CONCLUSION

To arrive at a fairly accurate answer as to what shaped Emily Dickinson's attitude towards her themes of Love, Death Religion, God and Immortality; it is necessary to study her poetic career against a wide perspective of her religious background and her times.

Emily Dickinson though born of a Puritan heritage, found the Christian theological framework insupportable. As early as the age of seventeen this realisation dawned upon her, and she admits standing alone in rebellion, unlike her friends who responded to the call of God. She was not willing to give up the world she loved, for any religion. The price she paid was heavy. She was forced to depart from the Holyoke Female Seminary. This was the starting point of her life-long individual struggle, her rebellion which she termed as "Faith is Doubt".

Emily Dickinson wrote in a letter in 1850 -

"The path of duty looks very ugly indeed - and the place where I want to go more amiable - a great deal - it is so much easier to do wrong than right - so much pleasanter to be evil than good, I don't wonder that good angels weep - and bad ones sing songs,"

Emily Dickinson's own life was a kind of deviation from the life of the young girls of her age. Even at the unripe age of thirteen Emily Dickinson looked up to Benjamin Newton as her preceptor who she claims, taught her 'Immortality'. Her father was perhaps the only man in her life to impart in her young mind a long lasting

1. Letters P. 82
impression of security, strength and integrity. So she remarked at his death:

"his heart was pure and terrible, and I think no other like it exists."

Gossip said that her father's possessiveness prevented both herself and her sister Lavinia from getting married and leaving the house. But there is doubt as to how far this fact is authentic.

Perhaps the most predominant factor among the Dickinsons was a strong closeness and family feeling. Strangely enough even such closeness could not bend Emily Dickinson's mind to follow her Family into church membership during the local awakenings that swept Amherst between eighteen forty to sixty two. In this connection her feelings are of regret:

"I am standing alone in rebellion and growing very careless ----. I am one of the lingering bad ones."

In her late twenties she looked desperately for alternatives to the church:

"The charms of the Heaven in the bush are superseded, I fear, by the Heaven in the hand occasionally "

When girls of her age busied themselves with various social engagements, Emily Dickinson chose to live a cloistered life with -in the boundary of her father's garden, with her bees, flowers and bobolinks. Her peculiar habit of sending notes with rhymed sentences, as condolence massages, and congratulatory remarks, made her appear eccentric. Her eccentricity reached its peak when at times she would

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in meet visitors not person but through conversations carried on across the wall of the visiting room. Deliberately dressed in white, Emily Dickinson appeared to her close acquaintances like Higginson, "Way Ward", "insane", and a "Partially cracked poeteess".  

Emily Dickinson very successfully resisted the religious and social context within which she lived. This rebelliousness is explicit when she writes in a letter in 1863: "Let Emily sing for you because she cannot pray, to keep the dark away". She obviously sees herself as the singing bad angel. Her "Singing" ranges from the baffling questions of her soul—her skepticism about the Puritan ideology, and her non-conformist attitude—to an inconsistent attempt at "Looking oppositely. For the site of the kingdom of Heaven".

She persistently questions her own faith in faith—

"Belief, it does not fit so well
When altered frequently". (J. 1258)

At the same time she is afraid of this doubt which may lead her to state as she pictures—

"Why - do they shut Me out of Heaven?
Did I sing - too loud?" (J. 501)

Though Emily Dickinson mastered the Bible, (involuntarily) and it was the model for the structure and language, and even themes of her poems; she doubted its ideological authenticity.

"Her dissatisfaction with the tradition, her questions of its theology, her discarding of ideas and manners expected of her—these are the moral adjustment of a rebel".  

5. Keller, p. 76.
Through her rebellion Emily Dickinson discovered her need for a religion of her own:

"Guess I and the Bible will move to some Old fashioned spot where we'll feel at Home", and there also existed in her a nostalgia for "God's old fashioned vows".

So the search for the means to satisfy her needs found expression in her rebellion. This search can also be called a religious search.

The Bible she says in the 'Centre' and her concern is 'Circumference'. 'Circumference' is associated with a heightened consciousness, she often called 'Transport'. In this state she speaks like an Oracle:

"Tell me how far the morning leaps,
Tell me what time the weaver sleeps,
Who spun the breadths of blue ", (J. 128)

Through her mythopoeic imagination, Emily Dickinson succeeds in identifying Nature with Heaven:

"Heaven is what I cannot reach
The Apple on the tree
Provided it do hopeless hang
That Heaven is to Me "; (J. 239)

So the Biblical Paradise is within the circumference of one's given experience. Similarly the Biblical God is unacceptable to Emily Dickinson because He stood for her as a Providential God who sanctions all the unnecessary misery in life and the demythologizes Him in this manner:

"Himself - such a Dance". (J. 267)

Her personal God is "Awe", "Absolute Reality". She calls herself:

"Circumference thou Bridge of Awe".
Behind this facade of serious attitude, Emily Dickinson very often wears the mask of a naughty child and calls God "Papa above". Sometimes she attackingly addresses Him as "Banker, Burglar", or intimately as "My Dim Companion".

This same mirth permeates her nature poems when she writes -

"In the name of the Bee and the Butterfly
and the wind, Amen;".

For the most part Emily Dickinson was happy with her simple appreciation of Nature. It is not strange that Emily Dickinson never philosophized Nature as was in vogue by the 18\(^{th}\) century; probably because the basis of her symbolic world - the projection of her rebellion - is not logical arguments but suggestive images. Her easy understanding of Nature is however, at times shrouded in mystery. Than Emily Dickinson admits -

"So impotent our wisdom is
To her Simplicity". (J. 668)

It is again from the notion of 'Circumference' that Emily Dickinson's concepts of Death, Love and Immortality, gets expanded.

Emily Dickinson's obsession with the idea of death is well known. By being a witness to the death of several of her Friends and relatives, Emily Dickinson gathered some first hand experience of it. Her mythopoeic imagination coupled with her experience, enabled her to actually re-live the experience of the dead. Death, seen from such a close angle, lost its fearful side for the poet. Infact she welcomes death in "Because I could not stop for Death"-. She says death "Kindly" stopped for her; the word 'Kindly' suggests the favour bestowed upon the narrator by death. Emily Dickinson perhaps sees death as the ultimate truth of life; therefore she is stoic about its
acceptance. Death for her, is also related with questions of an afterworld. but Emily Dickinson, akin to a mystic, believed in the here and now. The present engulf the past and future. Death is however seen by her as the gateway to immortality - it is the union of the soul with God. She sees this union as the union of two lovers. The image of God, the Divine Lover transporting the poet to Heaven is a frequently used metaphor. Only "fleshless lovers" can find Heaven in a gaze. So love and death appear synonymous terms, both having their roots in the religious soil -

"Unable are the loved to die
For Love is Immortality,
Nay, it is Deity -
Unable they that love - to die
For Love reforms vitality
Into Divinity". (J. 809)

Where love is concerned, Emily Dickinson neglects the physical side of it. It is not that she never spoke about physical love, but wherever she did, it stood independent of love. The poem "I started Early - Took my Dog" (J. 520) recalls the poet's experience when the sea advancing towards her gradually passing her 'simple shoe' passed her 'Apron' and her 'Belt' and "Past (Her) Bodice too". She is terrified with the advances of the sea and she admits that -

"No Man moved Me - till the Tide ......
And made, as He would eat me up - .......
and then - I started too ...... ".

Emily Dickinson's love is seldom consummated, the moment of fulfillment evades into a torment, and ecstasy mingles with pain, as the following poem reveals.

" I cannot live with you -
It would be life -
And life is over there -
Behind the shelf.
The sexton keeps the key to -
Putting up
Our Life - His Porcelain -
Like a cup -
Discarded of the Housewife .......
I could not die - with you
..............
Nor could I rise with you.
..............
So we must meet apart -
You there - I - here . . . . . . " (J. 640)

Though Emily Dickinson operated with the themes found within the traditional norms of society, her treatment of the same was uniquely her own.

Emily Dickinson's rebellion is not the kind Shelley championed. For that matter, Shelley and Whitman are similar because they both were concerned with society and man.

Shelley's endeavour was at creating a new and better world out of the old worn out system. Walt Whitman's rebellion too was somewhat of this nature. It encompassed the whole of America and the American society. Whitman called upon the Americans to wake up to a sense of American identity and destiny. In his preface to the Leaves of Grass, he declares that America of all nations on earth have the fullest poetical nature. Talking of the poet he says :

"his spirit responds to his country's spirit ............ he incarnates its geography ........ " . The poet is not longer to him the poet with the sacred mission to set forth the glory of God. The poet is now to be a democratic hero, a representative of the people, their priest. Whitman's bold statement made in his 1855 preface perhaps shocked the reading public, because it was certainly different from what they had tasted so far. Whitman says -
"The poet is one complete lover whose very flesh shall be a great poem".

Against the prevailing impotence, Whitman offered America him self as mate:

"Submit to the most robust bard till he remedy your barreness. Then you will not need to adopt the heirs of others; you will have true heirs, begotten yourself, blowned upon your own blood".

While Emily Dickinson talked about the 'Centre' and 'circumference', Walt Whitman shocked the sense of decency of the Public by talking about the "Body Electric".

Emily Dickinson's rebellion was symbolic, Walt Whitman's social and personal.

Emily Dickinson's unique handling of her themes coupled with her innovative strategies, places her in the position of a poet of total originality. Higgison was stupefied at such a display of unique style and originality. He could not classify her poems for they formed a genre of its own. Her use of metaphoric language can rightly be called the most revealatory aspect of her genius, and so her letters and poems escape literal interpretation. The following poem illustrates the point.

"My Brain - begun to laugh
I mumbled - like a fool -
And tho' - tis years ago - that Day
My brain keeps giggling - still ".

Emily Dickinson's employment of certain symbols, her use of syntax; along with her peculiar rhyme scheme; requires on the part of her readers the employment of their senses. She is indeed a sensous poet very much akin to the Romantics, specially Keats, whom she admits to have read.

Emily Dickinson's sensous utterance
"Bring Me the Sunset in a cup" is equivalent to Keats' longing for a "beaker full of the warm south".

They both employ abstract images to express very concrete feelings.

Emily Dickinson's use of such images marks a gradual change in her from her early appreciation of nature to her dealing with the mystical ideas, using images, symbols and metaphors which are abstract.

"The wind didn't come from the Orchard - today -" (J. 316)

is an excellent example of such a poem written at the fag end of her career.

"The wind didn't come from the Orchard - today -
Further than that -
Nor stop to play with the Hay -
Nor joggle a Hat -
He's a transitive fellow - very -
Rely on that — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — — —
If He brings Odors of Clovers -
And that is His business - not Ours -
Then He has been with the Mowers -
Whetting away the Hours -
To sweet pauses of Hay -
His way - of a June Day ........ ".

To talk about Emily Dickinson's symbols used in her poems, it is necessary to pick up certain imagery which contain for the poet a special symbolic meaning. The imagery of Royalty, particularly the image of king is variedly employed by the poet to express different meanings. The 'King' in "I have a king who does not
"speak" (J. 103) is depicted as a lover, and a source of inspiration, a guide to the poet's genius.

In "I met a King this afternoon" (J. 166) the description of the King with a "Palm leaf hat" instead of a crown, and "barefoot", certainly provides for the paradox between the King of the poem and the usual image of a King.

Critics have attributed to the King symbol the identity of a lover, husband, and also a God. But an analysis of the symbols prove the multitudeness of its meaning.

In yet another poem "I heard a Fly buzz - when I died"- (J. 465) the king is employed for religious connotations.

"For the last onset - when the king be witnessed - in the Room ....".

The 'King' indicates death who has come to take away "what portion of ( the narrator ) be Assignable ".

The 'King' can also be associated with Heaven, coming to claim the soul, as opposed to the "Blue Fly" who "interposed" in the room.

"Home" is another archetypal symbol in Emily Dickinson's religious poetry, used variantly to mean Heaven God, and immortality. In the Poem "Thou I got home, how late - how late", the poet is going forward on an endless journey which may take centuries to arrive at her 'home' - which is definitely the end of life, a union with God after death. So the tone of the poem is optimistic. In contrast to this poem, the poem "I years Had been from Home". (J.609) depicts the fears and doubts of the narrator of being unwelcomed in her 'Home'.

Emily Dickinson's primary concern while writing poetry was the faithful portrayal of her inner feelings and concepts. This is
the answer to her non-adherence to conventional notions of writing poetry. She kept no rules of grammar nor took her language close to prose in refinement and syntax. She sacrificed grammar for her need -  

"I took one Draught of life". (J. 1725) and coined new words wherever necessary - "And Debauchee of Dew" (J. 128) or "Learned Waters" (J. 1210)

The enchanting and unique quality of Emily Dickinson's poems is the ambiguity with which she coats her poems. Critics have claimed the ambiguity in her poetry to her strife - torn life between faith and doubt. An analysis of the poet can only reveal our inability to clarify the ambiguist in her. While creating her ambiguity Emily Dickinson is not interested in the reader's multiple and divergent readings of her work so much as in her divergent and multiple reading of the universe and the world. Her interest is not indeliberately blurring her thoughts for the sake of abstraction, so much as in putting down in black and white the blur and muddle in her mind. Emily Dickinson's marked ambivalent attitude towards fame and publicity, is yet another aspect of her silent rebellion.

Critics like Millicent Bingham claim that Emily Dickinson was obsessed by the thought of fame.

This is of course - too far - fetched an opinion because Emily Dickinson herself admits that "If famed belonged to me I could not escape her; if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chose .... My barefoot rank is better". She wrote this to Higginson in June, eighteen sixty two.

In contrast, Walt Whitman was playing up to the gallery.

Even if there is regret on the part of Emily Dickinson at not being recognized, it is always subsumed by the inner urge to be herself. Her attitude was not deliberate but she was answering some
deep longing in herself to express what she always felt to be the
truth. Perhaps the contemporary writer closest to Emily Dickinson, is
Emily Bronte. She wrote within a different setting from that of the
American scene. But Strangely enough both share the similar halo of
mystery surrounding their lives. This is what Winifred Gerin has to
say about Emily Bronte -

"Emily Bronte has been the subject of many books, even
if few of them can be classed as biographies. The scarcity of direct
evidence relating to her and the mystery that has been allowed to
surround her life, while enhancing her appeal for writers, has tempted
them to produce unauthenticated narratives and invent where they could
not record."

For Emily Bronte, like Emily Dickinson "the landscape of
her home at Haworth had the greatest effect in quickening her mind
and in shaping her character."

At home the picture she (Emily Bronte) produced was of
a busy housekeeper, baking and ironing. This is precisely what Emily
Dickinson did in the Dickinsonian house-hold.

But they both expressed in their art the passion for
freedom. The paradox between "this outward contentment and an inner
rebellion lies at the root of Emily Bronte's (And Emily Dickinson's)
art as of (their lives)."

If Wuthering Heights places Emily Bronte outside the
main current of Victorian fiction, her poems too, further establishes
her as an artist different from the literary norms of her time. Through

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8. Ibid
9. "A critical and Biographical Profile of Emily Bronte" by Inga-
Stina Ewbank in The world's Great Classics - Wuthering Heights -
her verses Emily Bronte (Like Emily Dickinson) intended to portray
the unvarnished reality which she perceived in the world about her.

The stylistic devise Emily Bronte developed in writing her poems
was as baffling as a riddle. This same strategy is very predominant in
Emily Dickinson which again makes her so fascinating.

Going back to Wuthering Heights, the world Emily Bronte
presents here is a microcosm of the human situation. It contains within,
its pages a world of birth, death, hatred, love, nature and the
seasons. Apart from this it bears no relation to the society outside.
This is Emily Bronte's symbolic world, through which she expressed
her silent rebellion - through the characters of the novel and through
the feelings they conveyed.

Emily Dickinson too succeeded in creating such a vision
of life through her poetry. In articulating the inner conflicts of her
mind. She becomes the anticipatory voice of doubt - which is the hall-
mark of twentieth-century man. In daring to voice doubts, in
questioning the sanctity of the sacred symbols erected by society,
Emily Dickinson stood apart and "alone in rebellion' as she herself
proclaimed.

Much of the relevance and interest in her poetry today
rests on this unique position of Emily Dickinson as a poet who stood
apart from her age - and could thus be considered a 'rebel'.