



THE POETRY OF KEBLE AND NEWMAN

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TO
MY PARENTS
THIS VOLUME
IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

PREFACE

It was less than a month ago that a priest told me the following anecdote: A Unitarian minister, in preparing his Sunday morning address, was in search of an illustrative quotation. Unperturbed by his inability to find this among his usual sources, he turned at last to the rectory of this priest, confident that here, if anywhere, he would be able to obtain Keble's The Christian Year. But the priest did not have the volume: he had recently lent his two copies to me for my preparation of the present work. He was able, however, to quote from memory the poem containing the lines which the Unitarian minister was seeking. The import of this incident is at once apparent. The Christian Year is not easily accessible to the average reader of today; it is no longer a widely popular volume; yet it is not entirely without influence upon some so far removed from Keble's ranks as this Protestant minister, and to one within those ranks it may be well known. Manifestly, the fact that these poems are in some degree a force in the thoughts

of disseminators of religious teachings but marks them as having a more widespread influence.

On the other hand, who has not heard of John Henry Newman? Who has not been stirred by the fervent lines of "Lead, Kindly Light"? Yet who today reads the Verses on Various Occasions?

In the present volume, by no means presuming to judge the work of these two priests, I have attempted to set forth the peculiar excellencies, characteristics, and shortcomings of their poetry, and to examine its content with a view of presenting the basis of its influence and position in English literature, and in the hearts of men.

In this endeavor I have been greatly helped and encouraged by Professor S. L. Whitcomb. To him I wish to express my utmost gratitude for his interest in this work, for his concern and care in its supervision, and for valuable suggestions. I gratefully acknowledge the criticisms and suggestions of Professors Josephine Burnham, R. D. O'Leary, and J. H. Nelson. Professor E. M. Hopkins's courses in versification have been particularly helpful to me in the writing of Chapter III of this work. For the loan of certain books, and for his sympathetic interest I thank the Rev. E. V. Hoag, Honorary Canon of Christ Cathedral, Salina, Kansas.

C. F. W. S., Jr.

Lawrence, Kansas
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CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I	Introductory 7
II	Comparison of Characters and Careers of Keble and Newman 16
III	Versification and Diction of their Poetry 26
IV	Emotional Qualities of their Poetry 39
V	Treatment of Nature by these Poets 54
VI	Treatment of Man as a Religious Being 67
VII	Treatment of Human History and Human Society 82
VIII	Immortal Creatures in their Poetry 89
IX	Attitude toward the Supreme Being 106
X	Concluding Estimate of their Poetry 115
	Appendix I 124
	Appendix II 125
	Bibliography 126

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The mention of the religious movement known as the Oxford Revival immediately calls to our minds the names of its two famous leaders, Keble and Newman. Though joined for several years in their ecclesiastical work, these churchmen, we shall recall, were subsequently separated by Newman's secession from the Anglican Communion. The common aims and ideas of their poetry, however, reflect rather the similarities than the differences between their careers, and seem to warrant our treatment of the two writers together in this work.

As an aid to our study of their poetic writings, let us briefly consider the lives of the two. John Keble[#]

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[#] These biographical sketches are based primarily upon the Dictionary of National Biography. Other material in these lives has been drawn from Benson, Faure, Bertram Newman, Reilly, and Shuster; (see bibliography appended to the present work).

was the son of an Anglican priest, the elder John Keble, and of Sarah, the daughter of John Maule, also a priest. He was born April 25, 1792, in Fairford, Gloucestershire. John had three elder sisters, and a younger brother. The future poet and his brother were so well educated by their father that both sons obtained scholarships at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. In 1811 Keble won double first class honors, and was elected to a fellowship at Oriel, where he was brought into contact with a group of young men who gave the intellectual tone to the University. He won the Oxford prizes for English and Latin essays the following year, and, residing at Oxford, he taught private pupils until, in 1813, he became public examiner in the classical school.

His first charges after being ordained priest, in 1816, were the two small contiguous parishes, East Leach and Burthorpe, Gloucestershire. However, continuing his work at Oxford, he became successively examiner for responsions, college tutor at Oriel, and, for a second time, public examiner. When, at the death of his mother in 1823, he left the University to reside with his father and surviving sister at Fairford, he undertook, in addition to his present charges, the curacy of Southrop. The entire population of the three parishes did not exceed one thousand, and the income derived from them was only 100 Ls. Keble's life from 1824, when he declined

the offer of the archdeaconry of Barbadoes, until 1836, is a record of refusals of offers of dignities and livings, on account of his father's poor health.

Keble had begun to write poems in 1819, intending to devote himself to such composition throughout his life and to leave a body of poetry for posthumous publication, but in 1827, at the earnest entreaty of his friends, and because of his father's desire to see the work in print, The Christian Year appeared anonymously in two volumes. No one, and Keble least of all, had anticipated its great success. Before Keble's death, it had passed through ninety-five editions, each of three thousand to five thousand copies. During the two years succeeding his nomination in 1830, Keble was one of the Oxford examiners for the India House examinations for the civil service, and in his second year in this office he was elected, without opposition, professor of poetry at Oxford, the chair later occupied by Matthew Arnold.

In 1833 Parliament passed a bill suppressing the Irish sees, and giving evidence that the government was about to invade the rights of the Church. To one as inveterately loyal to the Church as Keble, this could be only a signal for battle. On July 14, he preached, before the Judges of the Assize, the sermon that has become known as the National Apostasy. Newman pointed to this sermon as the beginning of the Oxford Movement. Soon Keble was deeply involved in the writing of tracts,

and in the trials of maintaining and diffusing the ideals for which he stood. The publication of Hooker's Works in 1836, under the direction of Keble, and the translation of the Church Fathers, begun by Keble, Newman, and Pusey in 1838, were important factors in the ecclesiastical movement of that day.

In 1835, Keble's father died, and in the same year he married Charlotte Clarke, whom he had known since childhood, and whose father was incumbent of a parish near Fairford. Keble now accepted the vicarage of Hursley, which had been offered him before, and for the next thirty years this town was his home, and the record of his outer life is simply that of an exemplary parish priest. At the conclusion of his tenure of the Oxford poetry professorship in 1841, he published his lectures of the past ten years under the title De Poeticae Vi Medica; Praelectiones Oxonii. The money from The Christian Year had been mostly devoted to the restoration of Hursley church. When more money was needed, he published another volume of poetry, which he had written to solace himself after Newman's secession. This was Lyra Innocentium, 1846. His stronger insistence in it upon the doctrines of the tracts tended to make this volume less widely popular than its successful predecessor. In this same year, Keble undertook the task of editing the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology. This work,

filling six volumes, was made up chiefly of Bishop Thomas Wilson's writings and a life of that prelate by Keble. The following year saw the publication of Keble's sermons.

In 1860 the death of Keble's sister, and of his oldest and dearest friend, Charles Dyson, together with the evident breaking up of Mrs. Keble's health, tended to shatter him, and he had a stroke of paralysis in 1864. Although he sought warmer climates in the winters because of the failing of his wife's health, she survived her husband. He died, after but a week's illness, at Bournemouth, on March 29, 1866, and was buried in Hursley churchyard.

A memorial bust of Keble has been placed in Westminster Abbey, but his chief monument is at Oxford. On May 12, 1866, it was resolved at a meeting in Lambeth Palace to raise a fund with which to build a college at Oxford to give an education in strict fidelity to the Church of England. Keble College was opened in 1869, and continues in the tradition originally formulated for it.

John Henry Newman was born in London, February 21, 1801. His father, of Dutch extraction, was a partner in a banking house; his mother, Jemima Froudrinier, was of a well-to-do Huguenot family long established in London. John Henry was the eldest of six children, three boys and three girls. When he was seven, he was sent to a private

school of high character, and in 1816 entered Trinity College, Oxford. Two years later he obtained the Trinity scholarship which had recently been thrown open to competition, and in 1819 he was entered at Lincoln's Inn, it being his father's intention to send him to the bar. After receiving his A.B. in 1820, Newman remained in Oxford teaching private pupils, and in 1822 was elected fellow at Oriel, where he made the friendship of Fusey.

Newman was ordained priest in 1824, and became curate of St. Clement's Church, Oxford, where he did much hard parish work. After having been vice-principal of Alban's Hall for a year, he became tutor of Oriel in 1826. He was subsequently the preacher at Whitehall and public examiner in the classics. In 1828 he was presented by his college to the living of St. Mary's university church. Here he worked steadily until in 1832 when he and Froude undertook their Mediterranean voyage because of the latter's ill health. After visiting Rome, Naples, Sicily, the Ionic Islands, Malta, and Gibraltar, Newman returned to England but five days before Keble preached his assize sermon. It was Newman who began the tracts of the Oxford Movement, but his four o'clock sermons at St. Mary's were probably of greater importance than these in winning men's minds to the momentous issue. His series of writings in defence of Anglo-Catholicism, the

Via Media, was written in answer to the liberal views expressed by Dr. Hampden, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford. The first of these works has come to be accepted practically as setting forth the Anglican view of the Church's position. Nevertheless, when Newman published his tract No. 90, which he meant to test how far the Articles were reconcilable with the doctrines of the Via Media, a storm of protest sounded in the Church. When one after another of the bishops began to bring charges against him, he felt himself, according to his Apologia, on his deathbed in regard to membership in the Anglican Church. In 1843, after three years of monastic seclusion, he retracted all the harsh things which he had expressed against the Roman Church, and, resigning his charge of St. Mary's, entered the Church of Rome. In 1846 he received the sacrament of priestly ordination according to the rite of that Communion.

Although Newman went to Dublin in 1854 to be rector of the Roman university recently founded there, the institution soon failed, in part because of lack of support, and in part because of a certain incapacity in Newman himself for practical organization. He next hoped to found a college at Oxford for Roman Catholic students, but this project failed, largely through the opposition of certain influential Roman churchmen. His plan for a new rendering of the Vulgate into English failed through the same power. However, in 1859 Newman

succeeded in founding at Edgbaston the school for sons of Romanists of the upper classes. He continued to take a deep interest in the work of this school until his death.

A pamphlet issued by Charles Kingsley in 1864 brought from Newman his famous reply, the Apologia pro Vita Sua, in which he reveals his most inward life. Its simple candor wrought conviction even in theological opponents, and through it the popular estimate of Newman was revolutionized. The new and uniform edition of his works began in 1868 with the publication of his Oxford Plain and Parochial Sermons. The series was brought to a close in 1881 by his translation of the select treatises of St. Athanasius against the Arians, bringing the whole to thirty-six volumes. His Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, a reply to a pamphlet of Gladstone, states that, while personally holding to the doctrine of papal infallibility, he had no sympathy with the tone and temper of some of its most prominent supporters. This statement gave him only a higher place in the eyes of his countrymen.

In 1877 Newman was elected an honorary fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, and the following year he visited the University for the first time since his departure in 1846. When he was made cardinal by the new pope, Leo XIII, in 1878, the honor was utterly unexpected by Newman. The favor was the greater since it was accompanied by an exemption from the obligation of living

at Rome. Returning from that city after receiving his elevation, he made another visit to Trinity College, Oxford, over Trinity Sunday and Monday, 1880, and preached in St. Aloysius church, but, with the exception of rare and brief visits to London, he thenceforth remained at Edgbaston until his death, August 11, 1890. He was buried at Rednall. A bust of the great Cardinal has been placed at Oxford, and there is a marble statue of him before the London Oratory.

CHAPTER II

COMPARISON OF CHARACTERS AND CAREERS

The true comprehension of the poetry of Keble and Newman is, to an extraordinary degree, dependent upon a knowledge of the characters, temperaments, and careers of its authors. In both their inward natures and outward circumstances their poetic writing is an image of themselves, and, even where they forsake pure subjectivity, they give suggestions of that intangible world in which they dwell, apart from the common range of human experience.

Keble, we may recall, was born into a family whose religious connections and traditions were firmly Anglican, and it was in this home that he received his entire primary education from his father, an ardent member of the High Church party. There Keble's tender nature was allowed to develop unrestrained; his individuality was unthwarted. "He was by nature a poet, living by intuition, not by reasoning; intuition born of, fed by home affection, tradition, devout religion. His

whole being leaned on authority." ¹ Through his whole life he maintained an absolute filial reverence, and he never doubted an opinion or prepossession which he had derived from his father.

Newman, however, was of an evangelical family lacking the close ecclesiastical connections of that of his fellow poet. His early education he derived from a large private school, where he enjoyed considerable freedom outside of class hours, edited a school magazine, and, in his writing for this publication, imitated the styles of various writers whom he read. From a child he was brought up to take a great delight in the Holy Bible. His imagination ran on unknown influences, on magical powers, and talismans. Life, he thought, must be a dream, himself an Angel, and all this world but a deception. But when, according to the custom of those of his belief, his "conversion" took place, at the age of sixteen, it was not allied with the usual emotional experiences, regarded as natural accompaniments. These he greatly distrusted. It was toward the highest perfection that his soul ever aspired, and in the failure of this attainment he could see only his own unworthiness. Gradually, Newman says, "I fell under the influences of a definite Creed, and received into my intellect impressions of dogma, which, through God's

mercy, have never been effaced or obscured".² This creed, however, we find, was strongly tinged with Calvinistic doctrines which Newman maintained for several years.

In contradistinction to such development, Keble's spiritual ideals were engendered, not from any prolonged conflicts, like those of the Puritan poets, nor even from critical processes, but from the calm assurance that the Faith which he acknowledged was the true path to salvation. The authoritative was inwardly transfused into the moral and spiritual aspects of his life to form his noblest ideals. Although we see in him little independence of thought and character, a marked modesty and lack of personal ambition, he is at the same time wise, able, and devoted, intensely affectionate, and dutiful; a lover of nature, friends, children, and also of quiet reflection.

In considering the spiritual serenity and assurance of intellectual tenets in Keble, and Newman's turbulent striving after an unattainable ideal, it is not out of place to note the entrances of these two students at Oriel. Keble won double first class honors at Corpus Christi and was elected to a fellowship; Newman, standing for highest honors at Trinity, did badly in his final examination, and his name was found in the second division

of the second class, but he attained the Oriel fellowship because of his promise, according to the policy of this particular period. The fellows of that school were at first disappointed in Newman, and placed him under the most forceful of their members, Dr. Richard Whateley, who had been elected with Keble. After Newman's election, he tells us, he received the congratulations of his friends until he came to Keble, "and then felt so abashed and unworthy of the honor done me, that I seemed quite desirous of sinking into the ground. His had been the first name I had spoken of with reverence rather than admiration when I came up to Oxford."³ This was their first meeting. Newman, writing of his later years of Oxford, tells us, "Keble was not in residence, and he was shy of me for years, in consequence of the marks I bore upon me of the evangelical schools."⁴

But the influence of Whateley soon asserted itself in Newman's life. To Newman's natural powers of analysis and deduction, this scholar added a training in practical logic, and taught his pupil to think for himself. By degrees Newman gravitated to the High Church party, and, although as late as 1828 he was deprived of his tutorship at Oxford because of the danger of his views, he began to

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³ Apologia pro Vita Sua, p. 17

⁴ Ibid., pp. 17-18

turn more and more against all forms of liberalism. In religious liberalism he could see only an impossible compromise, the halving of the truth, and false liberties of thought upon problems which cannot be brought to a successful solution. A not widely differing view is notable, at this time, in Keble, of whom Newman says, he "hated instinctively . . . heresy, insubordination, resistance to things established, claims of independence, disloyalty, innovation, a critical and censorious spirit".⁵

Another powerful and lasting influence came into Newman's life in 1828, when he began a detailed study of the Church Fathers, with whom he had made his first acquaintance in his early youth. The influence of this study is apparent throughout his writings and later career. It is surprising to find his preference for Crabbe and Southey among his contemporaries. It is not less surprising that he did not read a word of Coleridge before 1835. To the Middle Ages he was quite indifferent, although the medieval concept of holiness made a strong appeal to him. While Lucian appeared to Newman infamous and unworthy of study, in Virgil he naturally found much to admire.

Keble, although he is in many ways very unlike Scott, was a reverential admirer of that poet, and was undoubtedly

influenced by his chivalric ideal. "Wordsworth, the chief living poet (1827), had by that time developed an unimpeachable orthodoxy",⁶ and he had set an example of a metrical treatment of English Church history in the Ecclesiastical Sketches. The effect of this work upon Keble's poetry is unquestionably slight, but there are in many of his lyrics a tone and meditative depth, backgrounds of nature, and even phrases which suggest the influence of Wordsworth. In one poem of The Christian Year⁷ Keble acknowledges the borrowing of a phrase from Gray, and we find occasional passages in this volume in which the rhythm, spirit, and feeling are not unpleasantly suggestive of this poet.⁸

In the Anglican Church, at this time, there was a decided demand that her tenets, forms, and liturgy be invested with the externals of poetry. While the objection has been raised that the realms of formal religion and poetry are mutually exclusive, it must be observed that the chief enemy of the traditions of the Church at that time was Whiggery, one of the most prosaic of all forms of political theory. Keble saw in his times unbounded curiosity, and morbid craving for excitement, and wished to supply an antidote to these

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⁶ Bertram Newman, p. 23

⁷ The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 54

⁸ Ibid., p. 141

tendencies, a sober standard of devotional feeling in unison with that presented in the Prayer Book. The Christian Year had many faults, and these Keble recognized. He felt himself to be the best judge of his own poetry, but he feared to revise lest he should rob the poems of their spontaneity.

Newman, however, was not able to judge his poetry, nor to pick out the excellent from the worthless. His Verses on Various Occasions was first published when some critics, strangers to him, found, to his surprise, merit in his poems. Despite the great variety of worth in these poems, he published all of them since he could not distinguish the excellent from the poorer; nearly all had pleasant associations for him. There are, in this volume, eight or ten pieces of high merit, while two, in the completed series, are truly great poems. Verse was not his natural mode of expression, and his moments of inspiration in his poetic writing are consequently rare. In these poems "we constantly hear the voice of one who feels the weight of his own and the world's sins; who looks on England as ^a father upon the erring child of his bosom, who is striving to gain enough faith and courage to accomplish a national regeneration, even while he feels himself an inadequate and unworthy instrument of Heaven".

The primary impetus to the accomplishment of this national regeneration was given but five days after Newman's return from his memorable Mediterranean voyage. He had received the inspiration of those places rich in associations of the past, and had viewed the spirit of the Church in its foreign havens and forms. While The Christian Year had dimly foreshadowed the Oxford Movement five years before, as in its strengthened reverence for Our Lady, and in its depth of piety, it was Keble's sermon before the King's Court of Assizes that is the foundation of this religious revival. The Christian Year springs from Keble's quiet moments of deep meditation; the tracts, from his resistance to opposing tendencies, which forced him into a dogmatic attitude. Newman, the foremost of the tract writers, devoted his full energies to this movement, and consequently has few poems written after its beginning.

The opposition to Newman came always from the organization to which he belonged. He was markedly individual, and could not but come into conflict with institutions. In the Anglican Church he was distrusted as a Romanist; in the Roman he was feared as a liberal. The news of Newman's leaving the Church was a terrible shock to Keble, whose spiritual complacence, nevertheless, was now, as ever, complete. The early formed habit of intellectual change, the vague aspiring to something

beyond his present possession, had continued in Newman, had carried him to and beyond that which Keble had always held, had led him to a full acknowledgement of authority, had left him unsatisfied in his desires.

In May, 1845, Keble published his Lyra Innocentium which, he says, he had been writing as a consolation in the anxiety of the past two years. His statement that he hoped to settle at once upon some other work seems to show a continuance of this anxiety, and to manifest the degree to which the secession of Newman affected him. This work is largely but an expression of Keble's natural love of children, and a testimony of the extent to which the Oxford Movement had entered his thought. It was twenty years later that Newman's Dream of Gerontius was published, quite as accidentally as had been his earlier Verses on Various Occasions, to which this drama formed a conclusion. The Dream of Gerontius was written in three weeks, he tells us, and there was scarcely an erasure in the course of its composition. In this poem appears, with striking force, the highest expression of the thought of death---that contemplation which was never far from Newman's mind, not from fear, but from a joyful expectation of meeting God face to face.

So deep was Newman's humiliation at his failures within the Roman Church and at the distrustful attitude with which Rome regarded him, and so closely was he

confined to his simple parochial duties that in 1860 his return to the Anglican Church had been announced as probable; yet for nearly nineteen years the Roman Church did nothing to insure his position. The publication of his Apologia was probably the strongest influence in reinstating Newman in the favor of all his countrymen. Anglicans, who had condemned his actions, now saw Newman standing, a commanding figure, for his inmost convictions; and Roman opposition to him abated.

Of Keble, the Bishop of Exeter said that he was "the most eminently good man in the Church". "By the time of his death he had struck the public imagination as the highest specimen of a peculiarly English type, the country parson, cultivated, unworldly, and devout, content to live for his own parish and a small circle of friends." ¹⁰ It was in September, 1865, that Keble and Newman met for the last time. Then these two churchmen, with their friend and brother scholar, Pusey, sat together once more, quietly to regard the varied courses of their lives.

CHAPTER III

VERSIFICATION AND DICTION OF THEIR POETRY

Viewed from a purely literary standpoint, one of the most noteworthy characteristics of the poetic writings of Keble and Newman is the almost consistent mingling of Augustan with romantic elements; not, as in Goldsmith's poetry, definitely separable, but in all the constituents of their verse indiscriminately woven together. In this but partial sympathy with the literary tastes of their time, we may find some parallel to the lives and careers of these two poets, to their devotion to but one interest of the age. Unquestionably, however, in the final analysis of their writing, we may place Keble and Newman within the Romantic Movement.

We note immediately in their verse a marked preponderance of iambic movement, but, while Newman not infrequently interrupts this with trochaics, or employs other measures entirely, in Keble's lines there are few exceptions to the regular occurrence of the iambic foot.

In "Lessons and Accomplishments"¹ appears an example of his trochaics in tetrameter couplets with masculine rhyme, a form not uncommon in Newman's verse. Keble's ability to write trochaic lines is evident, but here the mechanical ring, and the lack of variety rob the lines of artistic effect.² "Dart and Weber" presents his almost unique example of anapestic movement. In this poem, the form, similarly used to suggest the galloping of a horse, is that employed by Browning in "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix" save that Keble's stanza is of four lines. Newman's anapestic verses may show little sympathy with his subjects, as in "The Queen of Seasons",³ but they are generally flexible and well constructed.

Keble's metrical schemes are often too complicated, and his poems too long to be satisfactory lyrics. With almost every poem his stanzaic forms vary; but he is probably most successful in the ballad stanza, or in that form augmented by two to four verses of various lengths and rhyme schemes. An excellent example of this latter type, and one of his most pleasing stanza forms, appears in "First Waking".⁴

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1

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 258

2

Ibid., p. 535

3

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 287

4

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 232

Ye who wait in wistful gaze
 Where young infants lie,
 Learning faith and silent praise
 From each pure calm sigh,
 Say 'mid all those beaming glances,
 Starts, and gleams, and silent trances,
 When the fond heart highest dances,
 Feeling Heaven so nigh?

5

The form of "Wednesday before Easter" presents a particularly interesting study. In this poem the first and the concluding portions are in stanzas, each consisting of three couplets, of which the first line is a pentameter and the second a dimeter. The middle portion of the poem, giving the somewhat more generalized thought, is in stanzas of five tetrameter couplets. The effect of the whole is pleasing, although there is scarcely enough change in thought or feeling in the portions of the poem to explain these metrical variations.

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One of Keble's earliest writings, "Robin Lee", a poem founded on a tradition preserved in Devon, represents his attempt in the regular ballad, and shows skill in verse and stanza formation, and in the management of the climax. This piece in spirit and rhythm is decidedly pleasing, and gives promise of greater lyrical ability than Keble's later writing manifests.

Newman does not often employ such complicated metrical and rime schemes as does his fellow-poet.

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 64

6

Ibid., p. 484

Most common among his forms are the ballad stanza, the sonnet, and nonstanzaic verse, although he, too, uses, besides these, a variety of forms. Generally, his lyrics are much shorter than Keble's. In "St. Michael" Newman has created an effective verse form. Here each line of each five verse stanza has one more foot than the preceding line. This has the effect of acceleration and crescendo in the reading, and throws the climax of feeling naturally upon the last line of the stanza. The effect in the succeeding stanza, then, is similar, but, the opening line being strengthened by the preceding climax, the effect is the greater. A more artistic form is that of his elegy "Consolations in Bereavement". Here there is a great irregularity of verse length, yet in each stanza this irregular form, compelling a retardation of the reading, rings with the same clarity of tone, and the word "Death", beginning each stanza save the last, falls like the tolling of a passing bell.

Keble's earliest sonnet, written in 1812, while it does not conform to any of the regular types, has, like much of his early verse, a charm that is nearly absent in his later writing. Although the poem is weighted with certain excesses of expression, he pours out, with

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⁷ Verses on Various Occasions, p. 321

⁸ Ibid., p. 26

⁹ The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 478

freshness and a degree of spontaneity, the pure emotions of his heart. The series of sonnets entitled "White Apparel"¹⁰ does not rise far above the level of mediocrity. Frequently, in the collaborated volume Lyra Apostolica, Keble's poems are in the form of sonnets of the three main types.

After 1832 Newman employs the sonnet form rather commonly, generally in treating subjects well adapted to this kind of poem. The octave is in the regular Petrarchan form; the sestet having almost all possible rime arrangements. Deviations from the Petrarchan division of thought in the two parts are rare. In the sonnets, as in Newman's poetry in general, there is great irregularity of poetic worth. One of his best is that called "Messina",¹¹ composed in 1833.

The two poets use other regular forms in their writing, but rarely attain any high degree of proficiency in these, and the impression is usually that these forms are merely experimental. In "My Birthday",¹² written in 1819, Newman attempts the use of the Spenserian stanza. This series of seven staves is manifestly an immature piece, and the versification is rough and strained.

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10

The Christian Year and Other Poems, pp. 363-8

11

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 129

12

Ibid., pp. 5-8

"Solitude",¹³ another of his early poems, is in heroic couplets, and, while these are closed nearly throughout, the verse is not without some freedom and grace. His translation from St. Gregory nazianzen, "The Married and the Single",¹⁴ executed in 1835, shows a decided increase in strength and freedom in forming the distich. Keble's "The Gibeonites"¹⁵ is likewise in this form, but in this there is so little flexibility in the lines that the inclusion of an extra syllable in one of the concluding lines is disturbing to the reader. His "Ode on the Victories in the Pyrenees"¹⁶ does not deviate widely from the stanzaic form, yet this early poem has peculiar beauty of diction and rhythm, and shows high seriousness of spirit, and fitness of expression. The "Ode for the Encaenia"¹⁷ is more stately and has a higher restraint, but this diminished freedom is a loss to the poem, which is hardly as effective as the former ode.

The Dream of Gerontius represents Newman's highest art in verse formation. The regular form for dialogue

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13

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 3

14

Ibid., p. 202

15

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 339

16

Ibid., p. 491

17

Ibid., p. 403

in this poetic drama is iambic pentameter, riming alternately or unrimed, and here formed with utmost freedom and flexibility. Interspersed with this are lyrics of various forms. In his adaptation¹⁸ of the Roman "Litany of the Dying", he preserves the Latin genius of intensity, which, in the original, the versicle and response, falling like the ringing strokes of a clear bell, give to the prayer; he perfectly maintains the normal spirit of the litany. At the same time, Newman has given to this series of petitions a lyric form in which the monotony of tone, as well as the endless repetitions of the original,¹⁹ are absent.

In the verse, as in the thought, strong contrasts are used throughout the drama with perfect discrimination. After the first portion of the litany, Gerontius, in a supreme effort, speaks:

Rouse thee, my fainting soul, and play the man;
 And through such waning span
 Of life and thought as still has to be trod
 Prepare to meet thy God.

In this alternate pentameter and trimeter utterance we feel the dying man's struggle in his last breathing. Again, Gerontius makes his last avowal of faith in a ringing tone of surety expressed in unfaltering trochaic

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¹⁸ Verses on Various Occasions, p. 324

¹⁹ See Appendix, p. 124

tetrameter verse, the reading of which conveys the feeling of unimpaired strength; but when Gerontius has completed his utterance, when the sustaining power of this declaration of trust is past, he falls back into a retarded iambic movement with great irregularity of rime and of line length:

Adoration aye be given
 With and through the angelic host,

 I can no more; for now it comes again, 20
 That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,

Finally, after the death of Gerontius, when he, in calm blank verse, is wondering at his new state of existence, the Angel breaks upon his thoughts in a triumphant paean:

My work is done,
 My task is o'er.
 And so I come,
 Taking it home,
 For the crown is won,
 Allelulia,
 For evermore. 21

In addition to such skillful variations in meter--- now dignified, now ringing with a sonority suggesting Milton, now quickened in time, and again subdued--- The Dream of Gerontius shows a deftness in handling liquids, and a marked absence of severity of tone. Newman's poetry generally manifests likewise a mastery

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 328

21

Ibid., p. 334

of rime, and faulty rimes are unusually rare. in "The
Month of Mary"²² we note his employment of internal rime:

O Mother maid, be thou our aid,
.
Lest sights of earth to sin give birth,

but this is not a part of the structure of the poem---
that is, it does not recur in succeeding stanzas regularly--
as though Newman had made these rimes almost by accident.

Alliteration is common in his verse, and, in fact,
we sometimes feel it to be not only a conscious ornament,
but decidedly forced as in this same poem:

The green, green grass, the glittering grove
or in "St. Philip in Himself"²³

Where foes are fierce, or friends have fled.
In keeping with Keble's absence of any literary display,
alliteration seldom appears in his poetry; however, in
the "Song of the Manna-Gatherers",²⁴ a poem unusual in
several respects, the device is fairly common throughout.

Comrads, haste! the tent's tall shading
Lies along the level sand
Far and faint; the stars are fading.

Onomatopoeia is rare in both poets. In "To a Thrush",²⁵

.....
22 Verses on Various Occasions, p. 284
23 Ibid., p. 296
24 The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 336
25 Ibid., p. 417

a lyric in which Keble's natural love of nature has broken down his ordinary reserve, the lines are alive with the spirit of the bird's song, and the first stanza has a particularly imitative quality:

Sweet bird! up earliest in the morn,
Up earliest in the year,
Far in quiet mist are borne
Thy matins soft and clear.

In Newman the diction, in its harmonious sound combinations, not infrequently is suggestive of the subject expressed.

In the lines:

Wave reared on wave its godless head
But now, there, reigns so deep a rest
That I could almost weep 26

the sounds and rhythms echo the contrasting thought: the first verse, rough and strong, is opposed to the calm, sustained note of the two latter. One of the most excellent examples of Newman's adaptation of his diction and rhythm to his idea appears in The Dream of Gerontius:

Over the dizzy brink
Of some sheer infinite descent;
Or worse, as though
Down, down for ever I was falling through
The solid framework of created things. 27

Combining with a diction of richly suggestive sounds, the rhythm, tempo, and meter all contribute to the strengthening of the concept of the passage.

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26
Verses on Various Occasions, p. 86
27
Ibid., p. 328

The diction of these two poets is, however, too often marred by conventionalities, excesses of expression, and obscurity. Even in Keble's otherwise artistic and colorful simile:

Meanwhile He paces through the adoring crowd
 Calm as the march of some magnetic cloud
 That o'er wild scenes of ocean-war
 Holds its still course in Heaven afar: 28

such faults are not absent. His poems are freighted with such reminiscences of the Augustan era as "vernal bower", "yon argent field", "emerald meadows", "flowery mazes". Other words he frequently uses with archaic or unusual meanings, as the word "warble", which in his ordinary usage signifies "to utter a melody". This employment of the verb is particularly unfortunate in such an expression as "deep-warbled anthem",²⁹ referring to a funeral dirge. Both poets use the archaic forms of the second person pronoun in almost all cases. In an utterly natural sentiment and situation, Keble has a parent say to his child:

'Well hast thou wrought, dear boy:...' 30

In considering this characteristic of these churchmen's verse, the influence of the Bible and Prayer Book, and the general religious tone of their verse cannot be

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 28

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 7

29 Ibid., p. 410

30 Ibid., p. 306

overlooked. The diction of both is preëminently that of the Church, although it is modified considerably in its adaptation to verse. Newman's poems have far fewer conventional and hackneyed expressions than do Keble's. His diction is consequently more nearly that of his ordinary speech, and the influence of ecclesiastical literature is even more apparent in his verse than in that of Keble. In his earlier verse, it is true, extravagances and improprieties of expression are not uncommon, as:

Let the sun summon all his beams and hold
Bright pageant in his court, the cloud-paved sky;
Earth trim her fields and leaf her corpses cold; 31

but to a large extent he abandons such excesses in his later poems. The phrase "moor and fen", made famous by its occurrence in "The Pillar of the Cloud", appears in several of his poems, however, and expressions like "mountain grot" and "rich blooms" are generally to be found in his references to nature.

It is probable that the rarity of such references in part explains the infrequency of verbal conventionalities in his poems, but we note that when he does turn to natural beauty, he manifests an unfamiliar hand. When he sings of

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..... a bird on bough propp'd tower

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 5.

32

Ibid., p. 34

he does not produce a felicitous picture, and the unpleasing combination of vowels and consonants makes the line quite objectionable. Keble's poetry also suffers from such inharmonious combinations. The word "wept'st" appears in two consecutive lines of a poem, and again we find the lines:

Thy true, fond nurslings closer cling,
Cling closer to their Lord and thee. 34

Finally, their verse is marred by faulty sentence orders, which rob many lines of their naturalness and lucidity. Newman says in "Sacrilege":

'Twas duty bound each convert-king to rear
His Mother from the dust,
And pious was it to enrich, nor fear
Christ for the rest to trust; 35

and Keble writes:

But for the soul no help is found
Save Him who made it, meet. 36

Such passages are too common in the poetry of Keble and Newman to allow their writing to claim the utmost lucidity; yet even in such lines it is a lack of this quality, rather than actual obscurity, which the artificial arrangement of words gives the poems.

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33

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 160

34

Ibid., p. 182

35

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 243

36

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 123

CHAPTER IV

EMOTIONAL QUALITIES OF THE POETRY

Before considering further the poems of Keble and Newman, it will be well to note the attitude of these two writers toward poetry. Keble, in his first lecture as professor of poetry at Oxford,¹ concludes that poetry is a divinely bestowed relief to minds burdened by some overmastering emotion, taste or idea, of which the direct expression is repressed. Regarding his poetry in the light of this concept, we may easily foresee that, since the governing emotion, taste, and idea are all religious and ecclesiastical, and the writing is not an end in itself, but only a relief or an indirect expression, the verse will be necessarily conditioned and therefore modified. His concept of poetry is further shown by a paper found, after Keble's death, among his writings. It is a formula for choosing and correcting hymns:

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See Keble's Lectures on Foetry, I, Chap. 1

- (1) Always use 'we' instead of 'I', or nearly always.
- (2) Insert as many touches of doctrine as may be.
- (3) Under every head have at least one ancient or archaic hymn. 2

Roughly speaking, we may find each of these principles operating in Keble's poetry. The personal note is too often lacking in his poetry. However, in his treatment of subjects so near to his heart as nature and his home, as in the delightful poems, "Third Sunday after Easter", "Ascension Day", and "Monday in Whitsun-Week", we find a more personal feeling and a more tender emotion than is common; as though his heart were expressing itself despite his determination to dogmatize. His ordinary freighting of his poems with doctrine is too much in evidence throughout his poems to demand illustration; he is ever the teacher, and no poem may stand without its ethical, religious, or ecclesiastical precept. Finally, his archaic elements appear, not in the production of the tone of a former age, nor often in historical interest, but too frequently in the use of words which are not only archaic but hackneyed in poetical employment.

In contrast to Keble's long interest in the writing

.....
 2 Benson, p. 184
 3 The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 82
 4 Ibid., p. 88
 5 Ibid., p. 93

of verse, and to his elaborate theories concerning primary and secondary poetry, the expression of emotions, and the function of poetry, Newman's attitude toward that art is as to something not important enough to demand serious consideration. Poetry was always easy for Newman to write, and he has said that he composed verse while he was shaving. He felt that in the rhythm and rime of poetry there was a certain "carry over" power which facilitated and regulated the composition. Again it cannot be neglected that "he found in the high intent of his poems and the purity of the spiritual emotions whose voice they were intrinsic qualities which were sufficient unto themselves without the need of a more nearly perfect form".⁶ These factors naturally produce a great irregularity in the literary worth of his poems, and while his "Pillar of the Cloud", commonly called "Lead, Kindly Light, and his Dream of Gerontius are superior to any of Keble's poetry, yet the general level of Keble's poems is higher than that of Newman's.

One of the most serious flaws in Keble's poetic art is his slavish adherence to regular metrical form. There is rarely any elasticity in his rhythm: the fall of syllables commonly has an almost mechanical regularity.

It cannot be overlooked that the chief aesthetic quality of his poetry is in the ideas and associations. Many of the poems that are mediocre in form, rhythm, expression, and imagery, taken as wholes, are of high intellectual beauty, as, for instance, "The Waterfall",⁷ yet the images which he conjures up, particularly those of nature, are at times sensuously beautiful.

In Newman's poetry, on the other hand, the appeal is rarely to the eye, but far more often to the ear: his genius is not of the pictorial type. While his poetry is, like Keble's, frequently lacking in limpidity and freedom, while there is much angularity and hardness in his lyrics, we find occasionally one of his poems with a thoroughly charming and artistic rhythm and cadence. His "Judaism",⁸ which he terms "a tragic chorus", illustrates Newman's rhythmic powers. He employs in this lines of varying lengths, and writes with unusual freedom. Although nearly all the verses are closed, his feeling for his subject carries him into a strong, almost majestic rhythm.

In another of Newman's excellent poems, "To Edward Caswall",⁹ the limpid grace of the rhythm fits well the

.....
7 The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 328

8 Verses on Various Occasions, p. 192

9 Ibid., p. 317

languorous situation of the momentary resignation to the power of nature.

Once, o'er a clear, calm pool
sets the meditative note for the piece; not the impassioned contemplation of the destinies of souls, but a calm delight in the parts of the scene as they reveal themselves. In the line;

And light green leaves; the lilac too was there,
we note the simplicity with which he turns from one observation to another, as though he fears he may forget a part of the scene. In this sudden shift, however, there is a skilful balancing of phrases, and, at the same time, a unification of the verse through alliteration.

Keble's departures from the ordinary severity of his metrical form are noteworthy, because of the strengthening of the aesthetic appeal which these give his poems, but are not of sufficient frequency to demand more than a single illustration. His "Bereavement"¹⁰ is an especially good poem. It is unusual in treatment and in being the handling by narration of a subject toward which Keble's personal contact has kindled in him a particularly deep sympathy. Although it is in the ballad stanza, there is great freedom and charm in the lines:

And chill and damp that Sunday eve
 Breathed on the mourner's road
 That bright-eyed little one to leave
 Safe in the Saint's abode.

In The Dream of Gerontius we should expect to find Newman's most artistic rhythms. These occur so consistently through the whole drama that it is only the extreme beauty of one passage that leads us to make a fitting choice from among these lines: this is the Angel's concluding lyric. It is a hymn celebrating the end of the long struggle of life. The graceful flow of liquids, the balancing of lines, the quiet fall of natural pause give to the piece a tone of absolute peace and security:

I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee. 11

It is yet necessary to examine Newman's "Pillar of
 12
 the Cloud".

Lead, Kingly Light, amid the encircling gloom
 Lead Thou me on!

After the hushed fall of syllables, following the emphasis of "Light", the impulsively accentuated words, "Lead" and "Thou" of the second line, sound forth as the cry of a soul realizing its insecurity. In the second stanza, the line "Lead Thou me on" becomes, in its rhythmic relation to the preceding line, an expression of resignation, a calmer utterance. But it is not alone

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 369

12

Ibid., p. 156

the propriety of rhythm to idea that distinguishes the structure of this poem: there is throughout a rare freedom from restraint, a subdued beauty of diction, and a perfection of balance in the phrasing that show Newman's artistic powers in their fullest expression.

It is scarcely necessary to note that "The Pillar of the Cloud" is one of the most excellent hymns that have been written, in its intense sincerity and in its universal appeal to the heart. The confusion of metaphors, similar to that which Saintsbury has pointed out in Young's otherwise majestic lines in the Third Night of The Complaint,¹³ while it is a serious fault in concept, has not been sufficient cause to impair the poem's popularity, or to dim its excellencies. "Day", it has probably been often observed, in the second stanza symbolizes the corrupt life of the penitent. Yet, in the first stanza the prayer is for deliverance from darkness, and in the third there is an anticipation of morning light.

Another of Newman's excellent hymns is the "Fifth Choir of Angels"¹⁴ of The Dream of Gerontius. This poem has won a place in various hymnals and has been sung at the graves of thousands. Newman's skill in writing verse

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English Poets, III, 223

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 363

suitable for hymns is strikingly manifested in his translation of the Compline hymn of the Roman Breviary. This rendition into English shows a marked superiority, in phrasing, and in tone suitable for an evening song, to the translation given in the Anglican Hymnal. ¹⁵

Keble is not at all a hymn writer, and, while The Christian Year follows the same plan as does the Hymnal of the Anglican Church, it does not purport to be a collection of such lyrics. Keble lacks the directness, the fervor, the buoyancy of devotion of a hymnographer. The poems of Charles Wesley have the characteristics of prayer, thanksgiving, and praise; those of Keble have rather the quality of meditation, sympathy, and devotion. Even the first two poems of The Christian Year, intended for hymns, are largely descriptive, and must be curtailed to be employed as actual hymns. His "Christmas Eve: Compline," ¹⁶ however, has a decided hymnal character. The idea and tone of the opening line of five of the stanzas, "Rejoice in God alway," is well sustained throughout the poem, and the whole is exceptional and noteworthy among Keble's poetic writings for its enthusiasm and joyfulness.

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See Appendix, p. 125.

16

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 384

It is almost needless to say that the outstanding quality of the verse of these two churchmen is ever the religious note, which, with the exception of a few of their poems and these mostly of their earlier years, is never absent from their writing. Keble's poems are nearly all lyrical religious meditations, with occasional verses of fervid emotion and direct heart appeal to God, as in the poem which we have just considered. While these verses are among the highest beauties of his poetry, they are not sufficiently frequent or long sustained to change the prevailing meditative cast of his works.

Keble's poetry represents a translation of religious sentiment out of what has been called the Hebraized form of the language into the speech of a more modern feeling. Keble took the thoughts and sentiments of which men of his day were conscious and infused into them the Christian spirit. He everywhere shows his intimacy with the Bible, and weaves its words and phrases, its scenes and thoughts naturally and gracefully in with his own. This unaffected introduction of Biblical incidents, and, with them, allusions, leads, at times, to obscurity. To the average lay reader, they are often meaningless. Newman is likewise so thoroughly familiar with the thoughts and figures of the Bible that he frequently finds it easier to express himself by means of allusions to

these than by a full explanation. Such a poem as
 Keble's "Ode for the Encaenia"¹⁷ is rare in the writing
 of these two men in its references to classical, historical,
 and geographical subjects.

A noteworthy quality in Keble's poetry is, to use
 his own phrase, "wisdom's mate, Simplicity"¹⁸. No doubt
 his simplicity arises often from nothing more than from
 his almost naive conception of his subject. Again the
 essence of this quality lies in his serious contemplation,
 at times with a touch of sentiment, of homely, evident
 truths of human experience:

For not upon a tranquil lake
 Our pleasant task we ply. 19

He makes a choice of easily comprehensible words, and
 deftly builds up his central idea by slow, well-marked
 steps. Rejecting all glittering tricks of style and
 gorgeous coloring, he employs a simple and familiar
 imagery, save in the allusions which we have recently
 noted. His expression is always chastened and subdued:

Farewell: for one short life we part:
 I rather wee the soothing art,
 Which only soul in suffering tried 20
 Bear to their suffering bretheran's side.

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 17

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 403

18

Ibid., p. 403

19

Ibid., p. 108

20

Ibid., p. 194

Newman's poems, while not so preëminently characterized by this quality, show a decided repression of all luxuriances of style or expression, yet, maintaining almost consistently a tone of dignity, they are not without distinction.

Newman's poetry, despite its ordinary high seriousness, manifests occasionally a sense of humor in the author, especially in his earlier poems, and he never loses this quality entirely. In his lighter moods he may be whimsical, disregarding all poetic tradition;

Yet inadequate though
to the terms strange and so-
lemn that figure in po-
lysyllabical row 21
in a treatise;

Again, he employs conceits in his light verse, as in his "Introduction to an Album", in which the album is considered a harp of many chords, each strung by a separate hand.

A sense of humor would have saved Keble from some of the puerilities and absurdities, into which he occasionally falls. He is, however, almost always intensely serious--as serious as either Shelley or Wordsworth--and there is even a puritanical sternness in much of his writing. The evidences of humor in his writing are almost entirely confined to three poems written in 1812 and three composed at the very end of his literary career. In

these Keble, for the nonce, assumes a lightness of tone and treatment with delightful effect.

Throughout Keble's poems there is a marked tenderness of tone, a delicate, sympathetic feeling for his subject. However, this never leads to a trace of effeminacy, and, although a woman's heart may be often manifested in his writing, we find, withal, a martyr's courage. Even in dealing with the Gunpowder plot, when he points out the errors of the Roman Church, he writes:

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Speak gently of our sister's fall.

and in nearly all his poems dealing with children we find this note, even though, at the thought of the possibility of sin in their lives, his sternness of attitude asserts itself. Newman's poems are most often characterized by humility, sympathy, resignation, and a tenderness which is at times nearly as deep as that to which Keble attains.

The poems of both writers show a marked ability in the creation of a tone suitable to the subject of the poems. In Newman's "Waiting for Morning",²³ one of his excellent poems, we find a most skilfully achieved tone color matching the intensity of emotion---the regret which knows tears---and the resignation above all emotions.

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His "Separation of Friends" is typical of his poetry,

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 204

23

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 210

24

Ibid., p. 195

beautiful in its wistfulness, as though that which is pitiful about death had brought him to the point of tears. Musing over the loss which he has experienced, he writes:

For when he left it, 'twas a twilight scene
About his silent bier,

Keble, in contemplating the subject of death in the "Twenty Third Sunday after Trinity",²⁵ creates his tone of sombre meditation by an excellent introductory description of a still autumn evening, and skilfully carries the deep feeling through the whole poem. His colorful lyric "Redbreast in Church"²⁶ reflects his sincere appreciation for the sights and sounds of nature in every line:

what is this sudden thrill
Of notes so sweet and keen?

A still more spirited poem is his "Song of the Manna-Gatherers"²⁷ written in a vivacious stanza form, and a diction which gives a rapid tempo to the reading.

Occasionally we find even a militant spirit in Keble's poems, as in "The Watch by Night".²⁸ The animated tone

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 141

26

Ibid., p. 368

27

Ibid., p. 336

28

Ibid., p. 415

is one of a crusader sounding the battlecry to fight under Christ's banner and to

....dream no more of quiet life.

But, to be sure, such a note is rare, and we seldom find the quality of enthusiasm in either poet.

In conclusion, it remains to consider a literary quality which Keble rarely shares with Newman, in whose writing it becomes a noteworthy factor. This is the portrayal of the dramatic. Although this element appears²⁹ in such of Keble's poems as his ballad "Robin Lee",³⁰ and the narrative-reflective lyric "Bereavement", his dramatic treatment is never profound, and lies more in circumstances or events than in analysis of human nature. Newman, on the other hand, shows that he is able to study the experiences of the soul under the stress of deep feeling.³¹ His "Absolution" is a little drama of intense brevity. He evidences the profundity of his spiritual life in the depiction of the situation: upon the troubled spirit of the penitent the divine grace descends in serene majesty. But the consummation of Newman's poetic moods and of his dramatic powers is in his Dream of Gerontius.

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 484

30

Ibid., p. 293

31

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 83

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Reilly notes the resemblance of this work to a Greek tragedy, especially to Prometheus Bound. The protagonist, a figure of peculiar importance in each poem, stands in a definite relation to the Divinity, in one poem a relation of revolt, in the other, of peace and acquiescence. The contrasts of characters are as skilfully executed as those of rhythm and meter. In the midst of the calm transcendent conversation of the Angel with Gerontius, the Demons scream their discordant song:

Low born clods
 Of brute earth,
 They aspire
 To become gods, 34

The Demon choruses, however, are scarcely convincing: the passions of hatred and jealousy are not real. Dramatically, the poem closes with the judgment of the soul by its Creator, but Newman continues it until the spirit of Gerontius is submerged in the cleansing lake of purgation, and the Guardian Angel leaves his charge. The psychological interest in the poem is confined to the first portion with the approach of death, and here the treatment is excellent; but the poem is, above all, a drama of the soul. Newman's power to study the human mind combines with his imaginative powers to produce this masterpiece.

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 32

Reilly, p. 129

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Vide ante, pp. 31-34

34

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 343

CHAPTER V

TREATMENT OF NATURE BY THESE POETS

There is no other respect in which there is a more evident difference between the poetry of Keble and that of Newman than in the use and treatment of nature; although it is undeniable that both men had an intense appreciation for natural beauty. This feeling is manifest throughout Keble's poetry, and occasionally we may find suggestions of it in that of Newman. Generally speaking, however, the latter writer seems to have considered nature a subject unfit for his poetry: his concern is the struggle of the soul with sin, and the contemplation of the world beyond human perception. That he could sense the full joy of absolute resignation to the power of natural beauty is strongly evidenced in a letter which he wrote to his mother from Dartington, July 7, 1831. "The rocks," he says, "blush into every variety of color, the trees and fields are emeralds, and the cottages are rubies, and the beetle I picked up was green gold as the

stone it lay on . . . The exuberance of the grass and the foliage is oppressive, as if one had not room to breathe." ¹
 It is probably because of his very love for nature that he feared it as engendering an affection which, drawing him to earth, might interfere with his aspiration toward Heaven, or might dull his perception to the fact that the tangible is but a veil which conceals the realities of the world. In his poem "Sympathy", we see his delight in nature, but, at the same time, the avoidance of more than mere reference to parts of a scene:

share this joy with me,
 This joy and wonder at the view
 Of mountain, plain, and sea; 2

Keble finds in the appearances of nature a framework on which to set his lyrics; a mould in which to cast his finest poems. Nature becomes to him a sacrament of God-- a visible sign signifying a spiritual truth--and the delicate reserve with which he reads the divine symbolism is at once simple and intangible. yet he recognizes that this symbolism is not a creation of the human mind, but has always existed,

And all the lore its scholars need
 Pure eyes and Christian hearts. 3

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¹ Mozley, Letters and Correspondences of Newman, I, p. 213
² Verses on Various Occasions, p. 136
³ The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 42

The blended voices of nature, forming a hymn which tells
 him that God made all, ⁴ are made harmonious and given
 melody by the power of the Heavenly wisdom, ⁵ and

old scenes will lovelier be
 As more of Heaven in each we see: ⁶

Again Keble stands,

Tracing out Wisdom, Power and Love
 In earth or sky, in stream or grove. ⁷

Nature, being absolutely pure and containing a symbolical
 lesson for every experience of life, should be the
 teacher of men from their earliest days, ⁸ and the hermit
 who lives among the elements of nature may be the nearest
 to God of anyone on earth. He may learn by some
 invisible teacher the hidden truths, and finds his moral
 precepts in natural objects. ⁹

At times the symbolical representations in Keble's
 poems degenerate into far-fetched, arbitrary analogies.
 In explaining the reading of the book of nature, he calls
 the moon the symbol of the Church, the stars those of the

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⁴ The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 105

⁵ Ibid., p. 396

⁶ Ibid., p. 4

⁷ Ibid., p. 5

⁸ Ibid., p. 235

⁹ Ibid., p. 175

saints of Heaven, and the trees of Eden those of the
 saints on earth.¹⁰ But more often his symbolical use of
 his symbolical use of nature is pleasing and powerful,
 as in the figure of a robin singing unweariedly in the
 bleak November wind, suggesting the virtue of contentment.¹¹
 A rainbow stretching across the northern autumnal sky is
 a sign of the possibility that the light of Truth may
 break through the clouds of sin and shine far from the
 source of life and light.¹²

Newman likewise recognizes this symbolism of nature,
 but, rather than dwell upon the beauties of this world to
 learn eternal truths, he turns from them to seek Truth
 directly, lest the symbol should take the place of the
 symbolized. Nature and Heaven are, to him, but two
 aspects of the same thing, but since nature must pass
 away while heavenly joys endure, he chooses spiritual
 subjects for his poetry. He recognizes that

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All is divine which the Highest has made,
 and that, nature having its due of beauty, the Creator
 rejoiced in the completed world; yet he knows that the

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 10

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 43

11

Ibid., p. 138

12

Ibid., p. 33

13

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 287

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eternal Heavens far surpass the best of this world.

The earth seems a sort of fairy ground until we see God,
 but, finding him, we lose all appreciation of the charms
 of nature. His chief delight in nature arises from the
 fact that the objects about us

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image forth a tenderer bower,
 but the material manifestations themselves have neither
 Truth nor Life. This attitude growing stronger from
 year to year, he turns ever less toward nature in his
 poems:

Yea, the rich earth, garbed in her daintest dress
 Of light and joy, doth but the more oppress. 17

Yet Newman does not deny that beauty, not reflected
 upon as a delight in itself, may be an instrument for
 revealing Truth, or for fostering a love of Truth in the
 individual. When he employs nature in this office, he
 may show rare ability---although such cases are infrequent---
 as in the "Progress of Unbelief", where he uses the
 rather homely figure of a tree losing its leaves as
 religion loses its influence in men's lives. Along with
 the consistent use of this imagery, there is, here, an

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14 Verses on Various Occasions, p. 288

15 Ibid., p. 319

16 Ibid., p. 285

17 Ibid., p. 108

unusual note of meditation and quiet sadness in Newman.

Now is the Autumn of the Tree of Life;
.
I will out amid the sleet, and view 18
Each shrivelling stalk and silent falling leaf.

Behind all nature he sees the energy of Life, and seeing this, he finds God in nature. Thus he is arrested by nature as a revelation of his Master, and as something akin to himself. But, at the same time, for art he can feel little sympathy, since it is but a blind imitation of nature. 19 His ascetic soul, however, does not lead him to condemn art: man may live in all holiness 20 in the midst of beautiful and costly surroundings.

Recognizing the seductive power which art, especially music, may have over man, he nevertheless holds art as a gift of God to inspire the soul with thoughts of heaven, 21 and to overcome our sinful nature.

Keble likewise recognizes the powers and influences of art in our lives, and, characteristically, shows a deep appreciation of the beauties of art. 22 But, to Keble, the powers of art are ever overshadowed by that which it imitates. Art may soothe, but the relief and

.....
18 Verses on Various Occasions, p. 181
19 Ibid., p. 17
20 Ibid., p. 34
21 Ibid., p. 82
22 The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 399

comfort of nature are so great that he almost doubts that
 Faith can dwell in the oppressive, crowded cities.²³
 Overcome by the sinfulness of the world, he finds
 consolation in nature, and God speaks to him because in
 this pure part of creation there is an absence of that
 evil which separates man from his Lord.

Besides teaching man spiritual truths and bringing
 him closer to God, nature has a third purpose, which,
 while it is the primary function of nature, is least
 clearly recognized by man. Keble considers the whole
 universe a continual hymn of praise to God. The spheres
 keeping time and tune in their dance before the Creator,
 the sun and moon, and the revolving earth, on which are
 all seasons at all times, send up their anthems to God.²⁴
 Even the animals and birds sing his praise, and may feel
 some inward power that draws their songs to him.²⁵
 Newman joins in this conception. The beauty of nature,
 far from being a mere delightful spectacle, or simply a
 rich attire worn in pride, fulfils its duty in praising
 God, and in giving us an example of perfect adoration.²⁶

Despite Keble's sincere delight in nature, his whole

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 23

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 175

24

Ibid., p. 379

25

Ibid., p. 369

26

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 34:

view is one-sided and wanting in insight. When he says to a child

The tiger's whelp encaged with thee
 Would sheathe his claws to sport and play;
 Bees have for thee no sting 27

he not only takes a false view of nature, but he makes a statement which we immediately recognize as incorrect. He here takes the whole thought of his poem from an Old Testament quotation. Nature is to him a type of mild fervor and uncomplaining patience. He closes his eyes to the cruelty, the waste, the ugliness that seem inextricably intertwined with natural processes.

Such signs of love old Ocean gives
 We cannot choose but think he lives 28

he says, quite neglecting the perils of the sea, and its destructive forces. Again he says that God is not manifested in these harsher aspects of nature, the whirlwind and the earthquake; God is in the world's calm. Newman, on the other hand, does not disregard the sterner powers of nature---the pelting hail, the harmful lightning, but, looking upon them, he considers them good because they are a part of nature, and therefore from God.

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 27

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 240; see also p. 292

28

Ibid., p. 102

29

Ibid., p. 116; see also p. 124

30

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 18

In presenting elements and scenes of nature, Keble's observations are too often general rather than detailed; his imagery is preponderantly of a purely conventional type. His accurate descriptions of the Holy Land throw some light on his nature description, and show how fully he may rely on the observation of others. These, at the same time, show a keen insight into nature and a strong imagination. The success of such descriptions may be judged by Shairp's statement that they satisfied "the most graphic of modern travellers even while he gazed on those very scenes". Yet Keble does not often travel beyond the nature which he knew well, although even in his descriptions of scenes familiar to him there is commonly a lack of distinctness and of the pictorial quality. Nature being to him a sacrament, he does not seek vividness of image; when we find full description in his poems, we feel that it flows from the plentitude of his delight in nature rather than from a desire to present a skilfully drawn picture. Such poems as "Trinity Sunday" and "Twentieth Sunday after Trinity" might have been written by one who knew of the scenes mentioned by report only. The latter, a poem largely

.....
 31 Shairp, pp. 264-5. Note: The present writer has been unable to identify the traveller to whom Principal Shairp refers.

32 The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 98

33 Ibid., p. 137

in praise of the mountains, has almost the whole of the descriptive element in two lines:

'Tis on the mountain's summit dark and high,
When storms are hurrying by.

The poverty of Newman's nature description results from his customary avoidance of beauty and his studied indifference to the material world. He is usually satisfied merely to mention a series of natural objects, and these often in conventional terms:

Sun-lit heaven, and rain-bow cloud
Changeful main, and mountain proud
Branching tree, and meadow green. 34

This method of description is at times pleasing and effective in conjuring up a picture through suggestion,
as in his song, "Heathen Greece".³⁵ Here we find a

craggy ridge and mountain bare
Cut keenly through the liquid air,
And in their own pure tints array'd,

towering above the contrasting green earth. It is probable that if Newman had attempted to give a full description of this scene he would have been less successful.

Likewise in Keble's verse we find striking passages in which the force of the picture is purely from his power of suggestion:

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34

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 34

35

Ibid., p. 305

When up some woodland dale we catch
The many-twinkling smile of ocean. 36

Here the terminology lacks freshness, and there is an absence of description, but the suggestion in the music of the lines and in the experience mentioned calls to mind a felicitous picture. His descriptive passages, even some of his most vivid and charming, usually suffer more from this use of conventional and inappropriate terms, since their force is more dependent upon the color of each word than upon the general image conjured up.

So I have seen some tender flower
Prized above all the vernal bower,
Sheltered beneath the coolest shade,
Embosomed in the greenest glade. 37

To appreciate Keble's pure descriptive power, we must seek to isolate this from the didactic and meditative elements which strongly characterize most of his poems. His ability to describe and his joy in nature, unchecked in his early verse, appear in many of the poems written before The Christian Year with unusual strength and appreciation of form and color values, although these poems as wholes are generally inferior to his later verse.

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"To the Nightingale", exemplifying such early poems, is simply a lyric in praise of the lover's bird. It shows

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36

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 102

37

Ibid., p. 40

38

Ibid., p. 477

unusual freshness in the treatment of nature in the almost spontaneous utterance.

The Christian Year, however, is not devoid of excellent descriptions. When Keble sings of

the new born rill
Just trickling from its mossy bed,
Streaking the heath-clad hill
With a bright emeral thread 39

we find beneath conventionalities of expression a deep appreciation of natural beauty and a closeness of observation. Again, when he says

Yet as along this violet bank I rove 40
The languid sweetness seems to choke my breath

we sense his tender sympathy for nature's charm and a full susceptibility to her moods. The spring morning and autumn evening seem to him the times in which the fancy may fly to give birth to poems; summer is devoid of delights and has no poetry. 41

Red o'er the forest peers the setting sun,
The line of yellow light dies fast away
That crowned the eastern copse; and chill and dun
Falls on the moor the brief November day 42

he sings, yielding to the beautiful melancholy of his favorite season. But, though these are his inmost feelings, night, he says, is the only perfect time, for

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39

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 74

40

Ibid., p. 82

41

Ibid., p. 163

42

Ibid., p. 141

then man is at rest, and nature---the pure and faultless--
reigns alone.

We cannot neglect to note Newman's excellent 43
treatment of nature in his poem "To Edward Caswall".
The first half of this piece is almost unique among his
writings in its expression of a full resignation to the
enjoyment of beauty. As he calmly contemplates the
delightful scene before him, his enjoyment is
unrestrained and his imaginative powers carry him into an
exquisite reverie,

While the rich gorse along the turf crept near,
Close to the fountain's margin, and made bold
To peep into that pool, so calm and clear;---
As if well pleased to see their image bright
Reflected back upon their innocent sight; 44

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43

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 317

44

Ibid., p. 317

CHAPTER VI

TREATMENT OF MAN AS A RELIGIOUS BEING

The interpretation of human life in the poems of these two writers is almost invariably that engendered by the Christian concept of the universe. The poetry of the two is, then, the application to the life of man and an exposition of the Christian faith as Keble and Newman have received it. It is largely the intimacy of this connection between the daily life of the individual and religion that was responsible for the tremendous though ephemeral popularity of The Christian Year. In Keble's hands the Catholic Faith becomes eminently personal, and we may almost say it rests on intuition and experience; it is the refuge of the burdened spirit.

The eye in smiles may wander round
Caught by earth's shadows as they fleet,
But for the soul no home is found
Save him who made it ... 1

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1

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 123

Newman looks on man as a cause; a creature of God, but given a free will of its own. Thus man is his own center, and, although he is never made entirely a part of the material world, he is able to employ external things as servants and receives heavenly assistance in this mastery. The will is of supreme importance to man's salvation. His words and thoughts, but more necessarily his feelings, must be constantly restrained. But more important than this is the positive value of the will: the meanest deed of Faith is fruitful when this arises from the heart and will. While Newman holds firmly to the idea that we must suffer for sin in the Afterlife, and even that some go to eternal damnation, there is no man living, he says, who has not the power of virtue and prayer by which he may gain ultimate salvation.

To Keble life seems holy in itself. Nature is a sacrament and praises God; children have close accord with Heaven and can sense the eternal Truth; man has the gift of intelligence by which he may pray to God; but, having lost his native purity, cannot comprehend the mysteries of the soul; but the angels, in undefiled purity, and with a higher understanding, pour out their praises eternally to the Creator. Man is as far below the angels in

spiritual understanding as children are from the thoughts of men, yet in some far moment of eternity the saved, having been washed of their guilty stain, will have full comprehension, and power to praise perfectly the God of all.

It is because children symbolize to Keble the highest human purity and a transcendent knowledge of spiritual truths that he delighted to write Lyra Innocentium and to introduce frequently infants into his other lyrics. His treatment of children, however, is never symbolical: the child is his teacher, and he wishes to teach the child only when he sees its native perfection undermined. This original holiness, which Keble sees constantly attacked by the material world, naturally suggests to Keble the idea of pre-existence. Like Wordsworth he sings:

But did the smile disclose a dream
Of bliss that had been his before?
Was it from heaven's deep sea a gleam
Not faded quite on earth's dim shore? 3

and he believes it possible that the angels whisper to us in our infancy. The idea of the communion of children with Heaven is so strong in Keble that he finds a spiritual significance in their early stammering: children sense celestial truths but cannot find words to express them. 4

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3 The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 225

4 Ibid., p. 290

Likewise the prayers of children have peculiar efficacy through this accord and communion.

He soon, however, in his consideration of children sounds a melancholy note as he realizes that

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These, like yourselves, were born to sin and die.

He hates sin so strongly that he, at times, seems unsympathetic. He holds up the impossible and even undesirable ideal for childhood of a sainted infancy. The sinful child is a stubborn, bold creature whom he prays God to chasten. Although he was unusually fond of children, it cannot be overlooked that he frequently creates a picture of them that is utterly false, as, for example, when he speaks of infants "prostrate in their sin and shame".⁶ The whole section of the Lyra Innocentium entitled "Early Warnings" is unpraiseworthy from the point of either literary taste or psychological study. It shows Keble's extreme impatience with children who in any way depart from their pristine innocence. This reaches its extreme expression in "Irreverence in Church" and "Desrespect to Elders". In these two poems headed by Old Testament quotations, Keble seems to have turned entirely to the Hebraic concept of God as the avenging Lord. He solemnly warns the child against such irreverence as will earn

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 20

6

Ibid., p. 260.

The doom prepared, that without hope or end
 The Temple Roof will draw
 Down on the irreverent head 7

Newman likewise notes in sadness the growth of sin in the individual as he leaves behind him the years of innocence, but to him the concern is more personal. It is his own life that he observes and in which he laments this change.

So now defilement dims life's memory-springs;
 I cannot hear an early-cherished strain,
 But first a joy, and then it brings a pain,
 Fear, and self-hate, and vain remorseful stings:
 Tears lull my grief to rest,
 Not without hope, this breast
 May one day lose its load, and youth yet bloom again. 8

Keble sounds a similar note in his poem "Guardian Angels" where he considers life "but a sleep and a forgetting". In his morning dream he saw all the Angels of heaven, the Celestial Home, and all of its joy, Growing to manhood he has lost most of his dream, but still he gropingly follows it, hoping to awake ultimately to a realization of it. "Man seems following still the funeral of the boy!" Again he compares human life to a ship in a stormy sea. It begins its voyage well fitted with vows of a saintly life, and with an undefiled soul, but its prayers are "blown wide by gales of care", and God alone can save

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.....
Verses on Various Occasions, pl 121

9

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 218

10

Ibid., p. 101

it from total wreck.¹¹

Keble considers man's corrupt heart the only fault of the world. All creation is true, faultless, and given to the glory and worship of God, "Man only mars the sweet accord".¹² Contrary to the general tendency of the Romantic movement of glorifying the wishes and feelings of man, he holds the senses only as the chief enemy of the soul,¹³ and says that Satan

through every gate of sense
Eye and ear, taste, touch and smell,
Fain would hurl the shafts of hell. 14

Newman, in his characteristic fear of the world, writes

Be it mine to set restraint 15
On roving wish and selfish plaint.

But to him pride and sloth seem the worst enemies of man and the most disastrous of sins.

In the midst of a wicked world, the heart alone, Keble believes, is able to bring men to Christ. Although men's deeds, training, and prayers be identical with those of saints, if their hearts are not inclined to God, they will not find salvation.¹⁶ He ventures no explanation

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11

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 22

12

Ibid., p. 106

13

Ibid., p. 339

14

Ibid., p. 340

15

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 23

16

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 180

for such differences in attitude, since this is a secret known to God alone. Keble's consciousness of sin is so strong that, although he himself was notably devoted to his home and to his father, he believes that

Even holy homes may hearts beguile
And mar God's work a while. 17

Marriage in itself may be a power for evil, and for crushing the nobler qualities of man, although the Christian tradition elevates it to a pattern of true love.¹⁸ Carrying this idea further, he believes that every situation has a redeeming quality, that there is an admixture of good in every evil. Newman's view of sin in general is somewhat more pessimistic. Throughout the history of man, he says, the aggregate of separate sins tends to produce a repetition of evil results, so that the same disasters constantly recur. It is, therefore, necessary that times will be evil so long as human nature remains.

In a brighter moment Keble sees friendship as supplying the golden mean, since the power of one person balances that of another: youth and age balance, joy and sorrow, noble spirits and the unrefined.¹⁹ Here the

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 279

18

Ibid., p. 193

19

Ibid., p. 183

fault of his concept lies, of course, in his selection of extreme types, supposing that elevated spirits will be drawn to simple and uncultured souls lying "in life's shadiest covert" by mutual piety. In his poem "St. Andrews Day"²⁰ he shows a particularly tender feeling for the bond of brotherhood, with a deep understanding of the yearning ^{of} one soul for another; and the delicate emotion of his feeling for his home appears in the wistfully contemplative lines:

Since all that is not Heaven must fade
Light be the hand of Ruin laid
Upon the home I love: 21

Yet Keble never entirely submerges his belief that he, who has the advantages of the Truth of God, if he allow worldly joy to claim his love before this Truth, is an idolator. In the presence of ever-impending death, he cannot conceive of men finding pleasures and comforts in this world. Moonlight fancies, love, and even comfortable homes seem too insignificant to be objects of our affection when we know that one day we must meet the Creator.²² The absolutely mutual sympathy of souls may

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 149

21

Ibid., p. 93

22

Ibid., p. 119

23

dim our ears to the voice of Heaven, and matrimony may
 take the place of our true home. ²⁴ Thus it is not only
 the ordinary sins against the moral code that he blames;
 it is rather any obstacle to the soul's full devotion to
 God.

Newman, being almost consistently subjective in his
 poetry, and having a decidedly ascetic attitude toward
 life, scorns the expression of human passions. Fear,
 anger, and care are all to man's shame. The soul is
 brought to God more through resignation than through
 deeds of holiness. ²⁵ There is occasionally a trace of
 this more mystical concept of righteousness in Keble's
 poetry. In writing of Lazarus's two sisters, who are
 considered as typifying the active and the contemplative
 life, he says

Where Martha loved to wait with reverence meet
 And wiser Mary lingered at Thy sacred feet. 26

Yet he writes again

We need not bid for cloistered cell,

 The trivial round, the common task,
 Would furnish all we ought to ask;
 Room to deny ourselves; a road
 To bring us, daily, nearer God. 27

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 23

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 144

24

Ibid., p. 160

25

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 68

26

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 8

27

Ibid., p. 4

That Newman's asceticism is modified is evident in such poems as "Sensitiveness".²⁸ Here he believes that it is better to risk sinning in attempting to do that which is good than to neglect duty, for, if our trust is in God, and if we seek to do His will, He will look mercifully upon our weaknesses and failures. Again, he feels that there is a possibility of holy living in the midst luxury and the satisfaction of earthly desires.²⁹ Pain and hardships are, nevertheless, God-sent, and we should consider them "shadows" of the punishment of the Afterlife. In such times of misery and torment, we should hate our proud hearts and give ourselves freely to the punishment, thus sanctifying our grief.³⁰ Keble's attitude toward material hardships is generally that of indifference:

Wealthy, or despised and poor---
 What is that to him or thee,
 So his love for Christ endure? 31

Newman does not often turn his interest toward the great deeds of heroism, for in these the hope of reward--- physical or spiritual---gives assurance to man. The

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 28

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 113

29

Ibid., p. 33

30

Ibid., p. 96

31

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 19

daily round of petty vexations and small obstacles seem to him to offer more fitting subjects for poems, since in these the goal, or reward for surmounting them, is more distant and the virtue of Faith consequently more

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 necessary. Man, says the Angel of The Dream of Gerontius, is a strange composite of Heaven and earth, a majesty dwarfed to baseness. He is never so near crime and shame as when he has accomplished some great

³³
 deed. Newman fears the blight, which the world's good fortunes bring to man, and cries out to God to deny him wealth and power. Echoing the words of the Beatitudes, he says that hope thrives in misfortunes, love grows from weakness, and faith is strengthened in those who are

³⁴
 humble and lowly.

Keble likewise lauds the heroism of the soul in its petty vexations and minor trials as well as in its great
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 struggles with adversity. He loves best those virtues and the characters which are least obstrusive and which

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³²

Verses on various Occasions, p. 171

³³

Ibid., p. 337

³⁴

Ibid., p. 47

³⁵

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 65

generally get the least praise. In the humble, he believes, the music of Heaven sounds as it cannot do in those in whom the riches and power of the world have dominion. ³⁶ But, though man may strive for a saintly character through his whole life and keep far from the powers that corrupt the soul, only at death may his salvation be assured,

37

The grey-hair'd saint may fail at last.

Newman, however, seems to believe that saintliness becomes a more deeply seated quality, of which the reflection, as of God's glory, may be seen in the face of a saint. ³⁸ It is the bright beaming of his heavenly birth, a manifestation visible to those who seek the Christian virtues. ³⁹

Keble becomes so thoroughly involved in the Catholic interpretation of life, augmented by certain imaginative speculations, that he is led to ignore ordinary perceptions. Surely his own observations and knowledge would have warned him that the following lines were not true to fact.

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36

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 176

37

Ibid., p. 115

38

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 110

39

Ibid., p. 42

Where is it mothers learn their love?---
 In every church a fountain springs
 O'er which the Eternal Dove
 Hovers on softest wings. 40

Even Wordsworth is said to have protested upon reading these lines. A more careful psychological study appears in his poem "Absolution".⁴¹ Here he expresses the spirit of hope and trust in the midst of the overburdening consciousness of guilt. He skilfully portrays the intense feeling of the rising to pardon from the depths of mental anguish. He is strengthened by the hope of salvation:

O fear, O joy to think!---and what if yet,
 In some far moment of eternity,
 The lore of evil I may quite forget,
 And with the pure in heart my portion be?

Newman does not allow speculation to restrain his psychological insight. His best study and understanding of man is in such distinctly ecclesiastical experiences as confession and absolution.⁴² In his "Absolution" He adeptly depicts in a few lines the sequence of emotions of the penitent receiving the pardon of the Church. The early sense of guilt and half-despair is mitigated by the comforting assurance of the priest, until, at the highly

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 189

41

Ibid., p. 260

42

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 83

effective last line: "Absolvo te", the reader shares the feeling of absolute peace. The Dream of Gerontius, again, apart from its spiritual value, is a study of the most intense psychic experience. It has been called supreme in literature for its description of dying. The poem opens with a dawning realization that death is near. Gradually the thought fixes itself in Gerontius's mind; he is startled, surprised:

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'Tis death---O loving friends, your prayers!---'tis he!..
and from this grows the feeling of horror at the experience.
His sense of approaching death arises not from the physical feeling of collapse:

44

Not by the token of this faltering breath,
This chill at heart, this dampness on my brow---
but from an inward, spiritual feeling that is new and at the same time cognizable:

'Tis this strange innermost abandonment
The dying man struggles in supreme effort to retain consciousness, but the inevitable power overwhelms him, and, as his physical senses slip away, he is conscious of terrifying, mysterious shapes and sounds. Finally, his death is but a falling asleep, and he can but half-finish the versicle of resignation: "Into Thy hands, O Lord,

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43

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 324

44

Ibid., p. 323

into Thy hands . . .” After the death of Gerontius, Newman relies upon the Church's teachings, transforming the psychological drama into a spiritual one. Even here there is no part that is overdrawn, or that can be repulsive to the most sensitive reader. The entire poem is an excellent and intense study of the flight of a soul from its earthly prison.

CHAPTER VII

TREATMENT OF HUMAN HISTORY AND HUMAN SOCIETY

Although both Keble and Newman were notably students of history in their ecclesiastical work, the historical element is strangely rare in their poetry. This may be partly explained by the fact that their poems are applications and expositions of truths based upon the study of antiquity rather than investigations themselves. In the former poet, there is scarcely any reference to church history: in Newman historical events do not appear for the production of a tone or background, nor for the sake of giving an artistic feeling to a poem. We find rather characters in the history of the Church, or of Judaism illustrating and extoling Christian virtues. In considering "the glory that was Greece", he sees not the art of the pagan age, nor the power at the zenith of the Greek civilization, but he praises the fathers, Clement, Dionysius, Origen, and others. The Mediterranean is richly suggestive to him of historical events, yet he is

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woes.

Biblical characters naturally attract both poets. Among the Old Testament figures, David and Moses seem to be the favorites of Newman. In "The Call of David", we find one of Newman's tenderest expressions of a full sympathy for man. He evidently loved David, and into this poem he pours the full depth of his feeling towards him:

Strange, that guileless face and form
To lavish on the scarring storm,
Yet we take thee in thy blindness,
And we buffet thee in kindness 5

The influence of the Old Testament is strong throughout Keble's writings. He dwells on incidents in the life of Joseph, Moses, Daniel, Aaron, Joshua, David, and others, and their experiences, in conjunction with nature, give foundations for his meditations upon Christian truths and virtues. In "The Fourth Sunday in Lent" the love of Joseph for his brothers gives an example and the rose a symbolic representation of the highest Christian love. He makes more frequent use of characters of the New Testament in his poems than does Newman. In "St. Peter's Day" his abilities in characterization appear at their

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4

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 104 ff

5

Ibid., p. 119

6

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 55

7

Ibid., p. 169

best. Here, almost uniquely in his poetry, all is made secondary to the study of a character. His sincere admiration for St. Peter appears in his unusually sympathetic understanding in the treatment of the Saints' denial of Christ, and in the description of his death.
 8
 In another poem, the saints are not at all characterized. In this piece his depiction of the Biblical figures is so purely symbolical that he occasionally substitutes for their names the virtues which they represent--Love, Reason, Faith. In dealing with the incident of Balak and his seven altars of magic, Keble explains that the prophetic sight flashed over him and died away; knowledge came to him not through any power of his altars, but because he waited patiently for this power.
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 Newman finds in the same incident the explanation of the salvation of the heathen and unbaptized. Faith is, among these unconverted, as among Christians, the keynote of justification, and their souls are in the hands of
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 God.
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Newman's historical sense is most clearly seen in

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 152

9

Numbers XXII-XXIV

10

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 81

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 134

regard to ecclesiastical tradition. He looks back to the Golden Age as to the time in which the Church was uppermost in men's minds, and when all of her teachings were ardently followed. The present day is all sinful and seems to seek out ways deliberately to commit new sins. In a somewhat pessimistic vein, he wonders whether the world will improve before the Church is entirely destroyed. Although the increase of worldly sin is monstrous, the corruption of religion is more shameful. Newman loves to think of France in her history of devoted saints, and in her ecclesiastical growth, but he hates her present self, abandoning the Holy Truth as he conceives it.

His feeling towards the Jews is similar to his attitude towards France. While he commends and is grateful to the Israelites for the ages in which they maintained the revealed Truth, and in which they were faithful to God's commandments and looked forward to the Messiah, he condemns the Jews of today who do not follow Christ and the New Dispensation. Keble, in keeping with his sympathetic attitude toward Classical Greece, regards tenderly the Jews, in whom he sees a race,

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 134

13

Ibid., p. 190

14

Ibid., p. 192

outside the pale of Christ's "true Israel", to be sure, but one which he is confident that God will redeem according to their worship of Him. They are indeed wrong, however, and God sees their error, for which they now suffer.¹⁵

Keble naturally finds much to criticize in the United States, but, although he is too conservative to recognize her great virtues, he does not condemn this country's departure from the Faith of her fathers, for her skepticism, for her Mammon worship; he rather entreats her to follow those within her borders who hold the Faith.¹⁶ Newman, considering material advancement as the great danger to man's soul, when he regards England, in place of lauding her might, her commerce, and industry, says to her: Dread thine own power.¹⁷ This is somewhat akin to Keble's feeling for his countrymen, turning from God through the attraction of the scientific and investigative spirit.

Faith as opposed to reason is a keynote to Keble's philosophy of saving knowledge. When "haughty Reason" pries too far into the divine order of the Universe, God will be avenged; but Faith is pleasing to God.¹⁸ He sees

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 57

16

Ibid., p. 427

17

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 89

18

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 432

in science, with its insatiable desire for facts and demand for proof, a proud rival of the Christian spirit, and, while he does not condemn science, he prays that it be shown its proper realm and bounds.¹⁹ In keeping with his ascetic ideal, Newman disparages the powers of science, which can neither touch man's inmost spirit nor give consolation. It cannot explain the hidden mysteries of life: faith alone is able to give man all that his heart craves.²⁰ The Church, Keble believes, has grown weak in spirit and has far too much of the worldly element. The wealth of the Church is everywhere apparent, and, even in the Anglican Communion, which he holds to be the "healthiest shoot",²¹ there are evidences of worldliness. The Church is not meant to be a pampered, peaceful body, but, as in its earliest, purest days, it should have endless strife with the enemies of the faith: there is no place in Orthodoxy for placid toleration, for there can be but one truth and that the belief in the true Church.²²

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 419

20

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 130

21

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 67

22

Ibid., p. 420

CHAPTER VIII

IMMORTAL CREATURES IN THEIR POETRY

The spiritual realm, Keble and Newman agree, is not only an actuality; it is ever near and important to this material world. The narrow margin separating the lives of mortal men from those of the etherial beings is transcended and lost in the interaction of the two worlds. Such a mystical attitude is foreshadowed and approached even in Newman's earliest poetry, when he feels,

. . . a Spirit singing aye in air,¹

and when he believes that it is

The Angel's hymn,---the sovereign harmony¹
That guides the rolling orbs along the sky,

The sign of the cross, he holds, has a power sufficient²
to dispel the hosts of evil spirits which gather about him.
The demons consider themselves the primal owners of the

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¹ Verses on Various Occasions, p. 3

² Ibid., p. 69

realms of light, although now, through a despot's will, they are dispossessed. Their enmity towards man is, therefore, principally fostered by the fact that they see those heavenly crowns which they once wore, now meted out to every beggar and slave who abides by the teaching of the Church. But, despite the boastfulness and apparent formidableness of these spirits, they are put to flight before a righteous man or the powers of light.³

To Keble, also, the spirits of darkness seem real and living. They are responsible for the constant sin of men, who, being more and more overcome, may at last be "prisoners of Satan";⁴ evil spirits, however, because of their fear of the might of Christ, dare not approach the cradle of a Christian child.⁵ Besides these forces, in an undefined realm, stand such creatures as elves and fairies. Keble neither denies the existence of these, nor condemns the belief in them, but rather affirms that they are "by fancy seen", and that they flit away at day-break.⁶

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Verses on Various Occasions, pp. 343-6

4

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 368

5

Ibid., p. 230

6

Ibid., p. 145.

It is not merely through the favoring choice of God that the Angels hold their state of felicity. The place, which they own in Heaven, Keble believes, is hard-earned by virtue of their battle with the rebels of that realm; but, because of their celestial love, they, seeing our need of help, come to our assistance in the "unequal fray". As when the Angels gathered at Bethelhem to worship Christ, they come from the infinite, through all space, to us in our necessity.⁷ These heavenly beings have, however, in addition to their guidance, protection, and governance of man, the duty of ruling the elements of nature, of holding back the cold winds until the earth is quite prepared for winter, of guiding the terrestrial spheres.⁸

Keble at one time declares that there is a possibility of men's souls being neglected by these celestial ministers, since the Angels in their watch over sinners are not assigned specific wards, but merely do God's work where they find it.⁹ Only two months later, however, he writes that we may not escape the vigil of our Guardian Angels.¹⁰ This latter belief becomes that of both poets

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 178

8

Ibid., p. 185

9

Ibid., p. 49

10

Ibid., p. 104

almost consistently; and they agree in believing the guardian to be sorrowful when we sin, and when we are thankless for the beauties of the world. The Angels, Keble continues, stand between man and God, noting and recording our prayers and deeds.¹¹ The Angels of infants are given the highest honor in heaven. They also have peculiar powers, are stronger than the forces of evil,¹² and warn the virgin heart when sin is near.

While Keble, in his firm belief in baptismal regeneration, holds that our guardians are given us at our christening,¹³ Newman feels that the Angel is assigned to the individual at birth and never absents himself.¹⁴ Consequently the Guardian Angel knows his ward as none other can: the soul is at once the child, the brother, and the fellow-servant of the Angel. Through all the trials of life, the angelic guardian is powerful and necessary; he imparts wisdom, turns the soul from wickedness, and wages a ceaseless battle against the diabolical host. Finally, the Angel accompanies its ward to the first judgment before God, there resigning it to the state of Purgatory until, at the Last Judgment,

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11

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 126; see also p. 255

12

Ibid., p. 360

13

Ibid., p. 359

14

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 300

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 he will again receive it. Keble, while he is less willing to speculate concerning the existence after death, believes that Angels conduct the disembodied soul through the dark curtains of the world above. 16

In regard to death, Newman attaches great importance to the circumstances of leaving this life. Good conduct in this world does not seem sufficient to give assurance of salvation; the Church's sacraments administered in the last hour have high potency in speeding the soul on its final journey. 17 This is not, of course, the equivalent of a death-bed repentance, which, Keble says, is not a matter open to discussion but is "best left in the merciful obscurity with which Scripture has

18 enveloped" it. Although the redeemed soul ascends to a joyful reward at death, or finds greater blessings in the next life, Newman conceives of the possibility of its consciousness of earthly losses, particularly in the separation of friends. 19 It has, therefore, not only memory of the past life, but the possibility of a remembrance happy enough to offer some contrast to the

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Verses on Various Occasions, pp. 336-70

16

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 52

17

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 179

18

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 51

19

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 195

Afterlife.

The death of Newman's sister Mary was a powerful influence in the development of his belief in the close connection between this world and the next. Not only may the dead think of us, but our thoughts may come to them.²⁰ They are near and ever watch all that was dear to them on earth. Before the throne of God they share His knowledge and have rest, as they see the reflection²¹ of the life of this earth in the crystal sea of Heaven. Keble, likewise, on the death of his sister, imagines her soul rising directly to Heaven, whence she watches him, and glories in the Beatific Vision.²² While it is true that he expresses a fear of the Romish veneration of saints and Angels as sapping the devotion which we owe to God, he commends and finds comfort in the belief that the dead are near, and that we are surrounded by guardian spirits.²³ The departed, he holds, pray for their loved ones more constantly and more intensely than when they were in the flesh.²⁴

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20

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 53

21

Ibid., p. 40

22

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 492

23

Ibid., p. 202

24

Ibid., p. 296

The trend in the development of Newman's theological tenets is reflected in his treatment of the world of spirits in his poetry. In 1830 he refers to the rest of the departed as deep and mysterious. About them Angels hover, keeping time with their wings to songs about the Creator, songs of eternity and of the day of the soul's ascension from the shades of Paradise to the bright
 25
 supernal Heavens. Here manifestly he does not use the word "Paradise" in Dante's sense. It is the intermediate rest of souls until the general resurrection, yet not the equivalent of Purgatory: the preparation of the souls lies only in edification, not in the torment of purgation. Again he holds that the spirit, retaining its faculty of memory, finds itself influenced by its former life in its constant rehearsal of past deeds. These, then, will
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 contribute to the soul's comfort or torment.

In The Dream of Gerontius we find Newman's view of the future existence of the soul fully in accord with the Roman Catholic teaching, with his concept strengthened by the powers of his imagination. The sufferings of the spirit begin even before death. Then they are those of
 27
 "some long-imprisoned dove" that dares not fly. After

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 25

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 53

26

Ibid., p. 85

27

Ibid., p. 8

its departure from the material habiliment, Newman entirely avoids the purely spectacular. The spirit cannot believe that it has passed the gate of death, nor realize that it is freed of the body. It knows that it is quitting the Universe, that, as though it were a sphere, it is entirely within the grasp of a mighty hand; but, when the Angel first sings, the soul cannot tell whether it hears, or touches, or tastes the tones, for it has risen above all earthly senses. The ideas of time and space are no part of its present existence: their places are taken merely by states of mind. The soul is unable to see God immediately only by reason its own unfitness and lack of preparation. It is through the teaching and assurance of the Guardian Angel that, by degrees, the soul progresses toward the House of Judgment, where, in its eagerness to behold the face of the Creator, it springs voluntarily before the throne of God. The Divine Presence is judgment in itself to the spirit, which, rendered fully conscious of its imperfections by this power, and, being made utterly helpless, is led by its guardian to its place in

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Purgatory.

At the general resurrection, Newman believes, the

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Verses on Various Occasions, pp. 323-70

spirit will be glorified and made excellent in all its then strengthened and augmented virtues. In that day souls separated on this earth will be united in new bonds of love. ²⁹ Keble likewise recognizes in the Afterlife

a state of reunion of parted friends. Knowing each other, those friends will meet with warm welcomes. ³⁰

He builds upon this concept to demonstrate that we should be comforted at the death of friends, for in this earthly loss our circle of friends will be the greater in the realm of Paradise. ³¹

In the words "The Fathers are in dust, yet live to God," Newman finds a justification for venerating relics of Saints, and the idea that in the relics are the seeds of life waiting until the Judgment Day. Similarly, he suggests that the graves of Saints are shrines to be venerated by the devout. ³² Keble feels relics and memorials to be capable of powers of healing and of working miracles; not merely because of the faith of individuals recipient of these benefits, but because the powers of evil fly before the relics of Saints. ³³

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 32

30

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 164

31

Ibid., p. 198

32

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 138

33

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 358

The Saints themselves appear primarily to be types of virtues to Christians and in the record of their lives we find examples of holiness. In the realms of Heaven also they stand thus typical of degrees of sanctity, so that, as we trace family resemblances in children, the Angels rejoice to find in infants spiritual qualities suggesting those of some Saint. Newman, after leaving the Anglican Communion, sings often of his patron, St. Philip of Neri. Extolling his virtues as examples to all men, he conceives of him as leading all to salvation; although Newman's emphasis is chiefly upon his own dependence upon St. Philip. It is probable that, in expressing his feeling for his patron in poetic form, Newman overstates his belief in the powers of the Saint. Besides giving an example for life and praying for him, St. Philip, Newman says, constantly points out to him the emptiness of life and the true worth of Heaven.

Following an idea expressed in Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living, Keble conceives of a special coronet in Heaven for those who have lived in perfect purity on earth, or who have been martyred for the Faith. This

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34

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 227

35

Verses on Various Occasions, pp. 293-300, 310-15

36

Chapter XI, section 3

is in addition to the crown of glory given to all Saints. God does not, however, give to any of the company of Heaven full comprehension. Such mysteries as that of the Atonement have elements that transcend the understanding of any but the eternal Trinity. The Saints, and chiefly the Blessed Virgin, are near to men, carrying their prayers to God, but even when men fail to invoke the Saints, those servants of the Lord watch over them and grant their aid of prayer.

38

There are in Keble's attitude toward the Virgin Mary evidences of development, reflecting, in a degree, his concern in the Oxford Movement. In "St. Michael and All Angels" we find the almost startling line:

39

Your God new-born, and made a sinner's child;
yet again in The Christian Year there appears a tender and devout Ave Maria of three stanzas, in which he declares that we may give all but adoring love to the name of Mary; and in still another poem of this volume, he employs the title "Queen of Heaven". In Lyra Innocentium, however, Keble's devotion to Our Lady has attained its highest fruition.

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41

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38

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 65

38

Ibid., p. 257

39

Ibid., p. 177

40

Ibid., p. 161

41

Ibid., p. 114

42

A royal Vergin evermore, heavenly and undefiled

43

he sings, and calls St. Mary the first of creatures,

44

Mother of God, Heaven's Spouse. She will be forever

robed in glory in Heaven, and to her all Saints and

Martyrs go to recognize with thanksgiving her motherhood

45

of Christ. It is she who chiefly watches over us and

46

warns us of the powers of sin.

In Newman's poetry, it is hardly necessary to say we may trace a more striking change in the feeling toward the Blessed Virgin. In 1831, Newman believes Our Lady to be, not in "the supernal Heavens", but serving with the expectant souls, although he already conceives of her as conferring a high honor upon the dead who serve at her

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side. When he feels the power of temptation, he prays that she may turn her tender smile towards him that he

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may be delivered from evil. After Newman was received into the Roman Communion, however, there is a noteworthy infusion of Mariolatry into his poetry. The thought of

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42

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 393

43

Ibid., p. 344

44

Ibid., p. 236

45

Ibid., p. 248

46

Ibid., p. 252

47

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 57; (for complete concept see also p. 53)

48

Ibid., p. 132

Our Lady seems to become to him a ruling passion. Addressing her as the one perfect creature, worthy of our best offerings, he writes several lyrics of highest praise to her.⁴⁹ It is interesting to observe his occasional treatment of the Blessed Virgin as personifying the Church, particularly the Roman branch.⁵⁰ Such a concept is, of course, but a degree removed from Keble's idea of her as the "Spouse of Heaven".

Although Keble's general feeling for God is that He is a forgiving Lord who will look with sympathy and tenderness upon the shortcomings of human nature and, though he speaks of God's Mercy tempering Justice,⁵¹ he does not wince at the idea of Hell. To Newman, also, eternal punishment is as real as Heaven and Purgatory; but, he adds, the Christian religion, being based upon a positive goodness, Hell should never be used by preachers as an intimidation;

The Fount of Love His servants sends to tell
 Love's deeds; Himself reveals the sinner's hell. 52

On the subject of Purgatory, Keble is notably silent. Speaking of the time between Christ's burial

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49 E.g. Verses on Various Occasions, pp. 284, 287, 290

50 Ibid., p. 282

51 The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 49

52 Verses on Various Occasions, p. 175

It is perhaps but a lack of definition in the following lines that separates this statement of Keble from Newman's final thought of Purgatory.

So happy souls, when life is o'er
Plunge in the empyreal vast 56

but the fact cannot be ignored that Keble's most common view of Heaven gives to it the nature of a mighty flood.

Till in the ocean of Thy love 57
We lose ourselves in Heaven above.

he writes, and again:

And I shall sink in yonder sea of light; 58

This sea of light, he tells us, hides the shrine from
men's and Angel's sight. 59 Yet, not unlike Newman's

theory of the first judgment of the soul, his belief is that the first and fondest gaze of the departed is upon the face of God. However, Keble holds this to be an enduring gaze, as when he says of the Beatific Vision that we shall dwell

Ever in sight of all our bliss. 60

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56

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 46

57

Ibid., p. 6

58

Ibid., p. 88

59

Ibid., p. 157

60

Ibid., p. 14

Newman's avoidance of discussion of the nature of Heaven is dependent upon his conviction that no one knows its fulness yet, neither Prophet, Saint, nor Angel. Adoring souls can approach the supernal Heavens but slowly, and this only in the degree to which they are prepared. The House of Judgment, however, he tells us, is built entirely of living beings: a temple made of immaterial life, hymning God's praise continually.⁶¹ Keble, finally, describes the throne of God as being of fire; surrounded by all the hosts of the seraphic choir, chanting eternally the praise of Him who sits thereon,⁶² their Maker, Judge, and King.

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61

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 354

62

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 191

CHAPTER IX

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SUPREME BEING

To both Keble and Newman life is but an aspiration to the beatific vision of God; the goal of all thoughts and deeds is the approach to the heavenly throne. Behind nearly all of their poetry stands the contemplation of the Lord of All, a contemplation at once elusive and satisfying to the heart. It is perhaps because of their belief in God as the Infinite, All, that attempts to define Him and clear-cut statements about Him are notably rare in the poetry of these two churchmen. Speculation concerning the Divine, since it is hazardous and leads to error, is sinful; men's faith should be sufficient to lead them to a full acceptance of God's¹ commandments.

In regard to knowledge about God, Keble admonishes

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 85

us to search our own hearts, of which he says, at the same time:

. . . . that willing slave 2
To all that works thee woe or harm:

In The Christian Year particularly Keble's thought of God is as of an all pervading power, an all loving Father, who, giving strength to conquer evil, forgives men their trespasses, although, to be sure, He punishes the proud and unrepentant. There is an apparent change in attitude in Keble's Lyra Innocentium, however, and notably in the section "Early Warnings".³ Here he considers rather God's vengeance upon a wilful people. Keble has sounded the note of battle and strife for the Church against those who oppose her, and his concept of God is correspondingly sterner. The fire of Heaven, the tempest and storm become instruments of wrath in the hands of the Lord.

Newman's general idea of the Supreme Being may be summarized in his lines:

Those searching Eyes are all-divine,
All-human is that Heart 4

He ever recognizes the human tenderness of God and conceives of Him as having the feelings and sympathy of

.....
2 The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 85

3 Ibid., pp. 276-82

4 Verses on Various Occasions, p. 137

man. With this belief, however, he combines, as does Keble, a reverent devotion and an unflinching love for our Lord. To Newman, God is Truth, and the life of Christ seems to symbolize the existence of truth in the world. Truth is at first despised and slain by wilful men, but, being immortal, it must rise again from darkness and give hope to the world.⁵ His use of the word Truth is noteworthy in several of his poems. This he employs in part symbolically, in part as standing only for Christ Himself, and again simply as meaning the virtue, so that even Newman is at times confused in the use of the word. In the lines:

When royal Truth, released from mortal throes
Burst His brief slumber, and triumphant rose 6

the reference is clearly to Christ; but, writing again, he is more strongly influenced by the original meaning of the word:

All gifts below, save Truth, but grow
Towards an end. 7

In another poem, where the word quite clearly signifies the Deity, he refers to Truth with the pronoun "It", 8

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5

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 96

6

Ibid., p. 96

7

Ibid., p. 126

8

Ibid., p. 122

practice opposed to ecclesiastical usage, and one of which, without doubt, Newman would not have been guilty but for his confusion in this use of the term.

Newman's feeling is that "God moves ⁱⁿ a mysterious way" and man cannot hope to comprehend the divine wisdom, nor to understand God's transcendence of time and place. It is thus that he explains the apparently unanswered prayers of the devout: God, knowing a higher, or a more ultimate good, grants the requests of the faithful in ways which man may not recognize, or which they may not learn until their departure from this life. God also knows before a soul is born whether it will attain to everlasting life, or to damnation; yet He did not predestine any souls to perdition, but rather understood ⁹ what course the free will of each man would follow. In this we see the avoidance of the uncatholic doctrine of predestination on the one hand, and of the limitation of God's power on the other. Finally, it is through God's wisdom and mercy that all the deepest secrets of the future and of eternity are revealed to none. Were these known to man, Newman believes, they would break,

The youthful spirit, though bold for Jesus' sake. ¹⁰

.....
⁹ Verses on Various Occasions, p. 43

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 133

and Keble, recognizing this obscurity, reverently says

So be it, Lord; I know it best, 11
 Though not as yet this wayward breast,
 Beat quite in answer to Thy voice,

In all nature Keble sees God, not to be worshiped in the various natural objects, but in these revealing to us analogical truths about Himself.¹² Such a vision is not, to be sure, indiscriminately given to men, but presupposes the perfect preparation of heart and mind in the observer. Those thus prepared may see Him move in the powers of the earth, and, feeling His divine Presence, may commune with Him.¹³ Newman is again less definite in regard to the presence of God in nature. Although he believes that

There is a spirit ranging through
 The earth, the stream, the air;
 Ten thousand shapes ever new
 That busy One doth wear; 14

the feeling of the passage is rather for life than for God; yet the very concept of life as a great permeating spirit which ranges through all manifestations of nature makes difficult the disassociation of the omnipresent Lord from this spirit. We find a somewhat clearer

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 11

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 41

12

Ibid., p. 42

13

Ibid., p. 259

14

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 17

statement of the appearance of God in external nature in one of Newman's early poems in which he conceives of a flower uttering the following lines:

Mine, the Unseen to display
In the crowded public way, 15

Again his tone is that of a particularly mystical type of transcendentalism, when he writes:

The flame, the storm, the quaking ground,
Earth's joy, earth's terror, nought is thine,
Thou must but hear the sound
Of the still voice divine. 16

This is, of course, far removed from the Kantian theory that this inner knowledge which he calls transcendental is independent upon the organizing principle within the mind, which makes sense impression meaningful. Yet the general feeling of Newman seems to be that God is ever present in all things. The world is eloquent of his power, and perhaps freighted with messages and warnings from on high.

God, he continues, is ever at hand to help His children when they call upon Him, and man cannot possibly escape the presence of his Lord. Although he may not understand God's tokens, he is never forsaken. The heathen who use charms and tokens against the powers of

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 23

16

Ibid., p. 25

nature but try to arm themselves against the Creator of all. Since God is thus completely omnipotent, at death, though we may fear the power of the Supreme Being, our resignation should be complete; if God's power should fail, there could be no help for man. It is God, Newman says, who has shielded him from harm and envious error, and who has fixed his gaze upon Heaven.¹⁷ While God's keen Spirit strengthens men in their struggle with sin, this power is quenched or revived according to men's reception of Christ into their lives;

Christ rears his throne within the secret heart.
From the haughty world a part. 18

Newman sounds a more mystical note when he recalls

When looking up, I saw Thy face
In kind austereness clad. 19

and when he refers to those hours spent in the service of the Lord, when he was accustomed

To tend and deck His holy place,
And note His secret word. 20

In The Dream of Gerontius, we may recall, it is the sight of God in the immediate judgment that kindles in soul all tender, gracious, and reverential thoughts, making the spirit suffer from love and from its yearning

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17

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 5

18

Ibid., p. 42

19

Ibid., p. 46

20

Ibid., p. 70

for God. The Angel foretells that

There is a pleading in His pensive eye
Will pierce thee to the quick, and trouble thee.
And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself; 21

But when Gerontius comes to the Eternal Presence, we catch no view of God. Newman seems to be blinded with Gerontius before the face of the Lord, and, rearing to look at Him, merely feels the Presence. Keble believes that the dead are made more nearly perfect by their proximity to the Divine Presence, by becoming ever more filled with Christ's most precious blood. He, like Newman, avoids any attempt at description of the enthroned Lord, but he does not hesitate to write:

God's witnesses, a glorious host,
Compass Him daily like a cloud;
Martyrs and seers, the saved and lost,
Mercies and judgments cry aloud. 22

Keble, in "Tuesday in Whitsun Week",²³ raises a peculiar point in regard to the divinity of Christ, whom he calls the "eternal mirror" wherein Angels view the Father.²⁴ He further, in regard to the Mass, declares

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 359

22

The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 175

23

Ibid., p. 96

24

The writer has been unable to find a precedent for this idea, which, in its analysis seems in some degree opposed to the strict trinitarian belief of Keble. The thought is similar to that held widely by Catholics in regard to Our Lady, and occasionally to other Saints, whom they call mirrores dei.

that Christ is truly present in the consecrated elements, and that He is exalted upon His altar-throne. The recipient of the Holy Communion, however, must likewise have God in his heart to derive the strengthening grace of the blessed Sacrament. In "The Three Absolutions", Keble touches upon the performance of sacraments. The apparent statement of this poem is that the efficacy of the sacraments is dependent upon the worthiness of the minister; however, considering the fact that the Anglican Church rejects this belief, it is necessary to adopt an alternative interpretation of these lines. By understanding that the administrator of the sacrament is worthy by virtue of proper ordination, we have a belief more nearly in harmony with Keble's general religious tenets.

Newman holds the Church to be the instrument of God, and although it is He alone who rules over the keys of Heaven, these He allows His Church to have for the salvation of sinful men, just as He permits men to sound some of the secrets of the Universe, and, in part, to master the elements of nature. The bestowal of the

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The Christian Year and Other Poems, p. 203

26

Ibid., p. 407

Church upon mankind is an indulgence which we do not deserve, and Newman, seeing the increasing wickedness of the world, fears that in the future there may be a time in which Christ will take away His Spouse and leave the earth in wretchedness. . . . In the membership of the Church, Newman sees a kind of election, and as Christ, after His resurrection, revealed Himself only to certain witnesses, the truth is manifested to those who are able to follow it. Newman sees in the Church the path of God, and cannot conceive of any other possible approach to Him. Therefore, although he sorrows for the disrespect which men give to her, and doubts not that Christ may yet take her from men, he fervently says to the Church of God

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True Seed! thou shalt prevail!

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Verses on Various Occasions, p. 98

28

This should, of course, be distinguished from the idea of predestination, by which some hold that God foreordained certain souls to salvation.

29

Verses on Various Occasions, p. 97

30

Ibid., p. 78

31

Ibid., p. 93

CHAPTER X

CONCLUDING ESTIMATE

Wordsworth, upon reading The Christian Year, is said to have remarked: "It is very good---so good that, if it were mine, I should write it all over again"¹. However much may be written concerning this remarkable collection of poems, a fundamentally juster evaluation of its true worth can scarcely be found than that lying in this statement of our great romantic poet. Had these contemplations of nature, of man, of the soul, of God been written by a Wordsworth, they would hold an enviable place in the history of English literature. Perhaps it may be argued that the same might be said of the meditations of countless great divines, and the argument is not without a degree of truth; yet, be this as it may, our present concern is entirely the poetry of Keble.

.....

¹
Benson, p. 186

As we have already observed, whatever aesthetic values the poetic writing of this churchman holds, its primary beauty lies ever in the pure ideas and association of thoughts expressed in it; sensuous appeal is sacrificed in it, or subordinated, to intellectual beauty. While we might ^{cite} from Browning innumerable passages of which this is equally true, and in which the study is similarly of the soul in its loftiest aspiration, in Keble these ideas and thoughts concern the end per se of human life; the activities, trials, and sufferings of the soul are but incidental to the attainment of perfection. Such an attitude is natural, of course, where the mission is to teach rather than to portray; nevertheless, this indifference to the individual except as a potential saint of Heaven is an outstanding flaw in Keble's poetry.

Newman is likewise bent upon the attainment of immortality without reckoning the privations and hardships involved in the approach to this goal. There is in his poetry a distinct didactic element, but he is never quite blinded to the tribulations of his fellow travellers by the glowing horizon before him. When he turns to view mankind toiling on the tortuous way, Newman's insight is scarcely surpassable; but such study is tantalizingly rare. Only in two or three poems does it find adequacy of expression, and, except for their

existence, we should not guess Newman's powers of depicting the inmost workings of the human soul. He is intensely subjective. In his introspection, he is able to find the deepest anguish of the heart, spiritual strivings, experiences of the soul. His was a varied existence, but it is with a parsimonious hand that he pictures for us the lights and shades of his life.

Keble's consciousness of a saintly life, his spiritual serenity, did not admit of such an inward understanding of the latent feelings of man. Toward the individual, burdened with pain and anguish, he has, probably, a more tender feeling than has Newman, for he knows the placidity which his fellow may lack. His sympathy is apparent in his consolation; Newman's produces portraiture. Herein we may find some explanation of the comparative popularity and literary value of the poetry of these two writers. Keble brings to men the teaching and comfort which have satisfied the yearnings of countless hearts; Newman allows his momentary glimpses of a great soul tossed on the turbulent sea of life.

Closely related to these characteristics of their poetry, largely traceable to the lives of the two priests, are those fundamentally dependent upon their respective temperaments. In contradistinction to Keble's resort to meditation upon the varied ways of man, we find in Newman's verse rather the overflowings of a full spirit.

In prayer and praise and thanksgiving, in hope and despair, in aspiration, in resolution, Newman pours out his heart. Although the quality which we may properly call enthusiasm is scarcely suggested in his lyrics, there is ever the reflection of the spirit that animated Newman through his life of forceful endeavor and strong impulses. Yet, ^{his} poetry suffers considerably from the lack of intellectual appeal and beauty of associated thoughts, those richnesses of Keble's verse. By this we would by no means commit the absurdity of treating these as essentials of lyric poetry: we would rather venture that a degree of the contemplative would have rescued many of his poems from angularity and a certain severity of treatment. It is largely Keble's meditative cast that has given to his poetry its delicate, quiet tone, a tone of religious feeling that is exceptional in religious writers of all time.

One fatal obstacle to universality of appeal in both poets, it hardly need be noted, is the fact that they are firmly bound by one creed, and by a single interpretation of that creed. Their approach to their subjects is ever primarily from the ecclesiastical side. A striking characteristic of The Christian Year, however, is the fact that, while the form of the whole collection is founded upon the services and festivals of the Anglican Church, and while it is written primarily for Churchmen,

the general tone and teaching cannot be said to be distinctly Anglican. There are, of course, exceptions to the statement that the teaching is simply that of a Christian ascetic, finding Truth revealed in nature, and acknowledging the existence of Angels who are God's instruments; but the almost universal popularity of the volume in an earlier generation has proved that it is not uncatholicity that has marred the literary worth of this poetry.

The fact, that the Lyra Innocentium and Verses on Various Occasions did not enjoy a like popularity, is not wholly independent of the greater stress laid upon distinctly Anglican and, in a portion of the latter volume, Roman tenets and usages. Both poets have here entered realms unexplored by many who could follow Keble in his wanderings through that world known by all Christians. If we might apply the affirmations that "It is at that point where opinion tends to pass into passion that it may be named conviction"² and "From deep conviction spring the life and spirit of a poet's best work"², we might well suppose that these volumes were superior to The Christian Year. While it is true that Newman's opinion tended to pass into passion early in his

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Gingerich, p. 4

composition of his Verses, and that one of his two great poems was written after the Oxford Revival, Keble's earlier volume, in which the element of passion is not clearly discernible, is almost unquestionably the superior of the Lyra Innocentium.

Again, accepting Matthew Arnold's demand that great poetry should represent the "master currents" of the age in which it is written, we can scarcely claim the works of Keble and Newman to be of high literary merit. The Oxford Movement in a slight degree is representative of a master current. It crystalizes the turning to the Middle Ages, the interest in the unreformed Church, the spirit of revolt against the complacency of the eighteenth century; but it is, to be sure, a small stream of this current. Other romantic elements appear in the poems under consideration in the interest in and treatment of nature, in the consideration of the individual in his petty vexations and poor estate, in the verse forms, in the vague aspirations of the soul expressed in the poems. Yet, mingled with all of these are untold traces of pseudo-classicism, of ultra-conservatism, and of indifference to the age which had produced these poets. Keble's attempt to employ a distinctly poetic diction, and the mechanical rhythms used by both poets show a lack of appreciation of the literary movement of their day. Newman's distrust of science and hatred of liberalism,

and similarly Keble's blindness to the virtues of the United States mark these writers as following but partially the great current of their era.

The inartistic diction and the stiffness of form, which we have discussed at length,³ will always be factors depriving the body of this verse of even a reasonably high place in literature. While it has been said that good religious poetry is hard to write because the language in which it is expressed has lost its luster and freshness from frequent use, we venture that, had Keble and Newman written secular verse, their poetry would show little gain in freshness of diction. A notable exception to the general religious purpose might be cited from among the poems of each writer, and these verses be shown to have unusual freshness and charm; yet such citations would be by no means conclusive. The freshness of these verses is equalled, if not surpassed, in some of the most intensely religious poems of Keble and Newman. It is not the diction of religious and ecclesiastical subjects that mars their verse; it is rather their general lack of artistry in verse formation, and a false theory of poetic diction.

With these qualities we cannot fail to note the great irregularity of their verse. Because of Keble's

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unusual excellences, together with his inevitable failing, we must search almost discouragingly long to cull from his poems passages of high poetic worth. In studying Newman's poetry, it is useless to seek beyond his "Pillar of the Cloud" and The Dream of Gerontius for great literature. That the latter two writings surpass anything which Keble wrote, we have already noted; but, on these alone does Newman's reputation as a poet depend. If a writer may live through one lyric and a poetic drama, Newman is assured of a place in the history of English poetry. Contrasted with Newman's claim to fame is Keble's masterpiece, The Christian Year. Although Keble, like his fellow poet, bids fair to live in hymnals, through his poems "Morning" and "Evening", the fact that these two pieces must be curtailed considerably for such use is not an insignificant consideration in evaluating his poetry. Though among his poems there is scarcely a single piece in which some fly does not darken the mellow amber, yet we may rarely find a poem of his entirely destitute of amber. It is for this reason that The Christian Year, instead of any particular poem, may be named as Keble's masterpiece.

Whatever fate the poetry and reputation of these two priests may share, the consideration of them as distinctly religious poets can not be neglected. In their own realm, they unquestionably stand high. Newman's two

principal poems have, beside their literary worth, notable value as religious poetry. "The Pillar of the Cloud" gives him a place beside Charles Wesley, and, though the foundation of Newman's claim to this place is but a single poem, his position is no less secure than that of the famous hymnographer of the eighteenth century.

The Dream of Gerontius gives Newman an almost unique standing among religious writers, unless we note its similarities to some poems of Francis Thompson. Keble's Christian Year places him in a realm not far from that of George Herbert. Among writers of purely meditative verse, Keble will probably continue to hold a high position, and will be a noteworthy figure for all time. It is safe to say that, until that day shall come which Newman, in despair, foresaw, when Christ shall take away His Church from the sinful world, the poems of Keble and Newman will continue to be read and to influence men's lives.

APPENDIX I

The Dream of Gerontius
P. 324

Holy Mary, pray for him.
All holy Angels, pray for
him.

Choirs of the righteous,
pray for him.

Holy Abraham, pray for
him.

St. John Baptist, St.
Joseph, pray for him.

St. Peter, St. Paul

St. Andrew, St. John

All Apostles, All
Evangelists, pray
for him.

etc.

Recommendation of a Departing
Soul

Roman Office

Holy Mary, pray for him.
All ye holy Angels and
Archangels, (pray for
him.)

All ye Choirs of the Just,
(pray for him.)

Holy Abraham, (pray for
him.)

St. John the Baptist, (pray
for him)

St. Joseph, (pray for him.)
All ye holy Patriarchs and
Prophets, (pray for
him.)

St. Peter, (pray for him.)

St. Paul, (pray for him.)

St. Andrew, (pray for him.)

St. John, (pray for him.)

All ye holy Apostles and
Evangelists, (pray for
him.)

etc.

APPENDIX II

COMPARISON OF TRANSLATIONS OF THE COMPLINE HYMN
OF THE ROMAN BREVIARY

Newman's "Compline"

Now that the day-light dies
away,
By all thy grace and love,
Thee, Maker of the world, we
pray
To watch our bed above.

Let dreams depart and
phantoms fly,
The offspring of the night
Keep us, like shrines,
beneath Thine eye,
Pure in our foe's despite.

This grace on Thy redeem'd
confer,
Father, Co-equal son,
And Holy Ghost, the
Comforter,
Eternal Three in One.

Anglican Hymn

Before the ending of the
day,
Creator of the world, we
pray
That with Thy wonted favor,
Thou
Wouldest be our Guard and
Keeper now.

From all ill dreams defend
our sight,
From fears and terrors of
the night;
Withhold from us our
ghostly foe,
That spot of sin we may not
know.

O Father, that we ask be
done,
Through Jesus Christ, Thine
only Son,
Who, with the Holy Ghost
and Thee,
Doth live and reign eternally
Tr. by John Mason Neale,
1852

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This volume is of particular value since it contains a chronological list of the poems.