CHAPTER TWO

A brief survey of English Devotional poetry from the Seventeenth Century to the Victorian Age.

"God appears and God is Light
To those poor souls who dwell in Night,
But does a human form display
To those who dwell in realms of Day".

(Blake)

The finest devotional poetry down the ages has been written by those poets to whom God "a human form displays". In other words, the essence of such poetry
is the sense of the Immanence of God, by whose grace everything is seen "apparelled in celestial light". The great lovers of God have written of Him as their friend, breath of their breath, nearer than any passionate human lover, the only companion of the soul. Indeed the realization of the ultimate loneliness of man, when he discovers that no human companion, however dear, can share the secrets and dearest intimacies of his innermost heart, is in earnest prayer for the companionship of God, to Whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden. God's voice can be heard in the whole of created Nature, if only man would open his eyes and ears, and lift up his heart. His voice is consoling, His touch irradiating, his love transfiguring:

"It was by love's script, I knew his hand:
He had been writing his signature on the land,
His name which only lovers can understand."^1

It is the "invisible heart of flame in the things seen"^2.

To those with a decidedly Christian bent of mind, it would seem strange, therefore, that the stupendous
experience of knowing God, the immense conviction of meaning and glory which alone gives to life an enduring richness of meaning, and is the only clue to man's darkest riddles, that God should be shouldered out of human life, unwanted, ignored, when He alone has the power to heal and redeem.

For such devotional poets, Christ, in Blake's words, "the bright preacher of life", walks the earth today as visibly as he walked besides the Lake of Galilee nearly two thousand years ago, and His form is not hidden only the seeing eye is lacking. On the first Easter morning, His body, perfectly spiritualized and thus empowered to overcome death and destruction, left the grave and proved that if men too could learn the secret, they could triumph over bodily limitations, since the body is no more than the instrument of the spirit. At Pentecost, Christ's promise "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you" was fulfilled.

English Literature is rich in mystical and devotional poetry, a great number of poets testifying to the glory and omnipresence of God. Even before William Langland, who sang as the mists of the Dark Ages began to roll away, two Anglo-Saxon poets,
Caedmon and Cynewulf, in the seventh and eighth centuries, sang glory of God and of Creation. Caedmon in obedience to a dream-vision. Then much later came—to mention only a few—John Donne, preacher and poet, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw, Thomas Traherne, Milton, and later, Wordsworth, Blake, Robert Browning, Francis Thompson, Alice Meynell, Coventry Patmore and Gerard Manley Hopkins. The work of some of these poets is outstanding for its purity and peace, others for simplicity and innocence; in others there is the hammering out of queries to God, in yet others, the predominant note is one of ecstasy and fire.

The devotional poet is one who loses or dissolves himself in the direct knowledge attained not by ordinary sensing or mere brainwork, but by insight and intuition. The essence of this infused contemplation is the felt contact of God's presence, but the role of such a poet is exceedingly difficult: the performer must balance between two worlds, the spiritual and the natural, and maintain high poetry and contemplative piety in one breath.

During the seventeenth century there was a great upsurge in English devotional poetry, the chief poets being those of the metaphysical school—
Donne, Herbert, Vaughan and Crashaw. In its remarkable development of religious poetry, the seventeenth century forms a striking contrast with the previous ages which has little to show in this field. An exception must be made for the poetry of the Jesuit martyr Robert Southwell (C. 1561 - 96) which shows an odd mingling of the earlier, more naive Elizabethan rhetoric and the Counter Reformation ardour, sensuousness and love of paradox. If Catholic poets tended to look to Italian models, Protestants found them to some extent in Joshua Sylvester's translations of the didactic and encyclopaedic works of the Huguenot poet du Barta, but there was no doctrinal exclusiveness, and often various strains mingle. In the work of Phineas Fletcher, du Bartas's didacticism is married to Spenserian allegory; in that of his brother Giles, the Spenserian quality is modified by Italian warmth and paradoxical wit in a way that anticipates Crashaw. Much religious poetry of this period was affected by the vogue of books of "emblems", sets of allegorical pictures each accompanied by verses expounding its moral. The first emblem book had appeared in England in 1586, but the most significant examples of religious verse in this form were the collections of Emblems by Francis Quarles. The indirect influence
of the emblem may, however, be seen in the imagery of more important poets, such as Herbert and Crashaw.

The devotional poetry of Donne shows the same qualities as his other work: the dramatic tone, the play of speech rhythms against the verse pattern, the dialectical subtlety, the startling imagery drawn from common life or from intellectual pursuits, and the psychological penetration. After a libertine youth, Donne attracted the notice of James I, who persuaded him to be ordained. He became a preacher, rose rapidly by sheer intellectual force and genius and in four years was the greatest of English preachers and the Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London. There he "carried some to heaven in holy raptures, and led others to amend their lives"; and as he leaned over the pulpit to address the congregation with intense earnestness, was likened by Issak Walton to "an angel leaning from a cloud".

Donne's religious poetry was written after 1610 and the greatest, the nineteen Holy Sonnets, and the lyrics such as A Hymn to God the Father, have a unique force in this class of literature. They
reveal the struggle in his mind before taking orders in the Anglican Church, his horror of death, and the fascination which it had for him, his dread of the wrath of God, the penitential strain, and his longing for God's love. They are the expression of a deep and troubled soul. In his harrowed soul, Donne's religious failing seems to be, as he himself described them, "devout fits" coming and going like "a fantastic argue". After the death of his wife Anne More, Donne sought in religion for the sense of security and completeness that she had at one time given him.

Religion had always been of great intellectual interest for him. Born and bred a Roman Catholic, he accepted the Church of England, but not without a struggle. In Satyre III, written between 1593 and 1595, he considers the relative claims of nonconformity, Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. Already religion and the true Church are of grave importance to him:

"........... though truth and falsehood be
Near turns, yet truth a little elder is;
Be busy to seek her, believe we this,
He's not of none nor worst, that seeks the best.
To adore, or scorn an image, or protest,
May all be bad; doubt wisely, in strange way
To stand enquiring right, is not to stray;
To sleep, or run wrong, is. On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must, and about must go;
And what the hill sudden resists, win so;
Yet strive so, that before age, death's twilight,
Thy soul rest, for none can work in that right."

(Satyr III)

In the Holy Sonnets, the desire for
intellectual repose is interwoven with a need for
the emotional serenity he had tasted in marriage.
Here the tone deepens, for it is, for the greater
part, one of torment and struggle, and the style
expresses this passionate conflict with dramatic
vividness;

"Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste,
I run to death, and death meets me fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday;
I dare not move my dim eyes any way,
Despair behind, and death before doth cast
Such terror, and my feeble flesh doth waste
By sin in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh;
Only thou art above, and when towards thee
By thy leave I can look, I rise again;
But our old subtle Foe so tempteth me,
That not one hour myself I can sustain;
Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart". 3

He cries out to God in the accents of love:

"Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me". 4

Donne thus expresses his love for God in terms of that of a mistress for her lover. He trusts and mistrusts God's pity as the lover vacillates between the secure sense of being loved and the recurrent fear that love may yet be withdrawn:

"What if this present were the world's last night?
Mark in my heart, O soul, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether that countenance can thee affright.

......; . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
No, no; but as in my idolatry
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pity, foulness only is
A sign of rigour: so I say to thee,
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assigned,
This beauteous form assures a piteous mind". 5

Donne suffered long from his sense of a barrier which his transgressions raised between God and himself, and viewed with equal distress his sins of the flesh and the dreadful need of discontinuing them:

"Batter my heart, three person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd and proves weak or untrue". 6

The Litany, composed in 1609, must have been among the earliest of Donne's religious poems. Sir Edmund Gosse dismissed it as "a cold work of the intellect", but its measured tone is the result, not of coldness, but of the marriage of thought and feeling:
From being anxious, or secure,
Dead clods of sadness, or light squib of mirth
From thinking, that great courts immense,
All, or no happiness, or that this earth
Is only for our prison framed,
Or that thou art covetous
To them whom thou lovest, or that they are main'd
From reaching this world's sweet, who seek thee thus,
With all their might, Good Lord deliver us*.

Balance and serenity are reflected in the quietness of the rhythm, the struggle is achieved in the close packed thought. The mind of the reader is checked by the sense of balance as thought after thought flows on:

"From needing danger, to be good,
From owing thee yesterday's tears today,
From trusting so much to thy blood,
That hope, we wound our soul away,
From bribing thee with Alms, to excuse
Some sin more burdensome,
From light affecting, in religion, news
From thinking us all soul, neglecting thus
Our mutual duties, Lord deliver us".
Donne's religious poetry is directly personal, revealing a keen psychological insight, and portrays the pre-occupation with death and his sinful state, as is seen in the Holy Sonnets. The vivid imagination and the acute and learned intellect which are the features of all of his work, cannot hide the basic underlying simplicity of Donne's faith and his longing for rest in God.

Writing in the same age as Donne, but unlike him, George Herbert never wavered in his resolution to devote his poetic gifts exclusively to the service of God. In the poem called Dullness, we find him drawing a parallel between his own theme and that of the love poet:

"The wanton lover in a curious strain
Can praise his fairest fair;
And with quaint metaphors her curled hair
Curl o'er again.
Thou art my loveliness, my life, my light,
Beauty alone to me;
Thy bloody death and undeserved, makes thee
Pure red and white."

For Herbert it is God, not an earthly lover, whose absence is inconceivable:
"Soul's joy, when thou art gone
And I alone,
Which cannot be,
Because thou dost abide with me
And I depend on thee;"

The devotional poetry of Herbert is a notable contrast to the virile, deeply impassioned work of such poets as Donne, Thompson and Hopkins. Herbert's nature was one which can well be called "naturally divine". His love-sonnets are addressed to God, and often he laments the realization that he cannot love God as he should, but he knew little of the conflict that mangled the wrestling souls of the other three poets. In the autobiographical poems Affliction, Herbert speaks of his "fierce and sudden" youth; the poems often describe his servitude to God as a bondage against which he vainly rebels:

"I struck the board, and cried, no more,
I will abroad.
What? shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines and life are free; free as the road,
Loose as the wind, as large as store,
Shall I be still in suit?
Have I no harvest but a thorn
To let me blood and not restore
What I have lost with cordial fruit?"
Sure there was wine
Before my sighs did dry it; there was corn
Before my tears did drown it.
Is the year only lost to me?
Have I no bays to crown it?
No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?
All wasted?"

The Collar is an emblem of servitude. The poem moves through rebellion against His Master to the sudden recognition that the freedom he is claiming is freedom from God's love:

"But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wild
At every world
Me thoughts I heard one calling, "Child"!
And I replie., "My Lord!"

In the beautiful poem Love, there is a restful simplicity:

"Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey'd love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.
"A guest"I answered, "worthy to be here";
Love said "You shall be he".
"I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah. my dear,
I cannot look on thee".

Love took my hand and smiling did reply
"Who made the eyes but I"?

"Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve".

"And know you not" says Love, "Who bore the blame?"
"By dear, thou I will serve,"

"You must sit down" says love, "and taste my meat".

So I did sit and eat.

There is a deeply moving simplicity in the form of address
"My dear". But Herbert, "crept to the throne of grace"
(Discipline) he did not have to fight his ways
through brambles and over rough stones to the
mountain of glory which a Donne or a Hopkins sought
with relentless passion. Even if there is a struggle,
Herbert constantly achieves his effect by relaxing
the tension at the end of the poem. With struggle
over, all is peace. The Thanksgiving, for instance,
is a discussion with God, in which the poet tries
to offer an equivalent for all that he has been
given:

"If thou shalt give me wit, it shall appear,
If thou hast giv'n it me, 'tis here."
Nay, I will read thy book, and never move 
Till I have found therein thy love, 
Thy art of love, which I'll turn back on thee; 
O my dear Saviour, Victory!"

Then the poet falters, and the culminating point of the poem suggests the lowering of the voice to almost a whisper -

"Then for thy passion - I will do for that - 
Alas, my God, I know not what".

Herbert writes for his fellow-Christian.
The substance of each poem is emotional, but the emotion is rooted in thought. He will argue with God, and the effect of rebellion and reconciliation, of complaint and resolution strikes a note that is generally less brilliant than Donne's, but is more homely and more immediately apprehended. Unlike Donne, Herbert never feels a secret fear that he may wander away from his God. In the quietly beautiful piece "The Flower", Herbert maintains that the Lord of power chastens man, so that he may learn the humility through which he is saved by the Lord of love;
"How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring;
To which, besides their own demean,
The late past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.
Grief melts away
Like snow in May,
As if there were no such cold thing.

These are thy wonders, Lord of power,
Killing and quickening, bringing down to hell
And up to heaven in an hour;
Making a chiming of a passing bell.

We say amiss,
This or that is.
Thy word is, if we could spell.

O that I once past changing were,
Fast in thy Paradise, where no flower can wither!
Many a spring I shoot up fair,
Offering at heaven, growing and groaning thither!

Nor doth my flower
Want a spring-shower
My sins and I joining together.
These are thy wonders, lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide
Which when we once can find and prove,
Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide.
Who would be more
Swelling through store,
Forfeit their Paradise by their pride".

Herbert's main themes are what one would expect of an Anglican Minister, and foremost among them are the Incarnation, the Passion, and the Redemption of Christ. Against this debt is placed man's behaviour, both the unseemliness of his disobedience, and the inadequacy of his obedience. "The Temple" is the name of Herbert's collection of poems, and the himself described the work as "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect freedom". This is beautifully borne out in the concluding lines of The Collar:

"Me thoughts I heard one calling, Child:
And I replied, My Lord".
Henry Vaughan was to some extent influenced by Herbert whose poetry he greatly admired, for he saw in the saintly life the only solution to the problems of his own troubled mind. Vaughan's poetry is less social, more removed from the world of action than that of Donne or Herbert. He has neither Herbert's attachment to the Anglican Church nor Crashaw's concern with Catholic ritual and dogma. His religious intuitions belong to a wider and vaguer tradition of Neo-Platonic mysticism, of solitary contemplation which turns to images from nature - Sun and stars, wind and streams, plant and hill - to express the soul's aspiration to eternal light or the "deep but dazzling darkness" of God.

The spirit of devotional poetry is to a great extent bound by ecclesiastical convention, dogma and doctrine, but Vaughan's poetry comes in like a breath of fresh air because it soars to the very spirit and heart of faith. Poems such as The Retreat, Peace, Ascension Hymn, Quickness and The World turn on images of peace, majesty, security, an illuminated vision of a newly-apprehended universe:

"I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,
All calm, as it were bright"
And round beneath it, time, in hours, days, years,
Driv'n by the spheres
Like a vast shadow mov'd, In which the world
And all her train were hurl'd......"

The attitude towards childhood of Vaughan has marked similarities with those of his contemporary Traherne, and Wordsworth's Ode on the Intimations of Immortality. Vaughan associates childhood with "whiteness", the symbol of purity; it is a "dear, harmless age", it is also "an age of mysteries". Like Wordsworth, Vaughan is tempted to look back to his childhood with regret, because to both poets it seems that children, like flowers or the stars, fulfil the law of their being unconsciously and inevitably. Thus Vaughan's The Retreat runs parallel with the Immortality Ode for a part of the way, at least:

"Happy those early days when I
Shined in my Angel - infancy!
Before I understood this place
Appointed for my second place,
Or taught my soul to fancy ought
But a white celestial thought,
When yet I had not walked above
A mile or two from my first love,
And looking back, at that short space
Could see a glimpse of His bright face;
When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadow of eternity.......

(The Retreat)

...the growing Boy
. . . . beholds the light and whence it flows...
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
As on his way attended . . . .

(Immortality Ode)

Vaughan is careful to perceive a relation between the state of childhood and that of man in the "early days". In Corruption he writes:-

"Man in those early days
Was not all stone, and Earth . . . .
He saw Heaven o'er his head, and know from whence
He came (condemned) hither . . . .
Still Paradise lay
In some greenshade, or fountain..
In Vaughan's mystical poetry, there is usually a tendency to an identification with Nature and a profusion of Nature imagery. In his well-known Peace (famous as the hymn "My soul there is a country..."), he writes:

"There grows the flower of Peace,
The Rose that cannot wither",

and in the exquisite "Friends Departed" he says;

"... Those faint beams in which this hill is dre'st
After the sun's remove".

and of the "fledg'd bird's nest". The mystic within Vaughan always sees "Heaven in a wild flower", and believes, as Kingsley believed that "Beauty is God's Handwriting".

Richard Crashaw is a very different kind of religious poet. The son of a Puritan rector for whom the Pope was Anti Christ, Crashaw came under the influence of Roman Catholicism at Cambridge, and held a major position at the Cathedral of the Holy House at Loreto. Notorious in Crashaw's religious work is his use of sensual imagery and in particular, his use, in picturing sacred love, of the metaphors
and the atmosphere of human love both of mother for child, and of man for woman. This sensuousness is present in his handling of physical and spiritual torture: "blood" and "milk" are his characteristic reference:

"To see both blended in one flood,
The Mothers' Milk, the Children's blood
Makes me doubt if Heaven with gather,
Roses hence, or Lilies rather".

(Upon the Infant Martyrs)

Crashaw's finest poem is his Hymn to St. Teresa with its direct opening:

"Love, thou art Absolute sole Lord
Of life and death",

and the passage which follows in unusually masculine for Crashaw:

"Those thy old Soldiers, Great and tall,
Ripe Men of Martyrdom, that could reach down
With strong arms, their triumphant crown;
Such as could with lusty breath
Speak loud into the face of death,
Their great Lord's glorious name .......

Teresa's childhood is related with sweet tenderness:
"She'll to the Moors; And trade with them;
For this unvalued Diadem,
She'll offer them her dearest Breath,
With Christ's name in't, in change for death".

He can express the consummation of her martyrdom best in terms of consummated love:

"O what delight, when Life reveal'd shall stand
And teach thy lips heaven with his hand;
On which thou now may'st to thy wishes
Heap up thy consecrated kisses.

Thou shalt look round about, and see
Thousands of crowns. Sons of thy vows
The virgin-births with which thy sovereign spouse
Made fruitful thy fair soul. . . . . ."

Crashaw was a man of rare single-mindedness.

He continually directed himself towards a way of life which would afford him peace and leisure for contemplation.

The world did not tempt him, rather he sought the continual protection and support of the Roman Catholic Church. Truly, if Herbert can be related to the popular sermon and the morality play then Crashaw must be related to Catholic ritual. The reader may feel slightly
repelled, but not shocked, at his use of erotic suggestions in the context of religious poetry, for in it, he could pour out his full heart.

**Thomas Traherne** is known as the poet of felicity; he lived in a constant awareness of God's immanence, seeing "the world in a grain of sand, and heaven in a wild flower". So he was happy. He had learnt the only secret worth discovering, the true secret of felicity which is heaven on earth, and with the knowledge came, the infinitely blessed sense of wonder and joy. He had learned "All blessedness, a life with Glory crown'd". He was a poet of joy. God, he knew, longs to make His people joyful here and now, and he was thus filled with the life that is immortal even in man's mortal life:

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Within did flow
With seas of life, like wine,
I nothing in the world did know
But 't was divine.
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(Wonder)

Traherne was a poet of innocence, and he came to know that state of regeneration, the birth
into true life, inevitably requires a return to the child-like state Christ referred to in the words, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven". So Traherne, pondering on his childhood in the poem *Innocence*, ends with the words, "I must become a child again". This attaining of the essential state of innocence is the outcome of long purgation and travail when suffering has cleansed the self, and leaves it empty and receptive as in childhood, ready to be filled with Light and Truth. The purity and innocence of the early years on earth are regained. This is truly a state of "Paradise Regained", after Paradise has been lost in the years of worldly delight. The bliss attained by Traherne is voiced in the lines:

"That light, that sight, that thought,  
Which in my soul at first He wrought,  
Is sure the only act to which I may  
............. Assent today . . . . . .  
. . . . : . . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
It is a fountain or a spring,  
Refreshing me in everything.  
From whence these living streams I do derive,  
By which my thirsty soul is kept alive
The centre and the sphere
Of my delights are here.
It is my David's tower
Where all my armour lies,
The fountain of my power,
My bliss, my sacrifice,

Thackerne's was the gospel, the "good news" of joy, contentment, unworldliness. Everywhere he found beauty and wonder, because everywhere he found God. All knowledge, all life, were gateways to happiness; wisdom must be sought in single-minded humility, that the only lasting happiness is in a state of blessedness, that God has "prepared for them that love Him, such good things as pass man's understanding". Thackerne knew, only too well, that to find God it was first necessary to discover the true self hidden in every man; he knew and proclaimed that only through self-development in the highest sense was it possible to become a blessing to all mankind. "The poet", he said, "in order to overflow to others must first be filled itself".

With regard to Milton's religious verse, most critics are agreed on the point that the very nature
of his themes and the great purposes he had in mind remove his poetry to a much greater extent than that of any of the others, even the Biblical poets, from the ordinary concerns and common experiences of men. For his material, he chose the Fall of Man, the tempting of Christ by Satan, and the Lord's vengeance on his enemies through Satan. In comparison with the themes of the classical epics, Milton's magnum opus, *Paradise Lost* is specifically Christian. His epic assertion is to "justify" the ways of God to men, against the vast background of the cosmos, set in eternity. Indeed, *Paradise Lost* has a vaster scope than any other epic, ranging as it does from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell, from the beginning of things to their final end. Traditional epic writers dwelt on the inter-course between cities, countries, governments, but Milton's focus is the far more basic inter-relation between man and himself and man and his Creator. Achilles, Ulysses, Agamemnon are only secondary heroes beside Milton's epic protagonist, Adam, the Archetypal Man, whose primal transgression culminated in exile from Paradise, in a harsh and alien world, remote from God's beneficence. The classical epics resound with the
clash of steel and the neighing of war-horses, "far on the ringing plains of windy Troy", but what greater battle-field than that which Milton depicts: the soul of man torn between temptation and grace, aware of sin and craving redemption?

The nucleus of Milton’s intention in writing his Christian epic is brought out in the Exordium:

Of Man’s First Disobedience and the Fruit Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste Brought Death into the world and all our woe With loss of Eden, till one greater Man Restore us, and regain the blissful seat, Sing Heav’nly Muse ..................

.......................... And chiefly thou, O spirit, that dost prefer Before all Temples th’ upright heart and pure, Instruct me, for thou know’st: Thou from the first Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread Dove-like sat’st brooding on the vast Abyss And mad’st it pregnant. What in me is dark Illumine, what is low raise and support; That to the height of this great Argument I may assert Eternal Providence And justify the ways of God to men",
"Man" is the unity of the human race whose sinfulness, woe, and hope of restoration are summed up in Adam. The first disobedience is thus not only the first in time; it is in a general manner, the source of all consequent disobedience. This disobedience is contained in the world "fruit", which is both the edible fruit itself and fruit in the Biblical sense (i.e. the results which grow naturally from decisions as fruit from a tree). The Forbidden Tree is equivalent to the divine command which forbade man to eat of the Tree, the transgression of which had such vast results. He thus connects the Disobedience with whole plan of Divine Providence, and indicates that it was not the temporary trespass of an arbitrary command, but a violation of that divine order which the spirit drew from the "vast Abyss".

There is a point in Milton's treatment of religion which proves to be troublesome to some readers. All important forms of religion in seventeenth century England were derived from the Continent, but were profoundly modified by the English mind. Milton's treatment of Christianity is coloured strongly by the controversial spirit of the times and by
the exploratory and argumentative nature of Milton's mind. It is generally held that *Paradise Lost* was probably written while he was exploring Christian doctrine to decide what he should believe. Consequently, the poem is not based on a settled creed as we find in Dante or Bunyan, and incidental blows are dealt in it against such things as medieval beliefs about angels (V. 435), the Roman doctrine of Indulgences (III. 478–93) and the Anglican hierarchy (XII. 515–24).

To both the general reader and the professional critic Milton presents special difficulties which, if they cannot be overcome, must at least be recognised. In the first place, he has built lengthy works out of religious convictions which are not widely shared or even understood. Without a fair understanding of these convictions and a certain amount of sympathy towards them, we are very likely to misread him. In the second place, Milton presented himself with a particularly difficult task, a task faced neither by the Hebrew poets (who concentrate on the experience of the Israelites); nor by the Greeks (who, in dealing with the gods, are constantly aware of the human situation), nor by Dante (who express his theological material in terms of a human pilgrim progressing towards Heaven through a series of vivid
encounters with various human beings); nor by Shakespeare (who in presenting human character, abstains from personal moral judgements). Even the great bulk of medieval religious poetry (the anonymous hymns and lyrics, Piers Plowman and the medieval plays) does not attempt to elaborate the story of the early parts of the Creation; it keeps religious beliefs and moral principles constantly in touch with the world we know.

The difficulties are further aggravated by Milton's intense conviction that his poetry must teach. The influence of the Old Testament is seen in his conception of teaching. He wishes not only to instruct the mind, but also to purify and elevate the heart. The whole of Paradise Lost must be understood in the light of the Exordium, Milton's great objective being to

"... assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to man".

The development of Milton's style is related to his consciousness of vocation both as man and poet. At the age of nineteen he already wishes to employ his native language "in some graver subject:
at twenty-three he laments his unproductiveness and dedicates his talents to God. In **Comus** he transforms the Caroline masque into a high-minded defence of chastity and temperence; in **Lycidas** the direction of his moral fervour against the corrupt clergy suggests the combination of religious seriousness and political ardour with which he greeted the Civil War. Disillusion was to follow, and a progressive rejection of one sect and party after another, but through all the controversy, often acrimonious, Milton never lost sight of being a dedicated champion of true religion and liberty.

After the death of Henry Vaughan in 1695, there was a lull until the moment when the mighty voice of William Blake, who was born sixty-two years after the death of Vaughan, began to proclaim the kingdom. In the realm of devotional poetry, Blake is seen as so titanic a figure, because during the period immediately preceding his birth, no great religious poetry was written. The greater part of Blake's writing bears witness to the individual testing of the wisdom, morality and theology of his time. He reached his scale of values by an infinitely more strenuous route than most people, and possessed it as a personal achievement. At the same time, the
consequence of being too continuously private in one's thinking and idiom of writing is revealed in the laborious obscurity of much of the "Prophetic Books".

In other ways too, Blake reveals the characteristics of the period that was coming in. He felt the significance of childhood experience, he accepted eagerly the glimpses he had, sometimes in the form of hallucinations, of unconscious process; he was poignantly aware of the terror and hostility of conventional adult society in face of some features of the child's outlook. The 'child' was for Blake primarily an aspect or possibility of every human personality.

Blake constantly kept in mind the pristine purity of the state of innocence, "the contrary state of the human soul",

and throughout his work he was exploring the relation between the perfect possibilities he felt in human life and the lamentable confusion and imperfections that appear in actual experience. Both the naturalism and mysticism of the Romantic period found expression in Blake, and on this point he differs from pioneers like Burns, who is simply naturalistic, or Cowper, who is only slightly touched by mysticism. On the naturalistic side Blake deals
with the simplest phases of life, with the instinctive life of the child, with the love of flowers, hills and streams and yet the mystical vision of the poet is always transforming these familiar things, touching obscure aspects and spiritualizing the common-place into something strange and wonderful. To Blake every spot is holy ground; angels shelter the birds from harm, the good shepherd looks after his sheep, the divine spark burns even in the breasts of savage animals. Cruelty to animals incensed Blake, and he would give them the same freedom he wishes for mankind:

"A Robin Redbreast in a Cage  
Puts all Heaven in a rage!  
A Dog starved at his master's gate  
Predicts the ruin of the state  
A Horse misused upon the road  
Calls to Heaven for human blood  
Each outcry of the Hunted Hare  
A fibre from the brain does tear  
A skylark wounded on the wing  
A Cherubim does cease to sing . . . .

(A Robin Redbreast in a Cage)
Blake's "Songs of Innocence" (1789) are short lyrics embodying his view of the original state of human society, symbolized in the joy and happiness of children. The joy to be found in the world is exemplified in the following:

Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by,
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it,
When the meadows laugh with the lively green
And grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha, Ha, He!"
When the painted birds laugh in the shade
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread,
Come live and be merry and join with me
To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha, Ha, He!"

The year 1794 saw the appearance of Songs of Experience, in which the mood of spontaneous love and happiness revealed in the Songs of Innocence is replaced by a less joyful note. In these lyrics, which have an intensity not to be found in the earlier ones,
we see Blake presenting two conflicting aspects of a nature which is so beautiful and yet so cruel. This two sided picture of natural things is well shown in what is perhaps his finest lyric, The Tyger.

Unlike some mystics, Blake did not seek after the world of spirit because be despised the world of sense but because he loved it so well he felt there was more in it than man could fathom here. His mysticism was not an aspiration for the future: it was a realization of the present. "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you" he proclaimed; we have only to free ourselves from what is base and paltry, and we live in the realm of spiritual beauty now.

On the whole, Blake's short lyrics are finer than his long poems, not only for their more secure control of the reader's response, but for their more direct statement of human experience in place of the excess of cosmology in the longer works. They include some in which Blake makes a direct moral comment on the London world of his time, as in the Holy Thursday of Songs of Experience.

"Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduc'd to misery
Fed with cold and usurous hand?
Is that trembling cry a song
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor
It is a land of poverty."

More usually, however, Blake is wrestling with the psychological and moral problems, those that are inescapable in family life. These problems and their effects on our personality are the ultimate material of the symbolic books too, but in the short poems they receive clearer statement. "Infant Sorrow" imagines the protest of the child at birth, its first experience of danger and constraint, its rage and its reluctant submission:

"My mother groan'd! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud:
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands
Striving against my swadling bands,
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast."
It was out of these basic problems and attitudes that Blake built his moral and quasi-religious system, which was later developed into his intricate mythology. The parallel between the Prophetic Books and Blake's struggle to understand and harmonize the features of his own personality is illustrated in a letter to Hayley, and can be compared with passages of Jerusalem and The Four Zoas:

"O Glory! and O Delight! I have entirely reduced that spectrous fiend to his station, whose annoyance has been the ruin of my labours for the last passed twenty years of my life. He is the enemy of conjugal love, and is the Jupiter of the Greeks, an iron-hearted tyrant, the ruiner of ancient Greece. . . . Oh! the distress I have undergone, and my poor wife with me; incessantly labouring and incessantly spoiling what I have done well . . . . I thank God with entire confidence that it shall be so no longer - he is become my servant who domineered over me; . . . ."

And in The Four Zoas, VII:

"Los embrac'd the Spectre, first as a brother,
Then as another self, astonish'd humanizing, and in tears,
In self-abasement giving up his domineering lust."
Thou never canst embrace sweet Enitharmon,
terrible Demon, Till
Thou art united with thy spectre, consummating
by pains and labours
That mortal body, and by self-anihilation back
returning
To life Eternal . . . . . . .

As a visionary Blake touched both Art
and Letters, he is ever looking behind the visible
frame of things for the glories and terrors of the
world of spirit, not with the ethical intent of
Wordsworth, but with the eye of one who cannot help
dreaming dreams and seeing visions. The visionary in
him often overpowers the artist, and wild confusion
of imagery often blurs his work, but yet it gives
a phantom touch and an exquisite beauty; that has
an elevating effect on his lyrical faculty. He could
see the entire world bound by threads of shimmering
gossamer, united in a spirit of joy and tender
sympathy. In a moment of vision Blake cried:

*And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was the Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark satanic mills?*
The Romantic poets are usually not classed as religious poets. Though much has been written on Wordsworth's Nature Mysticism, unless perhaps in his more pious moments, he could not be called purely 'devotional'. In Nature, he is far less concerned with the sensuous manifestations, than with the spiritual that he finds underlying these manifestations. The perception of natural objects does not convey to him a pageant of colour or sound; it is a moment of spiritual consecration:

"My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows Were then made for me; bond unknown to me Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly, A dedicated Spirit."

Wordsworth proclaims peace and order to be at the heart of things, and like Vaughan, maintains that the child is the "mighty prophet" and the "seer blest". Adult man achieves a sense of desolation too empty to imply even resignation:

"Turn whereso'er I may By night or day, The things which I have been I now can see no more".

But he maintains that we must seek consolation:

"In the soothing thoughts that spring Out of human suffering".
and in

"... that blessed mood
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:— that serene and blessed mood
In which the affections gently lead us on, —
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things".

(Tintern Abbey)

Unlike Blake, there is little of the visionary in
Wordsworth's spiritual meditations on Nature. Very often
his mysticism slips into theological formula: Nature
is God's book, and Wordsworth turns her pages to find
the prescriptions of that "Stern Daughter of the Voice
of God", whom men call duty:

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through
Thee are fresh and strong".

(Ode to Duty)

The Victorian age was an age of tremendous upheaval, political, social and moral, and no poet was more bogged down by religious problems as Tennyson. Simultaneously, no poet was more sensitive to scientific thought than he. Like so many men of his time (Arnold, Carlyle and Newman, to name a few), Tennyson was a worrier. He worried about God, Nature and Man; about modern science and its effect on faith; about the significance of Darwin's Theory of Evolution; about the meaning of life. The death of his close friend Arthur Hallam in 1833 added an abiding sense of personal loss to his basic worries. This grief and worry came together in the series of linked lyrics of In Memoriam (1850). Ultimately, he stops worrying and proclaims a belief in a Love that is stronger than Death, and in
"One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event.
To which the whole creation moves".

But his attitude is an attitude of compromises: he propounds a via media between the materialistic science of his day, and dogmatic Christianity. His solution for the uncertitude of the time was an undogmatic religion, that was at its core, intuitional.

“There's something that watches over us, and our individuality endures: that's my faith, and that's all my faith”, he is reported to have said on one occasion to a friend.

Tennyson has been called a mystic; it would be more correct to say that he was mystical. He was not a mystic in the sense that Vaughan and Herbert were mystics, but it would be do well to call him a rationalist with a strain of mysticism in his nature. The Philosophy of In Memoriam as bodying forth The Way of the Soul, a progress from the initial stunned grief, through gradual acquiescence, to a condition of peace and serenity in which the passionate regret is replaced by "the consciousness of the union with the spirit", and in which the world now seems "the abode of that immortal love, at once divine
and human which includes the living and the dead. Of the poem, Tennyson himself said...
The different moods of sorrow as in a drama are dramatically given, and my conviction that fear, doubts, and suffering will find the answer and relief only through Faith in a God of Love. He says:

"Let knowledge grow from more to more, 
Yet more of reverence in us dwell."

Tennyson is the Bard, the oracle:

"Our little systems have their day, 
They have their days and cease to be; 
They are but broken lights of thee, 
And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

(In Memoriam)

and he thus presents moral values through his poetry:

"We pass; the path that each man trod
Is dim, or will be dim, with weeds:
What fame is left for human deeds,
In endless age? It rests with God."

(In Memoriam)
In the realm of English religious poetry, each poet speaks with his own unique voice, and the real, the only final test, is the sincerity of the voice. Browning's line "Earth changes, but the soul and God stand sure" embodies the essence of the philosophy of life that will withstand the changes and perils of this earthly existence. His poem Christmas Eve is concerned with actual mystical experience, and The Strange Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician describes precisely, in the story of Lazarus the sufferings of the mystic in the world. A death in the Deserts tells the story of the last hours of St. John the Evangelist: Bishop Blougram's Apology is a discourse on theological issues, doctrine and faith. Saul, Abt Vogler and Rabbi ben Ezra are also powerful religious poems and The Ring and the Book is shot through with a vivid and living religious faith. Indeed, every line that Browning wrote was irradiated with the faith in the over-mastering assurance of God and His goodness, and the grandeur in the plan of human life:

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for?"

(Andrea del Sarto)
All of Browning's writings are experimental studies in spiritual experience. Whether he deals with love, patriotism, intellectual ambition or religious fervour, it is all brought to one common denominator - its effect upon character, its value in the making of the soul. Browning's philosophy of life is assuredly a pragmatic, buoyant and virile one:

"Man - creeps ever on from fancies to the fact
And in this striving ......
Finds progress ......
Man's distinctive mark alone."

A more debatable point in our times is, whether there will be any common ground between an English religious poet, and a reader who has no share in Christian beliefs. The possibility of communication between the reader and the poet depends on there being something in common between them. Fortunately, Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven" is readily conveyed to an unbeliever, although it may not have an exact parallel in his experience. The poem itself, with its abundant imagery and rhythm, can communicate it:
"I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter,
Up visted hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after
But with unhurrying chase
And unperturbed pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat — and a Voice beat —
More instant than the Feet —
All things betray thee, who betrayest Me'."

The impulse to escape from the unknown, and the longing to be at one with it, the hurry of the thought to avoid contemplation, these conflicting impulses are sufficiently common to be intelligible in the guise in which Francis Thompson portrays them. In the forceful and vigorous imagery, there is a sense of the tremendous and "world-wielding" nature of spiritual conflict. While roaming the London streets desolate and uncomfor
ted Thompson made great verse in his tormented mind.
"But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry; - and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross",
dreaming that he who had already glimpsed the vision
might one day see in truth

". . . . . . . . . Christ walking on the water
Not of Genesareth, But Thames!"

"Holy, holy, holy!! In Verdi's musical composition
Requiem Mass, the Sanctus is a triumphant shout of
praise, recalling the words, "The morning stars sang
together and the sons of God shouted for joy". The
same bold, strong and triumphantly adoring spirit
animates the poetry of Hopkins, one of the greatest
of religious poets of the last hundred years.
Coming at the end of the Victorian age, the poetry
of Hopkins owes much to the themes and pre-occupations
that pervaded the tradition of English religious
and devotional poetry. Much of Hopkins's Nature-
poetry witnesses to an affinity with Wordsworth. Both
poets' treatment of Nature is accurate and first-hand,
and even the lesser-known poems have evidence of
close observation. In his attitude to Nature, however,
Wordsworth is not content merely to rejoice; he
tries to see more deeply and to find the secret springs of this joy and thanksgiving:

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

With a remarkable fusion of sustained thought and poetic imagination, Wordsworth is able to convey the idea of a Being that is present everywhere, the force that penetrates all things, the mystical essence that lies behind all of created Nature.

In the same way, though in a specifically Roman Catholic context, Hopkins believes in the idea of a beneficent and bountiful God at work in the process of Nature. Nature is a manifestation of the beauty of God, a call to praise. The ecstatic enjoyment of nature found in the sonnets of his early maturity is a sacramental experience: "Glory be to God for dappled things", culminating in "He fathers—forth whose beauty is past change/Praise him" (Pied Beauty).

The deepest and most intensely personal of Hopkins's poems belong to his Dublin period (1884-89). In their direct, passionate utterance they are remarkably similar to Donne's Holy Sonnets. A compelling actuality of the mangled state of the soul is characteristic of
both poets. The chief power of Donne and Hopkins as religious poets is brought out in the element of conflict, doubt and fear, leading to an assured faith. The best of Donne's Holy Sonnets and Hopkins's Terrible Sonnets express these struggles with unparalleled force. His ecstatic love of Nature is an aspect of his love of God, and more so, since he was a Jesuit priest bound by the motto "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" - For the greater glory of God. To him, God is the Creator of all the beauty that he so passionately worships:

"Glory be to God for dappled things -
For skies of couple - colour as a brinded cow;
Fore rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim
Fresh fire-coal chestnut falls; finches' wings.

All things counter, original, spare, strange,
Whatever is fickle freckled, (who knows how?)
With swift, slow, sweet, sour, adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
    Praise Him".

(Pied Beauty)

The same worship echoes in the rapturous cry:
"Look at the stars! Look, look up at the skies!
O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!"

(The Starlight Night)

It is no less in the glorious poem *Harvest in Harvest*

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour
And eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?
And the azurous hung hills are his world - wielding shoulder
Majestic - as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him O half curls earth for him off
under his foot".

For the poet who has found his way back to Paradise,
there is no worship of Nature without worship of God.
Hopkins is a poet who praises and worships God with
arms outstretched to all the glory in the heavens.
His work is a passionate affirmation, his prayer is
praise. Even the "terrible" sonnets are vivid with
powerful, stormy, never weak, or pitiful imagery.
"Not, I'll not, carrion-comfort, Despair, not
feast on thee;
Not untwist-slack they may be - these last
strands of man
In me, or most weary, cry I can no more, I can;
Can something, hope wish day come, not choose not to be.
But ah, but oh thou terrible, why wouldst thou
rude on me.
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb
against me? Scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones?
and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me
frantic to avoid thee and flee?"

(Carrion Comfort)

Again, he cries:

"O the mind, mind has mountains, cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathom'd. 'Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there".

(No Worst, there is none)

Always, Hopkins' powerful mind scales the summits of
spiritual experience and there are affinities here with
John Donne is also of the same brotherhood:

"Batter my heart, three person'd God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, overthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn and make me new".

(Holy Sonnet XIV)

Undoubtedly, Hopkins and Donne wrote in the same poetic tradition. They resemble each other in brain-power, emotional richness, candour, complexity, wrenched metre and syntax and extensively far-fetched imagery. But Helen Gardner underlines the basic difference between the two:

"In his almost total blindness to the beauty of the natural world, he reveals a lack of that receptivity, that capacity for disinterested joy which is one of the marks of the spiritual man. This differentiates him from a poet with whom he is often compared, Gerard Manley Hopkins". 12

But the Holy sonnets of Donne, and the Terrible sonnets of Hopkins are similar. Donne prefigures Hopkins, and Hopkins writes like a nineteenth-century Donne. The beginning of Hopkins's Thou art indeed just, Lord
parallels the sestet of Donne's *If* poisonous minerals... Hopkins's *No Worst, there is none*, as sharply contrasts with and resembles Donne's *Death be not proud*, as pessimism contrasts with and resembles desperate optimism. But the two poems that go together are Donne's *'Batter my heart* and Hopkins *Carrion Comfort*. Donne pleads:

"That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn and make me new".

While Hopkins having been battered, caries

"... why would'st thou ... scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones?
That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear".

Th' thought and dominant metaphor of both is strikingly similar: the idea of God ravishing or wrestling with a recalcitrant sinner in order to humble and cleanse him. Both poets are rich in alliteration, assonance, rhyme, parallel verbs, caesuras, interjections, terse and irregular metre. Both reach the apex of religious
sonneteering. These poems show both at their distinctive best when they are most alike, near-mystic and metaphysical.

The spirit of religion manifested in poetical works has existed in every age. Yet Dr. Johnson is pungent in his attack:

"Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man, admitted to implore the mercy of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer . . . . . The ideas of Christian theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestic for ornament; to recommend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror, the sidereal hemisphere."

Devotional poetry is exposed to attack both from believers like Dr. Johnson, and from the sceptical. Johnson rejects it with such harshness because he assumes that it can add nothing to religious experience: "... religion must be shown at it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it; and such as it is, it is already known."
Dr. Johnson is of the opinion that the "Topicks" presented by the Christian faith are limited but they, we may say, so also are the "topicks" suggested by human love. Successive ages have been employed about both. Yet, out of these time-worn experiences, poets are continually creating something new; the love of God takes as many different forms, and gives rise to as many states of mind as the love of woman. The same beliefs and circumstances produce unendingly varying effects.

It is against this background of religious poetry that Hopkins's poetic output must be looked at. In a poem like Pied Beauty, we see the process openly enacted. After a catalogue of "dappled" things, things which owe their beauty to contrast, inconsistency and change, Hopkins concludes by a neat inversion—an invocation to God, who fathering forth such things, is Himself changeless. In Hurrahing in Harvest, again we have an extended metaphor: the senses glean in the Saviour in all the beauty of summer's end. The Windhover, a poem about the Kestral's flight, is dedicated "To Christ our Lord". All of Hopkins's poems are tributes to God's glory, as all devotional poetry must be: they are tributes to the senses, and a right conception
of God and of religion is not hurt by such 
tributes. Hopkins's faith allows him more than a 
Wordsworthian delight in sight and sound for

"Christ plays in ten thousand places".

Though he retrieved the Romantics' keenness of 
perception, he knew these could be no copying their 
method of rendering this perception in art. Where 
Shelly writes:

"Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music
Doth surpass".

Or Worsworth:

"Up with me! Up with me, into the clouds!
For thy song, lark, is strong;
Up with me, up with me, into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With all the heavens about thee ringing."

Hopkins has:

"Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
His rash-fresh re-winded new-skined score
In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl and pour
And pelt music, till none's to spill or spend".

In Hopkins, the outer world of Nature and the inner world of his soul do not exist on two irreconcilable planes; but rather, both grow out of and complement one another. In both worlds may be distinctly heard the "still small voice", the Voice of God. In both worlds, again, he is able to perceive "the quiet. . . . places where angels used to alight", that D.H. Lawrence wrote of. And ultimately, when a few more generations "have trod, have trod, have trod" people will be reading with gratitude and heart-lifting joy Hopkins's paean of the Creation:

"........ I kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely-asunder
Starlight, wafting him out of it; 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".

(The Wreck of the Deutschland, Stanza 5)
NOTES


2. Ibid.

3. Holy Sonnet -I

4. Holy Sonnet - XIV

5. Op. Cit. XIII


7. Of Contentment - Traherne

8. Paradise Lost. I, l-26


10. Bradley's commentary on In Memoriam (London 1901)

11. Quoted in the essay "Hopkins and Donne: Mystic and Metaphysical" By R. Coanda Renascence, Vol.9 No. 4 Summer 1957.

12. H. Gardner, ed. The Metaphysical Poets, p. xiv


14. Ibid.

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