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Critical Issues in the Religious Content of the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins: Problems & Resolutions

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1970

CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE RELIGIOUS CONTENT
OF THE POETRY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS:
PROBLEMS AND RESOLUTIONS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Jo Anne Gabbard

June 1970

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		
I.	INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
II.	TWO SCHOOLS OF CRITICAL THOUGHT DEALING WITH RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN HOPKINS	6
III.	SPECIFIC CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE POETRY OF HOPKINS	26
IV.	THE INFLUENCE OF SCOTIST PHILOSOPHY AND IGNATIAN DOCTRINES IN THE SPIRITUAL WRITINGS OF HOPKINS	53
V.	RESOLUTION OF CRITICAL ISSUES	71
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

At the time of his death in 1889, the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Jesuit priest, was scattered among his family and a circle of close friends. He refused to have his poems published, choosing rather to send his creations to close acquaintances for opinions and suggestions. His small circle of readers included R. W. Dixon, Coventry Patmore, and Robert Bridges, with whom he exchanged critical letters and from whom he received little encouragement. Dixon appeared to recognize and appreciate the importance of what he read, and offered Hopkins a bit of praise and encouragement, but Patmore and Bridges could not seem to grasp the meaning of his verse or his manner of writing.

When Robert Bridges first published Hopkins' poems in 1918, he pointed out the poet's "faults of taste" and "unpoetic lines," thus establishing the generally accepted criticism that was to remain unchallenged for several years.¹ Objecting to Hopkins' verse because it did not fit his preconceived standard of good poetry, Bridges states in the preface to the first edition

¹"The Oddities of Genius," Hopkins: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), p. 71. Hereafter cited as Critical Essays. Bridges' essay was originally published as "Preface to Notes" in the first edition of The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (London: Oxford University Press, 1918).

that "there are definite faults of style which a reader must have courage to face."² He then goes on to attribute part of Hopkins' oddity to his "habitual omission of the relative pronoun," causing confusion in parts of speech and reducing the normal order of words to "mere jargon."³ Bridges also accuses Hopkins of striving for condensation in his lines to the point of neglecting careful placement of "grammatically ambiguous" words, resulting in confusion and uncertainty for the reader. As for Hopkins' rhymes, Bridges warns the reader that he must be tolerant of them, as they are often repellent, hideous and childish.⁴ Bridges, then poet laureate, was the first to attempt an analysis of or to pass judgment on the poetry of Hopkins, and his warning that the poet's lines were obscure and odd greatly hampered and slowed the public acceptance of Hopkins by discouraging a wide reading of his poetry.

Around 1926, however, there began a change of attitude toward Hopkins and his poetry with the appearance of an article by I. A. Richards in which he defends as virtues the very ambiguity, obscurity, and strangeness which Bridges had condemned.⁵ Richards, along with critics Herbert Read and William Empson, was a forceful proponent of Hopkins and greatly increased the number of Hopkins' readers and supporters. The influential

²Ibid., p. 72.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 73.

⁵"Gerard Hopkins," The Dial, LXXXI (Sept., 1926), 195-206.

studies of Richards, Read,⁶ and Empson⁷ were pivotal works in the Hopkins critical movement, creating a strong current of favorable opinion based on the poet's innovations in style and rhythm. With the emphasis on this aspect of Hopkins' verse, the critics did not seem overly concerned with the thought content or the meanings hidden beneath this new style of writing.

However, with the question of Hopkins' obscurity and oddity appearing settled, scholars began to consider the biographical aspects of the poet in relation to the meaning of his poetry. Appearing early in the 1930's was a study by Elsie Phare in which she, like Richards, disparages the Christianity of Hopkins and scoffs at the poet's deeper religious motives and beliefs.⁸ Studies by other critics in agreement with Richards and Miss Phare followed, resulting in a staggering number of separate articles, essays and books giving an impressionistic, partisan, and sometimes misleading interpretation of Hopkins' poetry.

To counteract this anti-religious movement John Pick published Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet (1942), the first full-length study pointing out the religious context of Hopkins' poetry and emphasizing the influence of his religious beliefs in his life.⁹ More recently, David Downes completed a

⁶"Poetry and Belief in Gerard Manley Hopkins," New Verse, I (Jan., 1933), 11-15.

⁷Seven Types of Ambiguity (London: Chatto and Windus, 1930).

⁸The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1933).

⁹New York: Oxford University Press.

similar study but with less attention given to the biographical aspects of Hopkins' religion. His book, Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of his Ignatian Spirit (1959), concentrates mainly on showing the correlation between the priest's poetry and the discipline of St. Ignatius and the Society of Jesus.¹⁰

But it was W. H. Gardner who set the trend for future Hopkins' studies when his two-volume definitive study appeared relating the poet to his work and his environment.¹¹ This critic's study is the most thorough to date and the author is generally considered to be the most reliable Hopkins scholar. Using the poet's personal letters, diaries, journals and notes, Gardner gives a detailed analysis of the poet's life and works quoting from Hopkins' own hand. While not attempting to settle conclusively the question of conflict in the poet's life, Gardner recognizes its presence and shows how it sometimes seems to influence his art. He found new meaning in the poetry of Hopkins by relating his verse to his changing environment.

Gerard Manley Hopkins wrote only fourteen hundred lines of verse, but the amount of critical writing on this verse has been overwhelming--over seven hundred articles and books dealing with various aspects of his life and writings. Possibly this unusually large number of studies on so few poems can be attributed

¹⁰New York: Noble Printers.

¹¹Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition, 2 vols. This work has appeared in two different sets of circumstances. Volume I, the second edition revised, was published in London by Martin, Secker, and Warburg, in 1948. Volume II was published in New Haven by Yale University Press, in 1959.

at least in part to Hopkins having been a member of the Society of Jesus, thereby creating an interest in his writings not only among literary critics and scholars, but also religious writers and priests.

The purpose of this study is to investigate a limited number of the most influential and interesting studies dealing in depth with the question of Hopkins' religion and its resultant influence on his poetic talent, and to attempt to resolve some of the points of dispute. Some of the studies investigated argue that Hopkins was hindered in his poetic endeavors by his religion, while others attempt to prove that his religion enhanced his poetry. The present study is not intended as an evaluation of individual works; its purpose is rather to present the pertinent and relevant ideas projected in each study discussed, thus giving the reader an understanding of the general trend of critical thought dealing with the religious problem in Hopkins.

The findings of this study, however, tend to substantiate the contentions of those critics who feel that Hopkins' religion and art are inseparable, with poetic and spiritual matters interacting smoothly. To arrive at a resolution of some of the chief critical issues discussed, the spiritual writings of the priest Hopkins have been used to demonstrate that the ideas found in that body of prose are reflected in his poetry, indicating that the priest and poet in Hopkins were fused into a harmonious relationship.

CHAPTER II

TWO SCHOOLS OF CRITICAL THOUGHT DEALING WITH RELIGIOUS ISSUES IN HOPKINS

Most of the critics who are concerned with the influence of religion in the poetry of Hopkins assume either a completely positive or a wholly negative attitude toward his vocation as a priest and its resultant influence, with the rationalistic-aesthetic view on the one hand opposed to the Jesuit view on the other. According to the aesthetic interpretation, Hopkins' art and religion were extremely incompatible and were never reconciled, although he attempted throughout his life to create a satisfying union between the two. This failure to fuse successfully the poet and the priest is suggested by many of the critics in attempting to explain the conflict and tension they see in both his life and his poetry.

Among the proponents of this theory is I. A. Richards, who deals with the religious issue in his influential study. Although Richards' essay was written primarily to praise the strangeness in the poetic style of the poet, he devotes a considerable part of his study to the tension and conflict which he feels helped produce this strange style. He explains that when one compares the poems conceived within the circle of Hopkins' theology with those which transcend his religion, one

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must conclude that "the poet in him was often oppressed and stifled by the priest."¹ Richards adds that this inner conflict and "appalling tension" within the poet created the originality of structure and the audacity of experimentation which lead to his being called the most obscure of English verse writers.²

In his article, Richards takes issue with Robert Bridges, who in 1918 edited the first volume of Hopkins' poems. Even though Bridges and the poet were lifelong friends and corresponded regularly, Bridges was not at all complimentary to Hopkins' poetic efforts either during his life or after the poet's death. Only a cursory glance at their correspondence will reveal that Bridges not only misunderstood Hopkins and his poetry, but also failed to offer him any encouragement or help. His famous description of Hopkins' verse as "a naked encounter of sensualism and asceticism" along with his assertion that Hopkins' weakness as a poet was revealed in his blemished and extravagant poetic style appeared in the preface of the first edition.³ Richards, as the first to openly take issue with Bridges' evaluation, maintained that Hopkins' oddities of verse were deliberate and that the poet was most himself when, through his heightened sensibilities, he was experimenting with new rhythms, disturbed word order, and obscurity of thought.⁴ To illustrate his theory, Richards uses

¹"Gerard Hopkins," p. 199.

²Ibid.

³"Oddities of Genius," p. 71.

⁴"Gerard Hopkins," p. 197.

specific poems such as "Peace," "Spelt from Sibyl's Leaves" and "The Windhover," which will be referred to later.

Another critic who shares the rationalistic-aesthetic view is Herbert Read, who categorizes all of Hopkins' poetry according to the poet's religious beliefs. Read contends that all Hopkins' poetry falls into one of the three groups: those poems which are the direct expression of Hopkins' beliefs, poems which have no relation to any beliefs, and the poems of doubt.⁵ Read then quickly points out that the poems directly expressing Hopkins' religious beliefs are extremely inferior to those in the other two categories, so much so, in fact, that none of the poems in this group was included by Bridges in the first edition of Poems. The critic cites some of Hopkins' most beautiful verse --such as "God's Grandeur," "The Windhover," and "Pied Beauty"-- as examples of poetry having no obvious relation to beliefs of any kind, and he adds that most of the poet's creations are in this group.⁶

Read argues that there was indeed a conflict between the poet's art and religion, evident in the fact that upon becoming a priest he destroyed many of the poems he had written which he felt were inconsistent with his religious discipline. As examples of conflict in Hopkins' writings, Read cites "Pied Beauty" and "The Windhover" from the second category above as among those which are completely objective in their appeal to the senses and totally void of any asceticism; but, he adds, Hopkins attempts

⁵"Poetry and Belief," p. 12.

⁶Ibid.

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to justify their sensuousness and to appease his own guilt feelings by dedicating them to or channeling their meaning toward Christ.⁷ Read further asserts that the poems he has placed in the third category--those expressing doubt--are the results of the tension between Hopkins' created ideas (disciplinary dogmas) and his sensibility, with the space between self and dogma being bridged by doubt. He adds that "a creative gift or poetic sensibility is only consistent with such a state of spiritual tension and acuity" and that "true originality" is due to a conflict between sensibility and self.⁸ Thus Read is in agreement with Richards concerning the presence of tension and conflict in Hopkins' art and religion, and its enormous impact upon his poetry.

T. S. Eliot, in a study dealing with orthodox and traditional poets, asserts that Hopkins was greatly hindered and severely limited by his restriction to devotional poetry. Eliot agrees that Hopkins' technical innovations were good but adds that they, like the mind of the poet, operated within a narrow range. The critic claims that Hopkins cannot be classified as a religious poet or a traditional and orthodox poet. His poetry, Eliot asserts, does not reveal a development of thought and feeling since it was written under the influence of the church, rather than in an environment of a living and central tradition of ancestry and country.⁹

⁷Ibid., p. 13.

⁸Ibid., p. 15.

⁹After Strange Gods (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1934), p. 51.

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Written two years later and expressing basically the same thesis, the article "Gerard Manley Hopkins--Priest or Poet?" concerns the question of the influence exerted upon Hopkins by the strict orthodoxy of the Jesuit discipline. The author John Gould Fletcher writes:

If we deplore in a Blake or a Shelley the lack of classical, ordered form that made them incapable of producing major works of completely sustained structure or interest, we must equally regret the narrowing down of theme and treatment that made such a poet as Hopkins incapable, after his beginnings, of creating major works at all: for his later sonnets are like compressed dramas, demanding but not achieving the freer spaces of a larger and more comprehensive canvas. It is this limitation, this inability to bridge over the gulf between the theological and the human that makes of him still a poet for specialists in poetry.¹⁰

Fletcher also points out that the "fierce moral struggle" that was waged within Hopkins is apparent in his poems and letters. The critic reasons that the discipline of his order forced Hopkins to conceal and negate his innate artistic impulses, thus "stifling a poetic equipment as great as that possessed by any English poet."¹¹ Fletcher calls to mind Blake's warning which, he feels, Hopkins failed to take: "Expect poison from the standing water."¹²

In her full-length study of Hopkins' poetry, Elsie Phare contends that the inner tension in Hopkins was caused by his being a man apart from the stream of activity, a condition forced on him by the discipline of Ignatius. Stating that the poet in Hopkins was kept in subordination to the Jesuit, she adds that

¹⁰American Review, VI (Jan., 1936), 346.

¹¹Ibid., p. 345.

¹²Ibid.

he cannot be called a devotional poet because the religious element is not the main ingredient in his verse.¹³ She describes the characteristic element inherent in his creations as a combination of "the ingenuity of imagery, something too of the rather forced, excessive sweetness of the most florid of English poets with the wide, pure, and in a sense, unsophisticated sensibility of the poet of nature."¹⁴ Miss Phare adds that the two sides of Hopkins' nature are sometimes in conflict, with his sensibility revolting from the "thin, methodical conception of the universe" forced on him by his intellect.¹⁵

Miss Phare argues that a great deal of the conflict in Hopkins' life and poetry is not between his art and religion, but rather between his innate view of nature and the view forced upon him by his religion. She explains that the Jesuit theology describes nature as a tidy, orderly, part of a pattern, producing the cut and dried "mental world" of a riddle solved.¹⁶ The author maintains that Hopkins abhorred this dull, flat characterization of nature and yearned for the delight of a spontaneous, unaccountable, mysterious view of nature. She cites Hopkins' frequent use of the word "wild" as a term of praise, as in the line from "The Blessed Virgin," "Wild air, world-mothering air," indicative of Hopkins' use of nature as an antidote to the dullness and flatness of a world made comprehensible by his theology.¹⁷

¹³Poetry, p. 8.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 12-13.

Miss Phare suggests that his craving for variety is evident in his preoccupation with the pied and dappled, the irregular and uncertain, and that both his soul and his poetry needed some kind of external stimulus which his religion failed to offer but which he found in nature.¹⁸ Consequently, she sees in the poetry of Hopkins a combination of Keats and Shelley, using characteristics from each usually thought of as incompatible--the concrete, sensuous imagery of Keats and the ethereal, motile elements of Shelley.¹⁹

Since Miss Phare does not place Hopkins' conflict between his art and his religion exclusively, she theorizes that Hopkins did not intend for his poetry to be predominantly religious, but rather used poetry as a consolation for the lack of events in his spiritual life; he wrote to establish an equilibrium between the spiritual and the natural worlds.²⁰ She compares some of Hopkins' verse with Eliot's "Ash Wednesday," finding that both poets present a mood of wistful self-pity, admitting with candour and sadness that the spiritual life offers no delight or emotional satisfaction. Both poets, according to Miss Phare, were fatigued by the agony of thwarted desires and both longed for a spontaneous natural life.²¹

In summing up her view of Hopkins and his verse Miss Phare concludes:

¹⁸Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 30.

²⁰Ibid., p. 98.

²¹Ibid., pp. 102-103.

Using Arnold's touchstone method, the critic might easily find that Hopkins' best poetry is not dimmed or made to seem trivial by comparison with the best of Shakespeare and Dante. He has not their variety but his best poetry is not inferior to theirs in kind. Arnold's phrase "high seriousness" describes most justly the quality of Hopkins's greatest poems. His poetry is that of a man with exceptional intelligence and exceptional sensibility, who is constantly taking into account all the facts of his experience; he uses religion not as a solution but as an approach, a way of keeping all the facts in mind without losing sanity.²²

Attention will be given later to Miss Phare's interpretation of Hopkins' poetry, especially her ideas dealing with what she considers to be his views on nature and man's relation to it.

There remains one other full-length study to be considered at this point. W. H. Gardner, generally regarded as Hopkins' most reliable critic, assumes an objective attitude toward the question of Hopkins' religious problem, and his two-volume study could well be considered a bridge between the two schools of thought. Gardner deals with the poetic influences pervading Hopkins' life, and devotes a great deal of attention to the question of conflict and its effects on his poems. The critic states early in his study that all valid literary and scholastic criticism necessitates relating the work to the man and the man to his environment, although, he adds, some critics tend to "exaggerate or distort" the part environment plays in the man and his work.²³ Throughout his book, Gardner is always conscious of the main events and changing conditions in Hopkins' life.

²²Ibid., pp. 149-150.

²³Hopkins, I, 1.

In tracing the development of Hopkins' works, Gardner points out that religion played a great part in his poetic creations. He cites examples of his earliest poems--those written before Hopkins became a Jesuit--to show that the poet was pre-occupied with religious matters before he became a priest. Yet, Gardner also sees in these early poems the projections of a mind absorbed in general aesthetic principles. He feels that upon becoming a Jesuit these basic, innate leanings were intensified and Hopkins found himself facing a dilemma, acutely aware of the fundamental conflict between worldliness and spirituality, sensualism and asceticism.²⁴ Gardner sees an early fragment written by Hopkins as a parable on the subject of the poet's own internal conflict between his art and his religion. In the poem a woman about to take her veil passionately renounces her lover:

There's blood between us, love, my love,

 And blood's a bar I cannot pass

 Your eyes look earthward, mine look up.

The eyes of the lover, Gardner explains, represent the innate feelings of Hopkins, and the woman stands for the spiritual, ascetic calling of his theology.²⁵

Gardner asserts that this fragment, along with several other early creations, is contributory to a full understanding of Hopkins' mature poetry, even though many critics tend to overlook or de-emphasize these early works on the grounds that they are too personal and introspective. Throughout his study,

²⁴Ibid., p. 6.

²⁵Ibid., p. 81.

in which he traces Hopkins' poetic development and religious thought from the early fragments such as the one discussed above to the sonnets of his last years, Gardner points out that Hopkins was able to control the ever present state of tension between personality and character. He further asserts that Hopkins successfully fused both poet and priest, and adds that in his poems there is a poetic reconciliation between the man of the world temper and the claims of a pious and ascetic calling which yearns to change imperfection to perfection.²⁶

In opposition to the views discussed above is the Jesuit view, maintaining that everything in the life and poetry of Hopkins is subordinated to a devotion and glorification of God, with no sign of conflict or tension. This view maintains that if it had not been for the austerity of his religion the world would have been deprived of a great poet. Two book-length studies that attempt to counter the pervading anti-religious interpretation of Hopkins' verse have been extremely influential.

One is the study by Downes, who points out that Hopkins' tendency toward Catholicism was evident in his early notebooks and poetry written while he was an Anglican, thus making the transition into the Society of Jesus an easy one. Downes asserts that Hopkins' religious inclinations were well-suited for his conversion, which was not the traumatic experience many critics have made of it.²⁷ He sees Hopkins as a forerunner of a new era of meditative poetry in the tradition of Southwell and

²⁶Hopkins, II, 374.

²⁷Ignatian Spirit, p. 11.

Milton, and represented later in the poetry of Yeats and Eliot. Downes' entire study is an attempt to parallel the Christian theology in Hopkins' poems with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. His interpretations of the poems use the spiritual exercises as a basis which he thinks provided the poet with an ordered and intelligible world view of God, nature, and man. Downes maintains that Hopkins lived Ignatian spirituality all his life, and this spirit directly inspired Hopkins' art to an imposing extent.²⁸

Downes points out that the burning of most of Hopkins' poems at the time he became a priest was not an act imposed upon him by the church, but was rather a self-imposed act symbolic of his total dedication to his chosen life.²⁹ For seven years he wrote no poetry, choosing rather to spend his time attending mass, reading spiritual books, meditating, and reflecting. He took time out to write only when requested to do so by his superiors, who asked that he write about the tragedy of the wreck of the Deutschland, in which five nuns were drowned. Downes calls the writing of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" the turning point in Hopkins' poetic life, since the poet felt freer thereafter to submit to his creative impulses.³⁰

Downes devotes a great deal of attention to the highly controversial question of Hopkins' sensuousness, concluding that

²⁸Ibid., p. 12.

²⁹Ibid., p. 20.

³⁰Ibid., p. 21.

as a poet Hopkins is one of "the most sensuous."³¹ He adds, however, that most critics do not bother to explain Hopkins' artistic sensibility or attempt to relate it to his religion. Downes does this by showing the correlation between the Ignatian attitude toward beauty and that of Hopkins. Both Hopkins and Ignatius, according to Downes, sacramentalized their sensuousness by using the mortal beauty of the material to proclaim the immortal beauty of the spiritual--the transient leading to the intransient, with the perception of God behind it all.³²

Downes maintains that Hopkins saw beauty in all things but he always gave supremacy to spiritual beauty, marking the coming together of the poet and priest. The critic points out that in most of Hopkins' poems, his poetic method follows the pattern of beginning with a highly sensuous description, then elevating this beauty to a higher plane through which the supernatural is discerned--a movement from the creature to the Creator, from mortal beauty to immortal beauty.³³ The richly sensuous moments thus are insights into Infinite Being.

Downes disagrees with the assumption that Hopkins experienced extreme distress because of his unusually intense interest in the beauty of natural things. The critic acknowledges that there may have been some inner tension, not because Hopkins experienced guilt over his love of beauty, but because he was acutely aware of man's tendency, through shortsightedness, to

³¹Ibid., p. 76.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., p. 77.

use created things as an end in themselves. Hopkins was more sensitive to the possible evil in material beauty because he was so taken with that beauty; consequently, he was more conscious of the need to use a kind of asceticism to undercut his delight in natural beauty, searching for a satisfactory relation between mortal and immortal beauty.³⁴

Hopkins was able to achieve this balance, Downes suggests, because of his dedication to Ignatius and the spiritual exercises. And though at times the poet Hopkins seemed to be in conflict with the priest, he managed to be simultaneously both poet and priest most of the time because of the world vision provided him by Ignatius--a vision which allowed him to attain both his religious and artistic desires.³⁵ Downes sums up the characteristics of one living closely with the teachings of Ignatius:

What, then, is Ignatian spirituality? It is living in accordance with the Ignatian world view. The Ignatian man has a profound awareness of the grandeur of God's works and ways. He is so taken by God's greatness, that he dedicates himself entirely to God and tries to his utmost to live his life according to God's will. There are two qualities to this spirituality which I believe are peculiarly Ignatian. The first is that the Ignatian man is a sensuous man. Unlike other Christian disciples, he does not withdraw from the world, but rather plunges into it. He is overwhelmed by the beauty of things, not only because they are beautiful in themselves; but also because they are manifestations of God. His is a sacramental view of the world. The second quality is that the Ignatian man uses all things in so far as they lead him back to God. He does not use anything that leads him away from God. Because of his sacramental view, he sees all creation as a sign of, a message from, a beckoning to, the Divine. His desire is to live fully among the things God created, live among them for the glory of God. He is a man dedicated, but discreetly.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 77-78.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 74-75.

Such is Downes' interpretation of the Ignatian man, and he believes Hopkins exemplified every requirement in both his life and his poetry. Everything he did was for the glory of God, including his poetic endeavors; consequently, the critic asserts, there was no religious conflict in his love for the beauty of man and nature. In both the Ignatian man and in Hopkins, common values are elevated above their natural plane to the ideals not of an earthly king but of an Eternal King.

While Downes is concerned mainly with the extent to which Hopkins' art was influenced by Ignatian spirituality, John Pick in his book concentrates primarily on the biographical effects of Ignatius and the Spiritual Exercises. Pick, like Hopkins a member of the Society of Jesus, views the poet's life and writings with an insight and understanding provided him by his Catholic background. With his thorough knowledge of the spiritual exercises, Pick sees in Hopkins a unity of poet, priest, and Jesuit whose poems express a love and respect for God and His creatures. Like Gardner, Pick contends that even during his undergraduate days, Hopkins displayed an ascetic strain in refusing to make earthly beauty his goal in life. The writer cites early fragments and poems to illustrate that Hopkins was determined as a schoolboy to master his senses and himself.³⁷ One such poem he points to is "The Habit of Perfection" in which the poet addresses each of his senses and admonishes them to shut out the world:

Elected Silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorled ear,
Pipe me to pastures still and be
The music that I care to hear.

³⁷Priest and Poet, p. 30.

Shape nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
 It is the shut, the curfew sent
 From there where all surrenders come
 Which only makes you eloquent.

Be shelled, eyes, with double dark
 And find the uncreated light:
 This ruck and reel which you remark
 Coils, keeps, and teases simple sight.

Palate, the hutch of tasty lust,
 Desire not to be rinsed with wine:
 The can must be so sweet, the crust
 So fresh that come in fasts divine!

Nostrils, your careless breath that spend
 Upon the stir and keep of pride,
 What relish shall the censers send
 Along the sanctuary side!

O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
 That want the yield of plushy sward,
 But you shall walk the golden street
 And you unhouse and house the Lord.

And, Poverty, be thou the bride
 And now the marriage feast begun,
 And lily-coloured clothes provide
 Your spouse not laboured-at nor spun.³⁸

The above lines were written during Hopkins' Oxford years and, according to Pick, show his attraction to the sensuous world and his awareness through his asceticism of the necessity to control this attraction. Pick sees in "The Habit of Perfection" a sign of the inner chaos that was present in Hopkins' life at this time because of the pull between these two forces, and the critic suggests that the poet was not able to fuse these religious and artistic impulses until he became a Jesuit, at which time he found a solution to his problem. The Spiritual

³⁸ Poems and Prose of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. W. H. Gardner (London: Cox and Wyman, 1966), p. 5. All references to Hopkins' poetry, letters, and journal are from this edition. (Page reference hereafter will be given in parentheses at end of quotation.)

Exercises of St. Ignatius were then made the center of his life. The story of Hopkins, Pick concludes, from the time he entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1868 until he died in 1889, is "largely the story of the pervasive influence of the spiritual exercises upon him."³⁹

Since Hopkins wrote no poems during the period between 1868 and 1875, Pick goes to Hopkins' journals to point out the trend of his religious thought during these years. The critic's conclusion, drawn from the journals, reads in part:

His interest in the natural beauty of the world about him dominates all other interests. Nine-tenths of the Journal are filled with his notations of the radiance and splendour of objects of natural beauty.

The impact of his religious life is in the Journal, too. The conscientiousness and sacrificing zeal with which Hopkins was training himself is clear in a passage embedded in a description of the beauty of Wales, where he was pursuing his theological studies at St. Beuno's. The entry indicates that he was trying to order all his choices and decisions in accordance with the rules . . . in the Spiritual Exercises.⁴⁰

Pick also points out examples from the journals in which the experience of earthly beauty is accompanied by religious experience, a method which later is to become central to Hopkins' poetry. The critic asserts that this close association of beauty with religious experience is present only in Hopkins' mature poetry written after he had been a Jesuit for several years. Pick points out that this characteristic is not apparent in his early poetry, thus strengthening the argument that Hopkins found a resolution for his inner conflict through his Jesuit training

³⁹Priest and Poet, p. 30.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 31.

and discipline. It was through the spiritual exercises, the critic suggests, that Hopkins achieved the unity of poet and priest, employing his sensitivity to beauty to lead him to God, not suppressing but controlling the senses through discipline and purification. Thus Hopkins, through his religion, acquired a new vision of the world and of man, in which he saw God in all things and all things in God.⁴¹

In his book Pick devotes several pages to a study of the correlation between Hopkins' sermons and his poems, pointing out that the same pictorial scenes and sensuous descriptions are present in both. Pick is one of the few writers to devote attention to Hopkins' sermons, which many scholars consider failures; however, Pick uses the similarities to substantiate his argument that Hopkins was not forcing his asceticism or subduing his artistic sensibilities in his poetry. He was rather expressing his innermost feelings, sincerely and spontaneously.⁴²

Pick points out that Hopkins' sermons form an integral part of all his thinking and feeling, with the same poetic content and method present in his poems appearing time and again in his sermons.⁴³ The writer draws a parallel between a sermon Hopkins delivered on the theme of God as a hero, and the poem "The Soldier," appearing six years later, in which the same theme occurred. In the sermon, Christ is set up as the perfect model for man, with Hopkins sketching the hierarchy of beauties which meet

⁴¹Ibid., p. 32.

⁴²Ibid., p. 85.

⁴³Ibid.

in Him. He then describes the beauty of Christ's mind and body, but more importantly the beauty of His character. Christ is pictured as a perfect man, a hero for all men, one who loves to praise and reward rather than punish. In "The Soldier" this same theme is transmuted into poetry, mirrored in these lines:⁴⁴

Mark Christ our King. He knows war, served this soldier-
ing through;
He of all can reeve a rope best. There he bides in bliss
Now, and seeing somewhere some man do all that man can do,
For love he leans forth, needs his neck must fall on, kiss,
And cry 'O Christ-done deed! So God-made-flesh does too:
Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should be this'.

Pick contends that all Hopkins' expressions, both his prose and his poetry, are expressions of the same man and the same effort, with a deep interaction between his sermons and his poems. The critic adds that "his poems had been moulded and shaped by his personal practice of the spiritual exercises, while in his sermons he had sought more directly to mould the souls of his penitents to the same ideal of service to God."⁴⁵

Producing his study several years after Pick's book, Alan Heuser in The Shaping Vision of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1968) claims that Hopkins' vision of the world was a mystical one, with awareness of God's presence in both the world and his own soul. And, Heuser adds, Hopkins' poetry played a minor role alongside his religion--not because his religion demanded it but because he wanted it that way. Hopkins' creative vision, Heuser believes, received spiritual and psychological development during the years of his Jesuit training, which refined and deepened his artistic

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 86.

response to external nature as well as his religious response to the things of God.⁴⁶

Heuser points to "The Wreck of the Deutschland," written by Hopkins after seven years as a Jesuit, as a statement by the poet of God's mastery over his artistic impulses, which are shaped by God's power and love. Here the two worlds of earth and heaven are joined by an incarnational and sacramental vision, as opposed to the two worlds of flesh and spirit set against each other during his early Oxford days. This new vision, Heuser asserts, was shaped by St. Ignatius, from whom Hopkins learned to apply the senses to holy things for spiritual ends--sensation spiritualized.⁴⁷

Heuser concludes that through his religion Hopkins developed a theory of art using the best of two worlds--combining wild naturalism with religious idealism. In his poetry lay the foundations of a life truly lived in honesty and acceptance. According to Heuser, Hopkins' poems contained an interaction of poetry and spirituality, aesthetics and religion, directing all aspirations to God.⁴⁸ The critic sums up his interpretation with the following analysis:

On the one hand, there was a Romantic return to primitive innocence of sensations; on the other, a Christian striving towards the perfect Manhood. Here was the peculiar Pre-Raphaelite tension between angelic heaven and fleshly earth, without any of its sickliness, For Hopkins' work was free from two Victorian diseases--

⁴⁶London: Oxford University Press, p. 43.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 95.

subjective dream indulgence in vogues of escape and reverie, brooding exploitation of confused emotionalism and passive sensationalism. In Hopkins all had the immediacy and 'rash-fresh' clarity of authentic vision, the intensity of honest sensations and emotions.⁴⁹

The nine studies so far reviewed represent the trend of thought among the two schools of critics and serve as a basis for the discussion of specific critical issues in the poetry of Hopkins. These studies of course comprise only a small part of the body of Hopkins criticism. Numerous works of equal importance have appeared, broadening the range of opinion and offering new insight into the works of Hopkins. Some of these works are confined to a discussion of a single poem, but are nonetheless still helpful to the Hopkins reader who is interested in all the possible interpretations of Hopkins' verse.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Maurice Charney has compiled a list of studies appearing through 1949; see "A Bibliographical Study of Hopkins Criticism, 1918-1949," Thought, XXV (1950), 297-326.

CHAPTER III

SPECIFIC CRITICAL ISSUES IN THE POETRY OF HOPKINS

The general background of critical thought discussed in the preceding chapter may be given more specific shape in that most of the critics take up one or more of the following four questions: To what extent, if any, is "The Windhover" the cry of an agonized soul? Is Hopkins primarily a nature lover whose real interest lies in sensuous descriptions of material reality, or does he use natural landscape as a means of showing devotion to God? What do his poems reveal about his thoughts on the destiny of mankind? What is the real meaning underlying the "terrible sonnets"?

In "Instress and Devotion in the Poetry of Hopkins" Bell Gale Chevigny uses "The Windhover" to illustrate the importance of the theory of instress in Hopkins' poetry.¹ Hopkins coined the words "inscape" and "instress" to express his private theory of individuation--that unique element which gives all natural objects their individual characteristics. By "inscape" Hopkins meant the outer form of all things, animate and inanimate, as it expressed their inner souls, their intrinsic quality. The term "instress" was used to refer to that energy by which all things

¹Victorian Studies, IX (Dec., 1965), 147.

are upheld, the natural stress which determines an inscape and keeps it in being--its unifying force.

Chevigny states that the notion of instress may be considered "the single key to his aesthetics and his spiritual growth," and "a nearly constantly controlling factor in his developing poetry." According to Chevigny, for Hopkins instress was God, and this unifying factor in his poetry eliminates the need, as practiced by many critics, to concentrate on the poems of nature or spiritual isolation at the expense of the poems of priesthood.²

In analyzing the major themes in the poetry of Hopkins, which he defines as "the quest for climatic meetings of energies" (objective instress as original energy, and subjective instress as responsive energy) or "wills" (faith and the will to see the world as God's energy), Chevigny divides Hopkins' poems into three phases--those composed at the time of his ordination, those written during his priesthood, and those written during his sojourn in England.³ The critic points out that in each period the poems are centered around his theory of instress, but the relationship varies with the inscape which serves as their meeting place--in the natural world during the early period, with human beings in the middle period, and with his own soul during the late period.

"The Windhover," to come to the first of the four cruxes, is cited by Chevigny as an example of a perfect fusion of objective

²Ibid., p. 142.

³Ibid., p. 145.

and subjective energies, God's grandeur expressed in an individual bird, and generations of men in the individual "I." He further adds that the bird's mastery is a version of divine in-stress caught and brought down to unite with the heart of man. Though the man is earthbound, he is a man plodding with Christ, casting forth glorious light.⁴

A somewhat similar interpretation of "The Windhover" is given by Herbert Marshall McLuhan in "The Analogical Mirrors," in which he asserts that this personal transformation of man through Christ occurs without struggle, and he argues that it is this uniting of forces which gives the poem a feeling of excitement, not conflict.⁵ McLuhan maintains that Hopkins had a relatively small number of themes--all dealing primarily with the microcosm of man reflecting God's beauty and grandeur, and Christ reflecting the image of the Divinity.

"The Windhover," according to McLuhan, employs the three mirrors (physical, moral, divine) of God's beauty and grandeur, with the bird mirroring the physical order of valour and act, and the "kingdom of daylight's dauphin" mirroring the mastery of Christ over the world. Then as the poem shifts from the physical mirror to the moral, the heart becomes a hidden mirror of moral obedience which flashes to God "the image not of 'brute beauty and valour and act,' but a 'fire' which is a 'billion times told lovelier'--the chevalier image of Christ" (the divine mirror).⁶ McLuhan points out that Hopkins habitually shifts his

⁴Ibid., p. 147.

⁵Critical Essays, p. 87.

⁶Ibid., p. 84.

gaze from the order and perspective of nature to the parallel but grander scenery of the moral and intellectual order. In "The Windhover" the shift is from the brute beauty of the falcon, whose action mirrors Christ's mastery over the world, to the "heart in hiding" which sends it back to God. Immortal beauty wins through toil and discipline.⁷

Another critic who agrees with Chevigny and McLuhan that there is no sign of distress, agony or chaos in "The Windhover" is Raymond Schoder, who, like Downes and Pick, gives a Jesuit interpretation of the poem.⁸ In his article "What Does 'The Windhover' Mean?" Schoder paraphrases the poem in this way:

The sudden vision of a hawk pluckily and joyfully battling with the elements seizes upon the poet's mind and, becoming a symbol of the Christian knight valiantly warring against evil, stirs him from a timid and reluctant state of soul to resolutions of heroic deeds in the more active service of Christ in advancing His Kingdom among men; for he sees that this will make his life more noble, more glorious and exciting than the cautious reserve of a self-nursing and commonplace Christian existence.⁹

Schoder maintains that the sestet of the poem must be addressed to the poet's own heart and not to Christ, mainly on the ground that the expression "ah, my dear" could not appropriately refer to Christ. He further adds that the sentiments of this poem are "basically a poetic re-statement of the great meditation on the 'Kingdom of Christ' in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius," with Christ (symbolized by the falcon)

⁷Ibid.

⁸Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Norman Weyand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 275-306. Hereafter cited as Immortal Diamond.

⁹Ibid., p. 284.

endeavoring to uplift and beautify the souls of men for the glory of God.¹⁰

W. H. Gardner in "The Religious Problem in G. M. Hopkins" cites the chief problem in interpreting Hopkins' poetry as deriving from "the repressed conflict between two sets of values--those of the poet and those of the priest," and between "the psychic individuality" (personality) on the one hand, and the "character, as determined by a strict regulative principle" (the Jesuit discipline) on the other.¹¹ However, Gardner points to "The Windhover" as an example of Hopkins' ability to evince in all his poetry a perfect fusion of the poetic personality and the religious character, explaining that the fact that Hopkins dedicated the sonnet "To Christ Our Lord" suggests, first, that "he saw in the kestrel, as in the bluebell and all things of beauty, a symbol of Christ or of some ethical principle"; and second, that he found a "deep relief and self-justification in the writing of the poem."¹² Gardner explains the phrase "my heart in hiding" as key to the essential moral theme of the poem; for the supreme immortal beauty--the character of Christ--Hopkins had renounced worldly ambition, hence his heart was "in hiding" with Christ, wholly dedicated to His love, praise, and service.¹³

¹⁰Ibid., p. 285.

¹¹Critiques and Essays in Criticism, ed. Robert Wooster Stallman (New York: Ronald Press, 1949), p. 346.

¹²Ibid., p. 349.

¹³Ibid.

However, a more common interpretation of "The Windhover" is the one widely established by, among others, William Empson, Yvor Winters, E. E. Phare, and I. A. Richards, who agree on a basic reading of the poem as one of renunciation, sacrifice, indecisive inner conflict, and defeat. Richards sees in the phrase "my heart in hiding" an indication that Hopkins was aware that as a Jesuit his heart had been in hiding from a life of the imagination, the emotions, and the senses, secure in a shelter of meditation and doctrine.¹⁴ The critic finds in "The Windhover" an underlying meaning of fear on the part of Hopkins--a fear of what his senses and imagination might create if left to perform freely. Consequently, the heart has sunk into a lethargy and, like the plough itself, has grown rusty.¹⁵

According to Richards, Hopkins regrets his life of renunciation and despair and is envious of the windhover in its free, triumphant, soaring flight, jarring the poet to a sudden realization of his discontent. But fear of the temptations and errors which he might confront as a poet results in his resignation to a life of sheltered protection.¹⁶

Miss Phare's reading of "The Windhover" is similar to that of Richards' but with more emphasis on the poem as an apostrophe from Christ directed toward both Hopkins and the kestrel as words of comfort to each. Christ is expressing pleasure toward Hopkins with the life he has chosen--a life of quiet

¹⁴"Gerard Hopkins," pp. 198-99.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁶Ibid.

retreat and restraint which, says Christ, is just as lovely as the courageous, exciting, and daring life chosen by the kestrel. However, Miss Phare believes that Hopkins finds no comfort in these words and sees in the image of the woodfire a parallel to his own life, which is slowly, painfully dying and falling to the ground, yet still giving off an occasional spark. The poet, she thinks, acknowledges Christ's pleasure with both the kestrel's flight and the dying fire, the function of the bird performed with joy, and the fire accompanied by pain. Miss Phare maintains that the poet is asking, in essence, how Christ can choose to leave his creatures in such anguish.¹⁷

William Empson in Seven Types of Ambiguity (1956) sees "The Windhover" as a work of defeat, a groan of patient spiritual renunciation, a jealous envy of the bird's freedom for conspicuous external activity. The ash falling is taken as a symbol of life, whose precarious order is again and again shattered by an internal collapse, while the gold that "painters have used for the haloes of saints is forced by alliteration to agree with the gash and gall of their inner self-tortures."¹⁸ The poem is selected by Empson to illustrate what he calls the "ambiguity of indecision," where two admitted meanings of the same word are in unresolved conflict; thus, "the enormous conjunction standing as it were for the point of friction between the two worlds conceived together" illustrates the poet's inner conflict.¹⁹

¹⁷ Poetry, pp. 131-33.

¹⁸ Second ed., London, p. 225.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 226.

Winters, in a different but still rather negative view, maintains that "The Windhover," like most of Hopkins' poetry, has no deep, symbolic meaning, but is rather an example of "a fine description of the simplest subject matter available to the poet."²⁰ And he adds that as a description it can be equalled and surpassed by a great many descriptive passages in Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Keats. Winters takes issue with interpretations of the poem based on the philosophy of Duns Scotus or the spiritual writings of Ignatius, stating that it is "unfair to Hopkins to read into his poems a meaning for which the poem offers no evidence and which, once it is there, ruins the poem."²¹ The critic states that McLuhan in his interpretation departs too much from the actual text of the poem, illustrated by his association of the bird with Christ, which "does very little toward indicating the greatness of Christ."²²

Winters asserts that the main problem in finding the real meaning of "The Windhover" is the fundamental problem found in attempting to interpret most of Hopkins' verse--the ambiguous meaning of certain key words (such as "buckle" and "sillion"), his violation of grammar, and his vaguely excited and inefficient descriptive phrases such as "morning's minion" and "kingdom of daylight's dauphin."²³ The critic also takes issue with an interpretation of the poem based on the assumption that "chevalier"

²⁰"Gerard Manley Hopkins," Critical Essays, p. 49.

²¹Ibid., p. 51.

²²Ibid., p. 54.

²³Ibid., pp. 49-50.

symbolizes Christ, explaining that there is no real evidence that Hopkins had this in mind since Christ is not mentioned in the poem; he adds that the fact that the poem is dedicated to Christ--an argument used by many critics--is not sufficient evidence that it is about Christ. He maintains that if the poem concerns Christ at all, it is merely an indication of His qualities--nothing more.²⁴

The second point on which there is considerable disagreement concerns Hopkins' use of nature in his poetry, with many critics maintaining that there is no trace of insincerity or uncertainty in the poems dealing with the beauty of natural things. Downes points to Hopkins' sonnet "Hurrahing in Harvest" as an example of the poet's method of starting with a highly sensuous description of natural being, then progressing on to a higher plane in which the supernatural is realized in and through the natural (from mortal to immortal beauty).²⁵ In the sonnet, Hopkins exults over discovering in the beauty of nature the beauty of Christ, opening with a description of harvest:

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stocks rise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behavior
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-savier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?

The poem shifts in the next lines from mortal to immortal beauty, discovering the Saviour in the beauty of nature's

²⁴Ibid., p. 56. F. R. Leavis, in his essay "Gerard Manley Hopkins" in Critical Essays, agrees with Empson and Winters, adding that "The Windhover" is an example of Hopkins' inner friction and personal anguish; however, he offers no further analysis as to its central meaning, stating that Empson has "dealt admirably" with the poem (p. 30).

²⁵Ignatian Spirit, p. 160.

harvest. Then, according to Downes, the poet "re-examines this natural beauty in the light of its supernatural significance," invoking the senses to see, hear, and feel the divine Christ in natural reality:²⁶

I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And, eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet gave you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?

Downes explains that the poem ends in an ecstasy of colloquy in which the poet pictures "the beholder" leaping up to his God "when once they meet"--an example of the fusion of intense feeling and thought, of theological abstraction and sense experience characteristic of Hopkins. The critic sees the last lines of the poem as a description of the Ignatian goal in which Christ, God, and man are simultaneously comprehended and felt.²⁷ The lines read thus:

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic--as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!-
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under
his feet.

Maurice McNamee, in his article "Hopkins: Poet of Nature and the Supernatural," agrees with Downes that Hopkins used nature as a means of seeing God, but this critic emphasizes the influence of Duns Scotus on Hopkins' nature poetry, pointing out that the poet was deeply aware of this manifestation of the divine in the multitudinous variety of visible creation, making this natural

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 161.

revelation of God's beauty the frequent theme of his poetry.²⁸ McNamee points to "God's Grandeur" as "a beautiful and distinctive expression to the general truth of God's manifestation of Himself through beautiful creations."²⁹ The poem opens with a statement that the world is shot through and through with the beauty of God as with an electric charge. McNamee's paraphrase of the poem reads:

The grandeur will flame out, like shining from shook oil. The wonder and splendor of God's beauty, the poet insists, is trembling at the brink of man's consciousness, pressing in upon him from the whole hierarchy of created being. But thousands of men have been insulated against that revelation by artificiality and convention, by industrial ugliness and squalor. But for all that, the beauty of nature is still there to speak to man of God's grandeur, if men will but listen. Even though the sun of God's natural revelation has set for many in the murky clouds of industrial squalor, that sun is ready to rise again in the East and flash forth the beauty of God once more, if men will but look to the East. The creative Spirit of Love that was present when the world was first given being and beauty still hovers over it, preserving and fostering that being and beauty.³⁰

In his book, Gardner cites the above poem, along with "The Starlight Night" and "To What Serves Mortal Beauty," as an example of Hopkins' view of the ethical function of mortal beauty, in which direct sensuous enjoyment of natural beauty leads to an utterance of his philosophical faith. But the critic feels that nowhere is the combination of poetry, prayer, and predication fused into a more direct communication with God than in the poem "Spring." Gardner points out the combination of

²⁹ Ibid., p. 229.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 229-30.

heavenly meaning and earthly parable, with the song of the thrush reminding the reader that an instress from nature has restorative powers for the adult soiled by time and sin. The poem opens with a description of spring, then reflects on its meaning, which Gardner calls the "Christian exegesis" in the sestet:³¹

Nothing is so beautiful as Spring -
 When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
 Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush
 Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring
 The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing;
 The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush
 The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush
 With richness; the racing lambs too have fair their fling.

What is all this juice and all this joy?
 A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning
 In Eden garden.--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.

Pick points out a contrast in the early nature poems of Hopkins, characteristically lush, luxuriant, and abstract, with those of his later years, which the critic sees as joyous expressions of the beauty of the world, enhanced because creation is seen sacramentally. The senses, Pick maintains, are not suppressed, but are directed as a means to praise God, with an integration of sense, intellect and emotion. The critic adds that "Hopkins had attained that essential integrity which correlates all perceptions and thoughts, the spiritual and material, in one universal pattern of which God is the design."³²

³¹Hopkins, I, 19.

³²Friest and Poet, p. 53.

In his essay on Hopkins, Winters assumes a contrasting interpretation, pointing out certain difficulties in implying that Hopkins used landscape as a means of applying religious thought to his poetry. After quoting the first four lines of "God's Grandeur," the critic cites the ambiguity of the word "foil," which he maintains is a quantitative word, giving to the poem the "image of a mad man brandishing a metal bouquet"; he also points to the inaccuracy of the crushed oil imagery which, he asserts, does not "gather" to greatness, but rather spreads.³³ Winters cites Donne's "Thou hast made me" and Jonson's "To Heaven" as truly religious poems, then adds that in no other literary period would a poet who was "both a priest and a genuinely devout man have thought that he had dealt seriously with his love for Christ and his duty toward him by writing an excited description of a landscape."³⁴

Winters refers to Hopkins' descriptive scenes as "charming" but minor, and asserts that they are not incorporated into a well-organized poem but rather are parts of a "disorganized poem which pretends to be more than it is."³⁵ The critic offers no interpretation of Hopkins' poems on nature, but refers to his landscape as the "immediate motive for a feeling which is too great for it," to which the poet has appended the "perfunctory moral as a kind of theoretic justification."³⁶

³³ "Hopkins," p. 47.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 48.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 49.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 48.

To the dismay of the Jesuit critics, Miss Phare sees in Hopkins' nature poems a genuine pantheistic affinity with those of Wordsworth, stating that both poets "shared the belief that it is possible to come to a very strong sense of the divine presence through those aspects of nature which present themselves to the eye and ear."³⁷ Critics such as Downes and Fick have scathing rebuttals to those who attempt to append the word "pantheism" to Hopkins' nature poetry; however, Miss Phare feels that Hopkins actually obtained from nature a sense of the locked-in presence of God. But she adds that his pantheistic poems are more far-fetched and stranger than those of Wordsworth, with Hopkins having to struggle and strain to achieve the assurance of the divine presence for which he longs.

In continuing her comparison of the two poets, the critic points out that Wordsworth was not alarmed if he found out he suddenly had no spiritual joy in nature--he merely waited until his eye was clearer and his mind open. Hopkins, on the other hand, knows that he cannot rely on his eye and mind to achieve the assurance he wants, but must await the divine pleasure.³⁸ To illustrate her point, Miss Phare quotes these lines from "The Wreck of the Deutschland":

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, though he is under the world's splendour
 and wonder.

³⁷Poetry, p. 43.

³⁸Ibid., p. 45.

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

The critic explains that the gesture of "kissing the hand" is made to persons who are out of reach, indicative of Hopkins' knowledge that he must keep a distance between the human and the divine.³⁹

A third area in which the critics are sometimes in disagreement concerns Hopkins' poems dealing with man and his destiny. According to some critics, Hopkins, conscious of himself as a suffering mortal, saw for mankind a life progressing from frustration to resignation, and finally to defeat. These critics maintain that as Hopkins grew older he became more acutely aware of his own personal dilemma, resulting in melancholy and despair. Others, however, see his outlook as one of optimism and triumph, picturing man as struggling and suffering but never losing faith. Gardner cites Hopkins' poem "The Cherry Beggar" as an example of the poet's admiration for one who does not give up when life becomes a struggle and is not cast down by poverty.⁴⁰ The last part of the poem reads:

The motion of that man's heart is fine
 Whom want could not make pine, pine
 That struggling should not sear him, a gift should cheer him
 Like that poor pocket of pence, poor pence of mine.

The critic also points to the hero in "The Handsome Heart" who was marked out for a life of danger and struggle, but who "runs the race" victoriously through prayer, sacrifice, and self-discipline. Similarly, "The Bugler's First Communion," Gardner

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Hopkins, II, 287.

asserts, expresses the hopes and emotions of a Catholic priest who experiences spiritual delight in administering the Sacrament to a boy who shows promise for a full vital life through "self-instressed" devotion. But, the critic contends, Hopkins seeks comfort in the idea of predestination because he realizes the degradation and profanity the young boy will experience before he reaches heaven, as expressed in the last part of the poem:⁴¹

O now well work that sealing sacred ointment!
 O for now charms, arms, what bans off bad and locks love
 ever in a lad!
 Let me though see no more of him, and not disappointment
 Those sweet hopes quell whose least me quickenings lift,
 In scarlet or somewhere of some day seeing
 That brow and bead of being,
 An our day's God's own Galahad. Though this child's drift
 Seems by a divine doom channelled, nor do I cry
 Disaster there; but may he not rankle and roam
 In backwheels though bound home?—
 That left to the Lord of the Eucharist, I here lie by;
 Recorded only, I have put my lips on pleas
 Would brandle adamantine heaven with ride and jar, did
 Prayer go disregarded:
 Forward-like, but however, and like favourable heaven
 heard these.

Pick is in agreement with Gardner that Hopkins recognized man's waywardness and tendency to sin, but the critic points out that in all his poems dealing with this theme the emphasis is not on man's fall, but on the Incarnation and Redemption. Pick shows a correlation between Hopkins' sermons and his poems, which he sees as containing an optimistic note of hope and joy for man, offering an active and a positive spirit with Christ set up as a model of perfection and of positive values. In illustrating his thesis, Pick uses several poems, among them "The Caged Skylark,"

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 295-96.

which he refers to as a "magnificent poem on the nature of man." The first part of the poem describes the difficulties of living in the body while trying to attain a balance between body and soul. The body is necessary to house man and must be controlled and dedicated so as not to become a prison for the soul.⁴² These are the opening lines:

As a dare-gale skylark scanted in a dull cage
 Man's mounting spirit in his bone-house, mean house, dwells -
 That bird beyond the remembering his free fells;
 This in drudgery, day-labouring-out life's age

Though aloft on turf or perch or poor low stage,
 Both sing sometimes the sweetest, sweetest spells,
 Yet both droop deadly sometimes in their cells
 Or wring their barriers in bursts of fear or rage.

Pick points out that Hopkins is not saying that flesh is necessarily a cage, but the possibility is ever present if man does not discipline the senses. In the last part of the poem, Hopkins makes it clear, Pick says, that the soul is not in bondage when man uses his will to mould himself to perfection, to the ideal relationship between body and soul.⁴³ The last lines read:

Not that the sweet-fowl, song-fowl, needs no rest -
 Why, hear him, hear him babble and drop down to his nest,
 But his own nest, wild nest, no prison.

Man's spirit will be flesh-bound when found at best,
 But uncumbered: meadow-down is not distressed
 For a rainbow footing it nor he for his bones risen.

Hopkins did not attempt to make this union appear easy, Pick adds, but is at all times cognizant of the difficulties encountered as man is brought to the grace of God. The theme is that of the Resurrection, reasserting the sanctity of the body, the holiness

⁴²Priest and Poet, p. 69.

⁴³Ibid.

of the senses.⁴⁴

In her biographical account, Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Life (1944), Eleanor Ruggles cites "Spelt From Sibyl's Leaves," "The Handsome Heart," and "The Bugler's First communion" as poems in which Hopkins conveys a feeling of anxiety and concern for the decisions of right and wrong faced by all humanity, but she sees the poems ending in an optimistic note with the poet's satisfaction that the chastity of body and spirit will endure unscathed.⁴⁵

In contrast to the above views is the one expounded by F. O. Matthiessen in "Hopkins and Whitman," in which he states that the terrible pathos that became Hopkins' habitual poetic tone resulted not from doubt but from the "bitterest anguish," the "absence of movement in a life driven in on itself," and from the "unflinching scrutiny of his weakness before the perfection of God."⁴⁶ Thus Matthiessen concludes that Hopkins was driven to despair and death by his knowledge that he would never be capable of moulding his life in the image of Christ, never be able to rid himself of the mortal weaknesses which plagued humanity.⁴⁷

In comparing Hopkins with Whitman, Matthiessen asserts that both poets harbored misgivings about the conditions in society but each sought different avenues in his search for a

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 71.

⁴⁵New York: W. W. Norton and Co., p. 258.

⁴⁶Critical Essays, p. 150.

⁴⁷Ibid.

solution to the prevailing problems, with Whitman "drifting into socialism, and Hopkins converting to Catholicism." The critic adds that Hopkins' knowledge of the desperate conditions of mankind heightened the tension in his poetry, resulting in the struggle and fight against inner division.⁴⁸

Miss Phare also ponders Hopkins' views on man. She carries her comparison of Hopkins and Wordsworth further by discussing the poems of each that deal with the problems and primary laws of human nature, stating that Hopkins' poems dealing with this theme are very inferior to those of Wordsworth. She cites "Spring and Fall" and "Felix Randal" as examples, pointing out that the former envisions man's destiny as similar to that of the golden grove whose leaves are growing bare and leafless, foreshadowing the fate of a doomed human race.⁴⁹

But Miss Phare feels that Hopkins' poem "On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People" is among his best conveying this theme, and that Hopkins in this poem "evokes a sense of the immense consequences attendant upon each act of the human will, and of the pitiableness of the best-equipped assemblage of human powers in face of the hostile forces."⁵⁰ She adds that Hopkins' pity and fear for the whole of humanity is apparent in his portrait of the two young people, symbolizing for him the entire human race. Describing the poem as one of Hopkins' most obscure, Miss Phare gives detailed paraphrase and commentary on

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 148.

⁴⁹Poetry, p. 47.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 54.

it, seeing the poem as a presentation of the opposing choices which the two young people must make between right and wrong, damnation and salvation.⁵¹ And the critic interprets the mood of the poem as one of solemn foreboding and despair since the poet makes it apparent that the fate of the young people is evil:

There's none but good can be good, both for you
 And what sways with you, maybe this sweet maid;
 None good but God--a warning waved to
 One once that was found wanting when Good weighed.

A momentous choice between good and evil must be made by the young man, and Miss Phare points to the word "sways" in the lines above as suggesting the instability and frailty of their hold on happiness, as though they are on the verge of a precipice, wavering between safety and destruction.⁵²

Miss Phare also contends that Hopkins' conception of free will and predestination are inherent in the following verse which she also calls the climax of the poem:

Man lives that list, that leaning in the will
 No wisdom can forecast by gauge or guess,
 The selfless self of self, most strange, most still,
 Fast furled and all foredrawn to No or Yes.

Although no one can know for sure which choice will be made, his decision has already been predestined and will follow the bent of his will. And that the tendency of his will is evil is apparent in the last part of the poem, according to Miss Phare, summed up in "the picture of the blossoming, aspiring tree with its natural bent and its natural shape, the order of its boughs, destroyed

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 55-62.

⁵² Ibid., p. 59.

by the pest."⁵³ The boy is victim of the greed of evil powers which insist on making the best of humanity its own:

Your feast of; that most in you earnest eye
 May but call on your banes to more carouse.
 Worst will the best. What worm was here, we cry,
 To have havoc-pocked so, see, the hung-heavenward boughs?

Enough: corruption was the world's first woe.
 What need I strain my heart beyond my ken.
 O but I bear my burning witness though
 Against the wild and wanton work of man.

Miss Phare sees the mood of hopelessness and defeat in the poem epitomized in the line "What need I strain my heart beyond my ken," which she interprets as Hopkins' revelation that he must submit to a Providence whose designs he will never understand, troubling and oppressing though they be. But, the critic asserts, Hopkins is not placing the blame on divine Providence, but rather on man, who has helped the devil and his destructive powers surround the human race.⁵⁴

The above conflicting interpretations of Hopkins' poems on mankind represent the views adopted by the two schools of thought, with Matthiessen and Miss Phare as proponents of the negative side pitted against Gardner, Pick, and Ruggles, who are among the critics seeing in the poems an ultimate theme of optimism and hope. An attempt to resolve these conflicting views will come later, after a look at the fourth specific consideration posed earlier: the contrasting views concerning the "terrible sonnets."

⁵³ Ibid., p. 61.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 62-63.

Most Hopkins critics generally dismiss the entire group of sonnets with a single appreciative but unanalytical comment, while others do no more than locate the central critical problem in the identification of the conflict which underlies the poems. Most critics agree that the mood underlying these last poems of Hopkins is one of desolation and despair, but the reasons for the poet's dejection in his later years has created some disagreement. C. C. Abbott, in his introduction to Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges (1935), indicates that the struggle for supremacy of poet with priest provides the background of suffering against which the poems are written, explaining that it is perhaps "not fanciful to feel that this sacrifice of self aroused a measure of regret and a realization that his persecuted gifts should have been more fully used."⁵⁵ James Reeves, in his introduction to the Selected Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins (1964), refers to the sonnets as "among the unquestionably great poems of all time," embodying a new and somber majesty of tone, and a profound concentration of intense passion in which a "sensitive and civilized spirit raises itself from its death-bed to make a last attempt at regeneration through poetry."⁵⁶

According to Reeves, the themes in "Carrion Comfort," "No worst, there is none," "I wake and feel the fell of dark," "To seem the stranger lies my lot," and "Thou art indeed just, Lord" are threefold: the darkness that has enveloped the

⁵⁵London: Oxford University Press, p. xi.

⁵⁶London, p. xxv.

creation, the desertion of God, and the failure of inspiration-- the fate that has made Hopkins time's eunuch. The images of the sonnets are described by Reeves as those of "darkness, horror, and sterility"; yet he sees in the very act of writing the poems a cathartic influence on Hopkins, enabling the poet to triumph over his mood, in which the utter disintegration of his being was threatened.⁵⁷

In his chapter on Hopkins in The Christ of the Poets (1958), Edwin Mims explains that the state of "spiritual dryness" and "interior desolation" in the sonnets resulted from several causes: ill health, the drudgery of reading innumerable examination papers, his separation from England, and the uncongenial atmosphere of a university which failed to realize the dreams of Newman. Mims points out that "Thou are indeed just, Lord" is the complaint of a just man against the universe, like the cry in the Garden of Gethsemane, in which the speaker has wrestled in the dark with his God; yet, the critic maintains, Hopkins never lost his faith, and his physical and spiritual suffering during the last years resulted in a peace of mind and contentment at the time of his death.⁵⁸

David Downes points to a parallel between the "terrible sonnets" and Ignatius, explaining that both he and Hopkins suffered a period of intense dejection which became "crucial tests of their spirits," with both leaving records of their religious crisis--Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises and Hopkins in his

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. xxv-xxvi.

⁵⁸Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, pp. 208-10.

"terrible sonnets."⁵⁹ Downes feels that the sonnets, when juxtaposed with the spiritual exercises, are not manifestations of frustration, but are rather meaningful in the light of Christian asceticism--revelations of a spiritual plight the result of which God alone knows, revealing the anguish and the joy of spirit. The critic couples Hopkins' "acute moral sensibility" with Ignatius' teachings of God's justice and a fear of damnation because of personal sin, and points out that these elements in combination resulted in the sonnets in which Hopkins, with his scrupulous turn of mind, "gave expression to his feeling of terrible nothingness of self and the overwhelming all of God."⁶⁰ And this desolation of self, Downes adds, is "the victory that often must be won if praise is to be given."⁶¹

A somewhat different but quite interesting interpretation of the "terrible sonnets" based on the Prometheus myth has been given by Sister Mary Humiliata in her article "Hopkins and the Prometheus Myth," in which she takes issue with Yvor Winters' statement that Hopkins' "No worst, there is none" is an instance of late romantic emotional over-emphasis of experience. Sister Humiliata maintains that the Prometheus myth constitutes a "source for the total body of images in Sonnet 65" and for all the sonnets in general and adds that the tone of despair, discontent, desertion, and rejection inherent in the sonnets was the result of the poet's vicarious suffering, led by the Holy Ghost to offer himself not only as atonement for his own sins but for the sins of

⁵⁹Ignatian Spirit, p. 115.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 146.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 148.

others--a pattern characteristic of souls more advanced in spiritual life.⁶² The critic feels that the myth of Prometheus, with its allegorical fitness, is the source of the imagery, the under-thought. The cry of anguish in Sonnet 65 is, according to Sister Humiliata, a cry which "issues as one voice from the tortured figure of Prometheus and from the Christian soul which has given itself as a victim for sinners."⁶³ The critic continues in her analysis:

The figure of Prometheus emerges in the sestet most clearly with the image of the mountains: ". . . cliffs of fall/ Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed." Against these mountains is a hanging figure . . . which may refer to the form of the Titan nailed to the cliff. If this hypothesis be accepted tentatively the pattern cries of pain and terror of the tortured figure, the octave becomes retrospective, touching on the most agonizing moments of the preceding dramatic action: the actual fastening of the sufferer to the cliff, and the daily torture of the Furies or the winged hounds of Zeus. The first of these actions is hinted at by the "age-old anvil," which may well refer to the forge of Hephaestus where the chains and spikes were forged which now bind Prometheus to the mountain. The verbs "wince" and "sing" are predicated of the suffered himself, as well as of the iron, thus synthesizing the formation of the instruments of torture with the image of the victim's helpless passivity under the blows of Hephaestus' hammer. These two verbs in juxtaposition are richly connotative of suffering and joy in suffering, and at this point underthought and overthought offer contrast within lines of broad similarity, as the Christian victim prepares to accept from God the pain for which he has declared himself ready.⁶⁴

To Sister Mary Humiliata the soul of Hopkins became voluntarily the co-victim with Christ, approaching the gate to everlasting joy through his suffering for others; the suffering,

⁶²PMLA, LXX (March, 1955), 62.

⁶³Ibid., p. 64.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 65.

however, is that of a mortal, placed in a completely human context and subject therefore to human frailty and terror.⁶⁵

Sonnet 65 certainly supports her thesis:

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
 More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
 Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
 Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
 My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
 Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing-
 Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No
 Linger! Let me be fell: force I must be brief!

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
 Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
 May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
 Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
 Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind; all
 Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

In conclusion, the problem of conflict within Hopkins seems to be basic to the four questions under consideration--the conflict between the poet and priest, resulting in a conflict between his sensuousness and his asceticism and between his real, inborn impulses and those restrictions imposed upon him by his priesthood. To most of Hopkins' admirers, the idea that the poet could cease to be a priest in his poetic activities is not acceptable, and those who have a real understanding of the spiritual intensity of Hopkins' nature see a unity of the poet, priest, and Jesuit, as the studies above indicate. It should be remembered that Hopkins did not write his verse with the intention of reaching a wide reading audience. He produced poetry for his own

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 68. The application of this theory has also been used by Gardner in "The Religious Problem in Hopkins" (see footnote 11 above) in which he asserts that this projection of the self into another was a kind of relief for the poet, as with King Lear in the world of Shakespearean tragedy.

pleasure and perhaps for a few close friends; poetry was also used by Hopkins as an outlet for his innermost feelings, a means of expressing emotions felt in his heart.

Therefore, it stands to reason that the most logical means of settling the question of conflict is to go to the man himself, and there is no better way to become acquainted with Hopkins the man than through his prose. The letters, notebooks, sermons, and spiritual writings of Hopkins give the reader a body of autobiographical writing from which one can learn of his religion, his love of people and nature, and his attitude toward poetry. These writings are revelations of his concern with those ideas, interests, and beliefs which shape his poetic thought. Within this body of prose, the best and most complete source of his ideas on theology and philosophy are found in his spiritual writings, and it is to these that one should turn in an attempt to resolve the critical issues discussed above.

CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF SCOTIST PHILOSOPHY AND IGNATIAN DOCTRINES IN THE SPIRITUAL WRITINGS OF HOPKINS

For the full elucidation of Hopkins, some knowledge of the Scotist philosophy and Catholic doctrines that shaped his mind and thought is needed. Consequently, before attempting to show the correlation between Hopkins' poetry and his spiritual writings, a digression is necessary to give attention to the two main influences in these writings--the philosophy of Duns Scotus, whose ideas Hopkins embraced rather than those of St. Thomas (traditionally the norm for the Jesuit), and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus.

John Duns Scotus, a medieval theologian, was ordained to the priesthood in 1291 when he was twenty-five years old. He was known within the Order as a man of deep spirituality, remarkable talents, and piety. Scotus also became known for his powerful mind, which rejected many aspects of the philosophy of Aristotle and, to a certain degree, that of St. Thomas. In order to understand the originality of the Scotist philosophy, it is necessary to compare the two philosophical schools that existed within the Christian tradition during the latter part

of the thirteenth century--the years during which Scotus produced his most profound works.

The Aristotelian school, created by St. Thomas Aquinas, and the Augustinian school, formulated in the works of St. Bonaventure, agreed on basic philosophical questions of God's metaphysical transcendence over creatures, but disagreed on the relationship between God and His creatures. Both schools agreed that God's intelligence and love produced all things, which are in turn kept in existence by His continual action on them. Therefore, all His creatures carry within themselves the image of divine perfection, a stimulus that brings everything back to Him since everything was created for His own glory. God's immanence transcends all His creatures, which makes it possible for all things to be returned to Him.

Scotus agreed with both schools up to this point, but leaned toward the Augustinians in their theory of divine illumination, which is vigorously defended as the element which urges and stimulates man's ascent to God. This is opposed to the Aristotelian tendency to place on all creatures an excessive autonomy in their relationship to the Creator, stressing the importance of the human element in things, with less emphasis on man's innate relation to God. While Scotus came closer to agreeing with the Augustinian theory of God's relationship with His creatures, he sought to form a new philosophy by harmonizing both doctrines into a synthesis that would be acceptable to both schools.

In his study of Scotist philosophy, Efrem Bettoni describes Scotus' beliefs as "an Augustinianism that aims to meet

Thomistic Aristotelianism, and to fuse it into a more complete and therefore more vital and modern synthesis."¹ Scotus was preoccupied with guaranteeing man's capacity to arrive at God, and his doctrine gives full credit to the Augustinian theory of man's ability to know God, and of his craving and need for the divine, with the belief that our intellect is made to know all being and is capable of every ascent. Bettoni points out that "such a destination is the profound, inescapable call with which God draws man to Himself, and with man, all created reality."²

Hopkins, like Scotus, believed that man can arrive at God through the creatures that He has placed on earth for man. Everything is created by God and should lead back to Him, the least end toward which all creatures are ordained, either directly or indirectly, in virtue of their very nature as creatures. Hopkins also agreed with Scotus that God is the only necessary source of love and duty; anything outside of God is good only when used to help man attain his end--his obligation to God. Therefore, a sin is committed when man departs from his goal of attaining a perfect relationship with God and when he disregards the means necessary for attaining that goal. Throughout Hopkins' poetry and spiritual writings he projects his belief that God is the ultimate and necessary end of all things and He must be loved in an absolute manner, the object of all duties. Created things do not possess goodness unless

¹Duns Scotus: The Basic Principles of His Philosophy, trans. and ed. by Bernadine Bonansea (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1961), p. 21.

²Ibid., p. 45.

they are ordained to God, the last end.

Bettoni sums up Scotus' profound ethical doctrines in this way:

Just as the love of God for his creatures is the ultimate reason for creation, so the love of man for God is the inner force that raises him to God. Love is thus the law of our being as well as the law of our salvation. Duns Scotus' ethics can rightly be called a scientific demonstration of the primacy of love.³

These ideas are basically the same as those found in the poetry and spiritual writings of Hopkins, as will be pointed out later.

A second point of agreement between Scotus and Hopkins, and the one most frequently mentioned by Hopkins scholars, deals with the principle of individuation, the individually distinctive form revealing the intrinsic quality of finite being. For Duns Scotus, a concrete thing is a composite of a specific nature, a singular in reality found in something within the thing itself, and not merely a composite of matter and form.⁴ The logical and natural unity possessed by an individual--that intrinsic perfection of being itself--Scotus calls "haecceity" or thisness, the last step or ultimate preparation of the form toward the reality of the individual. According to Scotus, a "haecceitas" is a reality whether it exists or not because it is a distinct intention in God's will.

Bettoni emphasizes that Scotus' doctrine of the principle of individuation is a transcendental doctrine not limited to material beings as is the Thomistic doctrine, but including

³Ibid., p. 181.

⁴Ibid., p. 61.

all beings.⁵ Scotus taught that each individual has been assigned a definite place by God in the harmonious complexity of reality, with each individual furnishing new evidence of God's magnificence and generosity. In Scotus' theory of individuation Hopkins found a philosophy compatible with his own private theory of inscape, in which he found the unifying principle behind all works of nature and art. In a letter written to Bridges in 1879, Hopkins states:

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. (p. 184).

By "inscape" Hopkins meant simply the outer form of all things, animate and inanimate, as it expressed their inner soul, their intrinsic quality. According to Gardner, the poet coined the word "inscape" as the name for that "individually distinctive form (made up of various sense-data) which constitutes the rich and revealing 'oneness' of the natural object."⁶ And to this idea Hopkins added another term, "instress," which he used to refer to that energy by which things are upheld, the natural stress which determines an inscape and keeps it in being--its unifying force. Gardner refers to instress as "the sensation of inscape, a sudden perception of that deeper pattern, order and unity which gives meaning to external form."⁷ Thus Hopkins

⁵Ibid., p. 64.

⁶Poems and Prose, p. xx.

⁷Ibid., p. xxi.

is found not adopting Scotus' theory of individuation, but finding in it a corroboration of a theory already established in his writings.

Another philosophic controversy in which Hopkins and Scotus are in agreement concerns the question of the relationship of dependence and superiority in the intellect and will. Many scholastics see both a psychological and metaphysical dependence of the will on the intellect, with the intellectual act preceding and determining the volitional act. In contrast, Scotus believed that it is the will that actually determines itself to will or not to will; the principal cause of the volitional act is the will itself, with the intellect only a partial cause of the last definitive decision.⁸ Thus man's highest perfection is represented by the activity of the will which rules over all man's interior powers. Duns Scotus is always careful to keep the volitional act independent of the intellectual act, believing that man's will is rational by nature and does not derive such an essential characteristic from the intellect. Just as a thing cannot be separated from its own nature, so will and rationality are inseparable. Since no true rationality is possible without freedom, and since freedom is the proper characteristic of the volitive activity, it logically follows that the highest degree of human perfection lies in the will rather than in the intellect.⁹ Hopkins' theory on the relationship of the intellect and will is basically the same as that of Scotus,

⁸Bettoni, pp. 82-83.

⁹Ibid., p. 86.

but he uses the terms "affective will" and "elective will" when referring to them in his spiritual writings. He makes a sharp distinction between the two even though in practice they are closely connected.

One other obvious area in which Hopkins looked to Scotus for a verification of his own belief concerns the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Mother--a theme appearing in several of Hopkins' poems. It was during a teaching period at the University of Paris that Scotus embarked on his famous scholastic tradition of the Immaculate Conception, alienating all the masters at the University who were fierce opponents of his Mariology. His firm belief and adamant stand in this theological dispute resulted in his dismissal from the University along with the charge of heresy by his opponents. He sought refuge in Cologne, but after only one year of intensive work, died prematurely at the age of forty-three. Scotus taught that Christ's humanity was God's first intention in creating; many Scotists still hold the belief in connection with the Immaculate Conception that Mary was associated with Christ in God's first intention.¹⁰

In a sermon Hopkins delivered on the Immaculate Conception he refers to the incident above, and praises Scotus for the stand he took. The sermon reads in part:

This is all I shall need to say of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which Pius IX a quarter of a century ago published to all the world to be held as of faith and under pain of sin. It was known and believed by almost all Catholics long before; it was told by our Lord to his apostles, it is to be found in the Scriptures, in the works of the Holy Fathers and of great divines; still there were some who denied it

¹⁰Ibid., p. 4.

and a small number were left even in 1854 still disputing against it. But when the Pope spoke they obediently bowed their heads, gave in their submission, and made an act of belief like other Catholics. It is a comfort to think that the greatest of the divines and doctors of the Church who have spoken and written in favour of this truth came from England: between 500 and 600 years ago he was sent for to go to Paris to dispute in its favour. The disputation or debate was held in public and someone who was there says that this wise and happy man by his answers broke the objections brought against him as Samson broke the thongs and withies with which his enemies tried to bind him.¹¹

The ideas discussed above dealing with man's relationship to God, the theory of individuation, the relationship of intellect and will, and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception represent some of the Scotist theories which Hopkins fitted into his life and work. There are other areas in which one can find a correlation in the thought of Scotus and Hopkins, but these above appear most frequently in his spiritual writings and the ones most pertinent to arriving at an understanding of the ideas in his poetry. That Hopkins was an admirer of Duns Scotus and placed great faith in his ideas is indicated in a letter he wrote to Robert Bridges in 1875:

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. After all I can, at all events a little, read Duns Scotus and I care for him more even than Aristotle and more . . . than a dozen Hegels. (pp. 176-77)

Hopkins was also influenced by the doctrines and ideals of Ignatius, and a great part of his spiritual writings are

¹¹The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Christopher Devlin (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 296. All references to Hopkins' sermons and spiritual writings are from this edition. (Page reference hereafter will be given in parentheses at end of quotation.)

his reflections on St. Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, which lay the foundations for the spiritual life of a Jesuit. The Society of Jesus, which Ignatius founded around 1540, is an order of priests within the Roman Church, vowed to the most rigid standards of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Ignatius had been an officer in the Spanish army, and the discipline of the Society is quasi-military--absolute devotion, unquestioning loyalty, and exemplary spiritual purity. It is the object of the Ignatian man to obtain perfect love of God and complete obedience to the Society and to Christ.

The thirty days of spiritual exercises which the novice enters upon shortly after his admittance to the Society of Jesus is a period of meditative prayer into which is packed in miniature the spiritual life which the Jesuit must live. But the influence of the exercises does not cease at the end of the initial thirty days. Every year the Jesuit is required to make a retreat in which he again turns to the spiritual exercises to renew his vows to the Order and to the ideals of Ignatius. So, from the time Hopkins entered the Society of Jesus in 1868 until his death in 1889, the spiritual exercises were a continuing influence in his life, an integral part of his whole being.

The book of the Spiritual Exercises is arranged in a clumsy manner, somewhat more like a mass of pieces put together than an organic work, since Ignatius never acquired facility in logically arranging or expressing his thoughts in writing. The Exercises were first printed eight years before the death

of Ignatius in 1548.¹² At the beginning of the Exercises is a well-known old prayer "Anima Christi" which Ignatius recommended the exercitants to use:

Soul of Christ sanctify me.
 Body of Christ save me.
 Blood of Christ lift me out of self.
 Water from the side of Christ wash me.
 Suffering of Christ comfort me.
 Oh! good Jesus, hear me:
 Hide me in thy wounded arms:
 Let me not be separated from thee:
 From the wicked enemy save me:
 In the hour of my death call me,
 And bid me come to Thee,
 That with the saints I may praise Thee
 To all the ages. Amen.¹³

The object of the Spiritual Exercise is, according to Ignatius, to conquer self and order life without being decided by an exaggerated affection. The exercises are divided into four weeks, with the first week consisting of five exercises each with five points: the prayer, the two preambles (composition and fixing the object), the meditation (divided into points), and the colloquy. The two main methods of contemplation are the "composition of place" and the "application of the five senses." After vividly visualizing the subject of contemplation, the taker then asks for what he is seeking--forgiveness of sin, strength of spirit, or some other need depending on what is appropriate at this stage in the exercise. He then applies the five senses to the object of his contemplation which he has previously visualized in the "composition of place."¹⁴

¹² Paul Van Dyke, Ignatius Loyola: The Founder of the Jesuits (New York: Scribner's, 1926), p. 268.

¹³ Ibid., p. 269.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 270.

The first exercise of the first week calls on the exercitant to examine his conscience, during which time he records the sins which most easily beset him; he then marks the number of times he has fallen into a sin. These sins may include evil words, such as slander, idle talk and blasphemy, or sins of deed, such as disobedience to the Ten Commandments, the Church, or the superiors. After this preliminary meditation, the exercitant then opens the exercise with a prayer for grace to know his sins, to ask pardon of God, to seek His help in conquering his sins.¹⁵

After the prayer come the two preambles. The composition (seeing the place) is an effort of the imagination to see the sin in its visible form as having the soul imprisoned in a corruptible body. The second preamble, fixing the object, is to ask God to create within the exercitant shame and confusion because of his sin, replacing the peace in his soul with misery. Then follows the three points to which are applied the faculties of memory, understanding, and the will. During the first day of the first week while the exercitant is considering his own sins, he is made to see the three sins which have separated men from God: first, the sin of the fallen angels "considering that while they have gone to hell for one sin, I have deserved it for many sins"; second, the sin of Adam and Eve "bringing to my mind how great corruption came by it upon the human race, so many men going towards hell"; third, "the particular sin of some one person who for one mortal sin has gone to hell, and

¹⁵Ibid., p. 271.

many others who have gone to hell for fewer sins than I have committed."¹⁶

This first exercise of the first week then ends with a colloquy, when the taker is to talk to God about His becoming man and dying for the sins of others. The exercitant then is to ask himself what he has done, is doing, and ought to do for Christ.¹⁷

The second, third, and fourth exercises are extended examinations of one's own sins, and the fifth is a "meditation upon hell," to sear upon the soul a hatred of sin by terror. It opens, as do the others, with a prayer and the preambles. Then comes the composition, in which the imagination is "to see with the eyes the length, breadth and depth of hell."¹⁸ The "fixing of the object" involves a "realizing sense of the pains of the damned, so that, if through my faults I forget the love of God, at least the fear of the pains of hell may keep me from sin."¹⁹

Next come the points, this time on the application of the senses to see the fires of hell, to hear the cries and blasphemies against Christ and His saints, to smell the smoke, the brimstone, and putried things, to taste the tears, and the worm of conscience, and to feel how the fires burn the soul. The colloquy with Christ concerns those souls which are in hell, some for not believing in His coming, some for believing but

¹⁶Ibid., p. 272.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁹Ibid.

not obeying.²⁰

The first week of the spiritual exercises is preceded by a meditation on the principle and foundation from which all progress must come. This meditation concerns the question of the object of human life, the chief end of life. Ignatius believed that man must use all things to glorify God, desiring and choosing what will best lead him to fulfill the true object of life. This ends the first week of the exercises, with its realistic look at the horror of hell, and its emphasis on the sins of both the world and the individual.²¹

Ignatius' conception of good and evil was that the world was divided between God and the devil, thus stirring impulses in the soul for good or evil which might be resisted or fostered. This idea remained always as the starting point of his personal religion; he viewed the world as the scene of a continuous active combat between God and Satan. In the second week of the exercises, Ignatius deals with his conception of the eternal battle between the forces of good and evil in the universe. The first three days of the second week are set aside for contemplations upon the kingdom of Christ and the Incarnation, calling for an application of the senses for "seeing with the imaginative, contemplative or meditative vision the vast variety of men upon the earth," then seeing that the three divine Persons, regarding the earth full of men and "beholding them all descending into hell, determined in their eternity that the Second Person should

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 270.

become man to save the human race."²²

The second and third days of the second week lead the taker to the climax of the entire experience--to his election or choice of the state of life. The prayer asks for knowledge and help against the wiles of the evil chief and for knowledge of the true life shown by the true captain, and grace to imitate Him. In the preamble, Ignatius points out a parallel between Christ's obedience in following His Father's will and the obedience of the ordinary Christian to Christ. And just as Christ was forced to decide between His own will and a life of service, so must the taker decide whom he will serve. The preambles consist of two divisions: consideration of the two banners (one of Christ and the other of Lucifer, both of which call men to serve), and composition (seeing the place), instructing the exercitant "to imagine a vast plain around Jerusalem where the supreme captain general of the good is Christ: and another plain at Babylon where the chief of the enemy is Lucifer."²³

In the meditation, the taker is to apply his senses to see both Christ and Lucifer--the former seated on a lowly, beautiful plain calling his followers to a life of poverty instead of riches, humility and compassion instead of pride, and the latter seated on a high throne of smoke and fire, ordering his devils to use nets and chains to take men captive. The exercise closes with three colloquies--with Our Lady, the Son, and the Father.²⁴

²²Ibid., p. 277.

²³Ibid., p. 278.

²⁴Ibid., p. 279.

The Election closes the second week and is generally considered to be the high point of the Spiritual Exercises. During this time, the exercitant dwells on the kinds of humility he must exercise--the willingness to obey the law of God, and the acceptance of an attitude of indifference toward riches and poverty, honour and dishonour. Also considered are the three times when a choice or election is to be made: the first is under the call of God (as when Paul and Matthew decided to follow Christ); the second, when the soul is receiving both good and evil suggestions requiring the discernment of the spirits; the third time may occur when the soul is not agitated by the spirits of good and evil, and may use its faculties freely and quietly.²⁵ To impress upon the exercitant the horrible consequences of sin, Ignatius presents the vision of the two banners set in the midst of meditations on the earthly life of Christ. And it is here he makes clear what the choice of life should be:

In every good election, as far as regards ourselves, the eye of our intention ought to be single, looking only to the end for which I was created, which is, for the praise of God our Lord, and for the salvation of my soul.²⁶

The third week, developed in the same form as the first and second weeks, has seven days of meditation on the passion of Christ. The exercitant is instructed to dwell on the love with which Christ bore the evils of the world so that he too might bear them in like manner. Also, Christ's suffering and torment are to be considered in an effort to make oneself in His own

²⁵Ibid., p. 280.

²⁶Ibid., p. 281.

image. The fourth week is a series of meditations on the glorified Christ, the Resurrection and Ascension. The exercitant is instructed to ask for grace to be glad and to rejoice in the glory and joy of Christ.²⁷

The third and fourth weeks fill less than one quarter of the Spiritual Exercises and are not nearly so completely detailed as the first two weeks; they appear almost anticlimactic to the first exercises. But probably, as Van Dyke points out, "the man who had passed through the strenuous emotions of the part leading up to the Election found in them a needed rest for his soul."²⁸

The Exercises close with three unconnected works to be used as desired by the taker. These include a "Contemplation for Obtaining Love" in which Ignatius urges the exercitant to seek a great and abiding love for God since love is the motivating force for the right use of creatures which leads the soul to Christ. Also included in these last works are a long meditation on the "Mysteries of the Life of Our Lord," and a shorter study, "Instruction in Three Ways of Praying."²⁹

The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius should probably be considered the most important single contributing factor to Hopkins' spiritual and psychological development. The inner world of prayer, meditation, and sacrament taught by Ignatius and practiced by Hopkins resulted in his deepened artistic response to external nature and a more sensitive religious response to

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 282.

the things of God. The "application of the senses" in meditation advised by Ignatius became a part of Hopkins and intensified his sound-sight-touch sensibility, which found expression through the medium of poetry. Through both Scotus and Ignatius, Hopkins saw all creatures as the ideal human counterpart of the Incarnate Lord, and he read nature as a series of messages from the Word of God. With his insight and intuition refined and directed by the discipline of Ignatius, Hopkins came to a realization of the essential nature of creatures, the sacramental presence of Christ, who personifies nature. One of the key notions of the spiritual exercises--that creatures should lead back to the Creator--permeates Hopkins' spiritual writings and is a major theme in his poetry. This sacramental view of nature was also a part of his daily life. The stars served as reminder of lower nature's aspiration to ideal human nature, calling all men to aspire to Christ;³⁰ and at the sight of a bluebell his thoughts turned to the beauty of Christ.³¹

A critic who attempts an interpretation of the poetry of Hopkins without a knowledge of the Scotist philosophy and the doctrines of Ignatius is working under a severe handicap since it is the ideas of these two men which most shaped and moulded the mind of Hopkins. The theories of Duns Scotus and the teachings

³⁰Hopkins wrote in his journal: "As we drove home and 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" (p. 132).

³¹Of the bluebells he wrote: "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 inscape is mixed of strength and grace, like an ash tree" (p. 120).

of Ignatius can be found separately or jointly as major themes in most of Hopkins' writings, and the critic who does not acknowledge these elements in his poetry is failing both Hopkins and his readers.

CHAPTER V

RESOLUTION OF CRITICAL ISSUES

Hopkins' spiritual writings should not be considered solely as a commentary on the Spiritual Exercises; they are rather his personal impressions and reflections on the nature of life as inspired by the exercises of Ignatius and the philosophy of Scotus, with the main emphasis on the proper use of creatures, man's source of existence, man's free will, and, most importantly, the great sacrifice of Christ--giving up His divine privileges by taking on human flesh. This last consideration--the great sacrifice of Christ--was, according to Hopkins, the real inspiration of his spiritual writings; the term "great sacrifice" appears often in his prose and poetry.

The ideals of dedication, gallantry, and discipline are also inherent in his spiritual writings, with Hopkins' insistence that obedience to a superior is obedience to Christ, achieved through a life of prayer and meditation. Even though this idea was first projected by Ignatius, Hopkins carries the theory much further in his spiritual writings, showing a correlation between free will and supernatural grace, and a unity of desire and choice, all leading to the ultimate goal of acquiring perfect obedience. According to Hopkins, man has reached his highest perfection when he becomes another Christ with the help of a supernatural grace. Throughout his spiritual writings, his

poems, and his life itself, this theme is apparent.

Hopkins' spiritual writings follow very roughly the general outline of the exercises of Ignatius, with attention given occasionally to the five points of each exercise--the prayer, the preludes, the meditation, and the colloquy. Hopkins, however, is not consistent in this outline, choosing at times to omit a part or all of a certain exercise and giving extra consideration or emphasis to another. He appears at times to be writing his speculations as they occur, with no effort to categorize or arrange his ideas in an orderly manner. This characteristic, along with his frequent digressions, presents a difficulty to the reader who is looking for a coherent line of thought or a consistently logical arrangement of ideas. But with some knowledge of his relationship to Scotus and Ignatius, Hopkins' ideas begin to fall in place and take on meaning. A careful study of his spiritual writings juxtaposed with his poetry reveals a continuous correlation of ideas and thoughts between the two; thus, a familiarity with either his poetry or his spiritual writings results in an easier, more meaningful reading of the other.

As has already been pointed out, Hopkins, as revealed in his poetry, was extremely aware of the beauty in the world about him, so much so, in fact, that many critics feel it became an unhealthy obsession with him. This same awareness of mortal beauty is apparent in his spiritual writings, with many lines appearing almost word for word in his verse. The same is true in regard to his beliefs concerning sacrifice and suffering, two other motifs running through his spiritual writings and his verse.

Therefore, by going to this part of Hopkins' prose, one can hope to resolve the critical issues which seem to cause most of the disagreement among the students and critics of Hopkins. An understanding of Hopkins' views on sacrifice, suffering, and beauty is basic to an understanding of the meaning of his poem "The Windhover," a poem generally misunderstood by many readers.

In the second week of the spiritual exercises Ignatius sets aside three days during which the exercitant is to contemplate the kingdom of Christ, in which His followers are called to a life of humility, sacrifice, and labour. The taker is instructed to pray for knowledge of the true life of service and for the willingness to imitate Christ to the degree of perfection to which he is called. Similarly, Hopkins includes in his spiritual writings a section entitled "The Kingdom of Christ," in which he presents a parable--a description of a temporal king who calls his men to a life dedicated to ridding the country of infidels. This earthly king admonishes his subjects to "eat as I eat . . . in like manner labour by day and watch by night . . . in order that afterwards he may share with me in the victory according as he has shared in the toils." Hopkins then unmask the king to reveal Christ, adding:

If we pay attention to such a call of a temporal king to his subjects, how much more worthy of consideration it is to see Christ our Lord, the eternal King, and before him the whole of mankind, all of whom and each one in particular he calls saying: 'My will is to conquer the whole world and all my enemies and so to enter into the glory of my Father. Whosoever, therefore, desires to come with me must labour with me in order that following me in suffering, he may likewise follow me in glory.' (p. 160)

In his use of such a parable to illustrate the kingdom of Christ, Hopkins sets the stage for both his method of presentation and the underlying meaning in "The Windhover." Christ is symbolized by the falcon, which, ecstatic in the glory of "my Father," soars with strength, magnificence, and grace above the whole world which he has conquered, calling to those below to "labour with me in suffering" in order to "follow me in glory":

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-
 dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon,
 in his riding
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and
 striding
 High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
 In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
 As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend; the
 hurl and gliding
 Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
 Stirred for a bird,--the achieve of, the mastery of the
 thing!

The term "my heart in hiding," which has caused much disagreement among the critics, is easily understood if placed beside the interpretation of a "hidden life" as expressed in the spiritual writings. In commenting on the kind of life Christ lived, Hopkins writes:

And he had all his plans ready, matured during his hidden life, and adapted for every case. . . . He hid himself when the people wanted to make him king; yet he claimed to be their king and would in his own time have come to the throne: but everything was to be in its right time and natural order, which there was wanting. The Eucharistic Sacrifice was the great purpose of his life and his own chosen redemption. (p. 162)

And later, in a section he titled "The Hidden Life," Hopkins continues the above theme:

The hidden life at Nazareth is the great help to faith for us who must live more or less an obscure, constrained, and unsuccessful life. What of all possible ways of spending 30 years could have seemed so ineffective as this? What might not Christ have done at Rome, or Athens, Antioch or Alexandria! And sacrificing, as he did, all to obedience his very obedience was unknown. Repulsiveness of the place: a traveller told him, who had been twice to Nazareth, that even now it keeps its fame for rudeness and worthlessness. But the pleasingness of Christ's life there in God's eyes is recorded in the words spoken when he had just left it: 'This is my beloved Son.'

What was his life there?--One of devotion, saying or singing the psalms of David, which St Jerome used still to hear in the fields of Palestine; also one of labour; and of obedience: in every way it looked ordinary, presented nothing that could attract the world, not even austerities like those of St John in the wilderness. (p. 176)

When one reads the above lines and then considers the life that Hopkins lived, it is obvious that there are striking resemblances. After he became a member of the Society of Jesus, Hopkins' main concern was in living the life of a Jesuit in accordance with the wishes of his superiors, using as his guide the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Many months were spent in self-imposed, solitary retreat in deep meditation and constant prayer. During these periods of self-examination and re-dedication, his vows of self-renunciation were renewed and his loyalty to the ideals of Ignatius were more deeply embedded in his life.

It was often during, or soon after, these retreats that Hopkins experienced a new fervour and zeal for life, producing some of his most beautiful and delicate poems--all joyous and exuberant tributes to God's glory. His life took on a re-integrated character from his realization that he himself was like unto Christ, that his reason for living was to go through the

world to Christ in the manner of Christ.

Hopkins knew that an earthly, obscure life "in hiding," built on a foundation of dedication, self-renunciation, and service, was merely a preparation for a better life to come. He also felt assured that Christ acts in the heart, so when he wrote in "The Windhover,"

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

he was looking to the end for which he was created, aware that a life of faithful and obedient ministry on earth would lead ultimately to a victorious life with an Eternal King. The symbol of the bird mastering wind and storm was indicative of the spiritual direction and character of the poet's heart, hidden in a life of dedication to the battle under Christ's standard, undergoing hardships in order that His Kingdom be achieved and proclaimed.

This same message--the ultimately triumphant life of those laboring with Christ--is apparent also in the last part of "The Windhover," especially in the lines:

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.

Hopkins offered a prayer in "The Kingdom of Christ" asking for the strength to carry out his duties to a universal Lord, and for the willingness to act against his own carnal and worldly love. His prayer reads:

Eternal Lord of all things, I make my oblation with
thy grace and help, in the presence of thine infinite
goodness, and in the sight of thy glorious Mother, and
of all the Saints of the Heavenly Court (protesting) that

I wish and desire and that it is my deliberate determination, provided only it be to thy greater service and praise, to imitate thee in bearing all injuries and all reproach and all poverty, as well actual as spiritual, if only thy divine majesty be pleased to choose and receive me to such a life and state. (p. 161)

And later, in writing of the earthly battle against sin, a battle Hopkins felt all must engage in, he states:

Cowardly it would be and a wretched inconsistency in a knight to decline a glorious campaign from dislike of the hardships to be borne in securing its success, dislike of being obliged to share his general's lot. . . . But all . . . would be called on according to their state and means to support the war, they would be engaged in it in the sense that the whole kingdom was, and would justly share the joy, triumph, and prosperity of the victory. (p. 163)

Thus the ideas expressed by Hopkins in "The Windhover" correspond with the ideas inherent in a great part of his spiritual writings. The ideals of discipline, dedication, and gallantry are characteristic of an earthly life of service rendered to an earthly king, and these attributes should lead to the higher standard under which one must serve. There is a greater battle to be fought, an Eternal King to follow, offering rewards that are everlasting. Earthly nobility can be transformed to heavenly nobility.

One can also find in the spiritual writings an explanation of Hopkins' obsession with the natural beauty of the earth. It is probably in the area of Hopkins' so-called sensuous poetry that the critics are in greatest disagreement, but the divergences are easily resolved when one becomes aware that to Hopkins an experience of beauty was associated with a religious experience. His view of the world was a sacramental view; he believed that an experience of beauty was accompanied by a lifting of heart

and mind to God. He contended that the beauty of creatures is a mirror of the Eternal beauty of God, enhanced and enjoyed, and serving as a bridge between the finite and the infinite.

In many of his poems, Hopkins is concerned with directing beauty by an act of love to God, thus reaching a supernatural and eternal value. One of these poems is "Ash-boughs," in which Hopkins reinforces his beliefs that Heaven is creator of earth's child, nature, and that an inward spiritual grace is revealed through all outward visible beauty. The poem reads:

Not of all my eyes, see, wandering on the world,
Is anything a milk to the mind so, so sighs deep
Poetry to it, as a tree whose boughs break in the sky.
Say it is ash-boughs: whether on a December day and furled
Fast or they in clammyish lashtender combs creep
Apart wide and new-nestle at heaven most high.
They touch heaven, tabour on it: how their talons sweep
The smouldering enormous winter welkin! May
Mells blue and snow white through them, a fringe and fray
Of greenery: it is old earth's groping towards the steep
Heaven whom she child's us by.

In setting down his views on Ignatius' "Principle and Foundation" from the Spiritual Exercises, Hopkins is very forceful in his statement of a sacramental view of the world, exhorting all men to cultivate their sensitivity to beauty so that all created things may be used to attain God. He writes:

Man was created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by so doing to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth were created for man's sake and to help him in the carrying out of the end for which he was created. Hence it follows that man should make use of creatures so far as they help him attain his end and withdraw from them so far as they hinder him from so doing. (p. 122)

And later he adds:

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 meaning, is God and its life or work to name and praise him. Therefore, praise put before reverence and service.

The world, man, should after its own manner give God being in return for the being he has given it or should give him back that being he has given. This is done by the great sacrifice. To contribute then to that sacrifice is the end for which man was made. (p. 129)

Hopkins' poem "To What Serves Mortal Beauty?" probably best exemplifies the thought content of the above lines from his spiritual writings. In the poem, Hopkins recognizes the dangers of natural beauty if man employs nature as an end in itself, but he quickly counteracts this suggestion by conveying rapid, successive impacts of impressions and ideas on the good that is inherent in beauty:

To what serves mortal beauty - dangerous; does set dancing blood - the O-seal-that-so feature, flung prouder form
 Than Purcell tune lets tread to? See: it does this:
 keeps warm
 Men's wits to the things that are; what good means-where a glance
 Master more may than gaze, gaze out of countenance.
 These lovely lads once, wet-fresh windfalls of war's storm,
 How then should Gregory, a father, have gleaned else from swarm-
 ed Rome? But God to a nation dealt that day's dear chance.
 To man, that needs would worship block or barren stone,
 Our law says: Love what are love's worthiest, were all known;
 World's loveliest - men's selves. Self flashes off frame and face.
 What do then? how meet beauty? Merely meet it; own, Home at heart, heaven's sweet gift; then leave, let that alone.
 Yea, wish that though, wish all, God's better beauty, grace.

The beauty of nature is "heaven's sweet gift" which in a glance flashes off images leading to "God's better beauty, grace."

In Hopkins' early verses, the two worlds of earth and heaven had been set against each other, but in his Jesuit verse,

like the poem just quoted, the two worlds are fused by his sacramental vision. God's grace, through nature, has given a special meaning to all created things--a spiritual feeling of "dearest freshness deep down things."

This deep spiritual intensity is found in one of Hopkins' most exuberant poems on nature, "The Starlight Night." Here the poet sees the earth and sky as reflections of God's beauty, and creates a vision of Christ and His saints as "fire-folk" sitting in the air:

Look at the stars! look, look up at the skies!
 O look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
 The bright boroughs, the circle-citadels there!
 Down in dim woods the diamond delves! the elves' - eyes!
 The grey lawns cold where gold, where quickgold lies!
 Wind-beat whitebeam! airy abeles set on a flare!
 Flake-doves sent floating forth at a farmyard scare!
 Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize

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

Look, look: a May-mess, like on orchard boughs!
 Look! March-bloom, like on mealed-with-yellow shallows!
 These are indeed the barn; withindoors house
 The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse
 Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows.

By "buying" the beauty of nature with prayer, patience, and vows, one can possess both God and nature, and by practicing a disciplined use of beauty, one may rise to higher Beauty.

Further evidence of Hopkins' sacramental view of nature is found in his spiritual writings in the section called "Contemplation for Obtaining Love" in which he considers the love with which God has given all things, and the loving manner in which we must return all things to God. Then Hopkins adds:

The second point is to consider how God dwells in creatures: in the elements giving them being; in the

plants giving them growth; in the animals giving them sensation; in men giving them understanding; and so in me giving me being, life, sensation, and causing me to understand; making likewise of me a temple since I am created to the likeness and image of his Divine Majesty.
(p. 178)

In "The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo," Hopkins exhorts all men, in order to keep beauty, to give it back to God. Thus by being affirmed in God, mortal beauty becomes immortal beauty. The poem is divided into two parts--the first posing a question and the second responding with an answer. The Leaden Echo is speaking as the poem opens:

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?
O is there no frowning of these wrinkles, ranked
wrinkles deep,
Down? no waving off of these most mournful messengers,
still messengers, sad and stealing messengers of
grey?
No there's none, there's none, O no there's none,
Nor can you long be, what you now are, called fair.
.
O there's none; no no no there's none;
Be beginning to despair, to despair,
Despair, despair, despair, despair.

The Golden Echo then responds to the Leaden Echo's question, admonishing all beauty to be returned to the giver of beauty:

Spare!
There is one, yes I have one (Hush there!);
Only not within seeing of the sun,
Not within the singeing of the strong sun,
Tall sun's tingeing, or treacherous the tainting of the
earth's air,
Somewhere elsewhere there is ah well where! one,
One. Yes I can tell such a key, I do know such a place,
Where whatever's prized and passes of us, everything that's
fresh and fast flying of us, seems to us sweet of us
and swiftly away with, done away with, undone,
Undone, done with, soon done with, and yet dearly and
dangerously sweet

Of us, the simpled-water-dimpled, not-by-morning-matched
 face,
 The flower of beauty, fleece of beauty, too too apt to,
 ah! to fleet,
 Never fleets more, fastened with the tenderest truth
 To its own best being and its loveliness of youth: it
 an everlastingness of, O it is an all youth!

.....
 Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them
 with breath,
 And with sighs soaring, soaring sighs deliver
 Them; beauty-in-the-ghost, deliver it, early now, long
 before death
 Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God,
 beauty's self and beauty's giver.

.....
 O then, weary then why should we tread? O why are we so
 haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so
 fagged, so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,
 When the thing we freely forfeit is kept with fonder a
 care,
 Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, kept
 Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it)
 finer, fonder
 A care kept. - Where kept? Do but tell us where kept, where-
 Yonder. - What high as that! We follow, now we follow.
 Yonder, yes yonder, yonder,
 Yonder.

These lines, along with the poems quoted above, and
 "Hurrahing in Harvest" and "God's Grandeur" discussed earlier,
 are clear indications of the significance Hopkins placed on the
 spiritual aspect of beauty. And there are many other poems in
 this category--"Pied Beauty," "Ribblesdale," "In the Valley of
 the Elwy"--all tributes to God and His goodness and grace as in-
 spired and magnified by nature.

There is, however, another theme that needs to be con-
 sidered in a discussion of Hopkins' poems on nature. Throughout
 Hopkins' life, as has just been pointed out, he was intensely
 aware of the sacramental use of beauty, but during these years
 he also began to show a growing concern because of man's attitude
 toward nature, feeling that man was using created things to

pursue his own interests rather than God's. In "Binsey Poplars" Hopkins expresses his disappointment in man's apparent unresponsiveness to the exhortation of nature.

After describing in the first stanza a field of poplars that has been destroyed by man, Hopkins goes on in the second and third stanzas to pour out his heart on man's insensitivity to beauty. The poet sincerely believed nature to be a sacred gift from God, and he suggests in these lines that spoliation of nature is an indication of man's moral decay:

O if we but knew what we do
 When we delve or hew -
 Hack and tack the growing green!
 Since country is so tender
 To touch, her being so slender,
 That, like this sleek and seeing ball
 But a prick will make no eye at all,
 Where we, even where we mean

To mend her we end her,
 When we hew or delve:
 After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
 Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
 Strokes of havoc unselfe
 The sweep especial scene,
 Rural scene, a rural scene,
 Sweet especial rural scene.

A similar theme is found in "The Sea and the Skylark," in which Hopkins contrasts natural beauty and wayward man; the sea and lark sing praises of God, but man is sinking back into slime because of his failure to fulfill his obligation to God. Man, in his blindness and waywardness, does not see in the beauty of created things a message from God, does not hear the sea and the lark calling him to perfection. After describing in the first stanza the sound of the waves beating against the shore, Hopkins then turns in the second stanza to the beauty of the

lark's song:

Left hand, off land, I hear the lark ascend,
 His rash-fresh re-winded new-skeined score
 In crisps of curl off wild winch whirl, and pour
 And pelt music, till non'e to spill nor spend.

Hopkins then points out in stanzas three and four that those two--the sea and the lark--because of their purity, their cheer and charm, have put man to shame:

How these two shame this shallow and frail town!
 How ring right out our sordid turbid time,
 Being pure! We, life's pride and cared-for crown.

Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:
 Our make and making break, are breaking down
 To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first
 slime.

But Hopkins does not feel that nature is doomed because of man's neglect and sinning. He still has faith that God is always near, hovering as a protective Father over His child, nature, as expressed in these lines from "God's Grandeur":

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
 And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
 Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
 And though the last lights off the black West went
 Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs -
 Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

If Hopkins is optimistic about the ultimate survival of nature, what are his thoughts on the destiny of man? Many critics sense in the poetry of Hopkins a tone of despair and final doom for mankind, while others contend that the poet had faith in God's power and grace in saving man from everlasting destruction. In his spiritual writings, Hopkins shows a recurring

preoccupation with what he believes to be an inevitable opposition between the desire and choice of an individual, or what he terms the "elective will" and the "affective will." But the poet maintains that as long as man is intent on following God's will, the elective will (desire) will not be separated from the affective will (choice). Thus a prevailing, unresolved conflict between desire and choice indicates a separation between man's will and God's will, while a complete union of desire and choice reveals a harmonious relationship between God and man. Hopkins is confirmed in his theory by Scotus, who taught that the intellect does not determine the volitional act, rather it is the will that actually determines itself to will. While man, therefore, is free to act as he wishes, he attains spiritual perfection only when his will is in harmony with God's.

Throughout his prose and his poetry, Hopkins expresses his belief that man is innately desirous of the divine, with the self ultimately determining the outcome. Thus God has placed man in a world filled with reminders of Him and His goodness in an effort to assist man in his climb to the infinite, and to condition man toward a sense of His presence. The acceptance or rejection of these Heavenly gifts is determined by man's sensitivity to the message of God in nature, and by his dedication to His cause.

This idea is projected in a section of the spiritual writings called "On Personality, Grace, and Free Will," in which Hopkins dwells at length on the endless possibilities of decisions between good and evil. He points to man's freedom in

self-determination and in the execution and field of his choice, but feels that man's affective will is always struggling toward that which is good. "Pitch," in the lines to be quoted, refers to the Creator's influence on man in decisions of right and wrong, but exerted in such a way that man is left free to determine his own destiny. Hopkins writes:

This being so, God exercises his mastery and dominion over his creatures' wills in two ways--over the affective will by simply determining it so or so . . . ; over the arbitrium or power of pitch by shifting the creature from one pitch contrary to God's will to another which is according to it or from the less to the more so . . . it is a lifting him from one self to another self, which is a most marvellous display of divine power. (p. 151)

This "marvellous display of divine power" is possible, according to Hopkins, because of God's grace acting in three ways: stimulating the affective will towards good, correcting the elective will (turning it from one direction to another), and elevating the will from a lower plane to a higher one. To this threefold objective of grace Hopkins gives the labels "prevenient grace," "concomitant grace," and "elevating grace."

Hopkins' poem "The Soldier" is a poetic expression of the above ideas concerning God's never-ceasing pull on our lives. After describing his admiration for a soldier who has answered the call of his country, the poet turns his thoughts to Christ, who will help lift up those who, in another warfare, struggle to attain perfection, a message appearing in the last lines of the poem:

Mark Christ our King. He knows war, served this soldier-
ing through;
He of all can reeve a rope best. There he bides in bliss
Now, and seeing somewhere some man do all that man can do,

For love he leans forth, needs his neck must fall on, kiss,
 And cry 'O Christ-done deed! So God-made-flesh does too:
 Were I come o'er again' cries Christ 'it should be this.'

The ideas expressed above are also present in the last stanza of "The Lantern Out of Doors":

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

In his Catholic conception of the supernatural power of the grace of Christ, Hopkins sees man redeemed through the grace of Christ, counteracting his waywardness and his loss of original innocence. And Hopkins felt that this protective grace could be hastened and intensified if man denied himself and his selfish ways and dedicated himself fully to following Christ. The two standards of St. Ignatius are suggested in the idea above: the saint of God who surrenders to Him completely will be delivered up, but the one who refuses His calling dies to live on earth. Man, therefore, through perseverance against evil and through co-operation with divine grace, will be redeemed and resurrected through a spiritual transaction with the Divine Master. Hopkins expressed it this way in his spiritual writings:

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, all is done through Christ, Christ's spirit. (p. 154)

The ideal for man is imitation of Christ through sacrifice--dedication, service and obedience. Christ by his life of incarnation and atonement has the power to instill in man's soul the "divine stress" to imitate Him in body and character. In

poems such as "The Handsome Heart" and "The Bugler's First Communion" Hopkins recognizes the temptations and struggles which man must face in his journey to Heaven, but the poem ends on an optimistic note with the poet's assurance that man is well-equipped for life. The hero in "The Handsome Heart" is admonished to make the beauty of his character, his inward beauty, more desirable than outward beauty. This spiritual beauty demands God's protectiveness which He gladly and freely gives.

The poem opens with a colloquy between a child and his father:

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

The child is saying in essence that his father knows best what he needs. The religious overtones here are obvious; Hopkins feels that God gives His children whatever help is necessary when the will and heart must make a choice in order to become a resurrected and glorified soul.

The poet has faith that the boy's "homing nature"--his innate desire to do God's will--will protect him and eventually bring him home to God. The boy has been infused with spiritual grace which will keep his young heart in the right path, but Hopkins knows the boy must persevere in his task of resisting evil. He must brace himself to the moral ideal of Christ.

Hopkins' hope for the child, symbolic of all humanity, is expressed in "The Handsome Heart":

What the heart is! which, like carriers let fly -
Doff darkness, homing nature knows the rest -
To its own fine function, wild and self-instressed,
Falls light as ten years long taught how to and why.

Mannerly-hearted! more than handsome face -
 Beauty's bearing or muse of mounting vein,
 All, in this case, bathed in high hallowing grace. . . .

Of heaven what boon to buy you, boy, or gain
 Not granted! - Only . . . O on that path you pace
 Run all your race, O brace sterner that strain!

In his notes on the "Incarnation" Hopkins points out that Christ is mindful of Man's problems; he calls to mind the "peaceful majesty which Our Lord quitted to enter the miserable turmoil of mankind." But Hopkins held fast to his vision of Christ as rising and reigning triumphantly over humanity, soaring majestically in victory and power over evil.¹ Man is called to respond to God by receiving His grace and imitating His life, thus assuring himself of rising triumphantly above the suffering and sin of earthly life. Hopkins realized that painful situations could not be avoided when desire and choice seemed at odds, but he preached that as long as the general intent to do God's will remained, there would be a reconciliation of desire and choice.

But Hopkins warned that when man decides to reject God's help, to ignore His pleas to follow His will, he is bringing about his own destruction. When there is no cooperation between the will of God and the desire of the heart, man loses contact with God, and the desired relationship can be restored only when man submits to the call of God. In the first stanza of "The Wreck of the Deutschland" Hopkins describes the above situation in his own life, but he explains that God rescued him from destruction by raising him through divine grace to Christ. When

¹Cf. the image of the falcon in "The Windhover."

he felt the presence of God in his life, and responded positively to that presence, he then became, through God's mastery over him, all that was expected of him. Hopkins writes in the first stanza:

THOU mastering me
 GOD! giver of breath and bread;
 World's strand, sway of the sea;
 Lord of living and dead;
 Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened
 me flesh,
 And after it almost unmade, what with dread,
 Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?
 Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

Hopkins taught that man, in striving to attain perfection, will emerge from earth a new being in Christ, in the likeness of Christ. In his spiritual writings Hopkins expressed the belief that man, through correspondence with grace, becomes another Christ. He explains that this transubstantiation takes place when "the member is in all things conformed to Christ." He then continues:

It is Christ in his member on the side, his member in Christ on the other. It is as if a man said: That is Christ, only that it is no play but truth; That is Christ being me and me being Christ. (p. 154)

Thus the ultimate destiny of man is a life with Christ in the likeness of Christ. Just as Christ "became man and dwelt among men," so will man become Christ and be resurrected to live with Him. Nowhere is this belief expressed more explicitly than in the last lines of "That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire":

Enough! the Resurrection,
 A heart's-clarion! Away grief's gasping, joyless days,
 dejection.
 Across my foundering deck shone
 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.

Here is the buoyant, triumphant optimism Hopkins felt for humanity. The hope and joy expressed here and in the poems and spiritual writings above are indicative of his vision of man's destiny.

It is true, as some critics have maintained, that Hopkins at times projected a pessimistic view in his poems on man, but it should be pointed out that these poems are in the minority and are not nearly so emphatic in their statement as are the poems above. The poet does not at any time suggest that all men are doomed; he simply recognizes that man sometimes, by his own choice, refuses the guidance and grace of God, thus bringing about his own damnation. In "Spelt from Sybil's Leaves" Hopkins contrasts the existence of good and evil, right and wrong in the world where "thoughts/ against thoughts in groans grind," thus indicating the misery and pain of a separation from God. In "Spring and Fall" the poet sees in the life and death of trees a reflection of man's own doomed fate, sensing the tragic predicament of some men. Even so, the poem has a tender quality to it, with no trace of bitter resignation.

"Ribblesdale" also has a negative ending, with the poet suggesting that man has failed to fulfill his purpose:

And what is Earth's eye, tongue, or heart else, where
 Else, but in dear and 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.

It is to the poems above that the critics turn when wanting to present a good argument against Hopkins' faith in and hope for humanity. Miss Phare uses "On the Portrait of Two Beautiful Young People" to illustrate her negative interpretation of Hopkins' verse, and her commentary and paraphrase of this particular poem are very convincing, since in this poem Hopkins does seem to fear for the purity, innocence, and beauty of the two youths, suggesting the tragedy of corruption which faces them. But it is unfair and misleading to present a discussion of this poem and ones similar to it without recognizing the poems of a contrasting view which are actually in the majority.

A study of his prose, especially his spiritual writings, reveals in Hopkins a predominant theme of optimism and security, peace and joy. And most of his poetry conveys a message of confidence and faith in mankind, as in these lines from "As kingfishers catch fire":

I say more: the just man justices;
 Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces;
 Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is -
 Christ - for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
 Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
 To the Father through the features of men's faces.

The last group of poems to be considered--the so-called "terrible sonnets"--are few in number but are the ones which many critics maintain best represent the poet's inner conflict. A reading of the six sonnets indicates that Hopkins did indeed go through a period of extreme mental and physical suffering. The poems reveal an intense inner struggle between head and heart, comfort and torment, spiritual stress and soul--a tumult triggered by several external causes.

During this period, Hopkins wrote to his friends that he was extremely unhappy living abroad in Dublin, his temporary residence at the time the "terrible sonnets" were written. He was experiencing periods of nervousness, stomach disorders, and depression believed to be brought on by his dislike for the drudgery and routine of his teaching duties. There were also the political and social aspects of the conflict between the Catholic Irish and England, causing him frustration because of his sympathy with the former and his devotion and loyalty to the latter. These conditions, along with the lack of an intimate friendship and a fear of God's desertion, resulted in an unresponsive world of prayer and work.

Hopkins' sonnet "To Seem the Stranger" objectifies his interior desolation and his uncertainty with regard to the combat between his inherited ties with England and his adopted devotion to the Catholic cause. The poet feels himself a stranger in an alien world, physically cut off from his family, spiritually separated from God, and mentally torn between the two political factions:

To seem the stranger lies my lot, my life
 Among strangers. Father and mother dear,
 Brothers and sisters are in Christ not near
 And he my peace my parting, sword and strife.

Hopkins felt that he could not and must not take sides in the Irish political confusion, yet he was weary of standing idly by. He felt, however, that only by remaining "removed" from the conflict could he fulfill his obligation as a priest; the unheeded thoughts in his heart leave him lonely and alone. These feelings are expressed in the second and third stanzas:

England, whose honour O all my heart woos, wife
 To my creating thought, would neither hear
 Me, were I pleading, plead nor do I: I wear-
 y of idle a being but by where wars are rife

I am in Ireland now; now I am at a third
 Remove. Not but in all removes I can
 Kind love both give and get. Only what word
 Wisest my heart breeds dark heaven's baffling ban
 Bars or hell's spell thwarts. This to heard unheard,
 Heard unheeded, leaves me a lonely began.

But Hopkins had been conditioned to expect periods of desolation and aridity. St. Ignatius devoted a section of the *Spiritual Exercises* to a short study sketching the characteristics of this darkness of the soul by contrasting it with spiritual consolation which guards against weariness and despair. The spiritually depressed soul is urged to fight desolation with prayer and meditation in imitation of Christ who "being in agony, prayed the longer." St. Ignatius instructed the exercitant to realize that God brings a harvest of trial and suffering in order to produce the humility, holiness, and grace which He desires of His followers.

Hopkins comments on this section of the Spiritual Exercises in his spiritual writings. In "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits" he defines desolation:

I call that desolation . . . such as darkness and confusion of soul, attraction towards low and earthly objects, disquietude caused by various agitations and temptations, which move the soul to diffidence without hope and without love, so that it finds itself altogether slothful, tepid, sad, and as it were separated from its Creator and Lord. (p. 204)

The bitter, self-loathing of a soul in desolation is the theme of Hopkins' sonnet "I wake and feel the fell of dark," a poetic statement of the above lines from his spiritual writings:

I WAKE and feel the fell of dark, not day.
 What hours, O what black hours we have spent
 This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
 And more must, in yet longer light's delay.
 With witness I speak this. But where I say
 Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
 Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
 To dearest him that lives alas! away.

In the sestet of the sonnet Hopkins feels more acutely the spiritual desolation of his soul, the terrible fear of being without God. He is now alone with his "bitter self," only the bones, flesh, and blood which God has abandoned:

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
 Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
 Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
 Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
 The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
 As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

But nowhere is this awful sense of abandonment and desolation more explicitly stated than in the most terrible of the "terrible sonnets," "No worst, there is none." The lines warn that there is no trial worse than abandonment, and no suffering worse than that experienced during the absence of the Comforter. In this sonnet, Hopkins comes nearest to utter hopelessness and despair, feeling that he has been asked to endure more than other men:

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
 More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
 Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
 Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
 My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
 Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing -
 Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
 ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.'

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
 Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
 May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
 Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
 Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
 Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

Hopkins continues in his spiritual writings with his discussion of desolation, admonishing the abandoned soul to stand "firm and constant," refusing to be guided by the evil spirit. He insists that the only way out is through self-examination, prayer, and meditation. He then adds in Rule VII:

Let him who is in desolation consider how our Lord, to try him, has left him to his own natural powers to resist the various agitations and temptations of the enemy; and to do so is always in his power, with the divine help, which remains always to him, though he may not clearly perceive it, because our Lord has withdrawn from him His great favour, ardent love, and intense grace, leaving him, however, grace sufficient for eternal salvation. (p. 204)

In Rule IX, Hopkins lists the causes which place one in desolation:

There are three main causes on account of which we find ourselves in desolation. The first is because we are tepid, slothful or negligent in our spiritual exercises; and thus through our faults spiritual consolation is removed from us. The second is that God may try how much we progress in His service and praise, without such bountiful pay of consolation and special graces. The third is that He may give us a true knowledge and understanding whereby we may intimately feel that it is not in our own power to acquire or retain great devotion, ardent love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation, but that all is a gift and grace of God our Lord; and to teach us not to build our nest in another's house, by allowing our intellect to be lifted up to any kind of pride or vainglory, by attributing to ourselves the devotion, or other kinds of spiritual consolation. (p. 205)

The poetic counterpart of the lines above is Hopkins' sonnet "My own heart let me more have pity on," in which he recognizes the uselessness of the continued torment of self, which can give no relief. He realizes that he is helpless and impotent, and unable to find comfort by persecuting himself; relief is a gift and grace of God, the only source of spiritual consolation. Hopkins shows humble resignation and trust in God:

My own heart let me more have pity on; let
 Me live to my sad self hereafter kind,
 Charitable; not live this tormented mind
 With this tormented mind tormenting yet.

I cast for comfort I can no more get
 By groping round my comfortless, than blind
 Eyes in their dark can day or thirst can find
 Thirst's all-in-all in all a world of wet.

Soul, self; come, poor Jackself, I do advise
 You, jaded, let be; call off thoughts awhile
 Elsewhere; leave comfort root-room; let joy size
 At God knows when to God know what; whose smile
 's not wrung, see you; unforeseen times rather -
 as skies
 Betweenpie mountains - lights a lovely mile.

What, then, is to be done when man finds himself in desolation? Not only must he pray and meditate, but he must do so in patience, according to Hopkins. In Rule VIII from "Rules for the Discernment of Spirits," he writes:

Let him who is in desolation strive to remain in patience, which is the virtue contrary to the troubles which harass him; and let him think that he will shortly be consoled, making diligent efforts against the desolation, as he has been said in the sixth rule. (p. 204)

In "Patience, hard thing" one can sense in Hopkins an easement of despair and a total submission to God's will. Through efforts of obedience and patience come an answer to his prayer for comfort, and a release from his weariness with war, activities, and tasks. The first and second stanzas read:

PATIENCE, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray
 But did for, Patience, is! Patience who asks
 Wants war, wants wounds; weary his times, his tasks;
 To do without, take tosses, and obey.

Rare patience roots in these, and, these away,
 Nowhere. Natural heart's ivy. Patience masks
 Our ruins of wrecked past purpose. There she basks
 Purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day.

The healing power of patience covers the ruin of former hopes and plans; patience, the heart's ivy, "basks" with

contentment on ruined purposes. Rebellious will must be coerced through suffering to obedience and complete resignation. Christ rewards patience because he is filled with patience.

This is the message of the sonnet's sestet:

We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills
 To bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills
 Of us we do bid God bend to him even so.
 And where is he who more and more distils
 Delicious kindness? - He is patient. Patience fills
 His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know.

Hopkins points out in his spiritual writings that consolation will replace desolation when one devotes himself to a period of prayer and patience. In Rule III he writes:

I call that consolation when there is excited in the soul some interior movement by which it begins to be inflamed with the love of its Creator and Lord, and when, consequently, it can love no created thing on the face of the earth in itself, but only in the Creator of them all. Likewise when it sheds tears, moving it to the love of its Lord, whether it be from grief for its sins, or for the Passion of Christ our Lord, or for other things expressly ordained to His service and praise. Finally, I call consolation any increase of hope, faith, and charity, and any interior joy which calls and attracts one to heavenly things and to the salvation of his own soul, rendering it quiet and at peace with its Creator and Lord. (p. 203)

In these lines Hopkins is once again stressing the importance of the sacramental use of nature, pointing out that a state of desolation can be eliminated only when man uses created things to lead back to the Creator. Once this desired relationship has been restored, through patience and prayer, man receives that interior joy and contentment which leads him back to a life of obedience and service, and the soul is once again "at peace with its Creator."

Hopkins resolves in his sonnet "Carrion Comfort" that he will not feast on despair, but will rather with patience, faith

and hope wait for day to replace the darkness in his soul. He will not be cast down by suffering, but will endure for the glory of God. He resigns himself calmly to the will of God, recognizing that God sends suffering to purge man of his sins and indifference. The poet opens the sonnet with an emphatic statement of one who stands firm and constant in his resolution:

NOT, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
 Not untwist - slack they may be - these last strands of man
 In me or, most weary, cry I can no more. I can;
 Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.
 But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me
 Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me?
 scan
 With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones? and fan,
 O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to
 avoid thee and flee?

Why has God brought him such intense suffering? So that he may be cleansed of the evil and undesirable, separating the grain from the chaff in his life. After a year of darkness spent in wrestling with God's will, the sense of despair and abandonment have ended and his soul has been strengthened. There are once again joy and strength in his life since he has abandoned his self-will and accepted the Divine Will. One gathers from the lines below that Hopkins' "dark night of the soul" has ended:

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.
 Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed
 the rod,
 Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy,
 would laugh, cheer.
 Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung
 me, foot trod
 Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one?
 That night, that year
 Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!)
 My God.

The six sonnets above, when juxtaposed with the spiritual writings of Hopkins, take on a meaning of Christian experience,

revealing the spiritual plight of a devout man who is aware of the need of God's guidance, but who feels, temporarily, the loss of that guidance. Even though the lines at times reveal a sense of frustration, they ultimately are revelations of a Christian asceticism intensified by an awareness of the nothingness of self and the omnipotence of God.

Because Hopkins was completely dedicated to Christ, because his religious and moral sensibility was greater than most can imagine, and because his mind was constantly on spiritual perfection and a striving for union with God's will, he passed through a period of spiritual dryness that is familiar to any Christian who seeks to follow God; and because of the intensity and sincerity of his experience, Hopkins produced some of the most profound and moving sonnets in all literature. A failure to understand their reason for being shows a lack of familiarity with Christian experience.

Gerard Manley Hopkins was a sensitive, artistic poet--one of the major poets of Christianity--and he left behind some of the most beautiful lines ever written containing a body of ideas and attitudes on God. His larger theme is God as reflected in man and nature, and behind every poem lies the poet's concept of what God means to him. All through his poetry may be seen and felt the growth of this devotion to God, with Christ intimately interwoven in all his verse.

According to Downes, Hopkins is one of the few poets in the English language who could "imaginatively express the

imminent presence of God in all things."² His poems are poetic expressions of his own personal philosophy of life molded by the ideas of Ignatius and Scotus and by his other Catholic beliefs. The ideas in his poetry are consonant with the ideas he set down in his spiritual writings--all creatures were made for man to lead him back to God; mortal beauty through its supernatural significance becomes immortal beauty; everything in nature is a manifestation of God and His goodness; man is innately desirous to know Divinity; the individual reaches his highest perfection when, in co-operation with grace, he becomes another Christ. That these ideas and beliefs are the central thread running through both the verse and the spiritual writings of Hopkins seems to indicate a harmonious relationship between poet and priest, a successful fusion of art and religion.

Hopkins was by choice a priest, and he used poetry to express emotions and beliefs that were spontaneous and sincere, relating the feelings and thoughts to which he dedicated his life. There is therefore no reason to assume that any unusual conflict or tension existed in the life and writings of Hopkins. The suggestion that Hopkins was a man torn between his artistic desires and his religious restrictions has come from those critics who have attempted an interpretation of his verse without regarding the beliefs he held as a Catholic. This anti-religious reading of his verse is justified only in the event that one can point out ideas and meanings in his poetry that are not consonant with the

²Ignatian Spirit, p. 175.

teachings and doctrines of his Jesuit faith. The reading of his poetry in this study has attempted to show that this situation does not exist; Hopkins' verse is rather a poetic statement of the ideas and beliefs that he practiced in his daily life and set down in his prose. There is consistent correlation of life, poetry, and prose. No one, of course, can deny the occasional, powerful evidences of stress and tension in the verse of Hopkins. But all should remember that the Christian life, especially as Hopkins conceived it, is inherently rooted in conflict and cross-pressures. The tension in the poems, as his prose works corroborate, finds its own harmonious place in the larger pattern of Christian belief which Hopkins firmly held.

The final decision of accepting or rejecting the wholeness of Hopkins must be left up to his readers; but most critics and readers, while in dispute at times about interpretation and contributing influences, agree that his poetry is major and his stature permanent. Hopkins, along with T. S. Eliot, makes modern poetry an impressive witness to the continuing vitality of the Christian faith, and to its resources for creative newness.

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