

THE FALLACIES OF WORDSWORTH'S MYSTICISM

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M.A.

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TO  
MARY IMMACULATE  
THE GREATEST MYSTIC OF ALL TIMES

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## C O N T E N T S

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P R E F A C E

FATHER  
SANDREAU'S  
PROPHECY

The prefatory chapter of any book (so they say) is the hors d'oeuvre and the cocktail before dinner. Its purpose is to whip up an appetite for the book itself. But when the subject is mysticism no appetizer is necessary, for anything connected with the mystical is now amazingly popular. Father Sandreau's prophecy, "The twentieth century has already seen and will yet see more and more a renaissance of the mystical," is being fulfilled. Nor is there any denying the need and value of it in our age, with its spirit of self-indulgence and crass materialism and its consequent miseries.

DR. TINKER'S  
SOLUTION

Dr. Edward Tinker must have had this need in mind when he wrote his article in the New York Times: "When anxiety, unrest and jangled nerves distort the quiet pattern of most men's lives, the search grows for an antidote, for some sort of intellectual soothing syrup to allay the pain of change." He goes on to say that the present day desire of "escape" is leading people to turn in desperation to the incomprehensible and the mystical. But he doesn't mean religion. He is referring to "obscurantist" literature which he defines as a "phantasmagoric flow of dimly and subconsciously connected musings," and "casual juxtapositions of mental meanderings." It has been said that in paganism everything was God except God Himself. Many modern writers, including Dr. Tinker, treat of mysticism so loosely and so indiscriminately that we are tempted to say that nowadays everything is called mysticism except mysticism itself. One thing is certain,

and that is, Dr. Tinker's solution for the horrors and terrors of life is a fake. Solace and strength will not be found in unintelligible literature but rather in the bona fide incomprehensible or the genuine mystical because the true Mystical and Incomprehensible is God, our only Refuge.

UNIVERSAL  
APPEAL

I have chosen mysticism for the theme of this thesis because it is of deep and abiding interest. It holds a universal appeal, not being the privilege of the intellectual but within the reach of the poor and the unlearned. It has a bearing upon the many-sided problems of human life. The stunted seed of it lies in every man. It is that mysterious inborn thing which is in each son and daughter of Adam but which not all of them, in these bewildered days, are conscious of. In truth, it is commonly and successfully cultivated by those who know not its name. Consequently, it is very essential that proper orientation be given to "those Christian ideas run mad" (for mysticism and Christian ideas are closely associated) which the "isms" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have sent winging to the four corners of the world. President Roosevelt clearly grasps the importance of a man's mystical ideas. In a speech delivered last July he mentioned the perverse mysticism of Hitler which, in his opinion, "has caused such succeeding waves of upheavals that the plans of yesterday appear to have been made in a world which now seems to be as distant as that of another planet".

Wordsworth's mysticism excites my curiosity because being a teacher myself, I am interested in the thoughts and interior life of a man who wished to be regarded as a teacher or nothing, and the fallacies of

SUBJECT

TIMELY

his mysticism has been the particular object of my choice because I consider that subject to be very timely. Under the direct impact of the appalling consequences of the present titanic war originating in the "perverse mysticism of Hitler" we readily understand how important it is that our personal mystical ideas be based on Divine Revelation and common sense, and that we who instruct others unto justice be capable of detecting and pointing out the mystical errors in the philosophy of those whose lives they study.

WORDSWORTH

VERSUS

KILMER

There is also another reason for my choosing this particular topic. For a long time past a perplexing question has been occupying my thoughts. Why was it that Wordsworth fell into such a moral abyss of scepticism and despair in the face of the horrors of the French Revolution, whereas the soldier-poet, Joyce Kilmer, in the thick of the hellish Great World War, dedicated himself heroically to the cause, went into battle with poetry in his heart and a smile on his lips, and because his conscience told him he was right, died facing the enemy, a smile on his lips and a bullet between his eyes? That bullet wound robbed the world of a great poet and a great man. Had he lived there would have been a Christian Renaissance for his spiritual perceptions were rooted far down in the rock of faith.

CATHOLIC

OUTLOOK

If this thesis is at all in keeping with my idea, it will prove that the spiritual relation of the Catholic to the great kingdom of supernatural reality and its problems is profoundly different from that of the non-Catholic. An effort will be made to show the void there is in the mysticism of one without the fold of the Catholic faith

when made to grapple with the social problems common to humanity. Generally speaking, the conclusion reached, I think, will be that the Catholic outlook on life is more light-hearted, more serene; for earthly things are too unimportant to be taken very seriously. "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come." (Hebr. xiii, 14)

The matter is not to be exhausted here. Indeed, it will only be a skimming of the measureless pool, based upon the principle "that you go through the rivulets and do not try at once to come to the sea, because we must necessarily go to the more difficult through the less difficult." The subject is beset with dangers (that I am fully conscious of) for one not grounded in Catholic theology. It is a road upon which angels might fear to tread. Hence we betake ourselves to the task, with Pascal, on our knees.

S.M.C.

Immaculate High School  
Our Lady's Birthday, 1940

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

"For I intend in all I write (I appeal to God,  
Who knows it), rather to profit many than to  
praise him."  
(Scrinia Reserata, Bishop Hacket).

## INTRODUCTION

PANEGYRICAL  
CRITICISMS

The authors of the critical works on Wordsworth's life and poetry, found on the bookshelves of our public libraries, have succumbed to the same fault as the early biographers. Their criticisms are remarkably panegyric in tone and so they necessarily only contain part of the truth. To give a true picture of any man or his works, you must give the defects as well as the qualities. "De mortuis nil nisi bonum" is a trite adage, I agree, but were it to be blindly followed in the realm of literary criticism, morality and society would suffer a serious injury. Exaggerated untruthful praise of the qualities and the utter neglect of the defects of the philosophy or mysticism subtly permeating the poems of Wordsworth, for instance, is highly blameworthy. His poetry is on the outline for intensive study in the curricula of all our schools and colleges, Catholic and non-Catholic, and so it is of the utmost importance that the true character of his mystical inspiration be not painted in false colours. To palliate its weakness or varnish over any erroneous doctrine contained therein would be nothing short of criminal to the rising generation.

"ISMS"

Living in the midst of a chaotic and convulsed world we are fully aware of the harm done by the indoctrination of distorted mystical beliefs. If we trace back to the root causes of Socialism, Communism, Fascism, Nazism, Totalitarianism, we shall discover that they have all sprung from the ensnaring mystical conceptions of a dominating personality, such as a Karl Marx, a Mussolini, or an Adolf

Hitler. Mistaken ideals and ambitions naturally lead to a perverted order of things which in turn reduces our lives to prose although God meant them to be poetry. Robbed of the essential joyousness eternally welling up in hearts filled with an abiding faith in God and in God's ways, men and women around us are experiencing a soul-destroying drabness. Many of them know far too much about the moans of life and far too little about the exultation of life. Consequently, the only song they sing is what Wordsworth called "the still sad music of humanity".

All Wordsworth's thoughts and opinions, particularly in the heyday of his poetical inspiration, move in a rut which only have a meaning on purely naturalistic presuppositions, inasmuch as they are limited to sensual experience. Chesterton, in one of his strange paradoxes, says somewhere, "The natural can be the most unnatural of all things to a man". And Chesterton, in the case of Wordsworth, is right. A mysticism which confines itself to natural occurrences is actually the most unnatural, for it takes the smallest section of reality to be the whole reality. The Poet, at times, becomes all confused regarding the ultimate roots of this reality, its profoundest relations, its connection with the invisible, the superterrestrial, the divine. This is understandable since his religious convictions were not illuminated by the light of Revelation and Tradition. The way of knowledge cannot lead from earth to heaven, but only from heaven to earth because the plane of experience necessarily stops on this side of the line. It simply cannot

MYSTICISM

CONFINED

push forward to where the supernatural reality of God and his Christ is to be found, if it can be found at all. Jesus Himself bore witness to this truth in these words: "Flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven", (Matt. xvi. 17). Revelation by God's grace on the one hand, on the other, our faith-- these alone are the ways by which Christ can meet us. And at the beginning and at the end of our road to Christ, there stand Grace and Divine Love alone. Grace uses the same psychological mechanism to raise us to prayer as is used to put in movement that which is known as poetic experience, but prayer and poetry are not the same thing. Poetry of its nature tends to join prayer but as Dom Auburg admirably expresses it: "Poetry is a sign; it indicates a higher faculty in us, capable of receiving God, though incapable of apprehending him." (La Vie Spirituelle). The reason he gives is that not only contemplation, but the humblest prayer worthy of the name is a supernatural gift of God. Thus, it is not surprising to find Wordsworth, not having the necessary means of grace at his disposal, falling sometimes into the ambushes of error.

Generally speaking, many of the Poet's fallacies are emphasized by his lack of virility in thought and purpose. The mental stature of St. Thomas Aquinas, of St. Francis of Assisi, of St. Teresa, for instance, is entirely different from his. We might class Wordsworth and St. Francis as idealists, although they differ widely in that field also, but no stretch of the imagination would ever permit us to describe Wordsworth as a real live wire

LACK OF  
VIRILITY

like Horace Shipp does the Poor Little Man of Assisi, in--

"We thought that we had tricked you, Poverello,  
Walled you in marble, coffined you in gold;  
But you laugh last, the same quaint simple fellow,  
God's little sparrow, lively as of old."

St. Francis was a man of action as the following little incident in his life goes to prove. In that ruined Church of St. Damian in Assisi the Saint was facing the moral crisis of his career. He heard a voice saying to him,

ST. FRANCIS

"Francis, seest thou not that my house is in ruins? Go and restore it for me". What did he do? Did he spend long hours meditating upon the meaning of the message, as I am sure Wordsworth would have done? No! "Francis sprang up and went", thereby fulfilling one of the driving demands of his nature which was always to go and do

ST. THOMAS

something. St. Thomas of Aquinas' decisions are marked with a similar vitality. Kneeling before the carved Christ he too heard a voice saying to him that he had written rightly, and offering him the choice of a reward among all the things of the world. His characteristic answer was: "I shall have Thyself".

YEA AND NAY

It is this absence of "Yea and nay" in Wordsworth which is one of the dividing lines between him and the saintly Mystics. Perhaps it is because they stake their all on One whose iron Yea and nay is still heard in every corner of the globe. Our Divine Lord is the model par excellence in the use of terse, even stern language and of bold action. "Begone, Satan," was how He frightened away the devil who came to tempt him (Matt. iv. 10), and in the parable of the marriage of the king's son, when the king saw a man at the feast who

had not on a wedding garment, He, in unconcealed anger, gave the order: "Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. xxii. 11-13). The shadow of their Divine Master's uncompromising and unflinchable "Yea and nay" seems to have fallen upon all true mystics of the Church.

Before going farther afield in the boundless territory of mysticism, it is fitting to pause here and follow Mr. C. F. E. Spurgeon's advice who tells us: "Mysticism is a term so irresponsibly applied in English that it has become the first duty of those who use it to explain what they mean by it". Now, to define it explicitly is an impossible task because its elements have their resting place in the divine. Dom S. Louismet, O.S.B., claims that the mystical life is simply life in union with God. It is nothing more nor less, he says, than a genuine Christian life, lived in its fulness, according to each one's vocation and state. It is a human life made supernatural and wholly divine in all its manifestations, even the most lowly and material ones, such as eating, sleeping, recreation, material work! "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God". (1 Cor. x, 31). If mysticism, then, is such an ordinary thing why does this word defy the construer? One need only be an initiate in the mystical life to know that its experiences, for one who abandons himself perfectly to the action of God, and faithfully co-operates with it, are as numerous and as varied as the experiences of physical life. They begin in the early morning as soon as one awakens from sleep and gives

IMPOSSIBLE  
TO DEFINE

his heart to God, and they go on without intermittence the whole day long; "I sleep" says the bride of the Canticle, "but my heart watcheth". To the great Mystics, in other words, to the great Saints of the Church, there is no question of understanding what they experience-- the heavenly joy is so great that no tongue could explain it to those who have not experienced it, yet they accept it as does the child his daily portion of bread and milk.

DESIRE FOR  
ECSTASY

But mysticism is not confined to Catholic men and women alone. A desire for ecstasy, Mr. Algar Thorold urges, lies at the root of our nature. "Dieu est en nous" sang Ronsard,

"Et par nous fait miracle,  
Si que les vers d'un poète escrivent,  
Ce sont des Dieux les secrets et oracles,  
Que par sa bouche ils poussent en avant."

MYSTICAL  
TEMPERAMENT

Spiritual perception seems to be universal to man for the ideas of God and the soul spring together with his consciousness from the fount of his being, although the source like his own, he cannot see. Endowed with a mystical temperament, Wordsworth felt more immediately than most of his contemporaries the impact of the spiritual forces rampant in the world about him. It is solely and simply this mystical character that we attach to his poetry that gives a subtle meaning to his enthusiasm, his "Dic mihi musa," or his inspiration. I think Père de Grandmaison would place Wordsworth's poetical or so-called mystical experiences among those profane states of nature in which "one can already decipher the great lines and discern the image and rough sketch of the mystical states of the soul". It was a great theologian

POET

MYSTIC

who spoke thus. An English theologian, Father Sharpe, makes use of the same assimilation. "There are certainly", he writes, "striking resemblances between the flashes of inspiration which reveal and define genius, and the mysterious intuition of the Divine Presence granted to the mystics." But it is only in the psychological design of his own experience that the poet can be compared to the mystic. Apart from that, there is an abyss of differences. The richest confidences of Wordsworth are found in his Prelude but placed alongside the autobiographical analyses of St. John of the Cross or St. Teresa, or even the average mystic, they do not amount to much. The supernatural character of the interior life of the Saint completes, transforms, elevates the constitution of his natural psychic activity. He is always afraid of being the plaything of some illusion. Hence the pitiless examination which enables him to describe his mystical experience in a detail and with a penetration which you seek in vain to find in Wordsworth. Then the Pantheistic strain causes the Divine Personality to become something uncertain. The following paragraph gives us some perception of what we mean when we speak of Wordsworth's mysticism.

ENCYCLOPAEDIA

BRITANNICA

"Mysticism is a phase of thought, or rather perhaps of feeling, which from its very nature is hardly susceptible of exact definition. It appears in connection with the endeavour of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the Highest. . . . .The thought which is most intensely present with the mystic is that of a supreme, all-pervading, and indwelling power, in whom all things are one. Hence the speculative utterances of mysticism are always more or less pantheistic in character. On the practical side, mysticism maintains the

possibility of direct intercourse with this Being of beings--intercourse, not through any external media such as an historical revelation, oracles, answers to prayer, and the like, but by a species of ecstatic transfusion or identification, in which the individual becomes in very truth "partaker of the divine nature". God ceases to be an object to him and becomes an experience.....The mystic is animated not merely by the desire of intellectual harmony; he seeks the deepest ground of his own being, in order that he may cast aside whatever separates him from the true life. This religious impulse is shown in the fact that, whereas pantheism as such, seems to lead logically to passive acquiescence in things as they are--all things being already as divine as it is their nature to be--mysticism, on the contrary, is penetrated by the thought of alienation from the divine. Even where it preaches most our essential unity with God, its constant and often painful effort is directed towards overcoming an admitted alienation. In other words, the identity with God which it teaches is not a mere natural identity, as in ordinary pantheism, but one which is the goal of achievement."

Wordsworth early became aware of these powers, this mystic sense within himself, and intuitively as he grasped the sense, intuitively also he began to cultivate it. Without being religious he was a man of deep spiritual perceptions, and for these he strove to find expression through the medium of his love for nature and solitude, a characteristic which he shares with all true mystics. Deflected from his original ideal of democracy by the horrors of the French Revolution, he joined hands, as it were, with the monks, the real mystics of bygone centuries, and became in a sense a hermit soul, imbued with a powerful yearning for truth and harmony, a harmony which he conceived to rest at the heart of things as the central motive power of all life and activity. For the Catholic mystic, however, harmony lies in the fact of his being a son of God by adoption by the grace of Baptism.

#### HERMIT SOUL

He finds harmony by going out beyond the margin of the world to the perfect God, who, disguised as a humble Nazarene Carpenter, calmly revealed in one great and tremendous paradox, the secret of His ageless eternity in the strangest paradox this aging earth had ever heard: "Before Abraham was made....I am". He realizes that we must seek first the kingdom of God and His justice. There is no discordant note in his life because he has learned to look at things through the eyes of Christ, and in consequence does not even consider as desirable what the average petitioner aspires to in his prayers. It is always springtime in the heart that loves God. St. Anselm said of the monks of his day: "They fill the world with their songs of joy".

HARMONY

The story of mysticism is re-lived in a thousand times ten thousand lives. Every mystic bears the imprint of his hour. How else could they put their ideas across unless they had their finger on the pulse of their civilization? "In the rhythm of their poetry is the cry of their epoch; in the dreams of their philosophy is the aspiration of their century." Name a few great mystics of the earth: Job, Plato, Socrates, Isaias, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Teresa of Avila, Dante, Wordsworth, Kateri Tekawitha. What are they but the incarnation of Arabia, Greece, Judea, Italy, Spain, England, and North America, in the hour in which they lived? A man's mysticism is but a part of him, having as background the collective experience of the age in which he lives, but impregnated with his own preconceptions, his own personality and experience. Quoting Evelyn Underhill:

IMPRINT OF  
HIS HOUR

"In reading the mystics, then, we must be

EVELYN UNDERHILL

careful not to cut them out of their backgrounds and try to judge them by spiritual standards alone. They are human beings immersed in the stream of human history; children of their own time, their own Church, as well as children of Eternal Love. Like other human beings, they have their social and their individual aspects; and we shall not obtain a true idea of them unless both be kept in mind."

AGE OF  
WORDSWORTH

Each age has its own values,--its own beacon lights, its own dreams and aspirations. Therefore each age has its own peculiar mysticism. In the age of Wordsworth it resulted largely from an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility. The universe of sense of thought acquired a new potency of response and appeal to man, a new capacity of ministering to, and mingling with his richest and intensest life. It enshrouded the glory of lake and mountain, the grace of childhood, the dignity of the untaught peasant, causing a subtle fascination which rested partly upon wonder, but partly also upon recognition. By detaching himself from the real world he was restored to reality at a higher point, a soul being revealed where no eye had yet discerned it. Lake and mountain were invested with "the light that never was on sea or land". Wordsworth's aim was to make the natural appear supernatural, and Coleridge's was just the opposite--to make the supernatural natural. In those days, too, it was generally assumed that art and sanctity must remain miles apart for a great schism separated the artist and Catholicism. Even Catholics looked upon bad art as one of the "notes" of the Church by which men might know that she was of Christ--a king not of this world.

The world apart from the Church cannot get

away from its own immediate epoch. Only the mysticism of those within the fold of Mother Church has a universality about it because of the universality of Our Lord upon which everything mystical is founded. At times, Wordsworth seems to touch the hem of His garment but usually his message is sad. He has not the key to the secret of His Timelessness. He does not go out beyond time to the Timeless, beyond the complex to the Perfect, beyond change to the Changeless, as do those who rest their mystical beliefs on a man outside of time; the Man; the God-Man whose universality overflows the limits of time and space. There is plenty of scope left for divergence in the presentment and exposition of the topic under discussion but Catholic writers will always agree on the fundamental questions. The Catholic attitude is also more objective and constructive: "I love the people," said Henry George, "and that love brought me to Christ as their best friend and teacher". "And I" answered Cardinal Manning, "I loved Christ and so learned to love the people for whom He died".

CHRIST

TIMELESS

TERMS

AMBIGUOUS

To-day mystic and mysticism are generally so vaguely and loosely used that the meaning they convey is far from being precise. As these ambiguous terms will frequently confront the reader during the course of this thesis I deem it wise to cite a few trenchant sentences and definitions which have been gleaned from reliable Catholic and Non-Catholic sources.

THOROLD

"A mystic is known by his taste for divine things, a non-mystic by his taste for earthly things.

Mysticism is no sickly delusion of this or

that morbid individual, but as real a part of the experience of man as the nervous system." (Alger Thorold)

LOUISMET

"A celebrated sentence of Tertullian is that the human soul has a natural disposition to mysticism.

"St. Thomas Aquinas did not know of that vague, undetermined, and Proteus-like thing, which in modern language is called mysticism. Was it not because for him such a thing did not exist?" (Louismet)

UNDERHILL

"In Greek religion, from which the word comes to us, the mystae were those initiates of the 'mysteries' who were believed to have received the vision of the god, and with it a new and higher life. When the Christian Church adopted this term it adopted, too, this original meaning. The Christian mystic therefore is one for whom God and Christ are not merely objects of belief, but living facts experimentally known at first-hand; and mysticism for him becomes, in so far as he responds to its demands, a life based on this conscious communion with God. When St. Augustine said, 'My life shall be a real life, being wholly full of Thee,' he described in these words the ideal of a true Christian mysticism." (Evelyn Underhill)

"In the light of this, (mysticism), nothing in the world is trivial, nothing is unimportant, nothing is common or unclean. It is the feeling that Blake has crystallized in the lines:

To see a world in a grain of sand  
And a Heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour."

Quoting the same author, Spurgeon, again:

SPURGEON

"James's description of his own position in this matter, and his feeling for a 'Beyond,' is one to which numberless 'unmystical' people would subscribe. He compares it to a tune that is always singing in the back of his mind, but which he can never identify nor whistle nor get rid of. It is very vague and impossible to describe or put into words .....Especially at times of moral crisis it comes to me, as the sense of an unknown something backing me up. It is most indefinite, to be sure, and rather faint. And yet I know that if it should cease there would be a great hush, a great void in my life."

Against this indefiniteness stands the perfectly clear, traditional, historical meaning handed down throughout the centuries, not subject to confusion of thought until recent times.

"Mysticism is an experience; a soul-experience .....the special experience of a human being, as yet a wayfarer on earth, 'actually tasting and seeing that God is sweet.' (Ps. xxxiii, 9) Therein the loving soul meets the loving God. Therein man transcends the whole created order of things visible and invisible, to such an extent as even to meet God, to grapple with Him in the dark, and to wrest from Him, if not His name, which is ineffable, certainly at any rate, His blessing.....Catholic Traditional Mysticism is purely and simply the mysticism of our Holy Mother the Church, who is the Bride of Christ and the teacher and infallible oracle of truth; the mysticism with which the Old and New Testaments, but more particularly the divine Gospels, are overflowing; the mysticism of the Apostles, of the first Christians, of the martyrs and confessors of all ages, of all men of good will; a mysticism that is Catholic not only in name, or because it is sanctioned by the authority of the Church, but Catholic also in that it embraces all things and persons who are Christ's. 'All things are yours,' says St. Paul, 'and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's'." (1 Cor. iii, 22, 23)  
(The Mystical Life, Dom Louismet)

LOUISMET

And lastly, the definition taken from the Catholic Encyclopaedia:

"In philosophy, Mysticism is either a religious tendency and desire of the human soul towards an intimate union with the Divinity, or a system growing out of such a tendency and desire. This direct union of the soul with the Divinity is through contemplation and love, and this contemplation is not based on a merely analogical knowledge of the Infinite, but on a direct and immediate intuition of the Infinite. It may be orthodox or heterodox, according as it agrees with or opposes the Catholic teaching."

CATHOLIC

ENCYCLOPAEDIA

Mysticism is no strange country to us although we are well aware that it is not for us--at least for the vast majority--to pierce beyond the impalpable boundary

NO STRANGE  
COUNTRY

where "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them, that love Him." (1 Cor. ii, 9) The instinctive feeling of the natural man tends towards the supernatural for the fine edge of his soul's craving is for the beauty of God. Perhaps there are no more beautiful nor sadder lines illustrating this point than those which Michael Angelo penned towards the end of his life:

"Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest  
My soul that turns to His great love on high  
Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread".

Never perhaps did a man achieve so much in such varied ways as this child of the gods. Michael Angelo succeeded supremely as sculptor, painter, poet, lover; yet this is what he has to say of his success.

FAMILIARS

Nor are mystics strangers to us. Every human individual, sometime or another, has fled with Francis Thompson "down the nights and down the days....down the arches of the years;....down the labyrinthine ways of his own mind," before the persistent footsteps of his "tremendous Lover" until, beaten and exhausted he finds himself at the end of the chase face to face with his Divine Maker. Have we not felt ourselves supported and enhanced by some mysterious power under stress of difficulties such as Ignatius Loyola was, who, physically weak and penniless, tramped from Paris to Rome under the spur of his vocation, or looked up at the Host, with the Curé of Ars, "sometimes in tears, sometimes with a smile"? Indeed, mystics are, like angels, our dear familiars, and like them also too little regarded, for

"The world is too much with us: late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.--Great God! .....

CRUCIAL  
MOMENTS

In spite of this prevalent material-mindedness, there are crucial moments in our lives when "the light of sense goes out, but with a flash that has revealed the invisible world". Then we step with Wordsworth over the shadowy boundary which takes him into that realm where higher mystics have blazed a more spiritual path. His conception of this is pictured in Tintern Abbey where he speaks of

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

POETIC  
EXPERIENCE

"Beauty," says Maritain, "all beauty, tends of itself to unite us to God." Hence, the beauty of God's world which Wordsworth so long and so lovingly contemplated made him aspire to God before he really knew it. In a certain sense, in Tintern Abbey and other poems written during that inspirational period, he has seized Him before naming Him. Poetic experience, such as was granted to him, knows not blasphemy any more than prayer. It is, however, both excellent and essentially imperfect in so far as it is only the stepping-stone to a higher experience which in some way it calls out for, but to

which, of itself, it would never lead; rather would it block approach. Its springs require nothing but a supernatural impulse to serve the special ends of true prayer, but that supernatural impulse which finds its feeding-place in Divine Grace, and the Sacraments--the fountain-heads of Heavenly nourishment,--was not vouchsafed to Wordsworth. Instead of being numbered among the outstanding poets he might be famous as a great mystic if Heaven had bestowed that gift upon him. That statement challenges thought.

DR. SAMUEL  
JOHNSON

As I stated at the outset of this chapter, this thesis is going to be conspicuous for the abolition of the panegyric. Not that I do not find much to praise him for, but because--paraphrasing Dr. Samuel Johnson's condemnation of the servile eulogists among the earlier writers of Lives--I, too, declare: "We have had too many honey-suckle discussions on the Poet Wordsworth. Mine shall be in another strain".

CHAPTER II

HIS BELIEF IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE

"God's in his heaven--  
All's right with the world."

HIS BELIEF IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE

"God's in his heaven--  
All's right with the world."

Browning made Pippa, a poor little ragged girl, sing like that. She worked the whole year round in an Italian silk mill earning just bread and milk, and yet, that was the song she sang. Strange, isn't it! No one would ever make the mistake of saying that Wordsworth was the author of that beautiful thought amidst similar surroundings. In their faith in Divine Providence these two poets were poles apart, although both of them are guilty of a pantheistic optimism. In this, however, Wordsworth is the more serious transgressor. He finds it very easy to be optimistic when "in a spirit of religious love, he walked with nature;" that is, when there is a feeling of affinity between his thoughts and the universe. In the concluding strophe of "The Recluse" he acknowledges providential design because he experiences this mutual accommodation of his faculties with the objects of his perception and thought.

PANTHEISTIC  
OPTIMISM

PROVIDENTIAL  
DESIGN

"How exquisitely the individual Mind  
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less  
Of the whole species) to the external World  
Is fitted, and how exquisitely, too

.....

The external world is fitted to the Mind:  
And the creation (by no lower name  
Can it be called) which they with blended might  
Accomplish.....

In his acknowledgment of order and harmony in the universe, Wordsworth is in accord with the teaching of the Catholic Church. To give him his due, he, too,

seeing the beauty of the world about him, the regular succession of the seasons, the fruitfulness of the fields, the splendours of the heavens, and how admirably everything contributes to Man's needs and comfort, assumes that the natural world, in the whole and in detail, is designed to bring about the effects envisaged by divine wisdom. This assumption lurks more or less behind his poetry in all periods, but the most explicit statement of it is found in "The Excursion". The Wanderer is addressing the unbelieving Solitary:--

DIVINE  
WISDOM

"These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds,  
Does that benignity pervade, that warms  
The mole contented with her darksome walk  
In the cold ground; and to the emmet gives  
Her foresight, and intelligence that makes  
The tiny creatures strong by social league;  
Supports the generations, multiplies  
Their tribes, till we behold a spacious plain  
Or grassy bottom, all, with little hills--  
Their labour, covered, as a lake with waves;  
Thousands of cities in the desert places  
Built up, of life, and food, and means of life!

Other communities, such as those of summer flies, and of birds in flocks, where "more obviously the selfsame influence rules are then mentioned".

DUTY STERN In his "Ode to Duty" (1805), Wordsworth is still in his optimistic mood. Duty may be stern but she also wears "the Godheart's most benignant grace".

Flowers laugh before thee on their beds  
And fragrance in thy footing treads;  
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;  
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee,  
are fresh and strong."

Wordsworth says the duty which governs man's conduct goes back to the same divine fiat as the laws which govern and preserve the heavens. The universe reveals to Browning also, with even greater buoyancy, the love, power, and wisdom of a Supreme Being.

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and  
I spoke;  
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received  
in my brain  
And pronounced on the rest of His handiwork--  
returned Him again  
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as  
I saw.  
I report, as a man may of God's work--all's love,  
yet all's law."

Like all other poor mortals, Wordsworth found it  
easy to pronounce his "Fiat" and to agree "All's well  
with the world," when he wasn't obliged to wrestle with  
the problem of pain, sorrow, and evil. Then it is that  
we are brought face to face with the shallowness of his  
trust in a Fatherly God. When there were no clouds in  
the sky--when the complicated worldly apparatus supplied  
his sentient nature with pleasant sensations, then God  
was to him, a Being with one predominant attribute--  
benevolence.

PROBLEM  
OF PAIN

"How bountiful is Nature; he shall find  
Who seeks not, and to him that hath not asked,  
Large measure shall be dealt.

.....

For the discerning intellect of Man  
When wedded to this goodly universe  
In love and holy passion, shall find these--

that is, Beauty, Paradise, the Elysian Fields, all ideal  
DISILLUSIONED dreams of man. But when Wordsworth becomes disillusioned  
by the frailties of human nature he is grateful that in  
his childhood he started with faith in the nobleness of  
Man. Were it otherwise, he says:

"And we found evil fast as we find good  
In our first years, or think that it is found,  
How could the innocent heart bear up and live!

How widely different in tone from Browning this is!  
Pippa, in the grim surroundings of a factory, glanced  
upward and saw that God was in His heaven, and therefore

all was right with the world. I am tempted to compare Wordsworth and Browning, in their treatment of the subject of pain and evil to the men behind the prison bars, who looked out, and "one saw mud and the other saw stars".

Browning, understanding and accepting the philosophic implications of his creed, sees the hand of Divine Providence in the sin and sorrow of human life in a way Wordsworth never did. He says:

"Put pain from out the world, what room were  
left  
For thanks to God, for love to Man?"

Wordsworth, on the other hand, fought against the contradiction to his enthusiastic opinions received when the events in France proved that the principles he would have laid down his life for were null and void. His heart failed him under the blow and a vague despair began to take possession of him. Man became to him a wretched creature whose "best virtues were not free from taint,"

EVENTS IN  
FRANCE

".....the miserable slave  
Of low ambition and distempered love."

Man was either--

"The dupe of folly or the slave of crime."

Compared with Wordsworth regarding this point, Browning is pre-eminently virile-minded. To the latter, earth is the scene of a struggle with evil, and it is just this which gives zest, value, and significance to life. In "Bishop Blougram's Apology," he puts into the mouth of the bishop a graphic description of man's fight with the forces of evil, in which the author conveys to the reader a taste of his own exultation in the battle:

"When the fight begins within himself,  
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,  
Satan looks up between his feet--both tug--  
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes  
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!  
Never leave growing till the life to come!"

Browning apparently believes in the Greek Proverb: "No  
pains, no gains". In his mind, "Success is nought, en-  
deavour's all". Far otherwise thinks Wordsworth who,  
finding himself in a hopeless muddle when he made an  
effort to find an adequate answer to the problem of  
evil in the world at the time of the Reign of Terror,  
retreats from the fight and distracts his puzzled reason  
by the study of abstract science.

HOPELESS

MUDDLE

Shakespeare was even more Catholic-minded than  
either of the above-mentioned poets, although Browning  
was the more apt pupil. Suffering, however cruel and  
undeserved, if borne by one imbued with the spirit of  
Catholicism, does enoble men. Shakespeare implies  
this in--

SHAKESPEARE

"There is some soul of goodness in things evil, I  
Would men observingly distill it out."

Joseph, in the Biblical story, solves this problem of  
evil for us when he said: "Ye thought evil against me,  
but God meant it unto good".

In the Prelude, Wordsworth tells us that his sister's  
influence and the love of Nature helped to restore calm  
to his troubled soul. Nature and a woman's influence may  
often be God's instruments to bring comfort and solace  
into a distress-torn soul but they were never meant to  
be sufficient in themselves. Consequently, lurking  
behind the Poet's endless talk about Nature being--

SISTER'S

INFLUENCE

".....the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being ....."

And his claim that by collaborating with her

".....the mind of man becomes  
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
On which he dwells ....."

there is an undertow of weariness. He snatches at the  
last straw of hope by surmising that peace is

".....subsisting at the heart  
Of endless agitation."

Poor Wordsworth! He often mistakes the quiet of the  
desert, or even of the graveyard, for peace. We are  
reminded here of Tacitus' pertinent remark: "Solitudinem faciunt: pacem appellant"--"They make a wilderness and call it peace." Abram J. Ryan, the Poet Priest of the South, gives us the reason why he really never attained it. It was because he sought--

".....mid the Human for Heaven  
But caught only a glimpse of the blue."

Certain passages in Wordsworth are parallel in thought to the dialogue recorded between St. Catherine of Siena and the all-governing Father. I shall quote a few lines from it.

ST. CATHERINE  
OF SIENA

"I want to make you see, My well-beloved daughter, what patience I have to exercise in sustaining the creatures which I have made most lovingly.....in My own image and likeness.....

"Those who are indignant at and rebel against the things that befall them are blind with self-love.....they take for evil and regard as misfortunes, ruin, evidence of hate towards themselves, the things that I do out of love and for their good, that they may be saved from eternal loss and receive the life which shall not pass away. Why then do they murmur against Me? Because they have put their trust in themselves, and so all becomes dark for them and they do not know things as they are: wherefore they hate what they should reverence and in their pride would judge My secret judgments which are righteousness itself.....When somebody does something for them it is I who have prompted the deed and given that creature the ability and knowledge and will to do them that service.....

"So it is with these blind folk who have lost the light of reason fulfilled by faith: they will believe only the evidence of their senses.....The pleasures of the world seem lovely to them: but as they do not really see them they do not take into account that these pleasures are like a piece of good cloth that is full of thorns, that much grief and many cares wait upon them, and that the heart that cherishes them without reference to Me cannot bear the burden of itself....."

".....The path has been shown to her by My Son, the Word, when he said, 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' Whoever walks in it cannot lose his way or be overtaken by darkness, nor can any come to Me except through Him, for He and I are one. I have already told you that I have made of My Son a bridge over which all may come to their proper end, but for all that men will not trust Me, although I am concerned only for their sanctification. My great love ordains or permits everything that happens to that end alone--and they are always shocked at Me....They do not even know themselves, and yet in their blindness they want to see the most secret purposes that I ordain in justice and love. But he who does not know himself cannot truly know Me or understand My judgments; and all things else he sees distortedly."  
(Le dialogue de Ste. Catherine)

In the Prelude, Wordsworth seems to understand that complaint:

"In the unreasoning progress of the world  
A wiser spirit is at work for us,  
A better eye than theirs, most prodigal  
Of blessings, and most studious of our good  
Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours.

.....

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,  
And o'er the heart of man--invisible  
It comes--to works of unreprieved delight,  
And tendency benign, directing those  
Who care not, know not, think not what they do."

The thought herein expressed, as I see it, is a simple trust in a Divine and Merciful Providence, mingled with a contempt for the folly of man in not recognizing the wisdom of the Supreme Ruler. There is nothing contrary to the Catholic teaching which states that Providence is God Himself considered in that act by which in His wisdom

GLORY OF GOD

He so orders all events within the universe that the end for which it was created may be realized. That end is that all creatures manifest the glory of God. This last-mentioned aspect of the question Wordsworth entirely neglects. St. Thomas Aquinas says that Providence is the "Divine intelligence which is the cause of all things... Yet all things, whether due to necessary causes or to the free choice of man, are foreseen by God and preordained in accordance with His all-embracing purpose. Certain passages of the Poet harmonize with St. Thomas' viewpoint. For instance--

".....One adequate support  
For the calamities of mortal life  
Exists, one only;--an assured belief  
That the procession of our fate, howe'er  
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being  
Of infinite benevolence and power;  
Whose everlasting purposes embrace,  
All accidents, converting them to good."

FATALISM

Since free will is a central fact in the Christian conception of life, it would have been wiser on Wordsworth's part to have avoided the use of the term "fate". St. Augustine's advice is, "If anyone calls the influence or the power of God by the name of Fate, let him keep his opinion but mend his speech". Ralph Waldo Emerson says somewhere that "Shallow men believe in luck, believe in circumstances: it was somebody's name, or he happened to be there at the time, or it was so then and another day it would have been otherwise. Strong men believe in cause and effect". Fatalism is strongly condemned by the Catholic Church because it excludes man's moral freedom and responsibility. Do away with the truth that man is bound to obey the moral law, then there is absolutely no meaning to Christ's promise in the

Gospel that he will receive merited punishment or reward according as he violates or observes the law.

I agree with Wordsworth that there is only one "adequate support for the calamities of mortal life.... one only," but here I am tempted to conjecture what would be his attitude towards the unhappy and difficult times in

ATTITUDE

TO-DAY

which we are living, if he were "living at this hour". If we are to judge him by his reaction to the French Revolution which made of him a despairing sceptic for a time, we naturally surmise that his understanding of the manifestations of the workings of Divine Providence would not be in the same mental plane at all as that of our present Holy Father the Pope, as he made it known to the world in his worldwide radio broadcast on November 24th, 1940. Quoting:

POPE PIUS XII

"If the cataclysm does not depress our spirits we feel, nonetheless, that the present hour is a phase in the solemn story of humanity predicted by Christ....But if the din of war seems to overcome and drown our voice we turn our gaze away from earth to Heaven, to the Father of mercies and to the God of all comfort (2nd Cor. 1:3) who contemplates all here below and commands the flow of the ocean: Hitherto thou shalt come and shall go no further and here thou shalt break thy swelling waves. (Job 38:11)

"To Him beneath whose hands in the universal order of events and things the action of man is restless without being able to evade His provident and ineluctable counsel; to Him we raise the sorrowing cry of our heart, imploring from Him better days for the human race, better dawns and better sunsets to our days."

This partial text of Pope Pius' allocution distinctly brings out the serenity of mind which the spirit of Catholicism bestows upon the members of its fold. Wordsworth's philosophy is utterly incapable of producing any such results either in his own heart or in the hearts of his readers. There is another point of contrast between

his references to the Fatherhood of God and those of Catholic poets. Those of Wordsworth, for the most part, are negative while those of Catholic writers are, generally speaking, luminously positive. When confronted with the problem of keeping their mental and emotional balance in the face of cruelties and savageries, they remember with Shylock that "Suffering is the badge of all our tribe," and that our heaven is not here but hereafter. They remember, too, that the liturgical prayers of the Church all emphasize "that peace which the world cannot give," peace in the depth of the soul in spite of all exterior visible calamities. They have the teachings of tradition to fall back upon,--which Wordsworth had not--for instance, St. Augustine tells us that when terrible predicaments arise that we are not to be surprised and to feel ourselves undone. The following excerpt from his writings is worthwhile remembering:

"After all, what else can we human beings expect, seeing that both the Prophets and the Gospels foretold such things long ago? Surely we ought not to be so inconsistent as to believe those prophecies when we read them, but grumble when we see them fulfilled."

I mentioned above that the Catholic outlook was more positive. I might add to that statement that it is essentially more light-hearted. To illustrate FATHER FABER this, allow me to quote Father Faber from his poem,

"God Our Father":

"There's a wideness in God's mercy  
Like the wideness of the sea;  
There's a kindness in His justice,  
Which is more than liberty.  
There is no place where earth's sorrows  
Are more felt than up in heaven:  
There is no place where earth's failings  
Have such kindly judgment given.

.....  
But we make His love too narrow  
By false limits of our own;  
And we magnify His strictness  
With a zeal He will not own.  
If our love were but more simple,  
We should take Him at His word;  
And our lives would be all sunshine  
In the sweetness of our Lord.

This poem has a direct and simple appeal because of the childlike trust and the happiness reflected in the swing of its words. There isn't one single heavy idea, but Oh, it conveys so much food for thought! In the very lift of its phrase we know that Father Faber is happy in his song. There is an atmosphere of light and radiance about it strikingly absent in anything Wordsworth ever wrote about the Fatherly benevolence of the Creator. In fact, I think the contrast so obvious that no further comment is required.

HAPPY IN  
HIS SONG

Probably the weakest spot in Wordsworth's thesis is his failure to go beyond the stars to solve the mysteries of life. Only in the light of a life to come are the ills of this life bearable. God is in his heaven, and there, some day, will be enacted the scene of the unmaking and remaking. Firmly convinced of that fact, there can be no such thing as a final irretrievable failure. We remark also that there is no mention of the consoling doctrine of prayer. A Catholic writer has correctly said, "Prayer is man's strength and God's weakness". The most eloquent prayer mounts from a bruised heart and flies as straight as an arrow to the tender heart of the Father. This beautiful Catholic practice as well as Christ's demand that we imitate Him without limit even to the bearing of the Cross, did not hold any definite appeal for the Poet. Therein is found an adequate solution

PRAYER

for the many ups-and-downs of our mortal sojourn. "He that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me," (Matt. x. 38) rings out as clear as a clarion over the whole earth. Christ was too abstract a personage to Wordsworth for him to be overwhelmed by the fervour and warmth of Jesus' trust and confidence when he surrenders himself to the fatherly arms of God. Karl Adam describes it thus:

CHRIST

ABSTRACT

KARL ADAM

"Though the Father's love lead him by way of the Mount of Olives to Golgotha, it is 'Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt'. In the abyssal depths of his trust in his Father lie the happiness, the joy, the exultation of his religious life. It is to Jesus unthinkable, absolutely impossible, that the Father could leave disregarded an earnest request, a persistent knocking at his door. This is to him a thousand times more impossible than that an earthly father should give a scorpion to his own child when it had asked for an egg. (Luke xi. 12)"

He who wished to be a teacher of others should have first sat at the feet of the Greatest Teacher of mankind before attempting to impart his lessons to his fellowmen. What possibility was there of his escaping error when dealing with the high and difficult doctrine of Divine Providence in view of the fact that he didn't seek the answer in humble supplication from the Light of the World, the Fountainhead of all truth! In vain, therefore, do we seek for the secret of God's seemingly hard way with us in Wordsworth's poetry. It is the Catholic poet, Francis Thompson, in The Hound of Heaven who tells us:

"All which I took from thee I did but take,  
Not for thy harms,  
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.  
All which thy child's mistake  
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:  
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

CHAPTER III

HIS THEISTIC VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE

"Si Deus non est, quid ergo est?"  
(Job)

## HIS THEISTIC VIEW OF THE UNIVERSE

"Si Deus non est, quid ergo est?"  
(Job)

This sublime thought of Job's may well stand at the beginning of any theistic discussion. If God does not exist, everything is but illusion, but a lie. Leave Him out of our explanations and nothing has any rational justification. As Maine de Biran, that philosopher of inner experience, sees it-----"we are left with the book of nature and no explanation of how it comes to be a book and not a series of meaningless scratches". Now, do not mistake me. I do not intend for one moment to class Wordsworth as an atheist or even having atheistic views. For the most part, he uses the language of the theist--as the quotations of this chapter will prove--and I shall go one step further and say that his mind and heart is much more in sympathy with the believer than with the atheist. The chief fault I have to find is that he writes frequently as one who knows no personal God. This happens principally during the supreme decade of his poetical experience. In his later years his language and inspiration changes, and his Christianity becomes much more orthodox. With these preliminary rambling introductory remarks I shall proceed more explicitly.

NO ATHEIST

SENSE OF  
THE DIVINE

That Wordsworth was always haunted by the sense of some divine being is no exaggeration. In tracing his own growth under the influences of Nature in the Prelude, he says that even from his birth the "ceaseless music" flowed through his infant dreams, and gave him a fore-taste of the calm--

"That Nature breathes among the hills and groves".

Then, as a boy surrounded by the profound peace of the moors at night, he felt low breathings coming after him, and heard steps, "silent as the turf they trod," among the solitary hills. Did he stealthily row on the lake in the growing darkness, then, the huge peak which suddenly rose up in front of him seemed to voluntarily stride after him with a definite purpose in view. For days afterwards, the mind of the boy Wordsworth was troubled and bewildered. His brain

TROUBLED AND  
BEWILDERED

"Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of Being,....."

These vague impressions stirred in him the sense of moral wrong, the sense of indefinite sublimity, the sense of a vast and invisible life without himself. It was the living Soul of the universe which was acting upon his own soul, developing his passions which in turn were building up his character and the ideals which enoble it.

"By day or starlight thus, from my first dawn  
Of childhood, didst thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human soul;  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
But with high objects, with enduring things--  
With life and nature--purifying thus  
The elements of feeling and of thought,  
And sanctifying, by such discipline,  
Both pain and fear, until we recognize  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart."

SILENT  
EDUCATION

This silent education continued until at last he saw the "visions of the hills," and spoke with the "souls of lonely places," and felt that the whole world was alive and speaking to him as his companion, greater than himself, but yet one with him. These presences, visions, souls haunted him until the whole earth became like a great Being and,

"With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,  
Worked like a sea."

In his unaccompanied walks at Cambridge he was aware of

"Incumbencies more awful, visitings  
Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,  
That tolerates the indignities of Time,  
And, from the centre of Eternity  
All finite motions overruling, lives  
In glory immutable....."

His song of the sea seems to refer to the same Unseen  
Power.

"Listen! the mighty being is awake  
And doth with his eternal motion make  
A sound like thunder everlastingly."

WORLD OF  
MAKEBELIEVE

One would think Wordsworth was living in a world of makebelieve. It is true that God is essentially mysterious and knowledge of him is necessarily small in content and thin in texture unless supplemented by divine revelation, but Wordsworth's mystical concept of the Supreme Being in his early poetry mystifies us still more than God ever intended Himself to be. His revelation of Him is similar to a drama "in which contrasting, irreducible scenes are comprised; an unspeakable unity that cannot be focused in thought". We are made to think of the story of the man who went to see the king whom he revered and mistook the chamberlain for him, and like the king's admirer, we become disgusted with the vulgarity of the man, and decide to have no more to do with kings. There is all the difference in the world between this attitude and Hillaire Belloc's in his poem, The Prophet lost in the Hills at Evening. Although reeking with the mysterious, it contains no claptrap, no smudge religion. The citation of it will bear witness to this statement.

HILLAIRE  
BELLOC

"Above me in your heights and tall,  
Impassable the summits freeze,  
Below the haunted waters call  
Impassable beyond the trees.

.....

It darkens. I have lost the ford.  
There is a change on all things made.  
The rocks have evil faces, Lord,  
And I am awfully afraid.

Remember me! The Voids of Hell  
Expand enormous all around.  
Strong friend of souls, Emmanuel,  
Redeem me from accursed ground.

Hillaire Belloc reminds us of that other story wherein Joan of Arc went straight into the presence of the Dauphin and bent her knee before him despite the fact of his being disguised.

"The Prophet lost in the Hills at Evening" emphasizes another point of difference. Belloc, in saluting the Deity, employs the Biblical terms, "Lord" and "Emmanuel"; Wordsworth, in the Prelude, refers to God as the "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe"; the "Soul that art the Eternity of thought"; and in Tintern Abbey as "the presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts....a Motion and a Spirit that impels all thinking things". Such titles are anaemic and factitious. Agreed! We all, including Wordsworth, form our ideas, even in things divine, from the consideration of finite things, and make our designations correspond to our conceptions. Even theologians designate God by names, such as the Wise, the Bountiful, the Infinite, the Incomprehensible, after the fashion of Wordsworth, but the Catholic Church expressly teaches that such names are inadequate. They are only attributes identical with His very essence, while "He who is" expresses God's essence itself and not an attribute accessory to His essence. Down the history of the ages the artists and poets have predicated Him with every sort of attribute but Jehovah has said, "I am who am", thereby

ATTRIBUTES

DIVINE  
ESSENCE

declaring His sovereign being. The divine essence, therefore, because of His absolute infinity, essentially differs from all finite beings. All other things possess a limited being; consequently, God, to distinguish Himself from them, attributes to Himself unlimited being, the sum of all perfections. It is in this sense that Christ says, "One is good, God". (Matt. xix. 17) St. Augustine wrote, perhaps, the most haunting sentence of all literature: "Too late have I loved Thee, Beauty ever ancient and ever fresh," but all its fascination would quickly be dispelled if the God of the Christians be taken away from the ideal of man. Truth and goodness would lose their fair colour also. Now, here is where Wordsworth goes wrong. He is inclined to make an addition sum of God and duty, truth, beauty, soul, and mind, and the universe. He boggles over finding an appropriate name for the First Cause and Last End, the Alpha and the Omega, and is obliged to fall back on a sorry language about "Sheathed Divinity", "Active Principle", or Nature spelt with a capital. Here again, Wordsworth proves himself to be a true Romantic in that he shirks the issue and shifts the responsibility.

SENSE OF THE  
BOUNDLESS

Wordsworth's theism is peculiar and individualistic. His theistic view of the world is based on his sense of the boundless. This is the view, as it were, in which God is set; and without this opening into the transcendent, the finite world,--the world of our experience,--must remain to us as the whole of reality. So the Poet apparently believes in such passages as the one in which he speaks of "the disappearing line" of the public highway--

".....that crossed  
The naked summit of a far-off hill,  
Beyond the limits that my feet had trod  
Was like an invitation into space,  
Boundless, or guide into eternity."

or in--

"There I beheld the emblem of a mind  
That feeds upon infinity, that broods  
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear  
Its voices issuing forth to silent light  
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained  
By recognitions of transcendent power,  
In sense conducting to ideal form,  
In soul of more than mortal privilege."

PASCAL

Wordsworth concurs with Pascal on this point. The latter said that "Man was born only for infinity". Time and again in his poetry, Wordsworth's whole being seems to thrill to the idea of boundlessness or infinitude. Many and many a time he makes his readers conscious of a power or powers in the infinite sphere surrounding him. Take for instance the following excerpt from the Prelude:

".....I was only then  
Contented, when with bliss ineffable  
I felt the sentiment of Being spread  
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;  
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought  
And human knowledge, to the human eye  
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;  
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,  
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides  
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,  
And mighty depth of water."

SHADOW FOR  
REALITY

Now, such an attitude is justifiable in so far as it goes, but it can never be soul-satisfying. It is feasting on the shadow for the reality. The mind by its very nature searches for an explanation of all it meets, and there must be some order, some connection, so as to bring the idea of unity into the universe. A series of isolated explanations will not suffice. Wordsworth endeavours to get around the difficulty by

VOX POPULI

imagining that he feels the sentiment of Being spread over all, but that solution is only a figment. The plain and forthright reply is found in the vox populi: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." The tribes and peoples of the earth have always prayed to a God who is master of life and death, the Lord of heaven and earth, the author and end of all things. It is this notion of a supreme being holy and mysterious and without defect, and as creator has entrance into His creation, knowing it intimately, but above all else personal, which orientates our whole life to an end, and focuses everything together. If we say that the "Soul of all the worlds," the "Active Principle", the absolute "Power", or whatever we please to call it, is so vast and immense as to be supra-personal, then we have a featureless concept less than ourselves.

WORTHY IDEAL

Nothing which is below ourselves can become a worthy ideal or make us take wing. Therefore, without a personal final end, our whole moral life becomes shipwrecked. Behind the abstraction of goodness we must see a most lovable Person whose will "must be done on earth as it is in Heaven" who is waiting eagerly to respond to our every approach, our every appeal. The God discerned by the human mind, in order to satisfy, must infinitely surpass all that the universe contains, and yet is near "by virtue of His omnipotence and love which, like warm hands round a fledgling robin, keeps the heart of reality alive".

CARDINAL  
NEWMAN

From a similar angle Cardinal Newman derives his chief argument on behalf of a First Cause and self-existent Personal Being. Taking man's sense of moral

responsibility as a phenomenon to be explained there is no ultimate explanation to be found except by supposing the existence of a Superior and Lawgiver whom man is bound to obey. The great leader of the famous Oxford Movement, in keenness of intellect, has no superior in the whole course of England's history, and his conclusion is: "The human mind is unequal to its own powers of apprehension; it embraces more than it can master". For him, the voice of conscience speaking within the soul of man is what makes the existence of God absolutely certain. Conscience, by its emotional character, always

CONSCIENCE

"involves the recognition of a living object towards which it is directed. It is an instinct for the supernatural and the Divine.....if it is heeded it has a living hold on truths which are really to be found in the world, though they are not on the surface,.....it reads the scroll of the world by its own steady light and is able to assume that the laws of nature 'are consistent with a particular Providence'".

Newman said that "the human mind embraces more than it can master" and in saying that, I think he is directing his shafts of sarcasm against the "animating principle" of the vast system of the Romantics. Not that Newman was entirely wanting in the romantic spirit but rather that his Christian orthodoxy made him regard with suspicion their religion of wonder and its identification with worship caused by the romantic versions of transcendentalism. In the following passage taken from Newman's "The Tamworth Reading Room, in Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects" one does not feel that one has to do here with Wordsworth's Nature worship.

VAST SYSTEM  
OF ROMANTICS

"The truth is that the system of Nature is just as much connected with religion, where minds are not religious, as a watch or a steam-carriage. The material world, indeed,

is infinitely more wonderful than any human contrivance; but wonder is not religion, or we should be worshipping our railroads.

What the physical creation presents to us is a piece of machinery, and when men speak of a Divine Intelligence as its Author, this God of theirs is not the Living and True, unless the spring is the god of the watch, or steam the creator of the engine. Their idol, taken at advantage (though it is not an idol, for they do not worship it), is the animating principle of a vast and complicated system; it is subjected to laws, and it is connatural and co-extensive with matter. Well does Lord Brougham call it 'the great architect of nature'; it is an instinct, or a soul of the world, or a vital power; it is not Almighty God' ".

ROMANTIC MIST Such is the utterance of the eminent Scholar and Churchman! With the magic wand of his characteristic clarity he dispels all the mystagogic romantic mist enshrouding Wordsworth's theistical conception of the world. We are back again on terra firma.

WORLD  
INTELLIGIBLE The Catholic Church agrees with Wordsworth that the existence of God is knowable from creation, but to make the theistic and Christian position clear we must distinguish carefully between the two statements that the world is intelligible and that the world is fully intelligible to us. Père Marechal, after St. Thomas, says that the human intelligence is not "merely a mirror passively reflecting the objects which pass within its field, but an activity directed in its deepest manifestations towards a well-defined term, the only term which can completely absorb it--Absolute Being, Absolute Truth and Goodness". Wordsworth's intellect aspires to God before he knows Him, but he turns his aspirations into a deceptive channel by his "wedding of the intellect of man to this goodly universe, in love and holy passion". Is Wordsworth culpable for this erroneous deflection? Let us hear what St. Paul has

MANIFESTATION

OF GOD

ST. PAUL

to say on this matter. In reference to the pagan philosophers, he points out in what the manifestation of God consists: "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also and divinity; so that they are inexcusable." (Rom. i. 19-23) The philosophers could have arrived, and did not arrive, at the knowledge of a personal God, distinct from nature; else they could not be blamed. St. Augustine (de Civ. Dei, viii. 12; xi. 22) repeatedly expresses the opinion that Plato knew not only the existence of God, but also many other sublime truths from the contemplation of the created universe; as for instance, when he calls God Him who is, or when he teaches that God created the world merely from benevolence. In (Acts xiv. 14-16) St. Paul says, "He left not Himself without testimony, doing good from heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness". The Apostle here teaches that even after men had abandoned divine revelation God still manifested Himself to them through nature. In like manner, the inspired writer in the Book of Wisdom makes known the same fact: "For by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature the Creator of them may be seen so as to be known thereby". Since Holy Scripture claims that this knowledge is possible for all, it must be comparatively easy to obtain because God the Father is no tyrant and would not place a too heavy burden on his creatures. A study of created things, if approached in the right spirit and with an open mind, will give an

IMPERFECT  
KNOWLEDGE

imperfect knowledge of God. Mark, I said an imperfect, not a false one. He has not left Himself without evidence in nature, for to any thinking mind its candelabra must be lighted from some unfailing source of light. Judged in this light, therefore, Wordsworth must be branded guilty. If he had made an honest search he would have found the true God hidden behind the works of His hands. This, however, would have been an incomplete knowledge because God is too vast to fit into any pattern of a man's intelligence, too close to be felt in the tumult of his sensations.

PANTHEISTIC  
WOOL

Wordsworth's poetry, wrapped as it may be in pantheistic wool, proclaims "The heavens show forth the glory of God: and the firmament declareth the work of His hands," (ps. 18, 1), but he himself takes up a very half-hearted position in rendering to God, the greatest possible glory a creature can offer--the conscious praise and honour due His infinite perfections. Of course, in making that statement I am judging what went on in his consciousness and habits of mind from what he has written. He is enraptured that "every form of creature....looked towards the Uncreated with a countenance of adoration, with an eye of love"--

".....Sound needed none,  
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank  
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,  
All melted into him: they swallowed up  
His animal being; in them did he live,  
And by them did he live; they were his life.  
In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from the living God,  
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.  
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;  
Rapt into still communion that transcends  
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,  
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power  
That made him; it was blessedness and love!

Speaking of the lark--

".....Happy, happy Liver!  
With a soul as strong as a mountain river,  
Pouring out praise to the Almighty Giver.

MAN'S HOMAGE

But this life was natural, unconscious praise because the givers could not help giving it. Actually, it was God Himself rejoicing. Man's homage, as lord of creation, must be and is superior to the combined glory given to God by all other living but unintelligent beings. Nonetheless, Wordsworth sadly omits his duty to His Creator here. Each individual act of worship on his part would incomparably outweigh the combined worship of sentient and inanimate nature, and it is just this fact--the continual absence of man's conscious adoration and love to the Divinity--which renders his theism bankrupt and leaves a sense of void in our hearts.

STRANGE AND  
QUIET SPOTS

Wordsworth's theistic conception of the world might be studied from many more angles but it must suffice to meditate upon one more, before concluding. He did not take "his harp to the topmost hill and sit watching 'till the white-winged reapers come", but he did take his harp to strange and quiet spots and touched its strings to the music of the winds, the friendly murmur of the mountain streamlet, and above all, to the deeper more commanding call of the mountain peaks. In their praise he sang:

"Those lusty twins," exclaimed our host, "if here  
It were your lot to dwell, would soon become  
Your prized companions.--Many are the notes  
Which, in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth  
From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths, and dashing shores;  
And well those lofty brethren bear their part  
In the wild concert--chiefly when the storm  
Rides high; then all the upper air they fill  
With roaring sound, that ceases not to flow,  
Like smoke, along the level of the blast,  
In mighty current; theirs, too, is the song  
Of stream and headlong flood that seldom fails;  
And, in the grim and breathless hour of noon,  
Methinks that I have heard them echo back  
The thunder's greeting. Nor have Nature's laws

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RUSKIN

to possess a perpetual memorial of their infancy,  
that infancy which the prophet saw in his vision,  
'I beheld the earth, and lo! it was without form  
and void, and the heavens, and they had no light.  
I beheld the mountains and lo! they trembled and  
all the hills moved lightly'."

Ruskin teaches in these lines that the hardest materials  
and the most substantial of forms have written in them,  
so to speak, a memento mori, and that they have their  
nature and existence by permission. On the other hand,  
the highest effect of natural grandeur on Wordsworth  
when he beholds the glories of the Alps, is to make  
him conscious that

"Our destiny, our being's heart and home,  
Is with infinitude, and only there."

SAW LIFE

LARGELY

Finally, Wordsworth saw life largely, as it  
were, and not dissociated part from part. Not to him,  
as to Shelley, was the universe "a box of toys," but an  
extraordinarily significant assembly of closely related  
parts, all speaking "a various language". Strange para-  
dox, isn't it, that he saw so much, and yet he makes his  
God pantheistic? Happily, we may not class him among  
those who cry "there is no God!" whom Walter C. Peach  
described in his poem, Paradox:

"Down the roads of the sky  
His mind has trod,  
Beyond the light of the lanterns swinging  
On the mist-hung battlements of time,  
Into the darkness where the cosmic roar  
Sinks to a murmur of things sublime--  
Yet he cries  
'There is no God!'

"In deep surmise  
His reason plods  
Through atomed universes whirling  
In grain of dust their lightning course,  
Where matter like a trembling veil of mist  
Broods on the silent depths of force--  
And still the cry  
'There is no God!'

WALTER C. PEACH

"Strange paradox! that mind  
Seeing so much should be so blind.

.....But a man's a Man--nor even he  
Could make him the fool he tries to be!"

## CHAPTER IV

### HIS HIERARCHY OF BEING

Mind is confused with Being.  
Grace is confused with Nature.  
Man is confused with God.  
(Fulton J. Sheen, Ph.D., D.D., LL.D.)

HIS HIERARCHY OF BEING

"Mind is confused with Being.  
Grace is confused with Nature.  
Man is confused with God."  
(Fulton J. Sheen, Ph.D., D.D., LL.D.)

UNITY  
UNDERLIES  
DIVERSITY

It is with a "gentle shock of mild surprise" that we come to realize that Wordsworth is not playing with metaphors when he tries to make us feel " a presence far more deeply interfused" permeating all things alike. The basic fact underlying much of his mysticism is that unity underlies diversity, and this gives rise to his belief that all things are but manifestations of the one divine life. This principle necessarily shocks the Catholic conscience because its logical issue is to remove all distinction between right and wrong, and to identify God with all sorts of different things--good, and evil, living and lifeless, intelligent and unintelligent. God cannot change; He cannot become greater or less; He cannot be identical with what is limited, whether it be matter or human intelligence. To say so is sheer blasphemy.

INTUITIVE  
CONVICTION  
OF UNITY

The assertion that unity underlies diversity is founded upon an intuitive or experienced conviction of unity, of oneness, of likeness in all things. The Catholic idea of unity is founded on the principle that we are all members of the Mystical Body of Christ and receive in Holy Communion the same Precious Body and Blood of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The complete community wherein we grasp the God-man, in whom heaven

and earth possess their eternal unity, is the orbis terrarum. Everything in this conditioned, relative, fugitive world is caught up, finds its common centre, as it were, in an unconditioned, absolute, self-subsistent supra-mundane personal God. In some mysterious way He must unite in Himself all that beauty which we discern parcelled out and subdued to imperfection around us. All the perfections in nature, in others, and in myself must run together in some supreme unity and be caught up into some beauty which neither I nor friends nor nature could ever attain. Wordsworth passionately clung to this idea of unity which is an insatiable craving of human nature but instead of going directly to God to find the answer to the riddle, he turned to Nature, that "principle of love and joy". Therein lies the reason of his unceasing pother about nature and life--the "dim and undetermined sense" which clouds his communings:

SUPREME

UNITY

".....After I had seen  
That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts  
There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
Or blank desertion."

If he had looked up to God and then down at the world all things would have been satisfying to his intellect. To make sense we have to pass from the world to God not by way of Exemplarism but by way of Causality. God is not intelligible in function of biology; biology is intelligible in function of God. The imperfect is intelligible only in virtue of the perfect. To reverse this process is to bring chaos into philosophy.

EXEMPLARISM

CAUSALITY

Chaos is certainly evident in Wordsworth's mind regarding the hierarchy of being. There is no

sharp line of demarcation between nature, man, and God.  
He doesn't place them in their proper sphere at all.  
On the contrary, he tends to exalt nature above man.  
He congratulates himself that in his childhood, he was  
associated--

"Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man;  
But with high objects, with enduring things,  
With life and nature; purifying thus  
The elements of feeling and of thought...."

Elsewhere he says:

Oh! Soul of Nature! that dost overflow  
With passion and with life, what feeble men  
Walk on this earth!

Wordsworth fails utterly to grasp the principle that man by his reason and free will is almost as highly exalted above nature as God is above man. Between God and man, and nature and man, there is an UNFATHOMABLE unfathomable abyss. God does not enter into comparison with anything created. It would be like measuring ABYSS eternity with an hour. Here is one case where finite examples are useless because they are necessarily spiky and exclusive. The norm by which the multiple world of beings can be placed in their proper scale of existence is by judging their worth according to their power to break down their own barriers and become worldwide in their interests. This gift goes paradoxically with their increasing self-possession. Hence, man stands at the top of the ladder of created beings, just a little MIND below the angels. By having a mind he is a person separate from inanimate things and from animals, in that he can know himself to some extent, be a king within the domain of himself, control his fancy and imagination, be free both from external compulsion and to choose good or bad. These powers and prerogatives

PERSONALITY

confer upon him personality. A person stands off from other things and is not a part of nature; he is self-determining and can impose his will on the world. Throughout history he has explored, subjugated nature, to advance his own interests and develop his social relations. The Christian has the clue in the Psalms and the sapiential books of the Old Testament:

"What is man that thou art mindful of him?...For thou hast made him but little lower than God,... thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

Here we have stated the excellence of man and his position in this universe. I would like to cite a passage written by Father M. C. D'Arcy, S.J., on the superiority of man:

M. C. D'ARCY

"He is the overseer of material creation and he is so because he is like in some degree to the Supreme Spirit. He has been made the high priest of a world which awaits his ministry before it can divulge its meaning and join in a cosmic hymn to its Creator. The mountains are but masses of stone, the rivers and sea fluid matter, the flowers a chemical composition, the stars senseless blobs until their signification is picked out of them by a spirit which gives them names, is fascinated by their beauty and rejoices in the discovery of their laws and natures. They rise up into life in his thought of them and man can carry in his mind and soul the distilled perfection of a now wondrous universe. This is man's task and function; he is kin by his body to what is physical; his senses take in the colour and shape and sound of all around him, and his mind, aloof and superior, can reckon up the gifts brought to it by the senses. Nor is it just passive to what it receives. Pulsing with activity it flushes the sensible experience and views it sub specie aeternitatis, in the medium of those absolute standards and forms which as Wordsworth felt are the intimates of soul from childhood. The soul of man bears the imprint and likeness of its creator and every experience sets re-echoing the music of divine beauty; truth takes form there in the guise of human wisdom, and the self thus adorned becomes more and more precious and knows itself a person."

Wordsworth's theory relating to the dignity of man is an almost ridiculous travesty of the truth. Blake was more far-seeing for he tells us that we can hold

HAMLET

infinite space in the palm of our hand. Shakespeare, too, makes Hamlet, in a very significant manner give utterance to his unwavering credence in the elevated rank of the king of creation, the human being. In Act 11, Scene 11:

"What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason!  
How infinite in faculty! in form, and moving  
How express and admirable! In action how like an angel!  
In apprehension how like a God! the beauty of the  
World! The paragon of animals!"

INTELLECTUAL  
WORSHIP

Shakespeare compares him to an angel--a superior being in the scale of creation because he is able to give God an intellectual worship without abstracting an idea of Him from the material universe. Wordsworth is the great High Priest of Nature but Shakespeare is the "secretary of Nature who dipped his pen in mind" and although he was spectator ac particeps in relation to the doings and struggles of this world, yet he was far above it by virtue of the comprehensiveness and completeness of his vision. Hence, both he and G. K. Chesterton can give vent to humourous ironical laughter at the foibles and weaknesses of human nature. Hamlet says: "Lord, what fools these mortals be!" and Chesterton thunders out: "Thou fool, dost thou not see that all the things of God are good? Who makes them bad? Dost thou not see that the drunkard is not a reproach to the innkeepers but a reproach to the inmost soul of man?" Now, Wordsworth lacked this broad vision of life that Catholic philosophy gives. He forgets the superiority of mind over matter when he wishes to discover truth. In his opinion,

BROAD VISION  
OF LIFE

"One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can."

Not very amazing, is it, that the Poet must

"tread on shadowy ground, must sink deep" and notwithstanding his sinking deep, is lost?

"O mystery of man, from what a depth  
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see  
In simple childhood something of the base  
On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel,  
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,  
Else never canst receive."

No Catholic mystical poet would ever write that "our being rests" on "dark foundations," or that "our haughty life is crowned with darkness". What wealth of pathos there is, in the following lines which really summarize Wordsworth's attitude towards life:

"We Men, who in our morn of youth defied  
The elements, must vanish;--be it so!  
Enough, if something from our hands have power  
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;  
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,  
Through love, through hope, and faith's  
Transcendent dower,  
We feel that we are greater than we know.

It is the coexistence of certitude and question on the same point that causes the poignancy of the Poet's anguish of mind. This vague unrest is caused by his not knowing the honours God has conferred upon him when He created him a human being. God is not visible to him as the fundamental basis and ultimate meaning of all reality and consequently everything is indistinct and in disorder. No such sentiments buoy up the spirits of the eighty-year old English poet, Edmund Waller, who died in 1687:

VAGUE

UNREST

"The seas are quiet when the winds give o'er;  
So calm are we when passions are no more;  
For then we know how vain it was to boast  
Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.  
Clouds of affection from our younger eyes  
Conceal that emptiness which age decries.  
The soul's dark cottage, batter'd and decayed,  
Lets in new light through chinks that time hath made;  
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become,  
As they draw nearer to their eternal home.  
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,  
Who stand upon the threshold of the new.

SENTIMENT  
AND FEELINGS

The absolute certainty which forms the ground swell of those lines certainly doesn't arise from such shaky foundations as feeling that he is greater than he knows. It does spring from his ability to pigeon-hole all things according to their value in the light of eternity. Sentiment and feelings play only a very secondary role in the spiritual life and psychology of a Catholic mystic. The martyr Flavian asked St. Cyprian if the deathblow was very painful, and the saint replied, "The body feels nothing when the soul is given to God."

MAN AND  
MATERIAL  
WORLD

For Wordsworth, there is no absolute division between man and the material world. For him "sun, moon, and stars all struggle in the toils of mortal sympathy". The daisy and the thorn are his living friends and companions. The mystic charm of the White Doe of Rylstone lies in the way it is lifted up into the sphere of human sorrow and sympathy. In Peter Bell, he carries his scheme still further by making the ass the means of awakening the voice of humanity in the man. Even "the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears". Tennyson is very suspicious of these naturalistic interpretations. Wordsworth says:

".....my mind hath look'd  
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven  
As her prime Teacher,....."

But Tennyson puts forth just the opposite opinion:

"I found him not in world or sun  
Or eagle's wing or insect's eye;  
Nor thro' the questions men may try,  
The petty cobwebs we have spun."

A belief in God and in immortality must supplement nature.

No matter what Nature's message may be, he says, it is not from Her that man's gospel comes. In Locksley Hall Fifty Years After, the same poet states that our origin as men dates not from the origin of our physical tabernacle, but from the moment that our Maker--

"Sent the shadow of Himself, the boundless, thro'  
the human soul."

Wordsworth describes as divine, that liberty which allows "mortal man to roam at large among the unpeopled glens and mountainous retirements", whereas Tennyson upholds man's dignity by declaring--

"Well roars the storm to those that hear a deeper  
voice above the storm."

G. K. Chesterton's message to the world is this:

"You cannot get away from optimism except by blindness. You cannot escape the mercy of God either in the depths of the ocean or on the heights of the mountains. It is the blind who really see God: it is the deaf who hear His voice: it is the dumb who chant His praises."

Wordsworth seems to understand something of this strange paradox. In this, he is Catholic in outlook. No imperfection in man seems to deject this apostle of common men and common things, not even imperfections of the mind. Even the mad, the imbecile, are made to yield up kernels of wisdom, and in the gentle and dignified treatment he accords them there is a strong resemblance to the attitude of the Irish toward these unfortunates. In Ireland the weak-minded were not usually confined to institutions; they were allowed to wander at will and were made welcome at every fireside and to a share in the cabin's humble fare. "Naturals," they were called, or "innocents" and from their other-world innocence is supposed to spring a secret prescience which the simple-

Naturals

OR

INNOCENTS

WORDSWORTH'S  
KINSHIP TO  
THE MYSTICAL

hearted and supremely mystical Irish regarded at times both with reverence and respect. This resemblance emphasizes Wordsworth's kinship to the mystical of all ages and all nations, for only eyes anointed with the oil of religious belief are enabled to see the Fool as God sees him. The thought in Wordsworth's poem The Idiot Boy and Alfred Austen's Ave Maria runs along parallel lines, except that Austen (Poet Laureate from 1896-1913, and the first Catholic to hold this position since 1537), catholicizes the idea. He exemplifies in his poem the respect the Catholic Church pays to anyone gifted with the faintest ray of reason. The second verse reads as follows:

"There was an idiot, palsied, bleared  
With unkempt locks and matted beard,  
Hunched from the cradle, vacant-eyed,  
And whose head kept rolling from side to side;  
Yet who, when the sunset-glow grew dim,  
Joined with the rest in the twilight hymn,  
Ave Maria!"

Austen goes on to tell us that when the fisherman in the morning ran up his sail, the senseless cripple would stand and stare, hollowing his wonted prayer, "Ave Maria!". One year at the beginning of winter, he was found on the fresh-strewn snow,

"Frozen, and faint, and crooning low,  
Ave Maria!"

and this prayer he kept on crooning while his life ebbed away. The poem continues thus--

"Idiot, soulless, brute from birth,  
He could not be buried in sacred earth;  
So they laid him afar, apart, alone,  
Without or a cross, or turf, or stone,  
Senseless clay unto senseless clay,  
To which none ever came nigh to say,  
Ave Maria!"

The next spring "up from the lonely outcast grave, sprouted

a lily straight and high" although--

"None had planted it, no one knew  
How it had come there, why it grew;  
Grew up strong, till its stately stem  
Was crowned with a snow-white diadem,--  
One pure lily, round which, behold!  
Was written by God in veins of gold,  
Ave Maria! "

WELLSPRING

OF INSPIRATION

Wordsworth's poem breathes the same spirit of sympathy and understanding for Johnny, the Idiot Boy, but there is no mention of prayer or the immortality of the poor boy's soul. The mad, the crazed, the idiotic are to him a wellspring of insight and inspiration, and the child and the peasant become to him the types of a wisdom higher than that of the world. This naturally falls in with his theory that wherever we have things and persons whom chance or the order of the world has kept free from the bond of custom, has left simple and not complex, there we may look for illumination upon the things which really matter. Some one has said that a mystic is one who has a different angle of vision from that of ordinary folk. Who can say then what Wordsworth saw in his bedlamites, or in what guise Shakespeare--who is set down as no mystic--visualized his fools, into whose mouths he put such mordant wisdom! To give Wordsworth his due, he places these "Naturals" fairly close to their Catholic setting in the hierarchy of being.

TRUE

SOLUTION

Summarily speaking, only the Catholic religion possesses the true solution to the errors existing in Wordsworth's conception of the hierarchy of being. No other force can give it because it lacks the wider perspective that Catholicism has, in seeing the entire pattern from above. Wordsworth's conception of God was blurred; therefore his other ideas and his perception of

the world about him and the relationships between things became distorted, like the reflections in a House of Mirrors. Religion is rendering to God what is his due; it thus recognizes the proper subordination of man to God and preserves the proper order of things. Only Thomastic metaphysics can lead to a restoration of that proper teleological attitude. Since the concepts of order, God, and human personality are so inextricably intertwined, we need an ideal--a model for the cultivation of human nature. And we in the Christian faith have that model in the Redeemer-Judge, the Christ Who saved us from ourselves, and Who unites in Himself in an incomprehensible manner the natures of God and man.

## CHAPTER V

### HIS PANTHEISM

\*He is not a believer in God who uses the word of God rhetorically, but he who associates with the sacred word the true and worthy idea of God.\*

## HIS PANTHEISM

"He is not a believer in God who uses the word of God rhetorically, but he who associates with the sacred word the true and worthy idea of God.

"He who, in pantheistic vagueness, equates God with the universe, and identifies God with the world and the world with God, does not belong to believers in God.

### POPE PIUS XI

"Beware, Venerable Brethren, of the growing abuse in speech and writing, of using the thrice holy name of God as a meaningless label for a more or less capricious form of human search and longing. Work among your faithful that they may be vigilant to reject this aberration as it deserves. Our God is the Personal, superhuman, almighty, infinitely perfect God, one in the Trinity of Persons, threefold in the unity of the Divine essence, the Creator of the Universe, the Lord and King in whom the history of the world finds fulfilment, who will not, and cannot, tolerate a rival god by His side."  
(The Persecution of the Church in Germany)

### COMMON SENSE

The late Pope Pius XI of pious memory herein bluntly and scathingly exposes the falsity of the doctrine of pantheism. The two preceding chapters of this thesis have plainly indicated that the God of Wordsworth is a cosmic God, a being identified with the universe and not a personal God distinct from nature; therefore, Wordsworth falls under the lash of this indictment. Without a doubt, many of his best poems teach that all the phenomena of the universe, all contingent beings, are but manifestations of the Divine Nature; everything is one and the same. In promulgating this fallacy he sets himself in opposition to the common sense of mankind for isn't it absurd to maintain that the criminal to be hanged is really the same being with the judge who pronounces sentence of death against him, and with the executioner

who carries out this sentence? The Romantics are all somewhat afflicted with this mental disease. They think the supernatural can be extracted like so much subtle juice from the contemplation of the beautiful and the good in nature, and they rest their case on feeling, intuition and the "inner light".

To my mind, the Poet fell into the error of perverting the right order of things in their relation to God, not so much that he ever convinced himself that his mystical notions of pantheism were in accordance with right reason or the ordinary intellectual methods of proof, but rather because these same notions fed his supersensitive, highly abnormal imagination. Call this what you may,--"transcendental feeling", "imagination", "mystic reason", "cosmic consciousness", "divine sagacity", "ecstasy", or "visionary gleam",--they are all grounded and rooted in the senses. Wordsworth is essentially egoistic. His intense organic sensibility to the immediate beauties of sight and sound craves attention and on its behalf truth is often set aside. In his earliest years, he--

"...held unconscious intercourse with beauty  
Old as creation, drinking in a pure  
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths  
Of curling mist,....."

It was in the mountains that he felt his faith. All things there--

"Breathed immortality, revolving life,  
And greatness still revolving;--infinite.  
There littleness was not, the least of things  
Seem'd infinite:....."

Commenting on the evening shower, he says--

"My heart leaps up when I behold  
A rainbow in the sky:  
So was it when my life began;  
So is it now I am a Man;  
So be it when I shall grow old,  
Or let me die!"

Henry Vaughan, in some respects a forerunner of Wordsworth, has similar intuitions but to pass from him to Wordsworth is often to enter another world of poetry. The "five senses", to Vaughan are not things for scorn and disuse, but they are a "fleshy dress" which will not let him see "Heaven immediately, or comprehend the conversation of God's creatures." His is a dual perception --he gives us a noble world to live in, and worlds on worlds beyond that. In his lyric on the Waterfall, his poetical colours and tunes equal anything Wordsworth ever wrote nor does he show any contempt of this world's "masques and shadows", but after we have read it our thoughts rest in heaven:

DUAL  
PERCEPTION

"With what deep murmurs, through time's silent stealth  
Doth thy transparent, cool and watery wealth  
Here flowing fall,  
And chide, and call,  
As if his liquid, loose retinue staid  
Lingering, and were of this steep place afraid;  
The common pass,  
Where, clear as glass,  
All must descend  
Not to an end,  
But quicken'd by this deep and rocky grave,  
Rise to a longer course more bright and brave."

There is no trace of pantheism here. In what a different plane lie our reflections after reading Wordsworth's pantheistic description of the brook:

"It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee  
With purer robes than those of flesh and blood,  
And hath bestowed on thee a safer good,  
Unwearied joy, and life without its cares! "

Since he believes in a pantheistic God, we are not surprised at him for writing:

"But in the very world which is the world  
Of all of us,--the place where in the end  
We find our happiness, or not at all!"

IRREVERENCE

There is a possibility, also, that Wordsworth was a pantheist because his mind revolted at the irreverence paid to "God's own breathing world" by scientific professors who were desecrating the shrines of mankind by laying them upon the dissecting board. The public consciousness all around him revolted against the crass materialism of the eighteenth century Deists who had, by scorning the Incarnation, driven God from the world, had made of Him an intellectual abstraction who had created the universe and abandoned it to the operation of general and impersonal laws. "Adore God and act like a gentleman," was the formula Kant had given to his generation. But God was too far away, too infinite to be adored, so the eighteenth century ended by adoring the gentleman.

THEOLOGICAL  
DIFFICULTIES

The attempt to restore God to the world is known as the Romantic revolt. This restoration was not under the aspect of His creatorship, for the Deists had held that, but rather as a "sheathed Divinity diffused throughout the universe, its life not its maker,..... an immanent something identified with and one with matter." Wordsworth, following their lead, wished to keep clear of the odium and theological difficulties inherent in pure materialism, or mechanism, and so conceived of nature as a spirit, a soul of things, and active principle, to represent the operations of nature as a whole, to account for her purposive and rational procedure. For this idea of a soul (or something boundless) interfused throughout the whole of nature, he was

probably indebted to Plato and the platonists. He may have read the account given in the Timaeus of how God disposed the soul and body of the universe:

TIMAEUS

"And in the centre he put the soul, which he diffused throughout the body, making it also to be the exterior environment of it.....Now when the Creator had framed the soul according to his will, he formed within her the corporeal universe, and brought the two together and united them centre to centre. The soul, interfused everywhere from the centre to the circumference of heaven, of which also she is the external envelopment, herself turning in herself, began a divine beginning of never-ceasing and rational life, life enduring throughout all time."

WORLD SOUL

One reason for concluding that Wordsworth borrowed the idea of the World Soul from Plato is that Plato's theory is that God made the soul in origin and excellence prior to and older than the body, to be the ruler and mistress, of whom the body was to be the subject. The same "precedency" of thought is found in Wordsworth's poem, "The Influence of Natural Objects":

"Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!  
Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!  
And giv'st to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion!"

His statement that the "soul, that is the eternity of thought," gives "to forms and images a breath," seems to say that forms and images have their reality from the eternal "thought" which informs them.

GOD IS EVERYWHERE

No people are so cognizent of the fact that the dictum, "God is everywhere," is a great and lasting truth, as are Catholics, but the theory that the assemblage of finite beings or the universe is God Himself is a chimerical unity. "No one thinks of worshipping such a Noah's Ark!" God is immanent, or intimately present, in the universe because His power is required at every moment

to sustain creatures in being and to concur with them in their activities. There is nothing in this universe of which we can say, "Behold! what is," applying to it the full strength of that small word. Whatever creatures are, they are by virtue of God's conserving power; whatever they do, they do by virtue of God's concursus. Lest insistence on Divine immanence should degenerate into Pantheism, the Catholic Church emphasizes God's transcendence, that is God is an absolutely simple and infinitely perfect personal Being whose nature and action in their proper character as Divine infinitely transcend all possible modes of the finite, and cannot, without contradiction, be formally identified with these. Granted, Pantheism admits the existence of a supreme being. It is not, however, the cause of the world, as separate and distinct from it; it is one with the world. God is the real and intrinsic being of things, the acting principle of the universe. Everything is spirit, God, the Absolute. Now, who can accept the statement that the atheist is substantially the same being with God whose existence he denies, and whose name he blasphemes? And since "by the river of life there is ever a wintry wind as well as heavenly sunshine" who would be content to regard this little house of a world as other than the low porch of heaven where he must wait till the golden gate opens, and he can pass out of this short twilight into the unending light of the Beatific Vision of the Most High God?

The editor of the Catholic World maintains that all modern evils spring from a threefold misapprehension; modern philosophical and religious thought has

MODERN EVILS

lost sight of these three fundamental facts: the concept of God as a person unique, transcendent, and infinite; the status of man as an autonomous free agent, but contingent and subordinate to God, his Creator; and finally the nature of that binding force between man and God which is denoted by the term religion. It has to be admitted that Pantheistic beliefs tend to change and pervert these three fundamental concepts, and that they have played their part in introducing harmful philosophies into our present-day civilization. The ensuing paragraphs logically explain why such a mystical interpretation of the universe is severely condemned.

"Pantheism destroys the idea of the world, instead of explaining its origin. In this theory there is no multiplicity of being, but all things are the divine essence--all is one, and one is all. Our senses, on the contrary, represent to us a multitude of distinct beings. A stone, a plant, an animal, are all known by their different characteristics. Inanimate things are essentially different from animate beings; what is endowed with sense essentially differs from what is without feeling. Where there is an essential difference in the properties and activities of things, we must admit also an essential difference of the substances underlying these different properties and activities; for from these we must conclude to the substance in which they are inherent. Therefore, we must infer that there is not merely one substance, but that there are many substances. Moreover, every human being is conscious of his own thoughts, not of the thoughts of others; and yet, if there were but one substance we should be conscious of others' thoughts as well as our own. Pantheism, therefore, contradicts our internal experience.

"Pantheism destroys the idea of God which it pretends to defend. God is necessary and immutable; pantheism makes Him contingent and mutable, by submitting Him to all the changes which take place in the universe. God is absolutely simple; pantheism represents Him as composite, since it makes the divine essence subject to diverse modifications. God is infinitely perfect; pantheism, which places the one supreme being in the innumerable multitude

of limited beings, ascribes to him all the imperfections of finite things. God is holy; pantheism, making Him the internal cause of all action, also of the most heinous crimes, makes Him the author of all sins and the victim of all punishments inflicted for crime.

"Pantheism does away with the distinction between moral good and evil. If whatever we see in the world is only a manifestation of the infinite, if it does not depend upon man's free will to do, or to omit, any action, he himself and all his actions are only modes and modifications of the infinite. Where there is no free will there is no morality. If the infinite reveals itself in all our actions, no deed of ours, however our judgment and conscience may condemn it, can be considered sinful, since the Supreme Being Himself is incapable of sin."

To further prove that Wordsworth deserves blame  
WORDSWORTH in this field, I shall quote three more passages. The  
CULPABLE first one is that in which he describes absolute being as including within itself, as the sea its waves, all adoring and conscious and apprehending existence:

".....Life continuous, Being unimpair'd,  
That hath been, is, and where it was, and is,  
.....  
.....Thou, thou alone  
Art everlasting, and the blessed Spirits  
Which thou includest, as the sea her waves:  
For consciousness the motions of thy will;  
For apprehension those transcendent truths  
Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws,  
Even to thy Being's infinite majesty!"

The mysteriousness of Wordsworth's mystic meaning in the above quotation somewhat misleads us. The same thought, however, in less philosophical language, is expressed in "The Old Cumberland Beggar" where he declares that, even in "the meanest of created things," there is found--

".....a spirit and a pulse of good,  
A life and soul, to every mode of being  
Inseparably linked."

Wordsworth seems to share Leibniz' solicitude to avoid any great gap or chasm in nature as inconsistent with the notion of a rational and beneficent universe.

VACUUM  
FORMARUM

To effect this, he fuses several metaphysical notions-- that of the active principle (together with that of the world-soul), and that of the chain of beings, in which there is no break, no vacuum formarum. It is his conviction that this doctrine is contributory to the perfect goodness of the world:

"To every Form of being is assigned",  
Thus calmly spake the venerable Sage,  
"An active Principle:--howe'er removed  
From sense and observation, it subsists  
In all things, in all natures; in the stars  
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,  
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone  
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,  
The moving waters, and the invisible air.  
Whate'er exists hath properties that spread  
Beyond itself, communicating good,  
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;  
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,  
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link  
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds."

This imaginative synthesis is built on sentiment rather than on thought. He was obstinate in associating the concept of universal nature with the beauty and grandeur, with the stability and peacefulness, or the various objects of this visible world. That idea held a sensuous appeal for him and he ignored everything that would tend to contradict it. The emotions which he felt in the presence of the beautiful forms of his beloved Nature took the form of worship.

MYSTICAL  
ADORATION

It is time to turn to a Catholic poet, John Savage, whose inmost being was stirred to its depths by the beautiful and majestic in nature, but instead of it causing him to worship nature it lifts him up into the realms of mystical adoration of the Creator of Nature. The following is taken from his exquisite poem on Niagara Falls which will illustrate what I have just said:

"The mists, like shadowy cathedrals rise,  
And through the vapory cloisters prayers  
are pouring;  
Such as ne'er sprang to the eternal skies,  
From old Earth's passionate and proud  
adoring.

There is a voice of Scripture in the flood,  
With solemn monotone of glory bounding,  
Making all else an awe-hushed solitude  
To hear its everlasting faith resounding.

There is a quiet on my heart like death,  
My eyes are gifted with a strange expansion,  
As if they closed upon my life's last breath,  
And oped to measure the eternal mansion."

These verses speak for themselves. They need no comment of mine. Let me just ask you one question: "Does Wordsworth ever succeed in lifting our thoughts heavenwards like John Savage does?" The reader of this thesis may answer that question for himself.

As a fitting conclusion to this argument against pantheistical trends of thought--Wordsworth's in particular--

VATICAN  
COUNCIL

I shall cite their condemnation by the Vatican Council (de fide, l. can. 4):

"If any one assert that finite things, the material as well as the spiritual, or that the spiritual at least, have emanated from the divine substance; or that the divine essence by its manifestation or evolution is transformed into all things; or, finally, that God is a universal, or indefinite, being which by self-modification constitutes the universe in its various kinds, species, and individuals; let him be anathema."

Rome has spoken, and for the true Catholic the discussion is closed.

CHAPTER VI

WORDSWORTH'S MYSTICAL IDEAS ARE BUILT UPON SAND

"Without faith it is impossible to  
please God." (Heb. xi, 6)

WORDSWORTH'S MYSTICAL IDEAS ARE BUILT UPON SAND

"Without faith it is impossible to please God."  
(Heb. 11. 6.)

"He dwells in light inaccessible, which no man  
hath seen, nor can see."  
(1 Tim. vi. 16)

"Blessed are they that have not seen and have be-  
lieved."  
(Jo. xx, 29)

Wordsworth's mystical perceptions, lacking the unshakable foundation that the Faith, Tradition, and Revelation, unfailingly afford, are naturally fallacious. These supports are essential to any man if he wishes to be preserved from error. St. Paul testifies to this when he declares that "God is true; and every man a liar". (Rom. iii. 4.) The human mind cannot rise to the contemplation of the Deity unless it be entirely disengaged from the senses, and that is an impossibility in this world. God Himself, speaking to Moses said: "No man shall see my face and live". (Exod. xxxiii. 20) By natural revelation, man can easily know the existence of God as the First Cause and Master of all things, the Rewarder of good and evil; the survival of the soul, etc. These truths have been known in all ages by all men who had the full use of reason, but supernatural revelation is not attainable by our own unaided powers. It supposes a special action of God announcing the truth to man--which action took place through Prophets, Apostles, and other sacred writers, but especially through His Divine Son. A supernatural end cannot be reached but by supernatural means which our nature by its own powers

NATURAL  
REVELATION

SUPERNATURAL  
REVELATION

HISTORY OF  
PAST AGES

can neither discover nor employ. Therefore, to make known to us our supernatural end and the means of attaining thereto, a supernatural revelation is absolutely necessary. History of past ages gives us ample proof that whenever philosophers rejected the teachings of Divine Revelation doubts and errors on many important points of morality and religion infallibly arose, owing to the depravity of the human heart. In Redbook Magazine for January, 1941, Jay Franklin, columnist and former United States government official, writes:

FRANKLIN

"No nation can be strong unless its individual members accept the principles of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount as the fundamental charter of the state, and the rule of life for the citizens who support the state."

.....

"No race or civilization yet has fallen save as the victim of a lie. For men will not willingly die for a lie since it is only truth that sets men free."

PHILOSOPHY  
OF DIRT

Hence it is most important that we have the truth, especially the truths that relate to God and our eternal salvation. Now, by the Catholic analysis of man he is not sufficient to himself, and when he deliberately excludes the influence of grace and consciously abandons himself to the dangers of self-sufficient and isolated thinking, then he becomes a prey of subjective doubts, resting upon false presuppositions or erroneous deductions. Take, for instance, the materialism of the eighteenth century which Carlyle aptly calls the "philosophy of dirt". The late Archbishop O'Brien of Halifax, an outstanding Canadian ecclesiastic of burning faith, wrote with contempt as withering as Carlyle's of a class of humanity which he styled "scientific Fops", who worked with a limited vision in one restricted patch

and with a superficial eye, and who endeavoured to "catch Moses napping", in order to decry revelation. The urbane prelate had no patience with what he called "unturned scientific cakes", apt with the "cant phrase of bastard science", with the "glow-worm lights of illogical theorists", with "literary middlings, who would be daring and critically superior concerning revealed truth". He hated all philosophy destructive of a supernatural revelation, and energetically combated their skirmishing with truth, in their attempt to make of religion "a sort of transcendental medley of metaphysics, chemistry and laws of Nature, with a slight leaven about the 'Great Unknown'". That part of the condemnation which reads, "literary middlings, who would be daring and critically superior concerning revealed truth.....A sort of transcendental medley.....with a slight leaven about the 'Great Unknown' " might in some measure be applied to Wordsworth.

TRANSCENDENTAL

MEDLEY

St. Thomas stresses the point that it is only by recognizing that immutable order in the mind of God from all eternity that man can be preserved from the fruits of his own folly. He said that all truth of right belongs to Christian thought and delighted to quote the saying of St. Ambrose: "Every truth, whoever said it, comes from the Holy Spirit". Human knowledge is never perfect, but only partial and incomplete standing forth as a mere approximation of the ultimate truth which grows and grows unto new disclosures as we advance along the road. No one would dare deny natural mysteries--life itself, the light of day, or the artificial light we use at night; yet no scientist as yet can tell us exactly what light or electricity is. It

NATURAL

MYSTERIES

is just as monstrously unreasonable to disbelieve the mysteries of God's revelation, for a fortiori, the things INCOMPREHENSIBLE of God must necessarily be more incomprehensible to us than the sensible things around us. "The things that are of God", says St. Paul, "no man knoweth but the Spirit of God"; and he adds that we have received this Spirit, "that we may know the things that are given us from God". (1 Cor. II, 11, 12)

STABILIZING  
FORCE

A study of Wordsworth's philosophy of life will give ample proof of the crying need of the stabilizing force which Divine Revelation and an infallible Church affords. Even a skimming of the surface makes us aware of a radical change of emphasis in his way of thinking as age creeps upon him and he acquires the "philosophic mind". For example, during the "Golden Age", as Wordsworth's imagination led him to believe it was, he warmly espoused the new ideas of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity--the watchword of the French Revolution. With all the ardour and enthusiasm of youth, he discussed these abstract political theories founded on the conception of universal mankind, condemned the oppression and tyranny that had for centuries hindered Man's development, and even went so far as to argue:

".....about the end  
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;  
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,  
Custom and habit, novelty and change;  
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few  
For patrimonial honour set apart;  
And ignorance in the labouring multitude."

To the historian of to-day, "whose experienced eye can pierce the array of past events", his description of Liberty building her palace upon strong foundations, and sending from her council chamber laws which should

make:

".....Social life,  
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,  
As just in regulation, and as pure  
As individual in the wise and good,

COMPLETE  
BREAKDOWN

is provocative of a scornful smile. We all know the complete breakdown of these fanciful dreams--children of an erring mind--in France when the entire nation gave itself into the power of one man, "of men the meanest too,"--so Wordsworth voices it, when he found the nation prostrate before Napoleon as First Consul. At this time in his career, the Poet supported the views of the literary men of France who based their theory of the rights of Man on the qualities and instincts of man himself without any distinct reference to his Creator and Redeemer. It wasn't long, however, until Wordsworth became firmly convinced of the futility and inability of human efforts without aid from on High. Reaching out to the only hope left he appealed to God to further the work that France was doing against the oppressing kings of Europe:

"Great God! by whom the strifes of men are weighed  
In an impartial balance, give thine aid  
To the just cause."

APOSTATIZES

This was the man who, in 1793, wished and prayed that the arms of England might fall lifeless in the battle because She had espoused, so he thought, the cause of oppression against the destroyers of oppression. And this same individual, a few years later, after the long contest had closed at Waterloo, wrote two Thanksgiving Odes in which he deliberately apostatizes. Now he exults in the overthrow of the Republic and calls upon all those "who do this land inherit" to:

"Awake! the majesty of God revere!  
Go--and with foreheads meekly bowed  
Present your prayers--go--and rejoice aloud--  
The Holy One will hear!"

HOURS OF  
DIRECT NEED

Hours of direct need usually bring a change of outlook and sentiment to those who, until then, have walked with blind faith along the path of popular errors unconscious of the treacherous and insecure ground on which they trod. No defence of Christianity could be more effective than the dire straits which inevitably follow the destructive ways of hatred and conflict. The situation in France almost made a sceptic out of Wordsworth until, after studying the question introspectively, he came to the conclusion that the liberty and greatness of a nation were in its harmony with the laws of God. By the soul only, by patience and temperance, by--

"Honour that knows the path, and will not swerve;  
Affections which, if put to proof, are kind,  
And piety towards God."

"Plain living and high thinking" were the vital power in a people against oppression. Not from--

".....fleets and armies and external wealth,  
But from within proceeds a nation's strength."

Wordsworth no longer tells us that the grand repositories of truth are eyes, ears, and the resulting "visionary gleam". His moral code has undergone a complete change.

HIS MORAL  
CODE

Before attempting to explain how the teachings of the Catholic Church would have helped him solve his difficulties, I would like to dwell briefly on Wordsworth's reaction to the Reign of Terror in France. When the events of the French Revolution seemed to prove that the principles he would have laid down his life for were null and void, he could not weather the storm in his

VERGE OF  
DESPAIR

weather-beaten soul and he found himself on the verge of despair. He clung to his views as a man clings to religious opinions of which he has a doubt, saying to himself, "If I am wrong, then all is lost". The "senselessness of joy sublime" was no longer felt in the face of these "inward agitations" and "workings of the spirit" which forced his intellect rather than his heart, to battle with the world. He tried every means of escape but to no avail. He threw himself into speculative schemes of socialism, exalted the reason of Man as the sole lord of his acts, and strove to conceive a community in which man, shaking off all degrading pursuits, would be absolutely free,

"Lord of Himself in undisturbed delight".

STUDY OF  
SOCIETY

This led to a study of society which brought all systems, creeds, laws, before the bar of his reasoning faculty in order that they might prove their rightness. How did the soul know that it could distinguish between right and wrong? How did it know that it was immortal? Had morality or religion any ground in fact? These, and many other questions made of his days and nights a horrible nightmare. Not having the guidance of Holy Mother Church, it isn't surprising that Wordsworth saw death, not life in the world. He was at a loss to know whether there was any eternal rule of duty, whether it had any ground in the nature of things. He never cast his eyes on France without misery because during the Reign of Terror, in his mind, God had forgotten Man, and liberty wore the robes of Tyranny. His dreams were haunted by the ghastly visions of the dungeons, the executions, the unjust tribunals, and he never heard

the sunset cannon from the English fleet--

"Without a spirit overcast by dark  
Imaginations, sense of woes to come,  
Sorrow for humankind, and pain of heart."

At long last he yielded up all moral questions in despair.  
Man was either--

"The dupe of folly or the slave of crime".

RAGING  
CONFLICT

Meditation on the social ills of his day changed his whole spirit and character. A raging conflict seethed within his breast between old feelings, traditions of caste and honour, and the new ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity. In fact, he was so affected by them that he was like a tortured soul on a bed of pain. With every post from Paris--

".....the fever came,  
A punctual visitant, to shake this man,  
Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek  
Into a thousand colours; while he read,  
Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch  
In his own body."

MUNDANE  
EVENTS

The teachings of the Catholic Church would have dispelled all Wordsworth's misgivings. Enriched by her immense fund of natural wisdom begotten of experience, and enlightened by the Supernatural Light of the Holy Spirit, Holy Mother Church judges all mundane events, wars, calamities, revolutions, world-shaking movements sub specie aeternitatis, that is, in the light of eternity. From her emanates at all times an atmosphere of serenity and perfect peace of heart and mind which she sheds around her children. To illustrate this point I am going to relate an anecdote that Father Lord, S.J., told the Catholic Youth of the Ottawa Archdiocese in his recent lecture in the auditorium of the Technical High School. A California gentleman was one day walking down a very beautiful road surrounded by orange

trees in blossom, when all of a sudden the road along which he was travelling began to recoil back upon itself like a rope that has been suddenly snapped. He knew he was on solid ground yet nothing was steady under his feet.

FATHER LORD

The far-famed Youth Leader declared that moral crises, comparable to that little incident, arise in the lives of those who have not their feet firmly planted on the rock of faith. He then referred to the soldier-poet, Joyce Kilmer, who, because of the burning faith that was in him, never allowed any bitterness, any despondency whatsoever, to enter into his life or writings, although the world, at that time, was floundering in the mental and moral morass of the Great World War. The debacle

GREAT WORLD

WAR

of civilization caused by the Revolutionist rioters of Wordsworth's day wasn't so deplorable as that which menaced the world when Kilmer was living yet he was ever imbued with that easy light-hearted attitude and serene detachment so characteristic of the Catholic outlook on life. Wordsworth succumbed where Kilmer triumphed because the latter had the faith of a Paul Claudel who has said:

"I am a thousand times more sure that my Redeemer liveth and I shall see Him face to face, than I am sure that the sun will rise tomorrow morning". His belief in the heaven of the next world was too deeply imbedded in the depths of his being to be able to believe in a heaven on earth. Thus his sojourn among us was a song, for to him--

HIS SOJOURN

A SONG

"The air is like a butterfly  
With frail blue wings.  
The happy earth looks at the sky  
And sings.  
(Easter, Joyce Kilmer)

And a tree--

".....looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;  
.....  
Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.  
(Trees, Joyce Kilmer)

Joyce Kilmer continued to sing his songs of hope and joy when the catastrophe going on all around him seemed to bellow that there was a general failure of the human race to manage its own affairs. Wordsworth, in like circumstances, changed his song into a sigh. Why? The only answer I have to offer is that Kilmer was much more intimate with Christ Crucified than Wordsworth was.

SACRAMENTAL  
PRESENCE

Wordsworth's denial of the divine sacramental Presence relegated Christ to a remote past; it made of Him an historic figure merely. On the other hand, Kilmer knew him sacramentally and mystically, a living reality, "even to the end of the world". Now, it is only by an intimate union with the "Eternal Word made Flesh" that we learn to live, to know what to expect, to desire, and to hope for. The everlasting mysteries of life and death, doubt and belief, good and evil, find their interpretation only in the Crucifixion of the Son of God.

MYSTERIES  
OF LIFE

"He became weak that He might lift our weakness; He took flesh as a concession to our fleshiness". In Aubrey de Vere's words, "The Incarnation of Christ was God's own remedy for the broken humanity of all ages", and the freedom of all mankind springs forth from His Resurrection:

"Hadst Thou not risen, there would be no more joy  
Upon earth's sod;  
Life would still be with us a wound or toy,  
A cloud without the sun,--O Babe, O Boy,  
A Man of Mother pure, with no alloy,  
O risen God! "  
(He made us free, Maurice Francis Egan)

There was a Pentecost too, in Kilmer's beliefs.

Gerald Manley Hopkins in the following poem tells us how the Holy Spirit keeps a "freshness deep down things" in spite of the fact that everything around us "wears man's smudge".

"..... Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
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."

Returning to my statement that the teachings of the Church would have ironed out many wrinkles in Wordsworth's theory of life, I purpose now to show how they would have changed his views regarding liberty, equality, fraternity--those principles which at one time he cherished so dearly and which later proved so disappointing. Basically these principles are Christian. Their source lies in the universality of divine love which is crystallized in the oft re-echoed entreaty of our Pontiffs: "Behold your King". (John xix, 14) But when these same Christian principles do not originate in the brotherhood of Christ and the Fatherhood of God immediately there crop up an immense vortex of error and anti-Christian movements which will defeat their very purpose. This is what happened in France which agitated the inmost soul of Wordsworth causing him to doubt the very existence of God. The Golden Age was turned into a Reign

PRINCIPLES  
CHRISTIAN

ROOT IDEA

of Terror. The government itself was the chief offender. Whenever the State wished to make a road, it drove it right through one small property after another, generally without paying a penny. Private property had to give way, without any claim, to public interests. This was a root idea of the Revolution and this also is a root idea of the totalitarian states of to-day. Invariable, when puny man leaves God out of the picture his selfishness makes him tyrannize over his fellows and no man's liberty is safe from the caprice of those who have power or interest with those in power. Witness the actions of the Gestapo, the tool of Hitler, in Germany at the present time! No small wonder is it that Wordsworth lost faith in man completely when he heard of men visited by night, carried off without a warrant and never seen again? The brutality of man towards his fellowmen stares at us from out the pages of history unless he hearkens to the warning voice of that unerring legislator, the Catholic Church. The reason why She is unerring is because She bases her doctrine relating to the difficult problem of human solidarity solely upon the unchangeable principles drawn from right reason and divine revelation. There isn't any institution in the world that ever met with any success in dealing with important social problems other than the Church of Christ, because to her alone the greatest Teacher of all times gave the command: "Go teach all nations, and behold I will be with you until the consummation of time". Who else would dare proclaim the doctrine that the negro, the chinese, the japanese, and the white man,--all being men--have the same inalienable rights bestowed on them by the Creator!

BRUTALITY  
OF MAN

SOCIAL  
PROBLEMS

Sacred Scripture tells us that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psalm xxiii. 1), and so no absolute unlimited ownership can be claimed by man as if he were free to follow his own selfish interests without regard to the necessity of others. It is not his; it is the Lord's.

In that renowned Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII on the condition of labour, Rerum Novarum, in which the statesmanlike Pope refutes the false teaching arising from the spread of Socialism and the revolutionary change in the field of economics brought about by the growth of industry, and the discoveries of science, the Vicar of Christ writes:

RERUM  
NOVARUM

"Man is older than the State and he holds the right of providing for the life of his body prior to the formation of any State. And to say that God has given the earth to the use and enjoyment of the universal human race is not to deny that there can be private property. For God has granted the earth to mankind in general; not in the sense that all without distinction can deal with it as they please, but rather that no part of it has been assigned to any one in particular, and that the limits of private possession have been left to be fixed by man's industry and the laws of individual peoples."

.....

"It is the soul which is made after the image and likeness of God; it is in the soul that sovereignty resides, in virtue of which man is commanded to rule the creatures below him, and to use all the earth and ocean for his profit and advantage. 'Fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures which move upon the earth'. In this respect all men are equal; there is no difference between rich and poor, master and servant, ruler and ruled, 'for the same is Lord over all'. "

Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical Letter on Reconstructing the Social Order, Quadragesimo Anno,

issued forty years later, vindicated the social and economic doctrine of the earlier document, but developed certain points more fully to meet the urgent needs of his own day. The above-quoted excerpt is but one example of the farsighted and practical wisdom of Holy Mother Church of which Wordsworth along with so many others are deprived.

FREE AND  
EQUAL

But when the world says to God, "You are only an hypothesis; we have no need of You; we shall build our Utopia on our primal instincts,"our "cocksureness" soon leads to chaos. We are all born free and equal, you say? Look at yourself in the mirror standing beside someone of whom you are jealous, and repeat that question. What folly! Why, even the animals are not born free and equal. Call a meeting of the League of Nations of the animals in the jungles, and watch the lion, the King of the world, to see if he treats all present as his brothers and sisters--as free and as worthy of all the power and strength that is his. Ridiculous! That slogan of the Revolution is all stupid nonsense unless guided and built up on the commands of God the Father, on Revelation and Tradition along the lines the Church lays down.

PRE-EXISTENCE Another fallacy detectable in Wordsworth's poetry is the idea of the pre-existence of the soul before its conception. We find a hint of this in his Ode on the Intimations of Immortality:

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:"

We must not press the matter too closely in view of the fact that both Wordsworth and Coleridge tell us that we must not take the enunciation of this doctrine of pre-existence too conscientiously. The Poet himself wrote:

"I think it right to protest against a conclusion which has given pain to some good and pious persons that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too showy a notion to be recommended to faith as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But, let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of Man presents an analogy in its favour."

Mr. Wordsworth states that "though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it. On the contrary, it is on the strength of Divine Revelation that Holy Mother the Church denies it.

GENESIS

We read in the Book of Genesis: "Let us make man to our own image and likeness.....And the Lord God formed man out of the slime of the earth and breathed into his face the breath of life". No one who accepts the Divine authority of the Scriptures can refuse to see here a different origin for the body and the soul of Adam. In

CREATION

OF THE SOUL

consequence of this revelation the universal teaching of Catholic Doctors is that each soul is created immediately by Almighty God. Hence we look upon it as a part of the course of nature, that a human soul is created and infused into each body as soon as the body is fit to receive it. God formed the body of Eve from a rib of Adam. That God created the soul of Eve from nothing follows from what has been said in regard to the origin of Adam's soul. It is clear from texts of Scripture that all men are descended from Adam and Eve, and on it rest the doctrine of original sin and of Christ's atonement:

NO MEN  
BEFORE ADAM

BIOGRAPHIA  
LITERARIA

"As by the offence of one unto all men to condemnation, so also by the justification of One unto all men to justification of Life." (Rom. V, 18) Ecclesiastes says that at man's death "the dust returns into its earth from whence it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it". (XII, 7) That there were no men before Adam and Eve is manifest from the whole context of the Bible narrative. After describing the gradual completion and embellishment of the earth, Scripture says: "There was not a man to till the earth". (Gen. ii. 5) No person who believes in the doctrine of the Redemption can accept as true the doctrine of pre-existence for the purpose of Christ's coming on earth was to restore to our race what it had lost by the sin of Adam. Hence, Wordsworth erred grievously in stating there was nothing contrary to revelation in the idea of the pre-existence of the soul. However, it will be much more kindly on our part to assume that it was only a flash of his highly developed imagination and obey Coleridge's warning in the Biographia Literaria when he advises the reader not to take Wordsworth's doctrine of pre-existence in the literal and "ordinary interpretation". Quoting him:

"The Ode was intended for such readers only as had been accustomed to watch the flux and reflux of their inmost nature, to venture at times into that twilight realm of consciousness, and to feel a deep interest in modes of inmost being, to which they know that the attributes of time and space are inapplicable and alien, but which can yet not be conveyed, save in symbols of time and space. For such readers the sense is sufficiently plain, and they will be as little disposed to charge Mr. Wordsworth with believing the Platonic pre-existence in the ordinary interpretation of the words, as I am to believe that Plato himself ever meant or taught it!"

We shall leave it at that.

Now let us consider Wordsworth's gospel of

GOSPEL OF  
SENSATIONALISM

sensationalism. In his opinion there is no other, but in mine it is an out-and-out fallacy. An army of words must travel on its stomach--on something substantial and very evident. Now, to appeal to the emotions on questions where only reason and evidence are really revelant is to build upon sand. Before we can believe in God, we must have a reason for that belief. "Living as if we were rich will soon drive us into the poorhouse. Living as if there was a God will never give us God." Wordsworth bases his knowledge of God upon experience. He has encountered God but he does not argue about God. Impregnated with a misty romanticism, depreciating reason, exalting sentiment, he chooses intuition as the chief means whereby the reality of spiritual things might be brought home to him. By ~~a~~ kind of intellectual sympathy he sets himself in the interior of an object in order to coincide with the very reality of that object.

THE SEER  
AND THE  
SEEN

The seer and the seen become one in an effable experience of unity, and to the Poet, experience means essentially an emotion, a feeling, or better still, a feeling of objective presence. In reality what Wordsworth thinks to be contact with God is only a conclusion from first principles drawn from the visible things of the universe. God is not the phenomenon which he perceives but rather the Ultimate Cause which produces it. His whole position falls into an inconsistency.

FEELING

Feeling is not necessary for the meeting of the soul and God. This meeting takes place in the centre of the will, by a contact full of love but altogether spiritual. Sentiment, of itself, can add nothing to the act of self-surrender; neither can it take anything away from it. Beautiful considerations, fine words,

USEFUL

AUXILIARY

thrilling emotions, although not forbidden by God, are of no importance to Him. The sanctification of the soul is an affair of the will aided by grace, for the giving of oneself to God is an impulse of the heart and not an act of the imagination. Granted, sentiment may be a very useful auxiliary if governed and relegated to its true place which is a very inferior one, but it must never be allowed to usurp or meddle with the rights of the will. Now, Wordsworth would just tell us the opposite. In his scheme of things sentiment is of prime importance. The whole trouble lies in the fact that he doesn't understand the basic principles underlying all spiritual life--the nature of sanctifying grace and God's precious presence within us, and consequently, in dealing with questions of spirituality he turns everything topsy-turvy.

AFFECTIVE

STATE

Since Wordsworth stresses this topic of feeling with such insistence, I deem it worthwhile to explain the Catholic position more fully. One of the attributes of God is His unchangeableness. Since the affective state is organic, it is therefore personal and incommunicable, as are all affective states. From this there follow two results: first, God will vary from person to person because the affective state is not the same in any two individuals; secondly, God will vary from experience to experience in the same person. When one is in a passion, for example, something will seem good to him which does not seem so when one is not in a passion. Since no two people's emotional states are exactly the same, it naturally follows that our contacts with God do not give us the same kind of God. Hence, there are

as many Gods as there are "varieties of religious experience". What folly to worship at the shrine our own hands have made! And yet Wordsworth tries to teach us to do that.

Furthermore, emotion is apt to be misleading because wanting the object of our desire, our mental processes are likely to be affected and consequently, we do not face facts. The light of our reason is often obscured by our feelings and we fail to view objects in their true perspective. History gives us a wonderful proof that emotion never creates but presupposes knowledge. I shall give it in Reverend Father Fulton J. Sheen's own words:

"Solomon has lived immortally for refusing to admit that emotion could create truth. The guilty woman who appeared before him showed far more emotion than the innocent mother. The guilty woman tried to make emotion create the truth; the innocent woman allowed truth to create emotion. And the truth made her free."

If there is one thing wherein the Catholic faith differs from non-Catholic Christianity more than in any other, it is that the Catholic faith, while not ignoring the emotional side of religion, is a "reasonable" faith, with a thoroughly proven intellectual foundation for religious faith and practice. The Church recognizes that wherever you have genuine religion you must have mysticism and our emotions play a very large part in our mystical thoughts. Sentiment is God-given but that doesn't say everything is sentiment. It tells the direction but does not tell what directs it. "Feeling is important for religious belief, not in supplying its content or in supplanting its content, but in lending it strength." The Catholic Spirit has declared

BEST AMONG  
IDEAS

that there is a best among ideas and sentiments, that the premise of art, literature, etc., is truth, and that truth (which is beauty also) lies in and above what the intelligence perceives as existing in the world. The senses have their usefulness and the appearances presented to them have their allurements, but it is often a deceptive allurements. Only a rational treatment of the garment of the universe will reveal the reality and preserve the beauty of the raiment. By reason of its faith in and communication with a world that is higher than nature, by reason of the revealed truth which it manifests, the religious spirit keeps the mind on a higher level than matter. Its power is regulative and widening.

EDUCATIVE  
POWER OF  
THE CHURCH

All this leads up to the fact that the educative power of the Church lies in the special emphasis laid in her preaching on the other world and on the supernatural. It is lamentable that Wordsworth didn't come under the sway of her educational influence, for the brooding visionary of abnormal psychic constitution had within him the raw material out of which a great Mystic could have been made. He possesses the passion for the absolute but instead of turning directly to God, he goes to Nature and deliberately tells us that Nature and the report of sense is not merely the guide, the guardian of his heart, but the "soul of all his moral being". We clearly understand why, but at the same time we are sorry that he was--

\*.....endlessly perplexed  
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground  
Of obligation, what the rule and whence  
The sanction; till, demanding formal proof,

And seeking it in everything, I lost  
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,  
Sick, wearied out with contrarities,  
Yielded up moral questions in despair."

THE ETERNAL  
WHYS

Wordsworth met the fate of all those individuals who, from the beginning of time, have pitted their small minds against the overmastering and eternal whys--the problem of evil; the problem of being; the problem of the becoming and flux of things. These problems are too arduous for any one man to solve. They require the wisdom, the experience, and the enlightenment of the Holy Ghost, which the Catholic Church alone possesses. He wasn't aware of the divine mandate which established God's Church as "the pillar and ground of truth" nor of her divine mission to teach "all things whatsoever He has commanded", and so he is unable to offer any really solid constructive or effective criticism on the questions of life which really matter. Certain thoughts of his are Catholic in sentiment, however, as for instance in his "Ode to Duty", wherein he asserts that true liberty is found only in the observance of the commandments:

"To humbler functions, awful power!  
I call thee: I myself commend  
Unto thy guidance from this hour;  
Oh, let my weakness have an end!  
Give unto me, made lowly wise,  
The spirit of self-sacrifice;  
The confidence of reason give;  
And in the light of truth thy bondman let me  
live."

MORAL AND  
SPIRITUAL  
QUALITIES

In this and similar passages which here and there occur in his later poetry particularly, we feel, in some respects at least, that Wordsworth has all the moral and spiritual qualities possible to possess without the benefits of a revealed religion kept from error by the

ever-vigilant care of an Infallible Church. In other words, he is beginning to see the gleam--"to hitch his wagon to a star".

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION

"Purify the source. The renewal of the arts must begin with the artist himself. If you want to produce a Christian work, be a Christian..... do not adopt a Christian pose..... A Christian work would have the artist, as artist, free....as man, a saint." (Jacques Maritain)

## CONCLUSION

Purify the source. The renewal of the arts must begin with the artist himself. If you want to produce a Christian work, be a Christian .....do not adopt a Christian pose.....A Christian work would have the artist, as artist, free.....as man, a saint."  
(Jacques Maritain)

OUR FAITH

COLOURS

EVERY ACTION

SHADOW FOR

REALITY

Jacques Maritain has hit the nail a tiny bump on the head. Those thoughts of his sum up admirably what I have tried to say in this thesis. A man's religious faith and the man himself are inseparable for the Faith is a way of life made up by the myriad activities and preoccupations of daily living. It colours his every thought and action. Joyce Kilmer thinks so too, for he claims that when a Catholic attempts to reflect in words "some of the Beauty of which as a poet he is conscious, he cannot be far from prayer and adoration for he is a Catholic in all the thoughts and actions of his life". It is very certain that we have to pass through God in order to reach effectively the smallest reality, and we can only do that by means of God Himself. Without this there is no mysticism in the proper and sacred sense of the word. Hence, immediately we establish the premiss that Wordsworth often gives us the shadow for the reality, since during the supreme decade of his poetical inspiration his trend of thought is manifestly naturalistic and often pantheistic. Being deprived of a faith and philosophy of life which alone put poets in contact with that groundwork of truth from which all great Christian poetry must rise, how could his poetical genius be preserved from wrecking

itself in philosophical blind alleys? There is always a void in what he writes and Coventry Patmore tells us why:

"All realities will sing; nothing else will."

NO CONSCIOUSLY  
ANTI-CATHOLIC  
TENOR

Although there is very little in Wordsworth that is of a consciously anti-Catholic tenor, yet the Catholic reader is ever aware, no matter how sympathetic he may be, that the Poet fails to grasp the essential mystery of life. His labours should have been directed to a supernatural end but he lived in an epoch when the European man wandered from one glittering substitute for God to another only to find out that it was a fool's paradise that he sought--a deceptive dream that would never afford rest to his soul. Naturally, Wordsworth's mystical creations bear a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge, sentiment, and religion of his age.

POETS OF THE  
CATHOLIC  
REVIVAL

The mystical creations of the poets of the Catholic revival differ essentially, as would be expected, for Newman gave them the mind of the Church which gave purpose and direction to the romantic emotional élan. Their work is the product of a Catholic imagination and a Catholic sensitivity. How widely different would Wordsworth's mystical conception of life have been, had he experienced, borrowing Joyce Kilmer's quaint way of expressing it, "the divine adventure of conversion"! There would be no spiritual perils of religious questions, no want of balance, no anarchy between intellect and emotion, no false idealizing of "Truth", "Goodness", or "Beauty", or call it what you will, no trace of a confused and illusory Romantic

mysticism. A clear vision of a Christocentric universe  
CHRISTOCENTRIC would have made for solidarity and given direction to all  
UNIVERSE his ideas, whether political, economical, social, or  
religious. Those sincere longings for he knows not what  
would have found a home in the Mystical Body of Christ.  
Like Patmore he would have perceived that the highest  
mission of the poet is to speak in man's language of  
the love which dwells in inaccessible heights,--a love  
which has been translated and brought closer to us in  
the Word-made-Man, and like St. Augustine on his con-  
version, his cry would have been:

"Sero te amavi, o pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova!"

Generalizing Wordsworth's attitude towards  
Divine Providence, the opinion may be hazarded that at  
CATHOLIC POETS no time does he dare to be happy and playful, joyous  
JOYFUL and confident, as do the Catholic poets of the same  
century. In the Prelude, God is referred to as the  
"Wisdom and Spirit of the universe"; and in Tintern  
Abbey, as "a motion and a Spirit that impels all think-  
ing things". Again, in "To My Sister", he speaks of--

".....the blessed power that rolls  
About, above, below....."

The same misty vagueness permeates this doctrine as it  
does his entire works when he deals with questions in-  
volving the eternal values of life. There is nothing  
in common with Christ's way of telling us about the  
Heavenly Father's paternal care. His God clothes the  
lilies and feeds the ravens. As he works in the life of  
Nature, so does He in that of History. All the leading  
spirits of the Old Testament were sent by Him. Every  
world event, large and small, is God's act. The entire  
history of mankind is for Jesus a revelation of the

RELATION TO  
THE WILL OF  
GOD

living God. There is no picking and choosing what might flatter his own personal views, such as we find in Wordsworth, but the creative will of His Father is found in all things and in all persons. Therefore, He sees these things and these persons not from without in all the deceptiveness of their appearance, but from within in their essential relation to the will of God. His approach to every purely human conception and system is by way of God, not of man. Wordsworth's approach is by way of man, and hence we find traces of despair and questionings in his poems.

JOYOUS  
MESSAGE

Christ is the great Teacher of the Catholic poets, and so they, too, see the manifestation of the Divine will in everything. That is the secret hidden in their childlike, joyous message. That is why their song is:

"Lord, for to-morrow and its needs,  
I do not pray;  
Keep me My God, from stain of sin,  
Just for to-day".

And that is why the Little Flower of Jesus' heaven is--

".....from His presence ne'er to go;  
Childlike, to call Him Father as He saith."

Newman's trust is even more virile--

"Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene: one step enough for me."

DIVINE  
QUEST

The Divine quest, although the constant theme of the Bible, is not mentioned by Wordsworth. Francis Thompson is spellbound by it:

"Amazing love, immense and free,  
For, O my God, it found out me."

The beatings of the human heart remind him of the gentle patter of the following feet. Even the sordidness of the London slums was unable to rob him of the "unperturbèd

pace" of those "majestic, noised Feet":

"Halts by me that footfall:  
Is my gloom, after all,  
Shade of His hand outstretched caressingly?"

In order to get a clearer insight into why Wordsworth's theory of the Hierarchy of Being is fundamentally false, one must obtain God's view of His world.

GOD'S VIEW  
OF THE WORLD

It ultimately reduces to this: Wordsworth looked from the world upwards; Christ looked from God, the Creator, downwards. To arrive anywhere near the true perspective of things, one must see the picture that Christ saw when He walked this world in human form. Things must not be seen, rigidified by human thought into a fixed significance and being, but naked and bare as they proceed from the hand of the Creator for the purpose and use which He, in His Fatherly wisdom, so ordains. Wordsworth didn't see them in their inner, God-related dynamic, and as a result there is a fallacious grading of the scale of being.

FALLACIOUS  
GRADING

There are two very important relationships which he does not recognize--the unquenchable love of God for the human soul, as well as the dignity of the human individual; and the other, that man belongs to His God, as the sheep to its shepherd. (Luke xv. 6) The well-being of society largely depends upon a true estimate of these two determining factors. We are ever waiting for him to tell us that "there are many and wondrous things, but there is naught more wonderful than man," but he never does. Nor are any of his utterances in the same strain as Vaughan's--

"Fresh fields and woods! The  
earth's faire face,  
God's footstool and man's dwelling  
place."

Father J. B. Tabb, "The Poet Priest of Virginia,"  
reflects similarly, in his poem "Out of Bounds":

"A little Boy of heavenly birth,  
But far from home to-day,  
Comes down to find His ball, the Earth,  
That sin has cast away."

NATURE-  
WORSHIPPER

Now, Wordsworth was too much of a nature-worshipper to  
ever think of calling this world a footstool or a toy.  
He goes to the opposite extreme and "paints the lily".  
Even inanimate objects are endowed with moral life:

"To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,  
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,  
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,  
Or linked them to some feeling."

HARMONIOUS  
CRESCENDO

He would have us believe that there is a continuity  
between creatures and God in the pantheistic sense but  
the Angelic Doctor forbids us to do so. No creature,  
he tells us, however perfect, by the mere fact of its  
inherent perfection can fill the gap between itself and  
God. The universe, however, by a continuity of order  
and an analogical possession of being, is a harmonious  
crescendo of perfections from the lowest minerals up  
to God Himself. These two theories differ as much as  
black does from white.

IMAGERY  
SPIRITUALIZED

In so rapid a review as this, Wordsworth's  
theism and pantheism can be superficially synthesized  
by noting his reactions to a few of the beauties of nature,  
and at the same time comparing them to the reactions of  
Catholic poets in similar circumstances. Looking upon  
the setting sun, he saw the "quickenings" "Eternal soul"  
within and became an idolater, whereas Francis Thompson  
was reminded of the golden monstrance on the altar and  
God coming forth to bless the world. His imagery is just  
as sensuous as that of Wordsworth but he spiritualizes it.

Patmore acclaimed Francis Thompson "a greater Crashaw", and Crashaw's Latin description of the miracle of Cane and his English translation thereof are two of the noblest stanzas in all poetry. The one is--

"Lympha pudica Deum vidit et erubuit." (The limpid liquid saw its God and reddened),

the other--

"The modest water saw its God and blushed."

They are sublime religious reflections without any trace of pantheism whatsoever. Coming back to our Poet--he felt gay to be in the "jocund company" of the daffodils. Alice Meynell would sympathize with him here, but she would sink deeper and claim that he could never know full communion with "the earth's wild creature". Behind the beauty of natural forms lurks a secret:

SINK DEEPER

"O daisy mine, what will it be to look  
From God's side even of such a simple thing?"

Alice Meynell, like Abbé Brémond, stands aloof from Wordsworth's views because of her realization of the limitations of human powers, and also because her mystical range of vision regarding poetry, while participating in the phenomenal, has its essence in heaven. "The poet's imageries are noble ways" but she knows that they must never be confused with ultimate poetry itself.

In Art and Scholasticism, Jacques Maritain has said that "it is a deadly error to expect poetry to provide the supersubstantial nourishment of man". Paraphrasing that remark, I say that it was a deadly error on Wordsworth's part, to expect introspective feelings, intuition, inner light, irrational emotions, his "eye and ear" sensationalism, or even Nature to provide him with supersubstantial aliment. His subjectivism made

SUPERSUBSTANTIAL ALIMENT

of him an individualist with too much confidence in his own judgment, content to live within the area of his own experience. As befalls any man who endeavours to think things out for himself, he soon became entangled in the meshes of his own weaving. No man, not even Wordsworth, can afford to be independent and slight the

EXPERIENCE OF  
GENERATIONS

definite formality of ordinary laws which the experience of generations of men have established in Catholic practice and whose wisdom stands confirmed by long dealings with morality. True traditional definitions are the long-standing result of painful mistakes and previous experience. Hence, to condemn them in order to exalt introspection and psychological knowledge is simply a refusal to face facts.

RESTRICTED  
OUTLOOK

Wherever you have men you are bound to have a restricted outlook and narrowness of judgment for the sublime reality is seen only through a veil and from afar, like a mountain wrapped in clouds. "We see now as in a mirror, in a dark manner." (St. Paul) That is why the Catholic Church makes Christ the sole canon of her preaching and adheres so obstinately to His traditional message. Karl Adam states the reason why the Church will not endure any modernism, any fraternizing with the spirit of the age:

".....the Church has always resisted the domination of leading personalities, of schools or movements. And whenever men have sought to interpret Christ's message, not by tradition, but by means of private speculation, from out of the limited experience of their little individual selves, then the Church has proclaimed her emphatic anathema. The doctrinal history of the Church is simply an obstinate adherence to Christ, a constant carrying out of the command of Jesus: "One only shall be your teacher, Christ."  
(The Spirit of Catholicism)

CHRISTO-  
CENTRIC  
TEACHING

Since Wordsworth's mystical conceptions are not dominated by this Christo-centric teaching authority, there is an air of insufficiency, a touch of melancholy, about them all. And when his puny intellect wrestled with the arduous problems--the problem of evil, the problem of being, the problem of the becoming and flux of things --he met the fate of all those individuals who, from the beginning of time, have pitted their small minds against the overmastering and eternal whys. The answer to these is only found in Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, and in His Church the fulness of which wells out of the revelation of the Old and New Testaments, and of Tradition.

To sum up, Wordsworth was too much of a romantic pantheist to be a real mystic, too much given to an undefinable and untrustworthy emotional reaction of an unreasonable sort to ever comprehend the life of God, and too much of a nature-worshipper to pierce to the inner reaches of that heavenly country where alone one may speak with the angels or be rapt within sight of the Beatific Vision.

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