CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, the Catholic view of reality is presented in Hopkins's work with a fullness, a depth and a sweep that English poetry has probably not known since the Reformation. The life-giving power of Divine Life, the ultimate significance of the Incarnation, is the basic key to all of Hopkins's work. The focus of his intense emotions and the ultimate aim of all his imagery is the majestic and life-giving figure of Christ. In the early _Mondays_ the young Hopkins searched the glories of the earth, but found no host in the lighted but empty halls.
"We see the glories of the earth
But not the hand that wrought them all:
Yet like a lighted empty hall
Where stands no host at door or hearth
Vacant creation's lamps appal".

(Neundum)

In The Wreck of the Deutschland, in an act of adoration, Hopkins kisses his "hand to the stars", because behind them and in them he sees the Host, the Word:

"I kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely-asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of if; and
Glow, glory in thunder;
Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west;
Since, tho' he is under the world's splendour
and wonder,
His mystery must be instressed, stressed;
For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless
When I understand".

- From here to his final poem, Christ is the one subject that engrosses the poet's mind.

In this thesis, then, the attempt has been made to show that 'mature' and 'spirit, do not stand in opposition to each other.
Hopkins is in agreement with the orthodox Catholic position that nature is perfected through grace. There is an unremitting effort on his part to realise the truth of this dogma. He achieves it at times, as is seen in the nature-poems; but there are also moments of near-failure as in the "terrible" sonnets. Yet, it is this tension that led to the birth of his poetry. The fact that an equilibrium is maintained between the two rises from a basic assertion of the central Catholic Doctrines of the Fall, the Original Sin, the Incarnation, the concept of sanctifying Grace, which are necessary in the poetic output of a Jesuit priest. For Hopkins, all creatures are good, a fact that if properly taken into account, reveals the basic co-relationship between the terms 'nature' and 'spirit' Father William F. Lynch's words are illuminating:

"The whole theology of the fact and the mystery of Christ... involves on His part a relation to the finite and concrete human situation that can be summed up under the terms of total and actual positive and "athletic" penetration of the finite (exultavit ut gigas). As such, Christology stands as the model and enduring act of the healthy and successful human imagination which, if it really grasps the act
of Christ, will be able analogically to transfer this act to its own plane of human life.\(^1\)

In Hopkins, there is the inherent, intense belief that Nature, in being what it is, is symbolic of something more. All Nature, he believes, is the language in which God expresses Himself; Nature is a rich hieroglyphic book, everything visible concealing an invisible Mystery, and the last mystery of all being God:

"The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made, even his ever-lasting power and Divinity."\(^2\)

For the devout priest-poet, the natural and the spiritual are, somehow or other, to be reconciled. The external world is no longer regarded as a place of exile from God, or as a delusive appearance; it is the living vesture of the Godhead. Christ's precept "Consider the Lilies..." sanctions the religious use of Nature, which is found in truest form in the writings and experiences of St. Francis of Assisi. He loves to see in all around him the pulsations of the One True Life, which sleeps in stones, dreams in plants, and wakes
in man. "He (Francis) would remain in contemplation before a flower an insect or a bird, . . . he was interested. . . . that the humblest manifestations of creative force should have the happiness to which they are entitled." So strong was his conviction that all living things are children of God, that he would preach "to my little sisters the birds", and even undertook "the conversion of the ferocious wolf of Agobio".

It is in this Franciscan spirit that Hopkins sees the Divine in Nature as the meeting-point of the Good, the True and the Beautiful. St. Augustine held that there are three shades of beauty, corporeal, spiritual and divine, the first being an image of the second, and the second of the third. Similarly Hopkins held that all that is beautiful comes from the highest beauty, which is God:

"The Beautiful is essentially the spiritual making itself known sensuously, presenting itself in sensuous concrete existence, but in such a manner that the existence is wholly and entirely permeated by the spiritual so that the sensuous is not independent, but has its meaning solely and exclusively in the Spiritual and through the Spiritual, and exhibits not itself, but the Spiritual."
In 1886, Hopkins set down in one of his Oxford Notebooks a passage from St. Bonaventure's Life of St. Francis:

"Everything excited him (Francis) to the love of God; he exulted in all works of the Creator's hands and, by the beauty of His images, his spirits rose to their living origin and cause. He admired Supreme Beauty in all beautiful things, and by traces impressed by God on all things, he followed the Beloved. To him all creation was a stairway which led up toward Him who is the goal of all desires. It is this religious concept of Nature, in the philosophical formulation provided for it by Scotus, which we find in Hopkins. But although the Jesuits did not wholly approve of the Scotist system in general, on this particular point there was no disagreement, for the Spiritual Exercises close with an act of the love of God motivated by a sweeping survey of the varied but continual communication of God in His visible creation.

The concept of religion underlying Hopkins's nature-poetry is not merely the Christianising of the romantic cult of Nature. Within Hopkins's intensely sensitive soul, there is always a movement beyond
the material to the spiritual "nature" leads to "spirit" and both terms are necessary and intrinsic to each other. Nature for Hopkins, exists primarily as a manifestation of the Ignatian ideal, and is in keeping with the forms of Ignatian spirituality, that:

1. Ignatian man is a sensuous man. Unlike other Christian discipline, he does not withdraw from the world, but rather, he plunges into it. He is overwhelmed by the beauty of things, not because they are beautiful in themselves, but because they are manifestations of God. His is, therefore, a sacramental view of the world.

2. Ignatian man uses all things in so far as they lead him back to God. He does not use anything that leads him away from God. Because of his sacramental view of the world, he sees all creation as a sign of a message from a beckoning to the Divine. His desire is to live fully amongst the things God created, to live among them all for the greater glory of God.

In Hopkins's Nature-poems, as has been seen earlier, the physical nature of sight, sound and movement are all vividly rendered. The 'drama' is played out between his senses and the thing observed, as, for instance, in Spring, where all
of Nature is in a rush with vividness and richness, revealing and intensifying the intrinsic character of leaf, blossom, timber and animal. There is no blending and/or blurring between object and object, between object and observer, such as is often to be found in Impressionist painters.

The religious dedication in Hopkins's Nature - poetry is absolutely genuine, whether starting with an invocation ("Glory be to God for dappled things") and ending with a benediction (Praise Him), or being fiercely sensuous and untraditional, as in "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves":

"Earnest, earthless, equal, attuneable, vaulty, voluminous . . . . . stupendous 
Evening strains to be time's vast womb-of-all. 
Home-of-all, hearse-of-all-night".

It all indicates that a dedication to God is possible by means of natural perceptions which are the fruits of the senses. Hopkins's imagery is romantic, if it may be called so at all, only in the freshness of its perceptions, in its first-hand treatment of natural phenomena. Nature for him had no magic openings into "faery lands forlorn" and beauty was used by him
not as a narcotic. To him, a wild bird is not, as to Keats and Shelley, a symbol of escape into sweet oblivion or airy void; it is a stinging reminder of his own hard vocation as a Jesuit priest (The Windhover) of the mortal flesh which lusts against the spirit (The Caged Skylark), of the failures of material civilization (The Sea and the Skylark), of bright healthy realities, the sheer ecstasy of living (Spring, In the Valley of the Elwy), of the "pied", individuated beauty of all of God's creatures (Pied Beauty). All these are symbols not only of God's Grandeur, of His infinite productiveness for man's delight, but also of that sensual gratification or lower spiritual pleasure which must be held in "detachment", given back to God in the interests of the higher spiritual good.

It may be questioned whether a priest, whose eye should be turning heavenwards, should feast on the alluring charms of Nature. The Hindu attitude to Nature is succinctly summed up by Dr. Radhakrishnan, and would have a close parallel with Hopkins's world view:

The individual tries to make good his infinite nature and become more and more godlike. In the empirical world, Isvara is the highest reality and the world is
His creation. The believer in God should love the whole universe, which is a product of God.\(^6\)

Dame Edith Sitwell finds in Hopkins "a piercing, truth, finding visual, acute: apprehension.\(^7\) All forms of nature excited in Hopkins an incandescent emotionalism, now "poised but on the quiver", now struck down by a "horror of height", now sunk in the "swoon of a heart". The Jesuit who curbed the flesh for Christ's sake displays "a naked, agonizing sensuality in the stabbing images of his religious poetry.\(^8\).

II

We may take it that by 1884, Hopkins was "jaded" in his major ambition, which The Wreck of the Deutschland had abumbrated, and which was an attempt to show the Grace of Christ working in the universe to form it into one body with many members. But portions from the 1886-88 letters indicate that he still hoped to achieve something in a narrow field. He hoped, it may be supposed, to portray the working of grace and nature in his own person, to make his verse the integration of insight and faith, as
as exemplified by Donne and Blake. In other words, he turned from the macrocosm to the microcosm. Father Christopher Devlin, S.J., puts it succinctly:

"... The story of the universe is the story of the separation and attempted reconciliation, in time or duration, of two powers which, in eternity are distinct but never separated: the Mind of God which projects the Divine Idea of Nature, the primordial harmony, and the Will of God which works through matter, through life, but finally and properly, through the operation of free selves, to re-establish the primordial harmony. The Word of God, the Grace of Christ, working in nature is the bridge of re-establishment ... ".

But by 1885-86, Hopkins's soul was left half-way between day and night - vanishing daylight of the senses, dark night of the understanding - "a lonely began". Frustration, loud or resigned, is the theme of many of the post-1884 poems. The sonnets which express the nadir of his frustration came to him like "inspirations", "unbidden and against my will". We might be tempted to say that inspiration was born of frustration. A dry wind of rational faith blows through these poems, but eventually they lead to the profound realization of faith and grace over despair.
zephyrs of recurring spring find Hopkins once more
the poet of faith unlimited:

"Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain".

In this context, St. Augustine's words are significant:

"... This Cross, therefore, in which the
servant of God not only is confounded but even glories
in the words "God forbid that I should glory, save
in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom the
world is crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal.vi,14),
this cross, I say is not merely for forty days, but
for the whole of this life. ... In this wise ever live,
O Christians: if thou dost not wish thy steps to sink
in the slime of the earth, descend not from this Cross."

The whole of Hopkins's literary output may be
summed up as a soul's single search for the love of
and beatitude in God. It is his firm conviction that
men can fully comprehend the doctrine of "love thy
neighbour" only through "imitatio Christi" and the
"He is in us and we in Him" of the Eucharist. Hopkins
celebrates in poem after poem God's Love for man,
and the single complete revelation of it in Christ's
Incarnation and Passion. The concept of Grace figures
very prominently in Hopkins's poems as well as his:
sermons. In the later poems, bruised and agitated, he
casts himself upon the mercy of Christ, that in the
Fire of Communion with Him, he may forget the smouldering
earthly trivialities. Hopkins woos his God with both fervour and self-disgust, and the sustained spiritual intensity of the "terrible" sonnets signify that nothing is more striking than the violence of Hopkins's abandonment of himself to his God, the pathos with which he implores his God for a revelation of joy, light and expansion, in which to resolve his whole being - in other words, for the state of sanctifying grace to be conferred completely upon the mangled state of his mind. At the end of a reading of the Sonnets of 1885, we see that Hopkins is at length able to breathe a purer air, to relax all effort, and to submit to the healing touch of the Grace of Christ.

"... . . . . Even from the purely human point of view the phenomenon of grace must still appear sufficiently extraordinary, eminent and rare, both in its nature and in its effects, to deserve a closer study. For the soul arrives thereby at a certain fixed and invincible state, a state which is genuinely heroic, and from out of which the greatest deeds which it ever performs are executed . . . . . . Penetrate a little beneath the diversity of circumstances and it becomes evident that in Christianity of different epochs it is always one and the same modification by which they are affected: there is vertiably a single
fundamental and identical spirit of piety and charity common to those who have received grace; an inner state which before all things is one of love and humility, of infinite confidence in God, and of severity of one's self accompanied with tenderness for others.  

The state of mental and spiritual exhaustion brings a cessation of struggle. This is the whole process of redemptive poetry. Hopkins's words of acceptance do not simply switch from the threat-word to the consolation-word. With the gift of grace, of a sharing in divine life, Hopkins shares in the life and activity of Christ:

"If even the natural manifestation of God in the works of creation has found continual voice in the songs of poets, we would expect that the astounding generosity of this supernatural communication of God in the works of Grace would be a perennial source of limitless inspiration to Christian poets. But the strange fact is that seldom has this been the sustained theme of a poet's song in any language . . . . . Hopkins sang of it more consistently and beautifully than any other English poet."

It is this central Catholic notion of Grace that covers up any cleavage between 'nature' and 'spirit' in the work of G.M. Hopkins, The prayer of another great Jesuit seer of the modern age, Teilhard de Chardin, may serve as a proper parallel to the work of Hopkins.
In *La Vie Cosmique* written in 1916, he prayed for the men of this century:

"Lord Jesus, you are the centre towards which all things are moving: if it be possible, make a place for us all in the company of those elect and holy ones whom your loving care has liberated one by one from the chaos of our present existence and who are now being slowly incorporated into you in the unity of the new earth."\(^{13}\) Hopkins was, without doubt, one of those elect and holy ones, and his poems announces and share "the unity of the new earth".

"With this judgement, this study has aimed at supplying evidence that the apparently antithetical terms 'nature' (matter) and 'spirit' (soul) arrive at a wholehearted reconciliation, a fusion rarely seen in religious writings, in Hopkins's work. His mature poems, be they the sonnets of *Nature of Desolation*, show that immeasurably the most important fact is the Catholic view of the world, a basic and recurring theme in Hopkins's work. The effect of Hopkins's Catholic world-view on his poems does not escape Arthur Mizener:

"What did make Hopkins almost unique in his time was his Catholicism, not an emotional, antiquarian or hedonistic Catholicism — these were fairly common
in the period — but a precise, logical, deeply felt knowledge of Catholic doctrine to which, on the whole, he successfully disciplined both his thinking and his feeling ... The clearness of his thought ... on the immanence and transcendence of God saved him from any of the jerry-built cosmologies to which the Victorians and Romantics had frequently to resort to in trying to deal with their intense awareness of Nature ... ."14

And William James, in his ground-breaking study of the religious personality, "The Varieties of Religious Experiences", stresses the point with full conviction:

"Remember that the whole point lies in really believing that through a certain point or part in you, you coalesce and are identical with the Eternal. This seems to be the saving belief both in Christianity and in Vedantism. . . . The more original religious life is always lyric — "The monk knows nothing but his lyre" — and its essence is to dip into another kingdom, to feel an invisible order."15

James also succeeds in "summing up in the broadest possible way the characteristics of the religious life, as we have found them, it includes the following beliefs:"
1. That the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance.

2. That union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end.

3. That prayer or inner communication with the spirit thereof—be that spirit "God" or "Self"—is a process wherein work is really done, and spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world.

Religion also includes the following psychological characteristics:

4. A new rest which adds itself like a gift to life, and takes the form either of lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism.

5. An assurance of safety and a final temper of peace and in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections.

Thus, in accordance with the Jamesian creed, Hopkins would stand as the archetypal devout and humble religious. The central truth of the Catholic view is the literal union of the Divine Heart of Christ with the human heart of His member.
"The frown of his face
Before me, the hurtle of hell
Behind, where was a, where was a place?
I whirled out wings that spell
And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart
of the Host

My heart, but you were dovewing, I can tell
Carrier-witted, I am bold to boast,
To flash from the flame to the flame then, tower
from the grace to the face."

(Deutschland, stz. 3)

The repetition of "flame" and "grace" in the last line of the stanza is worth nothing since it bears directly, on the relevance of this scene to Hopkins's vocation. With uplifted heart, the poet flies to the sacred Heart, ("the heart of the Host") and homing there, mounts from Christ's flame of love to that flame of love in Himself from grace in Christ, to that grace in Himself. It is the movement from inspiration to aspiration described in the notes "On Personality, Grace and Free Will":

"And even the sigh or aspiration itself
is in answer to an inspiration of God's spirit and is followed by the continuance and expiration of
that same breath which lift it . . . . to do or be what God wishes his creature to do or be.17

The statement is an accurate description of the meaning of Hopkins's vocation.

What is made the central theme in Hopkins's work is synonymous with that which St. Paul spoke of in his letters and preachings: the power of sin and death, and the triumph of Christ, and life. In this, then the two terms 'nature and 'spirit' are dovetailed, and they are given their truest meaning. In one of his Sermons, Hopkins states the great theme:

"And what was to be man's reward and wages for his work done? Eternal life, glorious peace, and power and praise and satisfaction from his king and his angel companions and his own conscience, peace and the sense of life everlastingly, in mind and body for the efforts made, the pains taken, the strength spent. For the natural reward of duty as St. Paul tells us, is life - life is some shape or other, the continuance or the lengthening or the heightening of life, life here or life hereafter. . . . ."18

The life of God-made-Man in this world is the great theme of Catholic thought and it is this tremendous theme which is most central in Hopkins's
poetry. The fact that Christ, God the Son in the Holy Triune, became Man on this earth, is ample proof to testify to the fact that 'Nature' and 'Spirit' are not opposed to each other in the work of the Jesuit priest-poet. The nature and function of his poetry, concerned most intimately with the deep realities of life, reveal Hopkins as a poet who discovered that the "lighted hall" of the world was not empty after all. Hopkins found the Host, and gained the power to frame his vision, his love for life, his loneliness, his pain and his patience, his great hymn to life, in immortal song.

NOTES

2. Romans, 1. 20.

8. *John Press, the Fire and the Fountain*, p. 72.


10. St. Augustine, *Sermon CCV*, 1


19. cf. *Mandala*