

A BRIEF SURVEY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S NATURE AND RELIGION

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Wordsworth's life began in contact with Nature, and though once he turned his back on her, he came back to it again, and in his later years, the relation between them became more and more intimate. Nature always combined herself with his heart. Therefore at any time, when he opened his mouth to sing, the poetry of Nature poured out of it.

But Nature "was continually represented in all poetry as the scenery in front of which the drama of mankind was acted, but it did not become a distinct subject for the poets, a subject apart from human nature, loved for itself alone, described for its own sake, conceived of as a comrade, a friend, a personality, having a universal life, and able to communicate with us, till Wordsworth so conceived it in the realm of poetry. And immediately a new poetry, or another sphere of poetry, came into being".*

And J. C. Shairp says: "Poets, all but the greatest, are apt to adorn things with fantastic or individual hues, to suffuse them with their own temporary emotions, which Ruskin has called 'the pathetic fallacy', "*** "for Wordsworth, however," as H. Read says, "Nature had her own life, which was independent of ours, though a part of the same Godhead. Man and Nature, Mind and the external world, are geared together and in unison complete the motive principle of the universe."*** This distinction drawn between them is important in considering his poetry.

Then what is Nature? What is his view of Nature? or What is moving before his eyes? Now let us look through some of his poems and see how Nature acts upon Man, what she is, and what she teaches.

* Naturalism in English Poetry. Stopford A. Brooke, p 141

** Studies in Poetry and Philosophy. J. Sharip, p 70-71

*** Wordsworth. H. Read, p 184

I have said that Wordsworth distinguished the life-of Nature from that of ours. He felt it to be a living, breathing power, not dead, but full of strange life. He saw into it, as if it were transparent. He himself said, "I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all I saw as something, not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from the abyss of idealism to reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over these remembrance." Nature has not only her appearance but also life, and her life is active of itself, and the active powers come from God.

Now let us go into the fact written in his poems.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreath;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure :
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

(Lines Written in Early Spring, 9-20)

We see joy in Nature. Nature is full of joy. Wordsworth saw it in Nature, “and it awakened joy in him. To him it was, finally, the joy of God in His own creative life; ‘the ancient rapture,’ as Browning called it, which God had in the continuous act of creation; though incessantly passing into form.”*

Then he turned to Man. What he found in him?

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran,
And much it grieved my heart to think
what man has made of man.

He saw sorrow, troubles and pains. He knew “The days of our years are threescore years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow.” (Psalms 90 : 10) He could find joy not in the world of Man, but in the world of Nature.

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field. (To My Sister 5-8)

Nature gives a blessing to individual things which embody her own life.
In such a joyful, blessed world,

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar: (To My Sister 17-18)
and Love, now a universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth: (21-23)

And thus Nature acts on human heart in the hour of feeling, that is in the wise

* Naturalism in English Poetry. S. A. Brooke, p 149-150

passivity. So to Wordsworth, rather I say, to us one moment may give more

Than years of toiling reason: (25-26)

And from the blessed power that rolls

About, below, above;

We'll frame the measure of our souls,

They shall be tuned to love. (33-36)

How joyful this cry is! He was happy to sing thus from his heart.

Then let me take up "Tintern Abbey". This poem shows his faith in Nature, his unique view of Nature. Herbert Read says, "It was composed in July, 1798, five years after his first visit to the bank of the Wye. That first visit took place, therefore, in 1793, the year following his return from France, where overwhelming experiences, — had been his lot. This year, 1793, has been shrouded in deliberate mystery—by Wordsworth himself and by his official biographers. We only know that it was a year of unsettled habits, of strange disappearances and unexpected silences. We know that his mind must have been in a state of extraordinary turmoil — emotional and intellectual turmoil. In this state of mind he went on a tour in the West of England as companion to William Calvert, and during the course of this tour Wordsworth first saw Tintern Abbey and the valley of the Wye."*

Wordsworth said that his painful heart was comforted by the beautiful scenery.

These beautiful forms,

Through a long absence, have not been to me

As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:

But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din

Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,

In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,

* Wordsworth. H. Read, P61

In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened; — (35-41)

Nature lightens our burdens of all this unintelligible world.

that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things. (41-49)

Nature awakes our souls and we can see into the life of things.

If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beating of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee (49-57)

This was his own experience, and the source of his power. His “eyes weary of observing artificial manners and society, and minds tired of contemplating abstractions, turned for consolation and refreshment to the beauty of nature, realizing an

invigorating delight and sublimity undreamt of before.”*

Well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being. (107-111)

Nature is not an ordinary being. The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of our heart, and soul of all our moral beings, is a personal being, God.

Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life to lead
From joy to joy: (122-125)

Nature gives us joy. Nature is full of joy. Everything in nature shows her enjoyment. But at the same time her enjoyment comes into our hearts, making us happy, full of joy. Then he addresses to his sister Dorothy that as Nature can inform

The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgment, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings, (126-134)

she should be in contact with Nature and she will get the same enjoyment in her

* The Philosophy of English Literature' J. I. Bryan, p 191

later years when these wild ecstasies shall be matured into a sober pleasure, when her mind shall be a mansion for all lovely forms, and when her memory will be as a dwelling-place for all sweet sounds and harmonies.

In "The Simplon Pass" we see the unity of nature. The immeasurable height of woods is decaying, but never decays. The stationary blasts of waterfalls, winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn in the narrow rent, and at every turn, the rocks, black drizzling crags, floating clouds and the vast heaven,— these things

Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symblos of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end. (16–20)

Everything in Nature is under the law of God and never acts as it wishes, so that the universe has its unity and harmony. Though earthquake shatters it, though storm disorders the peace of the sea, and sometimes though the violence threatens us, we need not be uneasy. Nature has the unity or harmony behind those tumults, and the unity or harmony gives us peace and quietude. All things are embodiments of the Almighty who is "Alpha and Omega", of "the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come,"* But let us call our attention to that, though the idea of God underlies this poem, he did not praise God ostensibly, but sang of Nature for her own sake. Nature was not the background in front of which God was praised by him. This attitude is different from that of the Hebrew. For the Hebrew poets, everything in nature speaks of God's power and glory. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament sheweth His handiwork. They have no pleasure in nature for her own sake; they value her only as she speaks of the invisible presence of God. If they regard the earth, they view it as the 'footstool' of the Lord; if they

* Revelation, 1 : 8

see the clouds gathering, they speak of them as the curtains for Jehovah's pavilion; if they listen to the thunder rolling, they hear in it 'the voice of the Lord upon the waters'; if they watch the lightning flashing, they think of it as 'the arrows of the most High'. It is, however, the transcendence rather than the immanence of God that is the thought of the Psalmists' minds: while He uses nature to make known His presence and power, He is high above it."*

In "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower" we see how nature brings up the child. "She exercises watchful care over the life of all things; she loves with passion pure and calm, all her children."** On this child "she could lavish all her love without asking from them a return. And no lovelier poem exists than that in which Nature makes her whole world unite to educate and make beautiful one little maiden."**

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The Girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain. (1-12)

* The one Volume Bible Commentary. by J. R. Dummelow, p 325

** Theology in the English Poets. S. A. Brooke, p 78

“There is no need to quote the rest, it is well-known; but nothing can be more living than the personality with which this poem invests Nature, nothing greater than the difference in feeling and thought between this conception and the mechanical Nature of Pope, or the dead universe of Cowper. We are in contact with a person, not with a thought. But who is this person? Is she only the creation of imagination, having no substantive reality beyond the mind of Wordsworth? No, she is the poetic impersonation of an actual Being, the form which the poet gives to the living Spirit of God in the outward world, in order that he may possess a metaphysical thought as a subject for his work as an artist.”* This is his theological idea which is at the basis of his representation of Nature.

In “The Tables Turned”. we are able to know the essence of his thought that Nature is the best and truest of all teachers. This poem expresses the same idea as “Expostulation and Reply” does.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher. (9-16)

There is more wisdom in the sweet music of the woodland linnet than that contained in many books. The throstle singing blithely is no mean teacher. It is good for us to be in contact with Nature. She blesses our minds and hearts.

* Ibid. p 79

And spontaneous wisdom is breathed by health, and truth is gained by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can. (21-24)

Nature teaches us good and evil. She has a moral influence upon man. I take it for granted that Wordsworth did not read much and always spent his time in having intercourse with Nature. He was not able to do without her. Nature's influence upon man is much great. But man mis-shapes the beautiful forms of things with his meddling intellect. So he said,

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives. (29-32)

And we can be taught by her only in the attitude of wise passiveness.

From 1806, Germany was defeated by Napoleon, and had to lie deprest beneath the brutal sword. The philosophy of Kant did not elevate the will of the nation, did not lead them to that transcendent rest. At that time Wordsworth cried,

Her haughty Schools

Shall blush; and may not we with sorrow say,
A few strong instincts and a few plain rules,
Among the herdsmen of the Alps, have wrought
More for mankind at this unhappy day
Than all the pride of intellect and thought?

("Alas! what boots the long laborious quest". 8-13)

Profound science or learning is less powerful than a few strong instincts and a few plain rules given by Nature to the herdsmen of the Alps. I think this is the work of God, done in our heart through Nature.

In "Hart-Leap Well, "we see the same idea as in "Three years she grew in sun and shower." The poor hart was hunted. How far did he run away? For thirteen hours he ran away with all his might and at last he made three desperate bounds from the top of the hill to the foot, his choicest place where the spring was washing out. They could not tell

"What cause the Hart might have to love this place,
And come and make his death-bed near the well." (147-8)

Here, hearing the sweet sound of the spring, he grew up. It was beside this spring where he heard the birds sing their morning carols, where he drank for the first time. He might be comforted by the sweet sound and might feel the love of it. The soul of this place crept deeply into his heart. Therefore what he called up into his heart in his death agony was this place. I think this is full of deep meaning. Even the animal is under the influence of Nature, and has the reaction in his heart. The hart died peacefully, drawing his last breath with his nose at the margin of the spring as if he had been in the Abraham's bosom.

This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

The Being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care

For the unoffending creatures whom he loves. (163-8)

We saw, in "Three years she grew in sun and shower" Nature or God takes much care to bring up the beautiful maiden. Now we know He takes care for an animal. The Bible says, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? " "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, —?"* "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father."** God's love extends to all the beings. Nature, the embodiment of God, works thus. This is one idea in this poem.

There is another one. That is that man destroys Nature and feels triumphant, but he is not happy. The hunter made this place that of pleasure, damaging the original nature. But what became of this place? There was no grass, no pleasant shade,

The sun on drearier hollow never shone;
So will it be, as I have often said,
Till trees, and stones, and fountain, all are gone. (158-160)

There was no joy, no peace, but only no common waste and gloom. Man cannot be happy in such a place. It is true that we must

"Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels." (179-180)

His art in the description of Nature is so vivid that when we read, we feel as if they were now before our eyes.

* Matthew 6:26, 28-30

** Ibid 10:29

When we read "It is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free," we see him sing of a little girl, who is known as his natural child.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquility;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea: (1-5)

In this quiet and gorgeous Nature, he recognized the existence of the Mighty Being, God. But the child who walked with him appeared untouched by this solemn thought, while being before the glorious Nature. Her appearance being thus, the child was not out of the influence of Nature. He sang:

Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not. (11-14)

He said, in spite of its appearance, the child was always influenced by Nature, God being with her, though she was unconscious of it.

In "Stepping Westward," the feeling he and his sister had when they walked westwards and heard the simple expression, "What, you are stepping westward?" can be felt by us too, when we read it. Dorothy wrote in her Journal Sept. 11th, 1803, "I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glowing with the departed sun." The poet of no common sensibility might be excited at the beautiful sight and more by the simple words. He might feel to mingle with the glowing light. Walter Pater says, "The leech gatherer on the moor, the woman "Stepping Westward," are for him natural objects, almost in the same sense as the aged thorn,

or the lichened rock on the heath.”* I think that this poem has the same meaning as “Resolution and Independence” has. The greeting

was a sound

Of something without place or bound;

And seemed to give me spiritual right

To travel through that region bright. (13-16)

I think he heard not the voice of man but of Nature herself or God. S.A. Brooke citing this poem, says of his greatness as an artist. “That which we most love him for, that which speaks to our soul out of his verse ——— is his passionate joy in what is beautiful, his vital feeling of all that is tender, his capacity for losing himself in Nature and in Man, his imagination, his power of penetrating into the heart of that concerning which he writes; and then, to top all, he was the creative, forming faculty by which he can shape his subject into words which seem divine; so fitted are they, by placing and by melody, to make us feel that which he has conceived and felt. — Take as an illustration ‘Stepping Westward.’ As the girl asked him: ‘What, are you stepping Westward?’ Wordsworth felt the infinite in the question — westward for ever — beyond the world and its flaming walls. That sense of boundless onward movement was the imaginative emotion in the poet’s soul, and it is felt as a transport throughout the poem. Yet Wordsworth binds it up with the girl, and then the girl with the lake, till she and the landscape and the infinite region where imagination wanders for ever are woven together. This is the high poetic power.”**

In “Roman Antiquities,” he said,

Heaven out of view, our wishes what are they?

Our fond regrets tenacious in their grasp?

The Sage’s theory? the Poet’s lay? (9-11)

* Appreciation. Walter Pater, p 47-48

** Naturalism in English Poetry. S. A. Brooke, p 179

Man is worthless without Nature, without God he is of no value of life. The Psalmist said, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," and the consequence is that "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good."* In his later years Wordsworth regained his faith which was marked by conservatism. He saw God through Nature so that he could not help singing of God to teach this abominable world. Man must live with "gentle heart wrong-proof," with the fear of God, though he lives in an "earth-built Cot."** Without God, our wishes, our regrets, the sage's theory and the poet's lay are all in vain. As we know through Nature, we should know Him through the earthly events. They are profitless, "unless they chasten fancies that presume too high, or idle agitation lull."***

"By the Seaside" shows the state of his heart in his later years, that serene and blessed mood. The silent sea vividly described, symbolizes his heart.

Now the ships that drove before the blast,
Threatened by angry breakers as they passed;
And by a train of flying clouds bemoaned;
Or, in the hollow surge, at anchor rocked
As on a bed of death, (11-15)

lodge in peace, "saved by His care who bade the tempest cease." (1. 16) He now turns to God, offering thanks and praises with a full heart.

Ye mariners, that plough your onward way,
Or in the haven rest, or sheltering bay,
May silent thanks at least to God be given
With a full heart; "our thoughts are heard in heaven!" (36-39)

Though silent, his heart's thoughts are heard in heaven.

Now he is not only a Nature poet but also a religious one. His poetic powers,

* Psalms 14 : 1

** "Hagland Hut" 1.12

*** Ibid. 1. 3-4

it is said, decayed in his later years, but his thought became sober and serene without unrest at all in his heart.

When we read "The White Doe of Rylstone," what do we find in it? In this poem, we can see "the final message of Wordsworth's personal and original religion, the parting utterance of his poetic youth."* He teaches "that active life is vanity that passeth away, though the soul, through suffering and submission to nature, may yet win communion with what endures for ever."** According to his thought, "Human endeavour, the whole fabric of human deeds, are destined to pass away and leave no trace. Only Nature and Mind and the Peace of God endure. Salvation is found not through acting, but through suffering."*** When I am reading his poems, this idea is always clinging to my heart. In this world, justice and good are often oppressed by evil and injustice, and yet man must bear patiently, because, though these oppressions seem to be unbearable and grievous, the peaceful fruit of righteousness will be given to them who are exercised thereby. (cf. Hebrews 12:11) When man is weak, then he must be strong. (cf. II Corinthians 12:10) By what? When Emily is full of sorrow, seeing this world give her no comfort, even then she was soothed. When she was

Driven forward like a withered leaf,
Yea, like a ship at random blown
To distant places and unknown, (Canto Seventh 1614-6)

even then she was

Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,
And awfully impenetrable. (1627-8)

For she was in Nature, receiving the consolation from her. White Doe came back to her, and her life in such a desolate place was not uneasy but happy with the animal beside her.

* William Wordsworth, Harper, Vol, II p 154

** Ibid. Vol. II p 156,

*** p 155

With her Companion, in such frame
Of mind, to Rylstone back she came;
And, ranging through the wasted groves,
Received the memory of old loves,
Undisturbed and undistrest,
Into a soul which now was blest
With a soft spring-day of holy,
Mild, and graceful, melancholy:
Not sunless gloom or unenlightened,
But by tender fancies brightened (Canto Seventh 1751-1760)

But why should she or, rather say, man suffer in this desolate world? Wordsworth said:

Her duty is to stand and wait;
In resignation to abide
The shock, and finally secure
O'er pain and grief a triumph pure. (Canto Fourth 1069-1072)

Harper says, "a note of almost oriental renunciation runs through the poem."*
But the oriental renunciation leads man to the life of a hermit. I do not think that Wordsworth meant such a life.

We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,

* William Wordsworth, Harper, Vol, II p 155

In years that bring the philosophic mind. (Intimations Ode 183-190)

Man must stand and wait patiently in order to secure a triumph, a "peaceful fruit of righteousness." There is a hope for a thing unseen. His view of Nature, life, and his religious thought may be understood. Nature is, in truth, everything to him. And this world is not the place where the soul of man lives for ever. The soul of exalted Emily

Rose to the God from whom it came! (Canto Seventh 1868)

Man is a stranger and pilgrim on earth, (cf. Hebrews 11:13) and he is to seek a country from which he came out, and to desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called his God: for he hath prepared for him a city. (cf. Hebrews 11:15-16)

Wordsworth said,

The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

For him Child is not a child as its appearance seems to be, but an "Intimation of Immortality." Upon him Child urges the religious thought. The Child is nearer to God than the Man.

But when Wordsworth saw the child, a six years boy, he saw him surrounded by the glory of heaven, and called him the best philosopher, "since he sees at once that which we through philosophy are endeavouring to reach,"* the mighty prophet, "because in his actions and speech he tells unconsciously the truths he sees, but the sight of which we have lost."* The child "is more closely haunted by God, more near to the immortal life, more purely and brightly free, because he half shares in the pre-existent life and glory out of which he has come."*

The child himself is not conscious of this vision. He does not know that he sees

* Theology in the English Poets. S. A. Brooke, p 222

God, that he is revealing the truths “which we are toiling all our lives to find,”* and that the Immortality “broods (over him) like the Day, a Master o’er a Slave.”** “He knows nothing of it. But we, looking back on our childhood, or looking at childhood itself, from an age out which has faded the light we had, remember the light of this vision in our own childhood, and recognize its results and quality in children. We know that what we then felt and now see in children was and is divine, know it from the bitter contrast, for

The things which we have seen we now can see no more. (1. 9)

We are conscious that they were, because we have lost them.”*** The same thing is seen in “We are Seven.” The child has no idea of any severance between earth and heaven. Her dead brother and sister are still a part of the family. Death is nothing to her knowledge. And she speaks, in saying, “Nay, we are seven,” one of the truths, which we endeavour to know all through our life. And that we recollect the childhood and its glory is an Intimations of Immortality.

Now we can know that Wordsworth thought that the child had the glory of heaven, though he was unconscious of it, and growing old, man lost it; but when he sees the beauty in Nature, he recollects the glory in which his childhood was surrounded, or sees the child, knows the vision of glory is around it, and the recollection shows us that man is immortal, that is, man regains the glory, once lost, and holds it for ever. Wordsworth wrote the famous passages as follows: —

To me the meanest flower that blows can give

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears. (206-7)

This is the serene, blessed attitude of having spiritual awakening. “Consider the lilies of the field,” (Matthew 6:28) and we know there is a immeasurable depth of thought in them, the incessant thought of God.

We have run through some of Wordsworth’s poems and analysed them as

* Intimations Ode 1. 116

** Ibid 1. 119

*** Theology in the English Poets. S. A. Brooke, p 222-3

reflecting his Nature and Religion. In Nature there is a soul, a living principle. In all things in Nature abides an active principle. Nature is "a life-giving spirit who built up the universe, who from her own universal life gave to each particular thing, the smallest flower, the drift of a gossamer cloud, its own distinct life, its own soul, its own work."* The whole universe has a unity, is in a harmony and intercommunion. Nature has her own personal pleasures, emotions and thoughts. Nature is close to men and loves men, women, and children, not as they love one another, but with an elemental love. Though this may seem to be a mere poetic impersonation, he gave her substance, linking her with the conception of God ruling the universe. Nature herself and everything in Nature have their own life. This is why his Nature is called pantheism. But it is not a mere pantheism. It is the true and necessary pantheism which affirms God in all, and all by him, but which does not affirm that the all includes the whole of God. With regard to this, J. C. Shairp says: "The question has often been asked how far Wordsworth was a religious poet; That he was a religious man no one doubts. In his earlier poems, especially, as in 'Tintern Abbey,' and others, men have pointed to passages, and said, these are Pantheistic in their tendency. The supposition that Wordsworth ever maintained a Pantheistic philosophy, ever held a deliberate theory of the Divine Being as impersonal, is contradicted both by many an express declaration of his own, and by what is known of his life. But it is none the less true that though he never held the Pantheistic doctrine, the presence of nature, when he was in the heyday of imagination, stirred in him what is called the Pantheistic feeling in its highest and purest form."* His Nature was to him a person, and had her own life. And it was possible for him to have communication with any one manifestation of that life. He thought that under this intercommunion or active friendship lay Love, though sometimes red in teeth and claws in her appearance. The whole universe had the law of Love.

* *Naturalism in English Poetry*. S. A. Brooke p 142

** *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*. J. C. Shairp, p 108-9

This is why his Nature is said to be optimistic. Yet these Joy, Peace, Love were or are of Nature's her own. He distinguished Nature from Man. They were separate beings. The birds sang gaily or sorrowfully not because he himself was happy or sad. They sang their own pain or pleasure. This is his objective view of Nature. What is the relation between Nature which has such qualities and Man who has the similar qualities? I think this is the most important idea of Wordsworth's Nature. This relation is most remarkably displayed in his "serene and blessed mood." J. I. Bryan says, "To him Nature was alive: each aspect of beauty, in flower or stream or hill, had a soul of its own, a mystic reality expressing the divine mind; which is also a Japanese idea. Between this spirit in nature and the spirit of man there was a pre-arranged harmony enabling nature to communicate its thoughts to man, and man to reflect upon them, until an absolute union between man and nature was established."* Man, in the wise passiveness, or in the union with her is given comfort, repose, and healing. When he is utterly distressed, who gives him strength? When his heart is darkened by earthly cares, who gives him freshness? When he is disturbed by sorrow, who comforts him? It is Nature herself that does it. Nature teaches him more of man, of moral good and evil than all the sages can. Therefore Wordsworth said: If this thought

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart —
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee! (Tintern Abbey 11. 50-57)

* The Philosophy of Eng. Literature. J. I Bryan, p 191

And he got strength, comfort, repose, healing. For him Nature was He who said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Thinking thus, we know Nature has a moral influence on man's life. Wordsworth is remarkable in singing of Nature for her own sake, but by observing, and singing of her, he ultimately deals with life in his poetry and teaches us how to live. J. I. Bryan says, "Wordsworth said that creation in poetry meant revelation, through the imagination of the poet, of the invisible spirit of nature. The problem of poetry as of life itself, was fundamentally a metaphysical and not a technical one. Reason, alone, was non-moral; in nature was perceived the image and shape of right reason, embodied and made visible in conformity with eternal law. Man's wisdom was not independent of nature's impulse and guidance, nor must he impose on her his caprices. It is obvious that this philosophy involves the fundamental question of how to live."* "The question, how to live, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied."** Arnold proceeds, "It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life, — to the question: How to live."** As far as life is concerned morals should be taken into poetry.

Life is closely connected with morality. As Nature has the natural law, man has the moral law, and as Nature cannot get out of the natural law, man must observe the moral law — Nature and man must do their duty, or else they cannot hold their lives.

Wordsworth sang:

I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;

* The Philosophy of Eng. Literature. J. I. Bryan, p 192-3

** Essays in Criticism. Matthew Arnold, 2nd Series p 142-4

Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live!

(Ode to Duty 58-64)

This was not only the prayer for his own, but also for all men. And it was his ideal that all men should be

Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot
Who do thy work, and know it not. (Ode to Duty 13-4)

To realize this prayer or hope, man must

welcome fortitude, and patient cheer
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here —
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn. (Elegiac Stanzas 57-60)

And man,

whether praise of him must walk the earth
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,
Or he must fall, to sleep without his fame,
And leave a dead unprofitable name —
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause;
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
His breath in confidence of Heaven's applause:

This is the happy Warrior; (Character of the Happy Warrior 77-84)

This is his view of life which is developed from his view of Nature, and both views have the Religion as their undercurrent thought. And where does his religion come

from? It comes, perhaps, from the faith which "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1) He looked "not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (II Corinthians 4:18) He had the faith which the Psalmist had and sang of such beautiful following lines as found in Psalms 23.

I think that this is the faith which lies at the bottom of his thought. And let me say once more that this faith has developed from that which he had in his childhood. It is well said that the child is father of the Man.

Let me close the present study with a short sentence which J. C. Shairp cites — Wordsworth's work is "Ut animos ad sanctiora erigeret,"—"to raise our minds to holier things."* And he said, "In the world of nature, to be a revealer of things hidden, the sanctifier of things common, the interpreter of new and unsuspected relations, the opener of another sense in men; in the moral world, to be the teacher of truths hitherto neglected, the awakener of men's hearts to the solemnities that encompass them, deepening our reverence for the essential soul, apart from accident and circumstance, making us feel more truly, more tenderly, more profoundly, lifting the thoughts upward through the shows of time to that which is permanent and eternal, and bringing down on the transitory things of eye and ear some shadow of the eternal, till we

'feel through all this fleshly dress

Bright shoots of everlastingness' —

this is the office which he will not cease to fulfil, as long as the English language lasts. What earth's far-off lonely mountains do for the plains and the cities, that Wordsworth has done and will do for literature, and through literature for society; sending down great rivers of higher truth, fresh purifying winds of feeling, to those who

*Studies in Poetry and Philosophy. J. C. Shairp, p 113

least dream from what quarter they come. The more thoughtful of each generation will draw nearer and observe him more closely, will ascend his imaginative heights, and sit under the shadow of his profound meditations, and, in proportion as they do so, will become more noble and pure in heart?''*

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