1942

The Unity of Gerard Manley Hopkins' Achievement

M. Charlotte Welch

Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation

http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/418

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1942 M. Charlotte Welch
THE UNITY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS' ACHIEVEMENT

BY

SISTER M. CHARLOTTE WELCH, O.S.B.

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER
OF ARTS IN LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER

1942
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTRODUCTION</strong></td>
<td>Relation between subject matter and mind of the poet—Nature of poetic experience—Effect of faith upon poetic vision—Suitability of religious subject matter to poetry—Gerard Manley Hopkins as a religious poet.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER I. THE WRECK OF THE DEUTSCHLAND.</strong></td>
<td>Characteristics of Hopkins as a child and as a youth—Conversion and vocation—Circumstances of his composition of The Wreck—Its interpretation.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER III. PRIEST AND POET</strong></td>
<td>Parish work—The Loss of the Eurydice—Peace—The Bugler's First Communion—The Handsome Heart—Brothers—Spring and Fall—Felix Randal—Tertianship—Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves—The Leaden Echo and The Golden Echo—The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER IV. THE &quot;TERRIBLE SONNETS&quot;</strong></td>
<td>Appointment to Catholic University of Ireland—Influences upon his mind and work—Sonnets 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 50, and 69—That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire—In Honour of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez.</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONCLUSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BIBLIOGRAPHY</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Vast realms of latent wonder invite discovery in the poetic world. Wonder lies hidden behind the words of every great poem, behind the formal precision which the poet's genius has designed to reproduce his experience. Wonder is impregnated in that experience itself, in all that has contributed to its inception, and in the creative power of man so to act upon it as to produce something new.

For a poem is something new, "something which did not, and could not, originally exist as words."¹ Many elements have contributed to it, as to the poet's thought, from which it emanates. Lowes, in his study of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, demonstrates this relation between poetic subject matter and the mind of the poet. By following clues to the thought of Coleridge found in the poet's Note Book, he traces to their complex origins the hundreds of simple details embodied in his masterpiece. Of the Note Book Lowes says:

It makes possible... at least a divination of that throving and shadowy mid-region of consciousness which is the womb of the creative energy. For it is the total content of the poet's mind, which never gets itself completely expressed and never can, that suffuses or colors everything which flashes or struggles into utterance. Every expression of an artist is merely a focal point of the surging chaos of the unexpressed. And it is that surging and potent chaos which a document like the Note Book recreates.²

¹Lascelles Abercrombie, The Theory of Poetry, p. 54.
The bond of union between a poet's mind and his work is necessarily close. Sometimes a man's poetry is utilized as a means of knowing him when other sources of information are lacking. So also are known facts about the poet used to interpret difficult passages in his work. Such procedure in itself, of course, is inconclusive. Not every poet chooses to write of his own environment. Lands and people he has never seen or known find entrance into his work. His actions do not necessarily correspond with the ideas of moral perfection expressed by his poems. Finally, as Lowes points out, there is always much more in the mind of the poet than he is able to express. Hence it would be futile to attempt to reconstruct a poet's life or character merely from his poems, or to try to explain them solely in the light of his external life. Nevertheless, the total content of his poetry does reconstruct a significant portion of a poet's thought. Certainly the ideas on which his poetry is based have done more than pass through his mind. They have remained there to combine with other ideas in a never-ending process. Lowes describes it as follows:

For the substance of poetry is also the very stuff of words. And in its larger sense as well, the language of poetry is made up inevitably of symbols—of symbols for things in terms of other things. It is a language not of objects, but of the complex relations of objects. And the agency that moulds it is the ceaselessly active power that is special to poetry only in degree—imagination, that fuses the familiar and the strange, the thing I feel and the thing I see, the world within and the world without into a tertium quid that interprets both.

\[\text{Ibid.}\]
The critic, realizing that he possesses in the poet's work a key to the treasure chambers of his mind, may indeed gain access thereby. But if he is to explore them to the full and to determine the sources of their wealth, he will require guides. Thus, as has been shown, Lowes elucidated _The Ancient Mariner_ principally through the help of a Note Book. The note books of a poet, his correspondence, and any known biographical data may well be used in ascertaining the nature of the experiences that have been his. Behind each poem lies at least one, perhaps many, such experiences. "What language explicitly says," according to Abercrombie, "is thought; and thought in poetry is only the symbol of experience."4

The phrase "poetic experience" is said to cover all knowledge that seems in immediate contact with the real.5 Such experience is the basis of all art. In a sense, it is common to the generality of mankind, but "only with the very fortunate man does it spill over in words, sounds, colours, and produce sublime art and deeds."6 Abercrombie explains the mental process which lies behind the creation of all poetry, whether narrative or otherwise:

Something seizes on the poet's attention. It has importance for him; it means something to him; it delights and kindles his mind with the sense of its significance, of its wide relationship with other experiences. He holds it before him in imagination and recurs to it again and again; not to think about it, but simply to enjoy it in his immediate sense of it. It may be anything you please: the one thing necessary is the mode of its acceptance; and this is poetic in

---

5 Thomas Gilby, O.F., _Poetic Experience_, p. 11.
6 Ibid., p. 84.
so far as it is acceptance for face-value, for the value of experience as such, and not for any ulterior values that may be reasoned or moralized out of it. Whatever has been thus accepted, brings with it a certain joy and excitement, to which is due the urgency it takes on the poet's mind, driving him to express it in some appropriate form.  

Poets have sought to understand the nature of these experiences. To Shelley, for example, they were "eternal ideas which lie behind the many-coloured, ever shifting veil that we call reality or life." He felt that the poet's province is "to arrest these apparitions, to veil them in language, to color every other form he touches with their evanescent hues, and so to redeem from decay the visitations of the divinity in man." Shelley sought to preserve them through his art, and he has unquestionably raised numberless others to a share in his exaltation. Yet his life remained tempestuous. The rays of his poetic vision were insufficient to penetrate the veil of life. Only faith can supply the extraordinary rays required for such a vision.

Faith, religious certainty, adds power to poetic vision. It provides contacts with the real, the beautiful, and the eternal. Thus, before a mind of genius, it is able to spread a panorama of potential poetic sublimity. The poet of faith, free from the doubts and contradictions which obscure the sight of others, can envisage greater heights and depths, can experience more intensely the joys of divine visitation and can better understand its terrors, when he has come to know the Divine Visitant and his

---

8See A. C. Bradley, "Shelley's View of Poetry," p. 3.
own relation to Him.

Religious certainty, as Claudel demonstrates, gives the world meaning. It provides a basis on which to build, but it does not banish all human difficulties. A certain number of these always remain to be faced and to be solved.

Of this the poet is, of course, aware. Miss Drew points out that he is intensely conscious of himself as an individual possessed of a physical, mental, and emotional constitution making him unique, as is every other human creature. She says that "one of the impulses behind his writing of poetry is not only to interpret experience to others but to clarify and objectify it to himself." In seeking to do so, the poet brings into play all his faculties of soul and body. A professor of educational psychology directs attention to this, saying: "It is in art that man realizes the most perfect integration of his functions . . . in art, the whole of man functions as a unity; intellect and will, imagination and emotion nourished by the senses, the conscious and the subconscious elements of mind, all have a very important part to play."

It is precisely this view of art, of poetry, which establishes the importance of faith in relation to it. If the artist has the advantage of firm intellectual convictions, and if the subject of his art is in conformity therewith, the integration of his functions will be more nearly perfect. Thus the faith of a Catholic poet, underlying all his experiences,
will serve as a unifying medium and may be expected to color all his work. In the case of a poet who seeks to live the Christian life fully, a Religious, the spiritual coloring will be yet stronger.

The normal environment of a Religious is his religious community. His intellect and will, imagination and emotion, are nourished consciously and unconsciously by spiritual experiences and impressions. Gilby shows that "it is not the soul that acts, that leads what is called 'the spiritual life,' but the person, the composite or complete substance, the rational animal, made up of the two incomplete substances of body and soul." Hence, if his religious life is to be successful, these substances must work in harmony. If they are to be integrated, each must be mindful of the other. When a man lives the spiritual life, his experiences find their inspiration in it. If he is a poet as well and is moved to express these things in words, it is natural that his utterance be of spiritual matters.

A question arises as to the suitability of such material to great poetry. Samuel Johnson considered religious experience too great a thing. "Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul," he said, "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." Characteristic of the changed mental attitude between Johnson's day and ours, is the opposite opinion recently expressed by C. C. Abbott. Criticizing an important poem of our day, its content such as Johnson had re-

---

ferred to, Abbott declares that its subject is not great enough to justify an ode so ambitious. 14

During the years that elapsed between Johnson and Abbott many views were expressed on the subject matter of poetry. In the majority of them, even though they may not mention it explicitly, a place for spiritual experience can readily be discerned.

Wordsworth maintained that the materials of poetry "are to be found in every subject matter which can interest the human mind." 15 He wisely sought his evidence in the writings of the poets themselves rather than in those of the critics. Since it cannot be denied that the relations between God and His creatures have greatly interested human minds of every age, it follows that these relations are appropriate to great poetry.

Carlyle's opinion was that a poet need not go far in search of suitable subject matter, for it is "in him, and around him on every hand." 16 It is the fact that he recognizes this which constitutes the poet, said Carlyle, and he continued:

Wherever there is a sky above him, and a world around him, the poet is in his place; for here too is man's existence, with its infinite longings and small acquireings; its ever-thwarted, ever-renewed endeavors; its unspeakable aspirations, its fears and hopes that wander through Eternity; and all the mystery of brightness and of gloom that it was ever made of, in any age or climate, since man first began to live. 17

17 Ibid.
To Matthew Arnold the selection of "a fitting action" was most important. He believed that the "eternal objects of poetry," those common to all nations, are human actions which possess in themselves an inherent interest. He held that even skillful poetic treatment cannot make an inferior action equal to an excellent one. Therefore, he maintained, the poet must first select an excellent action. Seeking to determine what constitutes such, he said:

Those certainly which appeal to the great primary human affections; to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same also . . . To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting . . . Poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions; let them interest these, and the voice of all subordinate claims on them is at once silenced.18

To Arnold's requirements, as to Carlyle's and Wordsworth's, religious subject matter is suited. Other critics have been explicit in their statements regarding it. The following passage is illustrative:

If, as we are told, poetry is "the suggestion of noble grounds for the noble emotions," what emotions so noble, what grounds so elevated, as those to which devout souls are admitted in communion with their Maker? . . . When a man who has vitally felt these moods adds to them the true poetic gift, we then have the best that human poetry can do.19

19 J. G. Shairp, Aspects of Poetry, p. 73.
As might be expected, Cardinal Newman perceived the interconnection between poetry and spirituality. Maintaining that revealed religion is especially poetical, he said:

While its disclosures have an originality in them to engage the intellect, they have a beauty to satisfy the moral nature. It presents us with those ideal forms of excellence in which a poetical mind delights, and with which all grace and harmony are associated. It brings us into a new world—a world of overpowering interest, of the sublimest views, and the tenderest and purest feelings. The peculiar grace of mind of the New Testament writers is as striking as the actual effect produced upon the hearts of those who have imbibed their spirit... With Christians a poetical view of things is a duty—we are bid to colour all things with hues of faith, to see a divine meaning in every event, and a superhuman tendency. Even our friends around are invested with unearthly brightness—no longer imperfect men, but beings taken into divine favour, stamped with his seal and in training for future happiness.

These statements and others like them attest the fitness of religious poetry. The basis of its inspiration is suggested by Miss Kelly. Speaking of the identity of Truth and Beauty, she says that it "was the revelation that God... had last of all uttered when His Word was made flesh. It was the revelation which the Catholic Church had received and diffused, not only by oral and written teaching but by precept and example through the sublime use to which she put material things."21

It was the revelation, too, which enriched the many English writers received into the Catholic Church during the last half century. Among the first of these was Gerard Manley Hopkins. Victorian by birth, he is never-

theless considered a modern poet. His work, published in 1918, accorded in form and spirit with the new tendencies, and it was enthusiastically received. In every important study of poetry he now finds a place. Yet he has also been misunderstood and criticized. "In our day," says a recent critic, "his prosody is admired and imitated, but can a faithless age always reach his thought?"22

Failure to grasp the thought of Hopkins has resulted in certain criticisms relative to his subject matter. Robert Bridges, personal friend of Hopkins and editor of his poems, classified his faults as "of taste" and "of style." The former, he claimed, "were mostly efforts to force emotion into theological or sectarian channels."23 John Middleton Murry, writing of Hopkins, maintained that "the failure of his whole achievement was due to the starvation of experience which his vocation imposed upon him."24 More recently, in editing the letters of Hopkins to Bridges, C. C. Abbott declared, as already mentioned, that the academic religious subject of the Deutschland is unable to bear the stress of an ode so ambitious,"25 and that the succeeding lyrics are "only secondarily religious poems."26 He saw, in general on Hopkins' part, "a determined effort to coerce his poetry into narrowly Roman Catholic channels."27

23 Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, pref. to Notes, p. 96.
24 Aspects of Literature, p. 60.
26 Ibid., p. xxviii.
27 Ibid., p. xxxi.
It has been said that poetry "is a contact with the ineffable, which passes from the poet to the poem, from the poem to those who can apprehend it."28 I believe that the critics quoted above and others like them were unable thus to apprehend the poetry of Hopkins. The experiences of which he wrote were strange to them, and they did not fully comprehend their significance either in themselves or to the poet. Hence they concluded that Hopkins would have been a greater poet if he had written of other things.

What Hopkins would have been under other circumstances, it is impossible to prove. He must be taken as he was, an "honest actor-out of his convictions."29 By this, I mean that Hopkins regulated all in conformity with the faith and vocation which, as the result of a firm intellectual conviction, he had freely accepted, the action of and correspondence with grace being presupposed. Doing so consistently enabled him to achieve spiritual, intellectual, and emotional unity.

This does not imply that such a course involved no spiritual, intellectual, or emotional struggle. In fact, its result can be termed an achievement only because of the effort, self-discipline, and submission that were necessary. Hopkins himself realized that they were essential to his success. That he was thereby rendered unhappy is not true. It is important to remember that "it is not pleasure, not enjoyment, but the possession of the object of desire which constitutes happiness."30 Hopkins, much better than his friends and critics, knew what he desired, and he directed his life

toward its attainment. His success constituted his spiritual achievement, and it was attended by happiness.

His poetic achievement cannot be viewed apart from it, for he has made them one. It is here that his subject matter must be studied. Considered in this light, it fits into its proper place, not as something to which he forced himself from a sense of duty, but as an integral part of a unified achievement. It was integral to the existence of that unity. If his material had been in no sense religious, there could have been no unity. Moreover, poetry served to express the joys or fears and to resolve the conflicts which Hopkins encountered. Thus it occupied an important place in the working out of that unity. This it could not have done if the subject matter had been other than it was. It had a very real connection with his spiritual life.

For that reason it is possible to understand Hopkins' poetic subject matter only by studying it in relation to his spiritual life. It manifests the nature of his thought and experience in the various periods of that life. This becomes clear when the poems are read in the light of his notes and correspondence and of the facts of his biography. Those things which found expression in his poetry were supreme in the mind of Hopkins.
"Like a great dragon folded in the gate to forbid all entrance, and confident in his strength from past success"—thus did Robert Bridges envision the poem which he placed "logically as well as chronologically in the front" of Hopkins' book. Hopkins had been dead for almost thirty years when Bridges paid him the tribute of posthumous publication.

Their friendship had begun at Oxford, whither Hopkins had gone in 1863. Mutual admiration and similarity of interests had encouraged its development. Yet, when Hopkins' convictions had led him into the Roman Catholic Church in 1866, his friend had not followed him. Still less had he been sympathetic toward Hopkins' entry into the Jesuit novitiate two years later. Bridges felt "an unconquerable repugnance to the full-blown Roman theology." It is not surprising, therefore, that he found "both subject and treatment were distasteful," when Hopkins sent him The Wreck of the Deutschland, written in 1875.

Such lack of comprehension in religious matters was not strange to Hopkins. He had encountered it from family as well as from friends. His conversion had grieved them. Henry Parry Liddon, to whom Hopkins had made his first confession with a contrition never to be exceeded, had written

2 Ibid.
four dissuasive letters within as many days. There had been also a letter from Pusey, warning: "You have a heavy responsibility. Those who will gain by what you seem determined to do will be the unbelievers."6

This insistence on the part of Hopkins' associates was but a proof of the respect and affection he had inspired in them. There is evidence of the same effect upon his friends of pre-Oxford days. While in attendance at Sir Robert Cholmondley's Grammar School at Highgate, Gerard had much admired one of the instructors, Richard Watson Dixon. Many years later, when this acquaintance was renewed by correspondence, Dixon was able to recall the "pale young boy, very light and active, with a very meditative and intellectual face," who "got a prize for English poetry."7

Another friend of those days, of his own age, was Marcus Clarke, who later became famous as a writer in Australia. He seems never to have forgotten Gerard, and he brought him into his story, Holiday Peak or Mount Might-have-been:

"An artist lives there," was my first thought, for nowhere in the world, save in the pictures of Prout, do we see bits of colour floating about in that fashion.
"Yes, you are right," said a young man emerging from the well-dressed crowd which throngs in spring the steps of the Academy.
It was Gerard!
Gerard, my boy-friend, who fled from Oxford to Stonyhurst, and embraced the discipline of Loyola.
"Gerard, what means this?"
"Dear old fellow!" said he, putting his arm round my neck, in the fond old schoolboy fashion, "It means that I thought better of my resolve, and followed out the natural bent of my talents. My picture, the 'Death

6Ibid., p. 44.
7The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (June 8, 1878), p. 4.
of Alkibiades,' is the talk of the year. I shall soon be as famous as you."

"As If You jest..." "Ah! lucky fellow!" said Gerard, "how different things might have been..."8

It had not been characteristic of Gerard even as a boy to "think better of his resolutions." His was a decisive nature, and he had early accustomed himself to act in accordance with his convictions. Father Lahey relates two other incidents of his childhood, which are indicative of this early tendency. They were recalled by Gerard's brother, Mr. Cyril Hopkins.

One day he informed his friends at Elgin House that, observing that nearly every one consumed more liquids than was good for them, he would prove the correctness of his theory by abstaining from drinking anything for a week.

And he carried out his resolution and could not be persuaded to desist until the period in question had gone by.

The effect was that he collapsed when at drill, and had to ask leave to go home (i.e. to Elgin House), for the drilling took place in the playground. When informed, after he had left, of the cause of his indisposition, the old drill sergeant (an ex-Guardsman) thought it incredible, and could not believe it to be true. Upon which, the boy who had told him, and who was far from being sympathetic, exclaimed, "A lie indeed! He tell a lie? Why, he would rather die!"...

On another occasion, Gerard discovered that every one ate too much salt at their meals and passed a week without taking any, in the same manner. This latter experiment was not only severe self-restraint, but much moral courage in facing hostile public opinion, which can make itself felt at school as much or perhaps more than anywhere else.9

8 Quoted in Gerard Manley Hopkins, by G. F. Lahey, S.J., p. 5.
These youthful traits are further revealed in an early letter:

I am no longer an Elginite--I am a dayboarder. Fancy that of me. But it arose thus. Last quarter while working for the Exhibition I petitioned Dyne for a private room to work in, representing to him the great disadvantage I was at compared with my rivals . . . in this respect. He quite readily and ungrudgingly . . . granted me one of her rooms . . . so I was really quiet and comfortable for a little time. So far so good, but shortly afterwards I got nearly expelled, deprived of the testimonial which enables one to try for the ex. and degraded to the bottom of the prefects for the most trifling ludicrous little thing which I cannot relate at present and actually was turned out of the room and had to make apologies to avoid the other punishments being inflicted. Dyne and I had a terrific altercation. I was driven out of patience and cheeked him wildly, and he blazed into me with his riding-whip. However Nesfield and Mrs. C. soon gave me back my room on their own responsibility, repenting, I believe, of their shares in my punishment. Shortly after this Bord's cards were discovered but happily in that matter I was found irreproachable, but not so in the next case, when like a fool I seized one of the upstairs candles on Sunday night when they had taken ours away too soon and my room was denied me for a week. Nesfield presently offered it me back as a favour, but in such a way that I could not take it."10

Thus as a child Hopkins had already manifested the independence of mind which was to embolden him in the more important decisions of later life. His mind had been already made up when, in August, 1866, he had written to Newman, regarding his desire to enter the Catholic Church: "I do not want to be helped to any conclusions of belief . . . You will understand that by God's mercy I am clear as to the sole authority of the Church of Rome."11

Moreover, his duty being plain, he had permitted himself no unnecessary

11 Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 11.
delay in acting. On October 15, he had written to Newman:

But what I am writing for is this—they [his parents] urge me with the utmost entreaties to wait till I have taken my degree—more than half a year. Of course it is impossible, and since it is impossible to wait as long as they wish it seems to me useless to wait at all. Would you therefore wish me to come to Birmingham at once, on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday? You will understand why I have any hesitation at all, namely therefore if immediately after their letters urging a long delay I am received without any, it would be another blow, and look like intentional cruelty. I did not know till last night the rule about communicatio in sacris—at least as binding catechumens, but I now see the alternative thrown open, either to live without church and Sacraments, or else, in order to avoid the Catholic Church, to have to attend constantly the services of that very church. This brings the matter to an absurdity and makes me think that any delay, whatever relief it may bring to my parents, is impossible. I am asking you then whether I shall at all costs be received at once.12

It had been the same with his vocation. He had not embraced it in sudden, unpremeditated enthusiasm. He had acted with decision but only after consideration. On January 9, 1868, he had written to Bridges:

But the uncertainty I am in about the future is so very unpleasant and so breaks my power of applying myself to anything, that I am resolved to end it, which I shall do by going into a retreat at Easter at the latest and deciding whether I have a vocation to the priesthood. Do not repeat this.13

Five months later he wrote:

As soon as possible after my return [from Switzerland] I go, as perhaps Challis told you, into the Jesuit novitiate. My address will then be Manresa House, S.W., and perhaps some time when you are in town you might come and see me ... I cannot promise

12 Ibid., p. 19.
to correspond, for in that way novices are restricted, but I have no doubt that now and then I shd. be able to send you a letter. 14

The Jesuit life had not promised to be an easy one. Yet Hopkins, eager to make his oblation complete, had gone farther than Rule or superiors demanded of him and had burned his early poems. This he related later in a letter to Dixon:

What I had written I burnt before I became a Jesuit and resolved to write no more, as not belonging to my profession, unless it were by the wish of my superiors; so for seven years I wrote nothing but two or three little presentation pieces which occasion called for. But when in the winter of '75 the Deutschland was wrecked in the mouth of the Thames and five Franciscan nuns, exiles from Germany by the Falck Laws, aboard of her were drowned I was affected by the account and happening to say so to my rector he said that he wished someone would write a poem on the subject. On this hint I set to work and, though my hand was out at first, produced one. I had long had haunting my ear the echo of a new rhythm which I now realized on paper. 16

In this manner emerged once more the poet in Hopkins, now a young Jesuit pursuing his theological studies at St. Beuno's College, North Wales. Seven years of religious discipline had had its effect upon him, and this is reflected in his poem. Bridges called it a "great metrical experiment" which "must have served to establish the poet's prosody and perhaps his diction." 17 Certainly the result was strange to unaccustomed eyes and ears.

14 Such abbreviations appear frequently in Hopkins' letters. They are quoted throughout this paper as he wrote them.
Hopkins said that when he offered his poem to *The Month*, a Jesuit publication, "they dared not print it." It was indeed a departure in form from the typically Victorian. It was a departure too in thought.

Robert Bridges edited and published *The Wreck of the Deutschland* together with most of Hopkins' other poems in 1918. In 1930, a second edition was published, with an Appendix of Additional Poems and a Critical Introduction by Charles Williams. Bridges tells us that there are three transcripts of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. One was in his own collection, "a MS. book made up of autographs--by which word I denote poems in the author's handwriting--pasted into it as they were received from him." Another is in a MS. book into which, in 1883, Bridges copied from his collection certain poems of which Hopkins had kept no copy. Regarding this book, Bridges says,

He was remiss in making fair copies of his work, and his autograph of *The Deutschland* having been (seemingly) lost, I copied that poem and others . . . at his request. After that date he entered more poems in this book as he completed them, and he also made both corrections of copy and emendations of the poems which had been copied into it by me. Thus if a poem occur in both A and B, then B is the later and, except for overlooked errors of copyist, the better authority. The last entry written by Gerard Manley Hopkins into this book is of the date 1887.

Regarding the version which he published, Bridges said:

Text from B, title from A. In "The Spirit of Man" the original first stanza is given from A, and varies:

---


19 *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, pref. to notes, p. 94.

20 Ibid.
otherwise B was not much corrected. Another transcript, now at St. Aloysius' College, Glasgow, was made by Rev. F. Bacon after A but before the correction of B. This was collated for me by Rev. Father Geoffrey Bliss, S. J., and gave one true reading.\textsuperscript{21}

The Wreck of the Deutschland was inscribed by Hopkins, "To the happy memory of five Franciscan Nuns exiles by the Falk Laws drowned between midnight and morning of Dec. 7, 1875."\textsuperscript{22} Ostensibly this event is the subject of the poem. To call it its inspiration would be more nearly correct. The subject is more personal, yet at the same time more universal. It will be shown that part of the poem is based on experiences of the poet's own; the other part relates a single, though noble, incident in the drama of man's Redemption. Yet the two parts are closely united, as mankind is united, in Christ. His sufferings explain those of the poet, those of the nuns, and those of the other passengers in the wreck.

When C. C. Abbott edited the letters of Hopkins to Bridges he criticized The Wreck because of its subject matter:

The poet is handicapped by the academic religious subject and by his determination to make the poem safe as doctrine. The work is marred by the something of propaganda and "presentation piece" that pervades it, and becomes definitely smaller—excited, violent, over-pitched—as the main subject \textsuperscript{[Stanza 20]} is approached and the poet strives to justify his choice. It is curiously built. The two parts can almost be regarded as two separate poems, and the first, loosely linked to the other, is the more important."\textsuperscript{23}

An element of self-contradiction enters into this critic's statement.

\textsuperscript{21}Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, notes, pp. 103-4.
\textsuperscript{22}Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, edited by Robert Bridges, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{23}Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, intro., p. xxvi.
He maintains that the wreck itself is the main subject of the poem; yet he says that the other part is more important. He blames the subject for his "qualified approval" of the poem; then he declares that what he has called the more important part of the subject, "the passionate personal statement is perhaps the main factor in shaping the new rhythm," the source too of "that feeling of strain and stress, of lines mightily hammered on an anvil or hewn with great strokes." In regarding the two parts as almost separate poems, he betrays what is the root of his misunderstanding. Actually there is a close and unifying bond between the parts which, itself, is the main subject of the poem.

Failure fully to comprehend the poem is easily explained. Hopkins himself wrote to Bridges concerning it:

Granted that it is obscure, for indeed I was not over-desirous that the meaning of all should be quite clear, at least unmistakable, you might, without the effort that to make it all out would seem to have required, have nevertheless read it so that lines and stanzas should be left in the memory and superficial impressions deepened, and have liked some without exhausting all.

Some time later, Hopkins, in another connection, wrote: "One of two kinds of clearness one shd. have--either the meaning to be felt without effort as fast as one reads or else, if dark at first reading, when once made out to explode." 27

24Ibid.
25Ibid.
27Ibid., (Oct. 8, 1879), p. 90.
The Wreck can not well lay claim to either of these kinds of clearness. It approaches too closely the realm of "the mystery hidden for ages in God the Creator of all things."28 This "mystery" has been defined by Père Prat as "the plan conceived by God from all eternity . . . to save all men . . . by identifying them with His well-beloved Son in the unity of the Mystical Body."29 That Hopkins wrote his poem as an exposition of that doctrine is not probable. We are told that "The Jesuits . . . are . . . brief in their consideration of the subject, at least until the nineteenth century. We refer only to Jesuit theologians; the exegetes have more to say."30 The nineteenth century was of course approaching its close when Hopkins wrote this poem. While he does not explicitly refer to the doctrine in his extant notes or letters, there is evidence that its underlying idea was familiar to him. Some years after The Wreck of the Deutschland, in 1881, he wrote:

For grace is any action, activity, on God's part by which, in creating or after creating, he carries the creature to or towards the end of its being, which is its self-sacrifice 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 action, correspondence, on the creature's it is actio salutaris; so far as it is looked at in esse quieto it is Christ in his member on the 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.31

28 Eph. 3:9.
29 Quoted in The Whole Christ, by Emile Mersch, S.J., p. 90.
Hopkins' great interest in Duns Scotus reveals no further evidence. "The scotists, following the example of the Doctor Subtilis, often say nothing about it."

Nevertheless, the incorporation of humanity in Christ, particularly as regards His suffering, is strikingly apparent throughout the poem. It is the unifying idea. This is possible even though Hopkins might have expressed differently the subject of his poem. He would perhaps have been more inclined to say with Page, and we may agree with him, "The subject is still the salvation of souls."35

John Livingston Lowes speaks34 of what he calls, borrowing from Henry James, "the deep well of unconscious cerebration."35 He uses it to describe the activity in a poet's mind:

One after another bits from what he read dropped into that deep well. And there, below the level of conscious mental processes, they set up their obscure and powerful reactions. ... Facts which sank at intervals out of conscious recollection drew together beneath the surface through almost chemical affinities of common elements ... And there in Coleridge's unconscious mind, ... there in the dark moved the phantasms of the fishes and animalcules and serpentine forms of his vicarious voyagings, thrusting out tentacles

---

34The Road to Xanadu, p. 56.
35The following entry in Hopkins' Journal for August 9, 1873, is of interest here:

Some yellow spoons came up with the tumblers after dinner. Somebody said they were brass and I tasted them to find out and it seemed so. Some time afterwards as I came in from a stroll with Mr. Purbrick he told me Hugel had said the scarlet or rose-colour of flaminggos [sic] was found to be due to a fine copper powder on the feathers. As he said this I tasted the brass in my mouth. It is what they call unconscious cerebration, a bad phrase. [Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 179.]
The creatures of the great deep had become the new creation of yet deeper deep. And when the flash of inspiration at last came—that leap of association which, like the angel in the Gospel, stirred to momentary potency the waters of the pool—it was neither fish, nor animalcules, nor snake-like things, nor veritable water snakes, but these radiant creatures of the subliminal abyss that sported on the face of a sea lit by a moon which had risen from the same abyss.

The comparison is not very apt in the case of Hopkins, since his material was of such different sort. However, he too read and experienced much, and vivid bits dropped into the "deep well." When he wrote The Wreck, he was studying theology. All that goes into that study is essential to an understanding of the unity which is the Mystical Body:

To understand this unity we must understand the nature of the Incarnation which has brought it to our earth, the nature of the divine life whence this unity flows, the nature of justification of which it is one aspect, the nature of original sin of which it is the reparation, the nature of the Eucharist of which it is the supernatural effect...; in a word, we must understand the whole of Christian doctrine.

With all of these the mind of Hopkins was occupied when he wrote the poem. There is, moreover, the indisputable fact that the Mystical Body is a doctrine as old as the Church. By what name Hopkins would have called the subject of his poem, matters little. Its unifying principle is clearly mankind's incorporation in Christ. One phase of that incorporation is manifest throughout. St. Augustine expressed it thus: "Christ's whole body groans in pain. Until the end of the world, when pain will pass away, this

man groans and cries to God. And each one of us has part in the cry of that whole body."\(^38\)

Close to an understanding of the poem's content is F. R. Leavis. He recognizes in the account of the storm an account also of an inner drama. He says that the wreck "is both occasion and symbol." Hopkins, he says, "realizes it so vividly that he is in it; and it is at the same time in him . . . He takes the actual wreck as the type of the worldly disaster that brings conviction, supernatural assurance to the soul . . . and identifies such experience mystically with Christ's Passion."\(^39\)

What Leavis says is true, if by mystically we are to understand something mysterious, remote from or beyond comprehension.\(^40\) If, however, it is used in the sense of allegorical or emblematical,\(^41\) it is an understatement. To Hopkins, as in truth, the connection is very close between his suffering, the nuns', and Christ's in His Passion.

The poem, as has been said, is divided into two main parts, closely related. The wreck may be considered as "the flash of inspiration" which brought to the surface all the associations from reading and experience that had been mingling in the "well" of Hopkins' mind. It brought to him a unified vision. "By the act \[of the pren\] I do not mean the mere physical fact of shipwreck, but a more profound spiritual act to which the shipwreck

\(^38\)Quoted in The Whole Christ, by Emile Mersch, S.J., p. 423.
\(^39\)New Bearings in English Poetry, pp. 175-6.
\(^40\)Webster's New International Dictionary.
\(^41\)Ibid.
is material or fuel only, and of which the poem is utterance.\[42\]

The whole of Part the First is an address to God. In the first stanza, Hopkins recognizes Him as the giver and sustainer of life, supreme on land
and sea and Lord of living and dead. God has indeed created his being, but,
having done so, He has since almost destroyed him with dread. Now, the poet
asks, is he to be afflicted afresh, for he again feels the finger of God.
This very feeling, however, has become to him a means of finding God.

Gardner discusses this stanza:

In the opening invocation . . . we are made to
feel that the poet's first emotions were painful and
disturbing; we perceive that there has been a mental
struggle, in which the problem of evil and the
Christian doctrine of Divine love and Omnipotence
have been with difficulty reconciled by reason and
faith . . . But whatever may have been the precise
nature of the first mental conflict, it is certain
that he had attained the tranquillity of faith before
he began the poem.\[43\]

He bases this opinion on internal evidence of the poem, maintaining
that such confession and complete surrender would be impossible without some
previous conflict. He adds a note to his statement, "Many of Hopkins' co-
religionists would deny this difficulty."\[44\]

On the whole Gardner's discussion of the poem is sympathetic and
appreciative. This is one of the places, however, where he fails to grasp
the poet's viewpoint. There would seem to be no particular reason why one
should deny some difficulty on Hopkins' part if it existed. The supreme

---

\[42\] Bernard Kelly, The Mind and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, [p. 20.]
\[44\] Ibid.
Exemplar of Christian suffering experienced a struggle during His Agony:

"Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me." 45

Hopkins' co-religionists would expect him to have difficulties and to reconcile them by reason and faith. However, judging from Hopkins' account of how he came to write the poem, he does not seem to have endured a severe mental conflict on this occasion. Rather did he feel its inspiration. Hopkins is here viewing human suffering on a large scale. It would be strange to think that he had advanced so far in his religious training without having encountered the problem before. Here he gives it "its only tolerable solution"; 46 he shows that the nun's suffering becomes sacrifice by means of her "perfect act of oblation." 47

From the first stanza of the poem, Hopkins identifies himself closely with the victims of the wreck:

... and dost thou touch me afresh

This new "touch" is not a personal one; yet it becomes so to one who understands the unity of mankind in Christ. It suggests a passage from a modern Jesuit: "Included in this 'Me' of Christ, this Whole Christ, Christians are united with their Saviour God in a mysterious union; through that same union they are, as co-members, most intimately united also with each other." 48

45Matthew 26:39.
46Bernard Kelly, op. cit., [p. 29.]
47Ibid., [p. 25.]
Immediately the poet is reminded of a personal trial on some past occasion when he had united his will with God's. The context leads to the belief that the occasion had been one of overmastering fear:

\[\text{I did say yes}
\text{O at lightning and lashed rod;}
\text{Thou heardst me truer than tongue confess}
\text{Thy terror, O, Christ, O God. [Stanza 2]}\]

Kelly, pointing out that stanzas 2 and 3 overshadow in the poet's mind what is later to be enacted on deck, says: "They overshadow too, in a way marvelously complete, the later spiritual life of the poet himself, a life of stress and terror and the rare dear joy of consolation, that we understand clumsily, but the saints know perfectly and with great gladness."\textsuperscript{49}

This observation is no doubt correct. However, it seems clear that Hopkins had in mind rather a particular and still vivid experience of his past spiritual life. Gardner calls attention to "the undeniably personal nature of the confession"\textsuperscript{50} in the lines:

\[\text{Thou knowest the walls, altar and hour and night:}
\text{The swoon of a heart that the sweep and the hurl of thee trod}
\text{Hard down with a horror of height. [Stanza 2]}\]

Hopkins' spiritual diaries are not available. Occasionally, however, there slipped into his Journal certain notes which indicate flashes of deep religious experience. Some of these entries were made previous to the writing of The Wreck of the Deutschland. They are of interest here, for they are illustrative of the penetrating power of his poetic vision. They reveal the sort of thing of which Gilby spoke when he said that all of us

may have such experiences, but only a few of us are so fortunate as to be able to express them. Hopkins would have been able had he been writing poetry at that time. Some critics find his Journal disappointing in that it does not reveal enough of his personality; nor does it express intimate reflections on his contemporaries. It contains principally references to the weather, to natural phenomena and beauties, to legends and localisms, to things in general which would be of interest to the poet. It is possible that Hopkins included these particular incidents of his spiritual life because he saw that they too would be of poetic interest and value. There are altogether about eleven such entries. Just a few of them are quoted here:

[Dec. 23, 1869] One day in the Long Retreat... they were reading in the refectory Sister Emmerich's account of the Agony in the Garden and I suddenly began to cry and sob and could not stop. I put it down for this reason, that if I had been asked a minute beforehand I should have said nothing of the sort was going to happen and even if it did I stood in a manner wondering at myself not seeing in my reason the traces of an adequate cause for such strong emotion—and traces of it, I say, because of course the cause itself is adequate for the sorrow of a lifetime. I remember much the same thing on Maundy Thursday, when the presanctified Host was carried to the Sacristy. But neither the weight nor the stress of sorrow (that is to say of the thing which should cause sorrow) by themselves move us or bring the tears; as a sharp knife does not cut for being pressed as long as it is pressed without any shaking of the hand, but there is always one touch, something striking sideways and unlooked for, which

51 Poetic Experience, p. 11.
52 See Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, intro., p. xix.
in both cases undoes resistance and pierces; and this
may be so delicate that the pathos seems to have gone
directly to the body and cleared the understanding in
its passage. On the other hand, the pathetic touch
by itself, as in dramatic pathos, will only draw
slight tears if its matter is not important or not of
import to us, the strong emotion coming from a force
which was gathered before it was discharged. 53

[March 13, 1872] After a time of trial and
especially a morning in which I did not know which way
to turn as the account of De Rance's final conversion
was being read at dinner the verse Qui confidunt in
Domino siunt mons Sion which satisfied him and resolved
him to enter his abbey of La Trappe by the mercy of God
came strongly home to me too, so that I was choked for
a little while and could not keep in my tears. 54

[Sept. 14, 1873] I had a nightmare that night. I
thought something or someone leapt onto me and held me
quite fast: this I think woke me, so that after this I
shall have had the use of reason. This first start is,
I think a nervous collapse of the same sort as when one
is very tired and holding oneself at stress not to sleep
yet suddenly goes slack and seems to fall and wakes,
only on a greater scale and with a loss of muscular con-
tral reaching more or less deep; this one to the chest
and not further, so that I could speak, whispering at
first, then louder . . . I had lost all muscular sense
elsewhere but not sensitive, feeling where each limb
lay and thinking that I could recover myself if I could
move my finger, I said, and then the arm and so the whole
body. The feeling is terrible: the body no longer swayed
as a piece by the nervous and muscular instress seems to
fall in and hang like a dead weight on the chest. I
cried on the holy name and by degrees recovered myself
as I thought to do. It made me think this was how the
souls in hell would be imprisoned in their bodies as in
prisons and of what St. Theresa says of the "little press
in the wall" where she felt herself to be in her vision. 55

53 The Note-Books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 128.
54 Ibid., p. 158.
55 Ibid., pp. 184-5.
The exact nature of the spiritual experience which Hopkins recalls in The Wreck cannot be determined. He referred to autobiographical aspects of the poem when he wrote to Bridges: "I may add for your greater interest and edification that what refers to myself in the poem is all strictly true and did occur; nothing is added for poetical padding." He had said too that he was not "over-desirous" that all of the poem should be quite clear.

However, the next lines of his poem give a further insight into his experience:

The frown of His face
Before me, the hurdle of hell
Behind, where, where was a, where was a place? [Stanza 3]

We know of two important and difficult choices made by Hopkins: his conversion and his vocation. Each had involved the oblation of things which he cherished. What it cost him can be only guessed from the circumstances and from brief hints in his letters. One of the most revealing was written to Cardinal Newman: "I have been up at Oxford just long enough to have heard from my father and mother in return for my letter announcing my conversion. Their answers are terrible: I cannot read them twice. If you will pray for them and me just now I shall be deeply thankful." 

Father Lahey quotes one of Hopkins' contemporaries at St. Beuno's:
"I have rarely known anyone who sacrificed so much in undertaking the yoke of religion. If I had known him outside, I should have said that his love of speculation and originality of thought would make it almost impossible

57 Ibid. (May 21, 1878), p. 50.
for him to submit his intellect to authority."\(^5^9\)

Doubtless there had been sometime a struggle of supreme intensity. But Hopkins had made his decision quickly. Flinging off the spell—whether of depression, of rebellion, or of some other sort—he had sought refuge in Christ. Here, may be recognized a looking forward to the nun's experience in Stanza 24. Hopkins' suffering was doubtless of the spirit, whereas hers was of the body. Yet each finds its prototype in Christ. Hopkins' reference to Him here as the Host is a recognition of His sacrifice.

I whirled out wings that spell
And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart
of the Host.

In the next stanza, Hopkins compares himself to the sand in an hourglass. Though "it crowds and it combs to the fall," it is safe within the glass which is fast to the wall. Immediately there follows a second image:

I steady as a water in a well, to a poise, to a pane,
But \textit{rapped} with, always, all the way down from the tall
Fells or flanks of the voel, a vein
Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ's gift.

[B stanza 4]

Bridges has included an explanatory note on this. He says:

Father Bliss tells me that the Voel is a mountain not far from St. Beuno's College in N. Wales, where the poem was written; and Dr. Henry Bradley that moel is primarily an adj. meaning \textit{bald}; it becomes a fem. subst. meaning bare hill, and preceded by the article \textit{y} becomes voel, in modern Welsh spelt \textit{foel}. This accounts for its being written without initial capital, the word being used generically; and the meaning, obscured by \textit{rapped}, is that the well is fed by the trickles of water within the flanks of the mountains.\(^6^0\)

\(^{59}\)Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 132.
\(^{60}\)Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, notes, p. 104.
The reference of the stanza is clearly to the grace which flows from the Gospel—the revelation of Christ. It has been said that within the framework of Our Lord’s life on earth "there are two rich streams of human contact." The greater was through his mother.

The second stream was through His apostles—the men He gathered round Him, and prepared with especial care as the instruments for the spread of His kingdom among men... The fruit of our Lady's thirty years with Christ and the apostles' three years with Him, enshrined in part in the gospels, is the very essence of the Christian tradition, woven into the very fabric of the Christian mind.61

Hopkins, in Stanza 2, expressed "a horror of height," and confessed "Thy terror, O Christ, O God." But here he represents the streams, "the vein of the gospel proffer," flowing from the mountain, God, to feed the well, his soul. "Christ... in a sense, is God translating Himself into our nature... The fact that Christ is God takes on a new significance... To realize that the knowledge... acquired of Christ is true of God is altogether revolutionary. For only by learning that Christ is Love have men learnt that God is love: and that is almost the greatest gift of Christianity to the world."62

That the preceding passage expresses something of Hopkins' meaning seems clear from the stanzas which follow. The knowledge of God can be acquired by various means. One of these is the beauties of nature. "In the Universe we have God's work before our eyes and by examining any work we can learn something of the workman. But, in practical fact, not much."63

61F. J. Sheed, A Map of Life, pp. 54-6.
62Ibid., pp. 53-4.
63Ibid., p. 53.
This is just what the poet says:

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.  

[Stanza 5]

The words instressed and stressed are important to an understanding of the poem. Gardner explains the former as an intensive form of the latter. He says that it usually conveys an idea of a supernatural overmastering influence accompanied by a sudden inrush of revelation. He sees in it an expression of the concept of Bonaventura and Anselm that all perfect knowledge is dependent upon an illumination. Such illuminations Hopkins sometimes enjoyed even from nature as may be seen from his Journal. He is speaking here of the Northern Lights:

This busy working of nature wholly independent of the earth and seeming to go on in a strain of time not reckoned by our reckoning of days and years but simpler and as if correcting the preoccupation of the world by being preoccupied with and appealing to and dated to the day of judgment was like a new witness to God and filled me with a delightful fear.

However there is something about God, "His mystery" which "must be instressed, stressed." This is not displayed by "the world's splendour and wonder," although "he is under" it. It becomes known only by stress, the supernatural overmastering influence accompanied by revelation. It is

65Note Books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 135.
necessary knowledge, for it enables human beings to meet Christ with recognition, to understand the love at work in His designs and thus to bless Him.

This definite use of the term "His mystery" recalls the explanation of Père Prat already referred to. This is God's plan for saving all men by identifying them with His Son in the Mystical Body.66 Hopkins states that the necessary revealing stress does not spring from "the bliss" of God. Nor does He swing first from Heaven the stroke that is to deliver it. The stroke and stress are delivered by stars and storms. Their effect is to remit guilt and soften hearts. Faith is essential to their comprehension.

And here the faithful waver, the faithless fable and miss.

The stress, the revelation, here spoken of is inseparably united with the human Christ:

It dates from day
Of his going in Galilee
Warm-laid grave of a womb-life grey;
Manger, maiden's knee;
The dense and the driven Passion, and frightful sweat;
Thence the discharge of it, there its swelling to be,
Though felt before, though in high flood yet---
What none would have known of it, only the heart being hard at bay
Is out with it! [Stanza 7]

Thus, says the poet, it is in Christ's Passion that the revelation of "His mystery" reaches its greatest height and is released. This, God's plan, was from all eternity, before the Passion of Christ; there are traces of it in The Old Testament.67 It is still being worked out today. However, it is only when the heart is "hard at bay," in a desperate situation and

66 See The Whole Christ by Emile Mersch, S.J., p. 90.
67 See The Whole Christ by Emile Mersch, S.J., p. 49.
forced, as it were, to turn and face its pursuer, God, that the true understanding of the mystery comes. It will flood the soul of a sudden. Hopkins compares the swiftness of the revelation with a sloe bursting in the mouth and instantly filling man's physical being with "sour or sweet." It is then to the feet of the Christ of Calvary that all men must come; it is the plan of their salvation.

--Hither, then, last or first, 
To hero of Calvary, Christ's feet--
Never ask if meaning it, wanting it, warned of it--men go.

If Christ is come into us, and if He is also come to die, then it is a life of pain, the life of the Cross, that He is come to implant in our souls. The prediction of His death must in consequence go hand in hand with an exhortation to self-denial. And, as a matter of fact, the two points are associated by all of the Synoptics; when Jesus foretold His Passion for the first time, He predicted that sufferings and contradictions would fall to the lot of His members. 68

F. R. Leavis calls attention to the manner in which the words of Stanza 8 which are stressed by the pattern justify their salience. He shows that the progression is a matter of sense as much as of sound in the lines:

Gush!--flush the man, the being with it, sour or sweet, 
Brim, in a flash, full! [Stanza 8]

The overwhelming onset of the experience is, Leavis says, suggested by gush; whereas flush connotes the immediate bewildering immersion. Flash becomes illumination, and full suggests "cup." 69

69 See New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 178.
Man having come to the feet of Christ, his suffering becomes sacrifice. "Perfect love casts out fear." The poet adores God in Trinity and prays Him to force man's stubborn malice to His will. When the mystery of Redemption is understood, and the part that man's suffering plays in it, God's love becomes manifest, even though it remains hidden:

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.  [Stanza 9]

The last stanza of Part the First contains an interesting reference to St. Augustine and St. Paul, two of the most enthusiastic teachers of the doctrine of mankind's incorporation in Christ. Like Hopkins, they were both converts.

Augustine has left us many . . . passages centered round the words that converted the Apostle. [Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute Me? Who can say whether their very recurrence is not an indication, a revelation of the influence exerted upon Augustine's soul and upon Augustine's theology by the memory of his own conversion, which, like Paul's, was accompanied by an interior revelation of Christ?

The preceding words recall those written by Liddon to Hopkins before the latter's reception into the Roman Church: "Surely in order to be sure that you are doing God's will, so certainly that you accept the responsibilities, so manifold and obvious—of your act with a good conscience, you ought to rest on something more solid than the precarious hypothesis of a personal illumination."  

70 1 Jo. 4:18.  
The mention together of these two great apostles of the Mystical Body
in concluding the first part of the poem strengthens the contention that
that doctrine constitutes, implicitly at least, the subject of the poem. It
indicates Hopkins' familiarity with and interest in them, and one could not
go far into the writings of either without absorbing something of the
doctrine.

With an anvil ding
And with fire in him forge thy will
Or rather, rather then, stealing as Spring
Through him, melt him but master him still
Whether at once, as once at a crash Paul,
Or as Austin, a lingering-out sweet skill,
Make mercy in all of us, out of us all
Mastery, but be adored, but be adored King [Stanza 10]

Part the Second tells the story of the wreck. It is introduced with a
brief consideration of Death—the various ways in which it seeks us out:
the sword, flame, flood, storms. Yet while "Flesh falls within sight of us,"
we are inclined to forget that Death awaits us too.

Then begins a direct narrative. The vessel sailed from Bremen on
Saturday, bound for America. There were, says Hopkins,

Two hundred souls in the round

His use here of souls serves to keep uppermost in the reader's mind what
was so in the poet's. "O Father, not under thy feathers" recalls Christ's
lament "How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen
gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not have it so."74 The
passengers were indifferent to eternal verities; they did not guess that a
fourth of them were to be drowned. Yet the poet, ever anxious for souls,

74 Luke 13:34.
asks, did "the millions of rounds of thy mercy not reeve even them in?"75

On Sunday the Deutschland, having left the haven behind, swept into the "whirlwind-swivelled snow," and struck "the combs of a smother of sand." In the next two stanzas the poet pictures vividly the growing helplessness of the scene. Twelve hours passed with no possibility of rescue. The efforts of a brave seaman to save the "wild woman-kind below" resulted only in his own loss. Then is introduced, in Stanza 17, the one whose vision is like to the poet's own:

A prophetess towered in the tumult, a virginal tongue told.

Hopkins here interrupts his narrative for the space of one stanza. He considers himself once more, thus emphasizing the unity between himself and the sufferers. His heart is touched with intense pain at the consideration of their agony. Yet the heart, in spite of its inclination to evil, utters truth. "And the truth shall set you free."76 It does just that to the poet. The truth which he conceives draws tears to his eyes, and he calls them "a melting, a madrigal start." It is not easy to comprehend his whole meaning, but the words introduce an element of joy, a setting in motion of the poem as a love song of the highest type. It deals with tragedy but is productive of supreme joy.

What can it be, this glee? the good you have there of your own?

75 In the notes, p. 100, Bridges explains: "reeve is probably intended in its dialectical or common speech significance ... to bring together the 'gathers' of a dress."
76 John 8:32.
Regarding this stanza, Kelly makes a penetrating statement:

Here and throughout the poem . . . the poet is the celebrant. It is he who offers through the vehicle of his hands, of his mind, a sacrifice of which the victim, other than he, is he also by participation. Hopkins is the priest of poetry; he is also the poet of the priesthood. The sufferings of shipwreck, terrible in the words, profound in the feeling of the poem, are an offering, an oblation, and an oblation received. 77

In the next stanza, Hopkins answers the question with which he had concluded the preceding:

What can it be this glee? the good you have there of your own?

...  

Sister, a sister calling  
A master, her master and mine!  

Here again is noticeable the unity of the poem—Hopkins, the nun, and their Master. Still the call brings no relief from the terrors and pain of the storm.

And the inboard seas run swirling and hawling;  
The rash smart sloggering brine  
Blinds her . . .  

Yet the nun's vision penetrates these things:

... but she that weather sees one thing, one;  
Has one fetch in her: she rears herself to divine  
Ears, and the call of the tall nun  
To the men in the tops and the tackle rode over the storm's brawling.  

The nun, Hopkins goes on to relate, was one of five, "of a coifed sisterhood." There follows a parenthetical reflection upon the antithetical character of the good and the bad which the ages have brought out of Germany, and from the human race in general since its very foundation.

(O Deutschland, double a desperate name!
O world wide of its good!
But Gertrude, lily, and Luther are two of a town,
Christ's lily and beast of the waste wood:
From life's dawn it is drawn down,
Abel is Cain's brother and breasts they have sucked the same.)

[Stanza 20]

It is of this stanza that Gardner says, "Hopkins had great faith in the value of his poem; but in a letter to Bridges he admits--'There are some immaturities in it I should never be guilty of now' (loc. cit., January, 1881). The above passage is probably one of them."78 Yet Gardner admits that the passage is well done. Classing Luther with Cain involves an element of shock to some minds, but such was not the case with Hopkins. He had expressed himself ten years earlier, even before becoming a Catholic, in a letter to Reverend E. W. Urquhart. He had just finished reading Romola.

"How strangely different is the fate of two reformers, Savonarola and Luther! The one martyred in the Church, the other successful and the admired author of world-wide heresy in schism."79

The stanza is a natural development when the subject is considered as the unity of humanity in Christ. It makes that unity more real by connecting it with the past of Christendom. The idea which it brings into the

79 Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Jan. 6, 1865), pp. 7-8.
poem is similar to that which St. Augustine here expresses:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, like a whole and perfect man, is Head and body ... His body is the Church, not simply the Church that is in this particular place but both the Church that is here and the Church which extends over the whole earth; not simply the Church that is living today, but the whole race of saints, from Abel down to all those who will ever be born, and will believe in Christ until the end of the world, for all belong to one city. This city is the body of Christ ... This is the whole Christ: Christ united with the Church.80

Hopkins returns to his story. The fury of the storm does not abate. The exiled nuns are gnashed in surf and snow. Yet the element of joy and hope, introduced in stanza 18, with the poet's comprehension of the truth, is not allowed to disappear. Here too the martyr-master is above weighing the worth. In His sight,

Storm flakes were scroll-leaved flowers, lily showers--
sweet heaven was astrew in them. [Stanza 21]

The poet is again drawn away from his narrative to reflect upon the significance of five nuns, the very number sanctified by the wounds of the suffering Christ. This thought suggests Saint Francis, a stigmatic, and the spiritual father of the suffering nuns.

Momentarily the poet returns to himself, to his comfortable security while these others were in peril. The very contrast brings him back once more to the storm, and we hear the nun's significant words, those which transform her hour of utter extremity into the very best one of her life.

She to the black-about air, to the breaker, the thickly
Falling flakes, to the throng that catches and quails

Was calling "O Christ, Christ, come quickly": 
The cross to her she calls Christ to her, christens her 

wild-worst

[Stanza 24]

The majesty of the words arouses every sense in the poet. He inquires into her meaning. He contrasts her feelings with those of the men who awoke Christ in the boat crying: "Lord save us, we perish." Is she calling for her reward to which she looks forward with greater delight "for feeling the combating keen"?

No, but it was not these

... Other, I gather, in measure her mind's
Burden, in wind's burly and beat of endragoned seas.

[Stanza 27]

The poet's vision approaches that of the nun. But the reality he beholds is so stupendous that he does not readily find words to express it:

But how shall I... make me room there:
Reach me a... Fancy, come faster --
Strike you the sight of it? look at it loom there,
Thing that she... there than! the Master,
Ipse, the only one, Christ, King, Head;

[Stanza 28]

The idea underlying the whole poem is nowhere better expressed than here, in the climax. It begins in Stanza 24, with the nun's cry, "O Christ, Christ come quickly," and culminates with the words of Stanza 29:

Ah! there was a heart right!
There was a single eye!
Read the unspeakable shock night
And knew the who and the why.

[Stanza 29]

81 Matt. 8:25.
In Father Mersch's book there is a remarkable parallel to this climax of the poem. It is a commentary on a part of the Apocalypse, with which, there can be little doubt, Hopkins was at this time well acquainted. Whether he thought of it in this connection we cannot know. Nevertheless the meaning is so closely allied to the thought of the poem that it does much to clarify it.

And the Spirit and the Spouse say, "Come!" And let him that heareth say, "Come!" And let him that thirsteth come! Let him that willeth take the water of life freely!

The statement is clear, and is immediately repeated:

He who testifieth these things, saith, "Yea, I come quickly!" Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with the saints. (Apoc. 22:17, 20, 21.)

Thus, in the concluding lines as well as in the opening verses, the Apocalypse directs the minds of its readers toward a return of Jesus. To be more precise, this return is announced to the faithful who are suffering persecution, to those who are "copartners in Jesus, in the tribulation, and in the kingdom, and in the patience." (Apoc. 1:9) To these is Jesus coming, to assure them that He is present, and that He comes in all their afflictions.

As we might expect from such a setting, the whole book speaks of Jesus' return, of a hidden coming, which occurs particularly when the Christians are suffering, and which will be made manifest in heaven, at the moment when their sufferings will have produced their effect.

... 

With these visions, the Apocalypse closes. Thus will the heavens reveal in glory that union with Christ which began upon earth in pain. And the entire Apocalypse may once more be summed up, we think, in the phrase with which the book opens and ends: "He cometh."
In the trials of this life, that which takes place is a coming: the coming of Christ in His brethren. 82

The nun then recognizes Christ in her suffering. Therein is contained the stress, the supernatural overmastering influence accompanied by revelation, of which Hopkins spoke in Part I. She understands, and blesses God:

His mystery must be instressed, stressed;
For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand. [Stanza 5]

The conclusion of Stanza 29:

Wording it how but by him that present and past,
Heaven and earth are worded of, worded by? —
The Simon Peter of a soul to the blast
Tarpeian-fast, but a blown beacon of light.

is strongly reminiscent of a prose passage from Hopkins: "God's utterance of himself in himself is God the Word, outside himself is this world. This world then is word, expression, news, of God. Therefore its end, its purpose, its purport, its meaning, is God, and its life or work to name or praise Him." 83 The nun looks beyond the storm and its attendant disasters, and to her, as to another Simon Peter, is revealed, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." 84 She is like one convicted of treason, "Tarpeian-fast," and exposed to the punishment of the blast; actually she is a beacon, a guiding light of salvation to the others.

There follows a reference to the Immaculate Conception; the wreck had occurred on the eve of its feast, December 7. Kelly comments upon it and

82 The Whole Christ, pp. 153-4.
84 Matt. 16:16.
upon this part of the poem in general:

He was to cure the extremity where he had cast her. For Christ was that extremity. He in the storm met joy for His joy of the harvest. Reason, breathless, lagging, big with stupendous truths, is consumed in vision. Pain has become sacrifice, has become joy. Christ the priest; Christ the victim; Christ the joy of the accepted sacrifice. Everywhere one face only. Behind, exact, a glacial pregnant monument, the mystery of the Immaculate Conception dominates the last four lines of the 30th stanza ... In this climax the "problem of human suffering" receives its only tolerable solution. And when Saint Francis said to his spiritual child, "Friar Leo, little lamb of God ..." what else did he mean by "lamb."85

It is appropriate here to remember that the nun too was a spiritual child of Saint Francis.

The nun then has Christ "for the pain, for the patience," but the poet's apostolic heart now pities the others:

Heart, go and bleed at a bitterer vein for the Comfortless unconfessed of them-- [Stanza 31]

But the wisdom of Providence has provided comfort for them also. The poet has referred before in the poem to the nun's influence upon the other passengers. In Stanza 19, he says that her call to her Master

To the men in the tops and the tackle rode over the storm's brawling.

In Stanza 29, he calls her "a blown beacon of light." Now he credits the obedience of this maiden with meriting salvation for the other victims of the wreck:

... is the shipwreck then a harvest, does tempest carry the grain for thee? [Stanza 31]

It is the mercy of God which occupies the poet now, as he returns to
the note of praise upon which the poem began. It is He that hides "throned
behind Death," providing a refuge for the heedful, answering prayers of the
past and susceptible to "last-breath penitent spirits." It is Christ who
comes:

Kind, but royally reclaiming his own. [Stanza 34]

The final stanza is a prayer to the nun. She, who was drowned among
English shoals, is asked to remember that country in "the heaven-haven of
the Reward." The poet seeks her intercession in bringing Christ back to
English souls. Such a coming would enlighten the darkness of his beloved
England, would rekindle the charity of her heart and restore the chivalry
of her thoughts.

Thus does Hopkins conclude the most ambitious of his poems. Surely he
was right in retaining a great affection for it! Its subject is rooted in
truth, so that the poet's intellect and will are in accord with his emo-
tions. His receptive mind grasps the overwhelming significance of the in-
spiring event; its realization penetrates even his physical being. He
beholds its relationship with other experiences, and it occasions a joy, an
excitement, and an urgency of expression. His resulting interpretation
becomes poetry in the true sense of the word.

It reveals poetic growth in Hopkins. What are left of his earlier
poems are also to a great extent religious in theme. Here, however, he
approaches the extremes of spiritual experience; he penetrates the depths

^86 See Lascelles Abercrombie The Theory of Poetry, pp. 59-60.
of its desolation and discerns the heights of its ecstasy. His scope is close to the universal, embracing by inference all of humanity.

The Wreck is valuable moreover for the interesting insight it provides into the mind of Hopkins. The available prose writings reveal nothing of an intimate character, as this does. Before Hopkins' conversion, he wrote in a letter:

You said you know yr. repugnance was to view the issues of eternity as depending on anything so trivial and inadequate as life is. I do understand the point of view... To myself all this trivialness is one of the strongest reasons for the opposite belief and is always in action more or less. Of course it is plain too that the belief in the future of theology destroys the triviality in proportion to its intensity... I think that the trivialness of life is, and personally to each one, ought to be seen to be, done away with by the Incarnation—or, I shd. say the difficulty wh. the trivialness of life presents ought to be. It is one adorable point of the condescension of the Incarnation... that our Lord submitted not only to the pains of life, the fasting, scourging, crucifixion etc. or the insults, as the mocking, blindfolding, spitting etc., but also to the mean and trivial incidents of humanity. It leads one naturally to rhetorical antitheses to think for instance that after making the world He shd. consent to be taught carpentering, and, being the eternal Reason, to be catechized in the theology of the Rabbins. It seems therefore that if the Incarnation cd. versari inter trivial men and trivial things it is not surprising that our reception or non-reception of its benefits shd. be amidst trivialities.87

Hopkins' life, during the seven years which precedes The Wreck of the Deutschland, had been cast to a great extent among apparent trivialities. How a man of his intelligence, education, and ability could remain happy among them has been to some an enigma. Yet his early balanced evaluation

of such things, expressed in the foregoing passage, remained his guide through these years. His very manner of using them is proof of his equilibrium. "The fact that, . . . the novice could for seven months deliberately and with the view of ascetical training, abandon his cherished habit of close observation of nature, shows that he was quite master of himself and not the plaything of his whims; he settled with himself the duration of his penance--January 25--July 25--and kept to it.88

Any study of Hopkins' poetry provides an insight into the mind of the poet. So from The Wreck of the Deutschland we may draw conclusions as to his mental outlook at the time of its writing. It is evident that the years had not altered the directness of his outlook. His mind is here revealed as reverent toward God; as humble, recognizing its limitations and the relation between it and its Creator. There is a manifest concern for humanity: esteem for the strong, zeal and pity for the weak. There is an intense discernment of relative values, of the eternal significance of commonplace incidents. Besides these there are the characteristics of which his friends spoke. The following statement, from one who knew Hopkins at this time, bears out the picture drawn from his poem, and thus makes it more convincing:

His mind was of too delicate a texture to grapple with the rough elements of human life, but his kindness of heart and unselfishness showed themselves in a thousand different ways, that gave full expression to the old words: "Nil humani a me alienum puto." The high order of his intellect was at once made evident to all

who came into serious contact with him. True it was of a somewhat unpractical turn, but the various and often amusing extravagances into which it was from time to time in consequence beguiled, only added another point of attractiveness to his character. The result of all was a man so loveable that we shall not soon look upon his like again.89

To Hopkins, the young Jesuit who wrote The Wreck of the Deutschland, may be applied, on its evidence, certain lines from the poem:

Ahi there was a heart right!
There was a single eye!

[He] knew the who and the why. [Stanza 29]

---

89 Quoted in Gerard Manley Hopkins, by G. F. Lahey, S.J., p. 133.
CHAPTER II

NATURE LYRICS

Almost two years elapsed between Hopkins' writing of _The Wreck of the Deutschland_ and his ordination to the priesthood. Since his Journal closes with 1875, our best insight into his mind at that time is gained through his poems. They are a succession of lyrics in which the poet, exalted by natural beauties, looks beyond them and beholds their Source. Of them Abbott says:

The poems of this group are comparatively simple, and contain little that can lead to a charge of obscurity... Freshness of approach, an individual music, and a temper of mind that may be called lovingkindness, characterize them. They are poems written to the glory of God by a man who is looking on the world as charged with His grandeur and revealing His bounty and presence. But always as I read them I feel that the poet is primarily seized by the beauty of earth, and that though a man of exquisitely tempered and religious mind, his senses, not his religion are in the ascendant. Let us grant the conviction that God made this loveliness and that it bears living witness to His affection. Hopkins says little more than this on the religious side of these poems, and he says this side with no particular distinction. On the other hand, his visions of earth and her creatures make a bevy of astonishing and new felicities rarely to be matched in English poetry. These are, therefore, only secondarily religious poems. The yeast of the religious spirit has not worked through them. The fusion of earthly beauty and exemplum is often so incomplete that the second is merely the addendum of a poet captive in the first place to the beauty besieging his senses.¹

Such a reading of Hopkins' poems reveals misunderstanding of the relation between God and nature, not on the poet's, but on the critic's part.

Hopkins, enlightened by faith, was prevented from going astray in his love of nature, as many others had done in the nineteenth century. There are certain things which the poet must not confuse:

The visible creation testifies to the existence of God and it reveals the three divine attributes of wisdom, power and goodness, but with Cardinal Newman, we must hold that it cannot tell us anything of Christianity at all. The basis of supernatural faith is not the testimony of the physical earth but revealed religion. Nature can arouse noble emotions, but the knowledge of God to be derived from the contemplation of nature is too limited to satisfy the cravings of the human soul.²

Hopkins learned his theology from authoritative sources; he recognized the value of prose writings when he wished formally to impart its teachings to others. While he delighted in the beauties of nature and found them good, even as had God Himself after their creation,³ while he was apt in learning what spiritual lessons they could impart, still he did not mistake creation for the Creator.

Catholic poets teach the transcendence of God by which He is essentially distinct from (and infinitely above) the physical world, and the immanence of God, by which He is present in all things as the cause of their being. In the Catholic view the entire universe overflows with the sustaining presence of God's power and love. ... This ... draws a line of sharp distinction between the Catholic dogma of God's omnipresence and the pantheistic idea that God is identified with nature.⁴

Just such are Hopkins' poems. There can be no question as to whether they are primarily or secondarily religious. They are based upon a true

³Genesis 1:31.
⁴I. J. Semper, op. cit., p. 286.
conception of the order of creation. The "exempla" are not afterthoughts, except in so far as sense perceptions must logically precede the full import of their combined effect upon the intellect. To such a mind as Hopkins', a spiritual reaction was of the very essence of that effect. Beauties of earth, of sea, and of sky were but reflections of God's beauty. Hopkins loved them, yet he knew their limitations:

The sun and the stars shining glorify God. They stand where he placed them, they move where he bid them. 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' They glorify God, but they do not know it. The birds sing to him, the thunder speaks of his terror, the lion is like his strength, the sea is like his greatness, the honey like his sweetness; they are something like him, they make him known, they tell of him, they give him glory, but they do not know they do, they do not know him, they never can, they are brute things that only think of food or think of nothing. This then is poor praise, faint reverence, slight service, dull glory. Nevertheless what they can they always do.5

There can be no doubt that Hopkins' sensitivity to natural beauty was extraordinarily acute. To understand his response, it is necessary to consider what he called the inscape of things. Nearly sixty references to inscape are listed in the Index to his Notes and Papers. In 1870, he wrote in his Journal:

One day when the bluebells were in bloom I wrote the following. 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. Its inscape6 is [mixed of] strength and grace, like an ash tree.7

Thus he perceived inscape in flowers, trees, mountains, animals, in

6The brackets are Hopkins' throughout this quotation.
7The Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 134.
clouds and sunsets, in poetry itself. In fact he wrote of it to Bridges:

But as air, melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling 'inscape' is what I above all aim at in poetry. Now it is the virtue of design, pattern, or inscape to be distinctive and it is the vice of distinctiveness to become queer. This vice I cannot have escaped.

Hopkins' fondness for inscapes bears close relation to his attachment to Duns Scotus, which began about this time. How great this devotion was may be judged from the poet's own references to it. He first mentions it in his Journal for 1872:

After the examinations we went for our holiday out to Douglas in the Isle of Man Aug. 3. At this time I had first begun to get hold of the copy of Scotus on the Sentences in the Baddely Library and was flush with a new stroke of enthusiasm. It may come to nothing or it may be a mercy from God. But just then when I took in any inscape of the sky or sea I thought of Scotus.

Another reference appears in 1874:

[July 9] To the Oratory. Addis was away but Fr. Law was kind and hospitable. I met Mr. David Lewis, a great Scotist, and at the same time old Mr. Brande Morris was making a retreat with us: I got to know him, so that oddly I made the acquaintance of two and I suppose the only two Scotists in England in one week.

The following year he wrote to Bridges:

It was with sorrow I put back Aristotle's Metaphysics in the library some time ago feeling that I could not read them now and so probably should never.

8 The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (Feb. 15, 1879), p. 76.
10 Ibid., p. 198.
After all I can, at all events a little, read Duns Scotus and I care for him more even than Aristotle and more pace tua than a dozen Hegels.\(^\text{11}\)

An element in Scotus' teaching proved highly satisfying to the mind of the young Jesuit, so sensitive to the individual inscapes of all around him:

Scotus admits, besides abstract and universal knowledge (the traditional doctrine), a previous intuitive knowledge, which represents in a confused manner the concrete and individual being (\textit{species specialissima}). It arises when the intellect first makes contact with what is outside it, and it is formed parallel with the sensible knowledge of the object. It is in accordance with the logic of the system that the intuitive contact of the mind should precede the reflective contact. There is in the individual thing a richness of distinct entities, amongst which is the \textit{haecceitas}.\(^\text{12}\) Our concepts are adapted to this, and are intuitive resemblances of the real. Thanks to the concept of the singular, the understanding enters into direct relations with the extra-mental world, and perceives as existing in their particular surroundings the elements of reality contained in a being. This at once stresses the objectivity of intellectual knowledge, and more than in Saint Thomas, links it up directly with the existing and actual world. At the same time, inasmuch as there is no real distinction between the faculties of the soul, the understanding acts in close union with sensible knowledge. \ldots the collaboration is natural. This intuitive knowledge prepares the way for the distinct knowledge, which grasps the real elements in the abstract and universal state.\(^\text{13}\)


\(^{12}\)In his "Comments on the Spiritual Exercises," \textit{Note-books and Papers}, p. 328, Hopkins wrote: "So also pitch is ultimately simple positiveness, that by which being differs from and is more than nothing and not-being, and it is with precision expressed by the English \textit{do} (the simple auxiliary), which when we employ or emphasise, \ldots we do not mean that the fact is any more a fact but that we the more state it. \ldots Is not this pitch or whatever we call it then the same as Scotus's \textit{ecceitas}?"

The way in which this teaching of Scotus was helpful to Hopkins has been explained by a recent critic. He first points out that Scotus is the friend of poets because his teachings on the Incarnation make the world lovelier to the poet's eye. There is also his championship of the Immaculate Conception. Nevertheless:

Hopkins's special sympathy for Scotus is indicated in another phrase of the sonnet Duns Scotus's Oxford. He calls Scotus "Of reality, the rarest-veined, unraveller." The philosophy, the theology, taught at St. Beuno's, had left him in bewilderment about the glimpse which he had of Nature, of his direct and intuitive knowledge of hills and windovers. In his prose notes on Nature he had invented certain phrases which gave, as it were, validity to his loving observation of what he saw in sky and earth and sea, "instress" was one word, "inscape" another... They are favourites with Hopkins... Hopkins found little place for his "inscapes" in Thomistic philosophy, but Duns Scotus seemed to have a place for them.15

It is necessary to understand this characteristic grasp of inscape, which led Hopkins, as has been shown, to his discipleship of Duns Scotus. Moreover, it is important to remember that theological matters were of immediate concern to the young poet, still a student of the sacred science. Finally, it is essential to realize the supreme force in his life, which has been noted by the editor of his papers: "No single sentence better explains the motives and direction of Hopkins's life than this 'Man was created to praise'. He believed it as wholly as a man can believe anything."16

---

14 Scotus maintained: "God would have become man even if Adam had not sinned, since He willed that in Christ humanity and the world should be united with Himself by the closest possible bond." Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. V.
15 Daniel Sargent, Four Independents, p. 151.
From the commingling of these ideas emanate the nature lyrics of Hopkins. Of these the first important one is God’s Grandeur. Bridges tells us there are two autographs, dated February 23, 1877, and March, 1877. The meaning of the poem is not obscure. Its first line, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," is the epitome of Hopkins’ response to nature. This grandeur, he says, "will flame out, like shining from shock foil." That unique simile Hopkins considered integral to his thought, and he defended it in a letter to Bridges:

I protest, and with indignation, at your saying I was driven to the . . . image. With more truth might it be said that my sonnet might have been written for the image’s sake . . . I mean foil in its sense of leaf or tinsel, and no other word whatever will give the effect I want. Shaken goldfoil gives off broad glares like sheet lightning and also, and this is true of nothing else, owing to its zigzag dints and creasings and network of small many cornered facets, a sort of fork lightning too. Moreover as it is the first rhyme presumably it engendered the others and not they it.

There can be no doubt then of the vivid manner in which Hopkins perceived God’s grandeur in the world. He questions why, in view of all this glorious manifestation, man does not heed God’s rule. Concern at mankind’s failure to give to God His due is frequently expressed by Hopkins. There follows here a reflection upon the miracle of Nature’s eternal youth. In spite of generations that have trod the earth, in spite of all that has been done to exhaust its resources,

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—

---

And Hopkins explains the miracle in a way characteristic of him:

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

These last beautifully spontaneous lines were classed by Bridges among Hopkins' "efforts to force emotion into theological or sectarian channels."

The figure should not seem odd, even to Protestants. The dove has always been a familiar symbol of the Holy Ghost. His moving over the waters at creation should explain Hopkins' conception of Him as brooding over the earth in creation's continuous renewal. Very reminiscent of the poem is a passage in Hopkins' Comments on the Spiritual Exercises, probably written during his Tertianship of 1881-82. It forms part of a contemplation on "the Holy Ghost sent to us through creatures. . . All things therefore are charged with love, are charged with God and if we know how to touch them give off sparks and take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of him." This thought, repeated by the poet after four years, must have been originally as important to him as any other part of the poem. He has drawn from Nature the lessons it is capable of presenting to a Catholic mind:

God's existence, His wisdom, power and goodness.

Much the same is true of The Starlight Night, also written in February, 1877. It opens with an invitation to

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
o look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!

---

20 Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 342.
Such bursts of pure delight do not spring from depressed spirits. Hopkins' early note-books and his Journal are evidence that he himself had often looked up to observe the stars. As early as 1864, he listed a number of similes that he might use for them. Except for a like use of gold and of flame, however, they do not find place here. The entry most resembling the poem is in the Journal for August 17, 1874: "As we drove home the stars came out thick: I leant back to look at them and my heart opening more than usual praised our Lord to and in whom all that beauty comes home." The imagery of the poem is varied. The poet beholds the sky as a vast field dotted with bits of bright light. There is a sense of security, for they are fortifications, boroughs and citadels. Then the stars become valuable and mysterious; they are momentarily caves or dens of diamonds; then, fantastically, they are elves' eyes. The sky is a vast gray lawn covered with shining gold, quickgold, and the stars become trees, whitebeam and abeles, moving in the wind and seeming as though on fire. Next they are like doves frightened by a farmyard scare and floating forth like flakes of snow. All these figures burst from the poet in quick, ecstatic succession. He asks how all this beauty may be his and realizes in answer that it is a prize, something to be purchased.

Buy then! bid then! -- What? -- Prayer, patience, alms, vows.

Again the poet's mind is seized with the overwhelming beauty, and he seeks figures to express it. It is the bloom of orchards in May; it is like

---

22 Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 205.
willows mealed or sprinkled with yellow in March. Finally, the poet declares this is the barn in which are stored the shocks of grain. These without doubt symbolize the fruits of man's labor, of the "prayer, patience, alms, vows," which he bids for the eternal prize. They are stored for him here where live "Christ and his mother and all his hallows," in the home of Christ, shut in by the "piece-bright paling" of stars.

Spring, a sonnet of May, 1877, begins with another burst of joy in nature:

Nothing is so beautiful as spring--
When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;

There is the beauty of the thrush, of its eggs, and of its song which strikes the ear like lightning. The leaves and bloom of the peartrees, the blue of the skies, the racing lambs--all contribute to the picture. The poet is reminded of "earth's sweet being in the beginning." The present beauty is a "strain" of that in Eden before the Fall. It is typical too of the innocent mind of boy and girl in the Mayday of their lives. With characteristic anxiety, Hopkins yearns for the salvation of their souls:

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 the winning.

The same tone of solicitude pervades Hopkins' next poem, The Lantern out of Doors, and its companion piece written two years later at Oxford, The Candle Indoors. In the first of these, the poet's musings are aroused by the sight of a lantern moving through the darkness of the night. He
questions, "Who goes there? . . . where from and bound, I wonder, where . . .?" Men going by are rare, precious, because of their beauty of body or of mind, but they are soon consumed by death or distance. Interesting in connection with Hopkins' use of imagery is an example that occurs here. While it is not easy to follow the thought of a mind as individual as his, it is helpful to remember that his images were clear to him. Bridges had evidently questioned the words, "wind what most I may eye after," and Hopkins answered him:

However 'winding the eyes' is queer only if looked at from the wrong point of view; looked at as a motion in and off the eyeballs it is what you say, but I mean that the eye winds only in the sense that its focus or point of sight winds and that coincides with a point of the object and winds with that. For the object, a lantern passing further and further away and bearing now east, now west of one right line, is truly and properly described as winding. That is how it should be taken then.23

The poet or casual observer cannot follow the passersby, cannot "be in at the end," and he forgets them. Yet Christ observes each of the wanderers in the night. He minds; it is to His interest to avow or approve what is good in them, to amend what requires correction. His eye watches them; His heart yearns for them; His care haunts them; His foot follows. He is:

Their ransom, their rescue, and first, fast, last friend.

Of The Candle Indoors Hopkins wrote to Bridges: "I enclose you two sonnets, capable of further finish. I am afraid they are not very good all through. One is a companion to the Lantern, not at first meant to be

questions, "Who goes there? . . . where from and bound, I wonder, where . . .?" Men going by are rare, precious, because of their beauty of body or of mind, but they are soon consumed by death or distance. Interesting in connection with Hopkins' use of imagery is an example that occurs here. While it is not easy to follow the thought of a mind as individual as his, it is helpful to remember that his images were clear to him. Bridges had evidently questioned the words, "wind what most I may eye after," and Hopkins answered him:

However 'winding the eyes' is queer only if looked at from the wrong point of view: looked at as a motion in and of the eyeballs it is what you say, but I mean that the eye winds only in the sense that its focus or point of sight winds and that coincides with a point of the object and winds with that. For the object, a lantern passing further and further away and bearing now east, now west of one right line, is truly and properly described as winding. That is how it should be taken then.23

The poet or casual observer cannot follow the passersby, cannot "be in at the end," and he forgets them. Yet Christ observes each of the wanderers in the night. He minds; it is to His interest to avow or approve what is good in them, to amend what requires correction. His eye watches them; His heart yearns for them; His care haunts them; His foot follows. He is:

Their ransom, their rescue, and first, fast, last friend.

Of The Candle Indoors Hopkins wrote to Bridges: "I enclose you two sonnets, capable of further finish. I am afraid they are not very good all through. One is a companion to the Lantern, not at first meant to be

though, but it fell in. This time it is the poet who is out in the night. He observes a candle burning clearly in a place which he must pass, and he reflects upon its power to put back the black of night. He wonders who is by the window and at what task employed. "Just for lack of answer," he continues to question, as he plods along his way. It is from eagerness that the unknown person may aggrandize and glorify God. This consideration, however, turns the poet's thoughts to himself, his first responsibility:

Mend first and vital candle in close heart's vault;
You there are master, do your own desire;
What hinders? Are you beam blind, yet to a fault
In a neighbor deft-handed? are you that liar
And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?

This, of course, is reminiscent of the Scriptural:

And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye;
and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? 25

Evidence of the truth underlying Hopkins' poetry is found in a statement of his regarding The Candle Indoors: "Though the analogy in the Candle sonnet may seem forced, yet it is an autobiographical fact that I was influenced and acted on the way there said." 26

With the exception of The Candle Indoors, placed here because of its connection with The Lantern out of Doors, the poems studied up to this point were written from February to May of 1877. They are alike in their deep appreciation of Nature in itself and as a manifestation of God's power and goodness. In May of that year appeared what Hopkins once declared to be

24 Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (June 22, 1879), p. 84.
"the best thing I ever wrote," 27 The Windhover. Critics in general have recognized its value.

The octave presents no particular difficulties of thought, once its grammatical peculiarities have been disentangled. In a series of expressive images the poet depicts the beauty of a soaring falcon. The time is early morning, and the bird is described as "morning's minion" or favorite, as the "dauphin," prince or heir, of the kingdom of daylight. The poet beholds him riding "the rolling level underneath him steady air," striding high, circling round. Then off again, smoothly like a skater after a curve, the bird rebuffs the wind itself with his "hurl and gliding." All is an achievement, a mastery, which stirs the heart of the poet.

In the sestet, Hopkins compares the achievement and mastery of the bird with the life he himself has chosen. The interpretation of this part has provoked discussion as to the poet's exact meaning. Hopkins said:

My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

I. A. Richards questions, "Why? From what?" and decides "that the poet's heart is in hiding from Life, has chosen a safer way." 28 Empson believes that "My heart in hiding would seem to imply that the more dangerous life is that of the Windhover." 29 J. H. Crehan says the words "may more readily mean that the poet was in a state of profound recollection." 30 Whether the phrase refers, as this last suggests, to a specific period of recollection,

27 Ibid. (June 22, 1879), p. 85.
29 William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, p. 285.
or to the whole of Hopkins' religious life, it is clear that the poet here turns the thought to himself, and the words serve to introduce the personal application with which the poem is concluded. There follows a one line summary of the bird's achievement completed by an unusual verb which may be read as a statement or as an imperative:

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!

In all of this, Empson sees the possibility of a twofold meaning, and on that fact he bases his interpretation of the poem:

In the first three lines of the sestet we seem to have a clear case of the Freudian use of the opposites, where two things thought of as incompatible, but desired intensely by different systems of judgments are spoken of simultaneously by words applying to both; both desires are thus given a transient and exhausting satisfaction, and the two systems of judgment are forced into open conflict before the reader. 31

He shows how this is so:

Buckle admits of two tenses and two meanings; 'they do buckle here,' or 'come, and buckle yourself here'; buckle like a military belt, for the discipline of heroic action, and buckle like a bicycle wheel, 'make useless, distorted, and incapable of its natural motion.' Here may mean 'in the case of the bird,' or 'in the case of the Jesuit.' Chevalier personifies either physical or spiritual activity; Christ riding to Jerusalem, or the cavalryman ready for the charge; Pegasus or the Windhover. 32

The intellect in its act of knowing is at once active and passive. The intelligence is informed by its object, receiving by the ministry of the intellectus agens the intelligible form, the real nature of the thing to be known. The intelligence is rendered fecund, receiving in a union more intimate and subtle than that of form and matter the nature of the real. It becomes the thing, moving from perfect receptivity to perfect act; act in which the mind is become a universe of stars, of movement, of the peril of hawks on the wing. But for the consummation of the act of knowledge, Logos, child-birth of the glory it has conceived; and the cry of the poet marshalls the senses to be ministers of the joy of utterance.34

Another critic takes exception to the "unusual and somewhat strained psychological explanations of these figures."35 He believes that the dedication of the poem "To Christ our Lord" is responsible for what he considers the ridiculous remarks contained in the personal interpretations.36 He says that chevalier does not refer to Christ, merely to the bird. Hence he gives to the poem a purely objective explanation:

In all things there is a potential beauty, perhaps an inherent beauty. In the act of buckling or struggling against forces, that beauty becomes a billion times lovelier. All the figures of the poem center about this line... It is then, at the time of buckling, that all things become most beautiful. The plough shines only because of its sheer plodding down the furrows; the embers of the burning logs are most beautiful when the log breaks and falls, causing the embers to "gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion." The kestrel is beautiful as it hovers in the eastern sky at dawn; but when, after it has swept swiftly with the wind, it turns to buckle against the wind's forces, the bird becomes lovelier in its dangers, as its reeling body and fighting wings break the still sunlight and push it into action.37

36Ibid., p. 515.
37Ibid., p. 514.
The concluding verses of the poem, referred to in the foregoing passage, seem richer in meaning than it allows:

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.

Fully to determine their significance is difficult. Yet it is improbable that this does not go below the objective surface. An application is characteristic of the poems of this period. To admiring but uncomprehending critics, the poem suggests "a stoic acceptance of sacrifice,"38 a "speaking at, rather than to our Lord... allowing Him to overhear his complaint,"39 "an indecision and its reverberation in the mind."40 While these things can be read into the poem, they are not true to the mind of the poet.

Crehan points out, on the evidence of prose writings, how thoroughly he "grasped the object of man's creation--the praise, reverence, and service of God--and how alien to his thought was any narrowness of vision or concentration on self."41 The same critic remarks that the poems are more informative than the letters with regard to the high value set by Hopkins on his priesthood, since the letters "after all cannot be made to tell us more than they were meant to tell their recipients."42 This poem is a particularly revealing one, but even a partial revelation of its secrets entails the necessity of finding, in the poet's other writings and in the thoughts

38I. A. Richards, op. cit., p. 199.
40William Empson, op. cit., p. 284.
42Ibid., p. 500.
which would necessarily have occupied the mind of a theological student, an expansion of its basic ideas.

It is evident that the poet does refer, in the sestet, to his religious life. Of first importance, therefore, is a determination of his attitude toward that vocation. Before he embraced it he wrote:

I am expecting to take orders and soon, but I wish it to be a secret till it comes about. Besides that it is the happiest and best way it practically is the only one. You know I once wanted to be a painter. But even if I could I wd. not I think, now, for the fact is that the higher and more attractive parts of the art put a strain upon the passions which I shd. think it unsafe to encounter. I want to write still and as a priest I very likely can do that too, not so freely as I shd. have liked, e.g. nothing or little in the verse way, but no doubt what wd. best serve the cause of my religion.43

Three years later, having had some experience of religious life, he wrote: "This life here though it is hard is God's will for me as I most intimately know, which is more than violets knee-deep."44 Such direct references to his vocation appear scarcely at all in his letters of 1877. As his correspondents were not sympathetic, it would have been distasteful for Hopkins to reveal his deepest thoughts to them. The few allusions to be found, however, are not expressive of internal debate and hesitation:

I hope to be ordained priest next September and after that shall be here, I suppose, for another twelvemonth.45

You say you don't like Jesuits. Did you ever see one? Who was St. Beuno? Is he dead? Yes, he did that much 1200 years ago, if I mistake not. He was St.

43 Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, to A.W.M. Baillie (Feb. 12, 1868), pp. 84-5.
44 Ibid. (April 10, 1871), p. 87.
Winefred's uncle and raised her to life when she died in defence of her chastity and at the same time he called out her famous spring, which fills me with devotion every time I see it and wd. fill anyone that has eyes with admiration, the flow...is so lavish and so beautiful: if you have not read her story (in Butler's Lives or elsewhere) you should, though you should treat it as fable, as no doubt you do the Gospels.46

An article by E. W. Gosse in July's Cornhill...speaks of and quotes you—a Triplet from your early book. It seems that triplets and rondeaus and chants royal and what not and anything but serving God are all the fashion.47

Certain conclusions may be drawn from this slender evidence. In the beginning Hopkins chose the religious life with eyes open to the sacrifices it would require of his artistic self. As time progressed, he experienced the difficulties he had anticipated, but they did not prevent his happiness. When the great day of his ordination approached he betrayed no indecision with regard to pursuing the course he had begun. His letters of 1877 attest his serenity of mind. Had it been as disturbed as some critics of The Windhover maintain, he could scarcely have entered with such clarity and ease upon detailed discussions of meter and rhythm. Nor could he have foregone that interest with equal facility when religious duties were pressing:

I see I must send a line to 'put you out of your agony.' Want of convenience of writing was the only cause of my delay. Having both work here to do and serious letters to write I shrank from the 'distressing subject' of rhythm, on which I knew I must enter. I

could not even promise to write often or answer promptly, our correspondence lying on unprofessional matter. However you shall hear me soon.  

What further knowledge we are to have of Hopkins' evaluation of his vocation when he wrote The Windhover must be obtained from the poem itself. However, another bit of background material should first be established. Hopkins dedicated the poem "To Christ our Lord." There is no unanimity of opinion regarding Christ's place in the sonnet. Some maintain that it is merely the dedication, by which Hopkins gives to Him what he considered his best work. Others believe that the poet addresses Christ directly, that He is the "chevalier" of the poem. Whichever may be the case, it is important to emphasize the devotion to Christ which the poet preserved. He was unequivocally "of Christ's company." He gave his estimate of the character of Christ

Now in the third place, far higher than the beauty of the body, higher than genius and wisdom the beauty of the mind, comes the beauty of his character, his character as man. For the most part his very enemies, those that do not believe in him, allow that a character so noble was never seen in human mould. He found the thought of his Passion past bearing, yet he went through with it. He was feared when he chose; he took a whip and single-handed cleared the temple. The thought of his gentleness towards children, towards the afflicted, towards sinners, is often dwelt on; that of his courage less. But for my part I like to feel I should have feared him. We hear also of his love, as for John and Lazarus; and even love at first sight, as of the young man that had kept all the commandments from his childhood. But he warned or rebuked his best friends when need was, as Peter, Martha, and even his mother. For, as St. John says, he was full both of grace and of truth.

49The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (June 4, 1878), p. 3.
50"Sermons, etc.;" Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, pp. 264-5.
From the evidence of prose writings then we may conclude two things: Hopkins was not obsessed by an unresolved inner conflict, and he did not regret the relationship with Christ which he had assumed by his Jesuit vocation. That this was true of him when he wrote The Windhover can be shown from the poem itself.

It is possible that in the first three lines of the sestet, Hopkins is addressing Christ directly as "my chevalier." The first line may be read as a petition that "here," in the poet's heart, He "buckle," fasten or confine, such "beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume" as is that of the brute, in this case the falcon. To the soul of Hopkins at this stage may be applied the following analysis:

It has a growing discernment of the action of God on it, and understands to a large extent how it can in its own activities cooperate with or impede that action. It now perceives how its every act has an effect on its own state, and makes for or mars its growth in supernatural life.51

Hopkins one time spoke of "brute things" as of those which give God glory necessarily but without knowing that they do so.52 With them he contrasts man:

Man was created. Like the rest then to praise, reverence, and serve God; to give him glory. He does so, even by his being, beyond all visible creatures . . . But man can know God, can mean to give him glory. This then was why he was made, to give God glory and to mean to give it; to praise God freely, willingly to reverence him, gladly to serve him. Man was made to give, and mean to give, God glory.53

51 Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., Progress through Mental Prayer, pp. 100-1.
53 Ibid.
Here we have a poet with a clear conception of the purpose of his existence. It has been shown before in this chapter that the praise of God was the prime factor in Hopkins' life. Now he prays Christ to "buckle" all brute actions on his part that he may perfectly attain his end.

The soul passionately desires that its life should be in harmony with that life of which Christ, its Head, has the plenitude. It is perfectly aware that it cannot receive the inflow of that life to the fullest of its own capacity, unless there disappears from it all pulsations of the life of self which in its tendencies is opposed to the spirit of the life of Christ. Its object now is to check all unsupernatural movements in itself, in order that its whole life may be supernaturalized and that thus it may be brought into perfect union with Jesus Christ Himself.54

Hopkins had a keen realization of just what constituted these unsupernatural movements:

Dissipation, purely natural activity, or want of fervour are the kind of faults that frustrate the realisation of the glory God is to gain through that soul... Inevitably in its conversations with God it will gravitate towards this ruling thought--now become the Christian motive of its life--that of lending itself to be a perfect and willing instrument in the hands of God, for the fulfillment of His designs.55

That this was the habitual bent of Hopkins' mind becomes evident as one watches the course of his life on to its end. To the despair of his friends and correspondents he consistently refused in any way to seek to advance his own inclinations when these did not seem clearly in accord with the manifestations of God's will. That this was the conviction of his mind in 1877,

55Ibid., p. 102.
is evident from his poetry, particularly from The Windhover.

Having implored Christ to check in him unsupernatural movements, his next thought is:

... the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier.

Empson suggests that fire here may be some reference to the burning of the early poems.\(^56\) That is not probable, however. There is no evidence that Hopkins was tormented by remembrance of that action; he does not even express regret for it. This fire is a lovely one, yet dangerous. It breaks from Christ. It is in accordance with the context of the poem to recognize in it "the purifying action of the Divine Will which tempers and perfects it [the soul] in the fire of trial and suffering."\(^57\) Then means when the poet's purely natural activity has been buckled. The poet suggests an infinite comparison when he says "a billion times." The fire, the purifying action of the Divine Will, is infinitely lovelier than the brute action of the bird or similar actions on the poet's part: "For it is as the self is crucified that the Other reveals Himself within us and the Infinite to whom every being is open permits us to know Him as a spiritual Presence and an overflowing Life."\(^58\) But it is also more dangerous: "The invisible world frightens and dismays the body; at the mere thought of the invisible world the body feels itself threatened with expropriation and clings with greater violence to its own domain."\(^59\)

\(^56\)Seven Types of Ambiguity, p. 285.
\(^57\)Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., op. cit., p. 97.
\(^58\)Maurice Zundel, The Splendour of the Liturgy, p. 7.
\(^59\)Ibid., pp. 3-4.
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.

The poet says that the truth of his apparently contradictory statement regarding the simultaneous loveliness and danger of Christ's action in the soul is no wonder but the usual condition in nature. The fire, the purifying action of the Divine Will, is lovely in its object and in its result, but it is dangerous, full of risk, to the natural man. Such risks to self are necessary, however, if the good is to be obtained. Only through labor is the ploughshare able to break the ground and reveal the shining beauty of soil beneath the hardened surface. No picture could be more desolate than that of blue-bleak embers. Yet when they dare the risk involved in falling and breaking themselves, they assume new life and beauty, opening up bright gashes, varying in radiance between gold and vermilion.

Various meanings can again be read into the poet's choice of words and colors. Empson, for example, says:

The metaphor of the fire covered by ash seems most to insist on the beauty the fire gains when the ash falls in, when its precarious order is again shattered; perhaps, too, on the pleasure, in that some movement, some risk, even to so determinedly static a prisoner, is still possible. The gold that painters have used for the haloes of saints is forced by alliteration to agree with the gash and gall of their self-tortures; from this precarious triumph we fall again, with vermilion, to bleeding.60

Perhaps the best explanation is suggested by the following passage in one of Hopkins' sermons: "Poor was his station, laborious his life, bitter his ending; through poverty, through labor, through crucifixion his majesty

of nature more shines." Since the thought of Christ is in the foreground throughout the sestet of the poem, it is logical to recognize a reference to Him in its closing lines. In that case the vermilion suggests His sacrifice; the gold, His majesty. The preceding words of the poet help to explain a statement, that "the beauty and dismay loud in the sound of those last two lines are the dismay of men in the brittle beauty of this world, that, being beauty still, lives chiefly in Christ and no one else, but in this world yields its joy only in articulo mortis."

The Windhover expresses two fundamental convictions of Hopkins' life. The first concerns the purpose of man's creation; the second, the means of its fulfillment. Man was created to praise God, and this praise is to be accomplished by voluntary correspondence with His will. Instead of being an expression of "inner friction," the poem is one of right order based on understanding.

The note of praise is again preeminent in Pied Beauty, composed a few months after The Windhover. Despite its simplicity, it is most characteristic of its author, not only in the element of praise, but also in its unique subject matter. As early as 1865, Hopkins had considered at some length the relative effect of variety and of absolute uniformity with regard to beauty. Pied is an adjective frequently to be found in his Notes, while dapple is often used in his poetry. Here their whole fascination is

---

61 "Sermons, etc." Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 254.
62 Bernard Kelly, op. cit., [p. 19.]
63 F. R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 182.
expressed in one hymn of exaltation. Hopkins enumerates bits of oddity:
"skies of couple colour," "rose-moles upon trout," "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.

In the last two lines Hopkins expresses his reason for a special delight in pied things. Sargent explains it as follows:

Pied things tell of God by their inability to be God, by their helplessness, by their humility. They indicate God by what they are not. God is simple. They are variety, variety. Hopkins delights in their humility. — What a difference from the poets who like to see the greatness of God in the greatness of a mountain.65

Miss Phare's interpretation is likewise helpful:

From the sight of that which is individual, odd, not conforming to a pattern Hopkins derives especial pleasure. He likes everything that hovers between two categories, such as the couple-colour of the skies, things that are now swift, now slow; things that are fickle, that vary over time; things that are freckled, that is, that vary over space. These things seem to him to be in a special way characteristic of God, because only he understands the principle on which they work.66

A similar element of delight in the wilder, more unusual aspects of nature is manifest throughout the next sonnet, Hurrahing in Harvest. The very title suggests its exuberance. Of its composition Hopkins wrote:

"The Hurrahing sonnet was the outcome of half an hour of extreme enthusiasm as I walked home alone one day from fishing in the Elwy."67 It is the end

of summer, and the beauties of harvest time present an aspect of wildness and barbarity. As the poet walks and beholds them all, he lifts up his heart as well as his eyes and tries, this harvest time, "to glean our Saviour." Nature's response is eloquent. Of it he says:

And eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

Bridges' words: "These poems... might be convicted of occasional affectation in metaphor, as where the hills are 'as a stallion stalwart, very-violet--sweet'," refer to the metaphor which begins the sestet of this poem. It is indeed a strange combination of ideas; yet the more one reads of Hopkins, the less inclined one is to accuse him of affectation. His writings present many unexpected comparisons, and, in other doubtful cases, he has declared that his experiences were in reality as his poems represent them. Here it is not difficult to devise his meaning. He has just described the hills as the Saviour's "world-wielding shoulder," typifying His authority in the world. Then he compares the Saviour to what is suggested by the appearance of the hills, a stalwart stallion. Yet, while the hills are stalwart, majestic, as is the Saviour in wielding authority, they are likewise beautiful and thus inviting rather than forbidding. This too is true of the Saviour in whose character majesty and

---

sweetness are blended. "No heart as his was ever so tender, but tenderness
was not all: this heart so tender was as brave, it could be stern." The
poet next refers to the objective truth of these things, to his ability to
apprehend them and to the resulting ecstasy:

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 hurls earth for him off under his feet.

Less glorious moments in man's earthly pilgrimage, his day-labouring,
are the subject of The Caged Skylark. "Man's mounting spirit" dwells
scanted in his body, "bone-house, mean house," "as a dare-gale skylark
scanted in a dull cage." The bird cannot remember his freedom, but the
life of man is drudgery. Both man and imprisoned bird sing sweet songs at
times; yet both droop in their cells or struggle in fear or rage against
their barriers. The bird indeed needs rest but in its own wild nest, not
in the prison of a cage. Man's spirit even at best, in the general resur-
rection, will be fleshbound. Then, however, his body will be no encumbrance
to him:

... meadow-down is not distressed
For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones risen.

There is no reason to interpret this poem as indicative of the poet's
yearning for freedom from the bonds of his religious life. The contention
has been answered by Crehan:

In "The Caged Skylark," the poet is concerned,

70"Sermons, etc.," Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Nov. 23,
1879), p. 264.
not with anything personal, but with the problem of man's position in the universe. Thus, he is at pains to express his view, which derives from Duns Scotus, that man, though "fleshbound" during this life to his own disadvantage, will not find the body irksome in the next. .. Critics should remember that the poet was, especially at this period, much preoccupied with problems of philosophy.71

Mankind was ever a source of concern to Hopkins. In the Valley of the Elwy expresses his anxiety and a prayer for the people of Wales. The poet recalls "a house where all were good" to him. Its very atmosphere reflected their goodness. There follow lines celebrating the natural beauties of Wales:

Lovely the woods, waters, meadows, combes, vales,
All the air things wear that build this world of Wales;

Unfortunately, however, the poet finds that "the inmate does not correspond," and he prays:

God, lover of souls, swaying considerate scales,
Complete thy creature dear O where it fails,
Being mighty a master, being a father and fond.

This is one of the few poems which Hopkins himself interpreted for us. It was evidently in answer to questions put by Bridges that he wrote:

The kind people of the sonnet were the Watsons of Shooter's Hill, nothing to do with the Elwy. The facts were as stated; You misunderstand the thought which is far fetched. The frame of the sonnet is a rule of three sum wrong, thus: As the sweet smell to those kind people so the Welsh landscape is not to the Welsh; and then the author and principle of all four terms is asked to bring the sum right.72

Such was the mind of Hopkins, eager that all things be made right. The beauty which surrounded him during the time of his theological studies was just that which he describes in the foregoing sonnet. To him it was eloquent in praise of God, a reminder of His beauty, power, and goodness, of His presence and purpose in the world. But man, all too often, was indifferent and ungrateful. The poet was anxious; things were not as they should be. He beheld Nature praising; he called upon man to praise; he besought God to induce Man to do His will. These are the thoughts underlying the nature lyrics of 1877. This was the conflict which troubled Hopkins.
"Hopkins is the priest of poetry; he is also the poet of the priesthood,"¹ wrote Bernard Kelly. These two designations have become inseparable in the study of Hopkins, and their mutual influence, a subject of controversy. Did one vocation "destroy" the other?²

It was in September, 1877, that Hopkins was ordained to the priesthood; during the months preceding he had re-established his claim as a poet. Then his inspiration had been derived principally from nature in itself and from its relationship with God and with man. The latter consideration had drawn forth expressions of fatherly solicitude. Now, in the next group of poems, this note tended to precedence. Poetically silent for about six months after his ordination, Hopkins, when he resumed composition, sang principally of man, the creature of a wise and loving, just and all-holy Creator. His priestly heart yearned for the salvation of all, and his poetic nature required its assurance in order to perfect the joy he sometimes experienced in his intercourse with human beings.

To understand this change in subject matter is not difficult; the circumstances of Hopkins' life readily account for it. From the beautiful environment of Wales, which had delighted him as a theological student, he was thrown into the sordid ugliness of industrial centers and into difficult

work. After Ordination, he was sent to Farm Street Church, London, as select preacher. His letters show, however, that by October 1877, he was stationed at Mount Saint Mary's College, Chesterfield, where he held the office of sub-minister. In May, 1878, he was again at Stonyhurst College, Blackburn. July of that year found him as Preacher at St. Aloysius' Church, Oxford. It is interesting to observe the effect upon him of this residence in Oxford:

My work was parish work and left no time, that was of any use, for reading. Oxford was not to me a congenial field, fond as I am of it; I am far more at home with the Lancashire people.3

A few months later:

You say it is something of an affectation for me to run up the Lancashire people and run down 'Oxonians'—unpleasant word, let us say the Oxford ones. I do not remember quite what I said; are you sure it was, as you assume, of Gown, not Town I was speaking? Now I do like both. Not to love my University would be to undo the very buttons of my being and as for the Oxford townspeople I found them in my 10 months' stay among them very deserving of affection—though somewhat stiff, stand-off, and depressed. And in that stay I saw very little of the University. But I could not but feel how alien it was, how chilling, and deeply to be distrusted. I could have wished, and yet I could not, that there had been no one that had known me there. As a fact there were many and those friendly, some cordially so, but with others I did not feel at home. With the Lancastrians it is the reverse; I felt as if [I] had been born to deal with them. Religion, you know, enters very deep; in reality it is the deepest impression I have in speaking to people, that they are or that they are not of my religion. And then it is sweet to be a little flattered and I can truly say that except in the most transparently cringing way I seldom am. Now these Lancashire people of low degree or not of high degree are those who most have seemed to me to welcome me and make much of me. This is, I suppose, what was on my mind.4

At the end of 1879, Hopkins went to Liverpool, where he was Preacher at St. Francis Xavier's Church. There he remained until the beginning of his Tertianship, with the exception of a few weeks spent in Glasgow just before that time. The Tertianship, "the third year (really ten months) of noviceship which we undergo before taking our last vows," was spent at Manresa House, Roehampton, beginning in October, 1881. Thereafter he was on the staff at Stonyhurst, teaching classics, until August 1884. Bridges said that Hopkins served in these several posts "without distinction." Some have interpreted his frequent changes as evidence of this fact. Hopkins himself gave perhaps a better explanation when he wrote: "I am so far as I know, permanently here, but permanence with us is ginger-bread permanence; cobweb, soapsud, and frostfeather permanence."

The poetic output of these eight years comprised but twenty-one poems. This fact has provoked discussion as to the nature and value of his inspiration. A priest critic maintains that "Hopkins lacked the continued inspiration which marks a major poet." Father Feeney replies with discernment:

I think Father Thornton errs slightly in assigning Hopkins' small amount of verse to lack of inspiration simply. Rather I think it was due to a lack of a peculiar quality of intense inspiration which Hopkins demanded in himself before he could set to work. He wanted, so to speak, to be struck by lightning every time he was inspired, to receive a charge strong enough to inform and

---

mould a most intense and exacting verse-pattern and
to keep it dazzling with music and metaphor from first
syllable to last. Such inspirations are—mercifully,
we may say—rare. Otherwise how could a man keep his
nerves? 9

Hopkins himself at various times expressed his ideas on inspiration.
There is in one of his early diaries, perhaps of 1864, an entry which he
later developed in a letter:

I think then the language of verse may be divided
into three kinds. The first and highest is poetry proper,
the language of inspiration. The word inspiration need
cause no difficulty. I mean by it a mood of great, ab-
normal in fact, mental acuteness, either energetic or
receptive, according as the thoughts which arise in it
seem generated by a stress and action of the brain, or to
strike into it unasked. This mood arises from various
causes, physical generally, as good health or state of
the air or, prosaic as it is, length of time after a meal.
But I need not go into this; all that is needful to mark
is, that the poetry of inspiration can only be written
in this mood of mind, even if it only last a minute, by
poets themselves. Everybody of course has like moods,
but not being poets what they then produce is not poetry.
The second kind I call Parnassian. It can only be
spoken by poets but is not in the highest sense poetry.
It does not require the mood of mind in which the poetry
of inspiration is written. It is spoken on and from the
level of a poet's mind, not, as in the other case, when
the inspiration which is the gift of genius, raises him
above himself. For I think it is the case with genius
that it is not when quiescent so very much above medi­
cracy as the difference between the two might lead us to
think, but that it has the power and privilege of rising
from that level to a height utterly far from mediocrity;
in other words that its greatness is that it can be so
great. 10

If lack of inspiration was indeed the reason why Hopkins wrote fewer
poems than his contemporaries, it is easy to find an explanation, during the

10Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, to A. W. M. Baillie (Sept. 10,
1864), p. 69.
years which followed his ordination, in various physical causes similar to those mentioned in the foregoing paragraph. Throughout his correspondence, there are incidental references to his health and environment. He wrote half-jokingly to Bridges:

You have no cause to complain of my delay in writing, I could not help it; I am not a consulting physician and have little time and now I am very tired, yes 'a thousand times and yet a thousand times' and 'scarce can go or creep.'

Increased hardships of priestly work augmented the original difficulties. He wrote in 1880:

I will send what else I can whenever I can find an opportunity of copying it. The parish work of Liverpool is very wearying to mind and body and leaves me nothing but odds and ends of time. There is merit in it but little Muse, and indeed 26 lines is the whole I have written in more than half a year, since I left Oxford.

Later in the same year he wrote:

I daresay you have long expected as you have long deserved an answer to your last kind and cheering—let us say, number or issue. But I never could write; time and spirits were wanting; one is so fagged, so harried and gallied up and down. And the drunkards go on drinking, the filthy, as the scripture says, are filthy still; human nature is so inveterate. Would that I had seen the last of it.

Again:

Liverpool is of all places the most museless. It is indeed a most unhappy and miserable spot. There is

moreover no time for writing anything serious—I should say for composing it, for if it were made it might be written. 14

Since our holidays began I have been in a wretched state of weakness and weariness, I can't tell why, always drowsy and incapable of reading or thinking to any effect. And this must be why I was, before that, able to do so little on your Prometheus. 15

From all this it is clear that Hopkins the poet was at a disadvantage. All would not necessarily agree with his analysis of inspiration and the conditions which produce it. Yet it seems reasonable to believe that the statement is correct as regards himself, since it is probable that he was writing from experience. Against him then were ill-health and hard work in uncongenial surroundings. Another letter, however, gives a hint as to what may have constituted a deeper reason for lack of inspiration. It is moreover an answer to those who contend that the religious aspect of his earlier poems was secondary. He was explaining why he did not mean to publish his poems. He said he had taken and meant to take no step to do so, except for having submitted his "two wrecks" to The Month. He would not refuse publication, he said, if someone in authority knew of his poems and suggested it, but that he considered unlikely. He thought then only of keeping his verses in one place so that "if anyone shd. like, they might be published after my death." But that, too, he considered "unlikely, as well as remote." 16 He then makes a statement significant in self-revelation:

I could add other considerations, as that if I meant

16Ibid. (Feb. 15, 1879), p. 66.
to publish at all it ought to be more or at least to be followed up, and how can that be? I cannot in conscience spend time on my poetry, neither have I the inducements and inspirations that make others compose. Feeling, love in particular, is the great moving power and spring of verse and the only person that I am in love with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart sensibly and when he does I cannot always 'make capital' of it; it would be a sacri-
lege to do so.17

It is consistent with the character of Hopkins, as manifested in his earlier life and poetry, that he willingly made sacrifices in view of a greater good. A poet cannot be always at his best. "Any poet when he is not at his greatest is preparing us for his greatest; it is by that approach to him that we can discern the elements which go to make up the unity of his achievements."18 Though all the poems of this period may not rank equally high, each provides an insight into the mind of the poet. Lest the presentation of his difficulties give a false impression of Hopkins, it is necessary to find in his poetry the reason for his underlying and consistent serenity of mind and happiness in his work. On these poems, as on the whole body of Hopkins' work, the following is an apt comment:

It is easy to regret that Hopkins's conscience would not allow him to spend time on poetry, but we must remember that the poet was the man—that his poetic make was complementary to his religious make, and that to ask for a different man is to ask for a different poet. If he had not been a priest, Hopkins would undoubtedly have written more verse—perhaps as much as Bridges or Browning or Swinburne. But he would not necessarily have been a better poet, and as it is, his small harvest is so rich and golden, that

17Ibid.
we would not exchange it for all the pallid stacks of verse piled up by his contemporaries.19

In April 1878, appeared The Loss of the Eurydice. Hopkins described its inspiration: "My muse turned utterly sullen in the Sheffield smoke-ridden air and I had not written a line till the foundering of the Eurydice the other day [March 24, 1878] and that worked on me and I am making a poem—in my own rhythm but in a measure something like Tennyson's Violet."20 This is the second of the poems Hopkins was accustomed to call his "two wrecks." He compared them on different occasions:

The Deutschland would be more generally interesting if there were more wreck and less discourse, I know, but still it is an ode and not primarily a narrative... This poem on the Eurydice is hitherto almost all narrative however.21

[The Eurydice is] also in 'sprung rhythm,' as I call it, but simpler, shorter, and without marks.22

It is best to read the Eurydice first, which is in plain sprung rhythm and will possess you with the run of it. The Deutschland, earlier written, has more variety but less mastery of the rhythm.23

Indeed when, on somebody returning me the Eurydice, I opened and read some lines, reading, as one commonly reads whether prose or verse, with the eyes, so to say, only, it struck me aghast with a kind of raw nakedness and unmitigated violence I was unprepared for: but take breath and read it with the ears, as I always wish to be read, and my verse becomes all right.24

19Herbert Read, In Defense of Shelley and Other Essays, p. 141.
I agree that the Eurydice shows more mastery in art, still I think the best lines in the Deutschland are better than the best in the other. One may be biased in favour of one's first-born though.25

The Eurydice opens with an appeal to Christ, consistent with Hopkins' apostolic mind. Mindful of the three hundred souls on board the wrecked ship, the poet reminds his Lord that the matter concerned Him. Then follows a detailed description of the wreck, which had occurred with great suddenness. Some of the passengers had been asleep; all had been unwarned. Hopkins wonders whether the vessel had prided herself on the bales and bullion with which she was freighted, whereas her real treasure lay in the lads and men on board. Returning "from a cruise, training seamen," the vessel had been close to home, when struck by a storm blowing from the very shores of England. Even the appearance of the day had been deceptive:

> And you were a liar, O blue March day,
> Bright sun lanced fire in the heavenly bay.

These lines Hopkins explained: "a bright sun was darting fire from the bay of heaven but that was of no avail, for did not a fatal north wind... and so on."26 The sudden approach of the storm is next described and its striking of the ship with such force and suddenness that nothing could be done against it; all was lost:

> This was that fell capsize,
> As half she had righted and hoped to rise
> Death teeming in by her port-holes
> Raced down decks, round messes of mortals.

Bridges sent questions and criticisms regarding the poem to Hopkins, and
the latter answered them. Regarding the foregoing stanza he wrote: "About
'mortholes' I do wince a little but can not now change it." In editing
the letters, Abbott inserted a footnote on this point: "This word is not
in the printed text: it was probably used as the end word of 1. 40, to
rhyme with 'portholes,' or instead of this last." The following comment
on the passage and the note is of interest:

Spiritual obtuseness is bad enough, but what shall
we say of literary stupidity? ... Hopkins uses the word
"portholes" to rhyme with the word "mortals." It must
be obvious to anyone that if this rhyme is to be allowed,
"portholes" must be twisted into "portals," or else
"mortals" must become "mortholes"... I wonder how much
he would wince if he found the editor of his letters
accepting "mortholes" not as a travesty of the rhyme-
requirement for "mortals" but as an authentic English
word.

Hopkins continues the story of the wreck. Within a few minutes all was
lost. The narrative becomes more real through the use of proper names.
Marcus Hare, her captain, kept to the ship "care-drowned and wrapped in
Cheer's death." Again we have Hopkins' own explanation of a somewhat
obscure passage: "Cheer's death = the death of cheer = the dying out of all
comfort = despair." Another individual is named, Sydney Fletcher, who:

Takes to the seas and snows
As sheer down the ship goes.

and is eventually saved, "after an hour of wintry waves." Another realistic

28Ibid.
56 (1936), p. 68.
element is introduced through the testimony of eye-witnesses:

They say who saw one sea-corpse cold
He was all of lovely manly mould
Every inch a tar
Of the best we boast our sailors are

The poet grieves for the loss of this beauty, for the ability and experience in seamanship which

Slumber in these forsaken
Bones, this sinew, and will not waken.

Thoughts of this lost sailor turn the poet's mind to thousands more like him among the people of England. He compares the foundering of the ship to that of his own nation and generation, wrecked by Protestantism. He says he might "let bygones be"--the disgrace of ruined shrines, unvisited, and dressed by the hand of Robbery only. More important though are the breathing temples, the human beings who have been deprived of their birthright, Catholicism. Just such was

...this crew, in
Unchrist, all rolled in ruin--

Deeply surely I need to deplore it,
Wondering why my master bore it,
The riving off that race
So at home, time was, to his truth and grace
That a starlight-wender of ours would say
The marvelous Milk was Walsingham Way
And one--but let be, let be;
More, more than was will yet be.--

Again we have Hopkins' own explanation of the preceding stanzas:

The difficulty about the Milky Way is perhaps because you do not know the allusion; it is that in Catholic times Walsingham Way was a name for the
Milky Way, as being supposed a fingerpost to our Lady's shrine at Walsingham.\textsuperscript{31}

The One of the Eurydice is Duns Scotus, on whom I have a sonnet lately done which I will send you. The thought is: the island was so Marian that the very Milky Way we made a roadmark to that person's shrine and from one of our seats of learning (to wit the above) went forth the first great champion of her Immaculate Conception, now in our days made an article of faith.\textsuperscript{32}

The next two stanzas, likewise somewhat obscure, have also been explained by the poet:

O well wept, mother have lost son;
Wept, wife; wept, sweetheart would be one:

Though grief yield them no good
Yet shed what tears sad true love should.

But to Christ lord of thunder
Crouch; lay knee by earth low under:

"Holiest, loveliest, bravest,
Save my hero, O Hero savest."

The words are put into the mouth of a mother, wife or sweetheart who has lost a son, husband, or lover respectively by the disaster and who prays Christ, whom she addresses 'Hero savest,' that is, 'Hero that savest,' that is, Hero of a Saviour, to save (that is, have saved) her hero, that is, her son, husband, or lover: "Hero of a Saviour" (the line means) "be the saviour of my hero."\textsuperscript{33}

In order to understand the two next stanzas, the last of the poem, it is helpful to observe the parenthetical phrase in the foregoing explanatory passage, "that is, have saved." The prayer is made after the wreck, after its victims have already died. Yet the poet hopes that it may have been effective at the time when it was needed. Quotation marks indicate that the

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid. (May 30, 1878), p. 53.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. (April 8, 1879), p. 77.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid. (April 22, 1879), p. 78.
second last stanza is a completion of the prayer begun in the preceding one:

And the prayer thou hearest me making
Have, at the awful overtaking,
Heard; have heard and granted
Grace that day grace was wanted."

Not that hell knows redeeming,
But for souls sunk in seeming
Fresh, till doomfire burn all,
Prayer shall fetch pity eternal.

The thought here expressed played a great part, Hopkins said, in his own mind and action. He remarked that in connection with an explanation of Henry Purcell, a sonnet of 1879. In spite of all his efforts to clarify the latter, it remained obscure to Bridges. Then Hopkins became very explicit:

In particular, the first lines mean: May Purcell, 0 may he have died a good death and that soul which I love so much and which breathes or stirs so unmistakably in his works have parted from the body and passed away, centuries since though I frame this wish, in peace with God! so that the heavy condemnation under which he outwardly or nominally lay for being out of the true Church may in consequence of his good intentions have been reversed.

This thought is the same as that of the Eurydice. It expresses hope that needed grace may have been given on some past occasion in virtue of prayers to be said at a later time. The last stanza makes clear that the poet understood the matter in that way, not that he expected a reversal of a judgment already made by God. Of interest in this connection is a passage from Hopkins’ prose:

2Ibid. (Jan. 4, 1883), p. 171.
It has been shown how God can always command if he chooses the free consent of the elective will, at least, if by no other way, by shutting out all freedom of field (which no doubt does sometimes take place, as in disposing the hearts of princes; but whether in matters concerning the subject's own salvation we do not know; very probably it does in answer to the subject's own or some other's prayer in his behalf.36

The Eurydice expressed anxiety for the salvation of others. Peace, a sonnet also written at Oxford in 1879, is a personal manifestation of spirit. Except for the difficulty presented by its inverted word order, this poem is not obscure; yet it is doubtful whether its full significance can be apprehended by anyone other than its author. Peace is evidently synonymous with the Holy Spirit. The poet asks:

When will you ever, Peace, wild wooddove, shy wings shut, Your round me roaming end, and under be my boughs?

It is a cry of weariness and of loneliness. The poet acknowledges that Peace does come sometimes. One is reminded of his words to Bridges, written in the same year, and quoted before in this chapter: "the only person that I am in love with seldom, especially now stirs my heart sensibly."37 Here he complains: "That piecemeal peace is poor peace," for peace, he says, does not allow alarms of war, the death of it. What constituted these alarms of war in Hopkins' case? He does not say, but the poem foreshadows the crucifixion of spirit so vividly reflected in his last works. He declares that the Lord, depriving him of peace, should leave something in place of it. Here, as always when he employs poetry to resolve such questionings of soul, he finds the correct solution and carries it to even

greater heights. He realizes that in lieu of Peace, his Lord leaves him patience, which "plumes to peace thereafter." These words express the poet's understanding that in his very sufferings, when they are borne with patience and conformity to God's will, he will find Peace, that Peace which is evidently a Divine Person. It is clear that for Hopkins there could be no peace in His absence. The thought of the poem thus far bears a marked similarity to a Scriptural passage:

But we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not; because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us. 38

...And when Peace here does house
He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo,
He comes to brood and sit.

Here the poet adds something of significance to the thought he has already developed, the realization that God can begin to work in him only when he has ceased to struggle and has conformed himself to God's plan. The plan is that of his sanctification. It is a work in which God is to have the more important part. When He abides within the soul, He is not idle. It is clear to the poet that God is directing the course of his perfection with love and cherishing care.

In Peace Hopkins is concerned almost entirely with God's workings in his own soul. Most of the poems of this time, however, were concerned with other persons or events. Abbott, criticizing him for attempting "to coerce his poetry into narrowly Roman Catholic channels," mentions in that con-

38 Rom. V: 3-5.
The attempt therefore to fetter his muse was a failure. The poet in him was not possessed by the spirit of these martyrdoms and was too honest for task-work. The priest in him chose the subjects; the subjects did not choose the poet. It is impossible to imagine what heart-searchings and travail lie behind this endeavour. 40

There is no evidence to support this statement except Hopkins' continual, unsuccessful attempts to complete the works in question. There may have been a lack of inspiration for the reasons already mentioned, and of the sustained energy which would have been necessary to complete these longer works. Yet when Hopkins referred to them in his letters, as he frequently did, his words were expressive of genuine interest in the proposed subjects and of desire to accomplish the work. 41 A passage from his Journal makes clear his feelings toward one of these subjects, Saint Winefred:

The sight of the water in the well as clear as glass, greenish like beryl or aquamarine, trembling at the surface with the force of the springs, and shaping out the five foils of the well quite drew and held my eyes to it... The strong unfailing flow of the water and the chain of cures from year to year all these centuries took hold of my mind with wonder at the bounty of God in one of His saints, the sensible thing so naturally and so gracefully uttering the spiritual reason of its being (which is all in true keeping with the story of St. Winefred's death and recovery) and the spring in place leading back the thoughts by its spring in time to its spring in eternity: even now the stress and buoyancy and abundance of the water is before my eyes. 42

40 Ibid.
Unfortunately, these ambitious projects were never realized. The subjects were such as might have appealed to Hopkins even if he had not been a priest. There is, however, another group of short poems, written at this time and definitely the outgrowth of his priestly ministrations.

Of delicate fibre, he found it hard to endure the terrible manifestations of human misery with which, as a priest, he was constantly coming in contact. But that same delicate fibre caused him the profoundest joy when he touched, as he often did, the loveliness of humanity and the natural beauties of the world. 43

Hopkins himself wrote, "I find within my professional experience now a good deal of matter to write on." 44 These "professional poems" are principally four: The Bugler's First Communion, The Handsome Heart, Brothers, and Felix Randal. They are concerned chiefly with the "loveliness of humanity." Spring and Fall also can be classed with them. It is delightful to recognize in Hopkins, the more or less eccentric 45 poet, fundamental traits common to the simplest of zealous parish priests the world over. These poems reveal in him qualities of which we would not otherwise be sure. Preeminently, they manifest the same solicitous anxiety for the salvation of souls which has already several times been noted. They display moreover a love for children and young people. This can be recognized at times in his

45 "You give me a long jobation about eccentricities. Alas, I have heard so much about and suffered so much for and in fact been so completely ruined for life by my alleged singularities that they are a sore subject." Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (April 27, 1881), p. 126.
letters. He spoke of his affection for his pupils when he began to teach:

I have written so many accounts of what this place is like that I can not write any more. But I am very fond of my boys and as there is nothing but boys visible that is really saying everything there is to be said about the general pleasantness of the place.46

He was pleased with Bridges' young companion:

My heart warmed towards that little Bertie Molesworth (I do not mean by this that he is so very small), so that if you were to bring him again I shd. be glad to see him. (But I am afraid he felt dull. He is shy I dare say.)47

After a visit with Patmore, he remembers especially the latter's three-year-old son:

Please give my kindest remembrances to Mrs. Patmore and the Miss Patmores. I hope all are well and Piff is not killing himself with his sensibilities.48

The poems show too Hopkins' interest in the humbler people. This, of course, is evident from his letters. There is the famous one to Bridges, which has since led the Communists to claim Hopkins as their own:

However I am afraid some great revolution is not far off. Horrible to say, in a manner I am a Communist. Their ideal bating some things is nobler than that professed by any secular statesman I know of (I must own I live in bat-light and shoot at a venture). Besides it is just.--I do not mean the means of getting to it are. But it is a dreadful thing for the greatest and most necessary part of a very rich nation to live a hard life without dignity, knowledge, comforts, delight, or hopes in the midst of plenty—which plenty they make. They profess that they do not care what they wreck and

48Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, to Coventry Patmore (June 6, 1886), p. 220.
burn, the old civilization and order must be destroyed. This is a dreadful lookout but what has the old civilization done for them? As it at present stands in England it is itself in great measure founded on wrecking. But they got none of the spoils, they came in for nothing but harm from it then and thereafter. England has grown hugely wealthy but this wealth has not reached the working classes; I expect it has made their condition worse. Besides this iniquitous order the old civilization embodies another order mostly old and what is new in direct entail from the old, the old religion, learning, law, art, etc., and all the history that is preserved in standing monuments. But as the working classes have not been educated they know next to nothing of all this and cannot be expected to care if they destroy it. The more I look the more black and deservedly black the future looks, so I will write no more.49

There is no reason why the preceding passage should be misunderstood; yet Hopkins himself cleared up any possible doubt in another statement:

My last letter to you was from Stonyhurst. It was not answered, so that perhaps it did not reach you. If it did I supposed then and do not know what else to suppose now that you were disgusted with the red opinions it expressed, being a conservative. I have little reason to be red; it was the red Commune that murdered five of our Fathers lately--whether before or after I wrote I do not remember. So far as I know I said nothing that might not fairly be said. If this was your reason for not answering it seems to show a greater keenness about politics than is common.50

These thoughts are reflected in a much later poem, Tom's Garland: upon the Unemployed. In concluding a long explanation of this sonnet, Hopkins says:

But presently I remember that this is all very well for those who are in, however low in, the Commonwealth

and share in any way the Common weal; but that the curse of our times is that many do not share it, that they are outcasts from it and have neither security nor splendour; that they share care with the high and obscurity with the low, but wealth or comfort with neither. And this state of things, I say, is the origin of Loafers, Tramps, Cornerboys, Roughs, Socialists and other pests of society.51

The poems in question dealt not so much with "pests of society," but with children, and with men of lesser rank. There is still another letter to Bridges from which we may judge Hopkins' attitude toward simple folk. He had objected to some of Bridges' verses saying, "The vulgar verses about Anne leave a bad taste."52 Later he referred to the matter again, and it is the parenthetical phrase which is revealing: "And I repeat that those stanzas are vulgar; but not because you made a friend of an old fisherman (how little you know to think that!). . . ."53 Hopkins did not look down on such friendships. This group of poems is evidence, moreover, of his appreciation of the privileges that were his in being able to administer the fruits of his priesthood.

The last statement is particularly true of The Bugler's First Communion. It is to some extent narrative, the story being a very simple one. From the "barrack. . . over the hill" comes a bugler boy to receive his First Communion from Father Hopkins. He kneels there in regimental red, and the priest takes him "his treat." Of the twelve stanzas, only the first three are taken up with the telling of the story. The next is a prayer that heaven's "sweetest sendings" may befall the lad in virtue of his Communion.

53 Ibid. (April 8, 1879), p. 75.
Then follow lines of admiration for the youth—his bravery, honesty, and purity. His Angel Guardian is asked to defend him against the devils, to march beside him and direct his days "to a dextrous and starlight order."
The poet then says that it does his heart good to visit at the barracks, where the youth is so responsive to his teachings. Although he may experience consolation for days thereafter, he feels that, in a sense, he is deserving of it. One of the reasons of his serving God is that he may thus serve "Christ's royal ration," Himself, to "just such slips of soldiery."
There is nothing else like it; nothing else so "strains" the poet-priest as thus to observe a youth in whom all portends the sweeter ending of the sweet gift of Holy Communion, eternal happiness in the kingdom of heaven. There Christ is heir as well as king. Still, anxiety is caused by the thought that this eternity is not yet secure. The youth must be exposed to temptations, and he may succumb to them. The poet prays that the "sealing sacred ointment," evidently the graces of Confirmation, may well work in him. Now will be needed charms or enticements, arms or defensive weapons, anything that will keep from him what is bad, and lock forever in the lad the love of Christ which now possesses him. The poet prefers to see no more of him lest disappointment quell the hope whose least stirrings have such power to elevate his spirits, the hope of someday seeing the lad a Galahad of our own day, seeking and finding the Holy Grail through his purity. The child's drifting seems channelled by the divine doom upon our fallen race. This does not necessarily mean that he will come to ultimate and eternal disaster. Yet, while "bound home," it is possible that he may "rankle and roam in back-wheels"; even this is beneath the ideal which Hopkins' priestly
heart would see realized in the youth. He leaves that, however, "to the Lord of the Eucharist" and lays it by. Nevertheless, his lips express pleas Would brandle adamantine heaven with ride and jar, did Prayer go disregarded.

These prayers are "forward-like" in contrast to those of the Eurydice. Hopkins considers it likely the prayers were heard, for to such requests heaven is favourable. The poem is an expression of Hopkins' conception of his priestly duties. Even its unusual figures are but evidence of the reality of the experience. The priest was genuinely awed by the beauty of the lad's purity and devotion, genuinely concerned lest they might be lost or tarnished. There was so much sin, and it so distressed him. Here he found everything as he wanted it and longed to preserve it so. His sincerity of feeling is well-illustrated in the following, if it is rightly understood: "I enclose a poem, the Bugler. I am half inclined to hope the hero of it may be killed in Afghanistan."54

Another incident of this time appealed to Hopkins, and he made of it a sonnet, called The Handsome Heart: at a Gracious Answer. He later related the story in prose thus:

I am somewhat surprised at your liking this sonnet so much. I thought it not very good. The story was that last Lent, when Fr. Parkinson was laid up in the country, two boys of our congregation gave me much help in the sacristy in Holy Week. I offered them money for their services, which the elder refused, but being pressed consented to take it laid out in a book. The younger followed suit; then when some days after I asked him what I shd. buy answered as in the sonnet. His father is Italian and therefore sells ices.55

54 Ibid. (Oct. 8, 1879), p. 92.
Later he wrote: "The little hero of the Handsome Heart has gone to school at Boulogne to be bred for a priest and he is bent on being a Jesuit."\textsuperscript{56}

The story occupies only the first four lines of the sonnet:

"But tell me, child, your choice; what shall I buy You?" -- "Father, what you buy me I like best."

With the sweetest air that said, still plied and pressed,
He swung to his first poised purport of reply.

The next seven lines are a reflection upon the wonder of the human heart when it is mannerly. It is more, the poet says, "than handsome face"; yet, in this case, both were present, bathed, moreover, "in high hallowing grace." Something that Hopkins wrote in another connection helps to make clearer the significance of these thoughts to him. The following was written in the same year as the poem:

I think then no one can admire beauty of body more than I do, and it is of course a comfort to find beauty in a friend or a friend in beauty. But this kind of beauty is dangerous. Then comes the beauty of the mind, such as genius, and this is greater than the beauty of the body and not to call dangerous. And more beautiful than the beauty of the mind is beauty of character, the "handsome heart."\textsuperscript{57}

A few weeks later, he developed these ideas into a sermon; it was for November 23, 1879. The subject was: "Our Lord Jesus Christ...our hero, a hero all the world wants." With an extended development for each point, Hopkins says:

There met in Jesus Christ all things that can make man lovely and loveable. In his body he was most beautiful...I come to his mind. He was the greatest genius that ever lived...Now in the third place, far higher

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid. (Oct. 8, 1879), p. 92.

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid. (Oct. 22, 1879), p. 95.
than beauty of the body, higher than genius and wisdom
the beauty of the mind, comes the beauty of his character,
his character as man.58

The three concluding lines of The Handsome Heart contain the poet's prayer
for the child who desired to have only what the priest would select for him.
The priest considers what boon he can best ask from heaven; it is only that
the child may continue and become ever stronger in the path he is following:

... 0 on that path you pace
Run all your race, 0 brace sterner that strain.

Brothers tells of "a little scene that touched me at Mount St. Mary's."59

Again the story is inconsequential, but it displays beauty of character, the
loveliness of an elder brother's love. Plays were to be given by the
students at Shrovetide, and a part was given to John. Priests and students
thronged the hall for the performance. Henry, John's elder brother,
beckoned Father Hopkins to sit beside him, and, more than the play itself,
the priest observed "the tender byplay":

For, wrung all on love's rack,
My lad, and lost in Jack,
Smiled, blushed, and bit his lip;
... with what stress
He hung on the imp's success.

After two tedious acts came Jack's cue. He was "brass bold" and uncon-
cerned, but Henry "dropped eyes and dared not look." Jack was a success,
and the poet is his usual economic self in expressing the fact:

Eh, how all rung!
Young dog, he did give tongue!

Hopkins was again forced to explain himself, which he did as follows:

First you misquote, then you insult me. I wrote "Dog, he did give tongue!" not, what you call like Browning, "Dog, did he give tongue?" It means, so to say, "And by George, sir, when the young dog opened his mouth at last he did make a noise and no mistake."

Harry must hide his flaming cheeks, stained with tears of love and shame. The poet finds comfort in this incident. Human nature, "bad, base, and blind," can still be kind.

Spring and Fall, composed by Hopkins, September 1880, "in walking from Lydgate" is "not founded on any real incident." In form it is the older person's part in a conversation with a child. Actually it expresses thoughts engendered in the poet's mind by the falling leaves of autumn. In the opening couplet, he asks:

Margaret, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?

The concluding couplet answers this question:

It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

The intervening thoughts are of such a nature that the reader finds it difficult to probe them to his complete satisfaction. The fresh thoughts of the child make her sensitive to this cessation of natural beauty.

Hopkins had shown a like susceptibility two years earlier, in Binsey poplars, and likewise when he wrote in his Journal, April 8, 1873:

The ashtree growing in the corner of the garden was felled. It was lapped first; I heard the sound and looking out and seeing it maimed there came at that moment a great pang and I wished to die and not to see the inscapes of the world destroyed any more.63

To the mind of the child the fall of leaves is as important as are "the things of man," real sorrows, to the adult mind. She is told that as her heart grows older she will view such sights more coldly; nor will she so much as "spare a sigh," though the world be filled with fallen leaves. Nevertheless, the poet says:

And yet you will weep and know why.

To this line critical readers have attached great weight, particularly to the accent which the poet placed on will. The poem was one of a group used by I. A. Richards to conduct an experiment in criticism. Printed sheets of poems were issued "to audiences who were requested to comment freely in writing upon them. The authorship of the poem was not revealed, and with rare exceptions it was not recognized. . . The majority [of the writers] were undergraduates reading English with a view to an Honours Degree,"64 hence serious students. Responses to Spring and Fall varied from enthusiastic appreciation to bewildered disgust; one comment was simply "Pish-posh!"65 Two of the most appreciative may well be quoted here, since they help to clarify the meaning of the poem:

64Practical Criticism, pp. 3-4.
65Ibid., p. 87.
It is difficult to understand this poem at first. After thinking about it a good deal I have come to the conclusion that this is the meaning of it—an elderly man, experienced in such matters, has found a girl grieving at the falling of leaves in autumn.

He shows that she will not longer have the same quick sensitiveness when she is old—she will no longer be able to grieve for such things (Cf. lines 2-4). Then she will weep, but this time not for such things as the falling leaves in autumn, but because she can no longer have such feelings—the feelings of youth. . . Even now in weeping at the transience of the things she enjoys in autumn, she is really weeping for the transience of all things. She is mourning among other things, for the fleetingness of her own youth.66

This poem shows great skill and I think it is by far the most difficult of the four. The more I read it the more I find in it; I did not really grasp its whole meaning till I had made about three attacks on it and even now I am not sure I thoroughly understand it. I do not think this is because it is obscure, but because it requires a special reading; the accenting of the seventh line is particularly important—the accent falls on "will weep" and "know why."

The way the poem is written I admire greatly. I like the simple opening and closing couplet, the one answering the other. . .

I like the whole idea of the poem, and I think the last couplet is excellent, giving the poem universal application and making this specially refer to Margaret.67

Hopkins originally placed an accent mark on will, but this was omitted in the printed sheets distributed by Richards. He explains his action as follows:

This mark I omitted, partly to see what would happen, partly to avoid a likely temptation to irrelevant discussions. Without it, "will" may be read as giving the

66 Ibid., p. 82.
67 Ibid., pp. 82-3.
future tense. Then the accents may fall on "weep" and on "and;" the sense being that in the future she will know the reason for a sorrow that is now only a blind grief. When "will" is accented it ceases to be an auxiliary verb and becomes the present tense of the verb "to will." She persists in weeping and in demanding the reason for the falling of the leaves, and perhaps also for her grief.68

Either reading, of course, carries with it an acceptable meaning. Accentuation of will, however, does not necessarily exclude the possibility of its being an auxiliary. It may simply make it an emphatic one. This would serve to offset the poet's previous statement, that such sights will not occasion tears when she is older. Whatever the exact meaning of the line, it turns the thought of the poem toward its universal import.

Now no matter, child, the name: Sorrow's springs are the same.

Thus the poet explains to Margaret that the name or nature of the sorrow does not matter—all sorrows spring from one source.

Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed What heart heard of, ghost guessed.

The sense of these lines becomes clearer from reading them in their original form and Dixon's comment on them. It is noteworthy that he speaks of them as expressing the leading thought of the poem. Hopkins does not contradict the statement; he rather attempts to improve the lines in accordance with the suggestion of Dixon, who wrote:

It seems to me that in the couplet "Nor mouth it, no nor mind expressed But heart heard of, ghost guessed" it would be an improvement to bring the latter line

68 Ibid., p. 83.
What the poet says is that the source from which all human sorrow and mourning spring, whether or not it is ever named by the mouth or even in the mind, is sensed by the heart, comprehended by the soul. This recognition of a universal fountainhead of sorrow is what lifts Hopkins' poem above the usual ones on the same theme and makes it possible to disclose its meaning. He does not, however, become explicit as to what it is. In The Wreck of the Deutschland, Stanza 18, it was his heart that set him right, taught him the truth of the sorrow then afflicting him. In Stanza 22, he explained it as the mark of the suffering Christ, which "he scores ... in scarlet on his own bespoken." Here, however, he calls mourning "the blight man was born for." Could he mean that the mark of Christ's suffering is a blight, a thing which withers hope, blasts prospects, or checks prosperity? Yet those are the very things which, in The Windhover, he showed to be characteristic of Christ's sufferings as well as of man's. He showed, of course, the more beautiful aspect of Christ's tribulations, and of man's when they are supernaturalized. In one of the Church's prayers, this world is referred to as a "valley of tears." All under the law of original sin have cause for mourning. Nevertheless, Christ said

---

69 Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (April 6, 1881), p. 49.
"Blessed are they that mourn." They shall be comforted in this life, through their association with Christ's Passion, as well as by their reward in Eternity. All of this the child should know, for mourning which is not supernaturalized, not blessed, leads to despair. These truths apply to all mankind, but each individual is in a special way concerned with himself.

During a retreat of August, 1880, a few weeks before he composed Spring and Fall, Hopkins wrote:

I find myself both as man and as myself something most determined and distinctive, at pitch, more distinctive and higher pitched than anything else I see; I find myself with my pleasures and pains, my powers and my experiences, my deserts and guilt, my shame and sense of beauty, my dangers, hopes, fears, and all my fate, more important to myself than anything I see... Nothing else in nature comes near this unspeakable stress of pitch, distinctiveness, and selving, this selfbeing of my own. Nothing explains it or resembles it except so far as this, that other men to themselves have the same feeling.

It was perhaps something of that sort which the poet had in mind when he wrote the last line of his poem:

It is Margaret you mourn for.

Hopkins was surrounded at this time by much of humanity's distress. His poetry indicates that he feared for youthful innocence its necessary contacts with life. There were other children too demanding his care, grown ones who had already fought their battles and been scarred therein. He tells of one such case in Felix Randal.

The poem derives its title from the name of a blacksmith, evidently

70 Matt. V: 5.
one of Hopkins' flock, whom he attended in his last illness. In conversa-
tional style, the man's story is related. The order of telling is reversed,
beginning with his death and ending with his early years. The first line
indicates that someone has just brought word that Felix Randal is dead. The
priest finds it somewhat hard at first to realize that his duty now is
ended. Apparently the sickness has been of long duration, and he has
watched this "mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome," pining and being
overcome by fatal disorders. In memory, the priest lives again the months
which have just passed. He recalls how sickness broke the man, who had
been impatient and cursed at first, but who had amended after being anointed.
Even some months earlier "a heavenlier heart began," after Father Hopkins
had tendered to him the "sweet reprieve and ransom" of the sacrament of
Penance. The priest begins gradually to realize how much the man has come
to mean to him; in a few words he recounts the incidents which produced
this affection:

    My tongue had taught thee comfort, touch had quenched thy tears,
    Thy tears that touched my heart, child, Felix, poor Felix Randal.

Finally he is struck with the thought of the contrast between Felix Randal's
last helpless months and his early, "more boisterous years":

    When thou at the random grim forge, powerful amidst peers,
    Didst fettle for the great grey drayhorse his bright and
    battering sandal!

    In 1881, Hopkins began his Tertianship, a period of great importance
in both his religious and his poetic life. A reviewer of his published
correspondence recognized and pointed out this fact:
The turning point of a Jesuit's life is the Tertianship, ten months of "second noviceship" before taking his last vows. At this critical time he and Canon Dixon exchanged a series of letters in which they discussed with earnest care the place of poetry in religious life. These letters are the centre of the whole correspondence. It is now possible to see the full importance of Hopkins' seven years silence and his considered attitude to composition and to publishing. He distinguished between the writing of poetry and the possible fame resulting from its being known. Publication should be left to obedience.\textsuperscript{72}

Hopkins himself explained the Tertianship to Dixon:

I see you do not understand my position in the Society. This Tertianship or Third Year of Probation or second Noviceship, for it is variously called in the Institute, is not really a noviceship at all in the sense of a time during which a candidate or probationer makes trial of our life and is free to withdraw. At the end of the noviceship proper we take vows which are perpetually binding and renew them every six months (not for every six months but for life) till we are professed or take the final degree we are to hold, of which in the Society there are several. It is in preparation for these last vows that we make the tertianship; which is called a schola affectus and is meant to enable us to recover the fervour which may have cooled through application to study and contact with the world. Its exercises are however nearly the same as those of the first noviceship.\textsuperscript{73}

The only way adequately to appreciate the views exchanged by Hopkins and Dixon in their correspondence at this time is to consider them in their original form. In October, 1881, Dixon wrote:

But first, I hope that you are going on with poetry yourself. I can understand that your present position, seclusion and exercises would give to your writings a rare charm--they have done so in those that I have seen;

something that I cannot describe, but know to myself by the inadequate word terrible pathos—something of what you call temper in poetry: a right temper which goes to the point of the terrible; the terrible crystal. Milton is the only one who has anything like it; and he has it in a totally different way: he has it through indignation, through injured majesty, which is an inferior thing in fact. I cannot tell whether you know what I mean.74

Hopkins replied a few days later:

I am ashamed at the expressions of high regard which your last letter and others have contained, kind and touching as they are, and do not know whether I ought to reply to them or not. This I say: my vocation puts before me a standard so high that a higher can be found nowhere else. The question then for me is not whether I am willing (if I may guess what is in your mind) to make a sacrifice of hopes of fame (let us suppose), but whether I am not to undergo a severe judgment from God for the lothness I have shewn in making it, for the reserves I may have made, for the backward glances I have given with my hand upon the plough, for the waste of time the very compositions you admire may have caused and their preoccupation of the mind which belonged to more sacred or more binding duties, for the disquiet and the thoughts of vainglory they have given rise to. A purpose may look smooth and perfect from without but be frayed and faltering from within. I have never wavered in my vocation, but I have not lived up to it. I destroyed the verse I had written when I entered the Society and meant to write no more; the Deutschland I began after a long interval at the chance suggestion of my superior, but that being done it is a question whether I did well to write anything else. However I shall, in my present mind, continue to compose, as occasion shall fairly allow, which I am afraid will be seldom and indeed for some years past has been scarcely ever, and let what I produce wait and take its chance; for a very spiritual man once told me that with things like composition the best sacrifice was not to destroy one's work but to leave it entirely to be disposed of by obedience. But I can scarcely fancy myself asking a superior to publish

a volume of my verses and I own that humanly there is very little likelihood of that ever coming to pass. And to be sure if I chose to look at things on one side and not the other I could of course regret this bitterly. But there is more peace and it is the holier lot to be unknown than to be known.--In no case am I willing to write anything while in my present condition; the time is precious and will not return again and I know I shall not regret my forbearance.

If I do get hereafter any opportunity of writing poetry I could find it in my heart to finish a tragedy of which I have a few dozen lines written and the leading thoughts for the rest in my head on the subject of St. Winefred's martyrdom: as it happens, tomorrow is her feastday.75

Dixon, persistent as well as anxious, wrote again:

I ought not in your present circumstances tease you with the regret that much of it gives me; to hear of your having destroyed poems, and feeling that you have a vocation in comparison of which poetry and the fame that might assuredly be yours is nothing. I could say much, for my heart bleeds; but I ought to feel the same; and do not as I ought, though I thought myself very indifferent as to fame! So I will say nothing, but cling to the hope that you will find it consistent with all that you have undertaken to pursue poetry still, as occasion may serve; and that in so doing you may be sanctioned and encouraged by the great Society to which you belong, which has given so many ornaments to literature. Surely one vocation cannot destroy another; and such a Society as yours will not remain ignorant that you have such gifts as have seldom been given by God to man.76

Hopkins' answer requires no comment,

When a man has given himself to God's service, when he has denied himself and followed Christ, he has fitted himself to receive and does receive from God a special guidance, a more particular providence. This guidance is conveyed partly by the action of other men, as his appointed superiors, and partly by direct lights and inspirations. If I wait for such guidance, through whatever channel conveyed, about anything, about my poetry for

75Ibid. (Oct. 29, 1881), p. 88.
76Ibid. (Nov. 4, 1881), p. 89.
instance, I do more wisely in every way than if I try to
serve my own seeming interests in the matter. Now if you
value what I write, if I do myself, much more does our
Lord. And if he chooses to avail himself of what I leave
at his disposal he can do so with a felicity and with a
success which I could never command. And if he does not,
then two things follow; one that the reward I shall never-
theless receive from him will be all the greater; the other
that then I shall know how much a thing contrary to his
will and even to my own best interests I should have done
if I had taken things into my own hands and forced on
publication. This is my principle and this in the main
has been my practice: leading the sort of life I do here
it seems easy, but when one mixes with the world and meets
on every side its secret solicitations, to live by faith
is harder, is very hard; nevertheless by God's help I
shall always do so.

Our Society values, as you say, and has contributed
to literature, to culture; but only as a means to an end.
Its history and its experience shew that literature proper,
as poetry, has seldom been found to that end a very ser-
viceable means. We have had for three centuries often
the flower of the youth of a country in numbers enter our
body: among these how many poets, how many artists of all
sorts, there must have been! But there have been very
few Jesuit poets and, where they have been, I believe it
would be found on examination that there was something
exceptional in their circumstances or, so to say, counter-
balancing in their career. For genius attracts fame and
individual fame St. Ignatius looked on as the most dangerous
and dazzling of all attractions. There was a certain Fr.
Beschi who in Southern Hindustan composed an epic which has
become one of the Tamul classics... But this was in India,
far from home, and one can well understand that fame among
Hindu pundits need not turn the head of an Italian. In
England we had Fr. Southwell a poet, a minor poet but
still a poet; but he wrote amidst a terrible persecution
and died a martyr, with circumstances of horrible barbar-
ity; this is the counterpoise in his career. Then what a
genius was Campion himself! was not he a poet? perhaps a
great one, if he had chosen. His History of Ireland,
written in hiding and hurrying from place to place, Mr.
Simpson in his Life says, and the samples prove it, shews
an eloquence like Shakspere's; and in fact Shakspere made
use of the book. He had all and more than all the rhetoric
of that golden age and was probably the most vigorous mind
and eloquent tongue engaged in theological strife then in
England, perhaps in Europe. It seems in time he might have
done anything. But his eloquence died on the air, his genius
was quenched in his blood after one year's employment in his country. Music is more professional than poetry perhaps and Jesuits have composed and well, but none has any fame to speak of. We had one painter who reached excellence...but then he only painted flower pieces. You see then what is against me...I quote these cases to prove that show and brilliancy do not suit us, that we cultivate the commonplace outwardly and wish the beauty of the king's daughter the soul to be from within.77

It is apparent that, by the time he wrote the preceding paragraphs, Hopkins had definitely assigned to poetry its place in his life. His sincerity of purpose was such that, a decision once reached, there was little possibility of changing his course of action. In spite of Dixon's continued urgings, he held to his purpose. Less than twenty short poems were to be completed by him in the seven remaining years of his life.

Several passages from his letters further illustrate his sincerity. It was the frame of mind which enabled him now, as in earlier years, to act resolutely in accordance with his convictions. He expected to find that quality in others. He could not understand how Dixon, a Church of England clergyman, could stand sponsor to his Loss of the Eurydice.78 He thought it natural that a man's writings should accord with his beliefs. He wrote, again to Dixon:

You said once you did not pretend not to have a side and that you must write as an Anglican; this is of course and you could not honestly be an Anglican and not write as one. Do you know Cobbett's Reformation? Cobbet was a most honest man but not an honest Anglican; I shd. rather say that he was an honest thinker and an honest speaker but not an honest actor-out of his con-

77Ibid. (Dec. 1, 1881), p. 93.
victions but is a conspicuous "bell in a bellcot" and "signpost on a road."\textsuperscript{79}

He feared for Bridges, who likewise appeared to be "not an honest actor-out of his convictions," or at least not to be facing them squarely:

The poem is autobiographical as you would say; it tells of what you really feel in yourself. What then is the meaning of those yearnings or aspirations in the mind? You bear witness against yourself that you have them. And... if they are powerfully felt even now, when the mind is drawn off them and engrossed by so many things, it is likely they will be at some other time its whole life and being, whether they are gratified or not. This poem as well as that sonnet expresses your belief that the mind is immortal... You cannot wisely neglect this world of being to which you imply that you will come. In it or above it is the sovereign spirit God, to whom you should now at once make your approach with the humblest and most earnest prayers.\textsuperscript{80}

He had no suppressed desires to abandon his religious life:

As for myself, I have not only made my vows publicly some two and twenty times but I make them to myself every day, so that I should be black with perjury if I drew back now. And beyond that I can say with St. Peter: To whom shall I go? Tu verba vitae aeternae habes.\textsuperscript{81}

He was troubled when Bridges appeared to question his earnestness. After the Corpus Christi procession, at which Bridges had been present, Hopkins wrote:

It is long since such things had any significance for you. But what is strange and unpleasant is that you sometimes speak as if they had in reality none for me and you were only waiting with a certain disgust till I too

\textsuperscript{79}Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (Dec. 1, 1881), p. 96.

\textsuperscript{80}Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (Jan. 26, 1881), p. 117.

\textsuperscript{81}Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (Oct. 12, 1881), pp. 75-6.
should be disgusted with myself enough to throw off the mask. You said something of the sort walking on the Cowley Road when we were last at Oxford together—in '79 it must have been. Yet I can hardly think you do not think I am in earnest. And let me say, to take no higher ground, that without earnestness there is nothing sound or beautiful in character and that a cynical view much indulged coarsens everything in us. Not that you overindulge this vein in other matters: why then does it bulk out in that diseased and varicose way in this?"\(^{82}\)

He referred to the matter again after some months, evidently in reply to Bridges' answer to the former letter:

When I reproached you for treating me as if I were not in earnest I meant, and I mean now, to open up no further question; it was only of the injustice to myself I was thinking then. But 'pain' is not the word; it was a mild rebuke to you for being so unreasonable towards me. However a man who is deeply in earnest is not very eager to assert his earnestness, as they say when a man is really certain he no longer disputes but is indifferent. And that is all I say now, that to think a man in my position is not in earnest is unreasonable and is to make difficulties. But if you have made them and can solve them, by a solution which must be wrong, no matter.\(^{83}\)

In order not to misinterpret his poetry, it is imperative to remember the foregoing paragraphs in which Hopkins so unmistakably declares his tenets. A change in poetic subject matter is again discernible after his Tertianship. He did not return to parish work but went to teach classics at Stonyhurst. The narrative element is henceforth completely lacking. The profundity of thought, so marked in these later poems, is fertile in possibilities for those who view all of Hopkins' poetry as an expression


\(^{83}\)Ibid. (Nov. 26, 1882), p. 163.
of mental and spiritual conflict.

Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves is an undated poem. Bridges places it with those of 1881, for what reason he does not say. The only reference in the letters indicates that it was completed much later. However, Bridges explains that Hopkins "dated his poems from their inception, and however much he revised a poem he would date his recast as his first draft. This, like his other great poems, has lent itself to a variety of explanations. The first part of the poem, a masterly, emotional description of evening deepening into night, has been well described by Leavis:

We are not merely told that evening "strains," we feel evening straining, to become night, enveloping everything, in the movement, the progression of alliteration, assonance and rime. This progression is associated with, and hardly distinguishable from, the development of meaning in the sequence of adjectives: evening is first sweetly solemn, serene, etherealizing and more awful, and finally ends in the blackness of night.

In line 7, with the words, "Heart, you round me right," is introduced a change in thought. Sensitive readers of Hopkins will come to recognize his use of that expression in one form or another as a pregnant moment. It occurs in The Wreck of the Deutschland, Stanza 18; in The Windhover, line 7; in Spring and Fall, line 13; and now once more in Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves. In each case it is like a prelude to the exposition of some great truth. It is conceivable that these flashes of inspiration

84 Hopkins wrote: "I have at last completed but not quite finished the longest sonnet ever made and no doubt the longest making." Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (Nov. 28, 1886), p. 245.
85 Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Preface to Notes, p. 95.
86 New Bearings in English Poetry, p. 183.
represent the most genuine bits of his poetic inspiration. A Jesuit critic of Hopkins' poetry maintains that "the majority of his poems seem to trace themselves back to a direct intervention of God, and to have their ultimate origin in either consolation or desolation in prayer."\(^{87}\) In instances like those just referred to such a supposition seems most likely. Hopkins is always sincere, but that quality reaches its height in these moments of his poetry. A passage contained in a sermon on the Sacred Heart, prepared by Hopkins, is helpful in understanding what is implied by his references to the heart:

\[
\text{In all these expressions what we call heart is not the piece of flesh so called, not the great bloodvessel only but the thoughts of the mind that vessel seems to harbour and the feelings of the soul to which it beats. For the heart is of all the members of the body the one which most strongly and most of its own accord sympathises with and expresses in itself what goes on within the soul. Tears are sometimes forced, smiles may be put on, but the beating of the heart is the truth of nature.}^{88}\]

Thus in the last part of *Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves* the thoughts of Hopkins' mind and the feelings of his soul are expressed. Apparently the poem was written in the same year as the beautiful sermon just referred to. How inconsistent must Hopkins have been if the thoughts and feelings revealed by the poem are such as the following criticism concludes:

\[
\text{The trees are no longer beautiful, refreshing things of daylight; they have turned fantastically strange, hard and cruel, "beak-leaved" suggesting the cold, hard light, steely like the gleam of polished}
\]

---


tools, against which they appear as a kind of damascene-work ("damask") on a blade. Then follows the anguished surrender to the realization:

Our tale, O our oracle . . . black, white; right, wrong.

--The run of alliterations, rimes and assonances suggests the irresistible poignancy of the realization. The poem ends with a terrible effect as of unsheathed nerves grinding upon one another. The grinding might at first be taken to be merely that of "right" against "wrong," the inner conflict of spirit and flesh, and the pain that which the believer knows he must face, the simple pain of renunciation. Yet we are aware of a more subtle anguish and a more desperate plight. And if we look closely we find that Hopkins is explicit about it:

black, white; right, wrong

--The first draft has "wrong, right," but he deliberately, and significantly, reversed the order. If he were merely "ware of a world where but these two tell" his torment would be less cruel. But his consciousness is more complex; his absolutes waver and change places, and he is left in terrible doubt.89

To find a more sensitive apprehension than the preceding of the general effect of the poem would be difficult. That is just as terrible as Leavis declares it to be, but, in his application, he goes astray. The same may be said of I. A. Richards, who wrote:

The heart speaks after "Heart you round me right" to the end, applying in the moral sphere the parable of the passing away of all the delights, accidents, nuances, the "dapple" of existence, to give place to the awful dichotomy of right and wrong. It is characteristic of this poet that there is no repose for him in the night of traditional morality. As the terrible last line shows, the renunciation of all the myriad temptations of life brought no gain. It was all loss. The present order of "black, white; right, wrong" was an afterthought

89F. R. Leavis, New Bearings in English Poetry, pp. 185-6.
and an intentional rearrangement; the original order was more orthodox. Let life, waned—the imperative mood carries through to the end; let life part, pen, pack, let life be aware of. 90

It is unfortunate that these critics have a strongly established misconception of Hopkins' character. They offer only their interpretation of the poems to support the contention that Hopkins' spirit was a tormented one. His prose writings as well as his biography are replete with evidence to the contrary. It was in 1881, that he wrote:

My mind is here more at peace than it has ever been and I would gladly live all my life, if it were so to be, in as great or greater seclusion from the world and be busied only with God. But in the midst of outward occupations not only the mind is drawn away from God, which may be at the call of duty and be God's will, but unhappily the will too is entangled, worldly interests freshen, and worldly ambitions revive. 91

The preceding words were written during the Tertianship. The poem may be an earlier production. Hence it may have been written when the will was entangled, worldly interests freshened, and worldly ambitions revived. If that were so it would have resulted from a state of mind which, upon later consideration, the poet regretted and rejected. As shown in a previous quotation, he was long in writing this poem. It is inconceivable that he would have devoted time and effort to reproducing and preserving an experience so contrary to his ideal: "The man who in the world is as dead to the world as if he were buried in the cloister is already a saint. But this is our ideal." 92

91Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (Oct. 12, 1881), pp. 75-6.
92Ibid., p. 76.
In the seventh line, then, the poet is turned from a contemplation of evening and night by thoughts and feelings of a serious nature. The thought which strikes him he expresses thus, with an accent on our in both places:

... Our evening is over us; our night! whelms, whelms, and will end us.

For a meditative mind such as Hopkins', thoughts of death are those most readily associated with night. Hence the line implies that the evening of life is already at hand and is deepening into the night of death. He appeals to the Oracle to tell our tale, the tale of man. Life is directed to wind off all on two spools. Once there was a greater variety of color; the events of life were "stained veined variety." But color disappears with light, and all appears to be black or white. So at the approach of death human actions will lose the various shades they have presented in the daylight of life when viewed in relation to other interests and attractions. All will appear as good or bad. Likewise, at the very end, Life will separate,

... part, pen, pack

Now her all in two flocks, two folds--black, white; right, wrong;

This is used, as Bridges points out, in the sense of sorting the sheep from the goats93 at the Last Judgment. In another connection, Hopkins wrote:

Of judgment it is the same. He [Christ] warned them of God's judgment: unless they repented, he said, they should all perish; unless they believed in him they should die in their sins; the fallen angel was their father, his desires they would do and of course would share his fall; Depart, they would hear said to them, cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.94

93Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Notes, p. 112.
So now, with true wisdom, he warns man to "mind but these two," right and wrong; to beware of a world, Eternity, where but these two count:

... of a rack
Where, selfwring, selfstrung, sheathe—and shelterless,
thoughts against thoughts in groans grind.

This line is indeed terrible, as Leavis and Richards recognized. It is a description of Hell, the eternal lot of those who refuse to heed right and wrong in their actions. Hopkins' obvious concern for the salvation of souls makes it easy to realize that no thought could be more frightful to him than that of eternal loss. That such thoughts did indeed occupy his mind is evident from a simpler poem of 1882, Ribblesdale. In its concluding stanza, he says:

And what is Earth's eye, tongue, or heart else, where Else, but in dear, dogged man? -- Ah, the heir To his own selfbent so bound, so tied to his turn, To thriftless reave both our rich round world bare And none reck of world after, this bids wear Earth brows of such care, care and dear concern.

A project, already referred to, which occupied Hopkins' mind over a period of years was his proposed tragedy on the martyrdom of Saint Winefred. The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo is subtitled (Maidens' Song from St. Winefred's Well). In The Leaden Echo is proposed the question:

How to keep--is there any any, is there none such, nowhere known some, bow or brooch or braid or brace, lace, latch or catch or key to keep
Back beauty, keep it, beauty, beauty, beauty, ... from vanishing away?

Is there no way to ward off wrinkles, grey hair and other evils of age? The answer comes insistently and repeatedly:
No there's none, there's none, O no there's none.

since there is none, it is wisdom "early to despair."

But The Golden Echo intervenes. There is one place where beauties may be safely kept, one way to assure their preservation. The poet enumerates youthful charms which will be reserved in heaven, for those who give them back, resign them, to God, beauty's giver. Nothing will be lost; on the contrary all that is surrendered will wax and increase a hundredfold. Why then are we so oppressed and cumbered with care?

Bridges disliked in this poem what he called "the naked encounter of sensualism and asceticism." To this Egerton Clarke replied as follows:

Hopkins has been accused . . . of being sensual in his asceticism. . . . Sensitive--and even sensuous--he was, always to a profound degree and in an intense manner. But the whole nature and purpose of his sensory life is misunderstood if it is considered apart from its saintliness. As an authentic Christian of the Thomist-Ignatian tradition, he labored, all through his Catholic years, to fulfill the unity of himself. He believed effectively that the eye, which delights in shapes and colours, and the nostrils which are sensitive to perfumes, and the hand which delights in textures, and the tongue which tastes, are essentially one with the soul that longs after goodness, the will that loves God, and the mind that reasons in order to understand. He believed in the complete triune man, and he moved his senses according to the purposes for which they were created. In other words he used the sensory powers harmoniously and intellectually.

This point is, in fact, one which manifests a particular excellence, an unusual strength, in Hopkins. "Chastity in poetry is a vitalising of sensa-

95Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Notes, p. 96.
tion by the intelligence," wrote Bernard Kelly. The Golden Echo is itself an excellent illustration of Hopkins' correct apprehension of this fact. Beauty he neither denies nor scorns. He knows, however, that it is from God, that if valued in and for itself it cannot last.

... If the sense appetite of man is his only appetite, then his search for reality is an acquisitive, grasping, passionate search that can be satisfied only in absorbing the object of its search, that must be constantly immersed in the uproar of passion. And he must end his search in the realization that even the sense beauty available to him always eludes his grasp.

Hopkins had long since manifested his awareness of this. To end there would have meant despair to one of his extreme sensitivity, even as he indicates in The Leaden Echo. His was, however, the greater wisdom. The whole direction of his life is evidence, as are also the companion poems under discussion:

... Virtue is the principle working for greater perfection, for the rich fullness of man's powers under the perfect order of reason; a principle whose climax is the ultimate perfection of man's union with the Supreme Reality which is the goal of his life. Virtue makes for constantly more penetrating vision of the beauty outside of himself; it works for greater perfection and at the same time for greater mastery over the lower faculties of man. That serene contemplation demanded for beauty is possible only where passion is under the rule of its master and where love is so great that it is able to be utterly selfish. The virtuous man walks in beauty to the goal of beauty which is at the same time the Supreme Beauty and the source of all that is beautiful. For the virtuous man walks the roads of reason to the mansions of God.

99 Ibid., pp. 360-1.
The applicability to Hopkins of the foregoing principles can at once be recognized. If they are kept in mind, the following paragraph cannot be misunderstood. It is a pertinent conclusion to what has been said:

Whether Hopkins was sensuous is another question. Anyone who reads his poems finds that essentially he is. But he, even as a Jesuit, need make no excuse, need construct no subtle phrases of deception. The critical term is a most misunderstood one. The senses are instruments of the intellect, not of the emotions only. It is through the senses that the philosopher knows truth; it is through the senses that the man of God seeks Christ. The greater the sensitivity of these organs, the greater the intellect. An utter ignorance of the senses would leave man inanimate. Read "God's Grandeur", "The Starlight Night", "Spring", or any of the other Hopkins' poems that are a tribute to God. All are sensuous. One cannot rightly say that Hopkins felt guilty or ashamed of his highly developed sensibility... Hopkins' sensuousness was as pure and discerning as sunlight, healthy, healthful, and mature.100

Among Hopkins' poems are a number written in honor of the Blessed Virgin. These explicit testimonials, together with occasional references in many other poems, attest the reality of his devotion. The longest and best of his Marian poems is The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe. Hopkins was not completely satisfied with it, finding "that the highest subjects are not those on which it is easy to reach one's highest."101 Nevertheless, it was from the first favourably received by others. Dixon, who himself had not yet seen it, wrote that Bridges found it "admirable."102 Coventry Patmore called it "exquisite,"103 although he was

unable to appreciate most of Hopkins' poetry. As the title suggests, the poem is an extended comparison. It opens with a reflection upon the air, mother of all the world, intimately associated with the life of every least thing. The poet comes more and more to realize its importance to man. It is constantly more needful to him than meat and drink. Without it the poet could not even sing its praises. In many ways it reminds him, he says, of Mary Immaculate whose power is above that of any goddess, although she is but a woman. Each grace bestowed upon humanity comes through her. Thus Hopkins becomes a prophet of the devotion to Mary, Mediatrix of All Graces.

In recent years the Holy See has appointed a commission to determine whether or not the universal mediation of Mary is capable of being defined as a dogma of faith. . . Father Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J., is the laureate of Mary's Mediation, and we may say he anticipated the forthcoming definition, since the ode in which he compares Mary Mediatrix to the atmosphere, was written as far back as 1885. It would be manifestly unfair, of course, to subject each nuance of thought or metaphor in the poem to the inquisitorial scrutiny of scholastic theology. Father Hopkins has here quite properly forgotten the Schoolman's distinctions; preoccupied with clothing his syllogisms, he is careless of folds in the drapery.

A modern Jesuit writing on the subject of this same devotion says that a very fundamental reason underlies the belief that all grace comes to us through Mary. It is a reason of profound beauty but not an astonishing one to those who are enlightened on the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ.

It is that Mary is the Mother of the whole Christ. She cannot isolate the head from the members in her mission, which is to form Christ.106 Now, it is evident from The Wreck of the Deutschland that Hopkins was enlightened on the doctrine of the Mystical Body. Here he manifests an understanding of Mary's maternal relation to that Body:

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 Nazareths in us,
Where she shall yet conceive
Him, morning, noon, and eve;
New Bethlemes, and he born
There, evening, noon and morn--

In order to show that devotion to Mary does not detract from the glory due to God, he compares their relation to that between the blue sky and the sun. The former, he says, "does no prejudice" to the latter. In fact on days when the sky is bluest the many-hued sunbeam will shine through it perfectly and unaltered. If it were not for the sky, man would be unable to stand the glare of the sun:

Whereas did air not make
This bath of blue and slake
His fire, the sun would shake,
A blear and blinding ball
With blackness bound, and all
The thick stars round him roll
Flashning like flecks of coal,
Quartz-fret, or sparks of salt,
In grimy vasty vault.

In like manner, through Mary we see God

Made sweeter, not made dim
And her hand leaves his light
Sifted to suit our sight.

The whole of the final section is the poet's plea to Mary that she be his atmosphere, his happier world wherein he may wander and meet no sin. He begs her to be above and around him, to stir within his ears, speaking there of God's love,

Of patience, penance, prayer:
World-mothering air, air wild,
Wound with thee, in thee isled,
Fold home, fast fold thy child.

With this prayer Hopkins himself becomes a child, the child of his heavenly mother.

Therein lies another mark of the true priestly character manifested through this period: zeal for the salvation of souls; fatherly solicitude for his flock; eagerness to minister as he has been empowered to do; insistence upon truth in forming his own mind and the minds of others; and the final essential—a sense of spiritual childhood. To embody all of this in poetry, as Hopkins has done, is indeed a unique achievement.
CHAPTER IV

THE "TERRIBLE SONNETS"

In 1844, occurred an important event in the life of Hopkins, but its significance was not immediately apparent. There resulted no apparent success. Rather, there began a period of continuous frustration in which disappointment attended his every endeavour. Time, however, was to prove the value of these years in which the spiritual and poetic achievements of Hopkins attained their height. The former cannot even now be measured; the latter has at last been recognized. The event was an appointment which Hopkins thus announced to Bridges:

"Remark the above address [University College, 85 & 86, Stephen's Green, Dublin]; it is a new departure or a new arrival and at all events a new abode. I dare say you know nothing of it, but the fact is that, though unworthy of and unfit for the post, I have been elected Fellow of the Royal University of Ireland in the department of classics."

Hopkins thus became associated in the work begun thirty years before by his friend and spiritual father, Cardinal Newman. The Catholic University of Ireland had undergone many vicissitudes since his time. A principal difficulty had lain in the fact that the university had no charter from the state to confer degrees, and its lectures were not recognized elsewhere as leading to a degree. Nevertheless, it had not been allowed to pass out of existence. Moved by the determination of the Irish Catholics, the Government, in 1879, set up, in place of the Queen's University, the Royal University of Ireland. 

\[1\] Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (March 7, 1884), pp.189-90.
sity of Ireland, an examining body entitled to give degrees to all comers on condition of their passing prescribed examinations. To stand against the Queen's Colleges in the competition of the Royal University, it was necessary that the framework of the Catholic University be considerably modified. The teaching institution in St. Stephen's Green became University College, and in October, 1883, it passed to the Jesuits. It remained largely an examining body.

It was at this time that Hopkins received his appointment in the Chair of Greek. The University Senate had been eager to secure his services because of Jowett's recommendation; he had called him "the star of Balliol and said that he was one of the finest Greek scholars he had ever seen at Balliol." Hopkins recognized the honor as well as the opportunity which the appointment involved; yet he accepted it with some trepidation. To Bridges he wrote:

"It is an honour and an opening and has many bright sides, but at present it has also some dark ones and this in particular that I am not at all strong, not strong enough for the requirements, and do not see at all how I am to become so."

To Newman:

"I am writing from where I never thought to be, in a University for Catholic Ireland begun under your leadership. ... In the events which have brought me here I recognize the hand of providence, but nevertheless have felt and feel an unfitness which led me at first to try to decline the offer made me and now does not allow my spirits"

---

2 This account is taken from Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XV, p. 199.
3 See Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, Note 2, p. 316.
to rise to the level of the position and its duties. But perhaps the things of most promise with God begin with weakness and fear.⁶

The last sentence in the preceding passage helps to dispel the picture too often drawn of Hopkins' last five years, the tragic one "of an exiled Englishman slowly dying of loneliness, drudgery, and despair."⁷ His days were harassed indeed by a number of sorrows, but he was saved from unhappiness by the ability to recognize potentialities even in failure. Perhaps he refers too often in his letters to his dejection. This can, however, be understood. It was frequently necessary that he explain delays in work he had proposed to himself or had been asked by his friends to do. Moreover, these subjects concerned his health and work or an exchange of opinion on current affairs; they were of interest to his correspondents and often a response to their inquiries. The essential happiness which sustained him, knowing his life was according to the will of God, is implicit throughout the correspondence, but such "happiness" is not readily comprehended by all readers. Still, if the letters are read with an open mind, it is hardly possible seriously to misjudge the character of Hopkins. One critic writes: "Unless the 'Letters' and 'Notebooks' are grossly disingenuous, it is difficult to maintain now that Hopkins seriously questioned his faith."⁸

Co-operating to disturb the serenity of his last years were natural and supernatural causes. The former included political, physical and intellectual elements. To understand the first of these, it is necessary

⁷Ibid., p. 140.
to remember the period in which Hopkins was sent to Ireland, and the intensity of his patriotism, as well as of his repugnance for any moral disorder. His attitude is best illustrated in an incident that occurred when the Royal University was conferring a degree on the astronomer, Father Perry. Hopkins left the assembly when they sang a nationalist song. The next day he explained to Father Darlington, "You know I would not have done that if it hadn't been so wicked." The apparent "wickedness" of the movement appalled him. In his eyes the whole thing was wrong. Ireland was wrong, for its people owned "no allegiance to any existing law or government." England was wrong too: "Its judgment is uninformed and misinformed, divided and distracted, and its action must be corresponding to its knowledge." He deplored the "crime, slander, and folly" which attended the advance of Home Rule; yet he felt it was likely to come about and that it might perhaps "in itself be a measure of a sort of equity and, considering that worse might be, of a kind of prudence." From all this it is clear that politics were a source of annoyance to Hopkins. Apparently, however, he did not permit them to intrude upon his daily life and conversation. Father Darlington knew him well and must have known his political views, since it was he who related the anecdote told above. Yet he affirms, "Politics never upset his equilibrium to make him unhappy." The reason is

12Ibid.
13Ibid.
perhaps explained by another of Hopkins' statements: "I believe you will have shared, you cannot have equalled, the mortification and grief the policy (or behaviour) of the government have been costing me. But it is better prayed over than talked about."15

Other details of his life in Ireland appear to have been less painful than they are sometimes represented. The following particulars, obtained from Father Darlington's account, are deserving of consideration:

When Hopkins joined the staff, there were in the house Monsignor Molloy, Rector of the University, and Father Darlington, Dean of Studies, besides Casey, Ormsby, Stewart, and Thomas Arnold, son of Arnold of Rugby; in fact Father Hopkins lived in Dublin with men who might have been found among the Dons of any of the Oxford or Cambridge colleges of the time. There were about ten resident undergraduates among whom Hopkins was popular, and he had many friends outside the house. There was a certain house in Donnybrook, especially, where he was a frequent visitor and much enjoyed a romp with the children, by whom he was worshipped wherever he went.16

One of his intimate friends gives a report of his work:

His duties consisted in teaching Latin and Greek in the Catholic University College--where he resided--and in examining in classics for the various degrees of the Royal University. The first of these duties he liked, taking much interest in his pupils; but he had a great repugnance to the labour and responsibility involved in the preparation of the examination papers, and in subsequently correcting and awarding them marks. Nevertheless, in his scrupulous anxiety to be just and fair, he was accustomed to give to these tasks a far greater amount of care and time than most conscientious examiners would have considered necessary.17

The preceding remarks accord well with the impression given by Hopkins' own references to his examination work. Lahey's conclusion, however, seems well-founded. He classes the labour of this work among the sorrows or inconveniences of Hopkins' last years; yet he maintains, "To imagine that a few weeks of distasteful work darkened his whole life is manifestly absurd."18

It is possible that lack of vigor was partly responsible for Hopkins' distaste for this work. During his stay in Ireland he seems never to have felt entirely well for any length of time. It was one of the things which in the beginning made him feel unequal to the task; "I am not at all strong, not strong enough for the requirements, and do not see at all how I am to become so."19 The following passages from the letters show to what an extent that condition persisted:

The melancholy I have all my life been subject to has become of late years not indeed more intense in its fits but rather more distributed, constant, and crippling. One, the lightest but a very inconvenient form of it, is daily anxiety about work to be done, which makes me break off or never finish all that lies outside that work. It is useless to write more on this; when I am at the worst, though my judgment is never affected, my state is much like madness. I see no ground for thinking I shall ever get over it or ever succeed in doing anything that is not forced on me to do of any consequence.20

I am in a low way of health, indeed I always am, but especially now in Lent; not that I fast, but the restriction of diet makes a difference to me. The delightful old French Father who teaches logic here...will have it that I am dying--of anaemia. I am not, except at the rate that we all are; still I could do (indeed how gladly I could) --as they say--with more life.21

18 Ibid., p. 140.
Tomorrow morning I shall have been three years in Ireland, three hard wearying wasting wasted years. (I met the blooming Miss Tynan again this afternoon. She told me that when she first saw me she took me for 20 and some friend of hers for 15; but it won't do; they should see my heart and vitals, all shaggy with the whitest hair.) In those I have done God's will (in the main) and many many examination papers. I am in a position which makes it befitting and almost a duty to write anything (bearing on classical study) which I may feel that I could treat well and advance learning by: there is such a subject; I do try to write at it; but I see that I cannot get on, that I shall be even less able hereafter than now. And of course if I cannot do what even my appliances make best and easiest, far less can I anything else. Still I could throw myself cheerfully into my day's work? I cannot, I am in a prostration. Wales set me up for a while, but the effect is now past. But out of Ireland I shd. be no better, rather worse probably. I only need one thing—a working health, a working strength; with that, any employment is tolerable or pleasant, enough for human nature; without it, things are liable to go very hardly with it.22

The correspondence offers many other examples of the annoyance given to Hopkins by his "jaded" condition of mind and body. In the last passage quoted, he mentions his desire or duty to write something on a classical subject. He had many such projects in mind, and his inability to complete any of them was a source of great concern. Soon after his arrival in Ireland, he expressed his hope to publish "a new and critical edition of St. Patrick's 'Confession.'"23 In February, 1886, he was "struggling to get together matter for a work on Homer's art."24 By the following February he had postponed, not dropped, his Homeric studies in favor of "a book on the Dorian Measure."25 Some months later he indicated that he had made some progress:

22Ibid. (Feb. 17, 1887), pp. 250-1.
25Ibid. (Feb. 20, 1887), p. 129.
"I have done some part of a book on Pindar's metres and Greek metres in
general and almost on art in general." 26  Meanwhile he had done some work on
"a sort of popular account of Light and the Ether." 27  More than any of
these, a growing interest in music absorbed his time. "Such versatility,"
says Abbott, "is both amazing and disconcerting, for his letters show that
he was no dabbler and could doubtless have written something of worth on all
these subjects had time allowed. But to one man one life; and versatility
is more common than genius." 28  None of the works was completed. Hopkins'
feelings in the matter can best be judged from his own words:

An old question of yours I have hitherto neglected
to answer, am I thinking of writing on metre? I suppose
taking too much and doing too little. I do greatly
desire to treat that subject; might perhaps get something
together this year; but I can scarcely believe that on
that or anything else anything of mine will ever see the
light--of publicity nor even of day. For it is widely
true, the fine pleasure is not to do a thing but to feel
that you could and the mortification that goes to the
heart is to feel it is the power that fails you; qui
occidere nolunt Posse volunt; it is the refusal of a
thing that we like to have. 29

I have done some part of a book. . . , but that I
shall ever get far on with it or, if I do, sail through
all the rocks and shoals that lie before me I scarcely
dare to hope and yet I do greatly desire, since the thoughts
are well worth preserving; they are a solid foundation for
criticism. What becomes of my verses I care little, but
about things like this, what I write or could write on
philosophical matters, I do; and the reason of the dif-
ference is that the verses stand or fall by their simple
selves, and, though by reading they might do good, by being
unread they do no harm; but if the other things are unsaid

26 Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (Jan. 27,
1887), p. 150.
28 C. C. Abbott, The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges,
Intro., p. xxxiv.
right they will be said by somebody else wrong, and that is what will not let me rest.30

Hopkins' mention of poetry in the foregoing paragraph introduces the question as to what had become of it in the maze of his other activities. His last poems cannot all be dated with certainty, but apparently only fourteen were completed during the five years in Ireland. Critics agree that they would not sacrifice the poems that do exist for a greater number of inferior ones. Yet they maintain that these very poems exhibit a degree of genius which could have produced more and longer ones. They question whether the inspiration was lacking or deliberately repressed. Some are even inclined to attribute the melancholy of his last years to such repression. John Gould Fletcher, for example, writes: "There is record of profound fits of weariness and depression in the letters...referred to frequently and probably arising out of nervousness and worry, together with repeated repressions of the poetic impulse that came, as all such impulses must come, unasked and unsought."31 Abbott, too, maintains that the discomfort Hopkins came to find in the irksomeness of the "mere routine of living" was "a consequence rather than a cause," resulting "chiefly from the fact that he suffered slow martyrdom as a poet, and that the martyrdom was self-inflicted."32 Gardner, conscious of the difficulty involved in such discussions, says justly: "How far the ill-health and depression so

30Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon (Jan. 27, 1887), p. 150.
frequently mentioned in the 'Letters' were due to thwarted impulses would be a dangerous matter for speculation by one who is not a trained neuropathologist."

Priests too have entered the conflict. Father Thornton believes that it was plainly lack of inspiration "and not his life as a Jesuit, or his preoccupation with examinations and scholarly work, which made his last years unhappy." Father Feeney, taking a middle course, comes closest perhaps to the correct solution: "I think the 'terrible sonnets' if examined, all of them, will be found to yield evidence in favor of both a spiritual and an artistic darkness of soul, with a predominance in favor of the former."

Just why Hopkins did not write more poetry during his stay in Ireland cannot be stated with certainty. He may have deliberately repressed inspiration. He wrote at one time: "It always seems to me that poetry is unprofessional, but that is what I have said to myself, not others to me."

If by that he meant that it would not promote the end of his religious life, it is easy to see why one of his character would not be eager to pursue it. Of some sonnets of this period he stated that they "came like inspirations unbidden and against my will." Their content might explain their being against the poet's will if it could be determined which sonnets he referred to. Yet the fact that he mentions their coming unbidden and like inspira-

37 Ibid. (Sept. 1, 1885), p. 221.
tions does not indicate that such experiences were frequent. When they came he appears ordinarily to have welcomed them: "My situation is that Wild Wales breathes poetry on the one hand and that my landlady gives me the heartiest breakfasts on the other." Apparently it was not often necessary to repress poetic inspirations; they seem to have been none too frequent. Hopkins himself settled the question when he wrote: "It is now years that I have had no inspiration of longer jet than makes a sonnet, except only in that fortnight in Wales: it is what, far more than direct want of time, I find most against poetry and production in the life I lead." The absence of inspiration is not surprising in view of Hopkins' own analysis of the conditions which promote it. He may have regretted its scarcity. Yet the lightness with which he at times speaks of his Muse does not indicate that he had reached the point of despair: "There was one windy bright day between floods last week: fearing for my eyes, with my other rain of papers, I put work aside and went out for the day, and conceived a sonnet. Otherwise my muse has long put down her carriage and now for years 'takes in washing.' The laundry is driving a great trade now." A feeling akin to despair did certainly overwhelm him when he beheld each of his endeavours fail. Yet this does not seem to have concerned poetry particularly. Regarding that, he appears to have continued the policy of his Tertianship,

40 See Chapter III of this thesis, p. 84.
"to continue to compose as time shall fairly allow."

That was but seldom because of the multiplicity of his other pursuits. It is of course possible to underestimate "the agonies of failure and frustration which creative genius, without any religious complications, can undergo," and to ignore "the neuroses which may be caused when powerful instincts and impulses are repressed or imperfectly satisfied." Gardner admits that such qualifications do not invalidate "belief in the supernatural origin and purpose of Hopkins's desolations." Nor do they explain that Hopkins had a desire stronger than his desire to write poetry or to accomplish any of his proposed works. There is no better commentary on the last years of Hopkins' life than a passage which he himself wrote to Dixon:

"Life is a short blanket"—profoundest of homely sayings: great gifts and great opportunities are more than life spares to one man. It is much if we get something, a spell, an innings at all. See how the great conquerors were cut short, Alexander, Caesar just seen. Above all Christ our Lord: his career was cut short and, whereas he would have wished to succeed by success—for it is insane to lay yourself out for failure, prudence is the first of the cardinal virtues, and he was the most prudent of men—nevertheless he was doomed to succeed by failure; his plans were baffled, his hopes dashed, and his work was done by being broken off undone. However much he understood all this he found it an intolerable grief to submit to it. He left the example: it is very strengthening, but except in that sense it is not consoling.

---

42 Ibid. (Nov. 2, 1881), p. 88.
43 W. H. Gardner, op. cit., p. 42.
44 Ibid.
Many of the passages already quoted refer in one way or another to the influence of Hopkins' spiritual life. The preceding suggests certain important phases of that life. He found the example of Christ strengthening, he said; it confirmed him in his purpose, fortified and encouraged him to persevere. Otherwise, he confesses, that example was not consoling. Hence, it is not too surprising that his Jesuit biographer finds one of Hopkins' sorrows to originate in his spiritual life: "Hopkins, smiling and joyful with his friends, was at the same time on the bleak heights of spiritual night with his God. All writers on mysticism... have told us that this severe trial is the greatest and most cherished gift from One Who has accepted literally His servant's oblation." Hopkins had recognized years before that sufferings may "be looked on as the marks of God's particular love." He expressed the same idea in The Wreck of the Deutschland:

But he scores it in scarlet himself on his own bespoken.

That knowledge did not, however, prevent the suffering. Hopkins' natural sorrows have been sufficiently discussed; it is more difficult, as Lahey recognized, to speak of the supernatural. Before attempting that, it is necessary to correct false conclusions that some have drawn from the evidence of spiritual tribulation. For those who maintain that he regretted his vocation, or even that his faith was weakened, Hopkins' reaction to the

48 Stanza 25.
apostasy of his friend Addis is as good an answer as any:

It is as you say about Addis. But why should you be glad? Why at any rate should you burst upon me that you are glad, when you know that I cannot be glad?

It seems there is something in you interposed between what shall we say? the Christian and the man of the world which hurts, which is to me like biting on a cinder in bread. Take the simplest view of this matter; he has made shipwreck, I am afraid he must even be in straits; he cannot support himself by his learned writings; I suppose he will have to teach. But this is the least. I hope at all events he will not pretend to marry, and especially no one he has known in his priestly life. Marriage is honourable and so is the courtship that leads to marriage, but the philanderings of men vowed to God are not honourable nor the marriages they end in. I feel the same deep affection for him as ever, but the respect is gone.50

On the evidence of his contemporaries, from the absence in his extant writings of any contrary testimony, from the poems of the period and, above all, from the ordering of his daily life, it is evident that Father Hopkins did not regret his faith or his vocation; that his mind, in spite of its tormented state, remained fixed on the Jesuit ideal. Nevertheless, he found in it at this time almost no consolation. Since his spiritual diaries are not available, the best way to comprehend so difficult a phase of his life is to accept the judgment of fellow Jesuits who knew Hopkins personally, and later Jesuit critics whose like background of training and experience enable them to understand him. Contemporary evidence is offered in Father Darlington's account that Hopkins was "in the highest paths of the spiritual life from the time of his arrival in Dublin, which gave to his whole bearing a certain other-worldliness and aloofness."51 One of Hopkins' most intimate

friends testifies:

I think the characteristics in him that most struck
and edified all of us who knew him were, first, what I
should call his priestly spirit; this showed itself not
only in the reverential way he performed his sacred duties,
and spoke on sacred subjects, but in his whole conduct and
conversation; and secondly, his devotion and loyalty to
the Society of Jesus.\textsuperscript{52}

The preceding testimonials justify the statement: "Hopkins was an exemplary
religious, exact in every observance, and might be expected to have won a
share in Our Lord's Passion before he died."\textsuperscript{53} Another writer explains this
further:

As in the inner life of every great soul who is
striving for the closest possible union with Christ there
comes Gethsemane before Olivet, so there came the third
week to Gerard. It came to him almost overwhelmingly in
Ireland. He makes no mention of the Passion; perhaps—
there is evidence in the Diaries—he imagined the bodily
pain too keenly to speak about it. He does not write
about the Agony in the Garden, but in a manner he lives
it. It was not the "Dark Night of the Soul" but it was
just desolation as Saint Ignatius describes it.\textsuperscript{54}

The lengthy exposition of Hopkins' afflictions which occupies the fore-
going pages is a necessary basis to the interpretation of his last work.
"The poems express his anguish; his letters and life show his heroic endur-
ance."\textsuperscript{55} To comprehend the poems, that anguish must be understood. It is
futile to dispute as to just which of its causes produced the "terrible

\textsuperscript{52}Quoted in Gerard Manley Hopkins, by G. F. Lahey, S.J., p. 145.
\textsuperscript{54}Christopher Devlin, S.J., "The Ignatian Inspiration of Gerard Hopkins,"
\textsuperscript{55}See Martin D'Arcy, S.J., "Gerard Manley Hopkins," Great Catholics, edited
by Claude Williamson, O.S.C., p. 366.
sonnets." Hopkins recognized all of his sorrows as coming from one source. Natural sufferings are means sometimes employed by God to purify the soul in its higher stages. Clearly, Hopkins viewed his trials in that light. One may well "doubt whether spiritually or practically he would have been so haunted by failure had it not been for the exhaustion and collapse of his body." Yet, accepting things as they were, Hopkins, in his artistic as well as in his spiritual darkness, directed his cry of anguish to the Giver of all gifts.

The cry is voiced in a group of poems that have become known as the "terrible sonnets." The name is probably derived from a letter written by Dixon:

I can understand that your present position would give to your writings a rare charm—they have done so in those that I have seen: something that I cannot describe, but know to myself by the inadequate word terrible pathos—something of what you call temper in poetry: a right temper which goes to the point of the terrible; the terrible crystal.

It is precarious, as one critic points out, to draw conclusions from these sonnets as to Hopkins' spiritual life. There is "an initial difficulty of deciding which they were." They are usually considered to be the ones that Hopkins referred to in two passages: "if ever anything was written in blood one of these was"; and "I shall shortly have some sonnets to send you, five or more. Four of these came like inspirations unbidden and against

---

56Ibid., p. 364.
It is commonly supposed that the poems referred to are the ones numbered: 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, and 47. However, Bridges could not date them with certainty. Another important point to remember, if Hopkins' character is to be correctly estimated, is one stressed by Gardner:

Commentators on the so-called tragedy of Hopkins's whole life... are so anxious to give full weight to these utterances [of the "terrible sonnets"] that they ignore the psychological significance of first-rate poems of quite a different outlook. "Harry Ploughman" (1887) and the incomplete "Epithalamion" (1888) are both joyous products of the unimpeded personality. Moreover to anyone who can entertain even only the smallest wistful hope of Immortality, "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire" must surely present as perfect a collaboration of priest and poet as "The Windhover."61

Bearing these limitations in mind, one can still learn much of the thought of Hopkins from studying the content of his last poems.

The sonnets which will be grouped together for consideration here are the ones numbered 40, 41, 44, 45, 46, 47, 50 and 69. As the source of these Bridges gives H, "the bundle of posthumous papers that came into my hands at the author's death."62 This would indicate that Hopkins, in his lifetime, had not sent them to Bridges. Of four of them--44, 45, 46, and 47--Bridges writes that they, together with No. 56,

are all written undated in a small hand on the two sides of a half-sheet of common sermon paper, in the order in which they are here printed. They probably date back as early as 1885, and may be all, or some of them, those referred to in a letter of Sept. 1, 1885: "I shall shortly have some sonnets to send you, five or more...." I have no certain nor single identification of date.63

60 Ibid. (Sept. 1, 1885), p. 221.
62 Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Notes, p. 94.
63 Ibid., pp. 116-7.
Whether Hopkins actually sent him the poems Bridges does not say. They are highly personal, written apparently with no thought of an audience. Each is a short drama, a dramatic monologue, which revives an experience for the poet's own benefit, that he may the better understand it. Hopkins' use of poetry here is allied to that described by Shairp:

Others there are who, having looked below the surface, have early learned that, if the world is not meant to give absolute enjoyment, if pain and sorrow are indeed integral parts of it, it yet contains within it gracious reliefs, remedies, alleviations; and for many sensitive hearts one of the alleviations is poetry. "We live under a remedial system"; and poetry, rightly used, not only helps to interpret this system, but itself combines with the remedial tendencies.64

_Carrion Comfort, No. 40_, opens with an apostrophe to Despair. The poet then addresses Christ, and finally himself. He cries out against Despair, for he can still hope and wish to live. Yet he questions Christ as to why He continues to pursue with suffering one whose only desire is to flee from Him. (The theme is that of Thompson's _Hound of Heaven_.) Understanding comes to the poet, and it is he who gives the answer; the suffering is for his purification. Once he has accepted pain, he is able to rejoice in it. He is astounded that he should have resisted God. Vivid and appropriate imagery makes up the greater part of the poem. Despair is the loathsome carrion upon which Hopkins refuses to feast. He retains some strength, like a rope which has become slack but the strands of which are still twisted. He must needs be purified by suffering, and this is compared to threshing in which the grain and the chaff are separated.

64J. C. Shairp, _Aspects of Poetry_, p. 4.
The preceding is suggestive of the words of the Baptist speaking of Christ:

Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly 
cleanse his floor and gather his wheat into the barn, 
but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. 65

Again, the misery he endures is a rod. By kissing the rod, or the hand that 
wields it, the poet signifies his acceptance of all that it entails, and he 
is happy.

...my heart lol! lapped strength, stole joy, 
would laugh, cheer.

Here it is well to remember that to Hopkins heart signifies "the thoughts 
of the mind that vessel seems to harbour and the feelings of the soul to 
which it beats."66 The darkness, whether of night or of mind and spirit, in 
which he wrestled with God, has now passed. This recalls another Biblical 
passage, the account of Jacob's wrestling with an angel and refusing to let 
him go until he had blessed him. 67 Though the time had been short, a night, 
the intensity of the poet's suffering had made it seem a year. Very probably 
"that night...of now done darkness" is used literally as well as figur-
atively. As in the first three stanzas of The Wreck of the Deutschland, 
Hopkins is doubtless referring to a spiritual experience. Bridges believed 
that "this is probably the sonnet 'written in blood,' of which he wrote in

65 Matt. 3: 12.
66 Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Sermons, Etc.," The Note-Books and Papers of 
Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 298.
67 Gen. 32: 24.
May of that year [1885]. Of this there is no conclusive evidence, however. Nor can the precise nature of the experience which inspired it be determined. The poem suggests that it was a temptation to despair; such would doubtless have presented itself to a mind troubled as was Hopkins'.

But the temptation to despair has often been God's most searching and patent instrument in the forging of strong souls; and it is to the realities of his religion that Hopkins always looks for solace—or at least for strength to endure. All his poems, and especially the late sonnets, show the essential rightness of his spiritual life—the true Catholic formation of his mind.9

Much of the intensity of the struggle which lay behind Carrion Comfort, and particularly much of the joy which followed its resolution is suggested by the parenthesis and the repetition of the last line. The effect is startling, as must have been the realization of his temerity to the poet:

... That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

In Sonnet No. 41, the poet first soliloquizes; then he addresses the Holy Spirit, then Mary; and finally he turns back to himself, seeking some thought of comfort. What he finds, even in the end, is but slight and temporary. The whole poem is a resigned and patient acceptance of limitless ills which he knows he must for the time endure. His first thought is of the apparent impossibility of attaining the zenith of his grief. Each new pang is but more intense because of those that preceded it. In his distress, Hopkins calls to the Holy Spirit:

Comforter, where, where is your comforting?

Some idea of what he longed for in comforting can be gained from a sermon he once prepared. Explaining the word Paraclete, he said that it is translated Comforter, but that that is not enough: "A Paraclete is one who comforts, who cheers, who encourages, who persuades, who exhorts, who stirs up, who urges forward, who calls on..." For all of this Hopkins appeared to yearn. In fact, he wrote in a letter of about the same time as the sonnet: "There is a point with me in matters of any size when I must absolutely have encouragement as much as crops rain; afterwards I am independent." He next calls to Mary:

Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?

Father Feeney quotes this line to support his contention that Hopkins' was not entirely a literary despair:

As to whether Hopkins "terrible sonnets" were the result of a spiritual or an artistic despair, I am willing to go part way with Father Thornton, but not whole way. Against the final sonnet, which has been quoted, I might mention that other most pathetic one in which the poet cries "Mary, Mother of us, where is your relief?" In the mouth of a man who had already said to Bridges: "When we met last, we spoke of nothing important, but only of literature," [Jan. 19, 1879, p. 60] it is hard to see how this cry can be taken to mean "Why can't I have inspiration for my poems?" It should be observed, however, that in 1885, Hopkins was mindful of the

70 "Sermons, Etc.," Note-books and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins, p. 287.
fact that Mary could help even in such natural occupations as the writing of poetry. He was seeking to spur Patmore on in writing his poem on the Marriage of the Blessed Virgin. Hopkins agreed that, in most cases, it may be better to await spontaneous inspiration; "but this poem was to be an act of devotion, of religion: perhaps a strain against nature in the beginning will be the best prospered in the end." Now it is to be remembered that many of the works Hopkins proposed to himself at this time were likewise "works of devotion," of duty, religious patriotic, or intellectual. He indicated how seriously he had accepted certain remarks of Patmore's about the Blessed Virgin's help:

Moreover you say in one of your odes that the Blessed Virgin seems to relent and promise her help to you to write in her honour. If this is not to be followed it is but a foolish scandalous saying. You will not venture to say heaven failed to do its part or expect others to say so; either then you deluded yourself with groundless hopes or else you did not take the pains of correspondence with heaven's offers. Either way the words would better have been left unsaid. This is presumptuous language on my part, yet aimed at the Blessed Virgin's honour and at yours.  

Hence it is not inconceivable that Hopkins would himself have called on Mary for relief in the unbearable stagnation which seemed to engulf his every effort. Yet, the remainder of the poem indicates that Father Feeney is right in his conclusion that Hopkins was not calling with such anguish of soul merely for poetic inspiration. He declares that his countless cries huddle or crowd together in one chief woe, world-sorrow, that they wince and sing

73 Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, to Coventry Patmore (April 4, 1885), p. 211.
74 Ibid.
on an age old anvil before they gradually subside. In view of the content of Hopkins' earlier poetry, it is not fantastic to interpret this chief Woe as the sufferings of Christ the Head, by which value is given to those of His members. The realization is strengthening to the poet; his cries are lulled and then leave off. Yet he is not consoled. The speech of "Fury" which closes the octave can be understood by reference to a later line. Day and life are short; man's endurance, limited. Hence if "Fury," his tormentor, would be cruel, it must perforce be abrupt, admit of no delay. That the poet refers here to mental suffering becomes apparent in the sestet:

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

Contemporary references in Hopkins' letters come to mind. For example: "I think that my fits of sadness, though they do not affect my judgment, resemble madness." The poem is more revealing than the letter. There can be no doubt that Hopkins had experienced the mental torment he describes so effectually there. A thought of comfort he does find. It seems a poor one, but in his wretched condition it is most helpful; it is the thought of eventual release:

... all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

In Sonnet No. 44, the poet more explicitly names his griefs. His lot is to live among strangers. Those close to him by ties of blood are not near in Christ. Years before he had written of his people, "None of them

are turned Catholics; I do not expect it. Yet it must have been a disappointment to him. It is evident that he was deeply devoted to his family, that he was also utterly convinced of the truth of Catholicism. From time to time he had expressed a wish to see his friends converted. How much more must he have wished this for his parents, brothers and sisters. And it is Christ, the very one in whom he finds his greatest peace, who is yet his "sword and strife," who separates him from those dear ones.

The second thought is of England, whose honor he has so deeply at heart. She is wife to his creating thought. Every lack in her is a personal sorrow to him. In The Wreck of the Deutschland and in The Loss of the Eurydice he had grieved for her loss of faith. His letters show that he deplored any want of bravery or of nobility on the part of England. He felt she was acting unwisely in Irish affairs. Any of these thoughts was sufficient to arouse in him a desire to write to her a plea; but he knew that it would not be heeded even if he were to write it. Worse still, however, was the realization that he was failing to write it: "However, to me, to finish a thing and that it shd. be out of hand and owe its failure to somebody else is nearly the same thing as success." He is weary of only standing idly by while wars are raging. His attitude toward works done for England can best be deduced from statements he made to Patmore, to Bridges and to Dixon:

Your poems are a good deed done for the Catholic Church and another for England, for the British Empire, which now trembles in the balance held in the hand of unwisdom. . .How far can the civilization England offers be attractive and valuable and be offered and insisted

on as an attraction and a thing of value to India for instance? Of course those who live in our civilisation and belong to it praise it... but how will it be represented by critics bent on making the worst of it or even not bent on making the best of it?... since there is always in mankind some love of truth and admiration for good (only that truth must be striking and the good on a great scale) what marked and striking excellence has England to shew to make her civilization attractive? Her literature is one of her excellences and attractions and I believe that criticism will tend to make this more and more felt; but there must be more and more of that literature, a continued supply and in quality excellent.78

By the bye, I say it deliberately and before God, I would have you and Canon Dixon and all true poets remember that fame, the being known, though in itself one of the most dangerous things to man, is nevertheless the true and appointed air, element, and setting of genius and its works... To produce then is of little use unless what we produce is known, if known widely known, the wider known the better, for it is by being known it works, it influences, it does its duty, it does good. We must then try to be known, aim at it, take means to it. And this without puffing in the process or pride in the success... Besides, we are Englishmen. A great work by an Englishman is like a great battle won by England. It is an unfading bay tree. It will even be admired by and praised by and do good to those who hate England (as England is most perilously hated), who do not even wish to be benefited by her. It is then even a patriotic duty [a Greek phrase is used here, which a footnote translates: 'to be active in producing poetry'] and to secure the fame and permanence of the work.79

For my part I shd. think St. George and St. Thomas of Canterbury wore roses in heaven for England's sake on the day that ode, [Wordsworth's] not without their intercession, was penned; for, to better a little the good

78Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins, to Coventry Patmore (June 4, 1886), pp. 218-9.
humoured old cynical proverb, "When grace of God is gone and spent, then learning is most excellent" and goes to make the greatness of a nation—which is what I urge on Bridges and now on you, to get yourselves known and be up betimes on our Parnassus. 80

These passages do not indicate that Hopkins' ideas on fame itself had changed. It should be noted that he still considered learning second to virtue: "Art and its fame do not really matter, spiritually they are nothing, virtue is the only good; but it is only by bringing in the infinite that to a just judgment they can be made to look infinitesimal or small or less than vastly great." 81 In his own case he could not act upon the ordinary view. He necessarily brought in the infinite and preferred virtue to fame. In Sonnet 44, however, he does not imply that any demand of virtue kept him from writing. It is clearly just the inability to which he had so often referred in his letters. His thoughts move on to his present situation; he is in Ireland, "at a third remove." This appears to be a reference to the old proverb attributed to Franklin "Three removes are as bad as a fire."

... Not but in all removes I can
Kind love both give and get ...

he says, and one is reminded of his remark soon after his arrival in Ireland: "I have been warmly welcomed and most kindly treated." 82 The closing lines are obscure. Gardner sees in them evidence that Hopkins' "elected silence" whether as patriot, priest, poet or plain man could at times prove almost

82 Ibid. (March 7, 1884), p. 190.
unbearably irksome. In this he may be uttering a repressed desire to write an ode to England, a political pamphlet, or perhaps merely to speak his mind freely to those about him. But to some ears the sestet vibrates with a deeper, more tragic note, which hints at something more personal and essential than a sporadic patriotism or what Dr. Richards somewhat curiously calls "self-consciousness."

There is no evidence that Hopkins repressed such desires as he had to write. Rather, as has been shown, he began the works they suggested, but without the energy to finish. The poem itself seems to say not that Hopkins represses his thoughts, but that they are barred by "dark heaven's baffling ban" or thwarted by "hell's spell." Evidently he feels that the force which detains him is a supernatural one. He appears to wonder whether it is the work of God, who wills that he should not succeed, or some diabolic interference to prevent him from completing works that would be to God's glory and his country's good. Thus to hoard, unheard by others, the thoughts which to him seem wise; or, having expressed them, to have them ignored by others, is a trial to him; it magnifies his loneliness.

The same feeling pervades Sonnet No. 45. This time, however, loneliness arises from spiritual desolation. He feels himself abandoned by God, left entirely to himself. Deprived even of the consolation of sleep, he wakes to "feel the fell of dark." To him it appears as a stretch of waste land, in which he has encountered some awful experience:

...what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!  
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

Ibid.
Evidently again the experience has been one of mind and spirit. He bears witness to the truth of what he says; yet by hours, he says, he means years, means life. Once more two interpretations are possible: a figurative night of extended spiritual darkness, or an actual night of intense suffering. In distress, he addresses countless cries

To dearest him that lives alas! away.

How revealing is that line! The poet's love is not lessened, although his lament, "like dead letters," seems to remain unheeded and unanswered. In order to describe his feelings, he identifies himself with them:

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste; my taste was me.

It is his "selfyeast of spirit" that sours the "dull dough" of his physical makeup. From this phrase Gardner deduces:

The active personality has not been perfectly assimilated by the passive religious character. "Self­yeast of spirit" suggests the individual vital principle, the psychic individuality, rather than the immortal soul of the Christian, which strives to annihilate the Self either in works of charity or in a perfect union with its Creator. The souring of personality and the consequent loss of inspiration is a foretaste of perdition.85

On the evidence of the thought of the octave, it is difficult entirely to agree with the foregoing. The poet declared that he called repeatedly upon God and received no answer. He interprets this as God's decree that he should taste the bitterness of himself. It may be related in some small way

85Ibid., p. 40.
to the cry of Christ on the Cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This sense of abandonment by God constitutes his foretaste of perdition:

The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

It is through the last two words that the sonnet ends on a note of hope. The poet realizes that for him God's decree is temporary; for them it is eternal.

Sonnet No. 46 vividly recalls the earlier poem entitled Peace. Patience, the poet says here, is not the hard thing. That is rather to pray for Patience, since he who does asks also for war and wounds, for weariness and work, deprivation, humility, and obedience. In those things alone does Patience root. It is the "natural heart's ivy" by which are masked "our ruins of wrecked past purpose." In spite of all it will involve, we ask God to bend our rebellious wills to Him. God is patient. Patience is in the "crisp combs" with which he arranges man's disordered will; it is indeed by His very action in this respect that Patience comes to man.

In Sonnet No. 47, Hopkins addresses a somewhat strange appeal to himself—that he have pity on, be kinder, more charitable to himself. He longs to live no longer

... this tormented mind
With this tormented mind tormenting yet.

He sees that it is vain for him to seek comfort in his comfortless mental world, even as for blind eyes to seek for day in their world of dark. He

---

Matt. 27: 46.
addresses himself:

Soul, self; come, poor Jackself, I do advise
You, jaded, let be; call off thoughts awhile
Elsewhere

Comfort must have "root-room" if it is to grow. In this quieter disposition joy will come according to the time and manner pleasing to God. His smile is not to be forced. It will shine at unexpected times and light "a lovely mile" of the otherwise dark road.

Sonnet No. 50 is of somewhat later date than those already studied. Dated March 17, 1889, about three months before Hopkins' death, it reveals a mind still troubled but less constrained, more peaceful. The poem is based on a Latin quotation, beginning: Justum tueum quidem tu es, Domine, si disputem tecum. While acknowledging the justice of God, the poet feels that his plea too is just; he questions:

Why do sinners' ways prosper? and why must Disappointment all I endeavour end?

His complaint is made as to a friend who could easily help, but who, for some unknown reason, refuses to do so. The rebuke is a tender one, made with a note of intimacy suggestive of certain of the recorded conversations between Our Lord and Saint Therese:

Wert thou my enemy, O thou my friend
How wouldst thou worse, I wonder, than thou dost
Defeat, thwart me?

The same quality is observable in the plea of the last line:

Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.
It is without doubt artistic frustration which here concerns Hopkins. Some time before he had written in a letter:

Unhappily I cannot produce anything at all, not only the luxuries like poetry, but the duties almost of my position, its natural outcome - like scientific works. I am now writing a quasi-philosophical paper on the Greek Negatives: but when shall I finish it? or if finished will it pass the censors? or if it does will the Classical Review or any magazine take it? All impulse fails me: I can give myself no sufficient reason for going on. Nothing comes; I am a eunuch -- but it is for the kingdom of heaven's sake.\(^{87}\)

The idea is repeated here, in Sonnet 50:

... See, banks and brakes
Now, leaved how thick! laced they are again
With pretty chervil, look, and fresh wind shakes
Them; birds build -- but not I build; no, but strain,
Time's eunuch, and not breed one work that wakes.
Mine, O thou lord of life, send my roots rain.

The final poem to be considered in this group, No. 69, was placed by Bridges with the "Unfinished Poems and Fragments." He explained:

It might be argued that this sonnet has the same right to be recognized as a finished poem with the sonnets 44-47, but those had several years' recognition whereas this must have been thrown off one day in a cynical mood, which he could not have wished permanently to intrude among his last serious poems.\(^{88}\)

It is possible that Bridges is right in this evaluation. Certainly many will agree with him, and it is well he placed the poem where he did. It is


\(^{88}\)Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, Notes, pp. 120-1.
a lament about the degradation of man's lot, about his ignominious position, entirely lacking either the glory of such material things as lightning, or the majesty of spiritual beings like the angels. From first to last, man's every breath is a *memento mori*. He lives improvidently and dies in shame.

He is a poor, ignoble creature, however great his name. Hopkins himself is such a man.

It is not easy to understand this poem. Even in his lifetime, Hopkins' words were misinterpreted, and it is unfair now to draw conclusions from apparent cynicism which he cannot explain; nor is that necessary. Miss Phare remarks:

> I think there is no doubt that towards the end of his life Hopkins was haunted from time to time, especially in moments of extreme mental fatigue, by an overwhelming sense of self-disgust. But Hopkins certainly did not encourage this mood as presumably he would have done if he had felt it the product of an asceticism particularly pleasing to God; he seems on the contrary to consider it something irreligious. The sonnet to which I have referred [No. 69] is the only poem in which he indulges it fully. His self-disgust is not, as far as one can judge, the distorted product of an exaggerated humility: his religion, though it may supply material on which to exercise his disgust, is in no way the cause of it.

That self-disgust did have a part in his thoughts can be judged from his letters. He more than once calls himself a "blackguard." Once in discussing Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, he wrote: "You are certainly wrong about Hyde being overdrawn: my Hyde is worse." However, it should also be remembered that Hopkins is said to have been in the highest stages of

---

90See *Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, pp. 129, 131, 139, 177.
spiritual life. Such a soul may be "painfully aware of her misery, helplessness and defects."\textsuperscript{92} A Jesuit spiritual writer comments on something of the sort:

Those of us, moreover, who are in the habit of meditating on this mystery [of the divine Indwelling] know the magnitude of the task man undertakes when he makes the resolution that his life-story shall be "the prodigious poem of a poor man who tries to model himself on Christ." Far from being puffed-up with pride, we are confounded in humility. "The contemplation of the graces we have received makes us better understand our misery," as St. Teresa puts it.\textsuperscript{93}

Moreover, it may never have occurred to Hopkins how bleak the picture he was painting would appear to others. He defended the imagery in his sonnet on Saint Alphonsus by saying it was familiar in Scripture and the Fathers.\textsuperscript{94} He might likewise have defended this poem by saying it was not too unlike certain chapters in the Book of Job. The characteristic note of hope is implied, though not very clearly, in the last line. The purpose of the poem seems to be to expose the truth underlying the deceits of life's masque. It is perhaps the supernatural view, by which alone human achievements assume their rightful value, which enables the poet to be not too concerned about them.

Of two of his sonnets Hopkins once wrote that they bore many resemblances to one another, "a fault in me the sonnetteer, but not a fault that can be traced home to either of the sonnets. They were conceived at the same time; that is how it is. But I have too much tendency to do it, I

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{92}A Catholic Dictionary, edited by Donald Attwater, p. 143.}\n\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{93}Raoul Plus, S.J., God Within Us, p. 43.}\n\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{94}Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (Oct. 19, 1888), p. 296.}
find."95 Such a likeness is perceptible in the "terrible sonnets." They are his own best commentary on the circumstances of his life, which have already been described. The quality which they all possess, which constitutes their essence, has been apprehended by a Jesuit critic:

In these poems it cannot honestly be said that there is any absolute tragedy, any more than there was an absolute tragedy in Gethsemane on Maundy Thursday evening. Gerard knows that it is only "as it were (veluti) a separation," he knows the reason for it, however hurt and baffled at the time he is; and he knows the remedies and employs them. He knows as he knew fourteen years ago, only far more vividly now, that some day he will come to find the Risen Jesus who is now so carefully disguised. ... The glorious paean on The Comfort of the Resurrection comes after the "terrible sonnets,"96 and even if the joy of that is dimmed by the long wait afterwards for death, we know that his last words were: "I am so happy, I am so happy." I repeat that these sonnets are love-poems in a far deeper sense than his earlier ones.97

In August, 1888, Hopkins wrote to Bridges:

I will now go to bed, the more so as I am going to preach tomorrow and put plainly to a Highland congregation of MacDonals, MacIntoshes, MacKillos and the rest what I am putting not at all so plainly to the rest of the world, or rather to you and Canon Dixon, in a sonnet in sprung rhythm with two codas.98

This sonnet is entitled That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection. Miss Phare observes of Hopkins' poetry: "My own feeling is that if there were happy moments in Hopkins's spiritual life, 95Ibid. (Jan. 12, 1888), p. 271.
96Two of the sonnets studied in the foregoing pages, Nos. 50 and 69, were apparently written after The Comfort of the Resurrection.
A beacon, an eternal beam. Flesh fade, and mortal trash
Fall to the residuary worm; world's wildfire, leave but ash:
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,
I am all at once what Christ is, since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch, matchwood, immortal
diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

The same sort of consolation—that derived from an undistorted vision
of the purpose of things, rather than from actual relief—is embodied in
the sonnet written In Honour of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez. Of this Hopkins
wrote:

I ask your opinion of a sonnet written to order on
the occasion of the first feast since his canonisation
proper of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez, a laybrother of our
Order, who for 40 years acted as hall-porter to the college
of Palma in Majorca; he was, it is believed, much favoured
by God with heavenly lights and much persecuted by evil
spirits. The sonnet (I say it snorting) aims at being
intelligible.101

Another writes of this poem:

He thought his spiritual life a failure and had
many moments of dereliction. But amongst his last poems
there is one in which he had a glimpse of his worth in
the sight of God, which he was too humble to apply to
himself. In the sonnet on the saintly, obscure lay
brother, Alphonsus Rodriguez, who was afterwards canonized,
he compares the glory which is flashed off exploits all
the world can acclaim with a hidden martyrdom.102

Hopkins was grateful for Bridges' criticisms of the sonnet and acted on
some of them; other things that had been questioned he defended. Among
these was the first line which, somewhat amended, now reads:

102 Martin D'Arcy, S.J., "Gerard Manley Hopkins," Great Catholics, edited by
Claude Williamson, O.S.C., p. 366.
Honour is flashed off exploit, so we say.

Hopkins wrote:

I am altogether at a loss to see your objection to exploit and to so we say. You will allow—would I shd. think, urge on me—that where the [a Greek phrase translated in a footnote as: "Proper name for a thing; exact word; a term from Aristotle’s Poetics." ] has nothing flat or poor about it it is the best word to use in poetry as in prose, better I mean than its paraphrase. Now exploit is the right word . . . there is no other for the thing meant but achievement, which is not better, and it is a handsome word in itself: why then should I not say it? Surely I should.103

This thought Hopkins develops in the octave. The very strokes that heroes once endured should come in time to be their glory. It has been so of Christ and, in some cases, of the martyrs. But when the war is interior, it is unobserved by others; they know nothing of it. In the sestet the poet finds his consolation. God, who gives being to mountains and continents, who causes violets and tall trees to grow, can bring conquest even from a hidden life. He did so in the case of St. Alphonsus in:

Those years and years by of world without event That in Majorca Alfonso watched the door.

So did He also in the case of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Of his poetic conquest a modern critic writes: "When the history of the last decade [the 1920's] of English poetry comes to be written by a dispassionate critic, no influence will rank in importance with that of Gerard Manley Hopkins."104 Of his spiritual conquest it is harder to speak; our evidence

ceases where it begins to be realized. There is an indication, however, that of the eternal happiness which was to crown his career—his "years and years by of world without event"—he had a foretaste at his death. It is described by one of his intimate friends:

A day or two after Low Sunday 1889 he fell ill of typhoid fever. From the outset he was fully alive to the gravity of his state, and, I believe, never shared the hope that others from time to time entertained, that he would pull through.

During the night of Wednesday, the 5th of June, a serious change for the worse took place in his condition, and when the doctors arrived early next morning, they pronounced his case well-nigh desperate. Father Wheeler, S.J., who attended him all through his illness with affectionate care, told him of his danger, and gave him Holy Viaticum, which he received with the deepest devotion.

On hearing that his parents were coming from England, he appeared to dread their arrival, because of the pain it would give them to see him prostrate, but when the first interview was over, he expressed the happiness he felt at having them with him.

He quite realized that he was dying and asked each day for the Holy Viaticum. He received it for the last time on the morning of the day of his death, Saturday, the 8th of June.

The final blessing and absolution were also then given him at his own request, and he was heard two or three times to say 'I am so happy, I am so happy.' Soon afterwards, he became too weak to speak, but he appeared to follow mentally the prayers for the dying, which were said a little before noon by Father Wheeler, and joined in by his parents. As the end approached he seemed to grow more collected, and retained consciousness almost up to the moment, half-past one o'clock, when he passed peacefully away. He was buried in the burial ground of the Society at Glasnevin. Requiescat in Pace.105

CONCLUSION

How all's to one thing wrought!
The members how they sit!
O what a tune the thought
Must be that fancied it.

So Hopkins wrote of a piece of music; he might have applied the words to his life. It has been considered in the preceding pages under a twofold aspect: spiritual and poetic. That his efforts in these spheres were mutually helpful was not the result of chance. All was directed toward one thing, which in his mind was supreme. Art, philosophy, manners and breeding, and everything else in the world were below it.\(^1\) He called it "that chastity of mind which seems to lie at the very heart and be the parent of all other good, the seeing at once what is best, the holding to that, and the not allowing anything else whatever to be even heard pleading to the contrary."\(^2\) In Christ's life and character was comprised his example. The task he set himself was tremendous, but he persevered in it. The finished work was itself his masterpiece, his spiritual achievement. Since it could not be completed till the end, he did not, in life, have the consolation of beholding it. That is now our privilege, but his was "the thought... that fancied it." The thought involved at once the human and the Divine, for it was of Christ Himself. A work of art cannot perfectly

\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 174-5.
reproduce the thought which inspired it; so Hopkins' life could only approximate that of Christ. Likeness there was, however, and in it his poetry may be included. Christ's life consisted of His Hidden Life, His Public Life, and His Passion. Hopkins' spiritual life reflects the first of these in the years preceding his Ordination; they had their share of joys and sorrows, but they were generally uneventful and unrecognized. The poems of the period reveal an appreciation of the beauties of the world and a prayerful concern for the salvation of mankind. After Ordination, Hopkins entered upon his active ministry, preaching and attending to the needs of humanity. The poems are replete with apostolic spirit: active charity for all ages and classes, eagerness to enlighten their minds, and zeal for their salvation. In his last years, particularly in Ireland, Hopkins shared in the Passion of Christ. Once more this is reflected in his poetry, in those sonnets so suggestive of the Liturgy of Holy Week. There is a glimpse of the Resurrection too, in one glorious poem and in the happiness with which Hopkins was able to face death. The parallel is not perfect. It is not essential and need not be over-emphasized. That it can be drawn at all, however, is proof of the unity that existed between the spiritual life of Hopkins and his poetry.

Critics have been quoted in this thesis who deny such unity, who believe that Hopkins chose his subjects from a sense of duty, that his thoughts and desires did not accord with his outward life, and that his poems express the conflict. Others object to these statements and seek to show that Hopkins was not unhappy. They maintain that his subjects are the expression of those things in which Hopkins found his inspiration and
that such conflict as they express may be explained through an understanding of his spiritual life.

The preceding study is an attempt to strengthen the latter view by evidence gained from the poems themselves. I have examined the content of Hopkins' poetry, regarding it as the best available index to the workings of his mind. I have tried to determine his meaning as nearly as possible with regard to each poem studied. My conclusion is that the mind of Hopkins was in conformity with his faith and vocation. They were, in fact, the strongest influence, the unifying force, directing him spiritually, intellectually and emotionally.

His subject matter is threefold: God in His relationship with nature, with man, and with the poet himself. Hopkins' attitude is one of reverence and praise deepening perceptibly into love. His greatest concern, the conflict which disturbs him, is that man, too often deprived of or indifferent to religious truths, does not universally render such reverence and love to God. This is a departure from the right order; it troubles Hopkins because it deprives God of His due and because it endangers the salvation of man. Hence it is Hopkins' prayer that God may induce man to do His will. For his own part, he strives to recognize and to accept it in spite of darkness and suffering, and there can be no doubt that he finds therein genuine happiness. Such is the mind of Hopkins as revealed by the content of his poetry.

It would be a mistake, however, to oversimplify his accomplishment. Both his life and his poetry may be termed achievements. His spiritual life, modelled upon Christ's, has already been discussed. It was designed
and carried out in the face of difficulties. Of his poetry the same may be said; he labored without an appreciative audience, with no hint of future fame, no models; he worked out his own technique and aimed at being intelligible. His poetry was difficult in the writing, as it is in the reading, because truth was all-important to Hopkins in life and in art.  

If his experience was complex, if he had to resolve mental conflicts, he did not do so by self-deception. He spared no effort in finding the truth or in seeking to communicate it to others:

All the devices which for the casual reader produce only obscurity are really intended to prevent the reader from understanding anything until he can understand everything. For the complete statement alone—elaborate, qualified, compressed, unified—is the truth...where the truth is kept in suspense until all is told...to understand a line before completing the stanza would be to learn a half-truth or a falsehood.

The same may be said of Hopkins' life. The Victorian mind was in quest of truth. Hopkins found it and had courage to express it in his life and in his poetry. Because truth is one, his spiritual and poetic achievement built upon it must necessarily be unified.

---

4 Ibid.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

for

THE UNITY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS' ACHIEVEMENT

(Collected Works)


(Book and Pamphlets)


Bradley, A. C. "Shelley's View of Literature" in English Association Leaflets, 3-20.


(Encyclopedia and Dictionary Articles)


ADDENDUM

In the Times Literary Supplement for Saturday, September 26, 1942, page 474, appears a review of a new book on Gerard Manley Hopkins.* It would doubtless be of great help to persons interested in the subject of this thesis, since it is similar in theme. The reviewer says of it:

Dr. Pick's study is the first to be based on a real understanding of the unity of the poet, priest, and Jesuit, in Hopkins... His book, in fact, both as a concise record of Hopkins's life and a detailed exposition of his poetry, is the most informing which has yet been written. Its accuracy and insight far outweigh any bias.