142
2 The Prelude, I, 292-3
3 Ibid, 345-6
4 The Prelude, XIII, 41
5 Ibid, 66 ff
6 Ibid VI, 450
7 Ibid VI, 243
8 Ibid, VIII, 792
9 Ibid XI, 304
10 Ibid XI, 358
11 The Excursion, I, 98 ff.
that the mind's eye can be opened by shutting the eye of the senses. We cannot realise Him who is the Supreme Being by neglecting our surroundings. He has the greatest respect for all objects created by God but he has no patience with the sophisticated men and women of fashionable society. The priest of Nature bids us —

"bend in reverence
To nature, and the power of human minds,
Men as they are men within themselves." ¹

We are creatures of this world but this does not mean that we should be solely guided in our lives by worldly gain and losses. Selfishness is the greatest barrier to communion with God. We can hear the call from afar if we are in tune with the Infinite. The whole world is steeped in harmony and joy which will touch our innermost beings and make us frantic with joy if our eyes and ears be open and our minds free from disquieting thoughts and passions. For this we should go to nature for he

"Whom nature by whatever means has taught
To feel intensely, cannot but receive." ²

Happiness in the true sense of the word consists in finding affinities underlying apparent contradictions, cosmos underlying chaos, and unity underlying diversity. The main principle of unity is love, whereas that of separation is selfishness. We can realise ourselves truly by finding our affinities with others and by extending ourselves beyond the limits of self.

"I was only then
Contented when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread

¹ The Prelude, XIII, 224-226
² The Excursion, I, 225-226
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still" 

A mystic tries to discover his true self outside himself by uniting the one in him with the one in all. Since the universe has been created by God and it is "as God sees it and not as we see it," there is some link somewhere which binds the visible to the invisible world. The mystic of all ages and of all countries is able to realise this supreme truth in his life and he tries to communicate his experiences to us in a language which is but an inadequate instrument for expressing the deeper thoughts and aspirations of mankind. He usually uses symbolical language, for like is known unto like, and, as such, we can know the unknown through the known between which there is an affinity. Mystics have found a great difficulty in all countries in relating their experiences to others. Lyric poetry does not appeal to a person whose emotional nature is not developed. A mystical interpretation of the world does not appeal to a person who is not mystically minded. There is another difficulty which is experienced more or less by all mystics. It is that they are possessed by such ecstasies as baffle all their attempts to relate their experiences to others. On account of this, many mystics have fallen victims to the danger of making profuse use of far-fetched analogies. Wordsworth seemed to have been altogether free from this danger.

The word symbol should indicate a real and not a conventional affinity. Falling leaves may be said to be a symbol of human mortality, or a flowing stream a symbol of life, but falling leaves are not a symbol of tears. "Every truth apprehended by the finite intelligence," says C.F.E. Spurgeon, "must by its very nature be the husk of a deeper truth which we are not capable of apprehending in

1 The Prelude, II, 418-421
2 Dean Inge: Christian Mystician, 24.
any other way. Wordsworth's imagination which is essentially scientific, does not distort facts. Unlike many other nature-poets, he did not find emblems everywhere in nature. What he actually felt was the presence of the Invisible Form and Eternal life in the visible and apparently transient objects of nature. In this he differs from the poets of his age. Some poets are conscious of the transitoriness of all the objects of the world. So they seek relief in a world of imagination far removed from the real world. Such a note we find sometimes in Shelley's poems of which the following lines are characteristic:

"The one remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly,
Life like a dome of many coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of eternity."  

Some again admire nature's beauty for beauty's sake. Such an attitude we find expressed in Thomson's 'Seasons'. Some are satisfied if they are able to make an accessory of nature's objects as we find in the lime-light the picturesqueness of nature. Wordsworth felt as it were the pulse beating in the agitated heart of the universe. So he never trifled with or falsified her. He was engaged in exploring her by minute observation and calm contemplation. When he takes any illustration from nature, the facts are minutely observed and are used to express a moral. With his spiritual eye which has so often been noted and described by his contemporaries, he finds a natural affinity between the workings of nature and those of human beings, and every object is to him a symbol of some higher truth. In the twelfth book of "The Prelude" he praises the sublime

1 C.F.E. Spurgeon: Mysticism in English Literature, 9
2 Adonais, 460-463
qualities of the winds, the streams, the waves and the woods, and asks man to derive lessons from them.

"Ye motions of delight that haunt the sides
Of the green hills, ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offence." 1

It is true that sometimes Wordsworth deals with similes and metaphors, such as we find in that poem on "The Daisy," where the flower is compared to a "Nun", "a queen", "a little cyclops" and a "pretty star", but Wordsworth is aware that this is a work of mere fancy to which he ascribes but a secondary place. He does not confuse it with imagination. He gives expression to such fanciful moods in the following lines: -

"Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit and play with similes,
Loose types of things through all degrees,
Thoughts of thy raising;
And many a fond and idle name
I gave to thee, for praise or blame,
As is the humour of the game,
While I am gazing." 2

Wordsworth did not have much regard for "loose types of things through all degrees," which is wrongly supposed to be the essence of mysticism by some people. The resemblances that he valued

1 The Prelude, XII, 9-14
2 To the Daisy, 9-16
were not the work of fancy but intuition or imagination as he calls it. He has great respect for facts. But he would have nothing to do with intellectual gymnastics. His creative genius was directed towards grasping an unbroken unity in what is presented to us. He spent his energy in reuniting what man has put apart, to bridge the gap between all differences which has been created by "the meddling intellect" of man. He found an active principle operating in all the objects of the world.

"A motion and a spirit, that impels
No charm, no attractive, from link to link
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
Of circulate, the soul of all the worlds.
And rolls through all things."

How was this active principle conceived by Wordsworth in the years of his poetic achievement? Was he a pantheist?

Most of Wordsworth's admirers, particularly of the previous century would not like to call their great poet a Pantheist. The line of their argument is somewhat like this: Wordsworth may be called a panentheist but not a Pantheist. The distinction that they drew between the two classes of people lay in the fact that the former believes in universal Divine of the universe with God. Moreover, they argue that Pantheism is non-ethical, for if every thing is equally divine, there can be no distinction between what actually is and what ought to be. Thus it ignores the problem of evil and suffering but this attitude does not belong to Wordsworth's poetry written after the age of thirtyfive, thought it may be true of his earlier poems. In support of his argument, J.C. Shairp in his book entitled "The Poetic interpretation of Nature" says:

"Though he (Wordsworth) never expressly recanted any of the views expressed in "The Prelude," yet he added to them
new elements when time and grief have shown him other sides of life. Hitherto human sorrow had been to him but 'a still sad music' far away. But when in 1805 he lost the brother, he greatly loved, then he learnt that Nature was not always serene, but could be stern and cruel. In that bereavement we find him writing: "Why have we sympathies that make the best of us afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the Supreme Governor? Would it not be blasphemous to say that... We have more of love in our nature than He has? The thought is monstrous; and yet how to get rid of it, except upon the supposition of another and a better world, I do not see."

This is not the language of a pantheist, as he has been often called, nor of an optimist, one blind to the dark side of the world, as his poetry would sometimes make us believe him to be. From that time on, the sights and sounds of Nature took for Wordsworth a soberer hue, a more solemn tone. The change of mood is greatly expressed in "The Elegiac Stanzas, suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle", where he says that now he could look no more on "A Smiling Sea", and be what I have been."

He tells us further:

"A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanised my soul."

Whether Wordsworth changed his conception of Nature later on in life or not does not concern us here. If not in his later poems, he definitely speaks in his earlier poems of the presence of a spirit in all the objects of the visible universe. But what matters to us is the real import of the word "Pantheism". There are other

---

1 Deliverance of Indian Thought and Religion through Naturalism and Idealism.
critics who admit that his earlier poems betray a pantheistic faith. Wordsworth became very sensitive to the charge of 'pantheism' by the time he had published 'The Excursion'. He informs us that it was based on a piece of poetic utterance which found place in his "Tintern Abbey". "We are lucky" writes Sir Herbert Read, in having a record of the criticisms made by a unitarian lady of the time after reading "The Excursion". They are to be found in a copy kept by Crabbe Robinson of a letter written by Wordsworth to Mrs. Clarkson. Wordsworth was very angry with the unknown lady, and refused to write to her direct. He writes to Mrs. Clarkson:

"I write to you and not to your friend direct with whom if you would take my advice, you will never converse by letters nor viva voce upon a subject of which she is in every way disqualified to treat. ................. She talks of my being a worshipper of Nature, a passionate expression uttered uncautiously in the poem upon the Wye has led her into this mistake. She reading in cold-heartedness, and substituting the letter for the spirit-unless I am mistaken there is nothing of this kind in "The Excursion". She condemns me for not distinguishing between Nature as the work of God and God Himself. But where does she find this doctrine inculcated? Whence does she gather that the author of 'The Excursion' looks upon Nature and God as the same? He does not indeed consider the Supreme Being as bearing the same relation to the universe as a watch-maker to a watch."

Here is a portion of a letter of Henry Crabbe Robinson written to Dorothy Wordsworth in February 1826:

"When I first saw Blake at Mrs Aders, he very earnestly asked me 'Is Mr. Wordsworth a sincere real christian?' In reply
to my answer he said, 'If so, what does he mean by the worlds to which the heaven of heavens is but a veil? And who is he that shall pass Jehovah unalarmed?'

Similar objections have also been taken by Western writers with regard to the philosophy contained in "The Upanishads". Dr. Urquhart's argument in this respect is of some value to us in our study of Wordsworth. "The idealism of the Vedantist", writes Dr. Urquhart, "is similar to that of Plotinus...........

'Like only can comprehend like. When you cease to be finite, you become one with the Infinite. In the reduction of your soul to its simplest self, its divine essence, you realise this union, nay this ideality'. This would seem at first sight to be an ethical and religious ideal of the highest value, even of absolute value............ We cannot truly serve our fellows if we are always emphasising the separateness of ourselves both from these and from God. Undoubtedly you cannot serve your neighbour aright unless you can love him as yourself. But if you press this to mean that you can love your neighbour as yourself only if you believe him to be yourself, this principle may cut both ways. It may lead you to argue it does not matter how much you injure your neighbour, because after all it is yourself you are injuring, you being identical with your neighbour who is suffering from the injury." ¹ In my humble opinion Dr. Urquhart is mistaken in his view that union implies identity. Dean Inge has drawn a distinction between Pantheistic Mysticism or Panentheism and ordinary Pantheism. According to the former, he says, God is really everything that may be said to be the universal Divine Immanence, and according to

¹ Deliverance of Indian Thought and Religion through Naturalism and Idealism.
the latter everything is God and this distinction is an important point in our argument. What we gather from the nature-poetry of Wordsworth belongs to the former class. To say that there is a divine spark or to feel a presence in all created objects of the universe does not mean identification of every thing with God. It means that there is a common bond of union among all things which we realise through our soul-consciousness. Thus some confusion is created by taking union to mean identifi-
cation.

Parts of a living organism have their distinct functions to perform, but at the same time these are linked with the whole organism and other parts through some unifying principle. So what Wordsworth means is that the false self should die. We should every day find new correspondences, new sympathies and affinities with the not ourselves. A person who realises the common life he has from the Creator and which he shares with others, and, in doing so, realises his own affinity with them, cannot be said to have lost his personality.

As regards the conception of a personal God in the poems of Wordsworth, we should remember that he was a poet first and foremost, and not a poet in the ordinary sense of the term but a mystic poet who seeks to pass from the particular to the universal - universal immanent in and at the same time transcending the particular objects. As such, his conception of God is bound to be different from the conception of God of any dogmatic religion. To a mystic poet, God does not usually appear in his vision in the form of a Christ, a Brahma, or Allah, but as the Divine Being, the Universal Spirit, from whom the whole world has come into existence. In Wordsworth's poems
written before 1804, God has not been mentioned as God, but as a Universal Spirit, the Vast Infinity, a Presence, The Supreme Soul. Those who bring the charge of Pantheism against Wordsworth point out how in the earlier version of "The Prelude" he mentions 'spirits' and 'Beings' which were changed by him into 'Spirit' later on. In support of their argument they quote two passages side by side. The earliest extant draft of the Prelude contains the following passage -

"And not in vain Ye Beings of the hills,
And Ye that walk the woods and open heaths
By moon or starlight, thus from my first dawn
Of childhood, did ye love to entwine
The passions that build up our human soul."  

They ask us to compare the above passage with the one given below, a later version of the same passage

"Wisdom and spirit of the Universe:
Thou soul that art the eternity of thought,
Thou givest of forms and images of breath
An everlasting motion."  

In the above passage it is interesting to note how the poet changes the 'Beings' of the hills to the 'Spirit of the Universe'. It is a clear proof, they say, that Wordsworth was definitely pantheistic at an earlier age and that when he felt sensitive to the change of Pantheism, or it may be due to his having come under the influence of Coleridge and the transcendental philosophy that he changed the phrases like 'Beings of the hills' to 'Spirit of the Universe'. I too share the same opinion and consider that Wordsworth became sensitive to such criticisms in the light of

1 The Prelude (1799-1805), I, 428-432.
2 The Prelude (1805) I, 429-432.
he introduced changes in the later version of "The Prelude". But even when he composed the earlier version, and used such phrases as 'Beings of the hills', he must be having in his mind the grand idea of unity in diversity actively operating in all the objects of the world. What I take to be Wordsworth's conception of God in relation to Nature and Man is that each object of this world has got a separate existence or separate soul, that all objects living in a particular spot have their own souls. That all these souls are dependent upon and included in the soul of the spot, that in this way we reach higher and still higher souls, until we come to the soul of the Universe on the one hand, which we discover in Nature and the soul residing in Man, and these souls are ultimately linked together with the Supreme Soul. So his use of the phrase "Spirit of the Universe" instead of "Beings of the hills" does not improve the situation in any way, for, whether 'Beings' or one single spirit, all these seem to have been conceived by the poet as linked with the Supreme Soul.

Let us now turn back to the point we were discussing. It is true that in the poetry of Wordsworth God has not been always mentioned as having human attributes, but does it not show a limited range of our own vision to conceive of God as such? Is God, who is so great and powerful, who seems to hold within his palm the infinite space with the stars and planets, who seems to regulate the Eternity of Time to be conceived in the form of a man only? Of course for the sake of devotional worship, it is necessary to think of God in some concrete image. It becomes easier for the mind to concentrate upon some concrete image than upon an abstract idea. But it does not follow necessarily that those who can have a vision of God in the abstract, having come face to face with the immensity and the marvel of this created universe are not the true sons of God. The 'Presence' of Wordsworth
in "Tintern Abbey" is nothing but God, though the poet may not have explicitly used the word 'God'. In this connection the opinion of J.W. Beach deserves mention.

"The word 'presence' is often associated with the deity or other spiritual beings ..............................................

With the poems of Thomson, Akenside, Cowper, as well as with those of Coleridge, Wordsworth was familiar. And yet, in writing his great nature-poem of 1798, he refrained from making explicit association of Nature with the deity which was so anxiously made by these other poets ............... This may have been due to purely aesthetic reasons - he may have wished to keep clear of the technically theological tone. Or it may have been taken so far for granted that 'the something far more deeply interfused', the motion and the spirit felt in nature was an active principle bestowed on Nature by God, that he felt it unnecessary to make the point explicit." ¹

A poet's religion is different from any specific religion, of course so far as the technicalities and formalities go. A poet usually discards all commonplace names for objects which lose their significance with familiar use. So to him a 'Skylark' is the 'Ethereal Ministrel', and God is a 'Presence'. Of course it is not that Wordsworth always uses uncommon words for commonplace names. The poetic theory propounded by him is at variance with this idea and other illustrations can be provided to show that Wordsworth used commonplace words to connote characteristic qualities of objects; but in his highest poetic mood, he often forgot his theories, and at such times used language which fully

conveys the poetic emotion without resort to commonplace words.

It is interesting to note how the mystical ideas connected with God in the Upanishads which embody the highest religious thoughts of the ancient sages of India correspond to Wordsworth's idea of God as revealed through Nature. In these religious books God has been conceived as being the Trinity. According to them the three principles of beauty, good and truth are united in God who is the Supreme Ideal. He is the Supreme Beauty, the Supreme Good and the Supreme Truth. To apprehend this three-fold nature of the Supreme Ideal, a human being has to follow a threefold path. These are the paths of intellect, will and emotion. By following any of these paths we can realise the supreme soul. The ideal of Trinity is manifested to man in his capacity for knowledge, for action and for joy respectively, which leads him on to communion with God as the Supreme Truth, The Supreme Good and The Supreme Beauty. In an individual the three elements of intellect, will and emotion are not at war with one another but work together unitedly as it were, one predominating at a time. This principle of Trinity can be very well illustrated from the nature-poetry of Wordsworth.

It has been discussed already how Wordsworth felt an irresistible attraction towards Nature, particularly to her beautiful aspects, how these beautiful aspects assumed living forms in his imagination, how he derived a sensuous pleasure by holding

"Unconscious intercourse
With the eternal Beauty, drinking in
A pure organic pleasure". 1

But this was the stage, he says, of his unreflecting love towards the spirit immanent in all natural objects. This kind of love, unless tempered by will and intellect leads to blind faith or excessive emotionalism. So it is necessary to realise the Supreme

1 The Prelude, I, 589-591
Being as the Supreme Good and as the Supreme Truth also. How did Wordsworth realise it? In his early youth when Wordsworth came in daily contact with Nature, he came to realise that there is a moral law actively operating throughout the universe and that this law corresponds to the law working in the heart of man, and, it is on account of this that Nature which is the manifestation of God is capable of impressing upon us moral principles, and thus giving the right turn to our instincts and impulses. This we can gather from so many of his poems and passages, "Nutting," and the rowing excursions of Wordsworth as a boy of fourteen. Nature in which God is manifested is the anchor of the poet's thought, the guardian of his heart, the language of his sense and the soul of all his moral being. This may be said to be the stage in Wordsworth's life when he realised God within his soul as the Supreme Good manifested in Nature. In the 'Ode to Duty,' as has already been mentioned, this Supreme Good had been observed to be manifested in the heart of man as well.

In the third stage, that is, when he has settled down with his sister at Grasmere, he realises through contemplation and meditation the Supreme Being as the Supreme Truth. This realisation did not come to him in glimpses through intuitive visions, but he pondered over and meditated upon such visitings which he had experienced in his childhood and youth, as a result of which that "blessed and serene mood" came to him with the help of which he could "see into the life of things." 

The real trouble of Wordsworth in systematising his views on Nature began when he tried to analyse his own mind to find the

---

1 Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey.
2 Ibid
import of his mystical experiences. Hartley's theory of associationism could not account fully for the mysterious workings of the human mind. In his earlier years, that is, when he wrote "Tintern Abbey" and the first two parts of "The Prelude", the influence of Hartley seems to have been great. According to Coleridge's expectation Wordsworth undoubtedly treated man as man, a subject of eye, ear, touch and taste in contact with the external world, but he did not inform the senses from the mind. Instead he compounded a mind out of the senses. "Informing the sense from the mind" 1 represents the central idea of Coleridge's philosophy. In connection with Wordsworth's treatment of Nature, Bea
dy says: "There can be no measure of doubt that he approaches the problem of mind from the angle of Locke, basing his whole theory on the assumption that thought originates in experience, and that out of the product of sensation, or experience, ideas and the more complex forms of mentality are developed." 2

But this is an over simplification of Wordsworth's position as a systematic thinker which does not take into account the elements of confusion in Wordsworth's theory and his gradual shifting of importance from the heat of nature to the soul of man. In the scheme of Hartley, who was a disciple of Locke, there is no such thing as innate ideas. According to him we build up our highest sentiment out of the simple elements offered by our sensations and arrive at higher mental processes such as imagination, ambition, sympathy with our fellows, a feeling for God and the moral sense. It is true that in 'Tintern Abbey' and the first two parts of 'The Prelude' Wordsworth follows the same order from sensation to idea and from idea to sentiment. But we do not find

1 Table Talk July 21, 1832 In Complete Works VI, 403
the same coherency in Wordsworth's poetic philosophy as we find in Hartley's system. Even in "Tintern Abbey" he seems to be vaguely conscious of the fact that all our ideas have not their origin in the sensation evoked in the mind in contact with external nature. The imaginative faculty of the human mind is a separate entity and can exist independently of the senses which are evoked by the external world. He tells us of

"All the mighty world
   Of eye and ear, - both what they half create
   And what perceive."  

It is in the later books of "The Prelude" composed during 1804 and 1805, that his consciousness about the existence of this faculty of imagination becomes clearer and he recognizes in this faculty an equal strength if not more than that of Nature in transmuting an ordinary experience into a permanent object of poetic creation. There are many passages in "The Prelude" in which he clearly states that there was something in his spirit by virtue of which he was able to make good use of what he received from nature. So the mind of man and the soul of nature work on a reciprocal basis. This something in the spirit he calls by various names, sometimes he calls it 'the creative sensibility', sometimes 'an auxiliary light', sometimes 'The intellectual love and holy passion' and sometimes 'reason in her most exalted mood', and more often imagination.

"But let this
   Be not forgotten, that I still retained
   My first creative sensibility;
   That by the regular action of the world

1 Tintern Abbey, 105-107
My soul was unsubdued." 1

In another passage, he calls it

"An auxiliar light

Come from my mind, which on the setting sun

Bestowed new splendour." 2

The superiority of the mind over the sense has been stated in the following passage:-

"Among those passages of life in which

We have had deepest feeling that the mind

Is lord and master and that outward sense

Is but the obedient servant of her will." 3

We come across two factors if we try to find out the reason of this gradual shifting of importance by Wordsworth from the soul of nature to the mind of mind in his nature poetry. The first is that Wordsworth must have realised dimly that what he beheld with the bodily eye must in some sense be created by our minds, and the second, that this idea must have gained in force and clarity by his coming in contact with Coleridge's mind, and through him, with the minds of a host of German philosophers - who initiated the transcendental movement. A most uncompromising account of the supremacy of the mind over matter, or rather the external world has been given by Coleridge in his prose-writings.

According to Coleridge, nature should be regarded as the direct antithesis of the spirit, for it is bound with the forms ideal of time and space, and as such, it cannot account for its own existence. The activities of spirit and will are self-origina-

---

1 The Prelude, II, 377-380 2 The Prelude, II, 387-389
3 The Prelude, XI, 270-273
ting and so these cannot depend on nature. It means that the mind is free from matter and as such it is responsible for its own action.

In Wordsworth's writings we do not get such a coherent account of the concept of mind. The reason is that Wordsworth's genius was essentially realistic, whereas Coleridge's was just the opposite of this. The naturalistic vein was strong in the thought and feeling of Wordsworth. So instinctively he was first drawn to Hartley whose theory of associationism seemed to have supplied him with a clue to the motive power of the universe. But as time went on, he came to realise more and more clearly the supremacy of the mind over matter. Here begins his trouble and he cannot give us a consistent view of nature and of man. In 1802, Coleridge in his famous "Ode to Dejection" deplores the loss of his power for appreciating the beauty of nature - beauty which was imposed upon her by his own soul. Addressing Wordsworth he says:

"O William, we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone doth Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud,
And would we aught - behold of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless over-anxious crowd,
Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous we cloud
Enveloping the earth -
And from the soul itself must there be sent
A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth
Of all sweet sounds, the life and element!"

I have quoted this stanza at full length to illustrate Coleridge's concept about nature and the soul of man. Let us compare this
passage with a passage of Wordsworth's in "The Prelude" written six years after he wrote "Tintern Abbey" and three years after Coleridge had written his ode.

"So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong
Oh! mystery of Man, from what depth
Proceed thy honours! I am lost, but see
In simple childhood, something of the base
On which thy greatness stands, but this I feel
That from thyself it is that thou must give
Else never canst receive." 1

Does it not echo to a certain extent what has been said by Coleridge in his "Ode to Dejection"? So we can safely assume that by the time he resumed the composition of 'The Prelude' in 1804, the influence of Coleridge and the German philosophers had already had a firm hold upon his mind. In this way he has shown in the later books of "The Prelude" how the great union of the mind of man and the soul of nature is consummated. In 'The Excursion' and the poems written at a later period of life, the power of the mind which he calls imagination is conceived by him to be still superior to the soul of Nature until alas! he lost the visionary power he had in moments of intense joy in his communion with nature and simultaneously with it he lost his faith in the natural goodness of human beings which has been stated by him in his "Ode to Duty" "The Ode to Intimations of Immortality" and "The Ode to Duty" are the two poems which record the most poignant utterances of his soul for the loss of his and mystical vision on the ond hand/the loss of his faith in the natural goodness of man on the other.

1 The Prelude, XI, 326-334
There is a passage in *The Prelude* besides those in the 'Intimation' Ode, which expresses the poet's concern over the loss of his visionary power:

"The days gone by
Return upon me almost from the dawn
Of life: The hiding places of man's power
Open: I would approach them, but they close
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all; and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,
Such in my hope, the spirit of the past
For future restoration." 1

In another poem, "Ode composed upon an Evening of extraordinary splendour and Beauty" written in 1818, he addresses the "Dread Power" of the mind and says:-

"O let thy grace remind me of the light
Full early lost, and fruitlessly deplored;
Which at this moment on my waking sight
Appears to shine by miracle restored;
My soul, though yet confined to earth,
Rejoices in a second birth;
'Tis past, the visionary splendour fades;
And night approaches with her shades."

The 'light' which was 'full early lost and fruitlessly deplored' must be 'the fountain-light of all our day' and 'the master-light of all our seeing' of the 'Intimation' Ode. His reference to it as being fruitlessly deplored must be due to his changed religious views. By that date, that is 1818, he had already become an orthodox Christian and could not support any more his own belief

1 The Prelude, XI, 334-343
in prenatal existence embodied in the 'Intimation' Ode.

The first four stanzas of this great Ode were written in 1802 and the poem was not completed until 1806. In 1802, the poem ended with

"Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now the glory and the dream?"

Here is a question to which the poet gives his own answer after having pondered over it for full four years. It was the greatest problem of his life to which he himself could find no satisfactory solution. His explanation of the loss of his youthful joy in nature has been embodied in the following lines:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home."

He tells us in his introductory note to the Ode that the shadowy notion of pre-existence expressed in it should not be taken too seriously by the readers, because it does not embody any faith of the poet but was accepted by him at the time he wrote it, to turn into best use he could, this idea for the purpose of poetic creation. We shall discuss this point later on. At present we should deal with some more significant features of this poem. The child, as he tells us, comes into this world with a spiritual endowment which sheds the glory of Divinity upon the objects of nature. In this poem we find that Nature has already been relegated to a place of secondary importance. It is rather the mind or the imagination of the child which invests all objects with divine glory. When
this child grows into a youth, he still retains his visionary power of the soul which bestows glory on the objects of nature, because he is still near his divine source. But gradually as he grows upto manhood and occupies himself with so many mundane interests, this 'master-light' 'fades into the light of common day'. As in 'Tintern Abbey' Nature is still said to be the child's loving nurse, but her function seems to have been changed. Here

"The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came."

But in 'Tintern Abbey' the same nurse has been said to help the child to visualise divine glory as she is "The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul Of all my moral being". In "The Prelude" too, stress is laid on what a child receives from Nature. The sharp contrast between what man brings from God and what the earth does to make him forget his divine origin is the theme of the "Immortality" Ode. I think in this poem Wordsworth bade farewell to his Hartleian theory. What he means to say in this poem is that on account of our divine origin, we partake more of the divine nature of God in our childhood than in later years, whereas according to Hartley, the mind at birth is a tabula-rasa on which impressions are made by the external world through sensations, and in this way, as the child grows to manhood, higher and still higher thoughts are developed. The process is just the reverse in this case. Nature is considered in this poem not as a means of developing the soul enabling it to realise divine glory, but alienating it more and more from that divine glory.
A few words need be said regarding the faith in preter-natural existence that Wordsworth expressed in this poem. It is an accepted belief in all religions that the soul of man is immortal which signifies that it existed before a person came into being and will exist even after his death. If it is understood in this sense Wordsworth’s theory of pre-natal existence should not be incompatible with the ideas of Christianity, and Wordsworth too, ought not to have felt sensitive about the criticisms he had to face on this account.

It is not that Wordsworth did not compose any poem on nature after this date. He upheld the claim of nature and solitude in promoting a spiritual life and we find references to her in his poetry as the manifestation of God, but we cannot hear any more the vibrations of her heart in it as we did in his poetry of the great decade.

Now we shall gather the threads of our previous discussion, that is, a study of the reasons of Wordsworth’s loss of mystic vision which is almost simultaneous with the loss of his poetic power. His poetry failed because his mystic vision failed and his mystic vision failed because nature failed to give him satisfaction in the manner she did at an earlier age.

An overwhelming number of explanations have been given to account for this change. I shall quote only a few of them. Sir Herbert Read is of opinion that Wordsworth allowed moral judgment to interfere with his poetic sensibility as in the case of Laodamia, which was a sign of the castigating of his conscience and this is the reason of the gradual decay of his poetic power. "Either there was", he writes, no spontaneous overflow of powerful
feelings of any kind - just mere prose rhetoric, or the feelings were crossed by the poet's own inhibitions, and thus reduced to confusion". 1

But it seems to me that this evidently is not the reason of the decay of his poetic power. If the feelings were "crossed by the poet's own inhibitions", this should have been much more the case during the period 1798-1808, the most fruitful period of his poetic career as the memories of the incidents which took place in his life in France with reference to Annette must have been much more fresher than those were at a later date, when his poetical power began to decline.

Some maintain, and Garrod is one of them, that the change is due to his alienation from Coleridge. A poem entitled "The Complaint" written in 1806 by Wordsworth is quoted by him in support of his view:

"There is a change - and I am poor
Your love hath been, no long ago,
Whose only business was to flow
At a fountain of my fond heart's door
Whose only business was to flow;
Now, for that consecrated fount
Of murmuring, sparkling, living love,
What have I? Shall I dare to tell?
A comfortless and hidden well."

Wordsworth is poorer, he says, "not only in the wealth of his affections, but in the riches of philosophic thought." 2 "The withdrawal of his influence", he says again, "carries with it, for Wordsworth, not only, as I think, philosophic impoverishment, but a kind of relapse into ordinariness." 3

1 Herbert Read: Wordsworth p.149 2. H.W. Garrod; Wordsworth Lectures & Essays, p.138
I have already stated my own opinion in this respect and I shall repeat it again. The strength of Wordsworth as a poet lay mainly in his mystic visions, and these mystic visions were evoked in the presence of natural objects. When he came more and more under the influence of Coleridge and the German philosophers, Nature no more gave him those visions, as she was regarded as a passive force, for now the importance began to shift more and more from the soul of nature to the mind of man. Numerous examples have been cited in the previous section of this essay to show how gradually he was shifting from one position to another. Referring to this power of the mind he says:

"And I remember well
That in life’s everyday appearances
I seemed about this period to have sight
Of a new world, a world too, that was fit
To be transmitted and made visible
To other eyes, as having for its base:
That whence our dignity originates,
That which both gives it being and maintains
A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from within and from without,
The excellence, pine spirit, and best power
Both of the object seen, and the eye that sees."  

I think that it was due to Coleridge’s influence that Wordsworth lost his adoration for Nature, and with the loss of this adoration, he lost his mystic vision which was the fountainhead of his creative genius. In the "Ode on Intimation" Wordsworth has given his own reasons for the loss of this vision which I think to be pretty true. Though "a six years’ darling of a pigmy size" may not be "a mighty prophet", "Seer Blest" as Wordsworth would have us believe, there is a certain amount of truth in his

---

saying that a child is nearer to God than grown-up people are. Saints teach the glory of child-like simplicity, innocence and purity of heart. Worldliness stands in the way of having a true vision of God. But as we grow up, we become more and more worldly-minded losing thereby the purity of our hearts. Wordsworth's childhood was extraordinary in many ways. Upto the age of seventeen he had lived almost in daily communion with Nature, far from the contamination of artificial society. As such, outward influences could not destroy the purity of his heart. So he could have glimpses of the Eternal Spirit through the manifestation of Nature. For a few years after this period, this remained veiled as his mind was preoccupied with politics, problems of a profession and other matters. When it found time again to seek the heart of nature, he was able to regain the visionary power, for the external world, though it enlarged his experience, left him almost as he was in his childhood. It was after a few years that the hardening process set in and 'the regular action of the world' left stamp upon him.

There was a northern canniness in his nature which was observed by a few of his contemporaries and which has been mentioned in the first chapter of this book. And in his relations with Coleridge we have observed how he became shrewder and colder day by day and also self-centred and arrogant. "The real truth is that", writes Sir Herbert Read, "There has rarely been a poet who reacted so violently to the criticisms directed on his poems. He poured scorn on any reviewer who ventured to question his greatness, his equality with Milton, his perfect felicity and moral effectiveness". How is it possible for a person, who is

1 The Prelude, II,380
so full of vanity and so conscious of his own power to have mystic vision of God? God is attainable, so all religious founders say, through humility and love. We do not notice these qualities in Wordsworth at any rate, in his relation with society. The same kind of coldness as he exhibited towards Coleridge, we are told, was shown to De Quincey too when he invited the Wordsworths to his house after his marriage. Love for humanity in general he had none, and love for nature died out too as has already been pointed out, by his having come under the influence of the transcendental philosophy. So the mystic vision died and the poetic muse slept.

One or two words need be said in connection with his "Ode to Duty", as this poem, in a different way, represents the same phase of Wordsworth's life as the "Intimation" Ode, that is, his concern over the loss of faith in the natural goodness of man. As we have seen already, in Wordsworth's later life, the power of mind, that is imagination was considered to be more important than the senses evoked by nature. Similarly in the 'Ode to Duty' he tells us that duty should take the place of natural virtue. But the word "duty", he gives a new significance. It is not a mere reasoning faculty cold and calculating, for which he has no respect at all. His address to "Duty" as

"Thou dost wear
The godhead's most benignant grace;
Now know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face."

takes us from the region of cold reason into that of pure imagination. He tells us in it 1

1 Herbert Read, p.152.
"There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who in love and truth
Where no misgiving is, rely.
Upon the genial strength of youth".

Here he does not seem to have abandoned the doctrine that the highest moral achievement is a part of our natural life. But if it fails us as he felt that it was failing him, duty is the second best. People will seek her firm support, he says, according to their need. Moreover he links duty, which is a law of the moral world with the physical law in nature:

"Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in their footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens, through thee,
Are fresh and strong."

Here duty is said to be setting a standard of life not only for the moral world but for the natural world as well. The two worlds did not appear to him to be antithetical to each other. Similarly, in the "Rainbow" poem he says:

"And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety."

Here the poem takes us from the natural to the moral world. But the very use of the words 'I could wish' suggests that he has already been feeling a loss of his former faith in nature and the natural goodness of man. He needed some external support which he found in imagination on the one hand and imagination on the other.