

THE INFLUENCE OF CHRIST IN RECENT AMERICAN VERSE

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PREFACE

In submitting the record of this investigation, it is fitting that I record my indebtedness and express my appreciation to those who have rendered valuable assistance in gathering and sifting the material, and in helpful, constructive criticism. To my wife, therefore, whose aid in recording material has been considerable, and to members of the Department of English in the University of Kansas who have given kindly criticism, I tender my thanks.

Lawrence Emerson Nelson,
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The Influence of Christ in Recent American Verse.

This thesis is in the nature of a report of the findings of an investigation as to the extent and direction of Christian influence on present day American verse. Some two hundred sixty volumes published between the years 1890 and 1919 (inclusive), together with a few copies of newspapers and other periodicals, were searched. From them were taken some sixteen hundred poems which show in a more or less direct way such influence.

The aim has been: (1) to discover all influences which could be traced legitimately to Christ and Christianity; (2) to analyze the verse under consideration in the hope of discovering the principal tendencies of the Christian attitudes embodied therein. In accordance with this plan the first part of the thesis deals primarily with the extent of the influence and the mode of its appearance, while the second portion suggests tendencies noted. Such tendencies are suggested as holding good only within the boundaries set, of course. They may or may not be true of verse having different geographical or chronological limits, or in some cases, with other material which did not come to my attention, tho within the limits set.

Since the effort has been to secure a cross section of American verse, no standards of literary excellence

have been applied. Crude verse has been accepted as readily as that of a more finished workmanship. No author has been barred because of any religious or literary creed or lack of such. The one and only aim has been to obtain and to study the work of a representative group of writers from the point of view suggested. The books were those of the Library of the University of Kansas, and of the Carnegie Free Public Library of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, which pertained to the subject. Since approximately two hundred seventy five authors are represented by the poems studied, the material is presumably representative.

For the purpose of a more systematic treatment, the material of the first part of the thesis is arranged in the following sections:

(1) Theme material dealing directly with Christ or those in direct contact with Him, during His incarnation. Theme material from historical Christianity.

(2) Favorite phrases from the Gospels imbedded in modern verse.

(3) The influence of Christianity on language.

The first of these topics is subdivided as follows: Reference to Christ, to His contemporaries, to later historical Christianity. Results were tabulated from the

verse read and yielded the following facts as to the

INFLUENCE OF CHRIST IN THEMES OF MODERN VERSE.

The Nativity is treated in a great mass of verse.

Excluding for later treatment the considerable portion which deals with the Christmas season rather than with the Nativity proper, there remain for consideration a large number of poems dealing in more or less detail with the birth of Christ. These fall naturally into three groups, with, of course, much overlapping because of the frequent reference in one poem to more than one phase of the Nativity. These groups are:

(1) Reference to events at the inn.

(2) Reference to the angelic announcement to the shepherds.

(3) Reference to the Magi.

For convenience references were classified as belonging to one of three types: 'poems', 'extended reference', or 'brief reference'. Classification under the first of these headings indicates that the theme of the entire poem deals with the subject under discussion; the second, that a portion less than the whole poem deals with the point under discussion; the third, that a few lines at most constitute the reference.

I have listed as dealing with the inn scene fifty-four references. Of these, sixteen are complete poems,

Thirteen extended references, and twenty-three brief ones. The most common type of treatment is that which attempts to portray the thoughts of Mary or of Joseph.

"Methinks the Blessed was content, her journey over-
past,
Amid the drowsy, wondering kine on lowly bed to lie;
To dream in pensive thankfulness, and happy days
forecast,
While over her the Star of Hope waxed brighter in
the sky." * !

This is Mary, in 'pensive thankfulness' and forecast-
ing 'happy days'. But it was not all peace and joy.

"But Mary-Mother she veiled her head
As if her great joys were lost:
And "Here is only a manger-bed,
Then why do I hear clashed swords?" she said," **

Here is Mary, vaguely disturbed by prophetic forebod-
ings. These two elements, happiness and dread, form the
basis of much verse.

The outstanding characteristic of Joseph, according
to the writers of verse, is suggested by the following med-
itation attributed to him:

"Brawny these arms to win Him bread, and broad
This bosom to sustain Her. But my heart
Quivers in lonely pain before that Beauty
It loves-- and serves-- and cannot understand!" ***

In addition to the shepherds and the Wise Men a few
legendary or imaginary characters are introduced. Reference

! References in notes are given to correspond to the numer-
ical order of volumes as listed in the bibliography.

* 53, page 25. COATES, FLORENCE EARLE. "Mother Mary".

** " " 20. WIDDEMER, MARGARET. "A Ballad of the Wise Men".

*** " " 31. BARKER, ELSA. "The Vigil of Joseph".

is made to 'the gentle hostler; to ' the little scullion m
 maid', to ' the fourth shapherd', to ' a little lad', to
 'two little Bethlehem sisters'. The beasts and the trees
 are gifted with speech; the oxen and the sheep invite Mary
 to lodge with them, the cedars of Lebanon

" - - - - - watched with her, till at dawn
 Her babe she bore." *

Most writers , however, confine themselves rather
 closely to the Scriptural narratives and characters.

The poems dealing with the coming of the Wise*men *
 are approximately equal to the number of those which deal
 primarily with the inn scene, and are in virtually the same
 propotion as to extent of reference. In addition to
 describing the adoration of the Wise Men, the poems frequent-
 ly attempt to construct their previous and, less frequent-
 ly, their subsequent history. While they do not always
 agree as to the names or history of the Magi, the poets
 seem to be unanimous as to their number -- three. I
 found no trace of those legends which give their number
 otherwise.

It is well to note the symbolism which has gathered
 about the Wise Men's star. I find the term used more than
 a hundred times. Its use has been extended to symbolize

*53, page 10. CREW, HELEN COALE. "The Cedars of Lebanon".

the birth of Christ, Christianity in general, of guidance of many sorts, etc.

The shepherds are less frequently mentioned than the Magi, perhaps because their humbler station in life appeals less to the poet. I find thirty-five references, of which only six deal with the shepherds throughout. If to the thirty-five references mentioned be added twenty-five which refer to the angels without definite reference to the appearance to the shepherds except indirectly, we have sixty references, a slightly larger number than those dealing with the two phases already treated, but with extended reference comparatively rare. The shorter references have to do almost exclusively with the message of the angels, "Peace on earth, good-will to men", which seems to so hold the attention that all else tends to fade from sight. At least, round it clusters most of the verse. The words have been adopted as a panacea for all ills of the social, economic, or political order by a certain type of reformer, and accordingly are used generously. Many of these uses are, of course, far removed from describing the Nativity and are not included in the list given in this part of the discussion. The few poems that do deal at length with the shepherds are usually ecstatic recountings of the vision that had been granted them. Several are powerful, but the scene itself is probably too emotional for any but a master

poet.

In addition to the three groups described I find about thirty references to the Nativity in which no details are mentioned.

Verse dealing with the infancy and childhood of Jesus is rare. I find four references to the flight into Egypt, two to the experience in the Temple when he was twelve, and nine to various imaginary surroundings and activities of His childhood. With two exceptions these poems all deal at length with the subject. He is pictured usually as a normal lad

"- - - -racing o'er the hills-
 Hair in the wind, with sun-browned boyish face,
 Chasing the clouds and shepherding the sky,
 - - -thoughtless friend of mountain birds,
 - - idle playmate of the bees - - -" *

and, in short, doing the things that a boy usually does, playing energetically. Only once or twice is he thought of as conscious of coming events.

Concerning His ministry I find two poems and three minor references dealing with the temptation in the wilderness, besides half a dozen passing references to his baptism. Many events of His public ministry are treated in verse, but comparatively few receive any outstanding amount of attention. The anointing at the house of Simon the

* 264, page 74. WATTLES, WILLARD. "But a Great Laughner".

leper receives most, with twenty-seven references. Next comes the driving of the money-changers from the Temple, mentioned seventeen times. The walking on the sea and the stilling of the tempest from the boat are tied with fourteen references each, as are the instances of the changing the water into wine at Cana, the raising of Lazarus from the tomb, and the command to allow children to come to Him, with eleven each. The rebuke to those who brought the woman taken in adultery, and the miracle of the loaves and fishes receive mention eight times each; the calling of Zaccheus six; and the lament over Jerusalem five. It is, no doubt, needless to state that many references to His ministry are so indefinite that it is impossible to know to what particular event they allude, if, indeed, they do not refer more to His habits of action than to a specific act. These refer often to His healing ministries, and to miracles, and to the gathering of multitudes about Him, etc.

As in the case of the Nativity, the crucifixion of Jesus receives abundant treatment. Consideration at this point will be given only to references dealing primarily with the historical crucifixion; references to the cross with the meaning of a modern crucifix, or the meaning conveyed by the phrase 'to bear one's cross' will be treated later.

Among the events leading up to the actual deed was the celebration of the last supper. The record of the

supper is preserved in the widespread recognition of the rite of communion developed from it, but of the historical event there is virtually no trace in the verse. This seems somewhat strange.

Concerning the garden of Gethsemane and the experiences therein I find forty-five references, twenty-one of them either extended references or complete poems. While the number is not large, it is in marked contrast to the almost total lack of attention paid to the last supper. I judge the emotion is more suited for presentation in verse, since it is focused so definitely on the lonely figure in the garden.

To the trial of Jesus I find but ten references, while to His scourging and mocking by the soldiers there are no less than seventy references. However, fifty-two of these refer to the 'crown of thorns'. Many of these allude to the original scene by inference only, being used figuratively to denote undeserved suffering. The preponderance of reference to Gethsemane and the scourging of Christ as compared to that of the last supper and of the trial tends to suggest that the physical suffering of Christ receives more attention than the spiritual rejection of Him, that the interest is literary rather than theological. Or it may be, as suggested above, that since these are less involved in their action they lend themselves more readily

to allusion and illustration.

The journey to Golgotha receives mention but nine times.

Approximately one hundred fifty poems refer to the crucifixion. Almost half refer in a general way only, specifying no details. The proportions of the remainder can be seen in the following tables:

	The jeering of the multitude.....	12
	The women at the cross.....	12
I.	(The Mother of Jesus)..8)	
	The soldiers at the cross.....	19
	John at the cross.....	8
	The nail prints.....	33
	The crucified thieves.....	19
	The spear wound.....	17
	The rending of the Temple veil.....	12
II.	"Why hast Thou Forsaken me ?".....	8
	The vinegar and gall.....	6
	"I thirst".....	5
	"Father, forgive them".....	5
	The earthquake.....	3

There is, as will be noted, a much smaller proportion of detail about the death of Christ than about His birth. There is, however, often a stark realism that seems to be absent in verse of the nativity. The order in which details are stressed offers tempting material for supposition. It is evident that the nail prints and the spear wound have become symbolic of the crucifixion, as the Judas kiss and the thirty pieces of silver are of the betrayal. But why should the words to the thief on the cross be used as much/^{as}all the other six sayings combined?

In striving to answer this question we may note that the incidents or teachings of the ministry of Christ most used by writers of verse are those showing His or the Father's helpfulness to the weak or distressed. The disproportionate use of this saying is, therefore, in harmony with a general tendency to emphasize the loving kindness of God.

The favor/^{which}the rending of the temple veil meets among writers may be explained by the readiness with which it lends itself to figurative use.

I find reference to the burial of Jesus to be exceedingly brief and fragmentary, about two dozen in number.

Eighty-two poems contain some allusion to the resurrection. A much larger proportion of these are completely taken up with the subject than was the case among those dealing with the crucifixion. By far the favorite theme is the meeting of Christ with Mary, after His resurrection. Strangely enough, the others connected with the discovery of the empty tomb are virtually ignored. On the other hand the guard of the sepulchre receives some attention. Verse dealing with modern Easter is treated later.

The material dealing with the forty days intervening between the resurrection and the ascension is negligible. A few minor allusions to 'doubting Thomas'; a few to the meeting by the seaside, a few concerning the journey to Emmaus are virtually all.

Concerning the ascension itself I find but five references, only one of which deals with the subject at length. I am at a loss to explain this barrenness, unless it be, as seems plausible, the result of our present emphasis on the portions of Jesus' ministry which reveal Him as the comrade of men.

Leaving this section of the study, the life of Jesus, we come next to those who were influenced by Him, whose lives touched His in the days of His flesh.

We find here a great mass of reference to the Virgin Mary. Of the one hundred sixty or more, more than half are in the nature of prayers addressed to the Virgin in Heaven, to images or shrines dedicated to her, or are used as epithets or oaths. Of the remainder, four poems and seven briefer references deal with the annunciation, a surprisingly small number, considering the wide-spread popularity of the theme in the art and literature of the past. A large part of the rest try to picture Mary's thoughts at the Nativity, at the crucifixion, or as in old age she looks back over her life. A very few are concerned with the relationship between Mary and Jesus in the days of his boyhood and youth. Always it is the mother heart watching over her child that is dominant.

The following table will show the relative proportion of attention paid to others than Mary.

NAME	COMPLETE POEMS	EXTENDED REFERENCES	BRIEF REFERENCES	TOTAL REFERENCES.
Peter . . . . .	.6 . . . . .	.2 . . . . .	.34	42
Judas . . . . .	.5 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.33	38
Mary Magdalene . . . . .	.4 . . . . .	.2 . . . . .	.21	27
John . . . . .	.2 . . . . .	.3 . . . . .	.21	26
Joseph . . . . .	.7 . . . . .	.2 . . . . .	.11	20
John the Baptist . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.5 . . . . .	.12	17
Pilate . . . . .	.1 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.9	10
James . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.2 . . . . .	.5	7
Joseph (Arimathea) . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.6	6
Zaccheus . . . . .	.1 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.5	6
Thomas . . . . .	.1 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.4	5
Caiaphas . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.2 . . . . .	.3	5
Matthew . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.5	5
Herod . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.4	4
Herod the Great . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.4	4
Martha . . . . .	.3 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.1	4
Mary* . . . . .	.3 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.1	4
Mark . . . . .	.1 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.3	4
Joses . . . . .	.1 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.1	2
Andrew . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.2	2
Zebedee . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.2	2
Simon Cyrene . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.2	2
Nicodemus . . . . .	.1 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none	1
Claudia Procula . . . . .	.1 . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none	1
Luke . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.1	1
Jude . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.1	1
Zacharias . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.1	1
Chuzza's wife . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.1	1
Bartimaeus . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.none . . . . .	.1	1

That Joseph leads in number of complete poems is due to his presence at the nativity, and to the large amount of verse about that event. That his own personality has little impressed writers is evidenced by the comparatively meager brief reference. On the other hand, the comparatively large amount of brief reference indicates that something in the personalities of Peter and of Judas offers an easy personal reference, a possibility for allusion readily caught by the average reader. So far as Peter is concern-

ed the point of especial stress in verse dealing with the mediaeval church is that to him were entrusted the keys of Heaven. Writers of light verse have seized upon the idea and have not a few sly puns with the conception of him as gatekeeper of Heaven. Edgar Lee Masters, in attempting to analyze the cause for the strong appeal made by the character of Peter, finds it to be in the impetuosity of the man:

Time that has lifted you over them all-
 O'er John and o'er Paul;
 Writ you in capitals, made you the chief
 Word on the leaf-
 How did you, Peter, when ne'er on His breast
 You leaned and were blest-
 And none except Judas and you broke the faith
 To the day of His death-
 You, Peter, the fisherman, worthy of blame,
 Arise to this fame?

.

 We men, Simon Peter, We men also give you the crown
 O'er Paul and o'er John.
 We write you in capitals, make you the chief
 Word on the leaf.

We know you as one of our flesh, and tis well

Not rock of you, fire of you make you sublime
 In the annals of time.
 You were called by Him, Peter, a rock, but we give
 you the name
 Of Peter the Flame.

.

 Oh, Peter, the dreamer, impetuous, human, divine,
 Gnarled branch of the vine.*

As will be seen from the preceding line, Masters feels that Peter has more of a 'human interest' appeal than the others.

Nearly all brief reference to Judas is based upon the
 *12, page 107. EDGAR LEE MASTERS. "Simon, Surnamed Peter".

false kiss which has become a classic symbol of smiling treachery. It is an interesting fact that about Judas alone was an attempt found to build up subsidiary figures such as wife and mother.

The apparent popularity of Mary Magdalene as a subject is largely due the exceptional fondness of one writer.. Father Tabb, to whom approximately forty per cent of the verse on the subject is credited.

It being manifestly impossible to treat the third source of material from which writers have drawn themes, post- apostolic Christianity, in detail in such a discussion as this, I shall treat only those aspects of this indirect influence of Christ, as have been so prominent that I do not feel justified in omitting all mention of them.

In treating of the nativity I referred to a large group of poems dealing not with the nativity so much as with the modern Christmas season. In the course of this investigation I have listed about one hundred thirty such references, about two thirds of them complete poems. Many in which the reference was very slight were not listed. In general these deal with Christmas as a social rather than as a religious occasion. I do not mean to suggest that the Christmas season inspires ^{religious} no/verse. It undoubtedly inspired much of that which was treated under the heading of the nativity. But it also inspires much which is purely social. Since it deals particularly with the merry-making of the people, much of it is

in dialect. James Whitcomb Riley is the most prolific producer of it that I found, having twenty-three poems of this type, in the last quarter century of his work. As he grew older he seemed to grow more fond of it. Paul Laurence Dunbar is second, with about half the number. Both these writers, are, as suggested, of dialect type.

Another season that has shifted to a social as well as religious tendency is the Easter season, and verse reflects the tendency, though in much less degree than was true of that just discussed, the Christmas season.

A third reflection of post-apostolic Christianity in verse is the constant reference/^{to} ecclesiastical symbols-- crucifixes, images, shrines, rosaries, and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper-- particularly in verse dealing with the middle ages.

Some dozen writers were found using material from the crusades, but not extensively. Three or four deal also with the life and character of St Francis of Assisi. A like number give considerable space to the Christian element in dealing with the life of Joan of Arc. Cale Young Rice is the only writer I found who uses historical or pseudo-historical material at all extensively. His work ranges in subject from the time of the Fathers to that of modern missionary activities.

Aside from the subjects mentioned there is no large a-

mount of verse dealing with any one subject connected closely with the purpose of this investigation. I shall not attempt a manifest impossibility by striving to draw an exact boundary of the indirect influence of Christ on the world's history or on literature dealing with historical material. Presumably anything which has been in the least modified by Christianity would be included. This could be stretched to include most things in the modern world, if the poet spoke truth when he wrote:

"Ever the feet of Christ were in events,
Bridging the seas, shaking the continents,"*

But such things can not be evaluated and we are concerned here with things which we can evaluate, so I shall go no farther than to say that there is continual but not outstanding allusion to Christianity and Christian ideals.

Aside from the purely historical material of Christianity there is to be found a tinge of Christianity in legendary materials, the more prominent of these being the Arthurian and Grail legends,--of which the most important were the five volumes of Richard Hovey's uncompleted cycle, and Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Merlin"--together with the legends of the 'White Comrade' whose appearance was reported from time to time during the recent war. The legend of the 'Wandering Jew' also reappears in verse of the recent conflict.

* 142, page 86. EDWIN MARKHAM. "The World Purpose".

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE ON THE PHRASEOLOGY OF MODERN VERSE.

The debt of modern American verse to Christianity is not for theme material alone, but for phraseology as well. Many favorite phrases and allusions are quotations or paraphrases of the Scripture narrative of the life and teachings of Jesus. Some of the causes which lead to the widespread use of Scriptural allusions may be summed up as follows:

A remarkable compression, a striking conciseness, is possible through allusion to well-known scripture. A single word often looses a whole mental picture, sometimes a series of pictures. In Edgar Lee Master's "Autochthon" we find these vivid lines:

"Great sphered brains gone into dust again,
Their light under a bushel all their days!"*

And he has drawn a perfect and complete picture of the men of ability who shirk the task. In "Heart of All the World" Marion Couthouy Smith refers to Belgium,

"Crowned only with the thorn--despoiled and broken!"**
and the figure of Him who also was a ransom for many seems to brood over the stricken land. H.T.Pulsifer, aroused at the sinking of the Lusitania, tersely puts the indictment:

"Look, there a nation stabs again
A bloody Figure on a cross!" ***

*147, page 37. EDGAR LEE MASTERS, "Autochthon".

**54, " 242. MARION C. SMITH, "Heart of All the World".

***187, " 36. H.T.PULSIFER, "The Lusitania".

Since the prosperity of an allusion, as of a jest, lies in the ear of the hearer, it must refer to well-known material. Scripture meets this requirement in a unique way, making possible the unusual conciseness just noted.

Moreover, added charm and dignity are secured by allusion to Scripture. The nobility of its material, the choiceness of its expression, the love felt by many for the century-famous scenes and stories unite to ennoble any literature affected by them. Robert W. Service, in "The Parson's Son", transforms a cheap, tawdry death scene and makes it majestic when the delirious dying man, growing suddenly quiet, drops back into memories of childhood days and long forgotten lines,,

"Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy
Name-----" *

Then, too, an unusual vividness is often obtainable by allusion to Scripture:

"The Herods of Hatred assailed you;
They pricked you with thorns and with spears." **

Or, again:

"O the shame, and the bitter shame
Upon our chivalry,
I would rather have led the band
That dived on Calvary". ***

Again, added power is given by reference to Scripture.

.

*220, page 35. ROBERT W. SERVICE, "The Parson's Son".
**144, " 130. EDWIN MARKHAM, "A Comrade Called Back".
***194, " 351. CALE YOUNG RICE, "Night Riders".

The poet then seems to speak 'as one having authority'.

"To him who hath, late, soon
To him shall it be given".*

Poets have not been slow to make use of the conciseness, vividness, charm, dignity, and power made possible by Scriptural allusions, but have used them in profusion.

Apart from the general appeal of Scripture, the personality of Christ has a special appeal to poets. Says Professor E.W. Work;

"There is a vitality about the name of Christ that makes it live especially in the hearts of poets. When they would utter their best thoughts, somehow they must link themselves to the name of Jesus. When they would deal with the deep longing of human hearts, somehow these longings find utterance in the language of Jesus. When they would study the dark problems of human life, somehow they must listen at last to some simple word of the Master."**

The element of mystery which was in His life forms one of the lures to poets. A mysterious birth, a hidden youth, a ministry full of miracles and cryptic sayings, a strange death, a startling resurrection, all form poetic challenges.

There is also the bond of idealism. Jesus was an idealist. And some poets are idealists.

Furthermore, Jesus life was dramatic. It abounded in tense moments.

There were, too, the quiet times when he talked about the birds and beasts and flowers, and gleaned therefrom illustrations for the making plain his words concerning the deeper

*PEABODY, JOSEPHINE PRESTON, "Song and Need", 178, page 34.

**WORK, EDGAR WHITTAKER, The Bible in English Literature, p.

truths of God and the human heart. And the Jesus that touched upon these things was a nature-lover and a poet. Naturally his thought was cast into a mold suitable for use by poets.

In Jesus was a mixed psychology, a dual personality. In the constant interplay between the human and divine lies a vast field open to the poetic dramatist.

Finally, there are elements of purity, of innocence, of forgiveness in the crucifixion which make Him the tragic hero of all time.

All these things, as well as perhaps others, appeal to poets, and help to explain His popularity, made evident by the widespread use of His words, and references to incidents in His life.

In the following table an attempt is made to show the relative richness of allusion to various parts of His recorded deeds and sayings. In giving the most prevalent phraseology, I can only approximate the results, since, while the wording is usually that of the King James version, there is often the effect of a phrase without the exact wording, or a paraphrasing of the thought. For the most part, however, the results are substantially exact.

I have attempted to give (1) the incident or teaching to which allusion is made, (2) the more prominent phrases, (3) the frequency of allusion, (4) to analyze the results shown by the table.

Incident or teaching	Phrases	Times occurring
----------------------------	---------	--------------------

The Nativity

The star in the East. (A wide variation of phrasing.)		106
The angels' message	"Peace on earth, good-will to men".	54

The Crucifixion

The crown of thorns.		52
The spear-pierced side.		17
The rent temple veil		12
"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do".		4

The Ministry

The lilies of the field		41
"Consider the lilies"		
"Neither toil nor spin"		
"In my Father's house are many mansions".		24
"Mansions in the skies"		
Gethsemane (or the Lord's prayer)		22
"Thy will be done".		
The Lord's Prayer.		20
"Our Father, which art in Heaven"		
"Give us this day our daily bread"		
(See also under Gethsemane for		
"Thy will be done")		
The parable of the prodigal son		20
"The prodigal son"		
"Huská for swine"		
"The ring and the robe"		
"Wasting his substance in riotous living"		
"The Prince of Peace"		18
"Dives and Lazarus"		13
The invitation to the heavy-laden		11
"Come unto me"		
"All ye that labor"		
"My yoke is easy"		
"I will give you rest"		
The Good Shepherd.		11
"Love thy neighbor as thyself"		10
The bread of life.		10
The broad and narrow ways		9

Incident or teaching	Phrase	Times occurring
	Eyes and see not; ears and hear not.	9
	Talents.	8
	"Hide talents in a napkin"	
	Treasure in Heaven.	8
	"Lay up for ypurselfes treasure"	
	"Moith and rust"	
	The mammon of unrighteousness	8
	"Take no thought for the morrow".	7
	The good Samaritan.	7
	Not where to lay His head	6
	Whited sepulchres.	6
	Purple and fine lincn.	6
	Render unto Caesar, etc.	6
	The Lamb of God.	6
	The wise virgins	5
	Not to send peace, but a sword.	5
	A stone for bread	5
	Touch the garments hem	5
	"I believe, help Thou my unbelief!"	5
	The blind leading the blind.	5
	The widow's mite.	4
	A grain of mustard seed	4
	The wind bloweth where it listeth,	4
	Love one another.	4
	A pearl of great price,	4
	To sin against the Holy Ghost	4
	The troubling of the waters.	4
	Crumbs from the table.	3
	Birds of the air.	3
	Ax at the root of the tree	3
	Beams and motes	3
	Judge not that ye be not judged	3
	The meek inherit the earth	3
	Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least, etc.	3
	The house built on a rock.	3
	Well done, good and faithful servant.	3
	Not to be ministered unto, etc.	3
	The walk to Emmaus.	3
	Killeth the prophets	3
	Work while it is day, the night cometh	3
	Peace, peace, when there is no peace.	3
	"Be merciful to me, a sinner	3
	The salt of the earth.	3
	The light of the world.	3

Other Biblical phrases met with, while many, occur only

once or twice, or are so generalized that they cannot well be grouped. The interesting thing about the group listed is that while there is a very wide range, the bulk of reference is confined to comparatively few phrases. A phrase or two from the nativity, and from the crucifixion are in use, and apparently suffice to call to mind the salient points of those events. From His ministry the lesson of the lilies, two of the prayers of Jesus, the parable of the prodigal son, and the promise of a heavenly dwelling are the five outstanding features. The last named occurs principally in dialect verse. 'The Prince of Peace' came into prominence as a reaction from the war. Considering arbitrarily that half the expressions using the words 'Thy will be done' originate from the Lord's prayer it is interesting to note what a large portion of the allusive material comes from a single chapter (Matthew sixth).

The lilies of the field	41
The Lord's prayer.	31
Treasure in Heaven	8
Mammon (Used elsewhere also)	8
No thought for the morrow	7
Birds of the air	3
Total	<u>98</u>

One feels justified in suggesting that in so far as use is a criterion this chapter seems to hold the heart of Jesus' message from a poetic viewpoint.

The most significant thing, however is the quantity and wide-spread distribution of the use of the Biblical phraseology.

WORDS SHOWING CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE ON THOUGHT AND LIFE.

Since the outward expression of verse is in words which necessarily bear the marks of their origin and development, a master of the etymology of the language, and those from which much of it is derived, would find many traces of Christian influence in the development of languages. My purpose is simpler, being merely to call attention to the fact that in modern American verse are words which owe their origin or certain of their meanings to the influence of Christ and the progress of Christianity. While the majority of such words are restricted rather closely to ecclesiastical use, some acquire literary popularity.

Many geographical or personal names are of this type. Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gennesaret, Bethany, Gethsemane, Golgotha, Calvary, Magdala, Judas, Peter, Pilate, and Zaccheus are illustrative. The influence of Christianity has made them familiar words to us, and has added distinct connotations to their primary meanings.

By adding the definite article, we limit many words to a special Christian meaning; the Virgin, the nativity, the Wise-men, the Babe, the twelve, the seventy, the transfiguration, the betrayal, the crucifixion, the sepulchre. Sometimes by adding the indefinite article we generalize a meaning; a crusade, a Judas, an Ananias, a John the Baptist.

Some words have definitely received added meanings. Skeat records, in his etymological dictionary, that the word

'talent' acquired in the English language the present meaning of special ability within thirty years after the King James version appeared. The Anglo-Saxon 'lent' has changed from its old meaning, 'spring', to a new ecclesiastical meaning, acquiring a religious significance. 'Bedlam', through the founding of the hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem, for lunatics, came to have its present meaning, and is scarcely recognized as a corruption of 'Bethlehem.' "Chapel", we are told, referred originally to a shrine at which was preserved the capa or copy of St. Partin. 'Petrel', a diminutive of Peter, is an allusion to Peter's walking on the sea, since the bird's habit of touching the water with its feet as it flies, reminded some of that event. 'Roam' is said to refer to pilgrimages to Rome. 'Simony' takes its name from an early Christian event. 'Magdalen' has given us 'maudlin'.

The examples given are intended to do no more than suggest the field they touch, since it is not in place here to enter into such a study. With them I close the first part of this thesis, which has dealt with the varieties and extent of influence of Christ and Christianity on modern American verse. The second part will deal with the tendencies of the period.

CHARACTERISTIC TENDENCIES:1890-1919.

Approximately ninety-five per cent of the books read in preparation of this report contain some reference to Christ.

or Christian influence. Half the remainder dealt with material which in its nature excluded such reference, classic mythology for the most part, leaving only two or three per cent unaccounted for. It will be seen at once that the use of Christian material appears in an overwhelming proportion of modern books of verse.

Authors differed widely as to extent of such use. As some of the material was gathered from anthologies and from periodicals, it is impossible to test the relative frequency of use of Christian material by the authors whose work was found there only, but among those whose work was examined in sufficient quantity to justify a judgment, the following appear to use it most freely:

Ernest Crosby,
Ernest Crosby, Vachel Lindsay, Edwin Markham,
Edgar Lee Masters, Gustav Melby, Cale Young Rice,
John Bannister Tabb, and Willard Wattles.

The work of Mr. Crosby is a curious patchwork of Scriptural passages woven together in a series of philippics against modern society, principally calling down destruction on the rich; that of Mr. Melby bears indications of being the work of a retired Scandinavian missionary. It has little literary value. Edgar Lee Masters appears to be the foremost user of materials concerning Christ in a purely literary way. His mind is simply steeped in Scriptura, so that he uses it easily and naturally, seldom quoting directly, but giving a profusion of allusion truly remarkable. The freshness of meaning he infuses is unusual. Apparently he is much in-

terested in the psychology of religious experience; he has several character studies in his longer as well as in shorter poems. Father Tabb writes in a conventional way, being especially fond, as shown previously, of taking Mary Magdalen as the subject of his verse. Willard Wattles has especially attempted to re-interpret the character of Christ, emphasizing particularly his comradeship. Mr. Rice goes to the realm of early or mediaeval church history for his subject matter. Mr. Markham prefers the incidents surrounding the birth or resurrection of Christ, or legendary tales of mediaeval miracles.

Other writers frequently using the type of material under consideration are: Katherine Lee Bates, Bliss Carman, William Herbert Carruth, Florence Earle Coates, E.C. Farnsworth, Theodosia Garrison, Caroline Hazard, Richard Hovey, Harry Kemp, Joyce Kilmer, Percy Mackaye, William Vaughn Moody, Conde Bendist Pallen, Josephine Preston Peabody, Reginald C. Robbins, Edmund Deacon Peterson, Clinton Scollard, Frank L. Stanton, Roscoe Gilman Stoff, Ruth McEnery Stuart, Henry Van Dyke, Edith M. Thomas, Thomas Walsh, and others.*

The number of writers who are noticeably free from use of Christian material is too small to allow of the formation of any elaborate theories concerning the types of verse most free from it. Here are three suggestions, however, which are

* For a complete analysis, see the appendix.

more extensive investigation may establish. A half dozen writers of the Middle West-- Arthur Chapman, Robert V. Carr, Henry Herbert Knibbs, and others-- writing of the out-of-doors in a frontier setting, show little trace of the use of Christian material. A group of like size, but interested in things foreign, particularly Japanese, show a like barrenness. Of this group are; Mary McNeil Fenellosa, for eight years a resident of Japan; Vance Thompson, educated in Germany and an authoritative writer on things Japanese; and Arthur Davidson Ficke, also a student of the Japanese. Perhaps the lack of Christianity in the frontier life explains the first group, the interest in a non-christian civilization may have had its effect even upon the subjective verse of the second group. Some of the imagist poetry group, notably Amy Lowell, (but not all of them) are unusually free from Christian reference. I attribute this to their desire to break with the phraseology and subject matter of the more conventional verse.

Leaving the discussion of individual writers to be taken up in the appendix in a more complete way, we pass to tendencies as to subject matter. Unavoidably there is some overlapping here with the material treated in the first part of the study. As was there seen, the verse tends to gather about a comparatively small number of events and teachings. These tendencies are suggestive, both as to things they include as well as those they omit. There is much about the

nativity, much about the crucifixion, a moderate amount concerning the resurrection, almost none dealing with the annunciation, the last supper, or the ascension.

That there is so much about the birth of Christ is largely explained by the extent to which we observe the Christmas season, I think. A noticeably large proportion of this verse was in magazines, instead of book form. The 'Christmas number' of most magazines brings out an annual flood of such verse. The Easter season does the same thing about verse concerning the resurrection, but on a much less extensive basis. That there is an almost total absence of verse concerning the annunciation is an important indication of the changing emphasis so noticeable in contrast with mediaeval times. As stated previously, the bulk of reference to the last supper consists of mention of the bread and wine, and is due to the ecclesiastical use of these elements. The absence of material concerning the the ascension is probably caused by the social emphasis now dominant, which is more concerned with the here than with the hereafter.

We have noted that only one of the parables of Jesus receives much attention-- that of the prodigal son. We can only speculate as to the cause. Its use, however, is in line with the general tendency to stress the tenderness of God toward the weak or erring.

The fact that James and John, surely two of the most

prominent of the apostles, are comparatively neglected in favor of Peter and Judas might plausibly be explained by the theory that the latter were more picturesque characters and offer a writer more dramatic opportunities than do the former. One hesitates to advance this theory, appealing though it may be, when he recalls that John the Baptist, though not an apostle, was one of the striking characters of the time and certainly offers large dramatic possibilities, yet has been almost neglected, if the verse read is typical.

The theory does seem to hold as to the events in His ministry which are commonly treated. The predominant events are spectacular--the breaking of the alabaster box, the driving of the money-changers from the temple, the walking on the sea, the stilling of a tempest, the changing of water into wine, and the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Turning to an analysis of the recent production of verse of the type under consideration from a chronological point of view, we discover, taking as a basis the earliest copyright of a book, the following percentage:

<u>Dates.</u>	<u>Percentage of volumes.</u>	<u>Percentage of reference.</u>
1890-1899.	18%.	21.5%
1900-1909.	26%.	20.3%
1910-1919.	<u>56%.</u>	<u>58.2%</u>
Total . . . . .	.100% . . . . .	.100%

On the face of it this seems to indicate that the extent

of reference is fairly constant within the period, with a slight shrinkage in the years between 1900 and 1909, inclusive. Closer analysis discloses the fact that two authors, Ernest Crosby and John Bannister Tabb, in three volumes copyrighted in 1894, 1897, and 1899, respectively, furnish about thirty-five percent of the reference for the decade, more than half as much as the other forty-two volumes combined. It thus appears that the inclusion of these two authors of extremely fervent religious convictions gives a false impression of the period as a whole, making its percentage of reference abnormally high. A fairer estimate would be formed by eliminating these exceptional books from the computation in an estimate of general tendencies. This would give:

<u>Percentage of volumes.</u>	<u>Percentage of reference.</u>
1890-1899 . . . 17%	. . . . .15%
1900-1909 . . . 26%	. . . . .21.5%
1910-1919 . . . <u>57%</u>	. . . . .<u>.63.5%</u>
Total . . . 100%	. . . . .100%

The proportion of verse found to volumes read would accordingly be:

1890-1899	88.2%
1900-1909	82.6%
1910-1919	111.4%

Taking the average of the first twenty years (85.4%) as a base we find that the next ten years shows a proportionate gain of 30.4%. If it should be thought unfair to eliminate

from the first period two authors showing unusual tendencies without similar action elsewhere, it may be stated that the larger number of volumes in the other decades would make the influence of any one volume comparatively much smaller, and that not more than one volume, if any, in the other two decades could be excluded for extraordinarily frequent reference to purely religious themes. Two things, then are apparent: Reference to Christian material is increasing, Biblical and Christian material is becoming more diffused in literature - less a thing apart.

A still more significant analysis is obtained by a consideration of the extended references and complete poems studied. Here appear the most striking results of the entire investigation. To make the results as conclusive as possible the works of Mr. Crosby and Mr. Tabb, though-- as previously shown-- exceptional, are included in the percentages of the earliest period. The comparison follows.

<u>Percentage of volumes.</u>	<u>Extended references and poems.</u>
1890-1899 . . 18%	. . . . 12.4%
1900-1909 . . 26%	. . . . 14.8%
1910-1919 . . <u>.56%</u>	. . . . <u>72.8%</u>
100%	100%

This indicates that the extended use of material concerning Christ has increased in comparative frequency from the decade 1890-1899 to the decade 1910-1919 by a full 88%. Giving due allowance for the fact that the units of measurement ('ex-

tended references' and 'poems') are indefinite, it is certainly safe to say that in the past decade there has been a marked increase in the use of Christian material. The proportion over the last decade of the past century has well-nigh doubled.

A comparison of titles between the earlier and later periods may suggest the change of type. In the earlier period I find such titles as:

- "All Ye That Labour", by Ernest Crosby.
- "Hymn Exultant", by James Whitcomb Riley
- "A Madonna of Dagnan-Bouveret", by Rob't Underwood John-
- "Magdalen (After Swinburne)" by John Bannister (son.
- "Mariners—a Hymn" by Lloyd Mifflin. (Tabb.
- "The Three Kings of Cologne", by Eugene Field.

The titles are obviously conventional.

In the decade 1910-1919 a different type of poem is common, as indicated by such titles as:

- "But a Great Laughter", by Willard Wattles.
- "Citizen of the World", by Joyce Kilmer.
- "Comrade Jesus", by Sara N. Cleghorn.
- "Judas' Apostrophe to Christ on the Cross", by Maurice
- "The Man", by William Rose Benet. (Browne.
- "Dr. Scudder's Clinical Lecture", by Edgar Lee Masters.

This list is at least suggestive of a new type of treatment that has come to the fore, one in personalities. The Christ and His apostles are no longer bloodless models of behavior, but are ruddy, comradely folk. I find, however, no tendency to a denial of the deity of Christ. "Christ, indeed," the poets seem to say, "is truly the Son of God. But he is also the son of man." And so they picture him as a hale and hearty, brawny,

cheerful comrade, rather than as 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief'. William Rose Benet, William Samuel Johnson, Harry Kemp, Edgar Lee Masters, and Willard Wattles are of the group that is bringing in this 'New theology'.

In this thesis I have attempted to show how the various parts of our recent American verse has been affected by the influence of Christ and His followers. I have dealt with vocabulary, idiomatic phrasing, and subject matter. I have pointed out the extent and proportion of various parts. I have attempted to analyze the tendencies within the period. If I have succeeded in these things, I have achieved the object for which I have labored.

APPENDIX

A Tentative Grouping of Writers.

While it is not, strictly speaking, within the scope of the preceding thesis to attempt to classify individual writers, it is felt that a tentative grouping might be suggestive. Therefore this appendix is added. No author's name has been included here of whose work less than a complete volume has been examined. The grouping is necessarily imperfect, since it is often misleading to base a conclusion on one or two volumes of an author's work, as those volumes might not reveal fully the tendencies of the author. The grouping does not consider tendencies apart from the Christian aspect.

Group I.

Authors whose work shows rather marked personal interest in Christianity.

Crosby, Eddy, Garrison, Kilmer, McGee, Melby, Peterson, Tabb, Thomas, Wattles.

The list includes, I believe, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and some without church affiliations. The only bond of unity I find is an appreciative recognition of the ideals of Jesus. There is wide divergence of opinion as to the extent these are applied in modern life.

Group II.

Authors who use Christian material somewhat freely, chiefly as literary material.

Boyd, Brown, Carruth, Erskine, Farnsworth, Howells, Kemp, Kennedy, Lindsay, Markham, Masters, Moody, Pallen,

Reese, Robbins, Robinson (Corinna Roosevelt), Scollard, Stott, Van Dyke, and Walsh.

It is not intended to suggest that members of this group are not as vitally interested in Christianity as members of group one. But their work does not show the personal element so clearly. Mr. Lindsay exhibits traits which would form reasonable ground for placing him in group one, but seems to me to be more nearly allied in spirit with group two.

Group III.

Authors who deal at some length with historical or legendary themes allied to Christianity.

Hooker, Hovey, Mackaye, Peabody, Rice, Robinson (Edwin Arlington), Santayana, Wendell.

Here are found works dealing with primitive or mediaeval church themes, the Grail legends, etc.

Group IV.

Authors of social protest.

Benet, Burnet, Burr, Raymond, Sandburg, Schauffler, Untermeyer, Widdemer.

Perhaps the title given this group is not the best that might be found, but the members of the group seem to find a distinct gulf between the words and deeds of our 'Christian' civilization. In no case do they disparage the personality or teachings of Christ. Some of the highest tributes to His life and teachings which were found emanate from members of this group. But they do often criticize scathingly condit-

ions existing under the name of Christianity.

Group V.

Nature lovers,

Carman, Cawein, Fisher, Frost, Higginson, Hovey, Nicholson, Stringer, Thompson (Maurice). In verse about nature the use of figures of speech forms the chief source of reference to Christian material. In the longer references the comparison of the coming of Spring to the Resurrection is not uncommon.

Group VI.

Users of classical or pre-Christian material.

Aldrich, Cheney (Ann Elizabeth), Fenellosa, Ficke, Ledoux, Le Gallienne, Mackaye, Schutze, Spingarn, Thompson (Vance), and Woodberry.

There is a greater degree of overlapping here with names in other groups than usual, since many writers seem to turn readily from classical to other themes. Naturally, though, one would expect a writer who habitually uses classical themes to have little or no reference to Christ. Such is the case.

Group VII.

Imagist and other 'modern' verse.

Aiken, Arensberg, Fletcher, Lowell, Norton, and Pound.

The tendency of this group is to avoid all reference to Christ, except to use His name or those of the saints as more or less mild expletives, or in invocation--usually non-religious.

Group VIII.

Informal verse--usually dialect or local.

Braley, Brooks, Carr, Chapman, Day, Dunbar, Drummond, Knibbs, Lincoln, Long, Malloch, Neihardt, Oppenheim, Piper, Riley, Service, Stanton, Stuart, and Underwood (Edna Worthley).

Verse in negro dialect tends to a rather frequent reference to the religious emotionalism in negro life, and places emphasis on 'many mansions' of the future life.

"Back East" verse tends to have more frequent Christian reference than does 'out West' verse, probably because of the lack of religious impress in a pioneer community as compared with a more stable environment.

Group IX.

Writers of light verse.

Adams, Burdette, Cooke, Field, Foss, Gillilan, Guiterman, Irwin, King, Kiser, Mason, Peck, Taylor, and Waterman.

Writers of light verse use little material of the sort under discussion, except in occasional humorous lines concerning Scriptural characters or the foibles of modern church members. Two stock subjects are St. Peter's guardianship of the gates of Heaven, and Easter bonnets.

Group X.

Two volumes of children's verse were read (Kelley, and Sherman). No material of value was gleaned.

Group XI.

This is a group of writers it was felt unwise to classify, usually because of insufficient or conflicting evidence.

Bolmer, Bynner, Chamberlain, Chase, Cheney, Cox, Daskam, Davis, Dresbach, Griffith, Hagedorn, Havener, Helton, Hope, Hurst, Johnson (Robert Underwood), Keller, Le Gallienne, Mifflin, Miller, O Sheel, Parker, Percy, Pulsifer, Rittenhouse, Roberts, Robinson (Edwin Arlington), Seeger, Sherman, Steele, Stephens, Sterling, Teasdale, Weeks, Whiting, Wilcox, and Wilson.

Some of these writers have been included in other groups with reference to a part of their work but, because the bulk of it has not been in any one tendency, their names are placed here, also. The verse of this group is inclined to sentimentality, or, rather, to sentiment.

The work of the entire body of authors read seems to gather about two centers of Christian aspect, apart from the subjective emotional attitude. The first is that which finds in the record of Christ and Christianity material of literary appeal; the second is that which feels that in Christianity is a challenge to a professing 'Christian' civilization to function as such in daily life and in social relationships, if it is to lay claim to the title. Most authors hold these ideas--both of them, at least to some extent, so it has not seemed wise to make an effort to distinguish the groups in

which each prevails. In general, the literary idea seems to be more widespread, a result, no doubt, of what Martha Foote Grow calls the discovery of "the fascinating theme of Jesus",* and Dr. Josiah Strong entitles "The return to Christ that is now taking place".** It seems to me that behind this discovery of the literary possibilities of the story of Christ is a change of attitude toward Biblical material. We think of it in more fearless terms. We are less likely to feel that literary treatment of the life of Christ is irreverent. The second center of appeal, the social attitude, is in line, I believe, with the general tendency during the past two decades toward a sharpening of the social consciousness and a keener feeling of the shortcomings of our social system.

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* 53, introduction.

** See 53, introduction.

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