THE INTERPRETATION OF NATURE BY THE MINOR
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RELIGIOUS POETS OF ENGLAND

by

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PREFATORY NOTE

When I first began the consideration of a thesis subject, it was with only a general notion that I wished to investigate the treatment of nature in seventeenth century literature. The limitation of field to that indicated in the title I owe to the suggestion of Professor W. S. Johnson, to whose lectures on poetry I also owe much of the interest in philosophical background necessary to a patient study of the extended and often tiresomely repetitious verse of the poets whose work I have undertaken to discuss.

I wish to thank Professor Selden L. Whitecomb for helpful advice, and for kindly criticism of my thesis. I wish also to express my gratitude to Professor R. D. O'Leary for criticism and for suggestions which helped me to acquire a proper perspective in the examination of my group of poets.

I recognize my indebtedness to all of the members of the English faculty in whose classes I have been enrolled during my years of study at the University of Kansas, but realize that I can express in small measure only, my appreciation of the help and inspiration they have given me during those years.

The small worth of this visible result of my inves-
tigation is incommensurate with the benefit which I feel I have received from the study involved in its preparation; much of the profit as well as pleasure of my research has come through my reading for background.

Nellie M. Barney.

Seneca, Kansas.
October, 1929.
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THE INTERPRETATION OF NATURE BY THE MINOR
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INTRODUCTION

At all times since the beginning of recorded history, in all stages of evolution, and in all regions of the earth, men have exhibited an interest in the manifestations of Nature; have endeavored to account for them and to discover their relation to themselves. Their interpretations and the manner of expressing them have varied greatly. The primitive black man of central Africa greeted the rising sun with weird incantations to the monotonous beating of his tom-tom, and the early American Indian reverently chanted his worship at daybreak from some hilltop; both were giving expression to a sense of the intimate relationship between themselves and the universe, as deep and sincere as that which animates the philosophy and religion of the most cultivated peoples, or breathes from the mystical lines of their poets.

1 Before the time of Plato the animistic theory of Nature prevailed. This view of a natural life, vitality, or indwelling soul in all objects, was opposed in Platonic thought by the conception of the passive material as distinct from the active formal element. Aristotle continued this distinction in his idea of a creative agency, or God, as separate from the created physical universe, or Nature. This sharp separation of God and Nature was maintained in seven-
Some of the oldest poetry that has come down to us from any source is on the clay tablets of the Babylonian-Assyrian peoples; their religious poetry includes the cycle of the eagle and of the winds as well as the poetry of creation.

The hymns of the Vedic period of the literature of India, beginning about 1500 B.C., are addressed to heaven, to the dawn, to the sun, to the earth, and especially to divinities such as Indra, the god of the storm, and Fire, the god of lightning, of the sun, and of the altar fire.

From a hymn of the fifteenth century, B.C., which the Egyptians sang to the sun god whom they worshipped, we have the lines, "The trees and the herbs become green, the birds flutter in their nests and lift up their wings to praise thee. The fish in the river leap up before thy face."

Hebrew poetry from the primitive age shows a sense of nature as an expression of the Divine, and a feeling of the presence of God in His creation. "With the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood

teenth century religious thought, and appears in the writing of the period. As used in this paper, the term Nature signifies simply creation or the universe outside of and unaffected by man—the material world including all created things by which man is surrounded, as plants, animals, the sea, the heavens, and all such manifestations. In this sense, landscape and topography are parts or phases of Nature.
upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea."

The gods of the early Greeks spoke to them through infinite and varied natural phenomena, and their religious rites were determined by the notions of their gods which they derived through the close observation of nature necessary to an understanding of the will of the divinities. The Romans also felt the presence of their deities about them in the forces of the universe, and appeased the guardian spirits of river and spring with sacrifices.

Among the inhabitants of the British Isles in pre-Christian times we find the same intimate sense of the religious significance of the universe that we see among other races. It has been said that the fondness of the Irish people for nature is deeper and more consistent than that of any other people in the world; William Butler Yeats, in his analysis of the Irish spirit, says "our natural magic is but the ancient religion of the world, the ancient worship of nature, and that troubled ecstasy before her, that certainty of all beautiful places being haunted", Authentic history does not begin in Ireland until Cormac, who probably reigned about the middle of

1Song of Moses, Exodus 15:8
2The Celtic Element, p. 217
the third century of the Christian era, when all the earlier pagan divinities had been reduced to a single great being symbolized by the sun. From this pagan time has come down a sixteen-line fragment of the Song of Amergin which begins, "I am the wind that breathes upon the sea".¹ In the Book of Leinster, a twelfth century collection of manuscripts of the ancient Irish saga-romances, we read:

One day the young poet Nede fared forth till he stood on the margin of the sea, for the poets believed the brink of the water to be the place of poetic inspiration. He heard a sound in the wave, even a chant of wailing and sadness, and he marveled thereat.²

The tendency to find life and intelligence in natural forces is seen in the greatest of Old English poems, Beowulf, which was the product of heathen times and a heathen people. Among the most interesting of later and less well known productions are a number of charms, the following one of which was used by the ploughman over land which refused to bear:

Hail to thee Earth, Mother of men!
Grow and be great in God's embrace.³

The poems of the Middle English period under the influence of Christianity still show an insight into Nature and much sympathy with Her moods in natural descriptions, but

¹Richardson and Owen, Literature of the World, p. 448.
²Ibid., p. 450.
³Spaeth, J. Duncan, Old English Poetry, p. 149.
the religious interpretation is not mystical. Nature is outside and separate, -- a work of God whose purpose is the pleasure and profit of man; the sun is now "that gladsome gem, God's candle."¹ But Nature and religion are still hand-in-hand.

The religious and philosophical thought of a time is, for the most part, the product of the periods that have passed, and the poets are interpreters of that thought. The ideas expressed by the minor religious poets of the seventeenth century are of interest as representing one stage in the philosophic thought which came down from Plato, was influenced variously in the minds of different men of the age by Neoplatonism and by the writings of the Church Fathers, and appeared two hundred years later in the thought of much greater poets. But why should students of literature show so little interest in the work of such earlier poets as Traherne and Vaughan, for instance, when they devote earnest attention to analysis and exposition of similar ideas in Wordsworth? The question seems worthy of investigation.

I have confined my discussion to minor English poets who belong to the pre-Restoration period of the seventeenth century, and to those who wrote a considerable body of religious verse. A few other names -- not limited as to rank,

¹The Pearl.
literature, or period—will be given little more than a brief mention by way of illustration or comparison.
THE INTERPRETATION OF NATURE BY THE MINOR
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RELIGIOUS POETS OF ENGLAND
PART ONE

The Reformation in England, in its emphasis on individual conscience and general freedom of thought as well, for a while went hand-in-hand with the Renaissance, the chief characteristic of which was the movement toward the liberation and expansion of human personality; but after a time the Reformation grew into a moral reaction against the worldliness and materialism of the Renaissance, which strengthened and intensified as the hedonistic spirit of the latter gradually passed away. The reaction brought about by this great religious movement exhibits early in the seventeenth century a change from the Elizabethan enthusiasm and joy of life to a deepening seriousness, and from a feeling of confidence in this world and the hereafter to one of melancholy, doubt, and distrust. The poetry of the seventeenth century to the Restoration period reflects the changing character of the age. Carpenter in his *English Lyric Poetry* calls attention to the fact that pastoral and song give place more and more to weightier lyric forms,—the ode and elegy, and reflective monody, which became typical of the age just as the lighter verse
forms are typical of the earlier time. Theme and manner also changed with the changing types. Instead of the objectivity of the previous century there was intense subjectivity; men's minds narrowed to an anxious consideration of one theme of momentous concern—the relation of God to man—with a still further limitation in some of them to concern with that phase of the subject which related to the welfare of their own souls in this world and the next. Religious poets, whether Roman Catholic, Anglican, or Puritan, were concerned chiefly in recording the progress of the soul in its search after God, and since it is the result of their own spiritual experience which they report, divine poetry of the century is almost exclusively autobiographic, and poets seem to write for themselves rather than for any general body of readers. Individual poets exhibit the change of theme and mode within the body of their own work as the early influence of the sixteenth century is superseded by that of the deeper and more intense spirit of the Reformation. An expression of the changing inner life of the age is the turning of Wither, Donne, Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, and others from secular verse to sacred, and their sincerity in the change is shown in their expressions of genuine regret for having

Carpenter, Frederic Ives, Introduction, p. 50.
written the earlier light verse, and in the intensity and religious fervor of their later verse.

It is, of course, inconceivable that the manifestations of Nature on every hand should not be reflected in the sacred poetry of any period, for certainly those poets whose minds are inclined toward religion might be expected to seek an explanation of Nature's revelations,—to attempt to relate them to the Creator. The individuals of the seventeenth century group of religious poets responded to the influence of Nature variously in accordance with their own mental and spiritual equipment and bias.

The aspect which Nature wears to the man who gazes upon her depends upon the mind of the observer; the light by which he sees comes out from his own soul.¹

Hence we have developed in the work of the divine poets of the age the hedonistic view, the quietly contemplative, the philosophic, the transcendental, and the purely mystical,—the last mentioned attitude affecting to a greater or less degree almost all the religious poets.

Evelyn Underhill, herself a mystic, in speaking of this period in the literary history of England, accounts for the mystic writers of the century with the following explanation:

The great periods of mystical activity come

immediately after and seem to complete the great periods of artistic, material, and intellectual civilization, those stupendous outbursts of vitality in which man makes fresh conquests over his universe apparently producing as their last stage a type of heroic character which extends these victories to the spiritual sphere. When science, politics, literature, and the arts—the domination of nature and the ordering of life—have risen to their heights and produced their greatest works, the mystic comes to the front, snatches the torch, and carries it on.

However, the combination of poetic insight with the religious temperament might well in any period produce that extreme sensitiveness to deep and hidden meanings which is the peculiar possession of the mystic. Hence there seems to be no need for any special explanation of the number of writers whose work exhibited mystical tendencies, during a time of great religious movement, when poets reacting against a light and airy poetry of nature, strove to find a meaning in the Universe worthy of their idea of its author.

Moreover, mystical terms and arguments came naturally in the seventeenth century to the many writers whose work exhibited such tendencies. The age was one of curiosity and investigation, and the religious poets were men of education whose lives for the most part were given to study and meditation. Henry Vaughan was the only one of those whom we shall discuss who had a profession other

1 Underhill, Evelyn, Mysticism, Appendix, p. 541.
than the ministry, which calling itself encouraged scholarly investigation along with meditation and soul-searching self-analysis.

The chief source of mysticism in England is Plato. Platonic doctrines had been a part of Christian teaching in the Church Fathers from Augustine on, and Plato had been rediscovered in the sixteenth century in Ficinus's translation of the Latin paraphrase of the Enneads of Plotinus. Marsilius Ficinus, in his work published in Florence in 1492, and other scholars later, Christianized this Neoplatonic philosophy. Along with the doctrines of Plato, his noted pupil Plotinus, who was an Egyptian, had imbibed much of Oriental mysticism from his studies in the religious philosophies of the Persians and the Indians. His Enneads were written in answer to the questions of his pupils, Amelius and Porphyry, who were filled with oriental teaching.  

Plotinus's system was based chiefly on the theorem of the "ideas", which Plato held to be the link between the visible world and the invisible; but Plotinus developed the theory of emanations, which avoids attributing to "the One", any direct act of creation of inferior

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1Taylor, Thomas, Select Works: Preface, p. XVI, XVII.
forms. A theory of emanations is a part of the doctrine of the Jewish cabala and of various other forms of Oriental mysticism. According to Plotinus, there is a constant transmission of powers from the absolute to the creation,--

For 'the One' being perfect, in consequence of not seeking after, or possessing, or being in want of anything, it becomes as it were overflowing, and the superplenitude of it produces something else. 1

All beings are beings through 'the One'. 2

This emanation is first through pure intelligence, from which flows the soul of the world; from the latter issue the souls of men and animals, and from these last matter itself proceeds.

Hence also the soul is seen to descend as far as to plants. 3

Men belong to two worlds, that of pure intellect, and that of the senses; but if they take the necessary steps, they will finally belong to the world of pure intellect, since "the higher the soul rises in the sphere of intellect, the deeper it sinks into the ocean of the good." 4

When the final consummation is arrived at, the union with God is complete, not through any intellectual process.

1Select Works, p. 253.
2Ibid., p. 290.
3Ibid., p. 254.
4Ibid., p. 295.
but through vision and ecstasy:

For intellectual perception is not the first of things—but it is the second thing, and generated posterior to the subsistence of 'the good'. As soon as generated, also, it moved itself toward the good. But being moved towards, it also knew it. And intellectual perception is this, viz. a motion towards the good, and an aspiration after it.

The soul however does not lose its own identity, as most the Eastern cults teach.

Since all life comes from one source, "the One", all life possesses immortality. The doctrine of reminiscence is a part of the theory of the "idea", for since life on this earth comes from the Absolute, then the soul must have had a previous existence in the Absolute.

The souls of men beholding the images of themselves, like that of Bacchus in a mirror, were from thence impelled to descend; yet were not cut off from their principle and from intellect.

Whoever becomes one by mingling with deity, and afterwards recollects this union, will have with himself an image of it. But he was himself one, having with respect to himself no difference, nor with respect to other things—but being as it were in an ecstasy, or energizing enthusiastically, he becomes established in quiet and solitary union, not at all deviating from his own essence, nor revolving about himself, but becoming as it were stability itself—nothing will be present with him who beholds in any other way.

Plotinus also taught that souls not sufficiently puri-

1 Select Works, p. 395.
2 Ibid., p. 223.
3 Ibid., p. 321.
fied during life on this earth return to earth to inhabit the bodies of men, of animals, or even of plants.

Souls—descend, and enter into that receptacle in which it is necessary for them to reside.¹

Hence, also, the soul of man is seen to proceed as far as to plants.²

The notion of the perfection or completeness of "the One" or Absolute, as not suffering a diminution in itself through being the origin of all else, is a frequently expressed seventeenth century idea:

God doth not need
Either man's work, or his own gifts.
Milton's Sonnet on His Blindness.

The nature of 'the one' is such that it is the fountain of the most excellent things and a power generating beings, abiding in itself without diminution, and not subsisting on its progeny.³

Plotinus also advanced the doctrine which is a favorite in seventeenth century religious poetry, of stability of substance amid a flux of changing form.

For every body being naturally in a continual flux, in consequence of having an adventitious form, the perpetual existence of bodies according to form takes place through an imitation of (real) beings.⁴

Plotinus's macrocismic theory of the universe constitutes the central idea of his philosophical system. His

¹Select Works, p. 225.
²Ibid., p. 254.
³Ibid., p. 309.
⁴Ibid., p. 215.
doctrine is that of trinity in unity,—the One Absolute, the First Intelligence or Universal Mind, and the World Soul; the microcosmic theory is based on it, and is also a trinity in unity,—of spirit, soul, and body. The affinity of Neoplatonism for Christian doctrine which Ficinus saw and made use of in his translation is readily apparent here.

The contributions, then, of Neoplatonism to the philosophic thought of the seventeenth century in England, which influenced the interpretation of Nature in the religious poets, are the doctrines of "the idea", the absolute or substance, with its earthly counterpart a shadow or unreality, of "reminiscence", with its corollary, immortality of the soul of all life, of "emanations", with the related ideas of stability of substance and flux of form, the music of the spheres, completeness of 'the One' in itself, and unity of the universe. These doctrines, which we shall endeavor to trace in the work of the individual poets of the period, are those which, as we have stated, originated in Plato, were interpreted by Plotinus influenced by Oriental mysticism, then further influenced in the Church Fathers and Ficinus by Christianity. There were other streams of influence which flowed from the continent, but it is almost impossible to separate these
from the main current of thought, and they were minor.

Platonic ideas were adopted consciously by some of these poets from Plotinus's translation, as a system of philosophic thought. By some they were taken over almost verbatim, merely put into poetical form; this is true in most of the verse of Quarles and of Henry More, and in much of William Drummond's verse. Other men, like Thomas Traherne, worked out their own philosophic doctrines through a study of Plotinus. Still others, those whom we think of more commonly as the religious poets of the century, show the force of Plotinian teachings not as a system of thought appealing to the mind so much as a spiritual influence whose unconscious working affected their outlook on life. These last poets were by temperament attracted to the more mystical tendencies of Plotinus.
PART TWO

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SPENSERIAN POETS

The fundamental doctrine of Platonism as it was understood throughout the period of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was the reality of a heavenly beauty known in and by the soul, as contrasted with an earthly beauty known only to the sense.¹

The Faerie Queen is the most extended poem of the sixteenth century which embodies this Platonic doctrine of the absolute. Among Spenser's many followers was Giles Fletcher, the younger, described by Edmund Gosse as "the most original and brilliant of the Jacobean poets devoted entirely to the Spenserian tradition,"² and of his noted poem Gosse says, "Christ's Victory and Triumph is the first important religious poem in seventeenth century England."³ Grosart says this is "the first sacred poem of any considerable length that has left its mark on English literature, --there is no single poem before Christ's Victory whose warp and woof, substance and ornament are 'sacred'."⁴

¹Harrison's Platonism in English Poetry, p. 1.
²Gosse's Jacobean Poets, p. 137.
³Ibid., p. 139.
⁴Grosart's Complete Poems of Giles Fletcher, memorial-introduction, p. 49.
The school of Spenser was "given to the cult of nature in her gentler aspects"; but Fletcher and the other members of the school of the time were scholars, and were more interested in expressing the Platonic ideas gained from their philosophical studies than in developing any theories of their own in regard to the natural world. Fletcher accepts the scholastic interpretation of the universe which is a part of the Platonic system taught from the time of Augustine. His treatment of Nature is, like Spenser's, allegorical. But even though he sings of the "Heavenly Beautie", he cannot conceal his delight in its shadow, which does not seem so much of an unreality in his vivid and glowing descriptions.

Th' engladded Spring, forgetful now to weep,  
Began t' enblazon from her leavie bed;  
The waking swallows broke her half-year's sleep,  
And ev'ry bush lay deeply purpuried  
With violets; the woods late-wintry head  
Wide-flaming primroses set all on fire,  
And his bold trees put on their green attire,  
Among whose infant leaves the joyous birds conspire.  

*Christ's Victory and Triumph*, Concl., St. 2.

Harrison says of Fletcher, "His is the most elaborate attempt in English poetry to describe the nature of the participation of the soul in the beauty of the ultimate reality, according to the Platonic notion of the participation of an object in its idea".¹

Fletcher expresses the Platonic doctrine of the 
"Idea Beatificall" in the following words which include 
in a few lines many of the ideas held by the Platonists 
of the time.

In midst of the city cælestiall, 
Whear the Eternall Temple should have rose, 
Light'ned the Idea Beatificall: 
End, and beginning of each thing that growes; 
Whoseself no end, nor yet beginning knowes; 
That hath no eyes to see, nor ears to heare; 
Yet sees, and heares, and is all eye, all eare; 
That nowheare is contained, and yet is every wheare.

Changer of all things, yet immutable; 
Before and after all, the first and last; 
That moving all, is yet immoveable; 
Great without quantitie: in Whose forecast 
Things past are present, things to come are past; 
Swift without motion; to Whose open eye 
The hearts of wicked men unbrasted lie; 
At once absent and present to them, farre, and nigh. 

Christ's Triumph After Death, 
Sts. 39, 40.

Most of the Platonic ideas common in seventeenth cen-
tury religious writing will be recognized in Fletcher's 
description. The Idea Beatificall is the source of all, 
having itself no beginning nor end. It is lacking in sen-
sible attributes, but omniscient, the one omnipresent, yet 
nowhere contained, and mover of all else but immovable 
mid constant motion of material things.

There is a passage in the Bhagavad-Gita especially 
interesting in this connection, since it contains many of 
the same notions of "the One", or the All, that Fletcher
gives in his mystical description.

Now will I speak of knowledge best to know—
(That Truth which giveth man Amrit to drink)
The Truth of Him, the Para-Brahm, the All,
The Uncreated; not Asat, not Set;
Not Form, nor the Unformed; yet both, and more;
Whose hands are everywhere, and everywhere
Planted His feet, and everywhere His eyes
Beholding, and His ears in every place
Hearing, and all His faces everywhere
Enlightening and encompassing His worlds.
Glorified in the senses He hath given,
Yet beyond sense He is; sustaining all,
Yet dwells He unattached; of forms and modes
Master, yet neither form nor mode hath He;
He is within all beings—and without;
Motionless, yet still moving; not discerned
For subtlety of instant presence; close
To all, to each; yet measurelessly far!
Not manifold, and yet subsisting still
In all which lives; for ever to be known
As the Sustainer, yet, at the End of Times,
He maketh all to end—and re-creates.
The Light of Lights he is, in the heart of the Dark
Shining eternally. 1

The Platonic conception of the baseness of sensuous images in comparison with the heavenly Idea is given in these two stanzas in which Fletcher contrasts the one with the other:

It is no flaming lustre, made of light;
No sweet consent, as well-tim'd harmonies;
Ambrosia, for to feast the appetite,
Or flowrie odours, mixt with spicerie;
No soft embrace, or pleasure bodily;
And yet it is a kinde of inward feast,
A harmony, that sends within the brest
An odour, light, embrace, in which the soule doth rest.

1 Bhagavad-Gita, pp. 81, 82.
A heav'nly feast, no hunger can consume;
A light unseen, yet shines in every place;
A sound, no time can steal; a sweete perfume
No winds can scatter; an entire embrace,
That no satiety can ere unlace.—Sts., 41, 42.

While Fletcher held to the Platonic philosophy of
the Universe, and so to the insignificance of pleasures
known to the senses, yet few of the poets of the seven-
teenth century can be at all compared with him in the
very evident joy with which he experienced these sensuous
delights. Not even to Keats did they make a stronger
appeal, I believe. Would the young poet who was so close-
ly and so delightfully observant and appreciative of Nature
as to write of "th' engladded spring," "laughing blooms of
sallow," "wide-flaming primroses," "th' moon's burning
bows," and "flowrie odours mixt with spicerie,"—would be
if he had lived much longer than his brief thirty-four
years, have arrived at some deeper feeling concerning these
beauties in which he rejoiced so greatly, so that in the
bitterness of personal tribulation he might have realized
Her healing powers, as a much greater poet two-hundred years
later came to do?

for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings.
    Wordsworth, Tintern Abbey.

William Drummond of Hawthornden is another member of the Platonic school of poetry which held over from the sixteenth century, but in him seventeenth century characteristics prevail. "William Drummond," says Ward, "is one of the earliest instances in our literature of a man of letters pure and simple,\(^1\) He was a literary and learned poet who wrote for the sake of writing, and since, as the same authority states, "his deepest interests were metaphysical religion,"\(^2\) in poem after poem, and often several times in a single poem, occurs his statement of the Platonic idea of Nature as an empty show, a shadow.

O Than the fairest Day, thrice fairer Night!
    Night to best Dayes in which a sunne doth rise
Of which that golden Eye, which cleares the Skies,
Is but a sparkling Ray, a Shadow light:
    For the Nativitie of our Lord, p. 11,
    II., 295, 300.

Were but one houre this World disiown'd from Thee,
    It in one houre to nought reduc's should bee.
For it thy shaddow is, and can they last,
If seuer'd from the Substances them cast?
    An Hymne of the Fairest Faire, p. 46,
    II., 295, 299.

Heere where as in Mirrour wee but see,
    Shadowes of shadowes, Atomes of thy Night,
Still owlie eyed when staring on thy Light.
    Ibid., p. 47, II., 330, 333.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 26.
This poem closes with a prayer that at death the poet may be translated from this "earthly Jails" to "Heavens high Temples."

The conception of the beauty of the world of sense as a copy of the absolute beauty of a world above, is repeated again and again in Drummond's sacred poems. The following reminds one of Fletcher's comparison of the two worlds, but has not the latter's delight in the "here below"; it was written by an older man, and one who has experienced much disillusionment. The unalloyed joy of the Elizabethan poets is altogether lacking here.

A Good that never satisfies the Minde,
A Beautie fading like the Aprile flowers,
A sweete with floodes of Gall that runnes combin'd,
A Pleasure passing ere in thought made ours,--

Are the strange ends we toil for here below.

The same idea of the disappointing character of this world is in the following sonnet, but contrasted with the happiness to be experienced in the world beyond.

If with such passing Beautie, choise Delight,
The Architect of this great Round did frame
This Pallace visible (Short listes of Fame,
And sillie Mansion but of dying Wights)
How many Wonders, what amazing Lights
Must that triumphing Seat of Glorie Clame,
That doth transcend all this great Alls vast hights,
Of whose bright Sunne ours here is but a Beame?
0 blest abode; 0 happie dwelling-place!
Where visible th' Invisible doth raigne,
Blest People which doe see true Beauties Face,
With whose farre Dawnings scarce he Earth doth daigne:
All Joy is but Annoy, all concord Strife,
Match'd with your endlessse Blisse and Happie life.

Contemplation of Invisible Excellencies above,
by the Visible below, p. 27.

The quotations which follow are expressions of the same thought

True Honour is not here, that place it clames,
Where blacke brow'd Night doth not exile the Day,
Nor no farre-shining Lamp dives in the Sea
But an eternall Sunne spreades lasting Beames:
The Court of True Honour, p. 29.

Now doth the Sunne Appeare,
The Mountains Snowes decay,
Crown'd with fraile Flowres forth comes the Babye yeare.
My Soule, Time postes away.

Looke to that Heaven which never Night makes blacke,
And there, at that immortall Sunnes bright Rayes
Decke thee with Flowers which feare not rage of Dayes,
Change should breede Change, p. 30.

Nature is "God's hand-maide created low under the Intellectual Pow'rs, which thou brought forth to praise thy Goodnesse, and admire thy Worth", therefore nature is not to be held in too high esteem. Man's mind should be fixed on the Reality, not concerned with this shadowy existence,--

so all that Drummond admires here reminds him of the heavenly,

Sweet Bird, that sing'st away the early Howres,
Of Winters past or coming void of care,
Well pleased with Delights which Present are,
Faire Seasons, budding Sprayes, sweet-smelling Flowres,
To Rocks, to Springs, to Rills, from leavy Boure
Thou thy Creators Goodnesse dost declare,
And what deare gifts on thee hee did not spare,
A Staine to humane sense, in signe that loures,
What Soule can be so sick, which by thy Songs
(Attir'd in sweetnesse) sweetly is not driven
Quite to forget Earth's turmoiles, spights, and wrongs;
And lift a reverend Eye and Thought to Heaven?
Sweet Artiessse Songstarre; thou my Minde dost raise
To Ayres of Speares; yes, and to Angels Layes.

To a Nightingale, p. 3.

Drummond delights in the "Sunne's bright Rayes"; and repeatedly compares them—"Scarce a Taper bright"—with the radiant heavenly beams. He does not often represent a bright and joyous Nature; his usual imagery is of "the plaintfull Owle", "plaintfull nightingale", "the hoarse Sob- bings of the widow'd Dove", "Birds harmonious Moane", "Zeph- ires Sighes embalmed". Neither is he much "given to the cult of Nature in her gentler aspects";—his imagination is more attracted by "ebone clouds more blacke than Night", "weeping Rain-bows", "howling tempests", "raging Waves", blacke brow'd Nights". Earthly Love to him is

A shrill tempestuous Winde
Which doth disturb the minde,
And like wilde Waves our designes all commoue.
The difference betweene Earthlie and Heavenlie Love, p. 27.

The Platonic idea of God's self-sufficiency, "nothing lost", is in the following lines of An Hymne of the Fairest Faire:

Whole and entire all in thy Selfe thou art,
All-where diffus'd, yet of this All no part.

The idea that there is no permanence in the material,— the Platonic notion of flux, is expressed throughout his poems:
So Age transforming all, still forward runnes,
No wonder though the Earth doth change her face,
New Manners, Pleasures new, turne with new sunnes,
Lockes now like Gold grow to an hoarie grace;
May Mindes rare slope doth change, that lyes despis'd
Which was so deare of late and highlie pris'd.
    Earth and all on it Changesable, p. 28, ll. 9,14.

But

God is permanent, tho' "this Alle" is not;
That Essence which not mov'd makes each thing move,
    An Hymne of the Fairest Faire, p. 37, l. 5.

The following lines from the same poem are another expression of the thought which is in Fletcher's Idea Beaufificall.

O King, whose Greatness none can comprehend,
Whose boundlesse Goodnesse doth to all extend,
Light of all Beautie, Ocean without ground,
That standing flowest, giving dost abound,
Rich palace and Indweller ever blest,
Never not working, ever yet in Rest.
    p. 46, ll. 323, 329.

Ineffable, All-pow'rfull God, All-hee,
Thou onelie liv'st, and each thing lives by Thee,
No Ioy, no, nor Perfection to Thee Came
By the contriving of this Worlds great Frame;
Ere Sunne, Moone, Starres beganne their restlesse race,
Ere paint'd with purple Light was Heavens round Face,
Ere Aire had Clouds, ere Clouds weep't down their shours,
Ere Sea embraced Earth, ere Earth bare Flowers,
Thou happie liv'd; World nought to Thee supply'd,
All in thy selfe thy selfe thou satisfy'd;
Of Good no slender Shadow doth appear,
No age-worne tracke, in Thee which shin'd not cleare;
Perfections Sunne, prime-cause of eurie Cause,
Midst, end, beginning, where all good doth pause.

Perhaps Drummond sometimes felt that he had not solved the riddle of the universe, after all, in his conception of Nature.
Drummond's conception of the universe, this All, is that of the majority of the age, though not of Henry More—then, of the earth with its concentric circles.

William Drummond of Hawthornden, then, sees in Nature only a "fraile Beautie" which is a copy of the absolute, and introduces it into his religious poetry merely as a contrast to the real, and as a means of extolling its creator, whose perfections it is his whole duty to sing. He lived his life in seclusion. Some one has said that in his poetry there are many "small phrases fairly close to Nature", but his landscape is generalized, and he might as well have been writing anywhere else as in his country home, surrounded by the beauties of the natural world, for his belief for himself is that which he expresses for man in general, "Hee was made that hee might in the Glasse of the World behold the infinite Goodnesse, Power, Magnif

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1A Cypresse Grove, p. 99, ll. 1021, 1025.
are vassaled unto him (man)."¹ Truly he saw only the
pattern of this All.

Henry More—"that deep-thinking Platonist," as Pal-
grave calls him—was one of the group of philosophers
whose system was the product of study and discussion at
Cambridge University during the early part of the seven-
teenth century. In discussing him John Smith Harrison
says, "Drummond is more of a poet and less of a philos-
opher than More; but the philosophic conceptions which
are woven into his poetical descriptions of the nature,
attributes, and works of God are drawn from the same
system of metaphysics;"² Grosart says of him, "It was to
sing his philosophy that he became a poet, yet not for
his philosophy per se, but for its imaginative qualities
and vividness of fancy and exquisite niceties of ex-
pression of the most gossamer thinking and feeling, and
its pre-Raphaelite like studies of nature and now and
again—mainly in the minor poems—wonderfulness of rapture
and aspiration, that we hold the poetry of Henry More to
be worthy of prolonged study."³—Like all of the

¹ A Cypresse Grove, p. 98, ll. 1017.
³ Memorial-introduction to Henry More, p. XXIX.
followers of the Grecian sage, he dwells in a region of ideas which are to him the only realities, and not cold but warm; he sees all things in Divine solution, the visible is lost in the invisible, and Nature retires before her God. Grosart quotes Tulloch as follows, "More is at once the most typical—the most vital and interesting of all the Cambridge School—He is the most Platonical of all the Platonic sect, and at the same time the most genial, natural, and perfect man of them." More sings as the birds do, because he must sing, for joy in the singing. Asked how it was his "busie Muse was moved such fruitlesse pains to prove", he answers:

No pains but pleasure to do the dictates dear
Of inward living nature. What doth move
The Nightingall to sing so sweet and clear?
The Thrush, or Lark that mounting high above
Chants her shrill notes to heedlesse ears of corn
Heavily hanging in the dewy Morn.

Cupid's Conflict, p. 173.

He, like the most of the sacred poets, was a loyal member of the Anglican Church, but his fairmindedness allows to others their own opinions. In this he is in striking contrast to his contemporary, Francis Quarles, who seriously proposed that the children of other religious sects be taken away from their parents and brought up in the true

1 Memorial-introduction to Henry More, p. XXX.
2 Ibid., p. XXXVIII.
Thus, this vain man
Intitles always God to his opinion;
Thinks everything is done as he conceives;
Would bind all men to his religion;
All the world else of freedome he hereaves,
He and his God must have Dominion.

The Life of the Soul,
Book III, Canto 3, Stan. 68, 69.

The sweetness of his spirit is shown in Stanza 6, Canto 4, of the same poem.

Is he good to me?
That grace I would not ere should be deny'd
Unto my fellow. My Felicity
Is multiply'd when others I like happy see.

Such verses as these make more convincing the sincerity of his belief in the unity of all Souls, which is a part of the Platonic doctrine. Emphasis in Drummond's philosophy seems to be more on the unsatisfying quality of earthly beauty and on God the creator,—while in More's it is placed on the unity of life, and the worth of all life.

the first Every-where—Unitie
Is the true root of all the living creatures,
As they descend in each distinct degree.

That God is infinite all men confesse,
And that the Creature is some realitie
Beside Gods selfe, though infinitely lesse;
Joyne now the world unto the Deity.

What? is there added no more entity
By this conjunction than there was before?
Is the broad-brested earth? the spacious skie
Spangled with silver light, and burning ore?
Are the wide bellowing seas, whose bugling bellowes rear
Are these all nothing?

The Infinitic of the World, St. 34.

Then with pure eyes thou shalt behold
How the first Goodnesse doth infold,
All things in loving tender armes.

Resolution, p. 175.

The first pure Being's perfect Unity
And therefore must all things more strongly bind
Than Lives corporall, which dispersed be,

The Sleep of the Soul,
Canto III, St. 18.

Only once does the doctrine of reminiscence appear in
More's religious poetry.

A spark or ray of the Divinity
Clouded in earthly fogs, yiel'd in clay,
A precious drop sunk from Eternity
Split on the ground, or rather slunk away,

So we as stranger Infants elsewhere born
Can not divine from what spring we did flow.

The Præexistence of the Soul, St. 3.

Since More follows Plotinus in his theory of the creation of the Universe, that of Emanation, he must believe in the immortality of life,—of all life,—which his sympathy leads him to desire:

Whatever is, is Life and Energie
From God.

The Infinitic of the World, St. 10.

Each gaudy sight my sense doth captivate
When Vernon flowers their silken leaves display
And ope their fragrant bosomes, I that state
Would not have changed but indure for aye;

Why should that's good thus fade away?

Immortality of the Soul, Bk. I, Canto 3, St.4.
All life's immortal; though the outward trunk
May changed be, yet life to nothing never shrunk.

Ibid., St. 17.

When groaning ghosts of beasts or men depart,
Their tender mother doth but then unbind
From grosser fetters, and more toilsome smart.

Ibid., St. 29.

Thus have I trac'd the soul in all her works,
And severall conditions have displaid,
And show'd all places where so e'r she lurks,
Even her own lurking's of herself bewrayed,
In plants, in beasts, in men, while here she staid:
And freed from earth how then she spreads on high
Her heavenly rays, that also hath been said.

Ibid., Canto 2, St. 23.

The dance of the universe around the fixed central

The essence More develops earlier in the same poem as follows:

One steddy Good, centre of essencies,
Unmoved Monad, that Appollo Hight,

Yet round about him stir'd with gentle fire
All things do dance; their being, action, might,
They thither do direct with strong desire
To embosome him with close embracements they aspire.

Unseen, incomprehensible, He moves
About himself each seeking entity
That never yet shall find that which it loves.

Thus all things in distinct circumference
Move about him that satisfies them all,
Nor be they thus stir'd up by wary sense
Or foresight, or election rationall,
But blindly reel about the heart of Lives centrall.

Ex. 3, Canto 3, Sts. 12, 13, 14.
So doth the Earth, one of the erring Seven,
Wheel round the fixed sunne, that is the shade
Of steddy God, shining in this Out-heaven
With the rest of those starres that God hath made
Of baser matter, all of which he array'd
With his far-shining light.

Ibid., St. 15.

Then all the wide worlds acknowledgement,
The sunne's a type of that eternall light
Which we call God.

Ibid., St. 20.

"The radiant light" is a mystic expression used by
different religious poets. More uses it as Fletcher and
Drummond did to signify the central essence,—and the fixed
sunne is its shade. His idea of the body as the work of
the soul is a part of the Plotinian emanation theory.

We know this world, because our soul hath made
Our bodie of this sensible worlds spright and body.
Ibid., Canto I, St. 18.

More's insistence on the dignity of man as "part
reality" makes him declare that while the soul is at last
"eternally one with our God" still it maintains its iden-
tity in its final union, even though he sees the diffi-
culty of making this assertion clear to other people:

Nor will mens souls that now be different
Be God himself hereafter and all one:
For thus they were quite lost; their life ylent
And subtilly being quite away are flown.
This is a perfect contradiction
They are all one with God, and yet they are.
The Unity of The Soul, St. 22.

And again he says:

Farre otherwise it fares in that pure life,
That doth result in the souls Unity
With God; For there the faster she doth strive
To tie herself, the greater liberty
And freer welcome, brighter purity
She finds.

The Sleep of the Soul,
Canto III, St. 18.

More's love of Nature and sympathy with all her forms
is deeper than either Fletcher's or Drummond's, but even
he does not feel the same spirit pervading all the universe,
because he holds the Plotinian view of the descent of all
creatures in distinct degrees; and even to him, who be-
lieves in an indestructible soul in all matter, are birds,
beasts, and plants inferior.

All these and all things else thou hast made
Subject to man by thy Decree.

An Hymn upon the Creation of the World, p. 186.

Grosart in his memorial-introduction says that More
had the peculiar beauty and serenity of character which
ripens amidst retirement. He lived a life apart from his
fellowmen even more than Drummond, and did not let the
light from outside his study, or the common air, into his
choice theories. To More, God is the "steady Good", the
"first Goodnesse", --and his sense of this characteristic
of God, and of the unity of all creation, makes him empha-
size the brotherhood of man, but his belief did not crys-
tallize into action. The civil and religious disturb-
ances of the time did not in the least trouble him; he

1 Memorial-introduction to Henry More, p. XXIV. Grosart
quotes Tulloch.
completely ignored them, and spent his days in recording abstractions.
PART THREE

THE SCHOOL OF DONNE

By the end of the first quarter of the century religious poetry was largely under the influence of the "metaphysical" school of Donne instead of that of the Spenserian school of the Jacobean period. Instead of the philosophical poetry of the earliest part of the century, with its fine-spun and minutely analytical theories concerning the soul, written in the style of the Platonic love-sonnet or the extended Platonic allegorical poems, there were now many shorter lyrics—elegies, odes, and occasional verse.

Elizabethan influence had died out, and the newer poetry, while still concerned with the soul in its relation to God, was characterized by much greater gloom. Instead of patiently dissected theories of the universe in its relation to its cause, there are minutely-analytic records of the relation of the individual soul to God. There is, following the example of Donne, great compression of thought in this poetry; there is an unpoetic and often even uncouth quality, which is the result of a straining after entirely new effects—an attempt to get away from the stock Elizabethan epithets—and quaint, unexpected conceits are used for parallels in an attempt to be, above everything else,
original. Parallels are not so much from Nature, because Elizabethan use of nature had been artificial or allegorical.

It is Donne's deep sense of the underlying unity of all things and the consequent analogy between the spiritual and physical worlds, that lies at the root of his habit of discovering 'occult resemblances between things apparently unlike' which Johnson indicated as the distinctive feature of the 'metaphysical' poets.¹

In John Donne, the peculiar characteristics of the metaphysical school were carried to the farthest extreme. As a man of recognized genius, one of the greatest preachers of his time, and an original poet, he exercised a strong influence on the religious lyricists of the century in style and method. He wrote a rather considerable body of religious verse after he entered the church, but he was in no sense, in so far as his poetry indicates, a lover of nature. Evelyn Simpson says, "It is remarkable how little use he makes in his poetry of comparisons drawn from flowers or fruits or any other of the beautiful things in nature",² but an examination of his verse furnishes a number of allusions to the world which show as great a morbidity in his attitude toward it, as is indicated by his so frequent choice of death and physical

²Ibid., p. 48.
decay as a theme. "God is the glass,\(^1\) but the universe reflected in it is not Fletcher's nor More's, nor even Drummond's "this All". He has many such lines as:

What fragmentary rubbish this world is
Thou knows't, and that it is not worth a thought;
He honours it too much, that thinks it nought.

On the Progress of the Soul, p. 104.

From this world's carcase having mounted high
To that pure life of immortality.

Ibid., p. 100.

So struggles this dead world, now she is gone.
For there is motion in corruption.

Ibid., p. 101.

The world is but a carcase; thou art fed
By it but as a worm that carcase had.

Ibid., p. 102.

Forget this world and scarce think of it so
As of old clothes cast off a year ago.

Ibid., p. 105.

God is a mirror, or The All, omnipresent yet illimitable,
in Donne's conception:

The All, Which always is all everywhere
Annunciation, From Holy Sonnets, p. 151.

God be our true glass, through which we see
All, since the king of all things is he.

Obsequies, p. 125

He--which fills all place, yet none holds him.

Nativity, Holy Sonnet III, p. 152.

The Platonic notion of constant change on earth attracts him, and he gives frequent expression to it.

As bodies change, and as I do not wear
Those spirits, humours, blood, I did last year;

Obsequies to the Lord Harrington, p. 125.
And as, if on a stream I fix mine eye,  
That drop which I looked on, is presently  
Pushed with more waters from my sight, and gone——

*Obsequies*, p. 125.

You are both fluid, changed since yesterday;  
Next day repairs (but ill) last day's decay;  
Nor are (although the river keep the name)  
Yesterday's waters and to-day's the same.  

*Progress of the Soul*, p. 114.

Only in heaven joy's strength is never spent,  
And accidental things are permanent.  


Some of the Platonic thinkers of the age did not accept the doctrine of pre-existence, but Donne evidently did. He says:

My soul to heaven, her first seat, takes flight  
And earth-born body in the earth shall dwell.  


He has also the microcosmic conception of man common to the Platonists.

I am a little world, made cunningly  
Of elements and angelic sprite;  


His spirit of doubt and unrest, his curiosity, and his keen intellect made it easy for him to accept the new Copernican theory of the universe, as very few of his time did. He was always a seeker after truth, and explains the new conception of the system in a passage too long to quote, beginning,

And new philosophy calls all in doubt.  

*An Anatomy of the World*, p. 35.
Donne's prose as well as his poetry is full of passages containing expressions of rapturous delight, almost ecstasy, in contemplation of the beauty or goodness of God, —such apostrophes as

0 glorious beauty, infinitely reverend, infinitely fresh and young.¹

He was a mystic and saw all material things as symbols of a spiritual reality. The following examples show his use of conceits to express mystical thought.

Since I am coming to that holy room,
Where with the choir of saints for evermore
I shall be made thy music; as I come,
I tune the instrument here at the door,
And, what I must do then, think here before.

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We think this Paradise and Calvarie
Christ's Cross, and Adam's tree, stood in one place;
Look, Lord, and find both Adams met in me;
As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face,
May the last Adam's blood my soul embrace.

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So, in his purple wrapped receive me, Lord,
By these his thrones give me his other crown;
And as to others' souls I preached thy word,
Be this my text, my sermon to mine own.
Therefore, that he may raise, the Lord throws down.

Hymn to God, My God, in my Sickness, p. 213, 214.

The poem, The Cross, the first line of which follows, is filled with such symbolism.

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¹Prose Works, p. 122.
Look up, thou seeest birds raised on crossed wings.

p. 166.

But Donne was not at all a nature mystic. He did not seek an explanation of the "flower in the crannied wall", nor wonder at it, nor even admire it,—at least, so far as his poems are an indication, there is no evidence that he did. It is not merely as a part of his reaction from Elizabethan roses and nightingales that he does not mention the beauties of the natural world; but his imagination did not seem to be stirred by Nature's loveliness. Concepts and theories rather than sensuous impressions kindled it.

His thought of the universe is that of

an outward efflux of creative activity and an inward return of love towards the author of its being while the supreme expression of this activity is to be found in the mind of man, which has always kept a spark of the divine fire, and which remains ready to burst, at a touch from its Maker, into a flame of adoration and desire.1

Donne was fond of London; he did not care for the country. He sought the Divine within the soul of man, never in the "dead carcass of the world".

Among the chief admirers and devoted followers of Donne in the seventeenth century, George Herbert and Crashaw were acknowledged disciples. They follow their master

1Prose Works, p. 123.
closely in the use of conceits, and also in a disregard for the attractions of Nature. George Herbert was as fond of London as Donne was,—and both of them entered the ministry of the Church of England only after their ambitions for preferment at court were disappointed. It was only a sense of duty to God which sent Herbert to live in an out of the way country parish, and he seems never to have succeeded in stifling his desire for the attractions of a worldly career. His writings record his struggle to reconcile his refractory longings to the life he felt he owed to God.

George Herbert Palmer, in his Life and Works of George Herbert, says that this poet originated a new species of sacred verse, the religious lyric, which Palmer defines as "a cry of the individual heart to God", the writer "searches his own soul, and utters the love, the timidity, the joy, the vacillations, the remorse, the anxieties he finds there. It is a supreme Love-song, involving two persons and two only,—the individual soul as the lover, and its divine and incomparable Love. On God and himself his attention is exclusively fixed."¹ Robert Southwell, however, in the sixteenth century, wrote the religious lyric with an intense fervor, which to my mind, Herbert

¹Life and Works, v. 1, p. 74.
never shows, and, of course, Herbert's poetry is not the first of his century in which the attention is fixed exclusively on the soul of the writer and God.¹

George Herbert is not a philosopher like Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and he shows his contempt for the Platonic love poetry of the sort that his brother wrote in preference to Platonic religious poetry.

Is there in truth no beauty?
Is all good structure in a winding stair?
May no lines pass except they do their duty
Not to be true, but painted chair?

*Jordan, v. 2, p. 87.*

In another poem on the same theme he expresses his idea of the unworthiness of love poems which emphasize the material in place of the absolute beauty.

*Immortall Love,* author of this great frame,
Sprung from that beautie which can never fade,
How hast man parcel'd out thy glorious name
And thrown it on the dust which thou hast made.


Again:

True beautie dwells on high. Ours is a flame,
But borrow'd thence to light us thither.


The idea of Nature as designed for man's benefit—a conception held throughout the century by religious poets—is constantly emphasized by Herbert, as in the following verses:

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¹Palmer elsewhere states that a certain preparation for Herbert's work is found in Southwell's poetry.
For us the winds do blow
The earth doth rest, heav'n move, and fountains flow,
Nothing we see but means our good
As our delight or as our treasure;
The whole is either our cupboard of food,
Or cabinet of pleasure.

More servants wait on Man
Then he'll take notice of, in ev'ry path
He treads down that which doth befriend him
When sickness makes him pale and wan.
Oh mightie love! Man is one world, and hath
Another to attend him.

Herbs, "gladly cure our flesh"; flowers are never particularized with the exception of "the Rose" and it usually with the idea of service to man along with its beauty,

A rose, besides his beautie, is a sure.

Earthly beauty, typified by the rose, is a lure or temptation to call him away from service to God.

First Beautie crept into a rose;
Which when I pluckt not, Sir, said she,
Tell me, I pray, whose hands are those?
But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

In The Rose, that flower represents the colour'd griefs and blushing woes of "this world of sugred lies".

Palmer speaks somewhere of Herbert's delight in sensuous impressions, especially of his enjoyment of delicate odors, but it is not a pleasure in the aspects of Nature in the country about him; his is a carefully cultivated taste for the refinements and luxuries of life in London
society. Mention in his religious verse, of odors, is confined to "boxes of sweets", and "caskets of Oriental spiceries". Only once is there an allusion to natural odors,—

Rain, do not hurt my flowers, but gently spend Your honey drops! Press not to smell them here, When they are ripe, their odour will ascend And at your lodging with their thanks appear. Providence, 11. 117, 120.

The best worldly things of life Herbert typifies by such seventeenth century luxuries as spices.

What though some have a fraught Of cloves and nutmegs, and in cinnamon sail;— The Size, v. 3, p. 193.

Herbert does not mention specific birds, but just birds, usually for analogy. In the poem, "Man's Medley", he develops the idea that man's nature is double, whereas other creatures have no soul. Man's material nature is not to be altogether despised, but sensuous images should call to his mind heavenly ideas.

Heark, how the birds do sing, And woods do ring! All creatures have their joy, and man hath his. Yet if we rightly measure, Man's joy and pleasure Rather hereafter then in present is.

To this life things of sense Make their pretence; In th' other Angels have a right by birth. Man ties them both above, And makes them one, With th' one hand touching heav'n, with th' other (earth,
In soul he mounts and flies,
In flesh he dies.
He wears a stuffe whose thread is coarse and round,
But trimm'd with curious lace,
And should take place
After th' trimming, not the stuffe and ground.

Not that he may not here
Taste of the cheer;
But as birds drink and straight lift up their head,
So must he sip and think
Of better drink
He may attain to after he is dead.


In more than one poem he calls attention to the industry of the bee; he himself was no idler, but physical weakness often prevented him from leading the active life which he felt to be approved by God.

Herbert mentions the stars oftener than any other aspect of Nature. He, like many others of his century, was a believer in the influence of the heavenly bodies on the careers of men, and he expresses this idea in a number of poems.

And if an herb hath power, what have the starres?
A rose besides his beautie, is a cure.
Doubtlesse our plagues and plentie, peace and warres
Are there much surer then our art is sure.

Providence, v. 3, p. 87.

George Herbert was a follower of John Donne in his idea that Nature is in itself of little worth. To him, as to Donne, the soul's relation to its Maker is the only important theme. By temperament and training he was attracted to a life of a different kind from the one he led. His tastes
were refined and cultivated, and simple pleasures were not those he would by nature have chosen. His lyrics are heartfelt prayers and ardent songs of praise filled with introspective passion often; but sometimes, too, his mood is one of quiet contemplation. Herbert was no mystic; but there are mystical tendencies in the poem called

*Divinitie*, which recognizes the dualism of faith and reason.

*As men, for fear the starres should sleep and nod, And trip at night, have spheres suppli'd As if a starre were duller than a clod Which knows his way without a guide.*

*Just as the other heav'n they also serve, Divinities transcendent skie Which with the edge of wit they cut and carve, Reason triumphs, and faith lies by.*

*Faith needs no stuffe of flesh, but stoutly can To heav'n above both go and leade.*

v. 3, p. 97.

Richard Crashaw is also a follower of Donne, but his poetry records an attitude of ecstatic and mystical worship rather than one of pious contemplation. His theme in divine verse is the raptures of the soul visited by divine love. His poetry does not show the influence of the Neo-Platonic doctrines to any great extent; among his secular poems, his Platonic Wishes, addressed to his supposed mistresse, treats her as an idea. In his sacred poem,* In the
Glorious Epiphanie of our Lord God, Crashaw develops the Platonic notion of progress from the sensuous to the intellectual stage. He begins with a description of the Child's face, a purely sensuous picture.

Bright Babe! Whose awfull beautyes make
The morn incurr a sweet mistake;
For whom the 'officious heav'ns devise
To disinherit the sun's rise,
Delicately to displace
The Day, & plant it fairer in thy face;
Look up, sweet Babe, look up & see
For love of Thee
Thus farr from home
The East is come
To seek herself in thy sweet Eyes.

Later on in the poem this sensuous image changes to that of Christ as the Day, present everywhere and always, and unchangeable.

To Thee, thou Day of night! thou east of west!
Lo we at last have found the way.
To thee, the world's great universal east
The Generall & indifferent Day.
All-circling point. All centering sphear.
The world's one, round, AEternall year.
Whose full & all unwrinkled face
Nor sinks nor swells with time or place;
But every where & every while
In One consistent solid smile:
Not vext & tost
Twixt spring & frost,
Nor by alternate shreds of light
Sordidly shifting hands with shades & night.
O little all; in thy embrace
The world lyes warm, & likes his place.
Nor does his full Globe fail to be
Kist on Both his cheeks by Thee.
Time is too narrow for thy Year
Nor makes the whole World thy half-sphear.

pp. 208, 209.
He compares the unreality of the sun with that brighter reality.

Time has a day in store
When this so proudly poor
And self-pressed spark, that has so long
By the love-sick world bin made
Not so much their sun as Shade.

The poem ends with the purely Platonic notion:

Come faith, Great master of the mystick day;

And teach obscure Mankind a more close way

To read more legible thine originall Ray.

Thus-
We vow to make brave way
Upwards, & presse on for; the pure intelligentall

In stead of bringing in the blissfull Prize
And fastening on Thine eyes;

Now by abased liddles shall learn to be
Eagles; and shut our eyes that we may see.

The following quotation shows another of the Platonic doctrines, that of the insignificance of the image in relation to its idea:

Hyperbolized Nothing! know thy span;
Take thine own measure here; down, down & bow
Before thy self in thine idea; thou
Huge emptiness! contract thy self; & shrinke
All thy Wild circle to a Point.

*Death's Lecture*, p. 292.

The following familiar lines contain the Platonic note of reminiscence.

The self-remembering Soul sweetly recovers
Her kindred with the starrs; not basely hovers
Below; but meditates her immortall way
Home to the originall source of Light & intellectuall

*Description of A Religious House*, p. 289.

Crashaw commonly uses imagery from Nature to express his religious ideas; he is essentially a mystic, and his treatment of Nature is mystical. His figures are chosen from the mystical standpoint. Dozens of examples similar to the following, which would illustrate this symbolic use of nature, could be cited from any of his long divine poems.

Hail, sister springs!
Parents of slyver-footed rills!
Ev'er bubling things!
Thawing crystal! snowy hills,
Still spending, never spent! I mean
Thy fair eyes, sweet Magdalene!

Heavens thy fair eyes be;
Heavens of ever-falling starrs,
Tis seed-time still with thee
And starres thou sow'st whose harvest dares
Promise the earth to counter shine
Whatever makes heav'n's forhead fine.

Not in the evening's eyes
When they Red with weeping are
For the Sun that dyes,
Sitts sorrow with a face so fair,
No where but here did ever meet
Sweetnesse so sad, sadnesse so sweet.
The dew no more will weep
The primrose's pale cheek to deck,
The dew no more will sleep,
Muzzel'd in the lily's neck;
Much rather would it be thy Tear,
And leave them both to tremble here.

Well does the May that lyes
Smiling in thy cheeks, confess
The April in thine eyes,
Mutual sweetness they express.
No April are lent kinder showers,
Nor May return'd more faithfull flowers.

The images from Nature throughout his religious poems
are of the same sort and used similarly, and favorite
comparisons are repeated often. Sensuous images delight
him.

So doe perfumes expire;
So sigh tormented sweets

Such Teares the suffering Rose that's Next
With ungentle flames does shed,
The Weeper, p. 264.

Dropping with a balmly Showr
A delicious dew of spices

Prayer: an Ode, p. 231.

And follow those fair starres of yours;
Starres much too fair & pure to wait upon
The false smiles of a sublunary sun.

Council concerning Her Choice, p. 233.

O Mother turtle-dove!
Soft source of love
That these dry lids might borrow
Something from thy full Seas of sorrow!
Sancta Maria Dolorum, p. 233.

O let me suck the wine
So long of this chest vine-

Ibid., p. 240.
Crashaw's ardent temperament influenced by religious devotion sometimes leads him, in the sweep of impassioned utterance, into lines which detract from otherwise fine passages. One such line containing an image from Nature, "His superficial Beames sun-burn't our skin", occurs in his Glorious Epiphanie; and even it is not so distasteful as others to which attention has frequently been called.

In the following extract, and elsewhere, he shows the popular seventeenth century notion of the influence of the stars:

Hope walks; & kickes the curld heads of conspiring (starres.

But Crashaw is not a nature mystic; he belongs to the few poets in England whose mysticism is popularly called erotic from the expression of the desire of the soul for God and of God for the soul, in terms of earthly love.

He read deeply in St. John of the Cross, the Roman Catholic mystic of the sixteenth century, and expresses himself in much the same manner. However, though there are no long nature passages in either his Carmen Deo Nostr or in Steps to the Temple, some of his most beautiful lines are those which contain allusions to Nature.

Let them sleep: let them sleep on.
Till this stormy night be gone,
Till the 'AEternall morrow dawn;
Then the curtains will be drawn
'And they wake into a light,
Whose day shall never dye in Night.

Epitaph, p. 290.
Donne's followers more than Donne himself, turned with poetic ingenuity from profane to sacred love. The result at its worst is the kind of elaborate conceit which has always shocked the critics of metaphysical poets; at its best, the ecstasy of religion and of poetry become identified, and nowhere more evidently than in the poetry of Crashaw. 1

The closing lines of *The Flaming Heart* show Crashaw's mystical imagery at its best in a passage of passionate and ecstatic admiration shown for Saint Teresa, a sister spirit in faith and temperament.

O thou undaunted daughter of desires,  
By all thy dower of Lights & Fires;  
By all thy lives & deaths of love;  
By thy larg draughts of intellectual day,  
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they;  
By all thy brim-fill'd Bowles of fervent desire  
By thy last Morning's draught of liquid fire;  
By the full kingdom of that final kiss  
That seiz'd thy parting Soul & seal'd thee his;  
By all the heav'ns thou hast in him  
(Fair sister of the Seraphim!)  
By all of Him we have in Thee;  
Leave nothing of my Self in me.  
Let me so read thy life, that I  
Unto all life of mine may dy  

p. 274, 1l. 276, 277.

Read, in the work previously quoted, says:

Crashaw's transcendent God, Wordsworth's immanent spirit of the Universe, are perhaps the noblest religious ideals ever formulated in the history of Christian thought. 2

But to place side by side the religious ideal expressed in the seventeenth century ascetic's fervid and rapturous outpourings and that expressed in the nineteenth century

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2Ibid., p. 106.
humanitarian's poetry appears somewhat strange; the two
men are on such different planes in their thought that
a comparison of the sort implied in the sentence quoted
from Read, seems hardly fitting.

The religious verse of Robert Herrick is hardly
worthy of consideration when compared with that of other
poets of his age. His poems in "Noble Numbers" have not
much in common with the Caroline religious lyric. They
exhibit none of the religious emotion of Donne, or of
his followers in this form of verse; they are not self-
revealing as the poems of these others are, nor as
Herrick's own secular verse is. Herrick lacks the in-
tensity of Donne, the poignancy of Herbert, the passion
and ecstasy of Crashaw, the mystic insight of Vaughan
and Traherne, and the deep seriousness of them all. He
writes with a great deal of assurance of his future state
of blessedness, but is just as certain of the "everlasting
woes" which many others are to receive.

I do believe the good, and I,
Shall live with Him eternally.
    His Creed, p. 358.

His conception of eternity is not that of Vaughan
and Traherne,—the here and now is no part of it. His
idea of the hereafter is interesting also, in comparison
with that of the others of the group.
In this world, the isle of dreams,
While we sit by sorrow's streams,
Tears and terrors are our themes

Reciting:

But when once from hence we fly,-
More and more approaching nigh
Unto young Eternity

Uniting:

In that whiter island where
Things are evermore sincere;
Candour here, and lustre there

Delighting:

There is calm and cooling sleep
We our eyes shall never steep,
But eternal watch shall keep;

Attending:

Pleasures such as shall pursue
Me immortalised, and you.
And fresh joys as never to

Have ending.


and again:

0 years! and Age! Farewell!
Behold I go
Where I do know
Infinitie to dwell

- - - - -

And there mine eyes shall see
All times, how they
Are lost i' th' Sea

Of vast Eternitie

- - - - -

Where never Moone shall sway
The Starres, but she,
And Night, shall be
Drown'd in one endless Day.

Eternitie, p. 142.
Herrick is sometimes spoken of as one of the school of Donne, but in his "Noble Numbers" he has little in common with the earlier poet. He has none of Donne's obscurity or conceits, or of his harsh and cramped style. He is Donne's opposite in treatment of Nature, for he delights in the fragrance, and names especially often the daffodill. He is a lover of birds, too, but his feeling for Nature is limited to a childlike delight in its features as he saw them about him. He does not interpret Nature; he pictures natural objects minutely and carefully, but there is nothing beyond. His portrayal of Nature is in the main idyllic; but his figures are frequently taken from the humblest and commonest of Nature's manifestations, as in:

One only lock of that sweet Hay.

The New Yeares Gift, p. 144.

God gives corn, seed, bread.

To God, p. 146.

His materialism is shown also in passages in which he thanks God for the blessings of the table.

The Worts, the Purslain, and the Messe Of Water cresse,
Which of Thy kindnesse Thou hast sent;
And my content
Makes those, and my beloved Beet,
To be more sweet.

And giv'st me for my Bushell sowne,
Twice ten for one,

A Thanksgiving to God for his House,
p. 350.
He mentions also his teeming Men, healthful Ewes, and his King.

In the Poem To finde God he expresses his idea of the incomprehensibility of God.

If you can find a way to measure
The wind, fetch back that cloud again,
Reshivered into seeds of Rain,
Tell me the motes, dust, sands, and speares
Of Corn when Summer shakes his ears;
Shew me that world of Starres, and whence
They noiseless spill their Influence.
Then if you can, shew me Him.

He has confidence in God's mercy, and speaks of it, often.

God's mercy like the ever-wealthy Ocean.

We do not, after a reading of the sacred verse of Robert Herrick, feel his sincerity in it, and we do not come away from it with an elevation of mood or feeling; he does not rouse us to nobler aspirations, nor strengthen our hope. Moorman says of him:

He lacks the highest gift of all, that of touching the deepest chords in human nature, and of rousing men to high purposes and high enthusiasms.1

Thomas Traherne is a religious poet whose writing was begun and finished in the third quarter of the seventeenth century. He is usually classed with the school of Donne,

1Cavalier Lyrist, p. 17.
but he is much more individual than Herbert. No other
divine poet of the century sings so exclusively of the joy
of life, the beauty of the world, the love and goodness of
God who "made all Nature for man's enjoyment", and the
worth of man. His sole theme is the relation of man to his
maker, and he does not depart from it in a single poem.
There are fewer than a half-dozen poems in the volume edited
by Dobell which are not written in the first person, but the
poet has found joy and peace, and his verse does not record
the disillusionment, struggles, and disappointments that the
verse of Donne and Herbert does.

Nature is a source of delight to Traherne, but his is
the Platonic view of its emptiness and unreality. God is
the reality, and the other ideas developed are but parts of
this great concept.

It is evident that Traherne has imbibed Platonic
doctrines, yet his poetry is no mere paraphrase of Plotinus,
as much of Drummond's is. His verse is so much a reflect-
tion of his own individuality that in reading it one almost
feels he can see the man,—at any rate the reader knows
him. Over and over again in the one little volume of his
verse which we have, he repeats the same ideas. The ear-
nestness, reiteration, and constant eager insistence on
the same few points in his philosophy of the soul's re-
lation with its maker, amount at times to a fervor which
is nothing short of rhapsodic. Traherne's poetry seems
to be a sincere expression of his spiritual consciousness rather than an attempt to write himself into a certain state of mind, as some one has said it is. His prose in *Centuries of Meditation*, as well as his verse, shows the same complete absorption in his theme and the same fervid devotion. His belief in the immanence of God in the human soul, in the possibility of oneness with the Divine here and now without any toilsome and slow progress into another world, and in Eternity, has no parallel in the writings of the century. His sympathies are broad enough to include the rest of humanity, though it was his own individual soul which he scrutinized and sought to relate to the Deity.

So far as his interest in Nature itself is concerned, he considers it from no other standpoint than as God's visible clothing of the Universe. There is no one of Earth's manifestations of more worth or beauty to him than another,—no special individual appeal, nor any particular localized interest. Nature, the garment of the Universe, he delights in, but the impression it makes on him is general. He mentions its music, but never a bird's song; he dwells often on the sweet odors, but never the fragrance of the English violet; there are no illuminating phrases which show that he ever particularized. His inward vision never rested on one particular aspect of
Earth's beauty, as a field of laughing daffodils, nor
could he draw lessons for himself from the voice of the
cuckoo, but the impression was rather a general one, the
effect of the whole Universe, of which he says that:

fields and meadows are a glorious robe
Adorning it with smooth and heavenly pleasures,

The aspect of Platonism which most appealed to Tra-
herne's devout and ardent spirit was the nature of God as
Good, or Love; and he arrives at his definition of the
universe through an explanation of this aspect of the Deity.
Man's soul, the most glorious thing in the Universe, exists
through a sort of emanation from God, purposeful on the
part of Deity, so that the soul is Divinity itself, (though
without a lessening of Deity). God strongly desires the
soul of man, which He has created out of His own essence.
The immense value which He sets on it is shown by His
creation of the visible universe,—made for the delight
of man, as a lure to attract his thoughts to his Creator,
and to woo him by constantly reminding him of the Maker's
love for him. Man is given a great desire to penetrate
to the mysteries of the other world, a recollection of
its blessedness which he saw with the pure eyes of his
angel infancy, and a longing for it, all of which serve
to attract his soul toward it. His physical senses are
the means of furnishing him with sensuous pleasures which
remind him of the much greater spiritual delights in store for him. In reminiscence he recalls the realities which he knew earlier, and by comparing these with the objects he sees about him, he recognizes the latter as mere images of the former. Without man's appreciation and understanding, then, the universe would be nothing, and God without man's appreciation and understanding would be undeified. Since God is immanent in the universe as in the human soul, eternity is here and now, heaven is here, and man's soul comprehends the universe. Traherne does not hold to the Plotinian theory of emanation to lower orders, at least in its entirety, and in only one place does he incline to a direct act of creation:

When first Eternity stoop'd down to nought
And in the Earth its likeness sought,
When first it out of nothing fram'd the skies,
And form'd the moon and sun—
The Choice, p. 60.

In other places he speaks with the Plotinian notion:

--as the Sun by shining's cloth'd with beams,
So from Himself to all His glory streams,
Who is a Sun yet what himself doth list.
The Anticipation, p. 90.

The Holy Cherubim,
Souls, Angels from Him came,
Who is a glorious, bright, and living Flame,
That on all things doth shine.
The Anticipation, p. 93.
Man's soul is one of the very essence of the Divine.

He is the primitive eternal spring,
The endless ocean of each glorious thing.
The soul a vessel is,
A spacious bosom, to contain
All the fair treasures of His bliss
Which run like rivers from, into the main,
And all it doth receive returns again.

The Circulation, p. 79.

God is complete in Himself, lacks nothing which He has given.

He neither sees with human eyes,
Nor needs Himself seas, skies
Or earth, or any thing.

The Demonstration, p. 35.

All things do first receive, that give;
Only to God above,
That from and in Himself doth live;
Whose all-sufficient love,
Without original can flow.

The Circulation, p. 79.

Traherne expresses the Platonic theory of idea and image often.

The soft and swelling grapes that on their vines
Receive the lively warmth that shines
Upon them, ripen there for me:
Or drink they be;
Or meat. The stars salute my pleased sense
With a derived and borrowed influence:
But better vines do grow;
Far better wines do flow
Above, and while
The Sun doth smile
Upon the lilies there, and all things warm;
Their pleasant odours do my spirit charm,
And being Images of God they are
The highest joys His goodness did prepare.

Goodness, p. 130.

He compares the worthlessness of the images with the reality. After an enumeration of natural beauties, he says,

Alas! all these are poor and empty things,
Trees, waters, days and shining beams,
Fruits, flowers, bowers, shady groves and springs,
No joy will yield, no more than silent streams;
Those are but dead material toys,
And cannot make my heavenly joys.

Desire, p. 120.

He then proceeds to an extended account of what these heavenly joys are.

O Love! Ye amities
And friendship that appear above the skies!
Ye hearts and living pleasures!
- - - - - - - ye high delights
That satisfy all appetites!
- - - - -

Whatever pleasures are at His right hand,
Ye must before I am divine
In full propriety be mine.

Ibid., pp. 120, 121.

What we see here and take for reality, are the images of the real:-

As fair ideas from the sky
Or images of things,
Unto a spotless mirror fly,
On unperceived wings,
And lodging there affect the sense,
As if at first they came from thence;
While being there, they richly beautify
The place they fill, and yet communicate
Themselves, reflecting to the seer's eye;
Just such is our estate.

The Circulation, p. 76.

A favorite idea of mystics concerning the need of the human soul for God and the desire for a return to a unison of the soul of man with the soul of the universe is expressed in the philosophy of the East and in Neoplatonism as in later Christian doctrine. It is expressed by Traherne (as in Francis Thompson's Hound of Heaven) as a desire and
need of God for the human soul, a conception which adds to
man's consciousness of his own dignity and his sense of
God's love.

He seeks for ours as we do seek for His;
Nay, O my Soul, ours is far more His bliss
Than His is ours;

- - - - -

His earnest love, His infinite desires,
His living, endless, and devouring fires,
Do rage in thirst and fervently require
A love 'tis strange it should desire.

He courts our love with infinite esteem,
And seeks it so that it doth almost seem
Even all His blessedness. His love doth prize
It as the only Sacrifice.

The blessings of the Universe are given Man as a lure
for his soul, and are of value only as he in turn appreci-
ates, loves, and extols the Giver.

For that all objects might be seen
He made the orient azure and the green:
That we might in his works delight
And that the sight
Of those His treasures might enflame
The soul with love to Him. He made the same.

The Godhead cannot prize
The sun at all, nor yet the skies,
Or air, or earth, or trees, or seas,
Or stars, unless the soul of man they please.

But neither goodness, wisdom, power, nor love,
Nor happiness itself in things could be
Did they not all in one fair order move,
And jointly by their service end in me:
Nor would an eye to be the Sphere
Of all things, none of these would e'er appear.

Thoughts II, p. 110.

The Demonstration, p. 85.

The Improvement, p. 27.
The End doth want the means, and is the cause, 
Whose sake, by Nature's laws, 
Is that for which they are. 

The Anticipation, p. 39.

-To Himself in me he always gave 
All that He takes delight to see me have, 
For as my spirit was an endless Sphere, 
Like God Himself, and Heaven and Earth was there. 
Silence, p. 41.

Physical senses were given man so that he could appreciate Nature.

For sight inherits beauty, hearing sounds, 
The nostrils sweet perfumes, 
All tastes have hidden rooms 
Within the tongue; and feeling feeling wounds 
With Pleasure and delights. 
The Preparative, p. 16.

God must be enjoyed; it is the reason for the Universe.

His nature burns like fire; 
His goodness infinitely does desire 
To be by all possesst; 
The Anticipation, p. 92.

For God enjoyed is all His End 
Himself He then doth comprehend 
When He is blessed, magnified

For He 
Doth place His whole felicity. 
In that: who is despised and defied. 
Undeified almost if once denied. 
The Recovery, p. 94.

If we despise His glorious works, 
Such sin and mischief in it lurks. 
That they are all made vain; 
Ibid., p. 95.

If man sees the Universe properly as his, he will delight 
in it.
That all we see is ours, and every one
Possessor of the whole; that every man
Is like a God Incarnate on the Throne,
Even like the first for whom the world began.
_Ease, p. 56._

That all things should be mine,
This makes His bounty most divine.
_Amendment, p. 82._

First, then, behold the world as thine, and well
Note that where thou dost dwell.
See all the beauty of the spacious case,
Lift up thy pleas'd and Ravish't eyes,
Admire the glory of the Heavenly place
And all its blessings prize.
_The Vision, p. 22._

Man is given desire for the Absolute in order that he
shall search for the Cause of the Universe.

Vast unaffected wonderful desires,
Like inward, native, uncaus'd hidden fires,

---

Why beauty should not there as well as here,
Why goodness should not likewise there appear,
Why treasures and delights should bounded be,
Since there is such a wide Infinitie;

---

The fountain tho' not known,
Yet that there must be one was plainly shown,
Which fountain of delight must needs be Love,
As all the goodness of the things did prove.
_Nature, p. 53, 54._

His desire to penetrate into the beyond will not let
him rest, and he is grateful for it.

For giving me desire,
An eager thirst, a burning ardent fire,
A virgin infant flame
A Love with which into the world I came,
An inward hidden heavenly love,
Which in my soul did work and move,
And ever me inflame,  
With restless longing, heavenly avarice  
That never could be satisfied  
That did incessantly a Paradise  
Unknown, suggest, and something undescried  
Discern, and bear me to it; he  
Thy Name for ever praised by me.  
*Desire*, p. 119.

Reminiscence is given him, also, to attract him back

to his former home.

There nothing was but I, and all my treasures.

---

There only one did sacrifice and sing
To only one Eternal Heavenly King.
The union was so strait between them two,
That all was either's which my soul could view.
His gifts and my possessions, both our treasures;
He mine, and I the ocean of His pleasures.
*Silence*, p. 40.

Traherne makes much more of this doctrine than Vaughan does.
The much quoted "How like an Angel came I down!" is from
the poem *The Wonder*. *The Salutation, Eden, Innocence, The
Preparative, The Rapture, The Approach, Dumbness, Silence,
My Spirit, Speed*, are all concerned with the same thought,
which is also brought out in other poems.

Traherne feels that if man learns to look with the
pure eyes of childhood he will realize God's presence all
about him, and see Divinity in humanity.

*His omnipresence is an Endlesse Sphere
Wherein all worlds as his delight appear:
His bounty is the spring of all delight;
Our blessedness, like His, is infinite.
His glory endless is and doth surround
And fill all worlds without or end or bound.
What hinders then, but we in Heaven may be
Even here on Earth, did we but rightly see?*
Eternity itself is that true light
That doth enclose us being infinite.

Thoughts IV, p. 124.

His Throne is near, 'tis just before our face
And all Eternity His dwelling-place.

His omnipresence is all sight and love
Which whoso sees he ever dwells above.

Ibid., p. 126.

O give me grace to see Thy face and be
A constant mirror of Eternity.

So shall my conversation ever be
In Heaven, and I, O Lord my God, with Thee.

Thoughts IV, p. 127.

The light which on ten thousand faces shines,
The beams which crown ten thousand vines
With glory, and delight, appear
As if they were
Reflected only from them all for me,
That I a greater beauty there might see.

Goodness, p. 129.

In different poems Traherne urges that

'Tis not the object, but the light
That maketh Heaven! 'tis a purer sight.

The Preparative, p. 18.

Traherne's feeling of unity with the Universe is most interesting as a statement of belief in the immanence of the Soul in nature which is beyond anything we have seen before.

My naked simple Life was I;

I felt no dross nor matter in my Soul,
No brims nor borders, such as in a bowl we see. My essence was capacity,
That felt all things;
--being simple like the Deity
In its own center is a sphere
Not shut up here, but everywhere.

It acts not from a centre to
Its object as remote,
But present is when it doth view,
Being with the Being it doth note
Whatever it doth do.

---

This made me present evermore
With whatsoever I saw.
An object, if it were before
My eye, was by Dame Nature's law,
Within my soul,--
And every object in my heart a thought
Begot, or was; I could not tell
Whether the things did there
Themselves appear,
Which in my Spirit truly seem'd to dwell;
Or whether my conforming mind,
Were not ev'en all that therein shin'd.

---

This mystic sense reminds one strongly of similar feeling
in Wordsworth, expressed in the lines from Tintern Abbey,

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

---

Wordsworth's account of his feeling when as a small
boy at certain times it was necessary for him to touch
natural objects to determine if they were really external
to him, also expresses a similar sense of oneness with the
universe.
While Traherne has some relation in thought to Wordsworth, his own statement of his conception of the proper life for man shows his limitations without further comment; his interests were solely concerned with his personal relation to his Creator.

A quiet silent person may possess
All that is great or high in Blessedness.
The inward work is the supreme; For all
The other were occasioned by the fall,
A man that seemeth idle to the view
Of others, may the greatest business do,
Those acts which Adam in his innocence
Performed, carry all the excellence,
Those outward busy acts he knew not were
But meaner matters of a lower sphere,
Building of churches, giving to the poor,
In dust and ashes lying on the floor,
Administering of justice, preaching peace,
Ploughing and toiling for a forcet increase,
With visiting the sick, or governing
The rude and ignorant; this was a thing
As then unknown-- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
- - - - - - - - - - till sin came in.
The first and only work he had to do
Was in himself to feel his bliss, to view
His sacred treasures, to admire, rejoice,
Sing praises with a sweet and heavenly voice,
See, praise, give heavenly thanks within, and love,
Which is the high and only work above
Them all.-

Silence, p. 38, 39.

Traherne reinforces this defense of a life secluded from the haunts of men in his Centuries of Meditation as follows:

I perceived we were led by one Spirit and that following the clue of Nature into this labyrinth, I was brought into the midst of celestial joys: and that to be retired from earthly cares and fears and distractions that we might in sweet and heavenly
peace contemplate all the Works of God, was to live in Heaven; and the only way to become what David was, a man after God's own heart. p. 216.

The finest and most sympathetic nature passages in Traherne's work are not in his verse, but in his prose book. The passage quoted below is cited by Dobell and others as proof of his delight in Nature; but in it Traherne will be seen to be voicing again the same mystic idea of immanence that is expressed in the poem My Spirit, though so beautifully that many of the phrases linger in the memory.

You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens, and crowned with the stars!—Till your spirit filleth the whole world, and the stars are your jewels.—Your enjoyment of the world is never right till every morning you awake in Heaven; see yourself in your Father's Palace; and look upon the skies, the earth, and the air as Celestial Joys. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Another prose passage which begins, "The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown," delightfully expresses Traherne's favorite theme of reminiscence.

Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, is the English poet who, of all, is nearest to Wordsworth in Nature interpretation. Not only in his attitude toward Nature, but also in his

*Centuries of Meditation*, p. 156.
use of simple language in expressing it, is he more akin to Wordsworth than to any of his own contemporaries. He is at times obscure, but his obscurity does not come from a striving after individuality of expression so much as from the nature of his thought. He does not attempt to reason or to analyze, but merely to record his personal experience, and words fail him; he is the only English nature-mystic of his century. Like his brother Thomas, he was deeply read in Plato and the medieval alchemists, but he does not emphasize the magical properties of natural objects as Thomas Vaughan did, though he seems to have been somewhat of a believer in them. The foundation of his mysticism was a belief in the immanence and transcendence of the Universal Divinity. Not only every creature, but also every plant and even every stone, was a part of the soul of the world. The similarity of his thought to Wordsworth's is stated by Anna von der Heide as follows:

Vaughan's best known poem is The Retreat, and his doctrine of reminiscence is known to most people chiefly through it, but there are other poems in which this same idea is prominent, and along with it, the possibility of a return to that former blessed condition, if man will but strive toward the innocence of childhood, in which state recollection exists.

Sure, it was so. Man in those early days Was not all stone, and Earth, He shin'd a little, and by those weak Rays Had some glimpse of his birth. 

This made him long for home, as loath to stay With murmurers and foes; He sighed for Eden, and would often say Ah, what bright days were those? Nor was Heav'n cold unto him; for each day The valley or the Mountain Afforded visits, and still Paradise lay In some green shade or fountain.

1 Die religiösen Lyriker, pp. 82, 83.
Angels lay Leiger here; Each Bush, and Cal.
Each Oke, and high-way knew them.
Walk but the fields or sit down at some wel
And he was sure to view them.
Ibid., p. 440.

I see, thy Curtains are close-drawn; Thy bow
Looks dim too in the Cloud;
But hark! what trumpet's that? what Angel cries
Arise! Thrust in thy sickle.
Corruption, p. 440.

Fair, shining mountains of my pilgrimage
And flowry Vales, whose flow'rs were stars;
The days and nights of my first happy age,
An age without distast or warrs:
Looking Back, p. 640.

This is the cause why ev'ry living
Creature affects an endless being.
And still they creep (drawn on by this,)
And look back towards their first bliss.
For otherwise it is most sure
Nothing that liveth could endure
Unless it's Love turned retrograde
Sought that first life which all things made.
Metrum 6, Lib. 4, p. 633.

I cannot reach it; and my striving eye
Dazles at it, as at eternity.
Childhood, p. 520.

I've lost
A traine of lights, which in those Sun-shine days
Were my sure guides, and only with me stays
(UNto my cost)
One sullen beame.
Mans fall, and Recovery, p. 411.

He sometimes expresses the thought that man alone in
the universe, does not know his way home.

Man hath stil either toyes, or Care,
He hath no root, nor to one place is ty'd
But ever restless and Irregular
About this Earth doth run and ride.
He knows he hath a home, but scarce knows where,
He says it is so far
That he hath quite forgot how to go there.

---

He knocks at all doors, strays and roams,
Nay hath not so much wit as some stones have
Which in the darkest night point to their homes,
By some hid sense their Maker gave;
Man is the shuttle, to whose winding quest
And passage through these looms
God order'd motion, but ordain'd no rest.

\[\text{Man, p. 477.}\]

In a number of passages Vaughan shows his acceptance
of the Platonic doctrine of the absolute and its shadow.

My Soul, there is a Countrie
Far beyond the stars,
Where stands a winged Centrie
All skilfull in the wars.

---

If thou canst get but thither,
There growses the flowre of peace,
The Rose that cannot wither,
Thy fortresse and thy ease.

\[\text{Peace, p. 430.}\]

Two Lifes I hold from thee, my gracious Lord,
Both cost thee dear;
For one I am thy Tenant here;
The other, the true life, in the next world
And endless is--

\[\text{The Match, p. 435.}\]

The following lines show the influence of Plotinus:

I am a separe Essence, and can see
The Emanations of the Deitie,
And how they pass the Seraphim, and run
Through ev'ry Throne and Domination.
So rushing through the Guard, the Sacred streams
Flow to the neighbour Stars, and in their beams
(A glorious Contract!) descend to Earth
And give Impressions unto ev'ry birth.

\[\text{The importunate Fortune, p. 616.}\]
Vaughan's striving after union with the Divine is as painfully eager as that of any of the other sacred poets,—

'Tis now clear day: I see a Rose
Bud in the bright East, and disclose
The Pilgrim-Sunne, all night have I
Spent in a roving Exstasie
To find my Saviour.

The Search, p. 405.

The same sort of experience is expressed more mystically in the poem, Vanity of Spirit, which tells of the poets' attempt to enter into the secret of the universe.

Quite spent with thoughts I left my Cell, and lay
Where a shrill spring tun'd to the early day:
I beg'd here long, and groan'd to know
Who gave the Clouds so brave a bow,
Who bent the spheres, and circled in
Corruption with this glorious Ring.
What is his name, and how I might
Descry some part of his great light.
I summon'd nature; peirc'd through all her store
Broke up some seales, which none had touch'd before,

After fruitless investigation—when he could not find out the mystery—he changes his plan of investigation:

I came at last
To search my selfe, where I did find
Traces, and sounds of a strange kind.
Here of this mighty spring, I found some drills,
With Echoes beaten from the eternall hills.

However, he found only fragments, which he endeavored to unite and so piece out the meaning—but the little light he had had disappeared, and he had to give up.¹ Yet he

¹pp. 418, 419.
feels always that there is only a thin mist to be penetrated in order that he may be face to face with the mystery.

Only this veil which thou hast broke,
And must be broken yet in me.
This veil, I say, is all the cloak
And cloud which shadows thee from me.

O take it off! Cock crowing, p. 488.

Vaughan does not take account of the yearning of the divine for the human, a thought which found so much place in Traherne's poetry.

He emphasizes always the soul in beasts, vegetables, and in rocks.

Come, sapless Blossom, creep not still on Earth
Forgetting thy first birth;

There is beyond the Stars an hill of myrrh
From which some drops fall here

There is thy country—

The Sep. p. 475.

Dear Soul! thou knowest, flowers here on earth
At their Lords footstool have their birth;
St. Mary Magdalen, p. 508.

That plant— the Sun—
Thus all things long for their first state,
And gladly to't return, tho' late.
Nor is there here to any thing,
A course allowed, but in a ring
Which where it first began, must end.
Metrum 6, p. 633.
Walk with thy fellow-creatures: note the hush
And whispers amongst them. There's not a Spring
Or Leaf but hath his morning hymn; Each Bus
And Oak doth know I AM;


Vaughan's comparisons in his sacred poems are always
of natural with spiritual phenomena and with the Divine.

Have you observ'd how the Day-star
Sparkles and smiles and shines from far!
Then to the gazer doth convey
A silent, but a piercing Ray?

Thou art the dark world's Morning star.
Matrum 2, Lit. 2, p. 630.

Dear stream! dear bank, where often I
Have sate, and pleas'd my pensive eye,
Why, since each drop of thy quick store
Runs thither, whence it flowed before
Should poor souls fear a shade or night,
Who came (sure) from a sea of light?
Or since those drops are all sent back
So sure to thee, that none doth lack,
Why should frail flesh doubt any more
That what God takes, he'll not restore?
The Waterfall, p. 537.

For each inclosed Spirit is a star
Enlightening his own little sphere
Whose light, though fettch't and borrowed from far
Both mornings makes, and evenings there.
The Bird, p. 496.

Mornings are Mysteries; the first worlds Youth,
Mans Resurrection, and the future Bud
Shroud in their births: The Crown of life, light,
Is stil'd their starre, the starre, the hidden food.

Adversity he recognizes as valuable to his soul's
growth, and does not repine, but each time draws a lesson
How rich, O Lord! how fresh thy visits are!
'Twas but just now my bleak leaves hopeless hung
Sullied with dust and mud;
Each snarling blast shot through me, and did share
Their Youth, and beauty, Cold showers nipt, and wrung
Their spiciness, and bloud;
But since thou didst in one sweet glance survey
Their sad decays, I flourish, and once more
Breath all perfumes, and spices;
I smell a dew like Myrrh—

Unprofitableness, p. 441.

Each fly doth tast
Poyson, and blast
My yielding leaves; sometimes a shower
Beats them quite off, and in an hour
Not one poor shoot
But the bare root
Hid under ground survives the fall.
Alas, frail weed!

Disorder and frailty, p. 445.

And since these biting frosts but kil
Some tares in me which choke, or spil
That seed thou sow'st, Blest be thy skil!
Blest be thy Dew, and blest thy frost,
And happy I to be so crost,
And cur'd by Crosses at thy cost.

For as thy hand the weather steers,
So thrive I best; twixt joyes, and tears,
And all the years have some green Ears.

Love, and Discipline.

All flesh is Clay, thou know'st, and but that God,
Doth use his rod
And by a fruitfull change of frosts, and showers
Cherish, and bind thy pow'rs
Thou wouldst to weeds, and thistles quite disperse,
And be more wild than is thy verse.

Affliction, p. 459.

The mystic symbol of the ring used by Vaughan in reference to eternity is a favorite medieval image. Vaughan
employs it, for example, in the poem *Eternitie*, in the famous passage which develops the Neoplatonic idea of the necessity of struggling to attain to the true light.

I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great Ring of pure and endless light,
All calm, as it was bright,
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years
Driv'n by the spheres
Like a vast shadow mov'd, In which the world
And all her train were hurl'd;

Yet some, who all this while did weep and sing,
And sing, and weep, soar'd up into the Ring,
But most would use no wing,
O fools (said I) thus to prefer dark night
Before true light,
To live in grots, and caves, and hate the day
Because it shews the way
The way which from this dead and dark abode
Leads up to God.

From one of the most beautiful of Vaughan's Platonistic poems is the following extract:

He that hath found some fledg'd birds nest, may know
At first sight if the bird be flown
But what fair Well, or Grove he sings in now,
That is to him unknown.

And yet, as Angels in some brighter dreams
Call to the soul, when man doth sleep:
So some strange thoughts transcend our wanted thems
And into glory peep.

If a star were confin'd into a Tomb
Her captive flames must needs burn there
But when the hand that lockt her up, gives room,
She'll shine through all the sphere.

In only a few passages does Vaughan's belief in the "magnetical" appear.

Absents within the Line conspire, and Sense
Things distant doth unite,
Herbs sleep unto the East, and some fowles thence
Watch the Returns of light;  
[1,p. 429.]  

A Comet, the sad world's ill-boding book.  
The Rainbow, p. 510.  

stones  
Which some think dead, shall all at once  
With one attesting voice detect  
Those secret sins we least expect.  
The Stone, p. 515.  

Vaughan's love of the country is in pleasant con- 
trast to the indifference of Herbert and Donne.  

Fresh fields and woods; the Earth's fair face,  
God's footstool, and man's dwelling-place.  

-- -- --  

If Eden be on Earth at all  
'Tis that, which we the Country call.  
Retirement, p. 642.  

He is fond of "the low Violet", and mentions often  
the primrose,—"primrosed" he uses in a mystic sense, also,  
as referring to the first fruits of a religious life; the  
"yeugh" with him symbolizes death,—"gilded cloud" and  
"Flowre" are mystical forms, too.  

His delight in Nature's every form shines through all  
the lines of all his poems.  

It was high-spring, and all the way  
Primros'd and hung with shade.  

-- -- --  

And heaven its azure did unfold  
Checqu'ed with snowie fleeces.  

-- -- --  

The air was all in spice.  
Regeneration, p. 397.
From the following and passages in other poems it is easy to believe that he had a special fondness for early morning.

The whole Creation shakes off night,
And for thy shadow looks the light,
Stars now vanish without number,
Sleeping planets set, and slumber,
The pursie clouds disband, and scatter--
The Dawning, p. 452.

His sympathy with all the objects and creatures in the natural world is delightful. Bryant has used the thought and many of the identical phrases of Vaughan's.

The Bird, in one of his poems.

Hither thou com'st, the busy wind all night
Blew thro' thy lodging where thy own warm wing
Thy pillow was. Many a sullen storm
(For which course man seems much the fitter born,) Rained on thy bed
And harmless head.

One of his most charming symbolic poems, is the little parable he wrote after the death of his younger brother. He tells of his walk in winter into a field where he had previously seen a flower blooming, and of his digging into the ground where the plant had been, to see if anything was left of it. When he finds the root fresh and green below, he is reassured, and closes with the prayer,

Grant I may so
Thy steps track here below,
That in these Masques and shadows I may see Thy sacred way,
And by those his ascents climb to that day Which breaks from thee. 7, p. 479.
The following passage is decidedly Wordsworthian though ending with a seventeenth century touch bordering on the erotic.

So have I known some beauteous Paisage rise
In sudden flowers and arbours to my eyes,
And in the depth and dead of winter bring
To my bold thoughts a lively sense of spring.
Thus fed by thee, who dost all beings nourish
My wither'd leaves again look green and flourish,
I shine and shelter underneath thy wing
Where sick with love I strive thy name to sing.

Mount of Olives, p. 476.

Henry Vaughan was by profession a physician, and according to his own account a busy one. His patients were the humble Welsh country people, and he did not lack interest in his work, for there are many allusions to medicines in his poems, and there is much symbolism introducing medicinal herbs. His sympathies extended to the whole of the natural world about him, but in spite of his close personal contacts with suffering humanity, so far as can be discovered from his poems, nothing in Nature helped to relate him to his fellowmen. He came to his philosophy of the Universal Soul through reading and reflection; Wordsworth came to his through personal experience, and so in the end could say

For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.¹

¹Above Tintern Abbey, 11. 87, 91.
Vaughan's poetry was all written in early life, when study and self-analysis interested him; he never wrote more verse after that brief period. Perhaps he too came to hear something of that still sad music, but was unable to put it into words.
From Giles Fletcher to Henry Vaughan, as was stated in our introduction, the religious poets of the seventeenth century had in common one theme; their poetry differed in the development of it. This theme was the all-engrossing one of the age,—the relation of the soul to its maker; and its importance was such that only to contemplate it warranted retirement from the distractions of the world, and dedication of the whole self to attainment of bliss in communion with God. Jane Steger remarks, "It is easy enough for certain temperaments to go into heaven; the difficult thing is to bring heaven forth." None of these divine poets seems to have thought of attempting to bring forth heaven. Grosart, in his account of Henry More's retirement from the world to the seclusion of his study where he remained immured, away from the turmoil of civil and religious wars, and from contact with his fellowmen, says, "To find God in others is better than to grow solely in the discovery of Him in ourselves, if indeed the latter were possible." 

---

The great Nature poets of the nineteenth century were excited by sympathy for suffering fellowmen in the outbreak of the French Revolution and were led to feel Nature more intensely through the intensity of their feeling for humble humanity; their regard for Nature deepened through their recognition of man's unity with the Divine spirit of the universe. The poets of two hundred years before emphasized the individual, and in their narrow spirit ignored the rest of the world; they interpreted Nature, because that was necessary in their endeavor to relate themselves to God. Stopford Brooke in his discussion of the later poets and their relation to the Revolution expresses a view of what is necessary for the best poetry, which is applicable to the earlier poets as well. His statement is, "When poetry is best, most healthy, most herself, she mingles together human nature and Nature, and the love of each. Human nature is first in poetry, and Nature second, but they must be together, if the poetry is to be great and passionate, simple and perceptive, imaginative and tender. It is a terrible business for poetry when it is wholly employed on man or wholly employed on Nature. In either case, the poetry becomes thin, feeble, unimaginative, incapable of giving impulse, or bringing comfort."¹

¹ Brooke, Naturalism in English Poetry, p. 18.
Brooke quotes Wordsworth's formulation of the desire which animated him in writing his poetry. "I wish", he says, "to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight, making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age to see and think and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous." That this desire was realized is at least suggested by the number of devoted readers he has. It was fulfilled largely because his poetry "mingles together human nature and nature, and the love of each." The little group of divine poets whom we have discussed were earnest, devout, educated men, and their verse is not unimaginative, crude, nor altogether uninspired, and there are flashes of real poetry in the work of each of them; but the poetry of all leaves out one half of Brooke's requirement. Perhaps that fact explains why they are so generally ignored by readers, --even scholars,--today.

1 Ibid., p. 169.
Crashaw, Richard

Drummond, William

Fletcher, Giles

Donne, John

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IV GENERAL WORKS FOR BACKGROUND

A. NATURE.


B. RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY


Spurgeon, Caroline F. E., Mysticism in English Literature. (2nd ed.,) Cambridge: at the University Press, 1922. 168 pp.


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