CHAPTER THREE

The Religious Focus in the work of G. M. Hopkins.

1. The Christological Nucleus

Describing Hopkins as "a poet who used his art for the greater glory of God", Prof. Tindall says that "far from impairing his poems, as several critics have held, his vocation improved their quality, gave them character and exciting matter, and disciplined their romantic confusion. Since he became a great poet
his vocation did not prevent his becoming one. It is idle to suppose that under other circumstances he might have been greater. The tenet of Roman Catholicism which Hopkins inherited at his conversion is represented in his poetry in entirely personal terms; yet it is completely orthodox in the theological sense. What is really new and striking in Hopkins is not so much his ingenious and fastidious experiments with language and rhythm, as his double-vision of the relations between God and Man - God both substantially present in the core of each man's soul, and God also pervading the whole universe. His unique vision reconnects the separate Christian symbols by putting them to work, as it were, in the context of all Creation - of nature, the cosmos, the seas, the earth, the air.

Like all visionary writers, Hopkins had to turn inward and know himself before he could know God and the universe fully. In John Henry Newman, "the Father" who received him into the Catholic Church and with whom he stayed during the seven crucial months before deciding his vocation, the young Hopkins found a kind of man whose sanctity and scholarship he emulated. Above all, he saw in Newman a deeply
pious priest, one in whom nature and grace, culture and discipline, suffering and peace fused in a personal, intimate union with Christ. Newman's sermons and patristic studies testify to his firm grasp of the Christian dogma in the person of Jesus Christ: God made manifest in the humanity of His Son. Constantly, Newman stresses the oneness of the Word-made-Flesh in time and eternity, and especially in his relationship to man. The Lord of the Gospels is the Son of God and the Son of Man:

"He who spoke was one really existing Person, and He, that one living and almighty son, both God and man was the brightness of God's glory and His power, and wrought what His Father willed, and was in the Father and the Father in Him, not only in Heaven, but on earth".2

The Christological view in the works of Newman and Hopkins needs to be emphasised, for it is not as obvious or simple as it first seems. In defending the divinity of Christ, the champions of the Counter Reformation created in the popular mind and in their theological speculations a vacuum where the humanity of Christ should have been. This humanity, of course, a fixed quality known to men only in its exterior accident. As long as the faithful believed that
Christ was God, they were safe from heresy, and capable of solving any mystery or problem by a fixed retort: "Because He was God". Newman succinctly diagnoses this malaise:

"It would be no difficult matter, I suspect, to perplex the faith of a great many persons who believe themselves to be orthodox, and indeed are so, according to their light. They have been accustomed to call Christ God, but that is all - they have not considered what is meant by applying that title to one who was really man and from the vague way in which they use it, they would be in no small danger, if assailed by a subtle disputant, of being robbed of the sacred truth in its substance even if they kept it in name. In truth, until we contemplate our Lord and Saviour, God and Man, as being complete and entire in His personality as we show ourselves to be to each other - as one and the same in all His various and contrary attributes, the same yesterday today and forever, we are using words which profit not."³

Hopkins' approach to Christ in his sermons, letters and poetry is remarkably fresh and searching:
"If we learn no more from a Gospel or a sermon on the Gospel than to know our Lord Jesus Christ better, to be prouder of him, and to love him more, we learn enough and we learn a precious lesson". 

Certainly Hopkins owed some of this Christological sense to Newman and to his Oxford experiences, but his insights into the mystery of the humanity of Christ show a sensitivity unmatched in his time. Contemporary Christology has only recently begun to explore the questions of Christ's growing consciousness of Himself, of the Nature of His tragedy in personal failure and disappointment, and of the historic implications of His role as cosmic Lord and Man. These three themes are all found in Hopkins's writings, and he treats them with his usual love of meticulous detail and spirited lyricism. His Sermon at Bedford Leigh (1879) on *Our Lord Jesus Christ* is intended to lead his listeners to acknowledge Christ as their "hero, a hero all the world wants". The sermon is built on a carefully structured ascent from the Lord's humanity to His Divine nature, never allowing the division, however, to intrude on or confuse the hearer's response to the historical Jesus as
as the object of one's faith. Christ's human nature — his body, mind and character — composes the main subject of the Sermon and leads up to a magnificent conclusion. The peroration, which repeats the phrase "Glory to" seventeen times, begins:

"And this man whose picture I have tried to draw for you, brethren, is your God. He was your maker in time past; hereafter he will be your judge. Make him your hero now".5

Such rhetoric and rhythm, cadence and stress, had not been heard in English pulpits since John Donne held his congregations spell-bound in St. Paul's. Beneath the eloquence, the sound Christology operates in Hopkins:

"Take some time to think of him, praise him in your hearts".

The person of Jesus Christ who is drawn in the Sermons is dramatically and theologically alive. From the Middle Ages onwards, the theologians, following the opinion of St. Thomas Aquinas, unfortunately tended to argue that Christ already
possessed the Beatific Vision in his earthly existence. His human mind gazed continually on the Triune God.

No perfection, the scholastics reasoned, could be lacking to Christ's human nature; therefore He enjoyed in His lifetime what moral men would experience in Heaven. Naturally, no growth in ordinary knowledge would be possible for such a man; psychic and moral development in Christ was out of the question for nineteenth-century theologians. In marked contrast to the thinkers of his time, Hopkins warns his listeners:

"You must not say, Christ needed no such thing as genius, his wisdom came from heaven, because He was God. To say so is to speak like the heretic Appolinaris, who said that Christ had indeed a human body, but no soul, he needed no mind and soul, for his godhead, the Word of God, that stood for mind and soul in him. No, but Christ was perfect man and must have mind as well as body and that mind was no question, of the rarest excellence and beauty; it was genius. As Christ lived and breathed and moved in a true and not a phantom human body and in that laboured, suffered
was crucified, died and was buried, as he merited by acts of his human will; so he reasoned and planned and invented by acts of his own human genius, genius made perfect by wisdom of its own, not the divine wisdom only. 6

For Hopkins, Christ is what God is, the Self of all selves. The events of his life manifest definitely God's attitude towards the world, and His actions on man's behalf. The events are dramatic, articulate and unique; their message is love. Man now views that life retrospectively, as the first followers of Christ had to recast it in their memories, through the experience of His resurrection and exaltation. Hopkins explains to Bridges in 1883:

"Christ is in every sense God and in every sense man, and the interest is in the locked and inseparable combination or rather it is in the person in whom the combination has its place. Therefore, we speak of the events of Christ's life as the mystery of the Nativity, the mystery of the Crucifixion, and so on of a host; the mystery being always the same, that the child in the manger is God, the culprit on the gallows is God and so on. Otherwise birth and death are not mysteries, nor is it any great mystery
that a just man should be crucified, but that God
should fascinate - with the interest of awe, of pity,
of shame, of every harrowing feeling".7

The life of Christ is most perfectly followed
by those who choose to enter the religious life
and take the three sacred vows of poverty, chastity
and obedience, that link them more closely with the
Master. Two days after taking his vows on September 8
1870, Hopkins wrote to his mother:

"I have bound myself to our Lord for ever
to be poor, chaste, and obedient like Him, and it
delights me to think of it"8. Christ led a life of
real, not pretended poverty, one in which, during
his period of teaching, he was absolutely dependent
for food and shelter. He willingly placed Himself
at the mercy of others:

"The son of Man has not come to be served
but to serve, and give his life as the ransom for
many".9
His followers, and expected to share the same treatment:

"If anyone wishes to come after me, let him
deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."
For he who would save his life would lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake will find it.\textsuperscript{10}

For Hopkins, Christ learned to be obedient, and his "saying Yes" to God was a vital union of His will with the Divine Will, an act that voided the cosmic non serviam of Lucifer and Adam.

In his sermons and poetry, Hopkins insisted on the intimacy of divine life, its saturation of every-day living. Through His passion and resurrection, Christ enters the whole field of man's interests and concerns. He first calls to men before they call to Him; he cuts across time and space to address each one:

"Christ called to us from his cross more than we call to him there. We call to him for comfort, but long ago he said: come unto me. Long before John or Edward, Margaret or Elisabeth ever said/ I love our Lord Jesus Christ/ he said, / I love John, I love Edward, I love Margaret, I love Elisabeth".\textsuperscript{11}

As He called his first followers in love, he summons each and all. Through the power of His risen
existence, He is present everywhere within Creation, and most intimately, within the hearts of those who acknowledge Him as Saviour and Lord. His presence is joyous, and he rejoices to men:

"Are they handsome, healthy strong, ableminded, witty, successful, brave, truthful, pure, just? He admired them more than they can, more than they justly can, themselves, for he made all these things, beauty, health, strength, and the rest". ¹²

One of the major trends in modern Catholic theology has been the fresh emphasis placed on Christ's resurrection, not as an afterthought in the divine plan, but as the dynamic source of the world's rebirth in the Son's newness of life. The first disciples primarily considered themselves to be "witnesses of the resurrection" and their earliest preaching as as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles centred on the risen "Lord". Hopkins's meditation on the "preciousness of our Lord's body born of the Blessed Virgin of David's line, crucified, raised from the dead, seated in heaven, united to the Word", integrates the integrity of his theological vision. Further, he considers "its mystery; it binds the Church into one, bodily into one. It is the pledge and means of our immortality". ¹³
The risen body of Christ adored among men is the continuity and contacting point of God's dealing with them in creation and atonement. This Body, received in the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, is the 'Bridge and stem of stress' between God and man, and between man and his world. In his sermon on "Our Lord Jesus Christ", Hopkins bids his listeners:

"I leave it to you, brethren, then, to picture Him, in whom the fulness of the godhead dwelt bodily, in his bearing how majestic, how strong and yet how lovely and lissome in his limbs, in his look how earnest, grave but kind. In his passion all this strength was spent, this lissomeness was crippled, this beauty wrecked, this majesty beaten down. But now it is more than all restored, and for myself I make no secret I look forward with eager desire to seeing the matchless beauty of Christ's body in the heavenly light".  

Because He lives on in his glorified manhood Christ is worshipped as God. As H.P. Liddon said:

"He reveals himself as the living centre, from which the higher life radiates, throughout regenerate humanity".
Christ sends His own spirit to create his personal risen glory in each man; since he died for all, then all men everywhere and in every age can know his saving action and confess:

"Over again I feel thy finger and find thee."\(^1\)

Corresponding to the poet's concept of Christ that is to be found in the Sermons, Hopkins presents in his poetry a Christ who by virtue of His Birth, Passion and Resurrection, incorporates attributes which are universal and cosmic. Hopkins is acutely sensitive to concrete things in their individuality. Seeing creation in all its beauty and uniqueness, he is able to see deeper; to see material things as revealing. God, and particularly Christ, are incarnate in the universe. The poem beginning As Kingfishers catch fire moves from a consideration of how individual things can reveal themselves in act, to an act of affirmation of a deep experience in Christ in particular persons— not in their "souls", in some general way, but concretely in the very individuality of each man. The poem concludes directly and emphatically:

"......the just man justices;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
Christ—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his,
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

The last line bears a resemblance, in the Jesuit
Tailhard's prayer, in Hymn of the Universe.

"Give me to recognize to other men, Lord God,
the radiance of your own face."

Again, in Hurrying in Harvest, the poet sees through
the Christ in the movement of the sky at summer's end:

"... what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds: has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean
our Saviour"

Before describing a bluebell in precise detail
Hopkins writes in his Journal:

"I do not think I have ever seen anything
more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking
at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it."
This statement may be compared with Teilhard's prayer:

"Lord, it is you, who through the imperceptible goadings of sense-beauty, penetrate my heart in order to make its life flow out into yourself. You came down into me by means of a tiny scrap of created reality; and then, suddenly, you unfurled your immensity before my eyes and displayed yourself to me as Universal being". 17

The coming of Christ in history, and his redemption of men is described in The Wreck of the Deutschland in terms of action and movement:

"Our passion-plunged giant risen
The Christ of the Father compassionate, fetched in the storm of his strides.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
The heaven-flung, heart-fleshed maiden-furled Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame.
Mid-numbered He in three of the thunder throne!
Not a doomsday dazzle in his coming nor dark as he came;
Kind, but royally reclaiming his own;"
In "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breathe", Hopkins figuratively refers to man's breathing Christ-like air, thus becoming a "new man" (in St. Paul's phrase) or a nobler man revealing Christ within him more clearly. When man is most himself, he most clearly reveals Christ or gives birth to Him anew:

"Of her flesh he took flesh,
He does take fresh and fresh
Though much the mystery how,
Not flesh but spirit now,
And makes, O marvellous!
New Nazareth in us,
Where she shall yet conceive,
Him, morning, noon and eve,
New Bethlem and he there born
There, evening, noon and morn —
Bethlem or Nazareth,
Men here may draw like breath
More Christ and baffle death;
Who, born so, comes to be
New self and nobler me
In each one and each one
More makes, when all is done,
Both God's and Mary's Son."
In his major work *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, Hopkins sees the suffering of the five Franciscan nuns who drowned, as joined with the suffering of Christ and accepted, sacrificially, in such a way as to give birth to Christ again. In stanza twenty-three, he addresses St. Francis, bearer of the stigmata, who can take joy in his followers:

"Joy fall to thee, Father Francis, 
Drawn to the Life that died; 
With the gnarls of the nails in thee, niche 
of the lance, his 
Lovescape crucified 
. . . . . . . . and these thy daughters 
. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 
Are sisterly sealed in wild waters, 
To bathe in his fall-gold mercies, to breathe in 
his all-fire glances".

In the next stanza he speaks of the sister who calls upon Christ to come as being "Christened" by His Cross.

"Was calling' O Christ, Christ, come quickly'. 
The cross to her she calls Christ to her, Christens 
her wild-worst

Best."
Through the nun's utterance of the word, Christ is "new born to the world" (Stanza, 34) because

"... here was heart-throe, birth of a brain-
Word, that heard and kept these and uttered
thee outright"

(Stanza 30)

In the Deutschland Hopkins sees suffering, not as caused by Christ, but as part of the human condition:

"Not out of his bliss
Springs the stress felt
Nor first from heaven (and few know this)
Swings the stroke dealt -

But it rides time like riding a river

It dates from day
Of his going in Galilee;
Warm-laid grave of womb-life grey

(Stanza 6 and 7)

In reference to his orientation towards Christ, Hopkins speaks of himself as "Carrier-witted", fleshing
"from the flame to the flame" (Stanza 3). Of Christ born again, Hopkins writes:

"Now burn, new born to the world
Double-natured name,
The heaven-flung, heart-flushed, maiden-furled Miracle-in-Mary-of-flame,
Mid-numbered He in three of the thunder-throne!
Not dooms-day dazzle in his coming nor dark as he came;
Kind, but royally reclaiming his own;
A released shower, let flash to the shire not a lightning of fire hard-hurled"

(Stanza 34)

After numerous references to Christ as "lightning and love". Hopkins, at the end of the "Deutschland" brings together the imagery of light and fire, asking:

"Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the
Dimness of us, be a crimson-cresseted east,
More brightening her, rare-dear Britain, as his reign rolls,
Pride, rose, prince, hero of us, high-priest,
Our heart's charity's hearth's fire, our thoughts' Chivalry's throng's Lord" (Stanza 25)

The whole of the Christological focus in Hopkins is dove-tailed in this magnificent vision early in the Deutschland:

"God, thee-numbered form, Wring thy rebel, dogged in den, Man's malice, with wrecking and storm, Beyond saying sweet, past telling of tongue, Thou art lightning and love, I found it, a winter and warm, Father and fondler of heart thou hast wrung: Hast thy dark descending and most art merciful then".

In the Windhover the beauty of the action of the bird in flight against the wind reminds the poet of the beauty of Christ's self-sacrificing love, as a study of the imagery of the poem steadily reveals. Thus the action of the bird is related to the action of Christ, His coming and dying. That the poem is definitely Christological in theme is suggested by the very dedication of the sonnet: "To Christ our Lord"
"Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air,
pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks, from thee
then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my
Chevalier!
No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down
sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion*.

Through all of Hopkins's writings, there flashes
the single message of Christ, that because he is in God,
love in person, the seal of the togetherness of
God the Father and the Holy Ghost, their "we-ness"
in spirit, Christ exercises a unique influence in
personalizing the Life Divine": The three divine
relationships shared in the oneness of being become a
communion of divine persons through the mystery of
the Immaculate Conception and Incarnation. And because
He is the link of communion within the orbit of
divine life, He is also the link between God and men,
the point of insertion of God's life into the life of
men. Through Christ, God bridges the infinite distance
that exists between Him and men, in order to dwell
in them personally. Thus, the function of Christ in the life of men corresponds to His personal character in the divine life.

"The mystery accomplished in Christ has universal repercussions. It brings salvation to the whole world united in the spirit of Christianity and it initiates a new creation. It results in the outpouring of the spirit over all flesh. A new order of creation becomes operative through the universal action of the spirit of Christ who enlivens all men and transforms all things. Through Christ, man is summoned by the spirit of God and invited to open himself to His recreating influence, for 'the cosmos is resurrected and groans with the birth-pangs of the Kingdom, the risen Christ is there'".18

2. The Holy Ghost

Nowhere is Hopkins's grasp of the essentials of Christianity more apparent than in his handling of the person and role of the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost), the third person of the Holy Trinity. In his sermons and meditations the spirit of Christ is a dynamic and transfiguring love at work in the universe. The Spirit channels out the energy which
has been gathered in Christ through His victorious cross. Hopkins always treated the two together, the Holy Spirit and Christ, and in his original manner calls them both Paracletes in several of his sermons. He promises his audience:

"I shall show why Christ as a Paraclete would not do alone, why it was better for him to go and another to come, why Christ's struggle with the world taken by itself looked like a failure when the Holy Ghost's struggling with the world is a success"  

Hopkins employs the Biblical sense of the world "spiritus" as 'breath' or 'life-force' to explain the nature and role of the Holy Ghost:

"As the breath is drawn from the boundless air into the lungs and from the lungs again is breathed out and melts into the boundless air, so the spirit of God was poured out from the infinite God upon Christ's human nature and by Christ who said:

Receive the Holy Ghost: as my Father sent me so I send you/, was breathed into his apostles and by degrees into the millions of his Church till the new heavens and new earth will at last be filled with it".  

19

20
Every man is to be filled with the spirit, none is to be overlooked,

"For the spirit, we read, searches all things, even the depths of God: if the Holy spirit searches the infinite riches of the godhead it is but little for his subtlety to search every corner of the world".21

The sermon on the Holy Ghost preached at Liverpool in 1881 is one of Hopkins's great prose works and provides an eloquent summary on the new convenant history. It may be quoted in full:22

"Christ came into this world to glorify God his Father; the Holy Ghost came to glorify Christ. Christ made God known by appearing in human shape, the Word took Flesh and dwelt amongst us; the Holy Ghost makes Christ known by living in his Church, he makes his temple in Christian hearts and dwells within us. Christ glorified the Father by his death and resurrection, the Holy Ghost glorifies Christ by the persecutions and triumphs of the Catholic Church. Christ himself was but one and lived and died but once; but the Holy Ghost makes of every Christian another Christ, an
After-Christ; lives a million lives in every age; is the courage of the martyrs, the wisdom of the doctors; the purity of the virgins; is breathed into each at baptism, may be quenched by sin in one soul, but then is kindled in another; passes like a restless breath from heart to heart and is the spirit and life of all the Church; what is soul to the human body, that St. Austin says, the Holy Ghost is to the Catholic Church, Christ's body mystical. If the Holy Ghost is our spirit and our life, if he is our universal soul, no wonder, my brethren, no wonder he is our Paraclete, to lead us and to life us and to fire us to all holiness and good, a Paraclete in a way too that Christ alone could never be. On this great mystery no time is left to dwell; I leave it for your thoughts to ponder.

In Christianity the Holy Ghost is the third Person of the Holy Trinity after God the Father and God the Son, and is symbolized by the figure of the Dove. The Dove, under the symbol of which the spirit of God descended upon Christ after his Baptism is discussed by a theologian.
"The symbol of the dove descending upon Jesus was doubtless meant to recall to our mind the account in Genesis: 'Darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God brooded over the waters and God said let there be light and there was light' (Gen. i, 2, 3). In genesis the spirit of God is pictured as brooding like a bird over chaos and darkness and thus fecundating it through its fostering care and pervading power . . . . It is obvious that all three Persons sanctified the human nature of Our Lord as something created, though Only One Person assumed it as His Own. This sanctification, however, is ascribed to the Third Person as the subsistent Holiness of God, thereby revealing to us his special characteristic as Person. For this characteristic the brooding dove was a fit emblem. Should it be asked why not another bird was chosen for this symbol, say, an eagle or a falcon, it is easy to give the reason, that God on this occasion wished no emblem of might of swiftness, but an emblem of that still and tender power of imparting life, which man's imagination joins to the nature of the dove, with which man also associates that of innocence or sinlessness, which was specially filling at the baptism of Christ".

In the sonnet "God's Grandeur, Hopkins depicts the scene of a world where:
"... all is seared with trade; bleared,
smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell:
the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod",

In the last lines of the poem, Hopkins "sweeps into the grandeur of one of the most magnificent images of our literature. The image must be huge, because at this point in the poem God Himself enters into the picture, the sole answer to the malice and destruction of man .... And the sun to which these creatures owe their renewal .... merges with the symbolic dove to express the deep subject of the poem - the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in creatures and above all in the souls of man".

"And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black west went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward,
springs -
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with
ah! bright wings".
In another poem "Peace", peace is the gift that the Risen Christ wanted first for all those to whom He appeared. The condition of spiritual growth, is aptly a dove, the symbol of the Holy Ghost who brings about the development of the divine life in our hearts:

"O surely, reaving peace, my Lord should leave in lieu
Some Good! And so he does leave Patience exquisite, That plumes to Peace thereafter. And when Peace here does house He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo, He comes to brood and sit".

Hopkins is here considering the divine activity in his heart as the work of the Holy Ghost. He is considering the divine life within him as stemming from the human nature of Christ, and developing in his heart through the activity of the Holy Ghost, the brooding Dove.

In his meditation notes and commentaries on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Hopkins throws further light on the place of the Pentecostal mystery. As Christ "was led by the spirit into wilderness", the poet-priest prays "to be guided by the Holy Ghost in everything"26. Writing on the finale of the Spiritual
Exercises, "The contemplation for Obtaining Love", Hopkins emphasises:

"Observe then it is on love and the Holy Ghost is called Love (Fons vivus, ignis, caritas'). . . . and the Holy Ghost as he is the bond and mutual love of Father and Son, so of God and man".27.

The quest for a good life comes from God Himself; the desire to seek Him is the urge of the Holy Ghost in men's hearts. The work of the spirit is the same in all- to raise up Christ in glory, the Jesuit motto that was the guiding light in Hopkins's religious life, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*.

3. Mariology

As a devout Catholic, Hopkins denies the view of Mary that had developed in the Protestant tradition. The warmth of a Catholic's personal love for his own life-giving spiritual Mother, his trust in her unshakable love and her intercessory power for him personally, his need to be with her in her precious moments at Nazareth, Bethlehem, Calvary, all throughout time - none of these appear in the Mary of Protestantism. Mary's one work, and a work which is possible because of her immaculate state, is to let the Divine Life
come through into the world, to be the human medium and channel of God's glory. Hence, she is worshipped as "the one woman without stain". Catholics consider themselves the spiritual children of Mary, since she is the mediatrix of all graces and the chief dispenser of the alms of God's mercy and love.

When Robert Bridges brought out the first edition of Hopkins's poems in 1918, he prefaced his notes with a series of critical observations which warned the reader of what be considered to be "dangerous pitfalls".

"If these poems were to be arraigned for errors of what may be called taste, they might be convicted of occasional affectation in metaphor/

... or of some perversion of human feeling...

these ... ... ... are mostly efforts to force emotion into theological channels ... ... ... or again, the exaggerated Marianism warrants investigation, and it would indicate a barrier of reserve between the two poets due to their religious differences. It is remarkable that in *The Scorial*, a prize poem written at the age of sixteen which otherwise betrays the anticatholic tone of his staunch Protestant unbringing, Hopkins devotes three lines to a description of Mary:
"There play'd the Virgin mother with her Child
In some broad palmy mead and saintly smiled
And held a cross of flowers of purple bloom..."
(Stanza 10)

At Balliol College, where he was caught up in the second wave of the Oxford Movement, Hopkins felt a need for discipline and penance and adopted an ascetical mode of life which tended to withdraw him from any delight in a life of the senses. His undergraduate poems "Nondum" and "The Habit of Perfection" made this renunciation explicit. Evidence of a deepening devotion to the Blessed Virgin at this time appears in a memoir written by his friend William Addis many years later:

"Before his reception by Newman (Addis writes), he used to invoke the saints and became full of devotion to the Mother of our Lord. This would astonish me for nobody else I knew went so far. But he always had a fund of good sense and modesty". 23

During his philosophical studies in the Society of Jesus, Hopkins produced two Marian poems Ad Mariam and Rosa Mystica. Though they are of slight artistic value, these poems reveal the poet's new understanding of God as the exemplary cause of every created
perfections he has reconciled the world of the senses with the world of the spirit. The doctrinal content of ad Mariam conveys the general belief in Mary's maiden-motherhood, her fresh beauty of body and soul, her exalted position as she who had brought the Prince of Peace into the world. But in the final stanzas of Rosa Mystica there is the suggestion on our behalf. As Mary is the Mystical Rose and Christ is her Blossom the poet prays that he might be made a leaf on that rosebud. The means of this spiritual union are brought out in the last stanza: the odour of the Rose and of its Blossom is grace, charity, which unites men to Christ and will bring them to their final rest in Heaven. When Hopkins was thirty-two and in his second year of theological studies a hint from his superior was enough to release the pent-up poetic energy of seven years. In the wake of the resounding Deutschland that followed, in the years of his ordination and early priesthood, a flood of his most joyful sonnets of God and Nature. Although none of these are addressed directly to Our Lady, it is interesting to see how she appears in these poems like a recurrent theme. Her place has been clarified by a deeper vision of Christ: as the poet draws closer to Him, he finds himself nearer to Mary too. We find the Blessed Virgin closely united to her Child:
"It dates from day
Of his going in Galilee;
Warm-alaid grave of a womb-life grey;
Manger, maiden's knee;
The dense and driven Passion".

(Wreck of the Deutschland)

In Mary, Christ clothed Himself with our humanity and with it rose to His Passion whence He drew all things to Himself. At the peak of the storm the tall nun in "Deutschland" calls upon Christ's name and so identifies herself with His suffering. In his admiration for her insight the poet pauses to recall that the shipwreck occurred on the eve of the Immaculate Conception:

"Jesu, heart's light
Jesu, maid's son,
What was the feast followed the night
Thou hadst glory of this nun?-
Feast of the one woman without stain".

The sister's calling upon Christ, says Hopkins, was another Advent, another Conception, a closer union of God and Man. Her death, too, is like a glorious torch alight with the flame of Christ - and Mary surrounds Him in the fire:
"Now burn, new-born to the world
The heaven-flung, heart-fleshed, maiden-furled
Miracle-in-Mary-of flame".

Thus does Our Lady Partake of Christ's resplendent glory in His recurrent rebirth throughout the world.

In The Starlight Night, Hopkins's intuition of the universe prepares us to find Mary, too, hidden among the stars. Hopkins sees in the heavens the granary wall in the parable of the harvest:

"This piece-bright plaining shuts the spouse Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows"

In the sonnet entitled Spring, Hopkins completes the picture of Mary as he sees Her at this time. What, he asks, is the meaning of the innocent, untouched beauty of natural growth in spring? It is like Paradise as the world was before the Fall. The first joy of Adam and Eve turns his thoughts upon the innocence of those in the spring of life, and the danger that sin will corrupt them too. There can be only one remedy:

"... Have, get before it cloy,
before it cloud, Christ, Lord, and sour with sinning
Innocent mind and Mayday in girl and Boy,
Most, O maid's child, thy choice and worthy
thy winning". 

Christ, for the poet, is always "a maid's child" and
in the Deutschland a "maid's son" and 'maiden-furled".
He is held upon a "maiden's knee". Thus Hopkins
presents him in the aura of his miraculous birth. He
is "Miracle-in-Mary-of-Flame". Such an emphasis has
a double-effect. First, it underlines the innocence
of Christ's life, and second it reflects praise
upon His mother and reiterates her position of
privelege.

The Marian poems written during Hopkins's
priesthood, though less intense and explosive than
the other works of his maturity, show nevertheless a
freshness and originality that lifts them far above
his former Marian efforts. Like Ad Mariam, The May
Magnificat finds an analogy of Mary in the season of
May-time. The universal growth of

"......flesh and fleece, fur and feather
Grass and greenworld altogether".

reminds Mary of her own expectancy:
"Their magnifying of each its kind
With delight calls to mind
How she did in her stored
Magnify the Lord".

The central stanza plays upon the word "magnificat". She magnifies Christ within her womb by contributing to His physical growth; she magnifies God too, with her lips, with her heart, in praise.

Hopkins's greatest Marian piece The Blessed Virgin compared to the Air we Breathe has been rightly called "a miracle of artistic simplicity, and the mystic import makes it an achievement in Marian poetry almost unrivalled and never surpassed except perhaps by the sublime prose-poems in the writings of St. Bernard".30 "To one who denies God", says Gardner, "The poem must we suppose, seem nugatory. To a Catholic its imagery should require no justification".31

This is eminently true, even to a non-Catholic reader. As one reads, the aptness of Hopkins's analogy is impressed upon the mind with the power of conviction. Then at last the poet turns to Mary with the words

"Be thou then, O thou dear
Mother, my atmosphere"......
the reader is borne irresistibly into his prayer. The introduction balances the mothering element of air against the mothering elements of Mary:

"Wild air, world-mothering air,  
Nestling me everywhere. 

Hopkins approaches the connection of air with life which is intimate not as a source of life, but as

"This needful, never spent,  
And nursing element."

Life's law decrees that our lungs must draw in air, and the poet draws it in to breathe it out in preparation for the Central image of God breathing out His Word through Mary.

Mary the eternal Mother of all is seen first in her divine motherhood; She

"Gave God's infinity,  
Dwindled to infancy  
Welcome in womb,"

and then in Her spiritual motherhood

"But mothers each new grace  
That does now reach our race"
Mary is without any stain of sin, hence she is worthily the world-mother. She raises far higher the seat that Eve had vacated, to be the mother, the Head and in another equally real sense the mother of His members.

To illustrate Mary's divine motherhood, Hopkins adapts an image which he had noted for a sermon some four years earlier:

"St. Bernard's saying, All grace given through Mary: This is a mystery. Like blue sky, which for all its richness of colour does not stain the sunlight, though smoke and red clouds do, so God's grace comes to us unchanged but all through her. Moreover, she gladdens the Catholics's heaven and when she is brightest so is the sun her son: He that sees no blue sees no sun either: so with Protestants."32

Mary's function, as Hopkins suggest, is to let God's glory through without change, so that she is a medium like air, not to be looked at in itself, but to bring the light through and to diffuse it so that

"... every colour grows
Each shape and shadow shows".

By this spiritual mother, says the poet, we are preserved from spiritual death. The poem deeply indicates, then, that Mary is a real woman who gives real life and she is made greater because
she is the channel of divine life. She is the instrument of the Holy Ghost in bringing Christ forth in the world and also His instrument in bringing Christ into our hearts. The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breathe closesfittingly with a prayer for Mary's protection:

* Be thou then, O thou dear Mother, my atmosphere; ....

Stir in my ears, speak there Of God's love, O live air, Of patience, penance, prayer:

World-mothering air, air wild Wound with thee, in thee isled,
Fold home, fast fold thy child,

The traditional Catholic view of Mary was expressed by Augustine thus, and Hopkins echoes him:

"That unique woman is alone truly mother and virgin in a spiritual as in a bodily sense. For she is spiritually mother, not of our Head, who is the Saviour Himself . . . . but clearly spiritually mother of His members, which we are because she cooperated through love that the faithful in the Church might be born, those who are members of that Head of which she is corporally the mother".
The extraordinary desolation of Hopkins's last years in Ireland draws from the poet some pleas for help from the Mother he could address so feelingly in his earlier work. There were periods of frustration and disappointment, when he needed the full resources of his faith to support the mere continuance of effort. The "Terrible Sonnets" he produced at this time suggest that ill-health, loneliness, incapacity for work and literary sterility combined to effect an agony of spirit pushed to the farthest edge of endurance. It is, therefore, not surprising at all, that we find him turning to Mary at moments like these:

"No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch
of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs,
wilder wing.
Comforter, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?"

That the desolate heart of the poet should reach out instinctively in this direction is corroborated by an entry upon the opening words of the Principle and Foundation in the Spiritual Exercises:

"Consider how the Bd. Virgin praised God, her obedience, her sorrows, her prayer, her work, her holy death". 
"Rejoice in her glory. Consider the meeting between Christ and His mother and how the joy of seeing Christ our Lord is from having lived for Him. Pray, therefore, earnestly to do this".  

For Hopkins, therefore, the Incarnate God comes to man through Mary exercising her divine motherhood. The exalted position given by Hopkins to Mary clearly rings of passages in the New Testament: 

"And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call him Jesus . . . . The Holy Spirit will come upon thee, and the power of the most High will overshadow thee".  

and: 

"And now, in heaven a great portent appeared; a woman that wore the Sun as her mantle . . . . She had a child in her womb . . . . She bore a son, the son who is to herd the nations like sheep with a crook of iron. . . . .".  

4. The concept of Sanctifying Grace 

The belief in Divine Grace, so central to Christianity is held by the Roman Catholic Church not as something concretely understood, but as a mystery revealed by God:
"The doctrine of man's deification is so wonderful that the mind finds it hard to believe it true. Conscious as we are of our baseness, we can scarcely credit that we are to receive - or rather have already received so amazing a dignity. We ask ourselves if this is not only a metaphor. It needs the repeated and emphatic assertions of the great teachers of the Church to persuaded us that it is no metaphor, but the literal truth; that the sanctifying grace with which we are endowed communicates to us properties which in their essential nature are divine; that through it we are destined to share in the life and the beatitude of the Ever Blessed Trinity."

The doctrine of Grace is the central pivot and profoundest mystery of the Roman Catholic faith - God's sharing of the inner life of the Holy Trinity with His creatures, through the Incarnation and Sacrifice of Christ. This sharing of God's life, which Roman Catholics signify as "divine grace" is achieved through sharing in Christ's Sacrifice, and it is to this divine life that each must consecrate himself. Fundamental for a discussion on Grace is the fact that God's loving will is extended to all men, and is active in all periods.
of human history. God offers, by means of His grace, every human being the possibility of being saved, and this possibility remains fruitless only through the fault of the person. The acceptance of this offer does not make it a merely human fulfilment, but leaves it divine and supernatural.

The emphasis in modern theology is on the central position of Jesus Christ in creation and salvation. This Christocentric emphasis means that Jesus Christ is the living centre of all revelation and all acts of God. All grace is oriented to the grace of Christ. The Catholic Church tells its members that they are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God." The life-principle of the Church is grace, a gift of God which confers a new life on souls, a sharing in the life of God Himself. Hopkins's own words are revealing:

"In going forth to do sacrifice Christ went not alone but created angels to be his company, lambs to follow Him the Lamb . . . . . . first to the hill of sacrifice, then after that back to God, to beatitude. They were to take part in the sacrifice
and he was to redeem them all, i.e. to say/ for the sake of the Lamb of God, who was God himself, God would accept the whole flock . . . . Christ then like a good shepherd led the way . . . . . .39

This is the theme most influential in the mind and work of Hopkins - the divine life which pours out from the activity of the Trinity upon creation. The sharing of God's own life is infinitely greater than Human life, "of breath and bread", and we are called to the former by "God's finger touching the very vein of personality, which nothing else can reach".40

Hopkins's analysis of grace, in his paper "On Personality, Grace and Free Will" examines the nature of man's consent to the divine activity within him:

"For grace is any action, activity on God's part, by which, in creating or after creating, he carries the creatures to or towards the end of its being, which is its selfsacrifice to God and its salvation. It is, I say, any such activity on God's part: so that so far as this action or activity is God's, it is divine stress, holy spirit, and as all is done through Christ, Christ's spirit, so far as it is looked at in esse quieito it is Christ in his
member oh one side, his member in Christ on the other. It is as if a man said: that is Christ playing at me and me playing at Christ only that it is no play but truth; that is Christ being me and me being Christ". 41

The problem of the way in which grace affects the will of man exercises a strange fascination in the mind of Hopkins. He had taken great pains in studying the works of grace and the influence of grace on free will. He ultimately came to the realization that man without grace is, anticipating T. S. Eliot's terminology, a Hollow Man in a Waste Land. He distinguishes between three kinds of grace:

(i) "quickening, stimulating towards the object, towards good, this especially in the affective will, might be a natural grace and in a high degree seems to be the grace of novices;

(ii) "Corrective, turning the will from one direction of putting it into another, like the needle through an arc, determining it its choice (I mean stimulating that determination which it still leaves free): this touches the elective will or the power of election and is especially the grace of a mature mind;
"elevating, which lifts the receiver from one cleave of being to another and to a vital act in Christ; this is truly God's finger touching the very vein of personality, which nothing else can reach and man can respond to by no play whatever, by bare acknowledgement only, the counter-stress which God alone can feel (subito probas eum), the aspiration in answer to his inspiration." 42.

The greatest event in man's history, according to Hopkins, was the coming of Christ, for through the Incarnation man's dignity was restored to its pre-Fall status, and even more, elevated to a greater glory in the sight of God. It was Christ who became man's source of grace following his fall. In his writings on Grace, Hopkins asserts that man becomes Christ through the action of grace, because he is restored to grace, "This time, corrective grace". This is the grace of purification through sacrifice with Christ as model and exemplar. Hopkins puts it clearly in a Comment on Ignatius's Meditation of the Third Week:

"... These three points are (1) Christ's Human nature and how it suffered: the Victim; (2) his godhead and
The presence of the Divine Grace is necessary in the world in order to redeem man from his sinful state. According to Ignatius and Hopkins there are two primary sins: (i) the first sin was the sin of the angels who, upon coming to pride, were changed from grace into malice and hurled from Heaven into Hell.

(ii) the second sin was the sin of Adam and Eve, who through their disobedience to the Word of God, brought much corruption on the human race. "It is the blight man was born for". (Spring and Fall)

With regard to the third sin, Ignatius describes it as the particular sin of a particular person, who for one mortal sin has gone straight to Hell.

Hence Hopkins is led to speak of grace as a change from "... a worse, ungracious, to a better, a gracious self, is a grace, a favour ..."
it is grace bestowed for a moment, offered for a continuance. A man is not complete until his self, his inmost self, is raised, elevated, and Christ is in him:

"And God in *forma servi* rests in *servo* i.e./ Christ as a solid in his member as a hollow or shell, both things being the image of God, which can only be perfect when the member in all things is conformed to Christ. This too best brings out the nature of the man himself, as the lettering on a sail or device upon a flag are best seen when it fills."

*Amor Dei* — Love of God— was the single motivating factor in Hopkins's life as a priest. During his tenure as Professor of Greek at Dublin, when desolation and disease enveloped him, he found that relief and consolation were afforded by such Pauline verses on Grace:

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair . . . . ; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus made be made manifest in our body."
Similarly, Hopkins fights grief, but with God's love for him.

In the poem *To What Serves Mortal Beauty*, Hopkins asks:

"What do then, how meet beauty? Merely meet it; own Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift, then leave, let that alone, Yea, wish that though, wish all, God's better beauty, Grace".

For the poet, grace is all.

In the "Terrible Sonnets", there is a steady progress from disgust and self-abasement to Grace, in the form of gratitude for the dignity of spirit conferred, benefit procured, and deliverance ensured. The tone is one in which the most solitary inner self speaks to God, at first disquieting, hammering out questions, violently querying. But the end is filled with joy and strength because of what Hopkins thought it meant for man to taste of Grace (Divine Love) essential in the Eucharist. This conception of the in-dwelling of Christ in the hearts of men recalls sooner or later all the great Pauline passages, of being "rooted and grounded in Love" or of "putting on Christ".
So with Hopkins:

"We hear our hearts grate on themselves; it kills
To bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills
Of us we do bid God bend to him even so.
And where is he who more and more distils
delicious kindness?"

(Patience, hard thing!)

In God's Grandeur it is Grace in the form of the Holy
Ghost that comes to men, "quickening" his spirit:

"And for all this nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah!
bright wings".

Christ is the pivot around whom the whole of the
Catholic concept of divine grace revolves:

"But to Christ Lord of thunder
Crouch; lay knee by earth low under:
Holiest, loveliest, bravest
Save my hero, O hero savest.
And the prayer thou hearest me making
Have, at the awful overtaking,"
Heard, have heard and granted
Grace that day was wanted",

(The Loss of the Eurydice)

Again:

"Christ minds: Christ's interest, what to avow
or amend
There, eyes them, heart wants, care haunts,
foot follows kind,
There ransom, their rescue, and first, fast,
last friend".

(The Lantern out of Doors)

and

"I say more: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: that keeps all goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is -
Christ. . . . . . . . ."

(As Kingfishers Catch Fire)

The end of the Deutschland emphasises the
Resurrection of Christ as a means of showering divine
grace on those who would receive:

"Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness
of us, be a crimson-cresseted east
More brightening her, rare-dear Britain,
as his reign rolls
Pride, rose, prince, hero of us, high-priest,
Our hearts' charity's hearth's fire, our
thoughts' chivalry's throng's Lord".

As the devout Christina proclaims the Death
and Resurrection of the Lord, he believes himself called
to a fellowship sealed forever in the blood of Christ.
As seen in the experiences of Hopkins, even as he
feels the anguish of doubt and despair in his day-to-day
experiences, he also feels daily the victory over the
doubt - his faith that Christ is Lord. This Lordship
of Christ and the sense of belonging to Him definitely
accompany Hopkins through all of his work. In other
words, his experience of grace is the experience of a
God met in divine friendship and love, and in a
communion of faith and redemption. As he proclaims in
an early piece:

"I have found the dominant of my range and state-
Love, O my God, to call thee love and love".

(Untitled)
This love is the Divine Love or Grace, bestowed upon
us by
". . . . . . . . . . . the master,
Ipse, the only one, Christ, King, Head".

(The Wreck of the Deutschland, Stanza 28)
NOTES

1. Quoted in 'Religious Trends in English Poetry' -


4. Sermons and Devotional Writings of G\(\text{MH}\), ed. C. Devlin
   (London 1959) p. 17.


7. Letters of GMH to Robert Bridges, ed. C.C. Abbott
   2nd ed. London 1955, p. 188.

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9. Matt. 29:28


11. Sermons and Devotional Writings of GMH, ed. C. Devlin

12. Ibid


15. "The Risen Life" in Sermons preached Before the University


21. Ibid.


29. Quoted in Lahey's "Life". p. 36


31. W. H. Gardner, Study I, Yale Univ. Press (1948) p. 188.

32. Sermons and Devotional Writings of GMH ed. C. Devlin SJ (1959) p. 29.

34. Note Books and Papers pp. 416–17


36. Apocalypse 12:1–5


38. Peter, 1:94.


42. Note Books p. 337

43. Commentary on the Spiritual Exercises — unpublished MS.

44. Note Books p. 332.


