

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS
AND TRACTARIAN POETRY

MARGARET JOHNSON

Gerard Manley Hopkins and Tractarian Poetry

in memory of Richard
Songs 8: 7

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The Nineteenth Century

General Editors' Preface

The aim of this series is to reflect, develop and extend the great burgeoning of interest in the nineteenth century that has been an inevitable feature of recent decades, as that former epoch has come more sharply into focus as a locus for our understanding not only of the past but of the contours of our modernity. Though it is dedicated principally to the publication of original monographs and symposia in literature, history, cultural analysis, and associated fields, there will be a salient role for reprints of significant texts from, or about, the period. Our overarching policy is to address the spectrum of nineteenth-century studies without exception, achieving the widest scope in chronology, approach and range of concern. This, we believe, distinguishes our project from comparable ones, and means, for example, that in the relevant areas of scholarship we both recognize and cut innovatively across such parameters as those suggested by the designations 'Romance' and 'Victorian'. We welcome new ideas, while valuing tradition. It is hoped that the world which predates yet so forcibly predicts and engages our own will emerge in parts, as a whole, and in the lively currents of debate and change that are so manifest an aspect of its intellectual, artistic and social landscape.

Vincent Newey
Joanne Shattock

University of Leicester

Abbreviations

CC	<i>Christ's Company and Other Poems</i>
CR	<i>The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti: A Variorum Edition</i>
DC	<i>The Poems and Letters of Digby Mackworth Dolben 1848-1867</i> , ed. Martin Cohen
EPM	<i>The Early Poetic Manuscripts and Note-books of Gerard Manley Hopkins in Facsimile</i>
Essays	<i>Essays Critical and Historical</i>
Grammar	<i>An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent</i>
JP	<i>The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins</i>
LI	<i>The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges</i>
LII	<i>The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon</i>
LIII	<i>Further Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins</i>
LD	<i>The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman</i>
Lectures	<i>Keble's Lectures on Poetry 1832—1841</i>
Lyra	<i>Lyra Apostolica</i>
Poems	<i>The Oxford Authors: Gerard Manley Hopkins</i>
PPS	<i>Parochial and Plain Sermons</i>
SD	<i>The Sermons and Devotional Writings of Gerard Manley Hopkins</i>
SP	<i>Selected poems of Richard Watson Dixon</i>
Verses	<i>Verses on Various Occasions</i>
Year	<i>The Christian Year</i>

Introduction

The importance of Tractarianism for Hopkins' poetry was recognized early. As literary executor, Robert Bridges selected High Church anthologies in which to introduce Hopkins' poetry, despite Hopkins' membership of the Society of Jesus. Jude V. Nixon lists the early publications, and points out the affinities between Hopkins' work and Tractarian poetry:

The gradual release of Hopkins's poems by Bridges in such anthologies as *Lyra Sacra*. . . *Prayer from the Poets*. . . *A Little Book of Life and Death*. . . and *The Spirit of Man*. . . corroborates the fact that Bridges understood that Hopkins was writing in the devotional and cathartic mode of Tractarian poetry.¹

In the fifty years from 1918 when Bridges' own edition of Hopkins' poetry appeared, the Tractarian component of the poetry was barely noted.² Then a resurgence of interest occurred. Alison Sullo way in 1972 described Hopkins as arriving in Oxford already 'a devout Tractarian,' and began her historical study with a thorough but selective discussion of the progress of Tractarian thought in Oxford during what she called its 'third phase,' and related it to Hopkins in his undergraduate years.³ Nine years later, George B. Tennyson pointed out the parallels between early Tractarian theology and poetics and Hopkins' works, and noted that 'his poetics, much as they owe to non-Tractarian sources, have affinities with the Tractarian linkage of poetry and prayer.'⁴ A decade after that, in 1991, Robert Martin argued that Hopkins' formative years were spent in the Church of England, and that an examination of those years was essential in coming to an understanding of the man:

we are used to thinking of Hopkins as a Roman Catholic convert and Jesuit priest, but we need to remember too that for almost exactly half his short life he was a member of the Church of England. If we can believe what most psychologists tell us, the psyche is formed early in our existence. When Hopkins was converted at twenty-two, the personality, intellect and spiritual cast of mind that characterized him at his death were well established, and the outlines of the great poet he was to become were already implicit.⁵

These critics have done much to bring about an awareness of Hopkins' Tractarianism, and to bring it into balance with the Roman Catholicism of the second half of his life.

Yet despite twenty years of critical argument that the Tractarian influence upon Hopkins was extremely important, no major study of Hopkins' poetry within the Tractarian tradition has been undertaken. Sulloway's work is intent on situating Hopkins within his historical context, and she does not therefore deal in depth with the theology, the poetics, or the poetry of the Oxford Movement, all of which were powerful influences on Hopkins' work. Her analysis is essentially historical, and considers Hopkins' early poetry as a response to the unsettling and emotional atmosphere which prevailed at Oxford during the time of Pusey's clashes with Jowett on several fronts, and to the gradual loss of power and following of the Tractarians. Two appendices to the book also deal with the Tractarian Movement, the first giving a chronology of events concerning Tractarianism at Oxford combined with a chronology for Hopkins; and the second, a summary of the Tractarian Movement before Hopkins' matriculation. The presence of these indicates the importance that Sulloway ascribes to the Oxford Movement as an influence on Hopkins; yet simultaneously this importance is marginalized; for much of the material is presented in appendix form.⁶

Tennyson acknowledges Hopkins' debt to the Tractarian Movement, noting that 'the points at which Hopkins and Tractarian poetry most strikingly come together are nature, sacramentalism, and incarnationalism, three of the most often remarked features of Hopkins' poetry.'⁷ Yet he argues against Hopkins' identification as a Tractarian poet on the historical grounds that he was not involved in the early phases of the Movement; and further, that he brings to his poetry elements not available to his Tractarian predecessors.⁸ Both of these assertions are indubitably true, and are of immense importance in situating Hopkins' poetry within the Oxford Movement. However, to limit the term 'Tractarian' to the years during which tracts were produced suggests a rigidification of terms rather than an awareness of the evolutionary character of the Tractarian Movement, and also restricts the application of a very useful

adjective. Tennyson's own comment that 'Keble was a Tractarian two decades before the word had been coined' is evidence that this is not what he intended.⁹ It is noteworthy that, despite his intention of limiting his study to 'the early or Tractarian phase' of the Oxford Movement, Tennyson considered the works of Christina Rossetti and Hopkins so important that he made room for a small chapter devoted to these latecomers to the Movement.

Although Hopkins may be said to be outside the Tractarian Movement as he came to it years after Tractarianism proper was in its decline, the Movement was far from over.¹⁰ Pusey was still at Oxford, and Henry Parry Liddon was also there, helping to foster the ritualism which became a noticeable part of Tractarianism after John Henry Newman's conversion. In 1864, the year Hopkins matriculated, Pusey was in the forefront of the High Church struggle to cite Benjamin Jowett, Hopkins' tutor, with heresy for his contributions to *Essays and Reviews*. Newman was gone but not forgotten; the publication of *Apologetica Pro Vita Sua*, also in 1864, renewed interest in him and in the Oxford Movement all over again. John Keble was working quietly in his country living, but *The Christian Year* was as popular as ever: Amy Cruse reports a diary entry of 1864 in which Lady Frederick Cavendish wrote, 'Mr. Lionel Ashley came and made my hair stand on end by announcing that he had just heard for the first time of Keble and *The Christian Year*.'¹¹ Tractarianism, thirty years after its inception, was still a notable force in Hopkins' world.

Martin, who like Sulloway and Tennyson is concerned with historical placement, emphasizes the importance of Hopkins' early years in his biography. Only by inference, however, is this related to his mature poetic works. Thus, even amongst those critics who place great importance on the role of the Oxford Movement in Hopkins' life, there is difficulty in relating it to the poetry. Either the poems are marginalized, as in Sulloway's and Martin's works; or Hopkins himself is, as in Tennyson's.

The reasons for this treatment are hard to define. Partly they relate to the problems of viewing Hopkins against the work of poets who have not enjoyed a similar renaissance of interest in their works. Little is known of Richard Watson Dixon, or Digby

Mackworth Dolben, or Isaac Williams, or Keble, except to students of Victorian religious poetry. Newman's verse is best known not for its unadorned merits but for the hymnodic settings of 'The Pillar of the Cloud' and Elgar's setting of *The Dream of Gerontius*; and the renewed interest in Christina Rossetti has been largely due to feminist studies which have brought about a re-evaluation of her work in the context of her gender and historical situation.¹² Hopkins' own popularity in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s was the result of early ahistorical studies which placed him not in a Victorian but in a twentieth-century context, and thus removed him from the sphere in which he actually developed and wrote, claiming for him a modernity at odds with chronology.

The most comprehensive early examination of Hopkins and his poetry, W. H. Gardner's new-critical study of 1944, *Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition*, indicates in its subtitle the identification of Hopkins as being somehow outside his own era; the final chapter of the first volume is entitled 'Hopkins and Modern Poetry.'¹³ Hoxie Neale Fairchild in his 1957 study *Religious Trends in English Poetry* omitted Hopkins from his chapter on Catholic Christianity which included Keble, Newman, Dixon, Dolben, Faber, Caswall, de Vere, Williams, and Hawker. 'Although some would say that he had reached full stature before 1880, Gerard Manley Hopkins has been reserved for treatment in a turn-of-the-century volume,' he remarked. Hopkins was removed to a later volume, sharing with several others the heading 'Mavericks.'¹⁴

This ahistorical path was followed by many other critics. Bernard Bergonzi, writing in 1977, commented,

When Hopkins first became widely read, it was assumed that he was a modern poet born before his time, rebelling against Victorian literary ideals and values; more recently, as a deliberate reaction against this view, it has been argued that Hopkins was really just another Victorian poet, having far more in common with his contemporaries than was at first realized. Both views seem to me equally false, or, for that matter, equally true. In his art as in his life Hopkins was too "counter, original, spare, strange" to fit in anywhere with complete conviction.¹⁵

This is an extraordinary comment, surely, from one whose purpose was 'to place Hopkins within the various contexts in which he lived and worked — Victorian England, Oxford, the Catholic Church, and Jesuit order —;' extraordinary, too, that the Anglican church is not one of these contexts. Later, in 1980, Michael Sprinker began and ended a deconstructionist reading of Hopkins' poetry with the remark, 'With him modern English poetry properly begins.'¹⁶

Concurrent with this ahistorical assessment of Hopkins' poetry runs another critical argument based not on form but on theology. The argument here is that Hopkins is writing in a specifically Roman Catholic mode; and, even more specifically, as a Jesuit. In 1942 John Pick's *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Priest and Poet* developed this line:

so many have been the misconceptions and misunderstandings of his spiritual life that a study of his religious thought and development, the very inspiration and substance of his poetry as of his life, is essential to an understanding of this poet who was a priest as well. . . . There is really only one date in the life of Gerard Manley Hopkins that has any great significance. It is the great dividing point of his life. On one side is the unformed youth, on the other is the Jesuit priest.¹⁷

Such a statement bisects Hopkins, and marginalizes his growth; indeed, despite the importance Pick ascribes to 'his religious thought and development' the entire text devotes only twenty-three pages to Hopkins' early life, and those deal mainly with his four years in Oxford.

This attitude is in part a reaction to Bridges' assessment of Hopkins' poetry which Bridges felt to be marred by his friend's religious vocation. 'He seems to have been entirely lost and destroyed by those Jesuits,' he wrote to Dixon after Hopkins' death.¹⁸ In defence, 'those Jesuits' emphasized the close link between Hopkins' poetry and his Jesuit vocation. In 1935 Joseph Keating, a Jesuit himself, wrote,

The Society cannot, nor can Catholics as a body, be wholly satisfied with the result of the labours of these various zealous non-Catholics, and that for a fundamental reason, for which, as it lies in the very nature of things, they are in no sense to blame. The fact is, they do not share the Faith of their subject, they

regard it as unsound and erroneous, they are more or less hostile to it, they resent its interference with his poetic work, and so, not understanding or appreciating it, they cannot fully understand or appreciate him.¹⁹

Another Jesuit, Vincent Turner, wrote in 1944,

In all his poetic work, it appeared more and more vividly the more these letters and note-books were read, there was unity of pattern and of inspiration, and the essence of this unity lay in his spiritual and intellectual and emotional life as a Jesuit priest. . .²⁰

Further on he suggests that there is a univocity about Hopkins' poetry so that any reading which is not Jesuit is false: 'It is odd to watch the burden of a Jesuit's poetry being misheard through the puritanism of his readers.'²¹ The exclusivity of such a comment is bound to irritate those many lovers of Hopkins' poetry who may have different religious affiliations, but who still feel there is much of beauty and value which they can perceive in his works. It is one thing to assert that there is a particular component of Hopkins' work that is specifically Jesuit; quite another to argue that this component provides the only true approach to understanding.

The passage of time, and of critical schools, has mitigated the harsh antagonisms of such opposing views. The many Jesuit critics of Hopkins' work no longer have to defend Hopkins' vocational choice; and the non-Jesuits are not alone in offering multiple viewpoints from which to read Hopkins' poems.²² Recent studies still consider the interdependence of Hopkins' Roman Catholicism and poetry, such as J. Hillis Miller's deconstructionist reading of *The Wreck of the Deutschland* which argues that Hopkins' language and theology are forever in conflict, because 'The centre around which Hopkins' linguistic speculations revolve, the unsettling intuition that they approach and withdraw from, is the exact opposite of his theological insight.'²³ Against this reading of theological absence Rachel Salmon argues that Hopkins achieves a 'jamming' by which he accomplishes 'the fusion of the metaphorical and metonymical modes in the poem.'²⁴ Her argument is based on the distinction between Protestant and Catholic perceptions of the Eucharist, the former metaphorical, the latter metonymical. Equating each

theological stance with its corresponding linguistic model, Salmon contends that both are present in each poem, and that it is the interaction of the two incompatible religious positions expressed in apparently exclusive figures of speech which provide the depth and subtlety of the work.

These studies accept Hopkins as priest and poet, and use biographical knowledge to provide an approach to the poetry. Salmon in particular points out the interaction of Protestant and Catholic modes of thought in the linguistic structure of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*. Her identification of two equal strands of thinking is interesting and provocative, for it suggests that Hopkins did not shed his early Anglican beliefs upon becoming converted, but instead added to them another system of beliefs which, although in tension, were neither contradictory nor destructive of them. The Protestant, metaphorical strand which Salmon identifies in *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, the poem which deals in part with Hopkins' conversion, represents the system of thought and theology which guided Hopkins' life until his introduction to Roman Catholicism.

This early strand, the teaching of Anglicanism and particularly of Tractarianism which led Hopkins until his conversion, and which is evident in his poetry far beyond that moment, is the subject of this study, which examines the poetic and theological affinities between Hopkins' work and five Tractarians whose works were known to him. John Keble, author of *The Christian Year* and contributor to both *Tracts for the Times* and *Lyra Apostolica*, was credited by Newman as being 'the true and primary author' of Tractarianism, and his Assize Sermon as 'the start of the religious movement of 1833.'²⁵ Hopkins recognized Keble as an 'Oxford poet,' and considered his poetry to be in the tradition of Wordsworth.²⁶ In 1844 the lectures Keble had given during his tenure as Professor of Poetry at Oxford were published; these lectures, delivered between 1831 and 1841, were contemporaneous with Keble's work on the *Tracts* and *Lyra Apostolica*. They present the poetic theories of one early Tractarian in relation to his theological standpoint and explicate, much as Hopkins' prose works do, the rationale behind the writing of poetry, in which religion is linked with poetic expression.²⁷ As such, they are a valuable source for identifying the links between Tractarianism and Romanticism, and for providing a systematic

explication of Tractarian aesthetics in the early phase of the Movement as perceived by one of the Movement's founders. From this base it is possible to consider the individual variations which the theology and aesthetics of the Movement underwent, even as early as in the publication of *Lyra Apostolica*.

Later, Richard Watson Dixon provides an example of a poet who develops an individual style based on his Tractarian predecessors but in many ways very different from them and from Hopkins. Coming from an Evangelical rather than High Church background, Dixon became involved with the Oxford Brotherhood while he was at Oxford. Several of his close friends — Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris, for example — gradually replaced religion with aesthetics as the dominant focus of their philosophy, and eventually became not priests but artists. Dixon took orders in the Anglican church, but was influenced by the ideas of his friends who were to become central figures in the Pre-Raphaelite Movement. These ideas were to inform his poetry, which Hopkins held in such high regard that in 1878 he initiated a correspondence with Dixon which continued until Hopkins' death.

Hopkins' own interest in art provides another link between the two poets, and the manner in which they developed out of Tractarian styles of expression indicates the variety of possible developments of poetry in the Tractarian mode. Their correspondence provides insights into Hopkins' thinking about poetic style and use, which are valuable aids to reading his poetry.

Another poet with Pre-Raphaelite leanings, Christina Rossetti, also developed from a Tractarian aesthetic. Hopkins met her in 1864 at the home of a mutual acquaintance, the Tractarian Frederick Gurney.²⁸ He was already clearly interested in her poetry. At the time of their meeting he was engaged in writing a reply to her poem 'The Convent Threshold,' which was included in *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, first published in 1862.²⁹ Hopkins noted references to her works in contemporary art periodicals and recorded the publication of *The Prince's Progress* in 1866.³⁰ Other references appear in his letters and journals.³¹

Rossetti, older than Hopkins by fourteen years, was closer to the origins of the Movement than he. When Newman finally joined the Roman Catholic church she was fourteen, old enough to take an interest in such a move, especially given her

upbringing in a household which was part Roman, part Anglo-Catholic, and one which did not restrict contentious issues to the ears of adults.³² Her own religious observances at the time of Newman's conversion were High Church: she attended Christ Church in Albany Street, where the incumbent was William Dodsworth, an associate of Pusey and Newman with a particular interest in the revival of religious orders. It was within this parish that the first Anglican sisterhood was formed in 1845; and the stir caused by this, and the subsequent affiliation of her sister with All Saints, another Anglican order for women, set directly before Christina Rossetti the issue of women's position within the Anglo-Catholic church.³³

It has been suggested that Rossetti's awareness that for a woman to write poetry at all was to invade male territory made her deliberately choose to write in areas which would not conflict with men. Gilbert and Gubar, for instance, ascribe Rossetti's poetic choices in terms of Bloom's theory of misreading:

For an "anxiety of influence" the woman writer substitutes what we have called an "anxiety of authorship," an anxiety built from complex and often only barely conscious fears of that authority which seems to the female artist to be by definition inappropriate to her sex. Because it is based on the woman's socially determined sense of her own biology, this anxiety of authorship is quite distinct from the anxiety about creativity that could be traced in . . . male writers. . .³⁴

Dolores Rosenblum argues that this anxiety caused Rossetti to select Tractarian poetic models with deliberation because of their conceal/reveal propensities.³⁵ Her choice of topics was also clearly Tractarian, yet because her work appeared not in Tractarian publications but in Pre-Raphaelite and other magazines, these attributes were concealed behind the assumptions of readers as to what sort of material they expected. Hopkins' poetry was first published as an opus in 1918; and this chronological anomaly has caused misreadings of his work too. The effects of such misrepresentations on a poet's reception are an interesting area of study. In addition, the work of a female Tractarian poet casts interesting light on Hopkins' representation of women.

In February of 1865 Hopkins met Digby Dolben, who was visiting Bridges at Oxford. Dolben made an immediate impression

on Hopkins. Like him, Dolben was a young man of deep religious fervour: he had been sent down once from Eton for illicitly visiting local Jesuits, and at the time of his meeting with Hopkins was a member of the English Order of St. Benedict, under the name of Dominic. He was just turned sixteen. Hopkins may have seen in Dolben a reflection of his own wavering attitude toward the Tractarian Movement, and a similar leaning toward Roman Catholicism. The two exchanged letters and poems; and Hopkins' conversion encouraged Dolben to write to Newman of his own, similar decision in 1867.³⁶

The poetry Dolben left behind after his early death at the age of nineteen displays a preoccupation with many of the Tractarian issues which concerned Hopkins. These include the importance attached to the understanding of the Incarnation, and the observance of ritualistic elements of the Anglican church. In addition, both young men were considering conversion to Roman Catholicism, and their changing religious perceptions are recorded in their poetry.

The man who, for Hopkins, spanned the Tractarian Movement in time and theology was John Henry Newman. Twenty years after his conversion he was still a powerful presence in Oxford, and it was to Newman that Hopkins wrote when he decided to be received into the Roman Catholic faith.³⁷ Newman represented much that Hopkins could identify in his own life: a brilliant Oxford career, High Church leanings, the writing of religious verse, and then a turning away from an assured future in the Anglican church to the uncertain and socially unacceptable assumption of Roman Catholic orders. Although Keble delivered the lectures which most clearly propounded Tractarian theology and poetics, Newman provided the example which Hopkins more nearly followed in his own developing theology. Even there, differences between the two men indicate individual growths from a common background, and different methods of adapting similar sources.

Of these Tractarians only one, Christina Rossetti, is still generally recognized as a poet and a Tractarian.³⁸ Newman, like Hopkins, is identified with the Roman Catholic faith to which he was converted, as well as with the Tractarian Movement which he helped both to found and to founder. Keble, and Dixon and Dolben to a far lesser extent, were recognized in their own times

as religious poets but are practically unknown today. Here their work will be presented in terms of the Tractarian elements they contain, and which they shared with Hopkins.

This will lead to a discussion of the nature of Tractarian poetry. What common elements do these poets possess which can be denoted as Tractarian? How, given a similar religious vision and poetic theory and subject matter, does each poet contrive to be individual? To what extent is the Tractarian component of a poet's work modified by interests not commonly held by the others? How far can a changing religious consciousness be traced through a poet's works? How is Tractarian poetry to be distinguished from Roman Catholic poetry? And how can Hopkins be placed within this group of poets to best demonstrate his own continuing indebtedness to a specific religious ethic which he later abjured?

The argument about the Incarnation which winds through each chapter provides a link between theology and poetics. The importance of the doctrine of Incarnation to Christian belief cannot be overstated; and the interpretation of this doctrine largely determines the religious affiliation of each person. Moreover, the perception of the relationship between Christ the God and Jesus the man has ramifications far beyond the bounds of formal religion, and ultimately affects the individual perception of the relationship between God and every aspect of human life. This work will explore some of the many dimensions of the idea of Incarnation, such as the effect of incarnational belief on the perception of the affinity between the natural world and heaven, the connection between the Incarnation and the role of Mary, and the link between self-perception and incarnational understanding. Throughout the emphasis will be on the way in which these theological matters are expressed through poetry.

The Christian doctrine of the Incarnation as it was revealed in the manifestation of Christ the God in Jesus the man was linked with the idea of the sacrifice which Christ made for mankind. In particular, the doctrine of the Eucharist, how it should be understood and celebrated, became a major issue in the theological debates of the Anglican church. It was, in a way, the nexus of the Victorian distinction between Protestant and Catholic, for in it was to be found respectively a rationalistic

understanding of an absent God or a mystical understanding of a present but hidden God. It was also, for many Anglo-Catholics, the doctrine which ultimately brought them to Rome.

The controversy centred upon the interpretation of the words spoken by Christ at the Last Supper. The Catholic position inclined toward a literal, the Protestant churches toward a metaphorical, understanding of 'this is my body.' James Froude, Hurrell Froude's younger brother, presented an overview of English attitudes toward the Eucharist from the time of the Reformation:

The sacramental system means something, or it means nothing. It is true, or it is false. The English Evangelicals used to answer in clear ringing tones for the second alternative. . . . They insisted sternly and firmly that material forms were not and could not be a connecting link between God and the human soul. The English High Churchman was less decided in his words, but scarcely less so in his practice. He was contented to use the ambiguous formulas which the Reformation left in the liturgy; but he confined his "celebrations" to four times a year. He regarded the Anglican ceremonial generally rather as something established by law which it was his business to carry out than as a set of rites to which he attached a meaning. High Churchmen have discovered now that the mystic body in the Eucharist is in the hands as well as the heart of the believer. They pine for more frequent communions as the food of their spiritual existence. They are gliding rapidly into the positive affirmation of the doctrine which Latimer and Ridley were executed for denying.³⁹

The distinction between 'heart' (metaphorical) and 'hand' (literal) was predicated on the rationalistic model, of the evidence of things seen. The Church of England had long held the doctrine of the Real Presence to be false; much less was Transubstantiation accepted as an interpretation of the sacrament of bread and wine. Yet the High Church apologists, led by the Tractarians, were advocating the Real Presence in the Eucharist. Seven years before Newman was censured for writing *Tract 90*, Hurrell Froude wrote to him:

In the preface to the Articles it is said that we are to understand them in their grammatical sense; which I interpret into a permission to think nothing of the opinion of their framers. By the by, vide Bull's Works, vol. ii page 255. "We are not ignorant

that the ancient Fathers generally teach that the bread and wine in the Eucharist, by or upon the consecration of them, do become and *are made* the Body and Blood of Christ."⁴⁰

That this set the tone and topic of Newman's discussion of the Eucharist in *Tract 90* is most likely; Newman acknowledged Froude's influence on his understanding of the Eucharist,⁴¹ and his explanation followed a similar line, which echoed Froude's sentence pattern: 'It is a duty which we owe both to the Catholic Church and to our own to take our reformed confessions in the most Catholic sense they will admit: we have no duties towards their framers.'⁴² The heart of his argument concerning the Article on Transubstantiation carries the interpretation to its logical absurdity, easily rejected by all rational people:

What is here opposed as "Transubstantiation," is the shocking doctrine that "the body of CHRIST," as the Article goes on to express it, is *not* "given, taken, and eaten, after an heavenly and spiritual manner, but is carnally pressed with the teeth;" that it is a body or substance of a certain extension and bulk in space, and a certain figure and due disposition of parts, whereas we hold that the only substance such, is the bread which we see.⁴³

That is, that Christ's physical body, in the size and shape of a man, does not overlay the bread and the wine, and is not physically consumed. This was an interpretation which both Catholic and Protestant could have little difficulty in rejecting; whether their agreement would reach to less crass understandings of the manifestation of God in the bread and wine was not Newman's point; he was interested in asserting the Anglo-Catholic mystery of Transubstantiation against the intensely rationalistic attitudes prevalent in much of the Church of England.

'Protestants have ingeniously converted the words, "This is my body," i.e. "the mysterious gift of which I spoke," (John vi.) into "my body is [only] this." Of course the words are an economy — they make it a metaphor,' Hurrell Froude remarked.⁴⁴ He, like Newman and Hopkins, Dolben and all others who were evolving toward a Roman Catholic faith, were considering the phenomenal, rather than the literal, aspects of the Real Presence. 'The great aid to belief and object of belief is the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Religion

without that is sombre, dangerous, illogical, with that it is — not to speak of its grand consistency and certainty — *loveable*. Hold that and you will gain all Catholic truth!’ Hopkins wrote to E. H. Coleridge.⁴⁵ And Dolben wrote:

“Do you remember the hush that followed the dread elevation?
 “Three mighty men at the Altar, in spite of the Philistine legions,
 “Had opened a way to the well that springs in the City of
 David.
 “Aye, and we thought, we knew, it was Blood, not water, they
 brought us. . . .” (DC 88)

This was a long step from the position of most Anglicans; Hurrell Froude criticized Keble’s interpretation of the Eucharist in his poetry:

Next, to the Christian Year. In the fifth of November “there present in the heart, not in the hands,” &c. How can we possibly know that it is true to say ‘Not in the hands?’ Also, on the Communion. . . .you seem cramped by Protestantism. . .

So much for quarrelling. I have attacked N. for some of the Tract Protestantism. . . .⁴⁶

As ever, some were moving from the rational to the mystical at a greater pace than others.

Along with an understanding of the Eucharist as more than a symbol, as a token of God’s continuing presence in the world, came a reaffirmation of the role of ritual. The sacramental and liturgical practices of the Roman Catholic church affirmed the immanence of God and the necessity of obedience in methods of worship.⁴⁷ The reclaimed rites of the English Catholic church were not merely hereditary; they were necessary observances in the proper worship of God. Many of them centred upon the celebration of the mass, which was taking on renewed importance as the ritual by which humanity communed with God. Such practices as lighting candles on the altar, ringing bells, burning incense and elevating the host, were gradually introduced. To those observing from outside the Tractarian camp, the rituals spoke not of obedience but of superstition. ‘ENOUGH!’ wrote Wordsworth in a poem of 1822 entitled ‘Transubstantiation’ but concerned more with the ritual than the meaning:

for see, with dim association
 The tapers burn; the odorous incense feeds
 A greedy flame; the pompous mass proceeds;
 The Priest bestows the appointed consecration;
 And, while the Host is raised, its elevation
 An awe and supernatural horror breeds;
 And all the people bow their heads, like reeds
 To a soft breeze, in lowly adoration.⁴⁸

The availability of many detailed studies of the Oxford Movement has made the inclusion of full biographical and historical material unnecessary, but throughout there are references intended to situate each poet in the context of the social and religious occurrences of the day.⁴⁹ This is important when considering that Tractarianism was indeed a movement, and its motion was not merely temporal, but also theological, æsthetic, political, and social: that is, that it changed; and what was true for its founders became modified in the works of its followers. Thus although each chapter concentrates on the work of a particular poet, references are made to others, to demonstrate the breadth of ideas, as well as the variations, that in time were encompassed by the Movement.

Central to each chapter is Hopkins, who himself underwent religious changes reflected in his writing. The final chapter examines his poetry in relation to those theological and æsthetic premises which are revealed in the works of Tractarian poets whom he knew. As he himself was grounded in Tractarianism, so was his poetry. As his conversion to Roman Catholicism developed from the beliefs he had acquired in the Church of England, so his poetry evolved out of the æsthetic principles laid down by the early Tractarians in precept and in practice. Tennyson has amply demonstrated that the poetic theory of the Tractarian Movement was itself a fusion of æsthetics and theology; and it is in the poetry, an amalgam of personal faith and beauty of expression, that the finest and most powerful expressions of belief can be found.⁵⁰ That these combined to produce the verse that Hopkins wrote long after his conversion is the argument at the heart of this work.

CHAPTER ONE

Early Tractarian Poetry

Like many before him, Hopkins found his way to the Roman Catholic church not by a turning-around but as a logical development of his religious education. As the child of observant High Church Anglicans with an interest in the arts, Hopkins was early exposed to the æsthetic expression of religious ideas. Many of the connections between poetry and religion which are demonstrated even in Hopkins' earliest extant poetry were directly descended from Keble's own, and were introduced to Hopkins in his home.¹ Poetry such as *The Christian Year* in particular, and *Lyra Apostolica*, made important contributions to Hopkins' developing æsthetic, through an emphasis on the affinity between art and religion, and the provision of a schema whereby all aspects of life could be ordered within a religious framework. Thus early Tractarian poetry holds a seminal importance for Hopkins' own poetic growth. In their tempering of Romantic ideals and their development of a Christian æsthetic, the Tractarian concepts which Hopkins discovered in his youth provided a crucial grounding for his mature poetry.

The Christian Year appeared in the Hopkins family library in 1855 when Gerard was eleven, a gift from Manley to his wife Kate.² A landmark volume from its first publication in 1827, it established conventions against which later devotional poetry was judged, and had become a standard Anglican source-book by the time of Hopkins' childhood. Robert Bridges, Hopkins' friend and contemporary, attributed his own early aspirations toward a religious vocation to 'the purely logical effect of Keble's "*Christian Year*", a book regarded in my family as good poetry, and given to us on Sundays to learn by heart.'³ It was joined in 1843 by *Lyra Apostolica*, a collection of poems of avowedly didactic intent, first published in the *British Magazine* as a conscious attempt to encapsulate and promulgate the 'spirit afloat,' as Newman described the first stirrings of High Church politics.⁴ Newman was the most prolific contributor to *Lyra Apostolica*,

the first of his two great poetic attempts, which was begun at the end of his continental holiday with Hurrell Froude in 1833.⁵

That Hopkins knew these works is clear. Not only were these volumes ubiquitous in High Anglican circles, forming part of the regular worship of many families, but there is internal evidence, such as the close correlation between Hopkins' 'Nondum' and 'Tokens,' one of Newman's verses in *Lyra Apostolica*. The similarities are such that it is possible to feel that 'Nondum' is the poem to which Newman's 'Tokens' is the response, despite Newman's having been written at least thirty years previously.⁶ Hopkins' poem is prefaced by a biblical verse which epitomized much of Tractarian thought: 'Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself.'⁷ The poem opens with a profound sense of solitude and abandonment:

God, though to Thee our psalm we raise
No answering voice comes from the skies;
To Thee the trembling sinner prays
But no forgiving voice replies;
Our prayer seems lost in desert ways,
Our hymn in the vast silence dies. (Poems 81)

'Tokens' is a response to a similar occasional sense of God's absence, expressed in terms of the same biblical passage used by Hopkins: 'What strikes the mind so forcibly and so painfully is, His absence (if I may so speak) from His own world. It is a silence that speaks. . . why, if we cannot have the sight of Him, have we not at least the knowledge? On the contrary, He is specially "a Hidden God."'⁸ 'Tokens' is an expression of this feeling of desolation. Using the basic rhyme and metre which Hopkins later imitated, it opens with an avowal of God's presence, both symbolic and incarnational:

O SAY not thou art left of God,
Because His tokens in the sky
Thou canst not read; this earth He trod
To teach thee He was ever nigh. (*Lyra* XXVII)

The idea of a hidden God, and that of clearly perceived symbols requiring interpretation, formed an important part of the poetic and theological tenets propounded by Tractarian poets.

Further evidence that Hopkins was acquainted with *Lyra Apostolica* can be found in his early notebooks, where 'Lead,

kindly light' was written out in September or October, 1865, followed by the first entry suggesting that a change of religion was being considered 'if ever I should leave the English Church.'⁹ Moreover, it was to Newman that Hopkins applied when he decided, less than a year later, that he would indeed join the Roman Catholic church, signifying identification with another Tractarian and academic who had been converted.

The format of *The Christian Year*, in following the order of services within the Anglican church and emphasizing the many special feast days and special celebrations in the church calendar, opened the way for a renewed dedication of daily life to the service of heaven. Keble took the lead in reintroducing regular services and Eucharistic celebrations in his parish, one of many catholicizing trends which characterized the High Church movement.¹⁰ In this way the æsthetic ideal implied by the arrangement of *The Christian Year* became actualized in the regular habits of worship of many Anglicans: while at Highgate School Hopkins persevered in reading his Bible lessons nightly, despite the possibility of taunts from his peers, Anglicans all.¹¹ There are many similarities too between Hopkins' notebooks and those of Hurrell Froude.¹² Thirty years apart, both detail the minutiae of daily life subordinated to the worship of God, indicating the extent to which religious ideals suffused all aspects of existence for High Church devotees. 'I will attend chapel regularly, eat little and plainly, drink as little wine as I can consistently with the forms of society: keep the fasts of the Church as much as I can without ostentation: continue to get up at six in the winter. . . .' runs a partial list of Froude's resolutions.¹³ Hopkins' asceticisms follow a similar line:

For Lent. No pudding on Sundays. No tea except if to keep me awake and then without sugar. Meat only once a day. No verses in Passion Week or on Fridays. No lunch or meat on Fridays. Not to sit in armchair except can work in no other way. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday bread and water.

(JP 72; EPM 201 pl. 149)

Such tendencies in Hopkins may have made his move to Roman Catholicism smoother, and certainly were good grounding for the many self-denying practices of the Society of Jesus. However, they were developed in a different religious environment. That

they could be transferred to and extended in the Roman Catholic church does not negate their different origins. Similarly, the majority of Hopkins' poetry was written prior to his conversion. Although it is far more traditional than the later work, it embodies all those elements of subject, æsthetics, style and presentation which are so evident from *The Wreck of the Deutschland* on. Hopkins' poetry may have developed after his conversion, but it was engendered in Tractarianism, and his later poetry is a development of, not a rejection of, the ideals that were fostered in the poetry of his youth.

In later years, attempting to catalogue the many strains of poetry in his century, Hopkins classified Keble and Newman with Wordsworth, as belonging to the Lake school.¹⁴ The influence of both Wordsworth and Coleridge on the Tractarians is indubitable.¹⁵ Keble dedicated his *Lectures on Poetry* to Wordsworth, who was made Poet Laureate in 1843, the year of their publication. The dedication culminated in a description of Wordsworth as 'chief minister not only of sweetest poetry but also of high and sacred truth.' The word 'minister' has clear religious overtones, for Keble had a vision of poetry as a vehicle for religious expression. This vision was adopted unconditionally by the Tractarian Movement; it was a clear illustration of the unity of æsthetics and doctrine which played so vital a part in the Movement.¹⁶ As Newman wrote,

The taste for poetry of a religious kind has in modern times in a certain sense taken the place of the deep contemplative spirit of the early Church. . . as if our character required such an element to counterbalance the firmer and more dominant properties in it. . . Poetry then is our mysticism; and so far as any two characters of mind tend to penetrate below the surface of things, and to draw men away from the material to the invisible world, so far they may certainly be said to answer the same end; and that too a religious one.¹⁷

Hopkins' placement of Keble, Faber and Newman within the bounds of Romanticism represented by Wordsworth pays tribute to the influence his work had on them.¹⁸ Wordsworth's sense of the numinous in natural objects was a powerful influence on Keble, and on Newman through Keble's poetry. Writing of this

sense of an angelic presence in the laws of nature, Newman asked,

what would be the thoughts of a man who, "when examining a flower, or a herb, or a pebble, of a ray of light, which he treats as something so beneath him in the scale of existence, suddenly discovered that he was in the presence of some powerful being who was hidden behind the visible things he was inspecting, — who, though concealing his wise hand, was giving them their beauty, grace, and perfection, as being God's instrument for the purpose, — nay, whose robe and ornament those objects were, which he was so eager to analyze?"¹⁹

It was *The Christian Year* which reawakened him to 'the doctrine that material phenomena are both the types and the instruments of real things unseen,' and he considered this to be one of 'the two main intellectual truths' that he discovered in *The Christian Year*.²⁰ It was a doctrine that he encountered in his reading of the early Fathers also:

I understood these passages to mean that the exterior world, physical and historical, was but the manifestation to our senses of realities greater than itself. Nature was a parable: Scripture was an allegory: Pagan literature, philosophy, and mythology, properly understood, were but a preparation for the Gospel. The Greek poets and sages were in a certain sense prophets; for "thoughts beyond their thought to these high bards were given."²¹

Wordsworth's early reluctance to name the numinous force of which he was so aware, or even to describe it as a religious phenomenon, did not deter Keble and others from making the theological connection on their own behalf, and patterning their poetry on what they found in their precursor. This Christianized version of Wordsworth's less specific sense of a great power in nature readily lent itself to ideals of Tractarian poetry, containing as it did the idea of the concealment of God with the possibility of revelation, and conveying too the wonder of those who could make the connection. However, Wordsworth's influence on Tractarian poetry was moderated by the vital theological needs which his early work failed to supply.²² A late shift in position saw the rewriting of some of his early poetry to express a more precise identification of God as the unspecified force so vividly

apprehended in his youth; it was coupled with Wordsworth's expressed wish that he had written *The Christian Year* himself, as he could have done it better.²³ As only five years earlier Wordsworth had published his own volume of verses on a religious topic, this was an admission of more than superior poetic prowess: it was a recognition of the value of *The Christian Year* as a theological document.

Wordsworth's book of verse, *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, is not an anticipation of Tractarian concerns, although it does touch on related issues. Its very existence suggests the widespread interest in religious matters, however, and its format, which provides an historic overview of the growth of the Christian church in England, emphasizes the historical and national character of Anglicanism, two concerns of Newman in particular. Within this framework Wordsworth included a justification of political intervention in church affairs at the time of the Reformation, and a recognition of the link between political and religious liberties, two topics that underwent review in Keble's Assize Sermon of 1833.²⁴ Another, 'Regrets,' which deals with contemporary issues, bemoans the loss of many religious rites in the purges of the Reformation, but couples this with a warning on the dangers of Roman Catholicism. Not only does its subject matter antecede Tractarian interests; its expression, too, is redolent of the sort of nature imagery that is prevalent in Keble's poetry, so that the sestet anticipates 'The Thrush in Winter' of *Lyra Apostolica* as well as 'The Redbreast in Church' of *Lyra Innocentium*.²⁵ Because this sonnet deals with matters of ritual and the desire for renewal of Catholicism without any accompanying Romanism, and because these are specifically linked with nature, all of which were concerns of Tractarians and, in altered form, of Hopkins, it is worth looking at here:

WOULD that our scrupulous Sires had dared to leave
 Less scanty measure of those graceful rites
 And usages, whose due return invites
 A stir of mind too natural to deceive;
 Giving to Memory help when she would weave
 A crown for Hope! — I dread the boasted lights
 That all too often are but fiery blights,
 Killing the bud o'er which in vain we grieve.

Go, seek, when Christmas snows discomfort bring,
 The counter Spirit found in some gay church
 Green with fresh holly, every pew a perch
 In which the linnet or the thrush might sing,
 Merry and loud and safe from prying search,
 Strains offered only to the genial Spring.²⁶

The opening desire is for the restoration of discarded rituals which are considered 'natural,' a point also made by Keble about the close organic relationship between truth and symbol.²⁷ The beauty and potential of religion, characterized by another natural object, a bud, are dead as a result of the 'boasted lights' of loudly proclaimed religious practices which are in effect destructive of what they purport to nurture. In contrast, the final images of a church and a woodland scene are so closely identified that it is impossible to decide whether the description is really of a holly-decorated building or a bird-filled glade. Such a unified vision of church and nature is offered as the only prospect of spiritual renewal; and it is interesting that this should be 'safe from prying search,' a suggestion of what will later be considered as an important Tractarian aesthetic, the principle of reserve.

This poem serves to introduce the correlations between Wordsworth's verse and the poetic aspirations of the Tractarian Movement, in that both develop a unity between religion and nature, and offer them in poetic form. This, as far as it goes, accords with the practices that can be perceived in Hopkins' poetry as well. Yet, as Stephen Prickett points out, Wordsworthian spiritual impulses were not specific enough for the needs of a theological movement; nor were they the sole Romantic source of Tractarian poetic theory: in these matters the writings of Coleridge were vitally important.²⁸ In particular, the distinctions which Coleridge developed between primary and secondary imagination, and between imagination and fancy, became important elements in the poetic theories of both Keble and Hopkins.

Both Coleridge and Wordsworth used the terms 'imagination' and 'fancy' to define poetic and aesthetic differences. Based on their own poetic philosophies, and reacting to those of each other, the two provided definitions which reflected their differing perceptions of the poetic voice.²⁹ Coleridge wrote:

The IMAGINATION then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living power and prime Agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially *vital*, even as all objects (*as* objects) are essentially fixed and dead.³⁰

The secondary imagination, that of humans who constantly recreate their world not just by seeing it but by interpreting it in artistic works, is a repetition of the divine imagination which simultaneously creates both humanity and world. It is, on a lower level, as vital and compelling an act as the original creation; and because it repeats rather than copies that act, it elevates the artist to a position beyond mere humanity: to a deity.³¹

Fancy, according to Coleridge, was devoid of any creative principle:

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The Fancy is indeed no other than a mode of Memory emancipated from the order of time and space; and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.³²

The concept of fancy as a passive process, in which the fancier is as uninvolved as a mirror is in the process of reflection, posits a much lower level of artistic involvement than is present in either the primary or the secondary imagination. This was a far more severe understanding than that favoured by Wordsworth. Where Coleridge characterized the workings of the fancy as 'poor Stuff — as poor in genuine Imagination, as it is mean in Intellect — / At best, it is but Fancy, or the aggregating Faculty of the mind — not *Imagination*, or the *modifying*, and *co-adunating* Faculty,' Wordsworth responded: