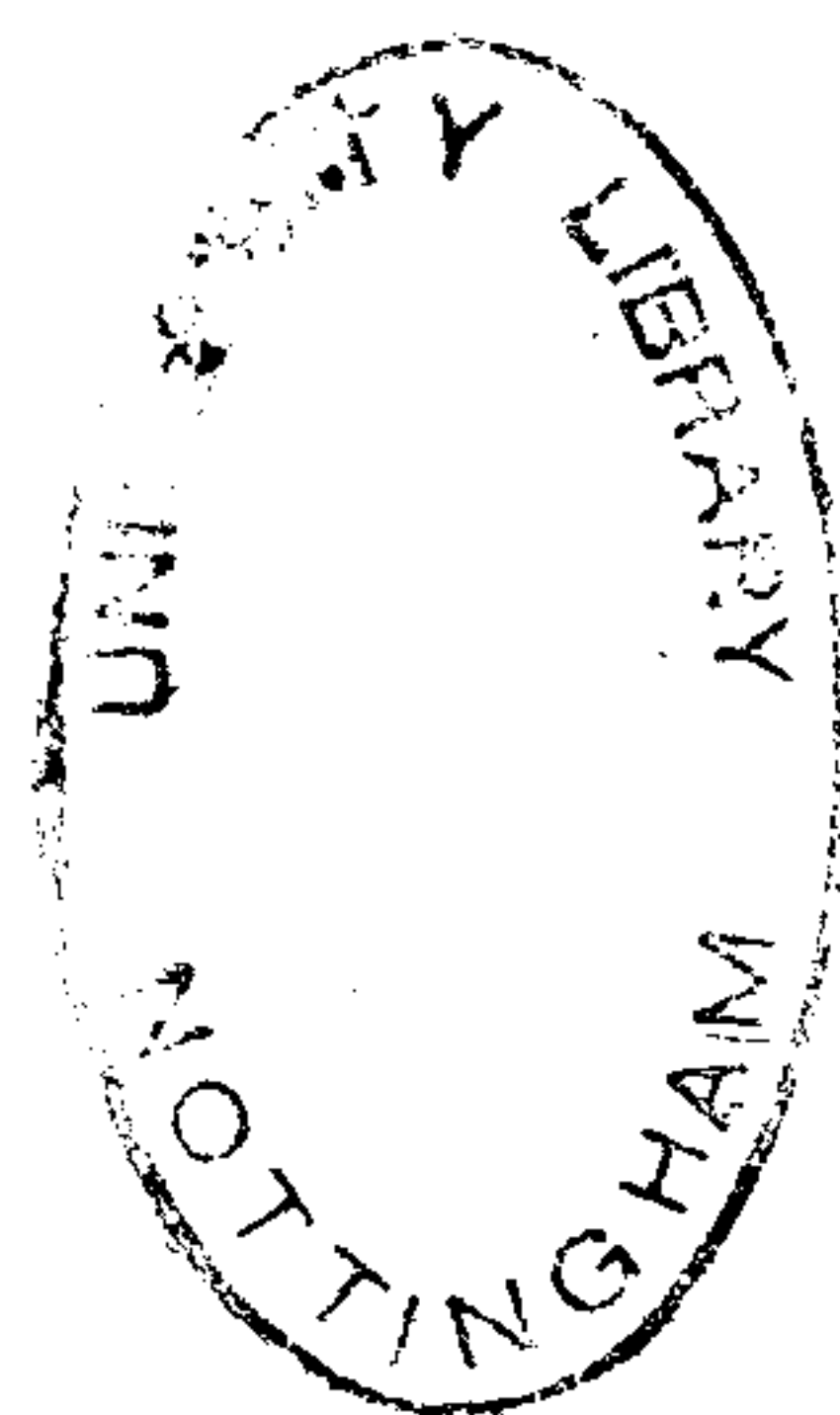


IMMORTAL DIAMOND : VERSIONS OF  
SELFHOOD IN CHARLES DICKENS,  
THOMAS CARLYLE, ROBERT BROWNING  
AND GEORGE MACDONALD

-by-

HEATHER PATRICIA WARD, B.A.

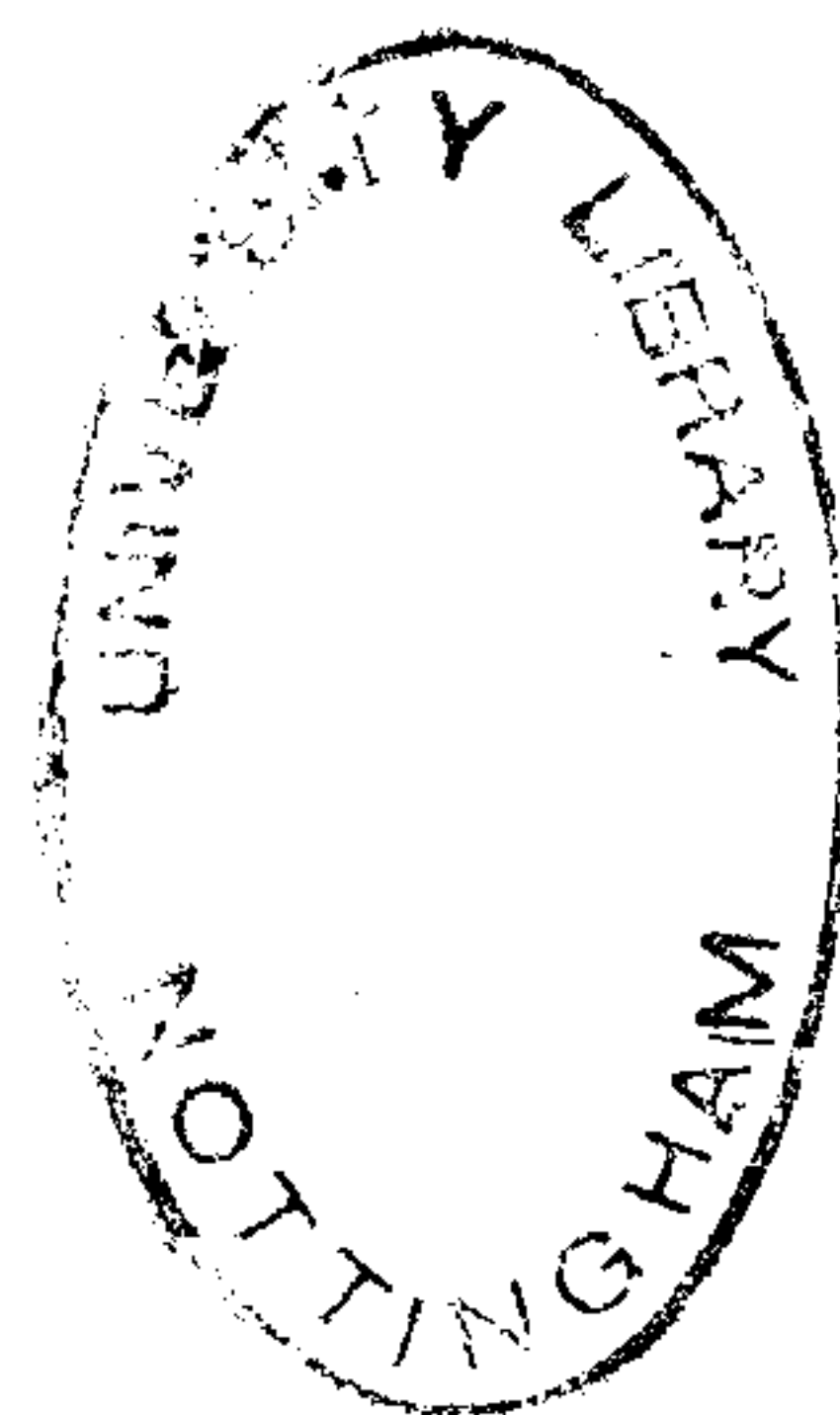


Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, October, 1981.

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## Preface

Intellectual debts must be acknowledged to the works of Canon A. M. Allchin and of Vladimir Lossky. The former first alerted me to the importance of patristic theology in Anglicanism and in English literature; the latter clarified my apprehension of the distinction between the person and the individual, the self and the ego. The influence of Dr. Frank Lake must also be acknowledged, as he introduced me to the concept of guilty innocence in its psychological aspects.

References have been compiled in accordance with the British Standard 1629 (2nd edition, 1976). However, in the notes to chapters an American modification in the presentation of details has been introduced. This allows an increased ease in reading and a greater differentiation between bibliographical data and comment.

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to explore the versions of selfhood found in the works of Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle, Robert Browning and George MacDonald in relation to patristic theological anthropology rather than to modern psychology. It sets the view of selfhood of these authors within the context of the English Christian and literary heritage and of their own period.

The anthropology developed in patristic and mystical theology, an Incarnational theology, is examined to determine the central aspects of its vision of selfhood. This selfhood is identified as God-participating manhood rather than as psychological individuality. The self is the image of God in man. The existence of this conception of selfhood and its corollaries in English literature and religious thought is demonstrated and analysed, to establish the tradition and the possible sources of this vision available to the Victorians.

The versions of selfhood in the works of Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald are analysed, and discussed in relation to their individual sources of contact with traditional thinking about the self, sources held to validate personal religious intuition. The tradition is acknowledged as both conceptual and experiential. The authors' approach to selfhood is also related to that of the influential Incarnational theology of their period : to Tractarianism and its successors; to the Unitarian-influenced Christian Socialism of F. D. Maurice. Their agreement with these schools of theology about the nature of the self is indicated, suggesting a greater, if unacknowledged, unity between Victorian theologians and men of letters than previously has been supposed.

## CHAPTER ONE

IMMORTAL DIAMOND : THE SELF AS THE IMAGE  
OF GOD IN A CHRISTIAN AND LITERARY TRADITION

My me is God, nor do I recognise any other me,  
 except God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

I am all at once what Christ is, since  
     he was what I am, and  
 This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch,  
     matchwood, immortal diamond,  
     Is immortal diamond.<sup>2</sup>

The experience of selfhood within Christian culture has frequently been one of antinomy. At moments of heightened awareness, it is possible for the person to become aware of his life as "being" in distinction from the attributes of personality; in such a state his self is perceived as a participant in an existence transcending his individuality.<sup>3</sup> At other equally heightened moments and in much social life, the self may be experienced as isolated and incommunicable. Christian man may be said to have lived in the tension between these polarities, acknowledging sociality and the necessity of relationship yet alone within himself and free to perceive himself as the centre of his own universe, underived and self-determining. A corollary to this conflict is man's sensitivity to his "immortal longings"<sup>4</sup> which are held over against his certain knowledge of decay and transience. The man who intuits eternal being within him understands it as a gift which accompanies and



transfigures his human contingency, a gift which, in the words of George MacDonald, turns the dead coal of human life into eternal diamond.<sup>5</sup> The lone man may know the horror of a human frailty which mocks his pretensions to absolute being and centrality. Desire for self-transcendence is bound to an assurance of involvement with a fragile earth.

For the Victorians consciousness of these tensions was highlighted not only by developments in social theory and in capacity for the manipulation of life, but also by the tendency of popular Evangelicalism towards extreme individualism and denial of divine immanence<sup>6</sup>. Man was isolated in himself from any fellowship with man bar that of depravity. Relationship with God distinguished the saved individual from his unredeemed companions and removed the elect from involvement with the fate of humanity itself.

The life of John Henry Newman is illustrative of one way in which these polarities were reconciled in Victorian theology. Newman's early Evangelical formation created in him acute awareness of personal responsibility and solitariness, of a state in which

to us ... there are but two beings in the whole world, God and ourselves.<sup>7</sup>

His religious and intellectual journey led him, however, to the rediscovery of the collective entity of mankind<sup>8</sup>

an entity in which the individual was understood as a member of a body, a participant in a greater life. For Newman, as Trevor has suggested,

transferred the idea of growth from the individual to the group, on the highest, the personal level.<sup>9</sup>

In the Catholic thought Newman helped to restore, the Church was just such a group, the Body of Christ in which each person realised

his identity and responsibility as a being incorporated into Christ. Membership of the body overcame, therefore, both polarities in man. The individual found himself as a being sharing in divine life with others and discovered his transient human mortality transformed through this collective union of humanity with Christ.

While many could not follow Newman in his acceptance of the Roman Catholic Church as the locus for this reconciliation of antinomies, the need for some such reconciliation was a key aspect of theological reflection throughout his century. There emerged from this concern a re-affirmation of belief in brotherhood between men as a theological rather than a political or social concept: men had the relationship of brother one to another because of the Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of Christ, through whom all might become "first-born sons".<sup>10</sup> Such a vision is particularly associated with the theologian F. D. Maurice, who thus analysed the dilemma of his contemporaries in The Kingdom of Christ :-

We cannot say to these men : You must cast aside this faith in the existence of bonds between man and the Universe; these bonds exist - they have been felt and realised - the more they are felt and realised the better. Neither can we say to them, There is an individual soul in you which is more precious than all these bonds; they will go all lengths with you in that affirmation; they have been bred in a school of pure exclusive Protestantism; they believe in the individual soul; they all but worship it. Nevertheless they feel that there are human bonds - bonds not merely for the individual soul but for humanity: they feel that these must be acknowledged quite as much as the needs of the individual soul; that that soul does indeed witness to them.

But they have been told by their Protestant teachers that there are no such bonds between humanity and God; He is concerned only with the individual; all forms signifying any more general relationship than this are unmeaning and obsolete. They have been told this; they have learnt the lesson; they believe it as heartily as such a lesson can be believed. Only they believe also, that if this lesson be true, then humanity must



seek its happiness in fellowship with something other than God, or rather must make its god or gods out of objects which can have living intercourse with it.<sup>11</sup>

For Maurice, the Redemption commenced in the Incarnation was just such release from the separate life of individuality into the full life of the son and brother.<sup>12</sup> It was also, in consequence, the liberation of man from subjection to mortality, enabling his growth into God-participating manhood : as Hopkins also understood it, the work of Redemption made possible the exaltation of creaturely matchwood into the immortal diamond of Christ's humanity.

This likeness to the vision of the former Anglo-Catholic Jesuit poet indicates Maurice's links with the Oxford Movement in its renewal of the patristic approach to the Incarnation and Atonement and its ensuing anthropology. Although differing in ecclesiology and interpretation of some aspects of traditional doctrine, the Tractarians had common ground with Maurice in their insistence upon God and the Incarnation as central to the meaning and valuation of human nature. That Christ had taken manhood into Godhood, establishing man as the place of his indwelling, was the cornerstone to the theology both of the Tractarians and of the Christian Socialists inspired by Maurice.

It is the contention of this study that the works of Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald are informed by a similar vision of the self as a brother made to partake of the divine nature<sup>13</sup>. Such a vision will be seen to arise from both personal religious response and acquaintance with various sources of patristic thought, theological and literary. Before considering the basis in their works for such an argument, it is essential to examine the meaning and history of this traditional anthropology in its theological and

literary expressions, in order both to understand its nature and to perceive the tenacity of its existence in English thought.

Selfhood today is generally conceived of as being synonymous with personality, self-image, personal identity or self-consciousness. It is therefore considered to denote individuality. Modern thought regarding the self concentrates upon either the distinguishing characteristics of the person, his psycho-physical and social attributes or upon his self-definition. The self is rarely related to a general concept of man or human nature which is frequently regarded as a dubious notion. Men not man is the concern. This was not so, however, to the Fathers of the Christian Church, especially those of the East. These theologians developed their approach to the self of man through a study of the Incarnation, aided by their mainly Platonic philosophy. For the Fathers the true being of man, what we term the "self", was not the individual, the bearer of various attributes of Nature, but the "person", the hypostasis which encompasses the entirety of Nature while remaining distinctive. In this thought, the self is, therefore, particularised manhood, after the model of the unity-in-distinction and distinction-in-unity of the Holy Trinity. The three persons of the Trinity are not three individuals among whom the qualities of the divine nature are shared, but three unique hypostases, each possessing the entirety of divinity.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the basic identity of this manhood was held to issue from man's creation in the image of God, in accordance with the likeness of Christ, the Son and perfect image. The work of Redemption was the restoration of man by Christ to the image and likeness of God, and hence to divine sonship. The Fathers varied



in their interpretation and location of the image in man<sup>15</sup>. There was agreement, however, that man could only be understood as a living subject in reference to God, while God himself was reflected in the work of his hands, as Irenaeus of Lyons claimed :-

The glory of God is a living man but the glory of man is the vision of God.<sup>16</sup>

So, too, Antony the Great, the first of the Desert Fathers, could affirm the value of the self and its union with all other selves. His letters of spiritual direction reminded his readers that "he who knows himself, knows God",<sup>17</sup> and that all men have a unity and an equality in sharing in the same "intellectual substance".<sup>18</sup> The basis for human brotherhood is man's creation as a reflection of the Intellect of God.

The Fathers perceived also that man tended to deny this selfhood by not recognising his spiritual nature, identifying himself only with his personality and physical needs, his inheritance from earth. And so there is in Irenaeus a distinction between the "pneumatic" and the "psychic" man. When a man lives only as a psycho-physical entity, as the modern individual, he is not fully a man :-

There are three elements of which ... the complete man is made up, flesh, soul and spirit; one of these preserves and fashions the man, and this is spirit; another is given unity and form by the first, and this is flesh; the third, the soul, is mid-way between the first two, and sometimes it is subservient to the spirit and is raised by it: while sometimes it allies itself with the flesh and descends to earthly passions. ...

When this spirit is mingled with soul and united with created matter, then through the outpouring of the Spirit, the complete man is produced: this is man in the image of God. A man with soul only, lacking spirit, is "psychic", such a man is carnal, unfinished, incomplete; he has, in his created body, the image of God, but he has not acquired the likeness to God through the spirit.<sup>19</sup>

Finding spirit for Irenaeus, as for Thomas Carlyle seventeen centuries later, is the primary task of man in becoming a self. This self, as Irenaeus presents it, is a naturally spiritual being who is yet dependent upon grace for his completion: made with a capacity for God he requires God's action to realise that capacity. That action is firstly the Incarnation in which

Our Lord Jesus Christ ... became what we are that he might make us what he himself is.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, it is his effect upon the spirit which responds to him. The self is therefore truly hidden in God and may be understood as another "incarnation", in which the obedience of the human spirit to the Holy Spirit produces a man wholly in the likeness of God. As later mystics experienced it, this "inner Christ" rather than the known personality is found to constitute selfhood.

Irenaeus provides the conceptual framework and the terminology for the discussion of selfhood in this study. The self will be regarded as the spiritual nature of man which culminates in identification with Christ. Becoming a self will be seen to be synonymous with realising Christ-like manhood, at once a total and a particularised man. Ultimately such a self is the entirety of man, with his psychic and carnal attributes subordinated to, and integrated with, his spirit. This is pneumatic selfhood. It is to be distinguished from Irenaeus' psychic or carnal manhood, which may, following accepted usage<sup>21</sup>, be termed the ego, or psychological self. This ego refers to all that man is as an animal and to his self-definition and self-image, the product of psychic consciousness. However, as Irenaeus discerned it, there is an implicit conflict between self and ego, pneumatic and psychological, carnal selfhood,



for the psyche may ally with flesh rather than spirit, with the created rather than with the reflection of divinity. Consequently, the term "self" must be employed at times to denote spiritual identity as it stands over against the demands and pretensions of the rebellious psyche when it is governed by the passions, the instincts of the material world in all its frailty and transience. In this case, "ego" means especially self-image and personality, the soul's decision about its identity in defiance of its spiritual nature and dependent, derived relationship to God. The self which includes its psycho-physical nature, its ego, is also free from it, acknowledging that this aspect of his identity is not his source and definition. The self is inimical to the claims of absolute, isolated ego and to the notion of the autonomous individual.

Irenaeus, moreover, introduces another key concept of the self as a responsive, co-creating being, which involves the student of selfhood in somewhat paradoxical terminology. If the self in the image of God is the product of the co-operation of man's spirit with God then selfhood ultimately resides in God and not in man. It is, yet, his own spirit which allows this selfhood and therefore shares in its nature. Hence it is necessary for the tradition of the Fathers to speak of the self becoming itself, of man as his own parent and as the Virgin Mother setting forth Christ<sup>22</sup>. "Self" as it pertains to man's part in the work of becoming denotes his spiritual nature which is only a partial and potential self until fulfilled by grace.

The self must become what it is, by grace. Herein lies the basis for the popularity of the image of the "divine seed" among theologians and poets of the seventeenth century. Here, too, is found the source

of the more optimistic aspect of Pusey's teaching on baptismal regeneration: man's life is a process of realising the identity bestowed by God.

A family resemblance of ideas may also be discerned in Carlyle's conception of spiritual man. The possessor of genius is the man who has been enabled to realise pneuma, for it is

the clear presence of God. Most High in a man.  
Dim, potential in all men; in this man it has  
become clear, actual.<sup>23</sup>

And for Carlyle man deserves veneration not for his individual gifts but for his enshrinement of the glory of God, his reflection of divinity :-

the actual life of Man includes in it all  
Revelations ... reverence thy fellow-man.<sup>24</sup>

But this veneration can only find its true subject when the centrality of the psychic self is denied, and the totality of manhood achieved through renunciation

by which alone man's narrow destiny may become  
an infinitude in itself.<sup>25</sup>

This belief of Carlyle in the greatness and glory of the self is, as it has been seen, no aberration in the history of Christian man's experience of himself. The Fathers were acutely aware of the high calling of man and were not afraid to use extravagant, personal language to describe it, when it was accepted that the personal implied manhood, not individuality. Hence Gregory Nazianzen could declare

I must be buried with Christ, arise with Christ,  
be joint heir with Christ, become the son of God,  
yea God Himself. ...

This is the purpose of the great mystery for us.  
This is the purpose of God, Who for us was made  
man and became poor, to raise our flesh, and  
recover His image, and remodel man, that we might  
all be one in Christ.<sup>26</sup>



The personal is here inseparable from the corporate concept of Man: each "I" encompasses the mystery of Redemption, as part of the humanity sanctified by the Humanity of God.<sup>27</sup>

In the vision of the Eastern Fathers, the glory of man as re-created in Christ was also his original state. Any understanding of depravity as natural to man was completely repudiated. Man was by nature innocent and beautiful, as befits the image of God. His innocence and beauty the Fall perverted and disfigured without destroying. Capacity for good and for love remain the natural tendency of man, a tendency subverted by his separation from God.<sup>28</sup> Original Sin is therefore an infection turning man away from knowledge of his true self, producing a diseased environment which perpetuates estrangement from God among men. Gregory of Nyssa explains it thus in his treatise On the Early Deaths of Infants :-

We may say that the enjoyment of ... future life does indeed belong of right to the human being, but that, seeing the plague of ignorance has seized almost all now living in the flesh, he who has purged himself of it by means of the necessary sources of treatment receives the due reward of his diligence, when he enters on the life that is truly natural; while he who refuses Virtue's purgatives and renders that plague of ignorance, through the pleasures he has been entrapped by, difficult in his case to cure, gets himself into an unnatural state, and so is estranged from the truly natural life, and has no share in the existence which of right belongs to us and is congenial to us. Whereas the innocent babe has no such plague before its soul's eyes obscuring its measure of light and so it continues to exist in that natural life; it does not need the soundness which comes of purgation, because it never admitted the plague into its soul at all.<sup>29</sup>

No vision could be further from that of the child as evil and subject of divine wrath which so affronted Dickens, while it shares the Dickensian approach to evil as an ethos in which men

live. Esther Summerson in Bleak House and Amy Dorrit in Little Dorrit are both children born into a diseased world, ignorant of the bonds between men, who must learn and grow, but have no need of purgation.

Newman also, a student of the Fathers, recognised that sin is not definitive of man, as is shown by the reflections in his diary during his retreat of 1843 :-

If disobedience is against nature, I am in the sight of Angels, like some odious monster which people put out of sight.<sup>30</sup>

Man "bemonsters" himself when he removes himself from God, repudiating his derivation from him and continuing relationship to him. His capacity for goodness is his, but only by virtue of his cleaving to the Source of Goodness :-

If the Deity is the fulness of good, and this is His image, then the image finds its resemblance to the Archetype in being filled with all good.<sup>31</sup>

Evil is the denial of that Archetype, the state of illusion in which men seek their being in something other than God, departing from the condition of sons and brothers who bear

only the stamp of God, by Whom and for Whom we were made, and have so far received our form and model from Him, that we are recognised by it alone.<sup>32</sup>

When such evil prevails "man" becomes "men" and the basis of brotherhood in the spiritual law of being is lost, only to be sought artificially in political and social organisation, the situation consistently attacked by F. D. Maurice. Such an attack on behalf of a concept of spiritual solidarity among men will be found also to form a mainspring for the works of Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald.

Solidarity resulting from origin in God is also, however, solidarity in creatureliness and contingency. To the Fathers man was not only an image of God but also a microcosm of material



creation, sharing its earth-bound tendency and subject to all its instability. The self was seen, therefore, as "the mediator between God and carnality"<sup>33</sup> the mean between

the Divine and incorporeal nature and the  
life of brutes.<sup>34</sup>

But it is Christ who is the ultimate reconciler of earth and heaven, flesh and spirit. Hence, in the theology of Maximus the Confessor, man is fully Christ in his selfhood when he is the microcosm and mediator of creation, bringing his contingent creatureliness into union with God. The self has thus a cosmic dimension : the integration and restoration of the one person is instrumental in the completion of Christ's work of atonement or universal re-unification (at-onement). For Maximus, consequently, the task of the self is not to develop his psychic attributes but to discover this Christ-like "inner man" who resolves the antinomies of flesh and spirit, man and woman, into the unity of God-man-womanhood. This self is a co-redeemer and a workshop of the universe.<sup>35</sup>

This microcosmic self, like Christ by virtue of his spiritual and his fleshly nature, is consequently vicarious by nature. Like Christ he stands for all other selves whom he mirrors, in solidarity with the estrangement of creation. The self must know himself as Adam as well as Christ, a view espoused by Symeon the New Theologian, after St. Paul :-

we are participants in the nature of our  
ancestor Adam ... we are participants of the  
Divine grace of the Second founder of our race.<sup>36</sup>

This patristic anthropology differs widely from the view of man which arose out of the development of Aristotelian nominalism and out of Protestantism. God is transcendent but also directly



implicated in humanity. Man is dependent upon God but is neither powerless nor devoid of free-will. He is the naturally godly co-creator and co-redeemer with Christ, made for growth into God. His is the kind of human nature traditionally recognised in the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>37</sup> Such a self is definable only by relational terms, knowing himself from and towards God and others, and before God on behalf of all others. He resists the reduction of man found in extreme Protestantism; he is antithetical also to the absolute self of late European Romanticism as much as to the mechanical model of selfhood arising from the rationalist tendency to conflate psyche and pneuma.

The responsibility for the survival of this patristic vision in the West lay primarily with the monastic communities, in particular with the Cistercians and the Rhineland Dominicans. The former exerted considerable literary influence, as their contribution to the development of the Grail legends suggests, and they preserved an experiential approach to theology in the face of the Scholastic inclination to over-rationalistic definition of doctrine. Monastic theologians such as Isaac of Stella, despite the debt to Scholasticism, continued to consider man according to patristic models. Isaac produced a Christological anthropology greatly similar to that of Maximus the Confessor: man as an image of God and a microcosm of the universe reflected the role of Christ as the mediating "missing link" in the golden chain of being. Man was once again the point in which the universe was reconciled to its Creator, a form of Superman who reached upwards and downwards, spanning earth and heaven.<sup>38</sup>

It was, however, Cistercian liturgy, even more than Cistercian

scholarship, which conserved the vision of the Fathers, for this was by nature the most traditional and least susceptible to change of all expressions of theology. The following antiphon celebrating the "divine exchange" of the Incarnation perfectly summarises the Fathers' emphasis upon the deification of man made possible again by Christ :-

O admirabile commercium! Creator generis humani  
animatum corpus sumens de Virgine nasci dignatus  
est; et procedens homo sine semine largitus est  
nobis suam deitatem .<sup>39</sup>

The German and Flemish Dominicans of the school of Eckhart, directors of Cistercian nuns and well versed in some of the Fathers, reinterpreted patristic thought in terms of contemporary Scholasticism,<sup>40</sup> as St. John of the Cross did later in terms of affective mysticism.<sup>41</sup> Eckhart accepted the fact of individual existence but affirmed man as a God-participating being to whose fulfilment the emphasis upon separate personality was a barrier.<sup>42</sup> He taught not a pantheistic absorption in God but a loss of ego when the self knows himself in God :-

When all individuality is asleep in you, then you are  
awake in God.<sup>43</sup>

Through such monastic sources the anthropology of the Fathers, primarily of the East, survived the re-orientation involved in the rise of scholasticism. They made available a tradition which remained a factor in theological thinking for, as McGinn remarks, the concept of man as the image of God "was indispensable to all mediaeval theologians."<sup>44</sup>

Furthermore, the vitality of this tradition within Rhineland mysticism was important for its transmission to the Protestant world through its influence upon Lutheran mystics such as



Johann Arndt and Jacob Boehme. Boehme, under the tutelage of his pastor Martin Möller, a student of the Fathers and the mystics, developed his theosophy upon the basic premises of patristic theology.<sup>45</sup> His personal vision offered therefore a rich source of traditional insight both to Pietism and to the Romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He reveals also the extent to which this traditional concept of the self of man emerges both from personal religious experience and from Biblical and philosophical study. Both this Behmenist influence in English Dissenting Christianity and Romanticism and the Cistercian, monastic ambiance of much mediaeval English literature point to the retention of this mode of thought in English Christian culture.

Within the literature of mediaeval England there is evidence both of the ancient vision and of the new approach to selfhood which was soon to become dominant. The vogue of extreme nominalism in the late Middle Ages<sup>46</sup> and the accepted Aristotelian definition of substance precluded belief in man's participation in God and in humanity. To the Aristotelian, as Sherrard points out,

As the whole thing, substance has a separate existence in the manner of particular entities. It belongs only to itself and to that which possesses it. It cannot consequently be present in a multiplicity of particulars simultaneously ...

Substances for Aristotle cannot be participated or shared. Every substance in the Universe is absolutely individual.

And consequently

The Incarnation could be envisaged as something that occurred only once in the unique case of the historical figure Jesus, and not also as something in which every individual participates.<sup>47</sup>

In such a situation the self is left alone to work out only his own salvation on an earth and in a society which has no spiritual

relationship to him.

Such a change in perspective may be observed by comparing two mediaeval morality plays, The Castle of Perseverance and Everyman, the latter illustrating the individualism accompanying nominalism. In The Castle of Perseverance the battle between good and evil is re-enacted within the person, whose soul is called to allegiance with spirit and is seduced by the flesh. Man is to choose between pneumatic and carnal selfhood: the drama is that of the person who images forth the tension in the entire Creation.<sup>48</sup> In Everyman, however, each man is "everyman" not as a microcosm but as a separate, lone being. What exists between "man", kin and neighbours is not a share in a common condition but a self-interest which has no spiritual root. Neighbour and kin are no longer terms denoting an ontological bond between brothers, but empty concepts which serve to heighten awareness of isolation and the gulf between human and divine realities. Human brotherhood is no longer a "shadow" of the brotherhood of Christ. Consequently, the relationship with God has altered from the filial to the legal. Everyman cannot claim his sonship by adoption but must produce some bargaining power. His value no longer lies in what he is as an image of God. While the Reformation reaffirmed the doctrine of dependence upon grace, it endorsed this vision of man's solitariness and, indeed, of his legal relationship with God, for he was left to stand before the throne as a condemned alien and not as an estranged son. Here is found the seed of the condition of dislocation of the self from God and man which Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald held to be the disease of their own age. Political and social evil takes its origin in the view of man held



by the community.

Everyman contrasts sharply with two important poems of the fourteenth century, Pearl and Piers Plowman. In asserting the traditional vision of selfhood these poems employ imagery and concepts similar to those used by Dickens in his later novels. Although no influence may be claimed, a certain "family" of images may be said to inhere in this traditional, experiential approach to the self which links literature of differing periods.

Pearl is a christocentric poem which expresses the nature of the redeemed self as the icon of Christ. The pearl-maiden is associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary as one who leads to Christ and as one whose merits derive from his. She, like Mary, provides a way to the vision of <sup>him</sup> ~~he~~ who is "the gate of the sheepfold".<sup>49</sup> The maiden is an image of the Image, gate to the Gate. The encounter with the pearl-maiden culminates in the sight of the Lamb, "the pearl of great price"<sup>50</sup> whose appearance is the interpretation of her attire. She is fulfilled as an icon of Christ the pearl within a community of icons. Distinctiveness and personal relationship with Christ and others is not destroyed by participation in the one image. There is neither merging in the mass nor isolation and division of nature for any of the pearl maidens. Each is one pearl on the circle of pearls which forms the structure of the poem; each is a microcosm upon a macrocosm. Moreover, at the close of the poem the father learns that all might become as his pearl-like daughter through partaking of the life of God in the pearl-grain of the Eucharist. The state of icon, microcosm and participant in divine life is the true state of man for this unknown poet.

Dickens has no such explicit doctrinal basis for his novel Bleak House. Nevertheless, when he seeks to express the union of being discerned by the afflicted, Christ-like innocent Esther Summerson, he uses no other image than that of the bead upon the ring of beads, a microcosm upon a macrocosm. Similarly, in this novel clothing and sharing of clothing is used to indicate identity beneath superficial differentiation while, as it is in Pearl, true human worth and innocence is at variance with the "world's" understanding of them. Great Expectations has a similar vision of microcosmic man when Pip Pirrip, in the crisis of ego-purging fever, sees himself as a brick in a wall, enjoying its particularity yet echoing the shape of every other brick and of the total structure.<sup>52</sup> Pearl presents the unity of Heaven, Bleak House and Great Expectations the disharmony of fallen earth: all derive from a common apprehension of the source of order and fellowship, and of its meaning for earthly man.

The sense of restlessness and chaos underpinned by an unperceived cosmos, which characterises the later novels of Dickens is also in evidence in Piers Plowman. Trilling has already proposed such a comparison in a paper in which "In His Will is our peace" is implicitly considered as the meaning of Little Dorrit, an insight equally valid for Piers Plowman.<sup>53</sup> In this poem the dreamer Will finds his peace, integration and ability to withstand the onslaught of Anti-Christ from his inner vision of Christ taking upon himself man's nature, in becoming Piers :-

me mette  
 That Pieres the plowman was paynted al bloody  
 And came on wyth a crosse before the commune people  
 And ryght lyke in alle lymes to oure Lorde Jhesu,  
 And than called I Conscience to Kenne me the sothe:  
 "Is this Jhesus the juster", quoth I "that Jewes  
 did to deth



Or is it Pieres the Plowman? who paynted him so rede?  
 Quoth Conscience and kneled tho; This aren Pieres armes  
 His coloures, his cote-armure ac he that cometh so bloody  
 Is Cryst wyth his crosse conquerore of crystene.<sup>54</sup>

This revelation completes his earlier apprehension of the image of Christ reflected within himself. If Piers is Will's "alter ego"<sup>55</sup> he is so as his elusive "inner man", his true self that is discovered only when the will of the soul is centred upon spirit. The incoherence of Will's world, blasted by sin, ignorance, self-seeking and parodies of Truth has much in common with the city of Dickens' later novels, especially in Little Dorrit. In this novel the Will-less Arthur Clennam, falling prey to the prevailing enslavement to illusion, rediscovers his will in experiencing both the dereliction of his personality and his truly valuable self as a loved and loving being. The final descent of the married couple into the tumult of their society is akin to Will's summons to his family to prepare to confront a rebellious, God-forsaking world. In both poem and novel social satire is employed to expose the spiritual disease of man of which social disintegration is the outcome. In both, the disease is to be cured not by external reorganisation of society but by the inner re-orientation of the selves constituting that society. The primary focus is upon man, whose healing will also be that of the community he encompasses and upon which he writes large his own evil. Langland, like Dickens, understood the extent to which the egotism of man was projected into his social institutions, into family, religious, economic and political life. To satirise society is to attack the psychological selfhood, the derangement of man from his nature, which is institutionalised in it.

The conflict between old and new models of the self finds full



expression in those plays of Shakespeare to which the question of the nature of human nature is central. In King Lear Edmund presents the secularised version of Everyman: man has no ground for relationship to man beyond usefulness. Goneril and Regan are incomplete, psychic beings whose rational souls are subservient to animality and rejecting of the bonds of derivation and relationship inherent in pneumatic man. Edmund's gratuitous response to another person, in relenting over Cordelia, queries the validity of his decision about his nature: in extremity the bonds of being, as Holland termed ontological relationships<sup>56</sup>, transcend existential choice. Within this frame of reference Cordelia is not a perfect, supernatural or allegorical figure by virtue of the allusions to Christ in the presentation of her but an assertion of human identity as likeness to Christ, known in sacrificial obedience to human and divine bonding.

As You Like It, as its title suggests, is another study of choice of selfhood. Jacques opts to see only depravity in man, projecting his own ego upon mankind, destroying its true life in so doing. His attitude to melancholy is also his attitude to human nature :-

I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel  
can eggs.<sup>57</sup>

Jacques wishes to isolate himself in superiority from the human nature he regards as degraded and sees no place for man in the natural world. Touchstone understands man only as a creature linked with the procreativity of Nature. Both are opposed by Corin, who acknowledges both distinction from and likeness to the sheep he tends. He masters and nurtures animality, so that his own carnality and that

of "brute creation" subserve spirit, so achieving unification. Corin is a veritable "good shepherd".

Moreover Nature teaches the Duke "feelingly" what he is.<sup>58</sup> He is found to be one who, although living with and upon the earth, is made for hospitality and brotherhood, rather than for the life of the animal. And for Orlando the flight back to Nature produces not the primacy of survival, the instinct of the beast, but the recognition of human bonds and of the necessity of willingness for self-sacrifice which frees spiritual awareness in others. Such choice of vicarious and related existence secures for Orlando his full entitlement as son and heir.

The meaning of brotherhood and sonship, in ontological, spiritual terms, appears to have been as crucial for Shakespeare and his age as it was to prove for Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald. The attack upon man as a God-participating being during the Renaissance offers parallels with that of the Victorian age. While developing Protestantism pressed man's depravity and failure, the resurgence of ancient learning, accompanied by the awakening of scientific thinking occasioned a contrary optimism in man's ability to know and manage the world. Life was increasingly offering more possibilities for systematisation and management, as seen in the evolution of the capitalism of such merchant houses as the Fuggers into a more ordered, conscious economic machine. Hence perhaps arose the fascination in Jacobean drama with the scheming avenger and with political conspiracy in relationship to the irrationality of sexuality rather than with the mediaeval awareness of contingency. The manipulative Vice of the Morality play is not a human character; only in the Renaissance and Jacobean drama does it become a cunning



human-being deliberately using men as chess-pieces and failing through pretensions to stage-management.<sup>59</sup>

Of this tension between contingent, spiritual, and controlling, psychic, selfhood Hamlet is the supreme illustration.<sup>60</sup> "To be or not to be"<sup>61</sup> is a new question for man, who must decide whether he is subject to life, or life to him. Hamlet hesitates between the new vision of his being as a disposable possession and the traditional concept of the self as a created mid-point between earth and spirit :-

What should such fellows as I do, crawling between  
earth and heaven?<sup>62</sup>

Paralysis ensues from his inability to choose between old and new. The Court, however, has wholly embraced the new. Efficiency and rationality appear to replace the untidiness of relationships and their attendant emotions such as grief. Yet spirit is denied in the subjection of the mind to the satisfaction of desire. Man in control of his own being is found to be man seduced by his own earthiness. He is reduced to a disposable object capable of analytical exploration, as Hamlet perceives in responding to the parodic friendship of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern :-

You would play upon me; you would seem to know  
my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my  
mystery.<sup>63</sup>

The conflict for Hamlet is resolved in the repudiation of the new model of selfhood. Fulfilment is seen to be attained not by managing his destiny and his world, but by surrendering to a life which transcends his comprehension :-

If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to  
come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it  
will come - the readiness is all. Since no man  
owes of ought he leaves, what is't to leave  
betimes? Let be.<sup>64</sup>

Hamlet finally says "Yes" to the Universe, following the advice of Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra in accepting

this dance  
Of plastic circumstance<sup>65</sup>

Shakespeare stands against the developing approach to man in his own day, bearing more relationship to the patristic Anglicanism of his period found in Richard Hooker. Although his philosophical affinities are as yet a matter of dispute<sup>66</sup>, Hooker held to the vision of the creation's participation in God :-

all things in the world are said in some  
sort to seek the highest and to covet more  
or less the participation of God himself.<sup>67</sup>

and of man's consequent deification :-

by virtue of grace, man is really made God.<sup>68</sup>

The fatherhood of God is for Hooker a fact of nature as well as of grace, since

all things which God hath made are in that respect  
offspring of God, they are in him as effects of their  
highest cause, he likewise is in them, the  
assistance and influence of his Deity in their life.<sup>69</sup>

Hooker, the father of classical Anglican theology, firmly established doctrine upon these traditional lines. His successors, the divines of the Caroline period, not only secured this version of manhood for their own age but provided a major source of patristic insight for the Tractarians. Their contemporaries the Cambridge Platonists and the poets Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne equally maintained the Fathers' approach to man and ensured its transmission to other areas of the Victorian world. The Cambridge Platonists were introduced to Carlyle by Dugald Stewart as part of his university studies whereas the influence of Vaughan is marked upon MacDonald who shared with Browning admiration for Herbert. Of



the direct knowledge of Traherne in these writers no evidence is available. He provides, however, so clear an exposition of the patristic and mystical vision of the self that he may be employed as a touchstone against which the views of these Victorians may be evaluated.

Rosemond Tuve has clarified the mediaeval inheritance of Herbert, so that it is now easy for modern students to discern his traditionalism,<sup>70</sup> a traditionalism which extends to his vision of selfhood.<sup>71</sup> The "I" of The Temple is a microcosm of the Church, the dwelling-place of God extensive in time as in size. Each personal dwelling makes up the body of the whole. Furthermore, like Isaac of Stella, Herbert employs both the concept of the microcosm and the chain of being to express his understanding of man. He is both the contingent "momentanie bloom"<sup>72</sup> sharing earth's frailties and the one who encompasses creation, articulating its praise. The affliction so often the subject of the verse emphasises the non-entity of the God-less man, departed from his derived and related nature as a child of God and representative of earth. To be outside the bonds of relationship is for Herbert the meaning of sin and Hell.

Henry Vaughan, so often regarded as heterodox because of his use of Hermetic imagery, was another direct inheritor of the Fathers, as a reading of his prose works reveals. His vision of the innocence of the child and of life as the process of return to the purity of infancy, that is, original manhood, is directly related to the teaching of Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, the vision of essential innocence is a feature of any mysticism in the patristic tradition: St. Teresa of Jesus saw her soul as a clear

mirror reflecting Christ, begrimed but not destroyed by sin.<sup>74</sup> The image of God is at the root of erring man's selfhood. And so, especially in Vaughan's prose, there is encountered a balance between awareness of fallenness and exultation in God who "hath made us kings and priests"<sup>75</sup> in the likeness of Christ the king and high-priest. And, true to the understanding of the Fathers, Vaughan's exhilaration is both personal and corporate. Each self is a king and priest in a community of kings and priests. Here is the basis for Carlyle's hope for a world of heroes.

Such a version of selfhood is even more ecstatically proclaimed by Thomas Traherne, who celebrates in prose and poetry the glory of pneumatic selfhood in the image of Christ. His delighted revelling in possession of the world is not, as Fairchild has suggested, an expression of "Holy Ego".<sup>76</sup> Rather is it the affirmation of the self as son and king, experiencing the felicity of the self found and freed in God to enjoy the world as God enjoys it. Traherne is, indeed, remarkably similar to some aspects of the thought of St. John of the Cross, the uncompromising enemy of egotism, who restored the concept of deification in his teaching upon the transforming union of the soul with God. Typical verses of Traherne express man's kingship of the world :-

From dust I rise  
And out of nothing now I wake; ...  
... The earth, the seas, the light, the day the skies  
The sun and stars are mine; if these I prize.<sup>77</sup>

A similar inebriation is found in St. John's Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love :-

Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth.  
Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and  
mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and  
the Mother of God, and all things are mine;  
and God Himself is mine and for me, because  
Christ is mine and all for me.



What do you ask, then, and seek, my soul?  
Yours is all this, and all is for you. Do not  
engage yourself in something less,<sup>78</sup>

But, as St. John suggests at the close of this prayer, and as Traherne recognised, the self may be deprived of fulfilment by the ego seeking itself and not God. Seeking to possess and be identified with some part of creation cramps the microcosmic self into the boundaries of the desires and labels of the psyche. Detachment from the ego, the meaning of self-denial, is required for the attainment of true selfhood and is therefore a positive activity. Such a concept of detachment is necessary when approaching the Victorian attitude to self-renunciation. Carlyle's demand for self-annihilation read apart from this traditional doctrine may be interpreted as enmity to the very notion of the self, in the manner of Feuerbach and George Eliot.<sup>79</sup>

These themes of the poets are seen in their full theological context in the works of the Cambridge Platonists, whose Platonic philosophy was completed by knowledge of patristic doctrine. In their thought God is once more the basis of the human self created for deification :-

Religion is an Heaven-born thing, the Seal of God  
in the Spirits of Men, whereby they are formed to  
a similitude and likeness of himself ...

God hath stamp'd a copy of his own Archetypal  
loveliness upon the soul, that man by reflecting<sup>80</sup>  
upon himself might behold there the glory of God.

This contemplative man must know

a deep sense of self penury and self-emptiness,<sup>81</sup>

He must be free, that is, from seeing himself as a self-sufficing  
entity, in order that his self may be

nothing else but God's own breath within him,  
and an Infant-Christ (if I may so use the  
expression) formed in his soul, who is in a  
sense ... the shining forth of the Father's glory.<sup>82</sup>



Here is seen the heritage of Irenaeus and the long tradition of the birth of the Word in the soul, found in Christian mysticism from Origen and Gregory of Nyssa to the Carmelite, Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity at the beginning of this century.<sup>83</sup>

The Cambridge Platonists habitually expressed this belief in terms of the "divine seed" employed in the First Epistle of Peter (vv 22-23). The "seed" captures the dual nature of the self as both given and in need of growth. Man is free to refuse or co-operate in the process of self-realisation. The self is therefore dynamic, as Mother Maria (Dr. Lydia Gysi) says of the "divine centre" in the thought of Ralph Cudworth :-

Cudworth thinks dynamically; it would be a mistake to circumscribe this centre as a divine spark in-dwelling the soul as a given entity; it is thought of rather as a virtual centre of energy, in structure towards the likeness of God, but which can only activate itself at an impulse, and which must be set off by the Spirit of God himself.<sup>84</sup>

Process, the self's parenthood of itself and its dignity as a co-creator are themes met again in the four Victorians considered in this study. They are concepts shared with Jacob Boehme, for whom the Cambridge Platonists had a critical respect. With Boehme they were influential upon the development of Dissenting spirituality, both through their correspondence with English and American Non-Conformist leaders and through the later use of their writings by Shaftesbury and the Unitarians.<sup>85</sup> A vital link between Reformed Christianity and patristic anthropology was therefore forged.

The Cambridge Platonists are frequently, and erroneously, considered as precursors of English Rationalism because of their emphasis upon Reason and man's natural capacity for God. The latter

has been seen to be a belief common among the Fathers. The former concept of Reason, or mind, is similarly derived from the patristic outlook. The "Reason of the mind" operates not by rational, discursive and deductive thinking but by pure intuitive knowing. It is a spiritual quality related to God's Reason or simple Intellect which has no need for process, the faculty which perceives the noumenal, as the discussion of Carlyle will consider in more detail. The Cambridge Platonists, that is, wished to establish man as a spiritual, intellectual being rather than as a psychological, reasoning mechanism. They came ultimately to oppose the developing Cartesianism, when its implications were appreciated; they are to be seen as opponents rather than fathers, of the modern tendency to conflate pneuma with psyche, mind with ratiocinative powers.

In the following century, such a rationalist version of the self predominated, leading to the threat to existence of the very concept of personal being from a plethora of newly discovered mental and biological mechanisms. Against such a state Yorick reacts in A Sentimental Journey by the seeking of excessive emotion; "I weep therefore I am" is presented as one counter-argument in the battle for the self.

The persistence of the ancient version of selfhood may yet be discerned in various areas of eighteenth century thought and letters. In Jonathan Swift and such Anglicans as William Law, the traditional doctrine may be found at its full, in Benevolism and in the pre-Romantics in more hybrid and aetiolated forms.

To claim Swift as a champion of selfhood may appear perverse in a climate of critical opinion which hails him as a prophet of



the abyss.<sup>86</sup> The perversity stems from an insistence upon Swift's relationship to his tradition and inheritance which demands detachment from the modern pre-occupation with the loss of ontology.<sup>87</sup>

Swift's attack on the contemporary view of man is two-fold. Firstly, for Swift man is not "reasonable" but "capable of reason" in the theological system in which Reason is the Intellectual nature of God. In this light the claims of Rationalism are blasphemous. Man is asserted to be God by nature, rather than capable of God and God by grace. God-like perfection is appropriated by man to the neglect of his creatureliness, the "beast" in the terminology of the Cambridge Platonists. Consequently, Swift's poetry in particular deflates the contemporary pretensions to innate godhood which deny man's traditional position mid-way between earth and heaven, mediating flesh and spirit. His characters fall from obsession with divinity to an exclusive vision of animality, being incapable of maintaining the state of tension which constitutes man. Here is found confirmation of Carlyle's Descendental Transcendentalism and of his assertion of man's "beast-godhood".<sup>88</sup>

Secondly, as true Reason is debased into rationality, so man is reduced to an analysable object whose capacity for reasonable, or intellectual, love is ignored. To the Fathers Divine Charity was also Divine Reason, for God's Love was understood to be one with his Intellect and devoid of the impulses and desire for self-gratification within human love. To be Intellectual was to be Love, when both terms are used with their proper meanings as spiritual concepts. So, too, the monastic theologian Aelred of Rievaulx



held that "God is Love" entailed "God is friendship"<sup>89</sup>, as it would appear also to have signified for Swift, from the evidence of his verse.<sup>90</sup> This reasonable love is therefore the defining factor in a human selfhood made with a capacity for God; it is also a factor inaccessible to the dissecting mind which believes only in observable data. Hence, when man seeks for what cannot be found by the rational faculties and in so doing dissociates himself from spirit, the discovery of a void is the inevitable result. Man viewed as a being in himself, without his spiritual cause, is phantasmagoric, as Vaughan had previously discerned, agreeing with the Fathers :-

Our present life (saith Chrysostome) is a  
meere apparition, and differs but very little  
from a dreame.<sup>91</sup>

Introspection and examination of the mechanics of man and mind may not produce evidence of what he as an experiencing subject reveals of himself. Hence, Gulliver's exploration and deduction persuades him that man must be either totally ratiocinative or totally bestial. His life among the Houyhnhnms, however, suggests that his true kinship is with the sorrel nag, the least rational of her kind but the most loyal friend. Gulliver's logical conclusion that man is a beast who had thought himself a god destroys his capacity for loving friendship, reasonable love, which had proved to be his nature.

Understood in the light of this traditional vision of man, Swift's often quoted attack upon analysis takes on metaphysical weight :-

Last week I saw a woman flayed and you will  
hardly believe how much it altered her condition  
for the worse.<sup>92</sup>

The quest for factual knowledge has become a parody of the flaying of Marsyas, destroying life rather than revealing the true self. Man has become mesmerised by his imagined capacity for complete comprehension and control of life to the neglect of his task of co-operating with Deity in the perfecting of nature fallen from full likeness to God.

Related to the patristic Anglicanism which provided the theological background to Swift's traditionalism is Benevolism. Shaftesbury evolved his concept of the "good heart" from the Cambridge Platonists' belief in man's natural tendency to God and goodness. In so doing he re-stated the traditional convictions about the primacy of the divine image in man and the possibility of unharmed sin in those who are centred in God.<sup>93</sup> However, as Bishop Westcott recognised,<sup>94</sup> Shaftesbury took from this ancient vision of the Church only the hope and glory. The reality of sin and evil in man, his capacity for degradation by his inheritance from earth and his existence in a milieu which speaks of alienation from God were aspects of life neglected by Benevolism.

Alone, the concept of the "good heart" is an inadequate version of manhood. In its best literary exponent Henry Fielding there is also a strong awareness of man's potential for evil. In Parson Adams and Tom Jones there is a goodness which lies beneath their individual personalities, co-existing with the possibility of choosing the evil of ego-gratification. Tom's "good nature" has to be unified through the subordination to it of his wayward personality; captivity and purgation precede freedom and return to the "exercising of his naturals",<sup>95</sup> as in any mediaeval tale. Moreover, the "natural goodness" of the postilion who succours



Joseph Andrewes is set within a wider environment of unnatural evil, which traps and compromises human nature. In this vision of innocent man implicated in a fallen world and in a supra-individual guilt is adumbrated one major theme of the novels of Dickens.

Nonetheless, Fielding's Benevolism posed one problem for the coming century, since in his works the innate capacity for moral choice and goodness was not always presented in isolation from determining constitutional, hereditary factors. In Tom Jones Blifil's origin from loveless parents gives rise to an unloving personality; while metaphorically appropriate, this nevertheless opens the question of heredity and the possibility of being "born bad". Dickens's confrontation with this problem can be seen in his progression from the confusion between nature and inheritance in Oliver Twist, through the arguments of Trotty Veck in The Chimes, to the presentation of Jo in Bleak House, a psychologically and physically unlovely savage who is also an afflicted, innocent child of God.

The awareness of sin and innocence as absolutes within each man was central to the thought of William Law. One of the last of the Anglican Non-Jurors, and student of patristic and mystical theology, Law distilled his own learning into the interpretation for the English of the work of Boehme. In so doing he developed his own vision of universal salvation, similar to that of Gregory of Nyssa, and of the meaning of election. To Law each man had the capacity for utter likeness to Christ and for total satanic rejection of God. Election and reprobation both took place within each man, who was both Adam and Christ, Cain and Abel, Moses and

Pharaoh.<sup>96</sup> A vital influence upon George MacDonald and acclaimed by Thomas Hancock, disciple of Maurice, as "that profound theologian",<sup>97</sup> Law was an important figure in Anglican thought.

Less directly related to traditional doctrine but the harbinger of its fuller renewal in literature are the beginnings of English Romanticism in the eighteenth century. The rediscovery of the sublime and the awesome in the natural world augured a growing awareness of the sacramental nature of the universe. Man was again being contemplated in relationship to wider creation.

Furthermore the basically Platonic notion of the poet as the recipient of genius, which characterised pre-Romantic literary theory, is related to the Christian understanding of "nous" as the basis for the divine indwelling in man. In Conjectures on Original Composition Young counsels :-

let thy genius rise (if genius thou hast)  
like as the sun from chaos; and ... Reverence  
thyself ... genius is that god within.<sup>98</sup>

Young is Platonic insofar as he restricts genius to the few but his total approach suggests that it is to be regarded as a heightened version of a general gift. Certainly this is so in the attitude of Gray to his unsung, silent poets. In a similar fashion sanctity may be regarded not as a gift distinguishing its recipients from humanity but as the culmination of potential within that humanity. The poet, like the saint, reveals the godliness of man. At the very least this exaltation of the poet re-awakened consciousness of the numinous in the nature and life of man.

Young's emphasis upon reverence for man as a creator and Law's upon man as an innocent sinner were found together in the thought of the American Unitarian, William Ellery Channing, which was made



known to the English by Dickens' friend Edward Tagart. Dickens and MacDonald greatly admired Channing. Despite their final adherence to Anglicanism they continued to maintain the stance towards man found in Channing and Tagart, a stance which F. D. Maurice had similarly retained upon his conversion to Trinitarianism and re-integrated into Anglican theology. Browning, likewise, was inspired by the related beliefs of the Unitarian William Johnson Fox, which were later assimilated into his patristically-based Christology.

Channing's theology of man as the image of God developed out of his study of the American Benevolist philosophers Hutcheson and Ferguson. It owed much, therefore, if indirectly, to the Cambridge Platonists. His Unitarian background itself contributed its own debt to patristic and Behmenist thought, as his language reveals.<sup>99</sup> Channing consequently speaks in traditional terms of the nature and destiny of man as an image of God who is liberated by Christ and finds his fulfilment in the Communion of Saints. He himself averred "I am very little of a Unitarian"<sup>100</sup>, and this is evident in his Christology. He presented to Dickens and to the more theologically aware MacDonald a faith to which an incarnate Jesus, as the Son of God, however defined, was central and inextricably linked to the vision of man's capacity for participation in God. At the memorial service for Channing attended by Dickens, Tagart reminded his congregation that

A favourite topic with Channing was the dignity and intrinsic excellence of human nature, its natural affinity for truth and goodness,

He continued by quoting from Channing's works :-

I do and must reverence human nature. ... I know its history. I shut my eyes to none of

its meanness and crimes. ... The signature of its origin and end are impressed too deeply to be ever effaced. ...

I honour it for its struggles against oppression, ... for its examples of heroic and saintly virtue. These are marks of a divine origin and the pledges of a celestial inheritance, and I thank God that my lot is bound up with that of the human race.<sup>101</sup>

The themes of the divine signature or stamp upon the self, its divine destiny and the bonding of humanity have already been encountered in the discussion of the Fathers. It is clear that Channing provided one means whereby the patristic vision of the self was renewed in English thought in the nineteenth century. His work in the early years of the period parallels that of Maurice in the middle decades and looks forward to the liberal, patristic Catholicism of Westcott and the Lux Mundi group.

In the knowledge of the resurgence of the patristic version of man, the emergence of the "Romantic self" and its world in English literature may not be seen as an aberration or an innovation in thought or experience. So much was recognised by the Tractarians in their re-integration of Romantic insights into their theology.<sup>102</sup>

The "genius" of pre-Romantic thought was previously likened to the saint as a clearer expression of the self of man. The self as it appears in Coleridge, Keats and Shelley as the visionary poet is similarly not an absolute individual, speaking of idiosyncratically interpreted experience. Rather is he representative man, man purged of ego who is able to discern reality and give voice to humanity itself. He is man the microcosm.

Coleridge is now appreciated as fundamentally a theologian, B. J. Reardon classing him with Maurice as the most seminal minds



of Victorian religious thought.<sup>103</sup> Versed in the Fathers, the Caroline Divines and the Cambridge Platonists, but no uncritical follower, Coleridge was well aware of the view of the self as an image of God destined for deification. Such doctrine is also clearly the source of his own theory of the primary imagination as the repetition in the finite mind of the infinite I AM.<sup>104</sup> The self which through the basic activity of the mind makes sense and form of the world, and in this way shapes it, is the created image of the "I" of the creating God whose "thoughts" are men.<sup>105</sup>

So, too, Coleridge shares the traditional concern for unitive being. The Ancient Mariner in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a vicarious being, sinning and suffering for his fellows. After having experienced the death-in-life of his rejection of spirit in killing the albatross, he is saved by his love for the snakes which re-unites the antinomies of flesh and spirit.<sup>106</sup> In killing the bird, he acted out the desires of the crew and on him was laid the burden of what was, in fact, a corporate deed. His experience liberates the spirits of the crew and leads him through death into life. The Mariner is the genius who is capable of consciously experiencing and articulating the Fall and restoration of every man which involves him in the mystery of vicarious being and supra-individual culpability.

For Keats also imagination is an activity not of the fanciful ego but of the purged self. Both Endymion and the early stanzas of The Fall of Hyperion, a Vision may be understood as poetry of ascesis.<sup>107</sup> In them the poet-visionary has to know his human solidarity and to be freed from his self-protective dreams and self-definitions. Endymion cannot attain Cynthia as long as his

dream is used as a bulwark against acceptance of brotherhood and mortality. Only when he has acknowledged the vanity of dreams and ceased clinging to them is he sufficiently detached for vision :-

I have clung  
To nothing, loved a nothing, nothing seen  
Or felt but a great dream! Oh I have been  
Presumptuous ...  
          against the tie ...  
Of mortals each to each.<sup>108</sup>

Only then, his ego abandoned and unity with a suffering, mortal creation embraced, can he enter into knowledge of wordless truth :-

So he inwardly began  
On things for which no wording can be found  
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd  
Beyond the reach of music.<sup>109</sup>

Vision is given only "when individuality is asleep". Similarly Hyperion loses part of himself before he can be admitted to the Temple of Moneta. Once there, before he can "see" he undergoes another death to ego :-

Everyday by day methought I grew  
More gaunt and ghostly.<sup>110</sup>

Keats' own religious experience and his knowledge of Hermeticism and Greek philosophy relate him to the patristic view of man which is experiential and conceptual. In the non-Christian Keats may be found vestiges of a Christian vision lost to many of the orthodox of his period and more fully expressed by the Victorian Romantics Browning and MacDonald.

The rejection of individualism by Shelley is even more unremitting than that of Keats, issuing in an apparent tendency to lose the person in the All, a tendency in the verse contradicted by the poet's capacity in life for personal loyalty and friendship. The Platonism of Shelley is proof against the charge of egotism, as



is a study of his work. In Prometheus Unbound it is ego which stands against the liberation of the world, represented by Prometheus' attachment to individual pride and resentment. Like Endymion, the potential poet in Alastor fails because of his attachment to an individual dream and his rejection of human solidarity. The poet cannot be an individualist. He must rather be the voice of man, being used by the spirit of life to articulate truth rather than using his gifts to express the desires of the ego. Shelley is ultimately at one with the mystic's insistence upon the necessity of ascesis.

The awareness within these Romantic poets of the glory of selfhood and of the unsubstantiality of the ego as an evil afflicting man and his social world is found also in the Victorian subjects of this study. Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald, while championing human innocence were deeply conscious of the capacity in man for refusing his nature and creating an environment fostering the illusion of self-sufficient manhood. Both Dickens' Mr. Dombey and Browning's Duke of Ferrara have kinship with the mediaeval Vice and the Jacobean stage-manager in their pretensions to control creation. Along with Carlyle and MacDonald, Dickens and Browning stand in opposition both to Calvinist belief in total depravity and to the contemporary conviction of inevitable social progress which rendered obsolete any concept of sin. Of this confidence in human advance, the following assertion by the mathematician W. K. Clifford is a typical instance :-

It is idle to set bounds to the purifying and organising work of science. Without mercy and without resentment she ploughs up weeds and briar; from her footsteps behind her grow corn and healing flowers; and no corner is far enough to escape her furrow.<sup>111</sup>

While Dickens, Browning and MacDonald each embraced some vision of progress, it was one which questioned such confidence in purely human powers. Rather was their belief in a process of growth into the full manhood intended for humanity, which attachment to the products of alienated mankind impeded. In Carlyle, initial participation in such a vision of growth did indeed change into an acquiescence in the later Victorian adherence to the doctrine of improvement through social manipulation.

The traditional concept of selfhood, which has been outlined here, is far from the modern vision that has arisen out of the rejection of ontological thinking. The loss of ontology and the subsequent disintegration of models of reality arising from it is an unavoidable fact for any student of twentieth century literature. It is tempting, therefore, for present-day critics to approach all Victorian treatment of the self from the current perspectives supplied by the experience of fragmentation and by psycho-analysis, employing as their touchstone the Victorian crisis of faith. This study is an attempt to explicate the existence of the earlier traditional perspective in the period, in writers in four important genres.

It is also an attempt to question the equation of Calvinism with Christianity frequently met in students of the literature of the Victorian age. Such a tendency commonly results in the opinion that views of the self which conflict with Calvinism indicate in their authors heterodoxy, rejection of, or indifference to, Christianity, or mere sentimental idiosyncrasy. This necessarily distorts both the impression that is gained of the age and of the versions of selfhood available to it. It must also



inhibit understanding of the continuity with earlier periods of nineteenth-century literature and thought. The time was, indeed, one of rapid change and of many paradoxes. It is the role of the student of literature to establish clearly traditions and continuities so that true contradictions, conflicts, innovations and idiosyncratic visions may be discerned and evaluated. It is hoped that elucidation of the breadth of the Christian approach to man will be some small contribution to the amendment of such groundless paradoxes as that proposed by Bernard Schilling in his discussion of Charles Kingsley :-

None could surpass Kingsley's reverence for man and his belief in a great human destiny, yet he was greatly influenced by orthodox religious belief.<sup>112</sup> (my emphasis)

The need for such elucidation in regard to Dickens was indicated by G. H. Ford in his contribution to a symposium on Dickens' criticism :-

It would be useful ... if we could see in what respects Dickens' religious position was representative rather than idiosyncratic. A religious point of view in which the Good Samaritan ranks as more important than the theological discussions of St. Paul has been dismissed by some of his detractors as merely childish. To dismiss Dickens' religion as childish is, of course, the critical reader's prerogative, yet it might be valuable to enlarge such discussions by determining how this position is connected (if it was) with the Victorian scene. In Oliver Twist, according to Mr. Miller, we have a point of view that "comes from Christianity" but comes as "sentimentalised by Rousseau and Wordsworth". This is the kind of verdict that would be more worthy of investigation (and it would require historical investigation) than a blanket condemnation of the superficiality of Dickens' religious thinking.<sup>113</sup>

Dickens' approach to Christianity in reference to his vision

of man will be shown to be related to some of the theological movements of his time and to the thought and experience of Christendom. Aelred Squire, in considering the Incarnational theology of Pope Leo the Great, cites from one of Leo's sermons a view of the affinity of man with God echoed by Dickens in both novels and letters<sup>114</sup> :-

If it is a matter for human praise that the good qualities of a father should appear in his child, how much more splendid is it that the likeness of their maker should appear in those who are born of God.

He then remarks of Leo what could equally be said of Dickens :-

Leo's doctrine of the nature of the image of God in man is a very simple and unsophisticated one, but it is quite firmly the basis for his belief that all men have a claim on our compassion, simply on the ground of their being man.<sup>115</sup>

An emphasis upon the value of man and upon the extension of brotherly love to all men need not represent either a minimal or a sentimental Christian faith.

In this study, therefore, exploration of the continuing life of a literary and religious tradition is a means of illuminating the presentation of selfhood in Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald. The attempt will be made to identify the human, religious concerns linking the literary artist to contemporary theologians, concerns which tend to be submerged beneath the consciousness of conflict and dispute. It is a premise of this thesis that the discernment by A. M. Allchin of an underlying unity between the Victorian schools of theology considered here applies also to aspects of the relationship between literary and religious milieux :-

It is interesting to find in Thomas Hancock, the disciple of F. D. Maurice, many of the same themes



and convictions which are central to the thought of R. M. Benson, the disciple of E. B. Pusey. It suggests that under the fierce and often short-sighted controversies of the period there was an underlying unity which has not yet been appreciated.<sup>116</sup>

The intention will be, therefore, not only to indicate certain or possible influences and sources of the tradition explored in this chapter for the four writers, but also to set the intuitions and religious responses of these individuals against a wider backcloth of Christian thought, imagery and experience. As a living and lived, experiential tradition, personal apprehensions of the meaning of selfhood may find within it their explication and inter-subjective validation.

The approach to these four authors is neither comparative nor a study in mutual influence. Common view-points are held to result primarily from personal intuitive belief informed by individual contact with sources of the tradition. All the verbal evidence for my arguments from a writer's works is not presented here, in order to prevent an attempted exhaustive analysis becoming also an exhausting task for the reader. Nor is the treatment of each artist uniform. Greater attention is given to an explication of the total structure of Dickens' novels, for in them the vision of selfhood can be separated neither from their world-view nor from their patterns of imagery, characterisation and plot. In discussing Browning and MacDonald key themes and images are elucidated by providing an analysis of certain works, supported by less extensive comment upon others. In the study of Carlyle, because of the nature of his works, the approach is entirely thematic.

The questions raised by the concept of selfhood, by the

Victorian age and by the four subjects of this study are many and weighty. This exploration into such territory cannot and does not claim to be a complete, critical, philosophical analysis of this traditional vision in relation to its literary expression. It can be but a first, small personal step towards the analysis of the renewal of an experiential religious tradition in four writers and in their times.



### Notes to Chapter One

General note on texts.

Throughout this thesis all references to the novels and collected prose works of Charles Dickens are made from :-

The Oxford Illustrated Dickens,

London, Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press,  
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All citations of the works of Robert Browning are taken from :-

Browning's Poetical Works,

London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1888-1894, 18 vols.

All references to the completed works of Thomas Carlyle are made from :-

The Works of Thomas Carlyle,

Centenary edition, edited Traill, H. D., London,  
Chapman and Hall, 1896-1901, 30 vols.

All quotations of the works of Shakespeare are to be found in :-

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edited Alexander, P., London and Glasgow, Collins, 1973.

In citations of Dickens, Carlyle and Browning dates given in parenthesis refer to the year of first publication, other dates being those of publication in the present edition.

1. von Hugel, Baron Friedrich, The mystical element of religion,  
London, J. M. Dent, 1908, 2 vols., 1, 265.
2. Hopkins, Gerard Manley, That Nature is a Heraclitean fire  
and of the comfort of the Resurrection  
in  
ed. Gardner, W. H. The poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins  
3rd ed., London, Geoffrey Cumberlege, Oxford University Press,  
1948, p.112.
3. See discussion in  
Macquarrie, John Principles of Christian theology  
London, S.C.M., 1966, pp.53-110.
4. Shakespeare, William Antony and Cleopatra  
Act 5, sc 11, l 279, p.1195.
5. MacDonald, George Paul Faber, Surgeon  
6th ed., London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co.,  
no date, p.363.
6. It is popular Evangelicalism, as it was understood by Victorian  
Christians, which is considered here. The necessary limitation of  
range precludes attention to the image theology of such  
Evangelicals as Charles Simeon and to the arguments of scholars  
regarding Calvin's actual doctrine of grace.
7. Newman, J. H. Our Lord's Last Supper and His first,  
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power  
  
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Allchin, A. M. symposium  
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8. Trevor, Meriol The pillar of the cloud, 1801-1853  
London, Macmillan, 1962, p.4.
9. ibid., p.4.
10. Epistle to the Hebrews, ch.12 v 23.
11. Maurice, F. D. The Kingdom of Christ  
2nd ed., London, J. M. Dent, no date, 2 vols., I, 170-171.
12. See, for example, the discussion in  
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discourses  
London, Macmillan, 1878, p.194.
13. See the Second Epistle of Peter, ch.1 v 4.
14. For discussion, see the standard text:-  
Lossky, Vladimir The mystical theology of the Eastern  
Church  
London, James Clarke & Co., 1957, pp.51-66.
15. For discussion and appreciation of this variety see  
Bernard, Regis L'image de Dieu d'apres Saint Athanase  
Paris, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1952.  
Burghardt, Walter J. The image of God in Man according to  
Cyril of Alexandria  
Washington D.C., Catholic University of America Press, 1957.  
Catholic University of America Studies in Christian Antiquity  
14.  
Leys, Roger L'image de Dieu chez S. Gregoire de Nysse  
Paris, Desdée de Brouwer, L'edition universelle Bruxelles, 1951.  
Meany, James J. The image of God in Man according to the  
doctrine of St. John Damascene  
San Jose Seminary, Manila Pl, Pontificia Universitatis  
Gregoriana, 1954.

- Sullivan, John Edward      The image of God : the doctrine of  
St. Augustine and its influence  
Dubuque, Iowa, The Priory Press, 1963.
- Wild, Philip T.      The divinization of Man according to  
S. Hilary of Poitiers  
St. Mary of the Lake Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois,  
Pontificia Facultas Theologica, 1950.
16. S. Irenaeus of Lyons      Five books against heresies  
    in      Bk.IV, XX, 6.  
ed. Bettenson, Henry      The early Christian Fathers  
    London, Oxford University Press, 1956, p.104.  
    I have chosen to use this modern translation for the  
    introductory discussion because of the need for clarity in  
    introducing key themes of the thesis. In remaining chapters  
    the translation by John Keble will be used, as the one  
    most readily available to Victorians and illustrative of  
    the contemporary approach to the text.
17. trans. & ed. Chitty, Derwas      The Letters of St. Antony the Great  
    Oxford, S. L. G. Press, 1975, p.12.
18. ibid., p.17.
19. Bettenson, op. cit., BXV, IX, I and V, VI, I, p.97.
20. ibid., v, praefatio, p.106.
21. As used, for example, in the discussion of the self in Traherne :-  
Clements, A. L.      The mystical poetry of Thomas Traherne  
    Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969.
22. Gregory of Nyssa      On Virginitv  
    in  
S. Gregory of Nyssa      Dogmatic treatises etc.  
trans. Wilson, Henry





32. Gregory Nazianzen, op. cit. Panegyric on his brother, p.237.
33. ibid. Letters to Cledonius the priest against Apollinarius,  
letter C1, p.441.
34. Gregory of Nyssa, op. cit. On the making of man, p.405.
35. See  
Thunberg, Lars Microcosm and Mediator: the theological  
anthropology of Maximus the Confessor  
Lund, C. W. K. Gleerup; Copenhagen, Ejnar Munkgaard, 1965,  
  
Acta Seminarii NeoTestamenta Upsaliensis XXV, p.148.  
It is noteworthy that Bishop Westcott, an influential  
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Westcott, B. F. Essays in the history of religious  
thought in the West  
London, Macmillan, 1891, p.148.
36. St. Symeon the New The Sin of Adam and our Redemption:  
Theologian seven homilies  
Platina, California, St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1979,  
Orthodox Theology Texts 2, p.59.
37. If Christ is God incarnate, made man to raise man to godhood, Mary  
is the first of the new race of deified manhood. For discussion,  
see the short collection of essays :-  
Ratzinger, Joseph Die Tochter Zion; Betrachtungen über  
den Marienglauben der Kirche  
Einsiedeln, Johannes-Verlag, 1977.
38. See  
McGinn, Bernard The Golden Chain: the theological  
anthropology of Isaac of Stella



Washington, Cistercian Publications Consortium Press, 1972,  
pp.177, 193 and 231.

and also

McGinn, Bernard

Three treatises on Man: a Cistercian  
anthropology

Kalamazoo, Michigan, Cistercian Publications Inc., 1977,  
pp.14-18.

For a more general discussion of "monastic theology" as a  
force in the preservation of patristic, experiential  
theology see

Leclercq, Jean

The love of learning and the desire  
for God

trans. Misrahi, Catherine

rev. ed., New York, Fordham University Press, 1974.

39. Morson, John

Via Veritas et Vita

Achel, Abbatie Cisterciensis, 1972, p.98.

Where books in English have provided quotations in foreign  
languages, I have cited them as they appear; from foreign-  
language sources I have translated them for my own text.

A basic translation of the antiphon would be :-

O wonderful exchange!  
The Creator of the human race, taking  
upon himself a living body has designed  
to be born of the Virgin, and issuing  
as a man without origin has lavished  
upon us his godhood.

40. See the discussion in

Clark, James M.

Meister Eckhart: an introduction to  
the study of his works, with an  
anthology of his sermons.

London, Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1957, esp. p.70.

See also McGinn, Three treatises, op. cit., p.14, for discussion of the Cappadocian influence upon Cistercian theology.

For further discussion of Eckhart's tradition see  
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Bloomington, London, Indiana University Press, 1972.

41. See

Louth, Andrew The origins of the Christian mystical tradition: from Plato to Denys  
Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981, pp.179-190.

42. See the premises of

Kelley, C. F. Meister Eckhart on divine knowledge  
New Haven, London, Yale University Press, 1977.

43. Quoted and discussed ibid, p.45.

44. McGinn, The golden chain, op. cit., p.231.

45. See introduction by Peter Erb to

Boehme, Jacob The way to Christ  
trans and ed. Erb, Peter.  
New York, Paulist Press, 1978, pp.5-6.

46. See discussion of Aristotelian approaches to substance in

Sherrard, Philip Christian theology and the eclipse of man

Sobornost, series 7, 3 (summer), 1976.

47. ibid., 171-2.

and see also



- Sherrard, Philip                      The Greek East and the Latin West:  
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London, Oxford University Press, 1959.
48. Cf     the dialogue between soul, flesh and spirit as discerned  
by Catherine of Genoa in    The Dialogue  
Catherine of Genoa        Treatise on Purgatory; the  
eds. & trans. Balfour, C.   dialogue  
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London, Sheed and Ward, 1976.
49. Gospel according to St. John, ch.10, v 7.
50. Gospel according to St. Matthew, ch.13, v 46.  
For the tradition of Christ as the pearl, formed in the oyster  
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                                The Pearl or seven rhythms on Faith  
and note the editor's comments upon the interpretation of the  
Fathers in  
ed. Morris, J. B.                      Select works of Ephrem the Syrian  
Oxford, John Henry Parker, London, F. & J. Rivington, 1847,  
pp.84-105.
51. Dickens, Charles                      Bleak House  
                                (1852-3), 1948, ch.35, p.489.
52. Dickens, Charles                      Great Expectations  
                                (1860-1), 1953, ch.57, p.438.
53. Trilling, Lionel  
Introduction to the Oxford illustrated edition of Little Dorrit  
                                (1855-7), 1953, p. XV.
54. ed. Skeat, W. W.                      Langland's vision of Piers Plowman  
B-text, London, for the Early English Texts' Society,  
1869, Passus XIX, ll 5-14, p.344.

55. Kirk, E. D. The dream-thought of Piers Plowman  
New Haven, London, Yale University Press, 1972, pp.76-78.
56. Holland, H. S. Faith  
in  
ed. Gore, Charles Lux Mundi: essays on the theology of  
the Incarnation  
London, Murray, 1891, p.9.
57. Shakespeare, William As you like it  
Act 2, V, ll 12-13, p.263.
58. ibid., Act 2, I, l 11, p.260.
59. See discussion of this theme in  
Spivack, B. Shakespeare and the allegory of evil  
New York, Columbia University Press, 1958.
60. See  
Mack jnr., Maynard Killing the king  
New Haven, Yale University Press, 1973, pp.47-60.
61. Shakespeare, William Hamlet  
Act 3, I, l 56, p.1047.
62. ibid., Act 3, I, l 127, p.1047.
63. ibid., Act 3, II, ll 355-60, p.1052.
64. ibid., Act 5, II, ll 213-217, p.1070.
65. Browning, Robert, Rabbi Ben Ezra, Poetical Works, VII, (1888)  
stanza XXVIII, 118.
66. For an Aristotelian Hooker, see  
Munz, Peter The place of Hooker in religious  
thought  
London, Routledge, 1952.  
For a defence of Hooker's Platonic stance note the comment of



the Platonist scholar Mother Maria (Dr. Lydia Gysi) to  
Professor A. Hilary Armstrong, Sept. 12, 1964 :-

I should like to discover in a very careful  
study the Platonism (perhaps rather as attitude  
to life) which underlies the theology of  
Hooker; and if this were possible to gain some  
clarity on his position between Thomas More and  
Erasmus on the one hand and the Cambridge  
Platonists on the other. I do not agree with  
Munz on this question; and Catholics now seem  
to claim him as an exclusive Aristotelian.

ed. Sister Thekla                      The life of Mother Maria in her  
letters

London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979, pp.132-3.

67. Hooker, Richard                      Of the laws of ecclesiastical  
introd. Morris, C.                      polity

London, Dent & Sons, 1907, 2 vols., 1, Bk 1, 165.

68. ibid., II, Bk 5, 214.

69. ibid., II, Bk 5, 226-7.

70. Tuve, Rosemond                      A reading of George Herbert

Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1969.

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Mother Maria                      George Herbert

(Gysi, Lydia)

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Herbert, George                      Repentance

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London, J. M. Dent, 1974, p.68.

73. A reading of  
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prose  
London, Oxford University Press, 1963,  
reveals Vaughan's familiar acquaintance with the works  
of St. John Chrysostom, the moral theologian who inherited  
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75. Vaughan, poetry and prose op. cit., p.128.
76. Fairchild, Hoxie N. Religious trends in English poetry  
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77. Traherne, Thomas The Salutation  
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In all references to this edition I have normalised the  
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78. St. John of the Cross Prayer of a soul taken with love  
in  
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Kavanaugh, Kieran, O. C. D. of the Cross  
and Rodriguez, Otilio, O. C. D.



Washington, Institute of Carmelite Studies Publications,  
1973, p.669.

79. See

Feuerbach, Ludwig                      The essence of Christianity  
trans. Evans, M. A.

New York, Harper and Row, Torch books, 1957.

and for this approach to George Eliot see

Bedient, Calvin                      Architects of the self

Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972.

80. Smith, John                      The nobleness of true religion  
in

ed. Patrides, C.A.                      The Cambridge Platonists

London, Edward Arnold, 1969, pp.180-181.

81. Smith, John                      A prefatory discourse concerning the  
true way and method of attaining to  
divine knowledge

in

ed. de Pauley,                      The candle of the Lord

William Cecil

Freeport, New York, Books for Libraries Press, 1937, p.96.

82. ibid., p.97.

83. For Elizabeth of the Trinity see

ed. Philippon, M. M.                      Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity;  
spiritual writings

London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1962, p.60.

84. Mother Maria                      Ralph Cudworth, mystical thinker  
(Gysi, Lydia)

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Library of Orthodox Thinking, 1973, p.25

85. See discussions in the introduction to Patrides, op. cit., pp.39-40 and the introduction to the poems of Henry More :-  
ed. Bullough, Geoffrey      The philosophical poems of Henry More  
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Donoghue, Dennis      Jonathan Swift: a critical introduction  
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87. For a view of Swift in his period, see  
Williams, Kathleen      Jonathan Swift and the age of compromise  
Lawrence, Kansas University Press, 1959.
88. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit., III, Boswell's Life of Johnson (1832), 75.
89. Aelred of Rievaulx      Spiritual friendship  
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Hallier, Amédée      The monastic theology of Aelred of Rievaulx: an experiential theology  
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Cuernavaca, Cidoc, 1970, Cidoc Cuaderno 51.





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anon. Memoir of William Ellery Channing  
London, John Chapman, 1858,3 vols.,I, pt 1, 62, 101, 149,  
151, 153  
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Wright, Conrad The beginnings of Unitarianism in  
America  
Hampden, Connecticut, Archon Books, Shoestring Press,  
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103. Reardon, B. J. From Coleridge to Gore  
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104. Coleridge, S. T. Biographia literaria  
ed. Watson, George  
London, Dent & Sons, 1975, p.167.



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106. See  
 Beer, John Coleridge the visionary  
 London, Chatto & Windus, 1959, esp. pp.150-160.
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## CHAPTER TWO



GUILTY INNOCENTS : THE SELF AS SON AND BROTHER  
IN SOME WORKS OF DICKENS

We are participants in the nature of our ancestor Adam.  
 We are participants of the Divine Grace of the  
 Second Founder of our race.<sup>1</sup>

I could believe that the word stranger is a  
 notion received from the posterity of Cain, who  
 killed Abel.<sup>2</sup>

in truth, we are each responsible to all for all,  
 it's only that men don't know this.<sup>3</sup>

I

Dostoevsky's estimation of Dickens as "the great Christian"<sup>4</sup>  
 is one shared by few modern students of Victorian literature.  
 Christian patterns and images in the novels are usually interpreted  
 as broadly metaphorical rather than theological.<sup>5</sup> Religious  
 language and concepts are held to be employed to accommodate  
 the requirements of the reading public and of contemporary  
 literary conventions.<sup>6</sup> When Christian beliefs are allowed to  
 Dickens, they are frequently condemned as sentimental, ill-  
 considered and heterodox.<sup>7</sup> Hence Elisabeth Jay, in her recent  
 study The Religion of the Heart, objects to Dickens' criticism  
 of the term "fellow-sinners" used by the preacher in Two Views of

a Cheap Theatre<sup>8</sup> because

For the Evangelical, the phrase "fellow sinners" did not serve as a mere religious equivalent for "dear friends"<sup>9</sup> but as a reminder of their common inheritance of sin.

It may be argued from the passage in question, however, that it was just such an exclusive vision of man's identity as a "sinner" and of the nature of human fellowship which inspired Dickens' criticism, a criticism arising from belief in an alternative Christian anthropology rather than from ignorance.

In his discussion of Evangelical preaching in Two Views of a Cheap Theatre the phrase "fellow sinners" is, indeed, understood by Dickens as a theological notion and is opposed by another theological concept, creaturehood :-

Is it not enough to be fellow-creatures, born yesterday, suffering and striving today, dying tomorrow?<sup>10</sup>

Man is related to man by the frailty and mortality which is his common inheritance as a created being, but also by those aspirations transcending creaturely mortality which are also part of his common humanity. Dickens is at one here with the patristic concept of Original Sin as inherited mortality, a heritage less destructive of original innocence than its counterpart in Calvinist theology.<sup>11</sup> In such an anthropology, brotherhood in mortality is also brotherhood in creation after the image of God, in the yearning for the Good, as Dickens claims in his essay :-

By our common humanity, my brothers and sisters, by our common capacities for pain and pleasure, by our common laughter and our common tears, by our common aspiration to reach something better than ourselves, by our common tendency to invest whatever we love or



whatever we lose with some qualities that are superior to our own failings and weaknesses as we know them in our own poor hearts - by these, Hear me! - Surely it is enough to be fellow-creatures. Surely it includes the other designation and some touching meanings over and above.<sup>12</sup>

Fellowship in sin is also fellowship in desire for transcendence of the ego; a capacity for God accompanies susceptibility to evil. Man as a race has a dual solidarity.<sup>13</sup>

The traditional emphasis on the solidarity of Humanity is seen, too, in Dickens' other objection to Evangelical preaching, its stress upon individual salvation. Dickens' reminder that his readers are "brothers and sisters" follows his rejection of the individualistic claims of the preacher :-

I am the son of a Prince! My father is the King  
of Kings. My father is the Lord of Lords. My  
father is the ruler of all the Princes of the Earth!<sup>14</sup>

For Dickens, God is implicitly: "Our" Father, Father of a race rather than of individuals, so that "I" implies always "we".

This deeply traditional vision of the brotherhood inherent in God-given human nature was given its final articulation at the close of the age by the Anglo-Catholic Lux Mundi group, whose theology and anthropology was rooted in the same belief that

We are sons : that is the root law of our entire self.<sup>15</sup>

Such sonship was seen as independent of personality or of individual faith for

sonship ... is at work underground in man, below the level of consciousness, ... Faith is the discovery of an inherent sonship.<sup>16</sup>

Dickens' understanding of man as a brother, fallen yet still spiritual, unites him with the earliest Christian concept of

man and with its renewal in the Christian thought of his period.

Furthermore, in this same essay on the theatre, an explicit Christological aspect is not lacking, "Aspiration to reach something better than ourselves" is related to man's response to Christ. Noting with approval the preacher's teaching on salvation as "simply, lovingly, and dutifully following our Saviour", Dickens continues :-

it was a most significant and encouraging circumstance that whenever he struck that chord, or whenever he described anything which Christ himself had done, the array of faces before him was very much more earnest, and very much more expressive of emotion than at any other time.<sup>17</sup>

The thought of Christ reaches levels of being in the audience left untouched by what Dickens saw as the "selfish" testimonies of individual conversion. The manhood of Christ is more eloquent of man's deepest longings than the claims and experiences of those averring distinction from their fellows.

"Original Sin" is thus not denied by Dickens but is refused its assumed place at the centre of Christian thought and its supplanting of belief in man's nature as an image of God, formed after the likeness of Christ, the Son. That man is created in this image of God is the chief inspiration for Dickens's portrayal of human innocence and his defence of the abused, as seen in his refusal to argue with a Calvinist critic :-

Whether the great Creator of the World and the creature of his hands, moulded in his own image, be quite so opposite in character as you believe, is a question it would profit us little to discuss.<sup>18</sup>

Man is "God's living image"<sup>19</sup>, a fact Dickens believes is widely



ignored or denied by his contemporaries. In refusing succour to their fellows, men refuse the God who is present to them in the human and the material, disclaiming the reality of Incarnation. And so The Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourers calls men back to this truth :-

Oh God, remind them! In the bread  
They break upon the knee,  
These sacred words may yet be read  
"In memory of Me!"<sup>20</sup>

Original innocence thus precedes and accompanies Original Sin, as it did for the Fathers.<sup>21</sup> Depravity is the result not of creation, but of the will which enables man to deny his nature as an image of God and return to bestiality. Hence, in Oliver Twist, there is a distinction between the criminals Fagin and Sikes, who have chosen evil, and those like Nancy, who have been seduced into evil by their environment without willing it. Man's capacity for evil may create an ethos in which offence and evil dominate but man remains free to choose his response to that ethos. So, too, the Fathers understood man's mortality as involving the creation of an environment in which evil is easily proliferated and is to be resisted by the purification of the will.<sup>22</sup> Man, therefore, (in this vision) creates his own evil nature : the ethos which produces evil in one man is the creation of his fellows. And so Origen could combine awareness of man's will and capacity for sin with awareness of his involvement in an evil beyond an individual's own making :-

We affirm that every rational soul is of the same nature, and deny that any wicked nature has been so made by the Creator of the Universe; but we think that many men have become evil by upbringing, by perversion and by environment, so that in some evil has become second nature.<sup>23</sup>

Man's capacity to deny his own being produces a society which entraps others in a similar denial. Such is also the vision of Dickens in his later novels, in which evil is understood neither as individual nor as social, but as a tendency in man which so shapes his social institutions that they create an environment inimical to his inherent innocence as a child and image of God. Thus in Bleak House rejection of sonship permeates society and the substituted human systems mimic the divine. Jo and Esther, in their orphanhood and sickness are implicated victims of the refusal to recognise the ontological laws of earthly and heavenly fatherhood. The "Law" and its machinery is established by man to supplant the divine Law, and shapes men's understanding and behaviour according to its own illusoriness. In Little Dorrit Arthur Clennam is trapped in a society built upon the substitution of Man for God, of which speculation is an expression. His "fall" is the product of the tendency of his race to mock God in creating out of nothing and involves with him the innocents, Amy and Doyce. The capacity for choice of evil, which is essential to man made in the image of a free God, includes all men in its effects : the "taint" of prison upon Amy is but the mark of her solidarity with Humanity.<sup>24</sup>

Man is consequently total innocence trapped in total sin, a Golden Dustman. There is in Dickens' novels an increasing awareness of this tension between sonship and sinfulness, redemption and condemnation, glory and dust. The inner harmony and identity uniting Jo, Esther and Nemo with Lady Dedlock,



the brick-maker's wife, Krook and the Lord High Chancellor in Bleak House co-exists with disintegration and chaos. The world of the novels is one caught in the "eschatological tension" of a Redemption which awaits fulfilment, freedom from bondage :-

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God ... the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature awaiteth the manifestation of the sons of God ... the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.<sup>25</sup>

And so in Bleak House men await the Apocalypse, the Judgement and destruction of evil, which will also be the revelation of divine sonship.

But this tension in the world of Dickens is also a tension in each Dickensian man, as previously suggested. Man is poised between his Christ-like self, the image of God, and his ego, his animal psyche, his creation from the dust of earth in Adam. Hence characters like Mr. Pickwick, Martin Chuzzlewit and Arthur Clennam experience not only their captivity in the evil of others but their own capacity for producing such evil. And Dickens' use of Cain and Abel imagery and allusions, from the Cain-like Monks of Oliver Twist to the pattern and inferences of Our Mutual Friend, reinforces this concept of duality.<sup>26</sup> Man is both the innocent and obedient Abel, acknowledging God and his brother, and Cain, the defiant rebel who murders his brother. Each man is a potential

"saving victim",<sup>27</sup> the Abel who pre-figures Christ, or the Killer of himself and of others in the rejection of relationship to God and man. So, in Our Mutual Friend, "Better to be Abel than Cain"<sup>28</sup> is proved through the "dying to self" of John Harmon which redeems Bella Wilfer, whilst the self-destruction of Cain is evidenced by the drowning of the murderer Bradley Headstone.

Dickens' use of these Biblical figures to embody his vision of man's selfhood and its rejection, is remarkably close to that of William Law. Law, student of the Fathers and great influence upon Nineteenth-century theology, saw each man as encompassing the spiritual history of mankind's bondage to ego :-

You are under the power of no other enemy, are held in no other captivity, and want no other deliverance but from the power of your own earthly self. This is the one murderer of the divine life within you. It is your own Cain that murders your own Abel. Now everything that your earthly nature does is under the influence of self-will, self-love, and self-seeking, whether it carries you to laudable or blameable practices, all is done in the nature and spirit of Cain and only helps you to such a goodness as when Cain slew his brother. For every action and motion of self has the spirit of Antichrist and murders the divine life within you... as Cain and Abel were no other than the genuine effects which Adam as fallen and redeemed was then in, so every man, descended from Adam, is in himself infallibly all that which Adam was, and has as certainly his own Cain and Abel within himself as Adam had.<sup>29</sup>

In this context, too, Dickens' use of the contrast between childhood innocence and adult vice can be understood, not as a sentimentalisation of the child, but as a demonstration of the dual potential of man for realisation and destruction of his selfhood in the image of Christ. The child, still close to



his origin in God, has yet had little opportunity to develop an ego and thus to actualise his potential Cain.

Acknowledgement of Dickens' simple belief in man as the image of God and thus, in some sense, another incarnation,<sup>30</sup> affects not only the evaluation of his treatment of innocence but also of his supposed secularity. In a world in which man images God, the human, perceived truly, points to the divine. As was seen in Two Views of a Cheap Theatre, human love and loss speak to men of things beyond their mortality : parenthood and marriage bespeak relationship with the divine. And so, too, the Dickensian love of celebration and feasting, of year-long Christmas,<sup>31</sup> is not divorced from a truly religious understanding of human life or of Incarnation. The Biblical vision of Heaven and of the Redemption heralded by Christmas is of the great banquet, the gloriously social celebration which fulfils man's desire for fellowship and for sustenance.<sup>32</sup> Dickens' fullest religious meanings are to be found not in verbal expression of Christian sentiment, nor in his characters' overt religious conflicts, as was the fashion of his day, but in the significance he gives to the activities of men and their manner of being.

Dickens' adherence to Unitarianism in the years 1842-4,<sup>33</sup> and his attacks upon Evangelical and High Church Anglicanism have frequently been taken as proof of his lack of commitment to Christianity.<sup>34</sup> Both, however, may be held as evidence of his genuine concern for a Christianity he felt was being betrayed by current orthodoxies, as some of his letters suggest. In March 1843 Dickens wrote of his decision to join the

Unitarians to C.C. Felton, explaining that they were people

who would do something for human improvement if they could : and who practise charity and toleration.<sup>35</sup>

This contrasted strongly with his feelings regarding the Tractarians, of whom he wrote later that month :-

I find that I am horribly bitter about Puseyism. Good God, to talk in these times of most untimely ignorance among the people, about what Priests shall wear and whither they shall turn when they say their prayers, - They had best not discuss the latter too long, or I shrewdly suspect they will turn to the right about : not easily to turn back again.<sup>36</sup>

It is not doctrine which alienates, but the substitution of a human system of rites for a divinely established response to human need. Over twenty years later, when once more an Anglican, it is still the apparent lack of charity and the attachment to human systems which again provokes his ire :-

How our sublime and so different Christian religion is to be administered in the future, I cannot pretend to say, but that the Church's hand is at its own throat I am fully convinced. Here, more Popery, there, more Methodism - as many forms of consignment to eternal damnation as there are articles, and all in one forever quarrelling body - the Master of the New Testament put out of sight and the rage and fury almost always turning on the letter of obscure parts of the Old Testament, which itself has been the subject of accommodation, adaptation, varying interpretation without end - these things cannot last. The Church that is to have its part in the coming age must be a more Christian one, with less arbitrary pretensions and a stronger hold upon the mantle of our Saviour as he walked and talked upon the earth.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, in the Unitarianism attractive for its philanthropy and tolerance, Dickens would have found an understanding of God and man which answered to his own, in his rejection of Calvinism. In 1842, during his American tour,



Dickens met the Unitarian theologian William Ellery Channing, whom he greatly admired. On returning to England, he attended the memorial service for Channing conducted by his English colleague, Edward Tagart at his Unitarian chapel in Little Portland Street. Dickens became both member of the chapel and friend of Tagart.<sup>38</sup> Tagart himself was a student of the Cambridge Platonists, editing Ralph Cudworth's famous sermon to the House of Commons, and was therefore acquainted with the key themes of patristic anthropology.<sup>39</sup> But he was also the main English interpreter of Channing's theology, one which reflected the thought of the Cambridge Platonists and William Law and held a Christology which would require, in many places, considerable theological sophistication to recognise as Arian.<sup>40</sup> From Channing, through the preaching and conversation of Tagart, Dickens must surely have gained both an affirmation and a deeper understanding of his convictions about the nature of the self of Man.

Channing's works abound with assertions of the intrinsic value of human nature in its creation in the image of God. Thus, in "The Immortal Father" he avers

Christianity calls upon us to recognise in all men the same Immortal Principle, the same germ of Divinity, the same Image of God.<sup>41</sup>

The language recalls Antony the Great's exhortation to self-knowledge in order to gain knowledge of God and his insistence upon equality between men in their sharing in one "immortal substance".<sup>42</sup>

For Channing, as for the Fathers, this image of God is found in unique fulness in "Jesus Christ, the Brother" :-

from whom could I have learned the essence of Divine Perfection, as from him, who was in a peculiar sense the Son, the Representative, and Image of God - who was especially an Incarnation of the unbounded love of the Father?<sup>43</sup>

Channing further echoes Gregory of Nyssa and the tradition of mystical, ethical theology in affirming that likeness to Christ and love of God is synonymous with virtue:<sup>44</sup> the self in God's image must become itself by practising the virtues of Christ :-

The love of CHRIST is but another name for the love of VIRTUE. It is not, as some seem to think, a kind of theological emotion - a mysterious fervour - distinct from moral integrity, from philanthropy and from our duties to God and our neighbour. We err grievously if we imagine that our salvation is promoted by occasional ardour towards Christ, which subsists apart by itself in the heart - which does not blend with our ordinary feelings and our daily lives.<sup>45</sup>

So, too, it is not the Dickensian characters who shout "Lord, Lord"<sup>46</sup> who are accorded the status of "righteous". That Dickens eschews personal religious emotion is no accurate indicator of his lack of belief in Christ, as Jay would suggest.<sup>47</sup>

And "duties to God and our neighbour" are for Channing, as shall also be discovered in Dickens, ontological imperatives, a fulfilment of the nature of the self. Rejection of relationship, of what is owed to God as source and man as brother, is self-rejection and misery :-

There is a guide to felicity fixed by God in the very centre of our being, and no other can take its place. Whoever obeys faithfully has peace with himself and with all beings. Whoever silences and withstands this is at war with God and with himself. It is no



brute matter with which he is at war. He makes the Principle of Right in his heart, and in all other beings, that is, the Highest Principle in the Universe, his reprover and foe.<sup>48</sup>

In short, he renders himself Satanic, a God-usurping and isolated man, creating himself according to his own vision of himself rather than to his nature as a related and relating being, a son and brother. Such characters are found increasingly in Dickens' novels, from Fagin to Bradley Headstone, the fate of the latter suggesting Dickens' concurrence with Channing's belief that

Separation of ourselves from our race is spiritual death.<sup>49</sup>

This sin of separation is the cause of social evils, for they are the writing large upon society of individualistic isolation :-

Unconsciously and perpetually we violate man's highest right, the right to be regarded and treated as a Child of God. Man's noblest relationship is practically denied.

The grand light in which this tie ought to be viewed, has hardly ever dawned upon us. What a regeneration it will be throughout all society, when men learn fully to believe in their Spiritual Relationship to One Heavenly Father! We hold this truth in words. Who feels its vitalising power? When brought home as a reality in social life, it will transform the world ... All other reforms of society are superficial. Until men's eyes shall be purged to discern in one another, even in the most degraded and fallen, a ray of the Divinity, a reflection of God's image, a moral and spiritual nature in which God works, and to which He proffers heavenly grace and immortal life; until they shall recognise and reverence the Eternal Father in all His human children, the true bond of communion will be wanting between man and man, and between man and God. Till then, under all forms of law and courtesy, will lurk distrust and discord, infusing pride, jealousy and hate into the individual heart, into domestic life, into the intercourse of neighbourhoods, into the policy of nations, and turning the fair earth into the likeness of Hell.<sup>50</sup>

Such a Hell is the City in Dickens' later novels, in which the outcast sweeper Jo has his relationship to the Father and to men denied by the demand that he ever move on; in which men seek isolated independence of God and man in the creation of their own systems and world-views; in which the human parodies the divine, in creating a system of law and in making riches from dust.

Channing, too, was aware of the danger of egotistic men

Confounding together, as of equal importance, those associations which are formed by our Creator, which spring from our very constitution and are inseparable from our being and those ... which man invents for particular times and exigencies.<sup>51</sup>

for idolatry is a constant danger :-

We may live, not recognising His Power, and idolising our own; and thus turn our very effort into crime, and our blessings to a curse.<sup>52</sup>

Such is the fate of the affluent, speculating society of Little Dorrit and the "severely workful" world of Hard Times.

Yet Channing, like Dickens, was also keenly aware that the human, idolatrous when viewed as an independent good, may point to the divine when viewed aright :-

Those men glorify God most who look with keen eye and loving heart on His works, who catch in all some glimpses of beauty and power, who have a spiritual sense for good in its dimmest manifestations, and who can so interpret the world that it becomes a bright witness to the Divinity.<sup>53</sup>

This vision of unity between men and between heaven and earth leads also to the patristic vision of unity in the personal. Channing teaches not a merging of the individual in the collective but a state in which one is all, and in which



the one is implicated in the action and condition of others :-

God in taking care of each person is taking care of the whole.<sup>54</sup>

for people are

living parts of this living whole<sup>55</sup>

so that

Through my vice, I intensify the taint of vice throughout the Universe. Through my misery, I make multitudes sad. On the other hand, every development of my virtue makes me a blessing to my race.<sup>56</sup>

The disease in Bleak House suggests just such a "tainting of the Universe" with evil, while the interrelationship revealed to exist between men implies that, as Channing claims, men are living members one of another.<sup>57</sup>

This membership in a living whole necessitates system for Channing. While warning against the potentially idolatrous nature of human systems and organisations, he avers that system itself, harmonious order, is an essential aspect of felicity :-

How could he bless us more effectually than by carrying forward the great Spiritual System to which we belong, of which we are living parts? ... He designs to make us all blessed beings in a blessed universe.<sup>58</sup>

Channing the Unitarian here restores a full vision of the Communion of Saints, lost to his Calvinist contemporaries. In such a vision of a Spiritual System lies, perhaps, the source of Dickens' images of unity seen by the gravely ill Esther and the fever-stricken Pip, the bead on the ring and the brick in the wall, whose traditional resonance has been discussed in the introductory chapter. Such an approach to system may answer Hillis Miller's criticism of the presentation of Esther Summerson in Bleak House

as a "pattern"<sup>59</sup> and as

intent upon the perfect working of the whole little orderly system of which (she is) the centre.<sup>60</sup>

Esther does not regard herself as the centre of this system, nor does she confuse it with the ontological system of relationships of which she is part. In her acceptance of Jo and Charley and of relationships of derivation and obligation, she is, indeed, a "pattern" for man in his spiritual world. It is as such a pattern that she stands over against the parodic systems of Chancery and of economic exploitation in the novel.

Praise of human nature does not exclude awareness of sin and frailty in Channing. He acknowledged the dual potential of man for realisation and denial of his being, the capacity for choice of ego which isolates Man from his fellows and from his true selfhood as a being for and towards others :-

there are antagonistic elements also in human nature, which tend to immure the Individual within himself, and to make him the slave of his selfishness. Now it is the glorious characteristic of Christ's salvation, that it sets at Liberty our Love, breaks down the prison walls of self, and carries us freely forth into this goodly universe, - as the Home of our Father and of His Vast Family;<sup>61</sup>

Such a "prison of self" is to be encountered throughout Dickens' work, predominantly, of course, in the two late novels of captivity and prison imagery Little Dorrit and A Tale of Two Cities.

The "righteous" are abjured by Channing to acknowledge their own evil and to recognise in the most hardened criminal

"an infinitely precious germ of love and holiness waiting to be quickened".<sup>62</sup>

just as Mr. Pickwick comes to accept his own involvement in evil



and the latent innocence of the destitute Jingle. But Channing's is also the traditional belief that there is "no sinning without willing"<sup>63</sup> and "no selfhood without willing". Man's choice can corrupt original goodness, as Origen had affirmed, for

We are endowed with that awful power of Free-Will, without which Virtue cannot be ... There is not one blessing in existence, not even God's choicest gift, which may not through our neglect, abuse and perversity, become a source of misery.<sup>64</sup>

Right use of this free-will implies not independent action, but responsive co-operation with the givenness of the self and the conditions of life, as the patristic tradition taught :-

God's connection with us, intimate as it is, is yet no pledge of happiness, without our own concurrence.<sup>65</sup>

Or, as Gregory of Nyssa viewed it :-

we are ourselves in a certain sense fathers of ourselves when by our good intention and our own free choice we conceive and give birth to ourselves and bring ourselves to light.<sup>66</sup>

and as John Jarndyce advises Richard Carstone in Bleak House

Trust in nothing but in Providence and your own efforts. Never separate the two like the heathen waggoner.<sup>67</sup>

Apart from God, man may pervert and parody divine realities.

United with God, his creativity is such that he must ask himself whether he is not

a being whom the Inspiration of God welcomes to be a Co-Creator with Himself?<sup>68</sup>

And in Dickens's true creativity is presented as a willing surrender to the human condition, rather than an attempt to impose an individual vision or design upon it. Hence Mark Tapley in Martin Chuzzlewit transforms shipboard life by

~~by~~ accepting the reality and limitations of the situation; Amy Dorrit works to bring good out of the captivity into which she was born. Both avoid the pride of claims to independence of their given state and the sloth of refusing to fulfil their nature as images of a creating God. Both resist, that is, the chief enemies to man's selfhood in traditional Christian thought of the Western and Eastern Churches.

Channing and his colleagues were not the only representatives of this understanding of man in the century, although they were doubtless its most immediate source for Dickens. In popular and academic theology, attention was once more being paid in this period to versions of the self which established God as the central reality of man's selfhood, and man as a God-participating being.

Thus, in Man and His Dwelling-Place James Hinton regards the self as man knows it, the "ego" of this study, as dead or illusory, yet without destroying the concept of the personal :-

To be not divine is man's death; what he wants is to have Being in him ... (then) the Name, the I AM ... becomes full of a new meaning, a new glory. God is THE BEING. And not less do the words of the New Testament reveal their true force. Is not this its doctrine throughout, that man's life is, to partake God's life. We need only to give up the persuasion that our self is Being, to see a new and awful meaning in the familiar words ... Man's death :- his self - defect of being; surely these are the same. In consciousness of this self surely man is made conscious of his death; ... We must have a Person for our God, or we are without hope in the world. But the difficulty in maintaining this lies in our taking ourself as the standard of personality ... Then first we are truly personal when God fills us with Himself, ... He is THE PERSON. Then are we personal when we are divine ... To be divine is ... to be in the true sense man.<sup>69</sup>



John Harmon's "death" and "resurrection" out of the baptismal waters in Our Mutual Friend can be interpreted in the light of such an understanding of selfhood.

Dickens' portrayal of sacrifice and meekness is also illuminated by Hinton's presentation of the traditional explanation of God's activity in Creation :-

In self-sacrifice, ... we must find the truest conception of creation. Love, sacrificing self : God limiting Himself as it were, giving up Himself for the creature's life : in this most truly may we present to ourselves creation. As Creator, not less than as Redeemer, is God revealed to us in Christ.<sup>70</sup>

As creativity was seen previously to issue from acceptance of the ineluctable and from refusal to impose an individual vision, so it is possible to see in self-sacrifice the true activity of the meek. Refusal to assert ego and willingness to be for others fulfils the meek in their selfhood as images of the God who is for and towards mankind in Creation. Amy Dorrit and Esther Summerson do what they are by living for their fellows, just as Sidney Carton becomes himself in dying for another. Sacrifice, like acknowledgement of relationship and derivation in brotherhood and sonship, is a law of being. The full self of man must recognise creaturehood, his being from God and fellow-men, brotherhood, living towards his fellows, and vicariousness, living on behalf of all men.<sup>71</sup>

This view of the self is central to the thought of F. D. Maurice

"a man of tradition, ... in whom the theology of the Fathers come to life in the Church of England for our own time".<sup>72</sup>

In "The Doctrine of Sacrifice, deduced from the Scriptures",

Maurice clearly enunciates an ontological law of sacrifice :-

Heads of families find that sacrifice is the only bond which can keep fathers and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters at one. God calls nations out of a chaos of turbulent, warring elements. They find that sacrifice must keep them from relapsing into endless war. Individuals discover that all right-doing has its ground in sacrifice, and they find, when they have offended, it is because they have chosen to break loose from the law of sacrifice. So it is proved that obedience and sacrifice are the very conditions of truth and righteousness; that they belong to man who is made in God's likeness, because they are involved in the very character and being of God Himself.<sup>73</sup>

So, too, brotherhood is an inescapable law of being, because of the Sonship of Christ who is

the ground and Archetype of men, the source of all life and goodness in men.<sup>74</sup>

and who therefore rescues man from the life of isolated individuality to make him a person in a community, a participant of the universal life subsisting in Christ.<sup>75</sup>

Since God is man's life, and God and man own familial ties, God is not remote from the human; human relationships lead to the divine, being

not artificial types of something divine but ... actually the means; and the only means, through which man ascends to any knowledge of the divine.<sup>76</sup>

Such a reality is, however, open to perversion and parody as a result of man's God-like free-will. Every self can choose to reject integration with God and brotherhood through his inclination

to set himself up and to become his own law and his own centre.<sup>77</sup>

And so co-creativity is denied, in an assertion of independence



which leads only to illusion, to the enthronement of defect of being :-

The life of man becomes a vain show, just because he does not confess his relationship to this Fountain of Life; just because he seeks that life where it is not to be found - in the things which he is to rule, not in the Lord who rules him.<sup>78</sup>

Like Channing, and Dickens, Maurice, whilst advocating recognition of ontological laws, attacks the human systems which supplant them in his day :-

These systems, Protestant, Romish, English, seem to me each to bear witness of the existence of a Divine Order; each to be a miserable, partial human substitute for it.<sup>79</sup>

These systems, resulting from choice of ego instead of choice of God were seen as being as imprisoning to men as personal egotism is to the individual. For this reason, throughout his life Maurice opposed all parties and theological systems, whilst directing his attention as a moralist to the problem of the entrapping ego. Like Channing, Maurice attributes man's sense of bondage, often held to result from innate depravity, to the direction of the will towards the demands of the ego :-

(God) has taught you that you have been in chains, but that you have been the willing wearer of the chains. ... Self is your great prison-house.<sup>80</sup>

Maurice perceives also the duality in man, which produces the paradox of the guilty innocent evident in the condition of Job :-

The deepest acknowledgements of sin come forth from his heart. But he speaks as if righteousness were deeper and more grounded than that. Sin cleaves very close to him; it seems as if it were part of himself, almost as if it were himself. But his

righteousness belongs to him still more entirely. However strange the paradox, it is more himself than even that is. He must express that conviction, he does express it, though he knows, better than anyone can tell him, how much it is at variance with what he had been thinking and saying the moment before. ... most religious persons, who have conversed at all seriously with men of any class, from the most refined to the most ignorant, in any state of mind, from that of the most contented Pharisee to that of the lowest criminal, ... hear from one and all, in some language or other, the assertion of a righteousness which they are sure is theirs and which cannot be taken from them.

And to this, Maurice asserts, the only response can be

You have such a righteousness ... It lies at the very ground of your existence. ... The righteous Lord of man is with you, at your heart.<sup>81</sup>

As St. Augustine knew, it is possible for God to be with the self, as its basis, and for Man to be "away" from God, so that ontological innocence may accompany actual guilt.<sup>82</sup>

Maurice's thought reflects both traditional Anglicanism and the Unitarianism of his own upbringing, relating him to Channing and to Dickens, whose social circle he sometimes shared. Whilst no direct influence can be positively confirmed, it is noteworthy that Dickens shared a milieu in which such beliefs about man were current.

It is on these grounds, therefore, that a true link may be inferred between Charles Kingsley, Maurice's associate in Christian Socialism, and Dickens. Peyrouton has convincingly argued against the view of Kingsley as a disciple of Dickens in questions of social reform,<sup>83</sup> but has ignored the vision of selfhood which allies Dickens to the principles of Christian Socialism as understood by Kingsley.



Kingsley was convinced, as was his tradition, that self-consciousness is not selfhood :-

St. Paul says, and we say : that crushed under this animal nature there is in man a spirit. We say : that below all his consciousness lies a nobler element a divine spark, or at least a divine fuel, which must be kindled into life by the divine Spirit, the Spirit of God.<sup>84</sup>

Of this view, Dickens' short story George Silverman's Explanation is a perfect illustration. Born in a cellar, upon his parents' death George is rescued and educated by an Evangelical pastor. His original state might well justify belief in natural depravity or in man's belonging with the beast :-

When I had occasionally slunk up the cellar-steps into the street, and glared in at shop-windows, I had done so with no higher feeling than we may suppose to animate a mangy young dog or a wolf cub.<sup>85</sup>

But this "wolf cub" grows to be a clergyman tutor who, feeling his requited love for his young and wealthy pupil would blight her life, withdraws from her in order to promote love between her and the young man who shares his love. Success in uniting the couple brings on him unjust accusations and social opprobrium. From being the human brute, he has developed into a full image of Christ, who sacrifices himself to promote life in others and incurs imputed guilt and persecution. The spiritual man is the truth lying within the savage.

As Dickens connected human aspirations towards goodness with Christ, so Kingsley avers

that light in our hearts, which makes us see, and admire and love what is good is none other than Christ himself shining in our hearts, and showing to us his own likeness, and the beauty thereof.<sup>86</sup>

But desiring goodness requires doing the good in order to actualise divine potential :-

If we only admire what is good, without trying to copy it, we shall lose that light. Our ... diseased nature ... will quench that heavenly spark in us more and more till it dies out.<sup>87</sup>

As for Origen, evil may become second nature and the Christ-like self a Satanic parody, separating his personality from his being :-

When Satan fell from his right place ... he became, remember, not a mere brute : but worse, a fiend ... As long as he was what he was meant to be - the servant of God - he was an archangel and more; ... When he rebelled; when in pride and self-will he tore himself - his person - away from that God in whom he lived and moved and had his being: the personality remained, he could still, like Medea, fall back, even when he knew that he had rebelled against his Creator, on his indomitable self, and reign a self-sufficing King, even in the depths of Hell.<sup>88</sup>

Grandpa Smallweed in Bleak House might be evoked here, a pride-ful parody of God who, enthroned at the centre of his quarrelling, exploitative family, in mockery of divine authority and community makes Hell on earth.

In Maurice and Kingsley, therefore, as in Dickens, there is the same eschatological tension between the condition of man through Creation and Redemption and his state as a being in time called upon to realise this basic condition. As Ramsey remarks, the motto of this school of thought was truly "Werde was du bist".<sup>89</sup>

The doctrines reasserted by the Oxford Movement confirm the availability of the patristic vision of selfhood in this period. Whilst Pusey and his colleagues held a stronger view of the effects of the Fall and of the nature of baptism, they never lost sight



of man's intrinsic goodness as a marred image of God :-

The soul is a holy and Divine thing : sick through sin.<sup>90</sup>

or of its corollary, the idea of selfhood as lying beyond the personality :-

He loves us as we shall be, which He knows in the midst of all our imperfections and miseries which grieve us and ought to grieve us : yet He knows what He will make us become.<sup>91</sup>

And this self belongs to God both by Creation and Redemption :-

Unutterable riches of the mercy of God, to be ever not our own, but to be His, His by creation, His by redemption, His by re-creation, but His too by His indwelling, His Life, His Love, His glory, His Light, His Wisdom, His Immortality, within us.<sup>92</sup>

Christ is therefore the identity of the poor whom Dickens is often considered to sentimentalise in acknowledging as good :-

In them (the poor) He comes to us, in them we visit Him: in them we may find Him; He in them and for them intercedes for us with the Father.<sup>93</sup>

The poor are bound to the wealthy within the Sonship of Christ.

Pusey, too, like Dickens, perceived the failure of the Church to recognise Christ, in its neglect of the poor :-

In these our towns, the Church is losing its best blessing, that of being the Church of the poor : We know not too often of their existence : our fair houses are like painted sepulchres, hiding, by a goodly outside, from our own sight, the misery and hunger and cold and nakedness, which we love not to look upon, but which will rise in judgement against our nation, if we heed it not.<sup>94</sup>

Pusey saw the poor being "moved on" out of sight, like the crossing-sweeper Jo in Bleak House , recalling perhaps the New Testament judgement upon such blindness, which also informs that novel. He may also have had in mind such patristic counsels as that of

St. John Chrysostom :-

Would you honour the body of Christ? Do not despise his nakedness; do not honour him here in church clothed in silk vestments and then pass him by unclothed and frozen outside ... Consider that Christ is that tramp who comes in need of a night's lodging.<sup>95</sup>

Christ goes about unheeded in others and in the self.

Free-will enables man to choose his carnal psyche, his personality, rather than his spiritual self in Pusey's understanding, so that there is once more a duality of divine potential and Satanic bestiality :-

Everything may, and does, minister to heaven or hell ... each wilful act is stamping upon men the mark of the beast; each slightest deed of faith is tracing deeper the seal of God upon their foreheads.<sup>96</sup>

Dickens' reverence for the child is also matched by Pusey's, for whom the baptised infant speaks of original innocence :-

Can we otherwise than, for love of Jesus, reverence and love and yearn over and cherish these little ones? Feel we not ... a drawing forth of our inmost hearts towards them, a tender love, a reverence for them? The childhood of Jesus, and their recent birth of God, the impress of His Hands ... their own freedom, for the most part, from grave actual sin, ... win from us a reverent love, unlike anything besides in this our corrupted world.<sup>97</sup>

And Dickens' sentimentality in his prizing of love and sanctifying of loving characters must be evaluated against Pusey's praise of human love, springing from his patristic knowledge rather than from any modern heterodox influence :-

Pure love engoldens life, because love is the created image of the Being of God, who is Love, a ray from the essential bliss of God.<sup>98</sup>

But the loving self as the image of a God of Love could be distorted, Pusey knew, into the loves of the ego, vaunting humanly created systems, in place of the divine. Pusey saw egotism behind



the excesses of Ritualism, leading him to counsel a young curate :-

recollect that you have not been called into the vineyard to preach a system, much less the externals of a system, but to tend your Master's sheep.<sup>99</sup>

Pusey is linked with Maurice and Channing in a defence of the divine order of selfhood and creation against the modern systems making central the pretensions of the ego.

Many of the key features of Dickens' presentation of the self and of the human community which the self implies, are thus discernible in the religious thought of his apparently conflicting contemporaries. Taking differing approaches to the same tradition, they bear witness to its life and influence in the <sup>19</sup>~~N~~ineteenth century and to the possibility of a reading of the major novels of Dickens which takes seriously this traditional stance.

## II

Since W. H. Auden's essay on The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club in The Dyer's Hand, Dickens' "mythopoeic faculty" has been widely recognised and Mr. Pickwick's imprisonment understood as symbolic of a "Fall".<sup>100</sup> To read Mr. Pickwick, however, solely as an unfallen Adam experiencing the reality of evil is to distort Dickens' understanding of man as it is presented in the character of Pickwick.<sup>101</sup> Mr. Pickwick, like his ancestor Parson Adams, shares the whole nature of Adam as fallen and redeemed man, instinctively good and slightly absurd,

both have the frailties and vanities of the earthly Adam which elsewhere result in egocentric vice. Pickwick's benevolence is held in tension with these frailties and is unproductive until it is integrated with acceptance of them in solidarity with a community of offending innocents. Before his prison sentence, Pickwick's "benevolence" is, in part, the easy affability induced by drink, rather than the willed activation of his inherent capacity for good. He is in this respect guilty of a charge of breach of promise, as are all men. In Dingley Dell, Pickwick may play as though in Eden, but in so doing he ignores the prior visit of the serpent. Deception, pride and self-inflation all thrive in this quasi-idyllic world, as revealed in its human relationships and, symbolically, in the fat boy, an image of slothful greed and self-centredness. This is the fallen world which Pickwick refuses to acknowledge as his own.

The "spirituous" rather than totally spiritual benevolence of Mr. Pickwick<sup>102</sup> is also suggested by his vanity and self-righteousness prior to imprisonment. With his sham claims to learning, Pickwick is quick to rebut and rebuke the club-member who calls him justifiably a "humbug".<sup>103</sup> Later, in skating at Dingley Dell, conscious of superiority he assails Winkle with the same accusation :-

Mr. Pickwick was exalted and indignant, ... "You're a humbug sir". ... "A humbug, sir. I will speak plainer, if you wish it, an impostor, sir."<sup>104</sup>

Just such an impostor is Pickwick himself in his self-image as the unsullied righteous man. And so, in the incident with the middle-aged lady, he cannot distinguish between responsibility and guilt,



insisting on a blamelessness that obscures the facts :-

Mr. Pickwick, in his turn, conscious of his own innocence and rectitude, and irritated by having unfortunately involved the middle-aged lady in such an unpleasant affair, was not so quietly disposed as was his wont.<sup>105</sup>

Concern for his own ego vies with awareness of involvement with others.

It is this Pickwick protesting his righteousness who pursues the offender Jingle and finally encounters him when both are sharing the same identity as offenders. Such a pursuit might be said to be that of Pickwick's own denied creaturely nature, without which he cannot fulfil his selfhood as the being reconciling spirit and flesh. For Jingle, indeed, but represents the characteristics of Pickwick put to worse ends, in the conscious willing of deception and fraud. Both men share the same capacity for evil and, implicitly, for the same good, however dormant.

This link between Pickwick and Jingle is strengthened in the later parts of the novel by the mirroring of Pickwick and Sam Weller by Jingle and Job Trotter. Jingle and Job could parody Pickwick and Sam, as the devil and his familiar parody friendship, suggesting the potential for evil in both pairs. Contrarily, Sam's loyalty to Mr. Pickwick is paralleled by Job's loyalty to Jingle : Job can still relate to others, Jingle evoke a response of love; the marks of selfhood remain and indicate their likeness in origin to their pursuers.

Thus, in meeting Jingle in prison, Pickwick discovers his union with Jingle as an offender and captive, and also the innocence and dignity within the impostor he has pursued. Jingle, reduced

to emaciated destitution, is unable to maintain his false self.

His ego collapses to reveal an afflicted "little child" :-

"Good fellow", said Jingle, pressing his hand, and turning his head away, "Ungrateful dog - boyish to cry - can't help it - bad fever - weak - ill - hungry. Deserved it all - but suffered much - very!"

Wholly unable to keep up appearances, and perhaps rendered worse by the effort he had made, the dejected stroller sat down on the stairs, and covering his face with his hands, sobbed like a child.<sup>106</sup>

In desolation, stripped of his former trappings, and now a hungry, sick and imprisoned man<sup>107</sup> with the simplicity of the child, Jingle actualises his Christ-likeness, his selfhood in the image of the God, who was a child and an outcast criminal.

Pickwick in this meeting learns how to exercise true benevolence, God-like mercy, in place of human censure, in a context of solidarity with, rather than distinction from, sinful men. He learns the Christ-like brotherliness to men which accepts involvement with human frailty. Pickwick set out to find a guilty man and discovered an innocent. Jingle believed he was evading a righteous man and was met by one sharing his own condition. Both experience the reality of guilty innocence.

Consequently Pickwick's true "angelic" qualities are realised only after his time in prison, when he has learnt fully of the captivity of his own innocence to his ego. It is refusal to relinquish his self-image of righteousness that causes his incarceration, from which he is only released by ceasing to care for his self-identity, allowing that his lawyers might do with him as they pleased.<sup>108</sup>



Prison teaches, too, of the distinction between willed and unwilled offence and the enmeshing of the innocent-in-will in the evil and suffering caused by others. Mishap, weakness, deliberate vice give rise to the same condition, but only those enjoy Hell whose wills have chosen it :-

"You see how these fellows drink, and smoke, and roar" replied Mr. Pickwick. "It's quite impossible that they can mind it much".

"Ah, that's just the very thing sir", rejoined Sam, "they don't mind it; it's a regular holiday to them - porter and skittles. It's the t'other vuns as gets done over, with this sort of thing! ... them as would pay if they could, and gets low by being boxed up!"<sup>109</sup>

Upon release from prison, Mr. Pickwick attains reconciling selfhood, bringing lovers and families back into the relationship. The resolution of these personal and familial ties is not a failure to face the evil discerned in prison, for such restoration of bonds and true love-relationships is the one means of overcoming self-captivity and all its social manifestations, redeeming harmony out of chaos.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, Pickwick's retirement and disbanding of the club is not a gesture of defeat in the retirement to another Eden,<sup>111</sup> but a sign of recognition that the Christ-like self no longer requires upholding by a supportive system and that the hope of renewal for man lies not in the activity of the ego but in the being of the self.

The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club is distinguished, therefore, from Dickens' later novels not by any change in belief about man,<sup>112</sup> but only by an increased awareness of the institutionalisation of egocentricity in society in the mature works. The world of egocentricity is less oppressive of its inhabitants in this early novel, the suffering of Pickwick less intense than that

of later captives, and the injustice of parodic laws is represented by individuals like Sergeant Buzz~~fuzz~~ rather than by the all-pervasive machinery of Chancery or the Circumlocution Office. It remains, however, a world in which the innocence of the child of God is endangered by his inheritance from earth and is realised only in acceptance of brotherhood.

In Oliver Twist the untouched innocence of Oliver can only be represented by distinguishing Oliver entirely from his adverse environments. Dickens appears to contradict his desire to champion essential innocence and intuition of goodness by his equal desire to reveal the enmity to such selfhood of contemporary social conditions. He cannot yet fully image forth an inchoate innocence co-existent with true ignorance and "savagery", as he was later to do in Jo of Bleak House. Oliver is seduced by evil, and, as I shall argue, Monks may be seen as the expression of his own potential for evil, but there is no suggestion of internal struggle in the child. And, although claimed as a parish boy, a typical child, Oliver is, in fact, a changeling, wrongly placed in a lower station, whose resistance to evil and restoration may be attributed to "blood" as much as to essential manhood. Dickens' vision of innocence is flawed by the notions of heredity implicit in such an adoption of the romance theme of the "fair unknown", a pitfall inherent in his model in Fielding, as was seen in the introductory discussion. Hence, the treatment of Oliver is inconsistent and his presentation of a representative child in a myth of salvation, flawed in its foundations.<sup>113</sup>

In the workhouse, where Dickens is concerned with the failure



of the system to realise human, spiritual potential, Oliver is a little heathen, as shown in the narrator's response to the pieties of the workhouse guardians :-

It would have been very like a Christian, and a marvellously good Christian, too, if Oliver had prayed for the people who fed and took care of him. But he hadn't, because nobody had taught him.<sup>114</sup>

This savage state disappears once Oliver is installed with Mr. Brownlow. Without nurturing, the response to love produces prayer :-

The darkness and the deep stillness of the room were very solemn; as they brought into the boy's mind the thought that death had been hovering there, for many nights and days, and might yet fill it with the gloom and dread of his awful presence, he turned his face upon the pillow and prayed fervently.<sup>115</sup>

Such an attempt to affirm the child's natural intuition of God is not only unrealistic in its articulateness but is contrary to the emphasis elsewhere in the novel upon the dependence of growth in selfhood upon external nurture and education.

Granted this flaw, Oliver Twist may still be analysed as the "Parish Boy's Progress" of its sub-title, as the journey to salvation of a <sup>n</sup>~~n~~ineteenth-century Christian child. The pilgrim's progress is two-fold. Oliver makes secular progress into the promised Kingdom in his recovery of his name and family. As a Christian, a child of God, he comes into his inheritance as a divine son, developing the characteristics of an image of God, under the guidance of his spiritual father, Mr. Brownlow :-

Mr. Brownlow went on, from day to day, filling the mind of his adopted child with stores of knowledge and becoming attached to him more and more, as his nature developed itself, and showed the thriving seeds of all he wished him to become ... the two orphans, tried by adversity, remembered its lesson in mercy to others and mutual love, ... I have said that they were truly happy; and without strong affection and humanity of heart and gratitude to that Being whose code is Mercy, and whose great attribute is Benevolence to all things that breathe, happiness can never be attained.<sup>116</sup>

With such a vision of the true nature of man, merciful, loving, related to his origin and his fellows, and knowing the "humanity of heart" which is the incarnate nature of "Divine Benevolence", Channing, Maurice and Pusey would be in agreement.

In addition to the use of the traditional literary themes of the progress and the "fair unknown", Dickens also uses in this novel a form similar to such Morality plays as The Castle of Perseverance where the soul is held in the houses of good or evil. Oliver, like the soul in this play, is held captive to evil in the house of the Satanic Fagin, where the intention is to corrupt his will, making his involvement with evil complete :-

the wily old Jew had the boy in his toils. Having prepared his mind, by solitude and gloom, to prefer any society to the companionship of his own sad thoughts in such a dreary place, he was now slowly instilling into his soul the poison which he hoped would blacken it, and change it forever.<sup>117</sup>

The vicissitudes of Oliver in the city are much like the relapses of the soul in the morality drama, whilst his restoration in the country home of Rose Maylie is the soul's return to the castle of his proper nature, to his origin in love, here the home and grave of Oliver's mother.<sup>118</sup>

Oliver's changes in clothing, therefore, are not, as Auden suggests, signs of the change in the self arising from change in environment,<sup>119</sup> but traditional symbols of the soul's "robing in righteousness" after taking on "another dress" of depravity. Changes of clothing represent the fate of Oliver's selfhood, much as they do in King Lear. Oliver can so change his clothing because his will did not correspond with evil, allowing it to become second nature.



Monks, half-brother to Oliver, would seem to represent the potential for evil in Oliver's inheritance as a man. As the intended destroyer of brotherhood in the service of his own ego, Monks<sup>120</sup> is the converse of Oliver's quest for relationship. His "fits" suggest him to be a man possessed, a departure from the normal. His birthmark, together with his enmity to his brother, relate him to Cain, the archetypal murderer and alien. Whilst Oliver finds rest and order, Monks lives on the edge of Hell, as is evident in his interview with the Bumbles :-

"Hear it!", he cried, shrinking back. "Hear it! Rolling and crashing on as if it were echoed through a thousand caverns where the devils were hiding from it".

He remained silent for a few moments and then, removing his hands suddenly from his face, showed, to the unspeakable discomposure of Mr. Bumble, that it was much distorted and discoloured.<sup>120</sup>

The innocent Oliver and the Cain-like Monks have the same father. : However much is accounted to the influence of birth in love and in contempt, according to the logic of heredity in the novel and its model, Tom Jones, Oliver is nevertheless involved with evil as a necessary part of his inheritance as it is of his environment.

As Monks is a figure of Cain, so Fagin is Satanic, the <sup>m</sup>Master of Cain, broken from relationship but retaining his powerful personality and establishing a parodic Kingdom. He is a seducer of the innocent-in-will, whose vision of self and community mocks its divine original in which each is both heir, the first-born, and for all others in a society of heirs. Thus he advises Noah Claypole alias Bolter :-

"In a little community like ours, my dear", said Fagin, "... we have a general number one; that is, you can't consider yourself as number one, without considering me too as the same, and all the other young people".

"Oh, the devil!" exclaimed Mr. Bolter.<sup>121</sup>

Claypole is right - in this context, Fagin's vision is devilish; but also, to the egotist like Claypole, such a vision of the common 'I' is worthy of execration. Evil perverts the good, whilst the good appears evil in the sight of those who reject reality.

And Fagin, like Milton's Satan, is clearly a perversion, retaining some appreciation of goodness. As Milton's Satan is "stupidly good" in his first sight of Eve, so Fagin, finding Oliver asleep, cannot disturb his rest and innocence :-

The boy was lying, fast asleep on a rude bed upon the floor; so pale with anxiety, and sadness, and the closeness of his prison, that he looked like death; not death as it shows in shroud or coffin, but in the guise it wears when life has just departed; when a young and gentle spirit has, but an instant, fled to Heaven and the gross air of the world has not had time to breathe upon the dust it hallowed.

'Not now', said the Jew, turning softly away. 'Tomorrow. Tomorrow.'<sup>122</sup>

Both Oliver and Fagin are spirit and dust. The "dustiness" of Fagin is clear in his pathetic collapse in prison at the close of the novel. Once deprived of his power, he is all too mortal and dependent upon others, his insanity pointing to the unnatural basis of his egotistic, isolated life.

If Fagin reveals finally the frailty of carnal man, Sikes presents the full animality of such manhood, identified as he is with his equally brutish dog. His murder of Nancy is the explicit expression of the "murder" also committed by Fagin and Monks in their perversion and destruction of relationship, a murder also of their own selfhood, made for relationship and its duties.

Awareness of the duties to man and, implicitly, God, flouted by the murder of Nancy is evident in Sikes' terror in flight, not



an external terror of being brought to punishment but an inner horror of death and violation. As Channing perceived it, this "carnal self", plunged in the depths of bestiality, is yet made conscious of a sense of justice and righteousness arising from within and declaring itself his enemy. Sikes is betraying his true nature and destiny.

Among the criminals Nancy stands with Oliver as an afflicted innocent, if one whom Dickens is still as yet unable to imagine fully. Tamed and trained to evil before her will was mature for choice, Nancy proves her innate innocence in her sacrificial response to Oliver, seeing her own betrayed selfhood in him and ready to give her life for his, and in so doing owning solidarity and vicariousness as the basis of her life. Her loyalty to Bill, part custom, part fear, is also an acceptance of bonds which transcend her treatment as an animal. Nancy's fidelity outweighs desire for survival, in contrast to the self-protective response of master and his cowed dog :-

The dog came up from the very force of habit; but as Sikes stooped to attach the handkerchief to his throat, he uttered a low growl and started back ... The dog advanced, retreated, paused an instant, turned and scoured away at his hardest speed.<sup>123</sup>

The human is distinguished from the beast in the willing laying down of life.

The child-innocent as a type of Christ is universally acknowledged in The Old Curiosity Shop in which Little Nell is claimed as a Saviour whose death is a form of Nativity, a restorative influence upon the earth :-

When Death strikes down the innocent and young, for every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world and bless it.<sup>124</sup>

But Nell is too angelic, too little enfleshed to fulfil this role of life-giver. She offers no hope for the earthy part of man, for evil remains always external and "other" to her so that there is no prospect of reconciliation between flesh and spirit. The pursuit of Nell by Quilp, furthermore, suggests the complete separation of evil from the beauty of innocence rather than their co-existence in man.

Such co-existence is apparent, however, in the minor characters, Kit Nubbles and Dick Swiveller. In these, where Dickens is unhindered by flight from grief,<sup>125</sup> it may be suggested, lie the germs of Dickens' future guilty innocents.

Kit's goodness is a quality quite separate from his initial attributes. Neither bright nor beautiful, he has difficulty in learning and appears uncouth and foolish :-

Kit was a shock-headed, shambling, awkward lad with an uncommonly wide mouth, very red cheeks, a turned-up nose and certainly the most comical expression of face I ever saw.<sup>126</sup>

Kit's oddity is a matter of nature, rather than the attempt to create a powerfully distinctive personality, as it is in Quilp. Foolishness in Kit accompanies acceptance of the given. The absence of "social graces" hides the innate grace-fulness of the child who is content to be, rather than to create, himself. Mr. Chuckster's disbelief in his willingness to work expresses the egotistic world's refusal to acknowledge goodness in those of such unprepossessing attributes.

Kit's identity as a self in the image of Christ is indicated by this absence of ego, his willing service and dutifulness, his



unconditional loyalty towards Nell. It is an identity reinforced by his role as a victim, bearing calumny and false accusation, which leads to an imprisonment evoking perceptions of a captivity more than material, of

something oppressive and always present, and yet impossible to define.<sup>127</sup>

The prison of self is unknown to Kit's will, but it is the condition of the world he inhabits and a potential in the earthly human nature he shares with all men. He must endure the condition of man, fulfilling his name Christopher, Christ-bearer, as one who is uncomely and silent before the persecution of the "world".

More interesting yet, in some respects, is Dick Swiveller whose very name implies his lack of relatedness and centredness. Dick is neither an actualised self, firmly centred outside his ego, knowing his existence from and for others; nor is he an egotist, with his will centred upon the creation and maintenance of his personality. His unrealised capacity for love and fellowship, co-existent with concern for the ego, is seen in his concurrence with Fred Trent's plans for Nell. Loyalty and generosity vie with vanity and levity :-

It is sufficient to know that vanity, interest, poverty and every spendthrift consideration urged him to look upon the proposal with favour, and that where all other inducements were wanting, the habitual carelessness of his disposition stepped in and still weighed down the scales on the same side. To these impulses must be added the complete ascendancy which his friend had long been accustomed to exercise over him - an ascendancy exerted in the beginning sorely at the expense of the unfortunate Dick's purse and prospects, but still maintained without the slightest relaxation, notwithstanding that Dick suffered for all his friend's vices, and was in nine cases out of ten looked upon as his designing tempter when he was indeed nothing but his thoughtless, light-headed tool.<sup>128</sup>

Dick's swivelling, his lack of orientation, leaves him open to development into the shape-changing Quilp whose fantastic imagination he shares, evidenced by his strategies for avoiding the limitations of debt. But this same liking for the fantastic and his light-headedness attract him also to the oddity of the Marchioness, directing his inventiveness into the nurturing of another, thus completing the need for relationship informing the attachment to Fred Trent.

Involvement with Kit and his family also awakens Dick to human realities beyond himself, beginning the process of enlightenment and orientation which is fulfilled by purgative illness. In the vulnerability and dissolution of his customary personality in sickness, come the awareness of his participation in the life of others, and self-abandonment :-

rambling for ever through deserts of thought where there was no resting-place ... with no change but ... the weary wanderings of his mind, constant still to one ever-present anxiety, - to a sense of something left undone, of some fearful obstacle unsurmounted, of some carking care that would not be driven away, ... the unfortunate Richard lay wasting and consuming inch by inch, until at last when he seemed to fight and struggle to rise up and to be held down by devils, he sunk into a deep sleep and dreamed no more.<sup>129</sup>

The "spirituous" excitement of years is finally replaced by the spiritual, aroused by new-found concern for others.<sup>130</sup> The language of this passage has many traditional resonances which indicate Dick's illness as a purging of the false self. The burning of fever is in itself a purgatorial image, whilst the desolation of the desert is ever the experience of the stripping of the ego to allow the emergence of the true self, naked of self-consciousness and self-concern. The echo of the confession from the Book of



Common Prayer in the thought of "something left undone" in connection with lack of health, points to the discovery of a case and a duty exceeding individual experience. Dick has discovered the obligations, the ties, binding man to man whose failure in fulfilment is his sin. Carelessness has become care for others, swivelling, centredness upon others. Dick emerges from the encounter with human mortality to find his old clothes, his previous trappings, consumed in the illness which has brought him into actual reciprocity. Not only is he obliged to the Marchioness for his own life but he finds himself responsible henceforth for her, as he discovers in catechising her :-

"And where do you live, Marchioness?"  
 "Live!", cried the small servant. "Here!"<sup>131</sup>

And dreams of serving Kit become reality as he acts upon the intelligence gained from the Marchioness to secure Kit's release. If Kit is an innocent accepting implication in evil, Dick is one of the redeemed, restored to a life towards and for others.

Quilp, by contrast, presents us with an image of the damned, the being who, denying spirit, becomes a fiend. Like Milton's Satan, he has made evil his good; like Shakespeare's Richard III, equally fascinating in his physical and mental distortion, he is a vice-figure, manipulating and stage-managing life until ultimately cheated by the intransigency of mortality to his will. Despite these god-like pretensions to control, he is, indeed, less than human, the carnal man whose personality is in service to his animal nature. His fantastic inventiveness, rather than being an expression of the free creative imagination, is only the sign of his bondage to "the beast", to lust and aggression. His planned controlling activity and deliberate posture of oddity issue from the animality

he shares with all men. Activity designed to inspire fear reveals not the particularity of the person but the destruction of his humanity :-

he ate hard-boiled eggs, shell and all, devoured gigantic prawns with the heads and tails on, chewed tobacco and water-cresses at the same time ... bit his fork and spoon till they bent again, and in short performed so many horrifying and uncommon acts that the women were nearly out of their wits, and began to doubt if he were really a human creature.<sup>132</sup>

And the roots of his individuality in irrational animal aggression are most clear in his attack on the ship figurehead representative of Kit :-

"Is it like Kit - is it his picture, his image, his very self?" cried the dwarf, aiming a shower of blows at the insensible countenance, and covering it with deep dimples "Is it the exact model and counterpart of the dog? - is it - is it - is it?" And with every repetition of the question, he battered the great image until the perspiration streamed down his face with the violence of the exercise.<sup>133</sup>

Death finally seals the illusoriness of all Quilp.'s pretensions; cheated of Nell by her death, his own proves him a nonentity, his body disappeared, his will unwritten. Of the "dead dwarf" and his will to power nothing remains, suggesting the fundamental insubstantiality of his ego and proving his created self to be but defect of being.

The themes and patterns of this novel occur more fully developed in Martin Chuzzlewit, a work expressly concerned with 'Self'. Lucas has questioned the validity of Dickens' view of his theme, suggesting that selfishness is contradicted by the love of Antony Chuzzlewit for his son Jonas.<sup>134</sup> But evil may be a perversion of good, and Antony perverts love into egotism by



rearing his son according to his own egocentric vision of the life of man. Jonas is forced to consider man as an object, for manipulation and exploitation to meet the demands of the ego, and thus to replace human values with those of the market-place. Both have fallen from I-Thou into I-It relationships, as Martin Buber analyses selfishness.<sup>135</sup> The commercial world is but the large-scale exemplification of such a fall. Its effect is seen in the withering of Chuffey, whose capacity for love and loyalty is imprisoned by his prolonged involvement with the world of figures and objects, rendering difficult communication with the "Thou" of his companions. He can no longer perceive of himself or others as "living parts of the living whole". So Antony Chuzzlewit rightly recognises that

I have sown and I must reap.<sup>136</sup>

for in destroying I-Thou relationships he has both been and produced a murderer of man's full human nature.

Jonas also acts from choice, however. His torment of Mercy is a premeditated exercise of power and self-directed lust. Courtship is no reciprocal relationship for him but a hunt aimed at the punitive subduing of the tantalising prey. Human relationship is thus reduced to a war of all against all, the reality of the commercial world in whose terms Jonas expresses himself :-

"Ecod, my lady!" said Jonas, looking after her and biting a piece of straw, almost to powder;  
 "You'll catch it for this, when you are married!  
 It's all very well now - it keeps one on, somehow,  
 and you know it - but I'll pay you off cast and lot  
 bye and bye. ... Take your own way as long as it's  
 in your power, my lady!"<sup>137</sup>

Jonas' involvement with a confidence trick symbolises the unreality of his life, built upon the demands of his own carnality, his psychic self, just as the murder he finally commits confirms his homicidal way of life. The hunting and being hunted which characterises his life as confidence-trickster, dupe and killer exposes the persecutory nature of the world based upon I-It relationships. The self which treats others as disposable objects is equally disposable to any other 'I'; the world becomes that of "King Lear" in which bemonstered men prey upon one another and in which claims to rationality prove to be the hollow validation of lust.

But Jonas' terror, like that of Bill Sikes, and his dream of Last Judgement before committing murder, indicate awareness of violation arising from within him; a vestigial sense of self-division and self-enmity is evident in this unbidden protest. Suicide is thus the natural expression of his own self-murder, effected by the deliberate decision to kill :-

There is no glare in the night. Even Glory shows to small advantage in the night, upon a crowded battle-field. How then shows Glory's blood-relative, bastard Murder!

Aye! He made no compromise and held no secret with himself now. Murder. He had come to do it.<sup>138</sup>

Mercy is initially a counterpart to Jonas, a caricature of humanity and parodic of a divine attribute. She is a worthy daughter of the egocentric architect who mocks the creativity of God, the architect of the Universe.

Her growth into a feeling victim may be understood not as inconsistency on the part of Dickens, but as development into



humanity through "seasoning with affliction" (Mark Tapley's sentiment in Eden<sup>139</sup>) and experience of the reality of human relatedness. Mercy's levity becomes awareness of the gravity of the life and relationship she has mocked, just as Dick Swiveller through illness exchanged carelessness for care. Dickens forewarns his readers of the coming torment of Mercy, reminding them of the disparity between the appearance and treatment of men as objects and their true nature as sentient relating beings. Her growth, furthermore, stresses the dehumanisation of Jonas in his chosen abuse of the real mercy offered him in the union with another person.

Hence, Martin Chuzzlewit is about "Self" in its fullest sense. It is concerned with two modes of selfhood; the spiritual selfhood of centredness outside the ego, in acceptance of relatedness, contingency and responsive co-creativity, and the false selfhood which establishes the ego as an independent, creative centre. The former rejects projection of a self-image, the latter is concerned primarily with its creation and sustenance.

Tom Pinch and Mark Tapley are complementary representatives of spiritual selfhood. The unreality of Tom's fate in his "adoption" by the elder Martin Chuzzlewit tends, for some readers of the novel, to reflect back an unreality upon his characterisation, questioning the credibility of his meekness.<sup>140</sup> However, there is, in considering Tom, a need for the same distinction between human identity and personality attributes which was employed for Kit Nubbles. Kit is comically foolish, Tom is poor in personality. His poverty of "spirit", that is, his lack of assertiveness and

confidence, is shown to stem from orphanhood. Tom has no expectations of the world and no sense of right to existence and significance in it. But this weakness psychologically, this lack of highly individual colouring, enables the realisation of true selfhood. Willing acceptance of the gift of life, willing loyalty, willing service, indicate Tom's capacity to be for and towards others in acceptance of dependence. By contrast with the younger Martin Chuzzlewit and Pecksniff, he refuses to be an ontological orphan. He refuses also to create or project himself, so that being and activity are unified in him. Thus, when Mary finds him playing the organ, his love for her issues not in self-assertion, but in even more complete integration with the music, to increase her pleasure.<sup>141</sup> Love and activity are directed away from the ego.

Tom thus exemplifies that transparent selfhood which does not attempt to appropriate itself as its own object, the selfhood which the Lux Mundi group acknowledged as the true model in employing it as an analogy for faith :-

Faith is an elemental energy of the soul and the surprise that we are undergoing at not being able to bring it under direct observation, is only an echo of the familiar shock with which we learn that science has ransacked the entire bodily fabric of man and has nowhere come across its soul ... that which observes can never, strictly speaking, observe itself. It can never look on at itself from outside, or view itself as one among the multitude of things that come under its review. How can it? It is itself the organ of vision and the eye cannot see its own power of seeing.<sup>142</sup>

Tom's personality-flaws do not hinder his selfhood because his need for love and usefulness is not directed inwards to himself, in the creation and satisfaction of a self-image as lovable, useful or needy, through the manipulation of others. Goodness is



compatible both with psychological frailty and need for growth. Tom does learn to discern evil, in the unmasking of Pecksniff, and through this, to know his own capacity to be fooled and held captive by the "vain show" of man's egotism. The "good" man, too, is capable of idolatry, when his valid spiritual perceptions are linked to human substitutions for the divine. So, too, Tom learns rightful self-assertion in the rescue of Ruth from her employers, no longer allowing his good-will and absence of egotism to be a means of promoting the egocentricity of others. Tom, like his successor Amy, has to understand that being towards and for others is not an effacement of the justice and truth of the spiritual self before the demands of the egos of others. As is also apparent in the silent Christ of the mediaeval Passion plays, the self in Christ's image, whilst rejecting false selfhood and suffering at the hands of the selfish as a foolish stooge, is finally a source of judgement upon the world.

Tom's vindication and exaltation by the elder Martin Chuzzlewit is ultimately to be understood, therefore, not as wish-fulfilment, but as the vindication of the son who, through rejection and condemnation, brings about the revelation of reality and the destruction of evil. Chuzzlewit has in the true sense imitated God in allowing the righteous to endure evil to bring about good. He is, indeed, not a fairy god-mother, but a representative of God the Father restoring selfhood.

Mark Tapley expands the vision of selfhood, suggesting its possibility of vitality and distinctiveness. His repeatedly expressed desire to prove himself in adversity and his refusal to accept its

advent, is a means of avoiding appropriation of qualities and achievements to the ego and of affirming contingency: life is always experienced as defeating his plans and apprehensions. He thus remains free from fixed expectations and self-definitions, to respond creatively to new situations. The world is understood as requiring his co-operation rather than the imposition of his own designs and will, as is evident in his reaction to life on board ship and in Eden. He stands as the true human architect, bringing to fruition a creation whose origin is beyond himself, in contrast to the Satanic architect Pecksniff who moulds a self-image and a world to his own requirements, a world of delusion. Tom's realisation that

There was no Pecksniff; there never had been a Pecksniff  
... Pecksniff had gone out of the world - had never been  
in it.<sup>143</sup>

is the evaluation in the novel of the creating ego which abandons its origin in a creating "I am", as mediated by the responsiveness of Mark.

Mark is therefore the ideal companion and teacher for the budding architect, the young Martin Chuzzlewit. Martin is poised between the potential and tutelage of Pecksniff and of Mark Tapley. Ripe for development into a false architect of ego, he learns in his companionship with Mark in Eden to become a true creator.<sup>144</sup>

Martin, an orphan like Tom, is set to be also an "ontological orphan" renouncing all the ties and duties of inherited relationship, while presumptuously regarding his selfhood as given and completed in his anticipated inheritance. And so he tells Tom

it's all very right and proper to be fond of  
parents when we have them, and to bear them in



remembrance after they're dead, if you have ever known them, But as I never did know anything about mine, personally, you know, why I can't be expected to be sentimental about 'em. And I am not: that's the truth.<sup>145</sup>

Love and sacrifice are his due as a being who acts with divine condescension in bestowing his favour, as he expresses in his explanation of Mary's situation :-

Of course, it's not very hard upon her to be obliged to yield to the necessity of the case: first, because she loves me very much; and, secondly, because I have sacrificed a great deal on her account, and might have done much better, you know.<sup>146</sup>

His travel to America and to Eden is not an inessential interlude, therefore, but a necessary journey of exploration into his own nature and into the deepest meaning of his profession. Eden, the land of man's origin, is found to involve work and pain. The clay of man's earthly origin is in ample supply<sup>147</sup>, but love, vision and effort are required to bring man's spiritual birthright to fruition. There is no ready-made Paradisaal self for man; nor is there any self independent of this origin in earth and in its inspirited life. Martin's desire for a given, egocentric selfhood, which refuses relationship and responsiveness, proves as illusory as the righteousness of Pecksniff and the financial solvency of Montague Tigg: it is one more confidence trick played upon the self. In Eden Martin learns what Richard Carstone fails to do in Bleak House, that man must of necessity

Trust in nothing but in Providence and (his) own efforts.<sup>148</sup>

Like Dick Swiveller, Martin learns through illness and the plight of others, of the reality of relationship, dependency and his own mortal frailty :-

he had grown selfish ... He never would have known it, but that newly risen from a bed of sickness, to watch by such another couch, he felt how nearly Self had dropped into the grave, and what a poor, dependent, miserable thing it was, ... in the hideous solitude of that most hideous place, with Hope so far removed, Ambition quenched and Death beside him, rattling at the very door, reflection came in, as in a plague-beleagured town, and so he felt and knew the failing of his life and saw distinctly what an ugly spot it was.<sup>149</sup>

Martin discovers his self as "defect of being", within the traditional experiences of the wasteland and the purgatorial fever, those destroyers of sin and ego. And, again traditionally, in losing his false self, he attains his universal selfhood, as a co-creator, living for and towards his fellows, an equal partner to Mark who declares

I'm reg'larly defrauded, ... It's a swindle. I never entered for this kind of service. There'll be no credit in being jolly with him.<sup>150</sup>

Martin's sojourn in Eden recapitulates in microcosm the story of redemption and judgement which constitutes the basis of the novel.

The theme of self-architecture, at individual and societal levels, is maintained in Dombey and Son. Mr. Dombey as a symbol of the Age of Mechanism or Mercantilism is a common-place of critics,<sup>151</sup> but it is important to discern what, for Dickens, underlies the mechanical age, the refusal of selfhood in the assertion of isolation and self-creation, framed in the novel in the traditional term of the Sin of Pride.

Mr. Dombey is Satanic in his insistence upon his own power and authority, usurping the role of God the Creator in proposing for, and disposing of, others, for, as he tells Edith



"I am used to choose my own times: not to have them chosen for me. I think you scarcely understand who and what I am, Mrs. Dombey ...

I must have a positive show and confession of deference before the world, Madam. I am used to this, I require it as my right."<sup>152</sup>

And in the hiring of Polly Toodles, the assumption of power over others is complete, extending to the capacity for mutuality; Dombey would fashion a world according to his own demand for control, which is institutionalised in his role as a merchant, buying and selling commodities :-

When you go away from her, you will have concluded what is a mere matter of bargain and sale, letting and hiring: and will stay away. The child will cease to remember you; and you will cease, if you please to remember the child.<sup>153</sup>

Dombey's Satanic nature and the institutionalisation of such usurpation of God in the mercantile world is stressed by the associations of the phrase "the House of Dombey", indicating both his self, the traditional significance of "house", and his representation of Commerce. Both the individual and the societal house is the Biblical house divided against itself which cannot stand, and the demonically possessed being requiring exorcism by Flo and the values she embodies.<sup>154</sup>

Moynahan has suggested, if slightly, that Flo's name in itself suggests the conflict in the novel between head and heart, control and spontaneity.<sup>155</sup> But Flo, in her name and character, represents far more than one side of such simple dichotomies. She is identified with that other "House" of the novel, the shipman's, and with the sea as opposed to the rail. That is, she is representative of the responsiveness and acceptance of that

origination and relationship of which the sea is a symbol in the novel. The sea of life and death heard by Paul and his mother, is the sea of the life-source which encircles the world of man, uniting it and returning it to one point of origin. Flo's tears are the sign of her knowledge that this relationship is being violated and of her desire for restoration. They are the mark of her responsiveness to the true conditions of life. Furthermore, in the contrast with the railroad as a means of transport, Flo's connection with the sea suggests responsive surrender to life rather than the attempt to control life and environment by one's own creation. Dombey manufactures life, Flo lives it.

And so, too, Flo's lover, Walter Gay ventures upon the sea. For him, going to sea entails trusting co-operation with a natural force, whereas for Dombey and Carker travel by rail is a symbol of their pretension to power and control over a world of their own making. The sea delivers Walter Gay, the railroad consumes Carker and shatters Dombey, imaging the self-destructiveness of the claims. Of itself, the railway, like commerce, is a potential blessing: it becomes evil when used as an instrument and extension of the ego. Thus admiration for the social progress heralded by the railway may stand alongside nostalgia for Staggs Gardens. Each advance in Man's control of his environment is one potential but not necessary step on the journey to the Hell of self-creation.

Hence the sea imagery associated with Paul Dombey is not religiose sentimentality but a reminder of Paul's "freshness from the hands of God"<sup>156</sup> and relationship to his source. The call of physical death in the yearning for his mother is thus a longing for



the child's life of relationship and derivation denied him, whilst his knowing innocence is an affirmation that such "childhood is health".<sup>157</sup>

The contrary desire of his educators to make a man out of the child, according to their own formulae, is one more aspect of his society's rejection of selfhood and of the large-scale triumph of the ego. Paul is thus the microcosmic illustration of the fate of selfhood, spiritual childhood (or child-ship in Boehme's phraseology<sup>158</sup>), in this world fallen into I-It relationships, as Dickens indicates to his readers, in rebuke of their self-righteous isolation :-

Calling up some ghastly child, with stunted form and wicked face, hold forth on its unnatural sinfulness and lament its being, so early, far from Heaven - but think a little of it having been conceived, born and bred, in Hell!<sup>159</sup>

The unity between Paul and his betrayed brothers is seen elsewhere in the offence against child-ship. High and low, innocent and guilty share an involvement with one another, transcending class and individual culpability. Alice Marwood and Edith Dombey reveal not only the social inequity in the fate of equally prostituted women, but equal offended innocence, equal desire for relationship held captive to the ego's desire for vengeance. As creations of their mothers, they have been reduced to distorted commodities no less than the afflicted children of the city slums.

With these two offended offenders is associated Harriet Carker. Although inadequately realised as a character, Harriet has an important place in this pattern of relationship beneath distinction.

She is implicated innocently in the offence of both her brothers, and is linked with both women as a victim of one. Harriet is prepared to acknowledge her oneness with the offending and the offended as a fact transcending her individual action and culpability. And Harriet's own true innocence, it is suggested, belongs also to those with whom she claims sisterhood. Capacity for love and sacrifice struggle to the fore in Edith Dombey, whilst in Carker his likeness to his sister, his "old idea of her", is retained, if left unheeded :-

Though his liking for her is gone, after this ungrateful slight, as he considers it; and though he abandons her altogether in return, an old idea of her is not quite forgotten even by him. Let her flower-garden, in which he never sets his foot, but which is yet maintained, among all his costly alterations, as if she had quitted it but yesterday, bear witness!<sup>166</sup>

The house-imagery of the novel supports the suggestion that the "flower-garden" and the "costly alterations" imply Carker's natural spiritual selfhood, which he shares with his sister, and its distortions by the ego. The relationship between innocence and evil in the brother and sister is reversed, but in them both is the same potential as is found in the two women with whom they are linked as offenders.

The roots of the spiritual sickness which besets the world of Dombey and Son <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ perhaps most clearly seen in "Good Mrs. Brown" and Mrs. Skewton, who complete the circle of relationship and its betrayal. In them most clearly is seen the despair of the ego at mortality and the intransigency of time, which leads man to usurp God and to deny his imaging of divine parenthood. "Mrs. Brown" steals Flo to deny the loss of her daughter and the passage of



time, and repeats her act of depredation. Mrs. Skewton sells her daughter whilst upholding the fantasy that "Age cannot wither her".<sup>161</sup> She is a very literal architect of the self, transforming herself, like one of Swift's "nymphs", into an idol to whom Edith is a human sacrifice. Despair of mortality, of creaturehood, and of divinity, her denied spiritual selfhood, is imaged in her paralysis: unable to be the self she wills and unwilling to be the self she is, she is locked into mocking death-in-life, a literal painted doll who images forth the futility of Man's pretensions to independent creativity and proclaims the need for the surrendering responsiveness of Flo.

"Nobody!" echoed the mother, striking her breast.<sup>162</sup> is the cry of "Good Mrs. Brown" which sums up the "defect of being" found at the heart of the egocentric characters in these early novels of Dickens.

### III

The relationship between man's perversion of his nature in the choice of ego and his social institutions, evident in Martin Chuzzlewit and Dombey and Son, becomes of paramount concern in Dickens' last six complete novels. It is impossible to consider Dickens' vision of the self in these novels without also analysing their total world, for in them man is seen as making that world in his own image. The parodic, God-usurping self, creates an equally

parodic and God-usurping society. Egocentricity is institutionalised in the Law, Commerce, Religion, Government and the Family.<sup>163</sup> A reified social system is shown to replace the ontological system of persons in relationship. In such a world men mistake the ontological for the social, the social for the ontological, just as they mistake their personality, family inheritance and self-consciousness for selfhood. The transient and accidental (in its Aristotelian sense) thus has the power over men of the transcendent.

In Bleak House such a condition is made plain in the presentation of Chancery and of the Jarndyce case. John Jarndyce, like Pickwick a man unaccepting of his involvement in evil, finds himself inextricably drawn into it. Just as he is involved in the Jarndyce law-suit, an inherited liability, as the consequence of derivation and relationship, so too he discovers his implication in the evil and suffering of members of the wider human family. As his name suggests, John Jarndyce is "jaundiced"<sup>164</sup> not through his own doing but through belonging to a community of men, just as Esther also becomes diseased by virtue not of her own culpability but of her accepted relationship with fellow orphans. Hence the Jarndyce case hints to men of an ontological reality :-

"Innumerable children have been born into the cause; innumerable young people have married into it; innumerable old people have died out of it. Scores of persons have deliriously found themselves made party to Jarndyce and Jarndyce, without knowing how or why."<sup>165</sup>

And Jarndyce himself experiences it similarly :-

through years and years, and lives and lives, everything goes on, constantly beginning over and over again, and nothing ever ends. And we can't get out of the suit on any terms, for we are made party to it and must be parties to it, whether we



like it or not. But it won't do to think of it!  
 When my poor great uncle, poor Tom Jarndyce, began  
 to think of it, it was the beginning of the end.<sup>166</sup>

"That way madness lies"<sup>167</sup> was also the cry of King Lear on his journey towards accepting solidarity with the wretched and ultimate "reclathing in righteousness", a journey initiated by awareness of familial and social bonds. The hints of such an association are deepened by the image of Tom's dilapidated house, Jarndyce's inheritance, in the continuation of this conversation between Jarndyce and Esther. The exposure to the elements and the ruin of his "house", literally and figuratively, in the attempt to delve the mystery of a condition in which he is unwillingly yet inextricably involved, speaks of an experience like that on the heath for Lear. Engagement with the man-made intricacies of the legal machine has replaced and yet also shadows man's engagement with the mystery of his state.

Jarndyce follows his great-uncle and his contemporaries in conflating the social and the ontological. The immutability of the law-suit is given the weight of the immutability of the human condition of solidarity in affliction; the impossibility of engaging successfully with the legal system becomes also the impossibility of engaging with that condition; desire to ignore the case becomes desire to withdraw from the reality of involvement in evil. Hence the "Growlery" is a symbol both of Jarndyce's innocence of will, his refusal to choose evil, and of his incomplete acceptance of his involvement in the frailty of humanity.

There is thus an ambiguity about Jarndyce's actions. Ready assumption of responsibility for Richard, Amy and Esther marks his

fundamental recognition of relationship but his response to Esther suggests also the desire to create his own benevolent system, the world of Bleak House, in defiance of his own creatureliness and involvement in the total condition of man.<sup>168</sup> Even the good man, in this society, wishes to create a world in the image of his own understanding of goodness.

Jarndyce is saved from this superiority by Esther's introduction into the world of Bleak House of victims of man's disease of broken ontological bonds.<sup>169</sup> Jarndyce's "house" cannot escape being touched by man's sickness. Such contact results in Jarndyce's admission of fault to Esther over their proposed marriage and the relinquishing of his pretensions to judgement, so that Esther has

never known the wind to be in the East for a single moment; since the day when he took me into the porch to read the name.<sup>170</sup>

In providing another Bleak House for Esther to use as she will, Jarndyce has, in effect, given himself away, fulfilling his selfhood as a self-dispossessing being.

Beyond the Jarndyce suit, men continue to mistake the relative, for the absolute, system. The inscrutable human system is confused with the mystery of divine judgement. And so, Miss Flite awaits judgement from Chancery as though it were the Last Judgement, conflating the social and the cosmic :-

I expect a Judgement. Shortly. On the Day of Judgement. I have discovered that the Sixth Seal mentioned in the Revelations is the Great Seal.<sup>171</sup>

The supplanting of Divine Law by Man's has rendered Miss Flite a passive victim of social egotism, denying her identity as a responsively related and co-creative being. The parallels between the vulnerability of her caged birds to Krook's preying cat and her



own vulnerability to the rapaciousness of the legal system suggests the reduction of men to hunting and hunted animals in this world in which divine law and selfhood are usurped.<sup>172</sup>

Krook's likeness to the Lord High Chancellor confirms the criminality of the Law and its essential sordidness, whilst his death by spontaneous combustion implies its inherent self-destructiveness and the absence of any principle of life. Here, in a non-comic mode, the "spirituous" has truly replaced the "spiritual". But this likeness is also a reminder of the deeper crimes of the Law - of falsifying reality and of robbing men of their common identity: the Lord High Chancellor is but a frail mortal like Krook, who yet pretends to isolated godhood and thus obscures man's unity with man both as a sinner and as an offspring of the same Creator. The text Esther reads for her godmother

He that is without sin among you, let him first  
cast a stone at her!<sup>173</sup>

sums up the basis for Dickens' criticism of the Law.

Gridley's fight against Chancery has, similarly, the despairing note of a man fighting against the ineluctable. He is caught up in an oppressive, destructive force, a faceless, blind machine which evokes the attributes of Fate. As for the Duke of Gloucester in King Lear, the evil of men tends to assume likeness to metaphysical reality, in which men are puppets or victims of the gods. But Gridley perceives the distinction between human and divine realities when he proclaims

The system! I am told, on all hands, it is the system ...  
He is not responsible. It's the system ... I will accuse  
the individual workers of the system against me, face to  
face, before the great eternal bar!<sup>174</sup>

Divine law and justice affirms relationship and responsibility, allows face to face particularity and encounter within its system, Gridley dies in despair of acknowledgement of his selfhood as a living member of a living whole, as a bead on the ring of being which Esther perceives in her fever. It is within the context of such a contrast between human and divine systems that the structure of the novel and the vision of selfhood must be discovered.

As was seen in Martin Chuzzlewit, Dickens' traditional enemies to selfhood are despair, leading to pride, and presumption, leading to sloth. Man is tempted to reject his identity in the pride of assumed self-sufficiency and self-authorship, or in the sloth of dependency upon inheritance, fortune or society, which refuses reciprocity and responsibility. The self must know itself as derived and as responsively creative, as Jarndyce counsels Richard Carstone :-

Trust in nothing but in Providence and your own efforts. Never separate the two like the heathen waggoner.<sup>175</sup>

Richard is prey to a sloth intensified by his fall into the prevailing confusion between the ontological and the social. His hopes for identity rest solely in inheritance from the Jarndyce settlement; his being is thus invested entirely in what is believed to be owed and given by birth. Trust in Providence is replaced by trust in the human legal system, effort by expectations. Richard refuses his true nature as a recipient of being and as a partner in the work of realising himself and the world of which he is a part. He parodies dependence, contingency and mutuality by living as a child who is to receive passively the products of the



social system. He neglects the responsibility of the child of God to be also a "parent" to his own self and that of others, imaging the God who is both Father and Son.

What is implicit in Richard is explicit in Harold Skimpole, in whom Dickens clarifies the ambiguities of the word "child", especially through contrast with those other "children" Esther, Jo and Charley. "Child" may signify immaturity; it may also signify origination and relationship, as was seen in the discussion of Paul Dombey, implying the existence of "parent", the usage of the Fathers in developing their notions of the Persons of the Trinity. Skimpole's "childishness" is an immaturity which denies the relational meaning of the child, in its complete repudiation of mutuality. As Esther remarks of his conversation, he speaks of himself

as if he were not at all his own affair, as if Skimpole were a third person, as if he knew that Skimpole had his singularities, but still had his claims too, which were the general business of the community and must not be slighted.<sup>176</sup>

Community is for Skimpole a system for the satisfaction of his own ego, which is established as the centre of a wheel rather than as a link in a chain.<sup>177</sup> This making of the human system of which he is part into an object servicing the ego issues in the reduction of his own self to another object. Skimpole is alienated from himself in alienating himself from others. He is thus antithetical to the life and growth of the child, a figure of spiritual death. And so his only positive action in the novel is the removal of Jo from Bleak House, an action which denies human bonds and leads not only to Jo's death but to the possible spreading of the disease

with which he is innocently infected, the denial of brotherhood. The plague of man is ignorance of his true condition, for Dickens as much as for Gregory of Nyssa and Channing.<sup>178</sup>

The failure of parents in Bleak House has thus not simply social and psychological significance; it points to man's failure to recognise his self as the image of a loving, creating and relating God and as a creature made for dependent responsiveness: the parent is also a child, just as the child must be parent to its own selfhood by choosing to correspond with life. Mr. Turveydrop is an emblem of this failure, in which sloth joins hands with the pride of self-creation. His relationship with his son, Prince, whose name recalls the true princely nature of sons, empties out the concept of fatherhood. Relationship and Fatherhood are flouted in the establishment of his ego as an object for maintenance by his son, as are his own sonship and creatureliness in his literal manufacture of a self-image. Deportment and padding defy frailty and mortality whilst unwittingly revealing the "defect of being" at the heart of this man built to the design of the ego. Richard Carstone, Harold Skimpole and Mr. Turveydrop create a parodic system of derivation, relationship and obligation with themselves as centre, mocking divine fatherhood and childhood.

Complementary to these characters who reject selfhood in passive mockery are those manipulative or exploitative characters who see themselves as creators or disposers of the world. Such men create an entrapping spider web, one more destructive system which reduces life to the animal and parodies the true web of brotherhood. Tulkinghorn's malice towards Lady Dedlock is thus



not unmotivated,<sup>179</sup> but stems from her assault on his claim to godhood in omniscience, for he is a man

mechanically faithful, without attachment and very jealous of the profit, privilege and reputation of being master of the mysteries of great houses.<sup>180</sup>

Pretensions to control and knowledge accompany a dead, inhuman likeness to loyalty, and an alienation from his kind. The dust and dehydration associated with Tulkinghorn, especially in his death, are not merely indications of the aridity of the law and social order he upholds, but marks of the creatureliness he has tried to deny in the bid for mastery. This "master" and "prime mover" has proved contingent, reduced to the dust of the earth into which he would not allow the breath of spirit. Having rejected his selfhood as a created "son", Tulkinghorn returns to the dust of Adam. The dustiness of the Law is thus seen in its true light as the revelation of the legal system as the lifeless, transient product of man's animal nature, reinforcing the link between Krook and the Lord High Chancellor. This connection between the Law and the dust and ashes of mortal, carnal humanity is made also by Esther's proverbial comment on the Jarndyce case :-

true and good above the dead sea of the Chancery suit, and all the ashy fruit it cast ashore, I think I see my darling.<sup>181</sup>

While Tulkinghorn presents the dead dustiness of spiritless egocentricity and its institutionalisation in the Law, Grandpa Smallweed and his family embody the rootless, choking growth of the parodic relational system created by egocentricity and institutionalised in capitalism. Smallweed, in active pride rather

than passive sloth, has made himself an idol, surrounded by an entourage of worshippers and demanding human sacrifice from his subjects. His system of association based upon debt and payment of interest mocks any concept of ontological duty or debts, and that of gratuitous or graceful giving between men. As evil imitates good, his web of association imitates man's bonding in being<sup>182</sup>, just as weeds imitate flowers and, in chaotic proliferation, supplant them. The Apocalyptic imagery of Bleak House may remind the reader of the fate of the Biblical weeds sown along with the good seed,<sup>183</sup> reinforcing ideas both of parodic imitation and of ultimate triumph of reality over the apparent power of the ephemeral.

Of the divine system, in its dual aspect of brotherhood in sonship to God and of solidarity in endurance of the effects of separation, Esther Summerson is a "pattern". She provides the unconscious centre of a system of relationships, as an image of divine reality, just as her associate Mr. Bucket images forth the God who uncovers secrets; together they reverse the parodic pretensions of Skimpole, Tulkinghorn and Smallweed. As this icon of reality, Esther's self is fulfilled not in making herself a centre nor in creating her own world, but in "clearing cobwebs from the sky", as her name Dame Durden implies.<sup>184</sup> She reveals what man obscures with the systems of his own spinning, truly acting as a co-creator with God in her redemption of relationship and cosmos from the chaos never far from the world of Bleak House with its primeval beasts. She is, that is, the realisation of man's nature, in a society ever tending to the mud and dust of its earthly,



animal origin. True to the relational nature of selfhood, however, Esther cannot be fully understood without reference to her links with others, Nemo and Jo, for her real significance lies not in her psychology but in the meaning of her relationships and mode of being.

Esther and Jo are linked in the novel by their shared orphanhood and by their relationship to Nemo, the one by parentage, the other by solidarity in affliction, both by their common identity as victims of broken bonding. And Nemo, no man, can be understood as Everyman, as man himself stripped of the wealth, self-image, power and individuality sought and created elsewhere in the novel. Nemo is man in his nakedness, who makes no effort to be "Somebody" over against a world of men reduced to objects.<sup>185</sup> He is one "despised and rejected of men"<sup>186</sup> who has purging and reconciling effects in the midst of desolation and degradation, dying accursed, as Jo suggests of his burial ground :-

"Blest?" repeats Jo, something troubled in his mind.  
'It an't done it much good if it is. Blest? I should think it was t'othered myself"<sup>187</sup>

Nemo, in this Christ-likeness, extends to Jo a relationship of love and generosity independent of individual attributes, transcending his own misery and destitution :-

That graceless creature (Jo) only knew that the dead man ... was sometimes hooted and pursued about the streets, That one cold winter night, when he, the boy, was shivering in a doorway near his crossing, the man turned to look at him, and came back and having questioned him and found that he had not a friend in the world said "Neither have I. Not one!" and gave him the price of a supper and a night's lodging ... That when the man had no money he would say in passing "I am as poor as you today Jo", but that when he had any, he had always, as the boy most heartily believes, been glad to give him some.<sup>188</sup>

Nemo, like Christ "The Man" in contemporary Incarnational theology,



has become cursed with the wretched of the earth. Looking "for some to have pity on him" and finding none,<sup>189</sup> like the desolate Suffering Servant, he gives Jo the one relationship which speaks of human goodness and evokes his own capacity to relate :-

"He was very good to me!" says the boy, wiping his eyes with his wretched sleeve, "When I seen him a laying so striched out just now, I wished he could have heard me tell him so. He was very good to me, he was!"<sup>190</sup>

The cursed man has begun to undo, like Christ, the curse of broken relationship for Jo, for Esther and for her mother, so that Jo, too, can die affirming solidarity in the nakedness of being :-

I wants to tell him that I am as poor as him now, and have come there to be laid along with him.<sup>191</sup>

Nemo, Jo and Esther all suffer, like Christ, the fulfilment of Abel, from the sins of Cain, the destroyer of brotherhood. The plague they contract and carry marks them as victims rather than as culprits of the breakdown of the brotherhood which makes every man Christ. Just as Esther has been made to feel without right to existence, and Nemo is persecuted, Jo's experience has been

To be hustled and jostled and moved on, and really to find that it would be perfectly true that I have no business to be here, there or anywhere; and yet to be perplexed by the consideration that I am here somehow, too, and everybody overlooked me until I became the creature that I am.<sup>192</sup>

Jo is denied his place in the human chain of being, his "bonds of being" are ignored, so that he may become not a realised son of God, but the savage or beast of his animal heritage :-

it must be a strange state, not merely to be told that I am scarcely human (as in the case of my offering myself for a witness), but to feel it of my own knowledge all my life! To see the horses, dogs and cattle go by me, and to know that in ignorance I belong to them, and not to the superior beings in my shape, whose delicacy I offend.<sup>193</sup>



But the savage is also the nascent Christ, an image of the first-born son, who also had "nowhere to lay his head"<sup>194</sup> and was accounted "a worm and no man".<sup>195</sup> Such an identity between Jo and Christ is confirmed by his similarity to that other afflicted innocent, Job, type of Christ. Job cries out against his unmerited suffering and questions the meaning of his pain, just as Jo, less articulate, constantly disclaims culpability and avers his bewilderment at his experience of life :-

"I don't know nothink about nothink at all".<sup>196</sup>

The "graceless creature" is also a graceful son, as Maurice perceived in his analysis of Job. The possibility of such a Jo-Job connection is strengthened by evidence of Dickens' use of language. During a speech in 1862, mentioning a letter signed J.O., he remarked :-

Then, turning my eye to the Fine Arts, I find the latest intelligence to be that a certain J.O. has most triumphantly exposed a certain J.O.B.<sup>197</sup>

Jo's final lesson in praying "Our Father", that "typical prayer of a Son of God and a brother of Christ",<sup>198</sup> is therefore not a sop to religious sentimentality in Dickens himself or in his readers.<sup>199</sup> It is an affirmation of his identity as a son and of the sin of his society in ignoring common divine fatherhood and its ensuing brotherhood in man. The traditional belief that Christ is crucified daily by man hence lies behind the evocation of the many Jos who die day by day :-

Dead, Your Majesty. Dead my Lords and gentlemen.  
Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every  
order. Dead, men and women born with Heavenly  
Compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around  
us every day.<sup>200</sup>

Men of the nineteenth century no longer crucify Christ, they merely allow him to die of neglect, and in so doing let wither their own divine seed, their innate "Heavenly Compassion". So shrivelled is Mrs. Snagsby's divine pity and comprehension of brotherhood, for example, that her husband's response to Jo can be understood only as proof of his actual paternity. Bonding and love are limited to this pitifully restricted human concept of family.

Jo's death offers no easy comfort,<sup>201</sup> for it reminds of the sin by which it is caused and of the darkness and desolation of Christ-like death. The narrator speaks of a light Jo himself does not experience: the glory belonging to Jo's identity is not part of his actuality in living or dying.

This identity in Christ, shared by Nemo and Jo, deepens Dickens' use of Carlyle's tale of the Irish widow as the source for Esther's infection from Jo.<sup>202</sup> The widow proves her sisterhood in a common mortality and origin by infecting those who refused her succour. Jo's infection of Esther through Charley, one more orphan, suggests the full identity of the brotherhood rejected and the subjection of the innocent to the effects of that rejection. Jo, Esther and Charley are not, finally, ontologically orphans, and Esther's derivation from Nemo enforces the idea of her belonging to, and issuing from, all. The familial once more extends to encompass humanity, involving each in the pain of all, as Esther learns in her illness when

strung together somewhere in great black space, there was a flaming necklace, or ring, or some starry circle of some kind, of which I was one of the beads! ... my only prayer was to be taken off from the rest and ... it was such inexplicable agony and misery to be part of the dreadful thing.<sup>203</sup>



Distinctiveness here accompanies unity, the perfection of the circle the suffering of involvement with the whole. Esther's self is neither isolated from the being and experience of other selves, nor the centre of a circle, nor is it merged in the mass, as is man in the parodic political system with its procession of Cuffy, Duffy, Doodle and Foodle. As a self she is a distinctive image of every other self in an ontological system of which she is the miniature. Each bead both links to, and may stand for, another, in the manner of the Son who was one with the sons he represented.<sup>204</sup>

Esther's personality must be understood in conjunction with her identification with these Christ-selves, and in the light of the distinction between spiritual and psychological perfection. Dislike of Esther for immodest and coy self-praise, frequently attributed to a failure in technique on Dickens' part,<sup>205</sup> stems from an understanding of modesty based upon the centrality of the ego and from a misunderstanding of Dickens' approach to human goodness. Modesty, the refusal to commend the ego, is required only where there is consciousness of ego to flatter; where self-love exists and demands curbing; where individual personality is not held as the centre of reality and importance it is possible to speak freely of the self.<sup>206</sup> Esther's child-like freedom with regard to her ego allows her both to be transmitted as a particular being, and to act as a window upon reality. Her transparency, the ideal of spiritual perfection,<sup>207</sup> is reflected in her narrative, in which the reader sees through her narrative rather than seeing her representation of reality.<sup>208</sup> Although much is said of Esther's appearance, the reader is never given an image of her.

Yet Esther is, indeed, psychologically poor. Her early rejection and loss of right to existence have produced a need for reassurance and for earning love, shown by the necessity of recording praise and of proving herself lovable through usefulness. These needs, however, do not impede selfhood, because they are met through proper orientation of her being towards and for others. The world is not manipulated for their satisfaction, as it is with the "child" Skimpole in his created "lovable" personality. Personality, however flawed, may, as Irenaeus suggested, ally with spirit or with flesh; Esther chooses spirit, preferring the "nothingness" of her father, Nemo, to the "wealth" of her mother's social status and distinction.

Esther is a representative of a system which reveals unity between the high and low in society, the beautiful and the ugly, the powerful and the wretched. Thus, in considering identity and its breakdown in the novel, there is discovered not only the entropy observed by Hillis Miller<sup>209</sup> but also, through dissolution, the inner reality of distinctiveness and articulation. And so the breakdown in the unity of the novel, in the disjunction of the plots concerning Chancery and Lady Dedlock is only apparent,<sup>210</sup> constituting a breakthrough to another level of unity. Lady Dedlock is connected with the world of Chancery and the Jarndyce case not by her actions and social ties but by her being; she is involved in the condition of her race, a condition of which Chancery and the Jarndyce suit are images. The breakdown of an anticipated formal unity leads to the revelation of the truth of relationship which is obscured by human artefacts, plots and systems. This is the paradox of the



Apocalyptic imagery of the novel: the "end time" brings Judgement and dissolution but also issues in the vindication and revelation of the sons of God.

The concern for co-creativity, over against slothful and prideful egotism is one neglected aspect of the opposition in Hard Times between the Circus and the Mill, first perceived by F. R. Leavis as a contrast between the instinctual and the mechanical.<sup>211</sup> The Circus is an emblem of man's creativity in responsive co-operation with a wondrous world. Man's will and rationality must unite with the physical powers he shares with the animals, in acts which suggest the marvellous aspects of Creation. Imagination is the faculty which leads man to attempt such useless but revelatory activity. The Circus is not, therefore, primarily an expression of the instinctual, for it combines man's physical faculties with imagination, willed effort and capacity for discipline. The circus-player is more properly the cousin of the sea-farer in Dombey and Son, responsively and responsibly surrendered to life.

Nor is the message of the Circus and the novel the simple adage "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" as Holloway contends.<sup>212</sup> The recreative and wondrous nature of the Circus does re-create man in his original wholeness as a thinking and feeling spiritual being, in opposition to the attempt of the Mill to impose a new version of man as "severely workful"<sup>213</sup> in accordance with man's own equation of reality with fact. Once again, in the world of the Mill, man's pride leads him to substitute his own vision and system for the ontological reality of spiritual man

enjoying spiritual relationship with his fellows. The Mill is presented in ironic fairy-tale terms not only to highlight the contrast with the Circus,<sup>214</sup> but also to suggest the possibility of wonder at the inventiveness of man underlying industrialisation :-

The fairy palaces burst into illumination, before pale morning showed the monstrous serpents of smoke trailing themselves over Coketown. A clattering of clogs upon the pavement; a rapid clanging of bells; and all the melancholy mad elephants, oiled and polished up for the day's monotony, were at their heavy exercise again.<sup>215</sup>

By the choice of men, the "elephants" of the Mill are used to subject and reduce men to their slaves rather than to expand them as co-creating stewards of the natural world, revealing man's glory in work, as the Circus does in play. The wondrous nature of man's ingenuity, his capacity for invention is destroyed by those who make his productions idols to be served, perverting his capacities to the satisfaction of their own demands for power and wealth. It is man's will to good or evil, his choice of his true nature or illusory ego which creates his social world.

That Dickens did discern the wondrous in industrial processes is evident in his occasional writings, as in his description in

A Paper Mill of paper-making :-

At it these grinders go, "Munch, munch, munch!". Like the sailor's wife in Macbeth who had chestnuts in her lap. I look at first, as if I were the most delicious curds and whey - presently, I find that I am changed to gruel - not thin oatmeal but rich, creamy, tempting, exalted gruel! As if I had been made from pearls, which some voluptuous Mr. Emden had converted into groats!<sup>216</sup>

Imagination has its place in the daily life of man, reminding him also of his own mystery. Dickens' defence of imagination is



part of his belief in this wondrous, God-like nature of man, as seen in the following extract from a speech given in 1858 :-

Do not let us, in the midst of the visible objects of nature, whose workings we can tell off in figures, surrounded by machines that can be made to the thousandth part of an inch, acquiring every day knowledge which can be proved upon a slate and demonstrated by a microscope - do not let us, in the laudable pursuit of the facts which surround us, neglect the fancy and imagination which equally surround us as part of the great scheme. Let the child have its fables. Let the men and women into which it changes remember the fables readily. Let numerous graces and ornaments that cannot be weighed and measured, and that seem at first sight idle enough, continue to have their places about us, be we never so wise. The hardest head may co-exist with the softest heart. The union and just balance of these two is always a blessing to mankind. The Divine Teacher was as gentle as He was powerful and wise. You all know He could still the raging of the sea and hush a little child. As the utmost results of the wisdom of men can only be at last to help to raise this earth to that condition to which His doctrines, untainted by the blindness and passions of men, would have exalted it long ago; so let us always remember that He set us the example of blending the understanding and the imagination and that, following it ourselves, we tread in His steps, and help our race onto its better and best days.<sup>217</sup>

Man's task as a race is to aid in the restoration of earth, following the pattern of the manhood of Christ. This the workers of Coketown aspire to do, in defiance of their masters, by their persistent hold upon imagination :-

It was a disheartening circumstance, but a melancholy fact, that even these readers persisted in wondering. They wondered about human nature, human passions, human hopes and fears, the struggles, triumphs and defeats, the cares and joys and sorrows, the lives and deaths of common men and women! They sometimes, after fifteen hours of work sat down to read more fables about men and women, more or less like themselves, and about children, more or less like their own.<sup>218</sup>

Imagination here is the means whereby men affirm their unity as a



race, their common mortality and frailty, their shared capacity for love and relationship extending beyond the confines of family and blood ties. Their thirst is for a communion and a community lost to those who, like Mr. Gradgrind, are obsessed with whatever the ego may grasp and appropriate, as Mrs. Gradgrind tells Louisa :-

there is something, not an Ology at all, your father  
has missed, or forgotten, Louisa, I don't know  
what it is.<sup>219</sup>

Just as Mrs. Gradgrind dies from lack of spiritual sustenance and partnership, so, too, the selfhood of the young Gradgrinds is mortally sick, Louisa has fallen into meaninglessness because the crushing of imagination has deprived her of the means of apprehending her involvement in the life of others, as a related self. Hence "nothing matters"<sup>220</sup>, including the deeply symbolic marriage-relationship. The capacity for love and generosity towards Tom points to the struggling survival of spiritual selfhood, whilst her exploitation by him marks her potential for being for others. As the victim of Tom's egocentricity, Louisa is linked with his other victim, Stephen Blackpool, whose bewilderment and alienation she also shares.

Not only as an offended innocent is Louisa associated with Stephen, however, for she is also innocently implicated in the offence against him through her aid of Tom. Louisa is in this sense a transgressor as well as one of the transgressed, and is involved in the full condition of man as inheritor of Abel, the offended brother and of Cain, his destroyer. The responsibility of the self exceeds individual volition and consciousness, as was seen also in Harriet Carker.



As for many of Dickens' characters, breakdown of false relationships and of the false self leads to restoration of genuine selfhood. In the loss of a false husband and of the illusions about her father and brother, Louisa gains a sister in Sissie Jupe, whose name is self-defining, and a brother in Stephen Blackpool. Although foreseen at the close of the novel as childless and single, Louisa is no longer estranged from her race. Human bonds are known to extend beyond the family and individual choice to the whole of humanity. Living for and towards others is accepted

as part of no fantastic vow, or bond, or brotherhood or sisterhood, or pledge or covenant, or fancy dress, or fancy fair; but simply as a duty to be done.<sup>221</sup>

Brotherhood or sisterhood is not extraneous to humanity, an act of supererogatory personal choice with its potential for inflation of the ego, but something owed by and to man's nature.

Tom Gradgrind falls prey both to sloth and pride through the stifling of his intuitions of relationship and derivation. This loss of imagination leads to the denial of pneumatic selfhood and thus he is abandoned to his carnal inheritance, becoming "The Whelp" :-

It was altogether unaccountable that a young gentleman whose imagination had been strangled in his cradle, should be still inconvenienced by its ghost in the form of grovelling sensualities; but such a monster, beyond all doubt, was Tom.<sup>222</sup>

As with the rational Goneril and Regan in King Lear, the denial of "irrational" love, and loyalty mediated by sympathetic imagination has left the psyche open to the seductions of the "flesh", and the self is unable to act as reconciler of flesh and spirit.

While Louisa's orientation towards Tom maintains her innocence of will, Tom, although a victim of egocentricity, also chooses it

for himself. Like Skimpole in Bleak House, he sees himself as the centre of a system, the possible recipient of sacrifice, as his view of Louisa's marriage reveals :-

"Not that it was altogether so important for her as it was to me", continued Tom coolly, "because my liberty and perhaps my getting on, depended on it".<sup>223</sup>

But slothful dependence is accompanied by proud disclaiming of derivation, as in his conversation with Harthouse about his development :-

"I have picked up a little since, I don't deny that, But I have done it myself. No thanks to the Governor".<sup>224</sup>

The reduction of others to objects once more leads to his own reduction. He is exploited as a "young dog"<sup>225</sup> by the man he can appreciate only as separated aspects of physical appearance :-

There was something so very agreeable in being so intimate with such a waistcoat; in being called Tom, in such an intimate way, by such a voice; in being on such off-hand terms so soon, with such a pair of whiskers.<sup>226</sup>

Tom's rejection of selfhood is sealed by his parodying of vicariousness in setting-up Stephen Blackpool as his substitute. Tom perverts a true law of being, whereby one man stands for another, to meet the needs of his own ego. His restoration begins, symbolically, in the necessity of participation in the Circus where, himself substituting for another, he loses his self-created identity and begins to learn of the responsiveness of the human self.

If Tom is partly a victim in his egocentricity, Bounderby is entirely the creature of his own choice. He reveals, even more clearly than Dombey, the Satanism of Industrial Society and



the roots in egotism of the rise of the entrepreneurial "new man", the self-made man. Like Satan's, his rejection of his derivation in the development of a myth about his origins and ill-treatment is a repudiation of his creation and maintenance in love, and thus an assertion of God-like self-sufficiency. Bounderby has, indeed, created in Coketown a world after his own image, in which the "great scheme" of the Father of men is replaced by the Master of Machines and his operatives. This world is shown to be as illusory as Bounderby's image of himself, based upon his own created "facts" in defiance of the responsive, relating nature of the beings composing the real world.

Bounderby's artificial facts reveal the ultimate evil of the Gradgrindian philosophy, through its subservience to man's egotism in making his perceptions the measure of reality. The Gradgrind ego rejects the mystery of being in reducing life to the confines of an "Ology" capable of appropriation by man. Man rather than God is thereby made the possessor of the secrets of the Universe and the "great scheme" shrunk to the petty theories of his own devising. The breakdown of Louisa's marriage and of the facade of Tom's rationality leads to Gradgrind's redemption through their demonstration of the inadequacy of his vision to the realities of human experience.

But Gradgrind's renewal is foreshadowed by his harbouring of Sissie Jupe, bringing into the midst of his rational world a living affirmation of a brotherhood which defies that rational ordering of society. Sissie's name and behaviour stress that she is a model of the divine system of relationship, always the

faithful child and sister, whose origin in the Circus reminds the reader of her responsive creativity. She confounds any attempt to develop an economy other than the divine one of human solidarity whose rule is

To do unto others as I would that they should  
do unto me.<sup>227</sup>

In her simplicity, foolish wisdom and belief in brotherhood, Sissie is linked with Stephen Blackpool, associating the world of work with that of the Circus. Stephen's affirmation of ontological bonds, of the necessity of human unity, and of usurped order, in his apprehension of contemporary muddle, maintains selfhood in the midst of self-creation and asserts the values of the Circus against the severe workfulness of the Mill. He is thus essential to the meaning and structure of the novel.<sup>228</sup>

Stephen is the outcast sign of contradiction to the "world" in his refusal to relinquish brotherhood to class and party divisions, the product of individualistic, egocentric isolationism. Theories of class-conflict and of laissez-faire economics equally destroy the bonds of humanity, as Stephen tells Bounderby regarding the establishment of industrial equity :-

"The strong hand will never do't. Vict'ry and triumph will never do't. Agreeing to mak one side unnat'rally awhus and for ever right and to other side unnat'rally awhus and for ever wrong, will never, never do't. Nor yet lettin' alone will never do't. Let thousands upon thousands alone, aw leading the like lives and aw faw'en into the like muddle, and they will be as one and you will be as another, wi' a black unpassable world betwixt yo!"<sup>229</sup>

Stephen, like the first Christian martyr Stephen,<sup>230</sup> is rejected by his fellows for bearing witness to a reality transcending



human divisions. Whilst Slackbridge likens him to Esau and Judas,<sup>231</sup> betrayers of birth-right and of sonship, Stephen is indeed a Christ-like faithful son in his martyred bearing of the sin's of others in ignominy. This Christ-likeness, increased by his meekness and poverty, is suggested also by his solidarity with men in readiness to drink the cup awaiting him :-

To repent of his determination would take a load off their minds. He looked around him, and knew that it was so. Not a grain of anger was in his heart; he knew them, far below their simple misconceptions, as no-one but their fellow-labourer could. "I ha thow't on't, above a bit, sir. I simply canna coom in. I mun go th' way as lays before me, I mun tak my leave o' aw here."<sup>232</sup>

Stephen has, like Christ, to say "Get thee behind me, Satan"<sup>233</sup> to his friends in order to take the course chosen for him.

And so Stephen's marriage is not Dickens' means of airing the inequities of modern divorce law but another aspect of ontological bonding. Stephen suffers for his inability to reject relationship, however burdensome and devoid of psychological reward it may prove. The wealthy may try to evade bonding by creating their myths and purchasing privilege, whilst the literally poor have insufficient possessions, materially and psychologically, to restructure the conditions of derived and related being. In Stephen's interview with Bounderby, the human law of the power of money over-rides the law of relationship, ego over-rides being. Stephen is too poor materially to achieve civil divorce but is too wealthy spiritually to be able to ignore the law of being in killing his wife or himself. Life is affirmed as a gift rather than as a possession, and divorce of man from man as an ontological impossibility.

Stephen's richly poor selfhood is fulfilled through a process of denudation which ends in the desolation of Hell-Shaft where, like Christ, he endures the affliction of many other victims of egotism and alienation :-

I hae read on't in the public petition, as onny man may read, fro' the men that works in pits, in which they ha pray'n and pray'n the law-makers for Christ's sake not to let their work be murder to 'em for the wives and children that they loves as well as gentlefolks love theirs. When it were in work it killed wi'out need; when it is let alone it kills wi'out need. See how we die an no need, one way or another - in a muddle - everyday.<sup>234</sup>

The fall into the pit images man's fall out of relationship, the breaking of brotherhood. Joseph, the son of Jacob, to whom Stephen is linked through his inaccurate likening to Esau, was abandoned by his brothers in a pit. And for Victorians well-acquainted with the Psalms, the pit was the afflicted state of those wrongfully rejected by family and neighbours or condemned by the weight of sin, states which pointed to the experience of Christ. The crimes of industrialism are thus linked to a wider condition. Hell-Shaft indicates the Hell man makes out of his world in the rejection of human bonds and the subjection of all to its effects, whilst emphasising the identity of its victims.

And in Hell-Shaft, Stephen's longing for reconciliation, atonement, emphasises his vicarious selfhood. His death has undertones of sacrificial offering, seen when he tells of his reaction to the star shining above him in the pit :-

In my pain and trouble, lookin' up yonder - wi' it shining on me - I ha' seen more clear, and ha' made it my dying prayer that aw th' world may only coom together more, an get a better unnerstan'in o' one another, than when I were in't my own weak seln.<sup>235</sup>



His interpretation of the star as one leading to "our Saviour's home"<sup>236</sup> is in keeping with both his simplicity and his experience. Stephen is being "taken home" to his true identity and origin as an image of the afflicted and forsaken Son and Brother, proving a "saving victim" for Louisa and Tom and thus redeeming some order from the muddle of flouted divine order.

Hard Times, despite the topicality of its setting and subject, can be seen to belong to Dickens' analysis of the nature of the self and its rejection in his society. However, it is difficult to experience the novel as wholly satisfying, for it lacks the richness and complexity of plot and texture which would substantiate Stephen's feeling of muddle and fully embody the values and mystery of the Circus. It appeals, indeed, more to rationality than to the sympathetic imagination, Mr. Bounderby, for example, remains a caricature, a rational exposition of the Satanic. There is little sense of the humanity which is being denied or of the passions which are his motive force, while plot and language do not join here, as in other later novels, to create the experience of unity beneath multiplicity.

For his next novel, Little Dorrit Dickens returned to the images of the prison and the progress, with its parody, the wandering. The prison has many resonances. The debtors' prison recalls firstly man's indebtedness to his fellows and his failure to meet this, his condition of sin in ignoring relationship. The Christian of Dickens' day prayed from the Authorised Version of the Bible to be forgiven and to forgive debts.<sup>237</sup> It is, consequently, also the prison of self, of the isolated ego, experienced by Milton's Satan, who is

enchained despite the appearance of freedom and who knows that  
 Myself am Hell;<sup>238</sup>

and by Spenser's Red Crosse Knight in his captivity in the dungeons of Orgoglio. But as the initial association suggests, the experience is universal, pertaining to Man rather than men. The prison is thus, also, like Hell-Shaft, the state of subjection to affliction of the race, resulting from its solidarity. The prison-house is a condition, a potential, into which each man is born, as he is born into brotherhood, and to which he must adopt his own stance.

But man in chains is also man in pilgrimage, like Will in Piers Plowman and Christian in Pilgrim's Progress. And, as in these works and the related romance, the quest for the "one true fair" may become the restless flight from reality. Dickens' travellers are all in search of some lost good or in flight from painful truths. For the Meagles, travel is an evasion of a permanent sense of loss; the Dorrits parody purposiveness in their quest for the illusory goal of respectability; Arthur Clennam seeks to journey back to his origins to recover his lost will. The sense of something lost or denied unites Arthur not only to the Meagles, but to the Dorrits, Tattycoram and Miss Wade. Travelling images the desire for restoration, the sense of incompleteness and deprivation which characterises man in his subjection to ego and dislocation from his source.

In the period when Dickens was planning Little Dorrit, his note-book revealed both a restless sense of loss and a desire for peaceful stillness, associated with a knowledge of self-captivity.



He commented upon

the man whose vista is always stopped up by the image of Himself ... looks down a long walk and can't see round himself ... would be such a good thing for him if he could knock himself down.<sup>239</sup>

and who

is incapable of his own happiness, or who is always in pursuit of happiness. Result, where is happiness to be found, then? Surely not everywhere? ... Is this my experience?<sup>240</sup>

This restless, self-defeating search, this "playing hide-and-seek with the world"<sup>241</sup> is accompanied by awareness of the value of attentive stillness in surrender to the flow of life. He contrasted his own state with that of a Ferryman on "a peaceful river", growing old in acceptance of Time and change, a figure for a projected novel.<sup>242</sup>

Little Dorrit itself can be seen as moving within the polarities of restlessness and stillness, including the parodic immobility of the egocentric, which is yet restless flight from the realities of selfhood, and the paradoxical stillness in movement of the true self. Amy's travels do not disturb her essential stability and rootedness, while Mrs. Clennam's confinement is an evasion of relationship and common creaturehood. Doyce's purposive travel in order to correspond with his gift as an engineer maintains his steadiness in his identity as a co-creator, while the Dorrits' progress through Europe is a centrifugal flight away from themselves. And so, Arthur finds in Amy a love given and present to him while he wanders physically and in time, nostalgically. Amy's love is the "now" of Eternity

overlooked by man obsessed with Time and its defeat. Their marriage then truly presents the triumph of Eternity over Time, the recovery of harmony and rest from the restless, rootless world of man's experience, speaking of man's true nature as a relating being who brings Eternity into Time, another incarnation :-

They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed; and as they passed along in sunshine and in shade, the noisy and the eager, the froward and the vain, fretted and chafed, and made their usual uproar.<sup>243</sup>

Travelling also provided a further means of suggesting the connections existing between apparently isolated travellers, as Dickens told Forster :-

It struck me that it would be a new thing to show people coming together, in a chance way, as fellow-travellers, and being in the same place ignorant of one another, as happens in life, and to connect them afterwards and to make the waiting for that connection a part of the interest.<sup>244</sup>

This "new thing" is not the discovery in Dickens' age of society as a unified fabric, resulting from the development of the social sciences, as Holloway suggests.<sup>245</sup> It is rather a renewal of the traditional vision of man as "a part of the main",<sup>246</sup> of men as members of one Body, as Channing saw it; for, as the traditional imagery shows, Dickens is concerned with the perennial nature of man and with a unity underlying social relationships and divisions.

The ultimate triumph of Eternity in the novel is prefaced by individual and social parodies of it, by a continual substitution of the individual vision and the social institution for an immutable, providential reality. Hence Arthur is described as



Bred in a creed too darkly audacious to pursue,  
 through its process of reversing the making of  
 Man in the image of his Creator to the making<sup>247</sup>  
 of his Creator in the image of an erring man.

and Mrs. Clennam is said to have

reversed the order of creation, breathed her<sup>248</sup>  
 own breath into a clay image of her Creator.

Individual and social vice has its origin in the exaltation  
 of man to godhood. And so, too, the Circumlocution Office imitates  
 the immutable and unquestionable nature of Providence, for Arthur  
 learns that

you mustn't come into the place saying  
 you want to know, you know.<sup>249</sup>

The fight for an answer from the Office takes on for Arthur the  
 resonance of a metaphysical struggle. The Office, like Chancery,  
 is the blind, mock-Fate which blocks the co-creativity of Doyce  
 and spins, not the threads of man's life, but the Red Tape which  
 constricts it. Conversely, Arthur's desire to know the cause  
 of his lost will and his father's secret becomes identified with  
 the compulsive need to wrench an answer from the Office.

Similarly, men see only the material prison of the  
 Marshalsea, pitying Amy's birth there, whilst being unable to  
 recognise their common captivity and Amy's liberty in acceptance  
 of her condition. Amy's birth in prison images forth the  
 solidarity of the innocent with human evil and the possibility  
 of its redemption through right orientation within that  
 captivity. She is the victim of egocentricity, trapped by others,  
 who makes captivity liberty by being towards and for others, like  
 the salvific Christ. Amy's response to her condition contrasts

with the flight into self-image making of her father and the defiant, self-destructive rebellion of Fanny, another form of self-creation. Amy accepts her given identity as prisoner's child and works within that confine to realise the meaning of childship and relationship.

Like other of Dickens' innocents, Amy is not without psychological flaws or the need for growth. As with Tom Pinch regarding Pecksniff, she has to learn of the danger to the self of the refusal of individuation, in the merging of the dispossessing self in the ego of others. In colluding with her father's fantasies in the Marshalsea, Amy ignores the distinction between fostering selfhood and nurturing the illusions of the false self. Consequently, her desolation during the family's European travel is a lesson in detachment from her family which makes her love truly liberating to it, revealing to Mr. Dorrit his own inauthenticity :-

The touch was still upon his arm. He fell silent; and after looking about the ceiling again for a little while, looked down at her face. Her head drooped, and he could not see her face; but her touch was tender and quiet, and in the expression of her dejected figure there was no blame - nothing but love.<sup>250</sup>

Amy's loyalty to her daughter-hood, regardless of the psychological merits of her father, breaks through his facade. He dies true to the poverty and captivity of the creatureliness he had denied. His old self perishes literally on the threshold of truth.

Amy's names are illustrative both of her growth and of man's tendency to create entrapping systems and labels which impose limiting definitions upon the self. Amy is nearly made captive



to her names "Little" and "Little Mother", despite their inherent truth. She is "little" in the Christian sense of the lowliness which is to be exalted, in the lack of self-inflation and assertion which characterises her and which questions the prevailing vision of greatness in the novel.<sup>251</sup> She is also truly "mother" in her actualisation of her own spiritual self and her nurturing of others. But such titles are used or implied of Amy in order to evade the responsibility of relationship. As the "little child" she can be denied adult relationship and reciprocity whilst subservience is demanded. As "mother", she may be seen only as provider and source, rather than as the child and sister, herself requiring sustenance and mutuality. The "world" would redefine Amy's selfhood, her recognition of bonds and creaturehood, to meet its own demands. Thus Amy has her name restored to her when she has attained individuation, whilst it is given out of the egocentricity of the family's desire to edit the past and restructure reality.

Pet Meagles and Tattycoram are likewise trapped in the given identity of their names, which prevents their self-fulfilment. Pet remains a beloved toy or possession, Tattycoram rebels against not only her labelling, but the reality of origination which her name implies.

Even more central to the meaning of the novel is Mr. Dorrit's title of Father of the Marshalsea. He is, in fact, both father and offspring of that captivity which the prison images forth; father, because his egocentricity produces imprisonment for others; offspring, because his egotism is the product of the tendency of

his race. His own behaviour, however, parodies fatherhood and denies child-likeness. Dorrit defines himself as father not in the God-like sense of loving sustainer but in the pagan sense of the recipient of homage, thereby also denying his own origination from a source transcending himself. The assumption of this "fatherhood" allows for repudiation both of derivation, of childship, and of brotherhood, as is evident in his treatment of Frederick Dorrit and Mr. Nandy. Solidarity with men in creation and in offence is denied, whilst he fails also in true fatherhood and sonship. All identifying relationships are rejected or distorted in the creation of a satisfying self-image.

The prison of ego is also the prison of memory: the Dorrits' self-creation on their European journey is a flight from the ever-present remembrance of their past life and identity. This need to escape memory highlights their usurpation of God in the mocking substitution of rootless and static artificial present for the ever-renewing present of Eternity which gathers-in the past. Responsiveness to the present and acceptance of the self as a being encompassing the Eternal yet subject to Time, is thus held captive to the power of memory, and the self-images it preserves.

So, too, Flora Finching is imprisoned by memories of her past personality and experience, in despair of the present and refusal of the responsiveness of the "I" to the present, in reflection of the eternal "I Am" of God.<sup>252</sup> The flow of memories in her characteristic monologues precludes relationship with the present reality of others: Flora peoples her world with the products of her own psychological needs. Her drinking for reassurance suggests one more variation upon



the exchange of the spirituous and the spiritual.

Flora's captivity is more the result of frailty than of will; her self-isolation lacks the manipulative exploitation of men predominant in the other prisoners of self in the novel. Her weakness and desire for relationship evident in her kindness to Amy emphasise the pathos rather than the viciousness of self-captivity. The egotist is revealed as his own perpetual victim.

Vice and victimhood are both apparent in Mr. Merdle and Mrs. Clennam. Merdle, in his name<sup>253</sup> and his business dealings, is not simply an illustration of "filthy lucre" and the criminality of Capitalism. He represents the baseness and the vacuity of the self-made man who reduces himself to the mud and slime of his origin from earth. As such, he is a reminder of the God-usurping pride of the speculation he promotes; of man, the creature, playing God in creating ex nihilo and involving his brothers in the evil of illusion. Merdle's gloom and perpetual self-handcuffing indicate his awareness of this deeper criminality and, more fundamentally, of his imprisonment within the vacuum of his own image. Suicide is once more the final demonstration of the self-murder implicit in the choice of ego, as also of the impossibility of sustaining the illusion of personal, as well as financial, substance. Death discloses animality masquerading as divinity, a human as well as an economic forgery :-

he, the shining wonder, the new constellation to be hallowed by the Wise Men bringing gifts, until it stopped over a certain carrion at the bottom of a bath and disappeared, was simply the greatest forger and the greatest Thief that ever cheated the gallows.<sup>254</sup>

The bursting of the financial bubble exposes "defect of being" and Merdle, like Quilp, vanishes.

Merdle's evanescence points to the illusory nature of the society which has made of him an idol, supplanting the man-making God by the money-making animal.<sup>255</sup> And consequently the living system of persons in face-to-face contact is replaced by a ritualised drama in which the person is subsumed beneath the social label, institutionalising captivity to names. Merdle's dinner-party is thus described in terms of a masque, with its Avenging Spirit, Chorus of Parliamentary Barnacles and characters identified by profession :-

Bar was truly repentant, and would not say another syllable ... The Chorus was excessively nervous ... Bishop alone talked steadily and evenly ... Physician, as a general rule, was of the opinion that the best way to avoid it (disorder in the Church) was to know how to read before you made a profession of reading.<sup>256</sup>

Theatre is exchanged for life and the concept of man as a representative of his race parodied by his representation of a social role.

This reduction of man to the theatrical is echoed in the commercial world in the reduction of man to a part in a machine, in which man enacts a function in a system rather than embodying that system itself. And so Pancks tells Arthur

Rattle me out of bed early, set me going, give me as short a time as you like to bolt my meals in, and keep me at it. Keep me always at it, and I'll keep you always at it, you keep somebody else always at it. There you are with the Whole Duty of Man in a commercial country.<sup>257</sup>

Duty is no longer an ontological law, speaking of man's ties to God and his neighbour but a socially created imperative for the maintenance of the social machine in a country where commerce has replaced Christianity.<sup>258</sup> Man as mechanism and man as actor has



superseded man as the image of God.

Hence the theatricality of Rigaud makes him not an extraneous figure of evil but an exemplification of the insubstantiality and alienation of the egotism of the society which both produces and rejects him. His shape-changing ubiquity and abuse of human relationships demonstrates the separation from the woof of human life of the egotist. If the call for his extermination as a man utterly bad is one judgement upon him,<sup>259</sup> it stems from his refusal to become a fully human, spiritual being in his actualisation only of the "badness" inherent in his animal inheritance.

Rigaud's demonic nature as man fallen from his glory, emphasises the satanism of the House of Clennam, for the House, in all senses, cannot stand when devil is set against devil. As in Dombey and Son, the dual meaning of "House" as firm and person underlines the link between individual egotism and social institutions. In Mrs. Clennam can be seen the offence and the fate of the society she has helped to create.

Mrs. Clennam parodies the stability and rest of Eternity in her consciously or unconsciously chosen confinement, making her will synonymous with that of God, as she tells Arthur

I know nothing of summer or winter shut up here.<sup>260</sup>  
The Lord has been pleased to put me beyond that.

Later events prove her physical capacity and very real spiritual incarceration in slighted ego, expressed in her feelings about Arthur's mother :-

She not only sinned grievously against the Lord,  
but she wronged me.<sup>261</sup>

Memory is once more abused to deny the claims of the present and to define the ego as an offended innocent.

Arthur Clennam is a true offended innocent, for whom a script has been prepared by his mother, in the general usurpation of a disposing Providence. Arthur's selfhood is consequently imprisoned in the definitions of himself issuing from Mrs. Clennam's decisions. His sense of being "nobody" and of lost will misleads him into a self-image of age, brokenness and unfitness for relationship, blinding him to his real selfhood and vicariousness in his desire to make reparation for his father's imagined offence. Conviction of his individual brokenness obscures his awareness of participation in the brokenness and frailty of humanity. Loss of belief in his will and co-creativity leads him to succumb to the disease of speculation, demonstrating his actual solidarity.

The restoration of his will and the liberation of his self occurs when the power of the illusory self-image is broken in the reception of Amy's love during actual imprisonment. Arthur discovers himself to be truly broken and captive, as a man, but one who is capable of giving and receiving love and sacrifice. In accepting Amy's love as a free gift and the valuation of the self stemming from it, Arthur forsakes the quest for a satisfactory ego to discover that, as Trilling suggests, "in His Will is our peace".<sup>262</sup> His marriage to Amy, the union of the redeemed with the innocent, validates the optimism of the conclusion of the novel. Cosmos is seen to be emerging from the chaos of Dickens' City.

Ideas of the vicarious and reparative nature of the self are increasingly prominent in Dickens' last three novels which also maintain the thesis of the institutionalisation of ego in modern parodies of the divine.



In the revolutionary Paris of A Tale of Two Cities, the sins of aristocratic fathers are visited upon the sons, and the Cross which puts an end to such notions of vengeance and inheritance is replaced by the "redemptive" guillotine :-

It was the sign of the regeneration of the human race. It superseded the Cross. Models of it were worn on breasts from which the Cross was discarded, and it was bowed down to and believed in where the Cross was denied.<sup>263</sup>

In making some men ~~dye~~<sup>die</sup> for the sins of others as a vengeful act, the Revolutionaries parody the ontological law whereby men by their nature stand for one another, giving themselves away in fulfilment of their being. Carton redeems the parody by making the guillotine a true place of voluntary vicarious sacrifice and thus a true symbol of the regenerative Cross.

The Revolutionaries, like the English parties to class conflict, cannot accept this unity of humanity in good and evil implicit in vicariousness. Men are consequently divided into "good" and "bad", peasant and aristocrat, obliterating both brotherhood and distinction in the personal. The breakdown of the vision of this bonded humanity patterned after the redemptive Brother, Christ, is evident in the response to Darnay's final condemnation :-

Therefore when the President said (else had his own head trembled on his shoulders) that the good physician of the Republic would deserve better still of the Republic by rooting out an obnoxious family of Aristocrats and would doubtless feel a sacred joy and glow in making his daughter a widow and her child an orphan, there was wild excitement, patriotic fervour, not a touch of human sympathy.<sup>264</sup>

The exaggerated bluntness of the speech serves to emphasise the deadening to divinely instituted human values which men are

undergoing. A humanly created obligation to serve a humanly created society is to destroy divinely established fatherhood and marriage, the ontological foundations of human community. True desire for the commonweal is replaced by concern for individual survival, in a sophistication of the animal imperative "Kill or be killed". The Republic is thus exposed as parodic of community. And spiritual man, "religious" man in the fullest sense of the term<sup>265</sup>, is parodied by the President's use of "sacred" in connection with the title "good physician" for Manette, and the context of the Cross-replacing guillotine. The "good physician" Christ was one who rooted-out evil by enduring rather than inflicting death, bringing about restoration of brotherhood.

Once more, an apparently rational human system is found to be a lapse into carnal manhood, validating man's animality and the centrality of his ego. The vengeance of the Revolutionaries is but another form of the hubristic self-creation of the aristocrats. Evil gives rise to evil when the victims accept the values and definition of reality of their persecutors. The aristocrats have usurped God as Creator and wrought their own ruin, as the narrator asserts of Monseigneur :-

nevertheless, Monseigneur, as a class had, somehow or other, brought things to this. Strange that Creation, designed expressly by Monseigneur, <sup>266</sup> should be so soon wrung out and squeezed dry.

But this usurpation in a world where philosophers were

remodelling the world with words, and making <sup>267</sup> card-towers of Babel to scale the skies with.

is met by equal hubris from the Revolutionaries, exemplified by The Vengeance in her averred superiority to natural forces :-

tell Wind and Fire where to stop; ... but don't tell me!<sup>268</sup>



The claim to public duty by The Vengeance is ultimately exposed as an individually motivated desire for revenge. The large-scale institutionalised retribution is seen to be but another demonstration of the supremacy of ego, whilst the submersion of the woman's identity in her title "The Vengeance" points to the captivity of humanity to a single animal imperative.

This pattern of parodic substitution of guillotine for Cross, vengeance for forgiveness, ego for self is completed by the perversion of ideas of dying-to-live and resurrection, perpetuating rather than destroying the proliferation of evil. The world of spies and informers changing name and appearance mocks both individuation and the concept of common identity. Stripping of outer identity leads only to the creation of facades for the purpose of betraying rather than affirming relationship. Mock dying in order to live enables Barsad to continue his treacherous destruction of human bonds, producing the true death of his self towards and for others.

So, too, Jerry Cruncher's role as a Resurrection-man stresses this substitution of human fabrications for divine reality. Resurrection in the contemporary world is understood as exhumation, the passing-off of death as life and the obsession with the dead past rather than with the living present. Man's version of a Resurrection-man is a life "cruncher" rather than a life-giver, similar to his version of Cross and Koinonia as guillotine and Republic.

The imprisonment of the Revolutionaries to their own egos, as victims and culprits in the proliferation of evil, is seen in microcosm in Dr. Manette. Manette's experience encapsulates the

evil suffered and caused by the Revolutionaries who are locked into the memory of suffering and respond by inflicting further destruction of life, in imitation of their persecutors. Both the Revolutionaries and Dr. Manette deny their involvement in evil; the former by the obsessive wreaking of revenge upon those labelled "bad", the latter by flight into one obsessive, self-defining activity. Dr. Manette's retreat into autism symbolises both the cause and effect of his suffering - the denial of relationship and self-creation of the Aristocrats, and the consequent continuation of destruction of bonds by their victims, with whom he is innocently implicated. Men promote suffering and evil by manufacturing their own realities according to the demands of the ego for assertion or defence, in isolation from other persons and groups. As in Hard Times brotherhood is forsaken for class-warfare or "letting alone". The law issuing from man's brotherhood, Kingsley's "Doasyouwouldbedoneby", is replaced by one resulting from injured ego, "Bedonebyasyoudid".<sup>269</sup> This is the practical meaning of the supersession of the Cross by the guillotine which can be reversed only by the acceptance of vicarious selfhood.

Vicariousness is the root of Darnay's predicament. He finds it necessary to acknowledge relationship without accepting the values of his ancestors. As with his name, Darnay can modify, but not destroy, his origin. His innocence of will cannot excuse him from involvement in the sins of his race and in the resulting social breakdown. He must bear accountability without culpability, holding in himself the tension which the Revolutionaries must polarise.



Hence a simple division between a "good" Darnay and a "bad" alter ego Carton is untenable.<sup>270</sup> Darnay's goodness is implicated in evil. Carton is a divided will, as yet unorientated towards good or evil. A non-comic Dick Swiveller, his latent capacity for relationship and sacrifice is evident in his exploitation by Stryver and his response to Lucy Darnay. Darnay, as Carton's double, is thus a rather dimly shadowed model or end-point for an integrated and orientated Carton. Carton sees himself and his desired love-relationship completed in Darnay and Lucy, just as in MacDonald's Phantastes, Anodos sees himself in the knight in silver armour to whom he loses the White Lady. Furthermore, their likeness belies the Revolutionaries belief in essential distinctions. The rooted and the restless discover and affirm a common identity in the midst of social incoherence.

Carton's decision to replace Darnay arises from a sense of his own "defect of being" and a desire to fill that void by being for Lucy and her child in her distress. Considering his own death, in despair for his false self, he is ~~led~~ to awareness of involvement with all those due to die at the guillotine and of the life-giving nature of the willing sacrificial victim :-

"There is nothing more to do", said he, glancing upward at the moon, "until tomorrow" ... It was not a reckless manner, the manner in which he said these words aloud under the fast-sailing clouds, nor was it more expressive of negligence than of defiance. It was the settled manner of a tired man who had wandered and struggled and got lost, but was at length struck into his road and saw his end ... Those solemn words which had been read at his father's grave, arose in his mind as he went down the dark streets amid the heavy shadows, with the moon and the clouds sailing on high above him. "I am the resurrection and the life!" saith the Lord; "he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall ~~be~~ live; and whosoever liveth and believeth

in me, shall never die". In a city dominated by the axe, alone at night, with natural sorrow rising in him for the sixty-three who had been that day put to death, and for tomorrow's victims then awaiting their doom in the prisons, and still of tomorrows and tomorrows, the chain of association that brought the words home, like a rusty old ship's anchor from the deep, might have been easily found. He did not seek it, but repeated them and went on.<sup>271</sup>

Carton's stability and hope, his anchor, is the promise of life through death in belief in the principle of giving oneself away. The memory of past personal loss and relationship does not protect or define Carton's ego, but opens him to a present response to his dying fellows, expanding the familial to the universal.

Life and death thus become ambiguous as Carton's discernment of his journey's end, his completion and goal, is identified as sacrifice. Desire for death as a fitting response to the perceived "defect of being" and failure in relatedness is converted into a fulfilment of self through self-abandonment for others. Carton does, indeed, do a "far better thing"<sup>272</sup> in dying for Darnay, for in so doing the wanderer has become the pilgrim who has found his end in Christ-like selfhood, in the New Jerusalem where each is a first-born son. This is not to say, however, that Carton dies in conscious sanctity: an essentially unconscious fulfilment of the self is accompanied by the psychological need for significance which has been his characteristic throughout the novel.

There is thus a tension between ego and self even in the resolution of the novel, and it is this which lends to the conclusion its sense of sentimentality or inauthenticity, for Dickens would seem to endorse the desire for survival in memory,



withdrawing from the full implications of abandonment, just as he withdrew from the realistic loneliness of Pip in the revised conclusion to Great Expectations.

Great Expectations itself continues to explore the contemporary parody of reality and the substitution of human for divine values, as its title suggests. Pip Pirrip understands his expectations of life and adopted sonship in terms of material wealth and status. He finally learns that his inheritance is one of relationship with a guilty innocent, Magwitch, and a childlike fool, Joe Gargery, upturning social interpretations of wealth and respectability. The term "expectations" is re-directed towards man's hopes and heritage issuing from his creatureliness and from his imaging of God.

The novel is thus not a criticism of social mobility, in which Pip is punished for rising above his station<sup>273</sup>, but a further analysis of the ways in which a socially constructed reality, the power of money and status, supplants ontological reality. The mobile society is a reprehensible revolutionary society when it seeks to deny human solidarity by separating the criminal from the "respectable", the workman from the professional, the poor from the rich, and to deny the inherent value of humanity by valuation according to class and inheritance. So too, Channing and Maurice, champions of the working-man, insisted that he be allowed to remain a worker, valued for his sonship to God rather than for his potential to rise above the status of worker.<sup>274</sup>

As with many of Dickens' heroes, Pip is presented in his parallel spiritual and psychological aspects. As an orphan, never

allowed to forget that he was "reared by hand",<sup>275</sup> as though sinning by existing, Pip has a ready empathy with the outcast convict Magwitch, together with both fear and a sense of superiority. His account of Magwitch's ravenous eating suggests both his abused humanity and Pip's multiple response :-

Something clicked in his throat as if he had works in him like a clock, and was going to strike. And he smeared his ragged rough sleeve over his eyes.

Pitying his desolation and watching him as he gradually settled down upon the pie, I made bold to say "I am glad you enjoy it", ... I had often watched a large dog of ours eating his food; and I now noticed a decided similarity between the dog's way of eating and the man's.<sup>276</sup>

The man who arouses pity is also the object of curiosity who is more easily related to mechanism and animal than to their common human species. Yet Pip's sense of transgression, aroused by his unwilling offence on the convict's behalf, like his later degradation at the hands of Miss Havisham and Estella, indicate his links with Magwitch, the true nature of which is disclosed only when claims to superiority are forsworn.

In his boyhood, Pip also feels brotherhood and superiority in his relationship with Joe Gargery, through their shared simplicity and subjection to Mrs. Joe. His condescension to Joe for his slowness hints at the germs of egotism fostered by Miss Havisham; his comradeship with him his true child-likeness, as an innocent, bonded self.

The reality of Joe's holy simplicity or holy foolishness, after the image of Christ, is evident in his lack of self-regard in willingness to be for others, enduring rather than transmitting



the evil of abused relationships, as he explains to Pip :-

I see so much in my poor mother, of a woman  
drudging and slaving and breaking her honest  
heart and never getting no peace all her  
mortal days, that I'm dead afeard of not  
doing right by a woman, and I'd fur rather  
of the two go wrong the t'other way, and be  
a little inconvenienced myself. I wish it  
were only me that got put out, Pip, I wish  
there wasn't no Tickler for you old chap;  
I wish I could take it all on myself.<sup>277</sup>

Pip's shame and rejection of relationship with Joe is thus also a rejection of the vicarious selfhood in which he participates with Joe. His repudiation of the forge signified not snobbery, so much as the refusal to follow Joe in actualising this selfhood, in forging his given self and his world as a co-creator who acknowledges child-ship. Responsiveness, true "trust in Providence", and effort are abjured in succumbing to the illusion of a ready-made identity provided by his socially created "expectations". Prey to presumption because of this parodic version of Providence and potential, Pip's existing sense of superiority leads him also into the pride of self-isolation, detaching his self-image from awareness of origination and from the earthiness of physical labour.

It is this dual potential in Pip for relating, vicarious selfhood and for ego destructive of brotherhood which associates him with Orlick. Joe and Orlick present the polarities of man, and his solidarity in divine sonship and offence. There is thus no need of psycho-analysis to explain Pip's guilt regarding Orlick's attack on his sister.<sup>278</sup> Pip shares with him a capacity for murder, in a living system of relationship which involves the technically innocent in the evil of another, as Pip realises of his sister's attack :-

It was horrible to think that I had provided the weapon, however undesignedly, but I could hardly think otherwise.<sup>279</sup>

Pip's unexorcised potential for brother-killing does, in fact, provide a means for the continuation of attacks upon brotherhood, as his treatment of Joe suggests, and validates spiritually his unfounded, psychological apprehension of guilt.

The inevitability of this implication in offence becomes clear in the behaviour of Pip's mentors, Jaggers and Wemmick, who both try to reject their involvement in a world of offenders. Jaggers' continual hand-washing is not only an obsessional ritual of exculpation and isolation, it recalls also that other legal figure Pilate, whose hand-washing was an attempt to deny his share of responsibility for the death of the Christ who identified completely with offenders. Jaggers thus refuses to recognise the true identity of the men with whom he deals and his own nature as a brother both innocent and convicted of offence.

Hence also Wemmick's "Castle" is not primarily a symbol of the private, as opposed to the public, self.<sup>280</sup> It signifies, rather, the isolation of man as a "law and lord unto himself", in contradiction to the law of relationship and human community. Victorian readers would have been alive to the traditional ambiguities of the castle as a symbol for man, as in Spenser's Castle of Medina and the parodic House of Busyrane. The castle may be the bulwark against evil, but it may be also the ego's bulwark against reality, establishing itself as a centre for self-satisfying illusions. Wemmick's Castle, like Jarndyce's Growlery, is without evil intent, but it presents the potential for evil of withdrawal



from the world of offence and suffering into a self-created idyllic, harmonious world. It is a mockery of God in attempting to create an individual cosmos rather<sup>than</sup><sub>^</sub> to co-operate in the redemption of human chaos. Hence the Castle is reported in the amused tone of one observing an attractive world of mechanical toys, whose regulated lives and movements have no bearing upon the wider world of muddle and pain.

The Castle, like Flora Finching in Bleak House, provides a benevolent foil to the presentation of the true viciousness of self-isolation. The house of Miss Havisham has clearly its perverted significance being, like the House of Busyrane, a place of seduction for the young. The offended Miss Havisham has become an offender through continuing to deny the love denied to her, manipulating and breeding false hope in others as has been done to her. The "disease" of destroyed relationship and denied selfhood is thus passed on, tainting the universe with evil, as Channing saw it, in reversal of Joe's Christ-like endurance of suffering. Miss Havisham has made herself a variety of vampire, making others what she has been made, feeding off life to make it also death-in-life, defect of being. She is in this sense a demonic parody of God, making man in her own image, trapped like Satan in the memory of injured rights and expectations. Memory has again become a prison, enabling the retention of a self-image of injured innocence, blocking awareness of contingency, responsiveness and solidarity with men as offender and as victim of evil.

Recovery of humanity begins for Miss Havisham when she is

finally able to recognise herself as a living cause of suffering, a link in a chain of offence and offending, and to see herself in another being, Pip :-

If you can ever write under my name "I forgive her", though ever so long after my broken heart is dust - pray do it! ... Until you spoke to her the other day, and until I saw you in a looking-glass that showed me what I once felt myself, I did not know what I had done. What have I done! What have I done!<sup>281</sup>

Only death can release her from the ego still inclined to be locked into remorseful, as into vengeful, memory. But death by burning is also implicitly purgatorial, suggesting the restoration of selfhood in this destruction of the old.

And Miss Havisham's death marks also the purgation of Pip, who recognises his own offence and his vicariousness in the attempt to rescue his persecutor from the fire. Burning away his false self leads to fulfilment of his true nature as a guilty innocent.

This mutual recognition of Pip and Miss Havisham as offended offenders, guilty innocents, links them with Abel Magwitch, as with the innocent Joe who had earlier affirmed relationship with Magwitch :-

"We don't know what you have done, but we wouldn't have you starved to death for it, poor miserable fellow-creatur ... Would us, Pip?"<sup>282</sup>

Joe avers a brotherhood in creaturely wretchedness and in origin from one Creator, And as there is in Joe a likeness to Christ, so too in Abel Magwitch are hints of a similar identity.

Jagers' association with Pilate has already inferred a connection between Christ and the criminal. In Magwitch the inference is heightened by his Christian name, Abel, the offended



brother who is the type of Christ. Like Abel, Magwitch is a betrayed brother, led into criminality by the neglect of his fellows and the exploitation of the deliberately evil Compeyson. Crime has been necessity rather than choice for Magwitch, contradicting the claimed superiority of Pip, whose fall has involved his will. In further distinction, morally, from Pip, Magwitch lacks self-creation, accepting his identity as given, in a way which also hints at his total condition as Magwitch, an individuated creature and as Abel, type of the innocent one :-

I know's my name to be Magwitch, chrisen's Abel.  
How did I know it? Much as I know'd the birds'  
names to be chaffinch, sparrer, thrush. I might  
have thought it was all lies together, only as  
the birds' names came out true, I supposed mine  
did.<sup>283</sup>

Pip may, indeed, find in Magwitch a "father" to his own betrayed innocence.

Like Pip, however, Magwitch has succumbed to the prevalent illusion about man in his desire to "make a gentleman" for himself. Yet even this suggests ego struggling with latent selfhood: his Australian life and desire for creation is centred outside himself in gratitude to one who acknowledged his humanity. Pip may know in Magwitch, too, a "father" and "brother" to his own compromised state, to his own spiritual nature held captive to the demands and pride of earth; both are heirs to Christ and inheritors of Adam. Pip's "great expectations" issue then not from human systems of law and wealth-creation, but from the God who, having affirmed his solidarity with offending creation, is both victim and Judge :-

The sun was striking in at the great windows of  
the court, through the glittering drops of rain  
upon the glass, and it made a broad shaft of light

between the two and thirty (the condemned) and the Judge, linking both together, and perhaps reminding some among the audience, how both were passing on, with absolute equality, to the greater Judgement that knoweth all things and cannot err.<sup>284</sup>

The theme of the divine and earthly inheritance of man, and of reparative, vicarious selfhood is also central to Dickens' last complete novel Our Mutual Friend. In this novel, man participates with man in the creaturely dust of his origination from earth, in the heritage of the animal, psychic self, Adam, and in the "goldenness" of his creation in the image of God as known in Christ, taking up the dust and ashes imagery of Bleak House. This "Golden Dustman" is a feature also of Carlyle's Sartor Resartus, in the character of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, God-born devil's dung, as it is of the Christian anthropology informing Dickens' vision. It is available in that Victorian poet of the Incarnation, Gerard Manley Hopkins, who rebukes man for his destruction of his Creator's image, his "make", and his regression to his earthly origin :-

We, life's pride and cared-for crown,  
Have lost that cheer and charm of earth's past prime:  
Our make and making break, are breaking, down  
To man's last dust, drain fast towards man's first slime.<sup>285</sup>

And it is found in representatives of seventeenth century Incarnation-alism, Henry Vaughan and Henry More. Speaking of the triumph of hypocrisy, Vaughan reminds man of his creation from the hands of God and the dust of earth :-

There is Clay enough for the Potter, but  
little dust where of cometh gold.<sup>286</sup>

While More, one of the Cambridge Platonists, relates acceptance of dust to the glory of man's righteousness in Christ :-



Lord, thrust me deeper into dust  
That thou maist raise me with the just.<sup>287</sup>

Both tradition and contemporary controversy about the Genesis accounts of Creation would suggest this primary connotation in dust, mud and slime, in a novel which is patterned upon the Christian concept of redemption. And Dickens further recalls the Biblical view of man by entitling "Better to be Abel than Cain" the chapter in which Headstone plans the murder of Wrayburn. The gold-dust duality in man is also that of Abel and Cain, the inheritance of Christ-like obedience to relationship and of self-choosing alienation.

That modern commentators have seen this novel primarily in terms of a criticism of Capitalism and the power of money<sup>288</sup> is illustrative of Dickens' theme in this, as in previous novels, that perceptions about men have been perverted into perceptions about money; that the illusoriness and "dirt" of money belong not to money itself but to the men who make an idol of it, in reflection of their idolatry of ego. Modern man worships his creations rather than his Creator, choosing the dust and dirt of his animal heritage above his spiritual origin.

Thus Mr. Boffin's true wealth from dust lies not in the dust heaps he inherits from Mr. Harmon but in his loving and relating selfhood which enables him to take on, for the sake of another, the aspect of sin in his pretended paranoid miserliness. In a Christ-like way Mr. Boffin "becomes sin" to save Bella Wilfer from the choice of ego, their common inheritance of dust. That his characterisation of the miser is so persuasive points to his acceptance of this dustiness and capacity in man to deny his own being.

As this miser, Boffin encapsulates the pervasive sickness of his society. The miser's love of money is shown to be the self-protectiveness and isolation of the egotist. Becoming his own centre, the miser defends himself and his possessions from his fellows, who are experienced only as alien predators. The City of community, Jerusalem the Golden, is reduced to a jungle, in which man preys upon man and is regarded as nothing but dust, or reduces himself to the scum of the earth. And so the city harbours docks

where accumulated scum of humanity seemed to be  
washed from higher grounds, like so much moral sewage.<sup>289</sup>

and the powerful men of the city earn the warning

My lords and gentlemen and honourable boards,  
when you in the course of your dust-shovelling  
and cinder-raking have piled up a mountain of  
pretentious failure, you must off with your  
coats for the removal of it all, and fall to  
work with the power of all the queen's horses  
and all the queen's men, or it will come rushing  
down and bury us alive.<sup>290</sup>

The egotistic society which makes "dusty" men totally spiritless refuse has in it the seeds of its own destruction through its suppression of its spiritual bonds.

This substitution of dust for gold, death for life, carnality for spirit, is seen in the occupation of Gaffer Hexam and Rogue Riderhood variants of the Resurrection-man. Plundering the dead involves maintaining life from the earthly mortality of man, in a parody of resurrection, whilst mocking God through the making of material gold from dust. Men are valued only as carrion, just as in the more respectable middle-class world men will be seen to be regarded as objects of prey.

Rogue Riderhood in his very name suggests degeneration from



the spiritual nature of man. Roguehood implies not only wickedness but the alienation of the beast separated from his kind, and developed into a settled nature. Riderhood further hints, through the association with Red Ridinghood, at the wolf in man's clothing.<sup>291</sup> Man is capable of becoming a lone wolf, but it is a perversion of his spiritual, related nature, a choice of the heritage from Cain, offspring of the earthly Adam. So Kingsley also understood man's duality, in his sermon Death :-

Rather must we mourn over those human beings who, being made in the likeness of God, and redeemed again in that likeness by our Lord Jesus Christ, and baptised into that likeness by the Holy Spirit, put on again of their own will the likeness of beasts which perish, and find, too often, alas! that the wages of sin are death. Rather must we mourn for those human beings who do not fulfill the law of their being; ... Rather must we pray for ourselves and for all we love, that God's Spirit of eternal life would raise us up, day by day, out of the likeness of the old Adam, who was of the earth, earthy; of whom it is written that - like the animals - dust he was and unto dust he must return; and would mould us into the likeness of the new Adam, who is the Lord from Heaven,<sup>292</sup>

Rogue's death at the hands of another murderer is indeed, payment of the traditional wages,

The bestiality of Riderhood's rejection of his spiritual nature is seen in its sophisticated form in the marriage-marketing of the Veneerings and the Lammles who simply add a polished surface to the animality of their desires and their response to others. Life for and towards others is perverted into a Satanic game of hunting and being hunted, manipulating and being manipulated, creating and falling into illusion. The Lammles operate as traditional Vice-figures, stage-managing their world and finding themselves literally wed to illusion.

"Mrs. Lammle, we have both been deceiving and we have both been deceived. We have both been biting and have both been bitten ... A mutual understanding follows and I think it may carry us through ... Firstly, it's enough to have been done, without the mortification of being known to have been done. So we agree to keep the facts to ourselves. You agree?"

"If it is possible, I do".

"Possible! We have pretended well enough to one another, can't we, united, pretend to the world?"

"Agreed".

"Secondly, we owe the Veneerings a grudge, and we owe all other people the grudge of wishing them to be taken in, as we ourselves have been taken in. Agreed?"

"Yes. Agreed".

"We come smoothly to thirdly. You have called me an adventurer, Sophronia. So I am ... So are you, my dear. So are many people. We agree to keep our own secret and to work together in furtherance of our own schemes".<sup>293</sup>

The new bargain parodies the earlier marital promises, agreeing to the promotion not of mutual love and of society but of deception and vengeance as an isolated unit opposed to the community. This couple, too, live off spiritual death, Satanic in their adhesion to lies and Cain-like, Satan's traditional companion, in their abhorrence of all relationship.

Bella Wilfer's choice of John Harmon as her husband reverses this parody by the Lammles, deception in this courtship indicating a reality obscured by appearance. Bella is poised between the egotism of her mother and the transparent simplicity of her father, her own inheritance of dust and gold. In rejecting the egotism of desire for wealth and status, the world of "defect of being", the wilful Bella becomes harmony, having chosen the gold of being. The illusion of the centrality of a wealthy, possessing ego is replaced by a self for others, discovered in the defence of the



apparent "nobody" John Rokesmith.

Harmon's denudation of his false social trappings in order to seek the wealth of relationship, and Bella's recognition of the spiritual poverty of these trappings of the false self empties the final restoration of wealth to the couple of any connotation of reward for righteousness or of inherent value in money. Bella can finally enjoy her selfhood, her husband and money because this last no longer symbolises idolatry of ego.

Harmon's denudation is a "murder" of ego. In this murder he gains an awareness of unearned accountability for destruction, of his solidarity with the "old man" Adam and his son Cain. Each man is faced with the choice of murdering his own Abel or his Cain, actualising vicarious selfhood or isolated individuality. Harmon has triumphed<sup>h</sup> over his own Cain in his underwater struggle, but awareness of his existence remains. He thus reverses the parody of Hexam and Riderhood in gaining life from death as the baptised "new man", the image of Christ, for the river of life and death is also the water of baptism.<sup>294</sup> Harmon enforces this new humanity, his dispossessed selfhood, in the adoption of the role of an ill-used servant coming unrecognised and in self-abandonment to his own.

Thus the murder mystery around Harmon is not an attempt to joint plots or to inject interest into a flagging plot,<sup>295</sup> but an essential aspect of the novel. Harmon's "death" and occasioning of imputed guilt links him with the world of the water-side. With Riderhood, Charley Hexam, and Bradley Headstone he is implicated in the crime of Cain.

With Lizzie Hexam, he presents the vindication of Abel, who acknowledges relationship and bears the effects of its destruction, Harmon in the accusation of murder, Lizzie in the felt need for reparation. The attack upon Wrayburn is a less symbolic demonstration of Harmon's dying in order to live and of society's espousal of the crime of Cain. And whilst Harmon and Lizzie are associated as saving innocents implicated in murder, Bella and Eugene Wrayburn are linked as representatives of man redeemed by vicarious selfhood.

While Bella is wilful, Eugene is will-less, his laconic carelessness suggestive of the wearied, wandering state of Dickens' other redeemed characters. Of "happy origin", Eugene is lost and dislocated both because of his presumptuous belief in the power of his birth with its attendant social superiority and because of his rejection of contemporary society. He is poised between the death to self of the rejection of solidarity and co-creativity, and the death to ego in the repudiation of false values. In identifying with Lizzie Hexam he opts for the selfhood which costs, and yet wins him, life. As a bridegroom, dead to ego and a victim of Cain, he confirms his true "happy origin" as an image of the groom-victim Christ, a sign of reconciliation and brotherhood amidst the decay of his society.

Eugene's upward spiritual movement in his material decline highlights the spiritual descent of those on the social ascent. The upwardly aspiring Charley Hexam and Bradley Headstone, in contrast to Harmon, have suppressed<sup>§</sup> their Abel-like selves in their claim to independence and self-creation. Lizzie's understanding of ontological duty, of bonds which tie her to others in accountability and need for reparation is thus rebuffed by Charley as fanciful :-



After a moody silence he broke out in an ill-used tone :

"It'll be a very hard thing, Liz, if, when I am trying my best to get up in the world, you pull me back".

"I, Charley?"

"Yes, you, Liz. Why can't you let bygones be bygones? ... What we have to do is, to turn our faces full in our new direction, and keep straight on".

"And never look back? Not even try to make amends?"

"You are such a dreamer ... we are looking into the real world now, ... I don't want, because I raise myself, to shake you off, Liz, I want to carry you up with me. That's what I want to do, and mean to do, I know what I owe to you. ... Well, then, don't pull me back, and hold me down. That's all I ask, and surely that's not unconscionable."

She had kept a steadfast look upon him, and she answered with composure,

"I am not here selfishly, Charley. To please myself, I could not be too far from that river".

"Nor could you be too far from it to please me. Let us get quit of it equally. Why should you linger about it any more than I? I give it a wide berth".

"I can't get away from it, I think, ... It's no purpose of mine that I live by it still".<sup>296</sup>

Lizzie accepts the painful and inevitable aspect of her being of standing on behalf of others in amendment for offence, as well as in the endurance of evil. She makes the choice of obedient Abel.

Charley's choice of Cain is evident both in his response to relationship and his Satanic perversion of truth. Freedom from egotistic imprisoning in memory through response to the present is mocked by his vision of their new direction. Memory may forbid the ego's belief in its independence and self-creation, reminding man of his involvement and debt to man, when it is brought into responsiveness to the present, as Redlaw experiences in The Haunted Man.<sup>297</sup>

Charley rejects both past and present in his orientation to a self-created future, which truly makes man a dislocated Cain-like stranger in the world. Similarly, duty is distorted into a social, malleable fact to be defined and fulfilled in material terms comprehensible to the ego. Bonds are capable of being "shaken off" when proved incompatible with the desires of the ego. So, too, as with the Lammles, relationship is distorted into a separation of a unit out of the community which but provides the environment and resources for the ego. Relationship is a possession: Lizzie is to be "carried up" in defiance of her own will and integrity, to meet the ego's version of propriety. His attachment to Headstone shares this idolatrous quality, being only a projection of Charley's own desire to "get on" and thus revealing his self-worship, his adoration of dust.

Headstone's "defect of being", his inner death, is implicit in his name: he is identified with the grave. He mocks the baptismal action of Harmon, burying himself not in order to die to ego but to present an apparently independent personality to the world. In so doing, he has fulfilled the other implication of his name, Headstone, by atrophying his rationality. It is not only that he has attempted to make himself a commodity instead of accepting himself as a living being, but that, in so doing, he has left his animality undirected and ultimately in control. The "head" has been seduced to the service of the "flesh" as Irenaeus understood the fate of spiritless man :-

He had acquired mechanically a great store of teacher's knowledge. From his early childhood his mind had been a place of mechanical stowage. The arrangement of his wholesale warehouse, so that it might be always ready



to meet the demands of retail dealers ... had imparted to his countenance a look of care; while the habit of questioning had given him a suspicious manner, or a manner that would be better described as lying in wait ... Suppression of so much had given him a strained manner over and above. Yet there was enough of what was animal and of what was fiery (although smouldering) still visible in him to suggest that if young Bradley Headstone, when a pauper lad had chanced to be told off for the seas, he would not have been the last in a ship's crew. Regarding that origin of his, he was proud, moody and silent, desiring it to be forgotten. And few people knew of it.<sup>298</sup>

The visible animality becomes active when Headstone literally lies in wait for his prey, Wrayburn, in the planning of whose murder the mind is totally at the behest of the carnal desire to remove an enemy. Man's claims to self-improvement and self-creation, in defiance of his true nature, have produced an irrational heir of Cain, who, like the Revolutionaries of Paris, can cope with his dual inheritance from Cain and Abel only by projecting his own evil onto another.

His choice of Riderhood as his substitute confirms an unconscious recognition of his own departure from his nature into bestiality. It also, in intention, parodies the principle of vicariousness, in attempting to make one man stand for another, whilst it also ironically affirms the truth of man's identity with man which his actions deny. The unity and similarity of Headstone and Riderhood in death mocks the claims of each to isolated individuality, averring relationship in mortality and in manhood. Those who refuse to live together as members one of another cannot escape dying together. This is Dickens' warning to his world in these last six novels, a warning which reminds man not only of ensuing Judgement upon his "defect of being", personally

and socially, but of its accompanying revelation of man's common identity and sonship, through the Man who was hungry, homeless and imprisoned.



Notes to Chapter Two

1. St. Symeon the New Theologian ,op. cit., p.59.
2. Vaughan, op. cit., p.179.
3. Dostoevsky, Fyodor The brothers Karamazov  
trans. Garnett, Constance  
London, Dent, Everyman, 2 vols., I, 307.
4. Quoted in  
Futtrell, Michael H., Dostoevsky and Dickens  
English Miscellany, 7, 1956, 49.
5. See, for example,  
Goldberg, Michael Carlyle and Dickens  
Athens, Georgia University Press, 1972, pp.160-161.  
Hornback, Bert G. Noah's Arkitecture: a study of Dickens'  
mythology  
Columbus, Ohio University Press, 1973.  
  
For a contrary, minority opinion regarding the religious import  
of Dickens' works see  
Gold, Joseph Charles Dickens : radical moralist  
Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1972.
6. See discussions in  
House, Humphrey The Dickens world  
2nd ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1942, pp.110-114.  
Reed, John Victorian conventions  
Columbus, Ohio University Press, 1972, p.30.
7. See Ford, G. H. in  
Peyrouton op. cit., p.24.  
and also  
Oddie, William Dickens and Carlyle : the question of  
influence

London, the Centenary Press, 1972, p.93.

Oddie would seem to agree with the estimate that, unknown to himself, Dickens' "religious" feeling was both inconsistent and cut-off from tradition.

An estimate accepted in

Jones, G. I.

Dickens : an essay in Christian  
evaluation

Blackfriars, November, 1957, 466-473.

8. Dickens, Charles

Two views of a cheap theatre in (1860)

The uncommercial traveller and

reprinted pieces etc. 1958, pp.29-39.

9. Jay, Elisabeth

The religion of the heart

Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1979, p.56.

10. The uncommercial traveller, op. cit., p.36.

11. The orthodox, patristic view of original sin may be summarised thus :-

Original Sin ... is not a transmission of guilt. It is rather a natural mortality transmitted from generation to generation, as a consequence of the separation between God and man after the sin of Adam.

Meyendorff, John

Christ in Eastern Christian thought

rev. ed., New York, St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1975, p.88.

12. Uncommercial traveller, op. cit., p.36.

13. See discussion in Moberly, op. cit., p.33.

The orthodox understanding of innocent involvement in guilt is well-expressed in a recent "catechism" of orthodox belief :-

Why should all be punished because of one man's sin? The answer is that human beings ... are interdependent and coinherent. No man is an island. We are members of one another (Eph.4; 25), and so any action, performed by any member of the human race, inevitably affects all the other members. Even though all are not, in the strict sense guilty of the sins of others, yet we are somehow always involved.



Ware, Kallistos

The Orthodox way

London, Oxford, Mowbray, 1979, p.81.

14. Uncommercial traveller, op. cit., p.36.

15. Holland, in

Gore, op. cit., p.10.

16. ibid., p.11.

17. Uncommercial traveller, op. cit., p.37.

18. Dickens, Letters III, op. cit., 485 (letter to Dickson, 10 May 1843).

19. Dickens, Charles A word in season (from The Keepsake, 1844) in  
collected Kitton, F. G. The poems and verse of Charles Dickens

London, Chapman and Hall, 1903, p.90.

20. ibid., p.103 Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourers (from Daily News, 1846).

21. See the patristic opinion in the works of the Cambridge Platonist,  
Benjamin Whichcote :-

Man forc'd himself, offered violence to himself  
and his Principles, went against his very Make and  
Constitution, when he departed from God and  
consented to iniquity.

The glorious evidence and power of  
Divine Truth in

Campagnac, E. T.

The Cambridge Platonists

Oxford, Clarendon, 1901, p.24,

and compare the modern orthodox view in Moberly, op. cit., p.20.

The standard view of Dickens' belief in a natural  
goodness in man is found in

House, op. cit., pp.111-112.

22. See Ware, op. cit., p.81 :-

The doctrine of Original Sin means ... that we  
are born into an environment where it is easy  
to do evil and hard to do good; - it means that  
we are each of us conditioned by the solidarity of  
the human race in its accumulated wrong-doing and  
wrong-thinking, and hence wrong-being.

23. Origen Contra Celsum  
trans. Chadwick, Henry  
Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1953, p.174.
24. Little Dorrit, op. cit., 1 ch.35, p.422.
25. Epistle to the Romans, ch.8, vv.16-23 (authorised version)  
and note C. F. D. Moule's view of "eschatological tension" which  
unites the cosmic to the personal :-  
the Easter conviction about Jesus persists undimmed,  
and imparts to practically the entire texture of  
New Testament thought the distinctive tension  
which the jargon of scholars knows as the  
"eschatological tension" of "the already and the  
not yet" and which issues in the distinctively  
Christian form of the ethical imperative, namely,  
"Become what you are".
- Moule, C. F. D. The origin of Christology  
Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.154.
26. Monks is recognised, if dismissively, as an "attendant demon"  
to the devil Fagin, just as Cain is traditionally known as  
Satan's servant in  
Wilson, Angus Oliver Twist  
Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1966; introduction p.23.  
Jonas is linked with Cain when described, in going to his  
crime, as looking on his body for "the red mire that stained  
the feet of Cain" in  
Martin Chuzzlewit (1843-4), 1951, Ch.47, p.720.
27. See Moberly, op. cit., pp.3-4, 6, 136-148.
28. Our Mutual Friend (1964-5), 1952, Bk.4, Ch.7.
29. Law, The Spirit of Love, op. cit., p.410-411.
30. See Illingworth, J. R. The Incarnation in relation to development in  
Gore, op. cit., p.135.
31. House, op. cit., p.52.



32. See discussion in

Prickett, Stephen

Victorian fantasy

Sussex, Harvester Press, pp.61-62.

Note also William Temple's dictum that Christianity is the most materialistic of all religions :-

Temple, William

Readings in St. John's Gospel

London, Macmillan, 1955, p.XX.

33. Attendance at Unitarian worship ceased only because of the journey to Italy in 1844, during which time he requested Thomas Mitton to purchase and send him a Unitarian prayer-book. See letter dated 12 August, 1844 :-

ed. Tillotson, Kathleen

Letters, op. cit., IV, 1977, 178.

34. See, for example,

Kent, William

Dickens and religion

London, Watts and Co., 1930.

35. To C. C. Felton, 2 March, 1843.

Letters III, op. cit., 456.

36. To Albany Fonblanque, 13 March, 1843.

ibid., 462-3.

37. To M. de Cerjat, 25 October, 1864

ed. his sister-in-law and

The letters of Charles Dickens

eldest daughter

London, Chapman and Hall, 1880, 2 vols, II, 221.

38. See Connell, op. cit., 230-231.

39. See Cudworth, Ralph

A discourse on 1 John II 3-4 preached

ed. & pref. Tagart, Edward

before the honourable House of Commons

London, Unitarian Association, 1843.

40. For discussion of Channing's development and theology see  
Memoir, op. cit., passim.
41. Channing, William Ellery      The perfect life in  
  The complete works of William Ellery  
  Channing  
                London, Christian Life Publishing Co., 1884, p.15.
42. Antony the Great, op. cit., p.17 and note, passim, Antony's  
great stress on love to neighbour as being identical with love  
to self :-  
  
        he who sins against his neighbour sins against  
        himself ... he who knows himself, knows all men.  
  
p.20.
43. Channing, op. cit., p.42.
44. See discussions in  
  
Williams, Rowan                      The wound of knowledge  
                London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1979, pp.52-5, 103.  
  
Graef, Hilda                         The light and the rainbow  
                London, Longmans, Green & Co., Westminster, Newman Press,  
                1959, pp.30, 51-53.
45. Channing op. cit., p.50.
46. Gospel according to St. Matthew, ch.13, v.21.
47. Jay, op. cit., p.76.
48. Channing, op. cit., p.45 (The perfect life).
49. ibid., p.15.
50. ibid., p.15.
51. ibid., p.147. (Remarks on associations).
52. ibid., p.23. (The perfect life).
53. ibid., p.60 (introductory remarks to Essays and Discourses).
54. ibid., p.17. (The perfect life).



55. ibid., p.16.
56. ibid., p.16.
57. ibid., p.52.
58. ibid., p.17.
59. Miller, J. Hillis Bleak House  
Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1971, Introduction, p.32.
60. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.37, p.531.
61. Channing op. cit., p.43 (The perfect life).
62. ibid., p.14.
63. See, for example,  
Gregory of Nyssa, op. cit., On virginity, p.357.
64. Channing, op. cit., p.17 (The perfect life).
65. ibid., p.17.
66. S. Gregorius Nyssenus In Ecclesiasten VI in  
ed. Migne, J. P. Opera S. Gregorii Nysseni  
Paris, 1863, Patrologia Graece XLV, para. 703.  
The Latin text reads :-  
  
Nobis enim ipsis quodammodo patres sumus,  
quando per bonum animi institutum,  
liberumque arbitrium nos ipsis  
formaverimus et genuerimus, et in lucem  
ediderimus.
67. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.13, p.180.
68. Channing, op. cit., p.31 (The perfect life).
69. Hinton, James Man and his dwelling-place  
3rd ed., London, Smith, Elder & Co., 1870, pp.146-7.
70. ibid., p.148.
71. See Moberly, op. cit., pp.3 & 6.
72. Allchin, A. M. The kingdom of love and knowledge  
London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979, p.174.

73. Maurice, F. D. The doctrine of sacrifice, deduced from the Scriptures  
London, Macmillan, 1893, p.111.
74. Maurice, F. D. What is Revelation?  
Cambridge, Macmillan & Co., 1859, p.54.
75. Maurice, Gospel of St. John, op. cit., p.194.
76. Quoted and discussed in  
McClain, Frank Mauldin Maurice, man and moralist  
London, S.P.C.K., 1972, p.5.
77. Maurice, F. D. Theological essays  
London, Macmillan, 1871, p.45.
78. Quoted and discussed in  
Vidler, Alec Witness to the Light  
New York, Charles Scribners' Sons, 1948, p.37.
79. Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, op. cit., 1, 316-317.
80. Maurice, Theological essays, op. cit., p.67.
81. ibid., pp.57-66.
82. A ubiquitous theme in Augustine, variously expressed :-  
God is near as the life of lives;  
God is before us, but we are absent from him;  
Man is in the land of unlikeness, alienated  
from his full manhood as a being transformed  
into God.
- St. Augustine Confessions  
revised trans.  
Pusey, Edward Bouverie  
Oxford, John Henry Parker, London, J. G. F. & J. Rivington,  
1893, Bk.III, 6, p.36; Bk.V, 2, p.66; Bk.VII, 10, p.121.
83. Peyrouton, Noel C. Dickens and the Christian Socialists :  
the Dickens-Kingsley myth.  
Dickensian 58, (May), 1962, 96-109.





The Divine Office

London, Collins, 1974, 3 vols, III, Week 21, 480-481.

96. Chadwick, op. cit., p.149.

97. Pusey, E. B. Whoso receiveth one such little child  
in My Name, receiveth Me

London, Rivingtons,

Oxford, Parker,

Ilfracombe, Barfield & Bowden, 1844, p.34.

98. Pusey, E. B. Life a preparation for death

London, Parker,

London, Oxford, Cambridge, Rivingtons, 1867, p.6.

99. Liddon, Henry Parry Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey

2nd ed., London, Longman, Green & Co., 1893, 4 vols, 11, 145.

100. Auden, W. H. The dyer's hand

London, Faber & Faber, 1962, p.408.

101. ibid., 409.

102. The Old Curiosity Shop (1840-1), 1951, Ch.63, p.473.

The spirituous versus the spiritual may be regarded as a key theme for Dickens, the opposition between man's own self-inflationary productions and the divine gift of selfhood in the manner of Swift's play with the ambiguities of the terms wind, spirit and the divine afflatus.

103. The posthumous papers of the Pickwick Club (1836-7), 1948, ch.1, pp.4-5.

104. ibid., ch.30, p.412.

105. ibid., ch.24, p.327.

106. ibid., ch.42, p.598.

107. See the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Ch.25, vv.31-46.



108. Posthumous papers op. cit., Ch.47, p.666.
109. ibid., ch.41, p.576.
110. See Patten, B. The Pickwick Papers  
Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1972, Introduction, p.22.
111. For differing views of Pickwick's innocence and success, see  
Rogers, Philip Mr. Pickwick's innocence  
Nineteenth Century Fiction, 27, (1, June)  
1972-1973, 21-27.  
Kincaid, James R. The education of Mr. Pickwick  
Nineteenth Century Fiction, 24, (2, Sept)  
1969-1970, 127-141.
112. Critical opinion tends to aver either a Dickens<sup>→</sup>s whose vision of  
innocence darkened in his later novels, as in  
Stevenson, L. Dickens' dark novels  
Sewanee Review, 51, 1943, 398-409.  
or a Dickens who always inhabited a dichotomised, Manichaeian  
world, as in  
Graham Greene The young Dickens in  
Greene, Graham The lost childhood and other essays  
London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1951, p.56.  
and  
Wilson, Edmund The wound and the bow : seven studies  
in English literature  
3rd ed., London, London University Press, 1961, pp.61-62.  
The present view agrees with that proposed by Van Ghent :-  
Van Ghent, Dorothy The Dickens world : a view from Todgers  
Sewanee Review 58, 1950, 419-438.

113. For discussions see

Empson, William

The symbolism of Dickens in

eds. Gross, John and

Dickens and the twentieth century

Pearson, Gabriel

London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962, pp.13-14.

Kettle, Arnold

An introduction to the English novel

2nd ed., London, Hutchinson, 1962, 2 vols., 1, 115-129.

114. Oliver Twist (1837), 1974, ch.2, p.9.

115. ibid., ch.12, p.69.

116. ibid., ch.53, pp.367-8.

117. ibid., ch.18, p.120.

118. See discussion of town and country, house and castle imagery in

Wilson, Angus

Evil in the English novel

Kenyon Review, 29, (Mar) 1967, 167-194.

119. Auden, op. cit., p.411.

120. Oliver Twist, op. cit., ch.38, p.251.

121. ibid., ch.43, p.293.

122. ibid., ch.19, p.128.

123. ibid., ch.48, p.330.

124. Old Curiosity Shop, op. cit., ch.72, p.544.

125. It is commonly agreed that Dickens' mourning for his sister-in-law Mary Hogarth lies behind the flight from mortality in the presentation of Little Nell.

126. Old Curiosity Shop, op. cit., ch.1, p.7.

127. ibid., ch.61, p.451.

Note that Kit is specifically a baptised, Christian child who knows his catechism by heart; he is truly Christ-ened.

128. ibid., ch.7, p.57.





For discussion of the differing approaches to the psychology of self-consciousness and self-identity, see

Strasser, Stephan                      The soul in metaphysical and  
empirical psychology

Louvain, Belgium, Duquesne University, Editions E.  
Nauwelaerts, 1957.

142. Holland, in Gore op. cit., pp.4-5.

and see Strasser op. cit.

we must not conceive "understanding oneself" as  
a retro-directed act, as a reflecting upon oneself,  
but as an existential presence with the self which,  
even when it is not conceptually explicated, makes  
it possible for the subject to affirm himself through  
the inexhaustible multiplicity of lived experiences,

p.116.

143. Martin Chuzzlewit, op. cit., ch.31, pp.501-2.

and see Hornback op. cit., p.50.

144. Hornback, ibid. p.46, sees the import of Martin's vocation as  
an architect but relates this to Dickens' vision of the  
artist rather of Man.

145. Martin Chuzzlewit op. cit., ch.6, p.93.

146. ibid., ch.6, p.97.

147. Again in Hornback, op. cit., p.46, clay is recognised in its  
Biblical connotation but is interpreted according to the  
author's concern with Art in Dickens' thought.

148. Bleak House op. cit., ch.13, p.180.

149. Martin Chuzzlewit, op. cit., ch.33, p.524.

150. ibid., ch.33, p.529.

151. See Goldberg, op. cit., p.51

and



Smith, G. Dickens, money and society

Berkeley, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1968,  
pp.107-124.

152. Dombey and Son (1846-8), 1950, ch.40, pp.562-4.

153. ibid., ch.2, p.16.

154. Gospel according to St. Mark, ch.3, vv.24-27.

155. Moynahan, Julian Dealings with the firm of Dombey and Son  
firmness versus wetness in  
Gross and Pearson, op. cit., pp.121-132.

156. Cf Pusey, Whoso receiveth, op. cit., p.34.

157. Herbert, op. cit. Holy Baptisme 11, p.65.

158. Jacob Boehme, Dialogue concerning the supersensual life (prologue)  
in

Boehme, Jacob Signatura rerum and other discourses  
introd. Bax, Clifford  
London, Dent and Sons, no date, p.225, (i.e. lying between  
223 & 227).

159. Dombey and Son, op. cit., ch.47, p.647.

160. ibid., ch.33, p.473.

161. See discussion of despair of time and contingency in  
Kierkegaard, S. K. The sickness unto death  
trans. Lowrie, W.

London, Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1944.

162. Dombey and Son, op. cit., ch.34, p.488.

163. Maurice, too, saw systems replacing ontology, "religion" replacing  
God, and worked to restore God as the central concern of  
theology. See

ed. Maurice, Frederick The life of Frederick Denison Maurice  
London, Macmillan & Co., 1884, 2 vols., 1, 369.

164. See  
 Leavis, F. R. and Dickens the novelist  
 Leavis, Q. D.  
 London, Chatto and Windus, 1970, p.124.
165. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.1, p.4.
166. ibid., ch.8, p.96.
167. Many parallels between King Lear and Bleak House may be discerned.  
 Direct influence is not necessarily suggested, despite Dickens' great admiration for Shakespeare. It is merely to be affirmed that both Shakespeare and Dickens are confronting the problems of man's betrayed nature.
168. For criticisms of Jarndyce see  
 Blount, T. Chancery as evil and challenge  
Dickens Studies 1, 1965, 112-120.  
 Lucas, J. Dickens and Arnold  
Renaissance and Modern Studies, 16,  
 1972, 86-111.
169. For contrary opinion that Jarndyce requires no restoration, see  
 Tomlinson, T. B. The English middle-class novel  
 London, Macmillan Press, 1976, p.62.
170. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.67, p.879.
171. ibid., ch.3, p.33.
172. See  
 Johnson, Edgar Charles Dickens : his tragedy and triumph  
 Boston, Little, Brown & Co.,  
 London, Hamish Hamilton, 1952, 2 vols., 11, 763.
173. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.3, p.19.



174. ibid., ch.15, p.215.
175. ibid., ch.13, p.180.
176. ibid., ch.6, p.70.
177. Cf Bleak House, op. cit., ch.35, p.489  
Little Dorrit, op. cit., bk.1, ch.35,  
p.422, for illustrations of this kind of relationship.
178. For discussion of union in diversity, see Lossky, op. cit., pp.164-8.
179. See Johnson, op. cit., 11, 765.
180. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.36, p.511.
181. ibid., ch.37, p.535.
182. See Holland in Gore op. cit., p.9.
183. Gospel according to St. Matthew, ch.13, vv.24-30.
184. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.8, p.97.
185. Note Dickens' suggested title for Little Dorrit of "Nobody's fault" in which "nobody" means "everybody" and yet points to the loss of the particular person in the mass.  
Note also the teaching of the Cambridge Platonists whose thought informed Channing's theology :-  

"being Nothing is the only way to be all things;  
... having nothing the truest way of possessing  
all things".
- John Smith    The excellency and nobleness of true religion in  
de Pauley, op. cit., p.190.
186. Isaiah, ch.53, v.3.
187. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.16, p.225.
188. ibid., ch.11, p.149.
189. Cf Psalm 69, v.20.
190. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.11, p.149.
191. ibid., ch.47, p.649.

192. ibid., ch.16, p.221.

193. ibid., ch.16, p.221.

194. Gospel according to St. Luke, Ch.9, v.58.

195. Psalm 22, v.6.

196. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.16, p.223.

and note the emphasis upon Jo's innocence in the evil he suffers and causes, ch.47, pp.646-647.

197. ed. Fielding, K. J. The speeches of Charles Dickens  
Oxford, Clarendon, 1960, p.308.

198. Helewa, Fr. John, O. D. C. New Testament teaching on prayer  
Privately printed at Darlington Carmel, 1977, p.3.

199. <sup>^</sup>Contrary opinions are found in

Gross, John Dickens : some recent approaches in  
Gross and Pearson, op. cit., p.xii.

Carey, John The violent effigy  
London, Faber and Faber, 1973, pp.52-3.

200. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.47, p.649.

201. For a contrary view of Jo's death which yet regards it as artistically effective see

Passerini, Edward M. Jo's will  
Dickens Studies 1 (1), 1965, 27-32.

202. Carlyle, Past and present, op. cit., p.149.

203. Bleak House, op. cit., ch.35, p.489.

204. Man's solidarity with man is preceded by God's solidarity with him : there can be no separation of consideration of man's community from christology. This was the theological position of Dostoevsky who was reared in a Russian Church in which the concept of solidarity, sobornost, was being revived. It may



be argued that Dostoevsky's adherence to this concept of man's relationship to man is one of the factors in his appreciation of the Christian vision within Dickens' novels.

205. See Johnson, op. cit., 11, 766.

206. See discussion in Strasser, op. cit., pp.114-116.

207. In Catholic theology Mary is the transparent mirror upon God and as such the ideal of humanity. Her humanity reveals God and not individual personality. It may be suggested that Dickens' meek women have in their conception an intuition of this understanding of humanity which is more readily available in traditional notions of the feminine.

208. See

Dyson, A. E. Bleak House : Esther better not born?  
and

Harvey, W. J. Bleak House : the double narrative  
in

ed. Dyson, A. E. Dickens : Bleak House

London, Macmillan, Casebook series, 1969, p.264; pp.229 & 232.

209. ibid.

Miller, J. Hillis Bleak House and the moral life, pp.158-  
162, 166.

210. See

Wilson, Angus The world of Charles Dickens

London, Secker and Warburg, 1970, p.234.

211. Leavis, op. cit., pp.190-193.

212. Holloway, John Hard Times : a history and a criticism  
in

Gross and Pearson, op. cit., p.168.

Note also the defence of the stage as entertainment and education

which resulted from the centrality of the Incarnation in the theology of the Anglo-Catholic priest Stewart Headlam, a disciple of F. D. Maurice. See

Headlam, Stewart                      The service of Humanity

London, John Hodges, 1882, pp.17-25.

213. Hard times (1854) 1955, bk.1, ch.5, p.22.

214. See

Barnard, Robert                      Imagery and theme in the novels of  
Charles Dickens

Bergen, Universitets forlaget, Norwegian studies in  
English, 1974, pp.83-84.

215. Hard times, op. cit., bk.1, ch.11, p.69.

216. Dickens, Charles                      A paper mill

in

ed. Stone, Harry                      Uncollected writings of Charles Dickens

Harmondsworth, Allen Lane Penguin Press, 1969, 2 vols, 1, 140-14

See also                      Discovery of a treasure near Cheapside  
11, 443-454.

217. Dickens, Speeches, op. cit., pp.284-5.

218. Hard times, op. cit., bk.1, ch.8, p.50.

219. ibid., bk.2, ch.9, p.199.

220. ibid., as in bk.1, ch.15, pp.100-101.

221. ibid., bk.3, ch.9, p.299.

222. ibid., bk.2, ch.3, p.132.

223. ibid., bk.2, ch.3, p.135.

224. ibid., bk.2, ch.3, p.135.

225. ibid., bk.2, ch.7, pp.167 & 170. Harthouse refers to himself  
as a dog, to Tom as both a dog and a whelp.



226. ibid., bk.2, ch.3, p.133.

227. ibid., bk.1, ch.9, p.55.

228. Stephen is considered inessential where he is regarded only as a vehicle for sentimentality, as in

Garis, Robert

The Dickens theatre : a reassessment  
of the novels

Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1965, p.98

or as an inadequate solution to a social problem, as in

Williams, Raymond

Culture and society - 1780-1950

London, Chatto and Windus, 1967, pp.93 & 96.

229. Hard times, op. cit., bk.2, ch.5, p.151.

230. See

Benn, J. Miriam

Characterisation and expression in  
Hard Times

Dickens Studies Annual, 1, 1970, 178.

231. Hard times, op. cit., bk.2, ch.4, p.140.

232. ibid., bk.2, ch.4, p.142.

233. Gospel according to St. Matthew, ch.16, v.23.

234. Hard times, op. cit., bk.3, ch.6, p.272.

235. ibid., bk.3, ch.6, p.273.

236. ibid., bk.3, ch.6, p.274.

237. Note also the many parables in which sin and its consequences are expressed in the image of the debtor's prison.

238. Milton, John

Paradise lost

ed. Fowler, Alastair

London, Longman, 1971, bk.IV, l.75, p.194.

239. Quoted and discussed in

Fielding, K. J.

Dickens and the discovery of the soul  
Aryan Path, 33, (May) 1962, 212.

240. ibid., 211.
241. ibid., 211.
242. ibid., 212.
243. Little Dorrit, op. cit., bk.2, ch.34, p.826.
244. Forster, John The life of Charles Dickens  
ed. Ley, J. W. T.  
London, Cecil Palmer, 1928, p.624.
245. Holloway, John Little Dorrit  
Harmondsworth, Penguin Press, 1967, Introduction pp.15-16.
246. Donne, John Devotions on emergent occasions in  
ed. Alford, Henry The works of John Donne DD  
London, John W. Parker, 1839, 6 vols., III, Meditation 17,  
575.
247. Little Dorrit, op. cit., bk.1, ch.13, p.165.
248. ibid., bk.2, ch.30, p.775.
249. ibid., bk.1, ch.10, p.113.
250. ibid., bk.2, ch.5, p.480.
251. For a discussion of the tradition of "littleness", holy  
simplicity and idiocy, see  
Saward, John Perfect fools. Folly for Christ's  
sake in Catholic and Orthodox  
spirituality  
Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1980.
- The currency of this tradition in the nineteenth century is  
evident in the rise of St. Thérèse de Lisieux and in the  
satirical presentation of holy simplicity in Gustave Flaubert's  
Le Coeur Simple.
252. Cf. Kierkegaard, op. cit., pp.92-3.



253. It is noteworthy that the expletives of Rigaud are translated, "sacré bleu" becoming "holy blue"; the hidden expletive in Merdle's name remains the one French expression in its original form.
254. Little Dorrit, op. cit., bk.2, ch.25, p.710.
255. ibid., bk.2, ch.12, p.556.
256. ibid., bk.2, ch.12, p.569.
257. ibid., bk.1, ch.13, p.160.
258. The original Whole Duty of Man was, of course, the standard work of Puritan spirituality.
259. Little Dorrit, bk.1, ch.11, p.127.
260. ibid., bk.1, ch.3, p.34.
261. ibid., bk.2, ch.31, p.790.
262. Trilling, Little Dorrit, op. cit. p.xv. According to Trilling Arthur discovers "the non-personal will in which lies our peace".
263. A tale of two cities (1859), 1949, bk.3, ch.4, p.260.
264. ibid., bk.3, ch.11, p.316.
265. That is, "religio" and "pietas" both include notions of binding (religere) and of dutiful relationship in acknowledgement of derivation.
266. A tale of two cities, op. cit., bk.2, ch.23, p.216.
267. ibid., bk.2, ch.7, p.100.
268. ibid., bk.3, ch.12, p.324.
269. The views of Kingsley and Dickens are put in a theological perspective in the study by Munz :-

Munz, Peter

Relationship and solitude

London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964, esp. pp.26-27, 64-65.

270. See

Fielding, K. J.

Dickens : a critical introduction

2nd ed., London, Longmans, 1965, p.203.

271. A tale of two cities, bk.3, ch.9, pp.297-298.
272. ibid., bk.3, ch.15, p.358.
273. See for discussion  
Faber, Richard Proper stations  
London, Faber and Faber, 1971, p.70.
274. Maurice envisaged Christian socialism as a means of enhancing rather than eradicating the role of the worker. Channing's similar views are available in Complete works, op. cit., Self-culture pp.64-78.
275. Great expectations, op. cit., ch.2, p.6.
276. ibid., ch.3, p.16.
277. ibid., ch.7, p.45.
278. See  
Moynahan, Julian The hero's guilt : the case of Great expectations  
Essays in Criticism, 10, (Jan), 1960, 60-97.
279. Great expectations, op. cit., ch.16, p.114.
280. See Leavis, op. cit., p.311.
281. Great expectations, ch.49, pp.377-8.
282. ibid., ch.5, p.36.
283. ibid., ch.42, p.328.
284. ibid., ch.56, p.434.
285. Hopkins, op. cit., The sea and the skylark, p.73.
286. Vaughan, op. cit., p.180.
287. More, op. cit., Charitie and humilitie, p.155.
288. See, for example,  
Kettle, Arnold Our mutual friend



Killham, John

# Pickwick, Dickens and the art of Dickens

in

Gross and Pearson, *op. cit.*, pp.219;238-9.

Morse, Robert

Our mutual friend

in

Ford, George H. and

## The Dickens critics

Lane, jnr., Lauriat

Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1961, p.205.

289. Our mutual friend, op. cit., bk.1, ch.3, p.21.

290. *ibid.*, bk.3, ch.8, p.503.

291. See Reed's comment on Dickens' use of fairy-tale in a moral and Christian context :-

Reed, op. cit., p.30.

292. Kingsley, Westminster sermons, op. cit., Death, p.219.

293. Our mutual friend, op. cit., bk.1, ch.10, pp.125-126.

294. See Goldberg, op. cit., p.161.

295. For discussion of the plot in this novel, see

Fielding, critical introduction, op. cit., p.226.

Muir, Kenneth

## Image and structure in Our mutual friend

Essays and Studies n.s.19, 1966, 92-105.

296. Our mutual friend, op. cit., bk.2, ch.1, pp.227-228.

297. Christmas books, (Haunted Man 1848), 1954, pp.235-312.

298. Our mutual friend, op. cit., bk.2, ch.1, pp.217-218.

## CHAPTER THREE



"BEAST-GODHOOD" : VERSIONS OF DIVINE SELFHOOD

IN THE THOUGHT OF THOMAS CARLYLE

All the disorder and corruption and malady of our nature lies in a certain fixedness of our own will ... wherein we live to ourselves, ... it is this life of Self that we are to hate and lose that the Kingdom of God may arise in us.<sup>1</sup>

The moment thou art imprisoned in ... thine own separate individuality ... thou committest a worse suicide than taking the life of thy body.<sup>2</sup>

I

The dual solidarity which is the characteristic mark of the self in the works of Dickens is also central to the early anthropology of Carlyle. The "Golden Dustman" of Our Mutual Friend is also the spiritual

dust-making, patent Rag-grinder<sup>3</sup>

of Sartor Resartus, the man who is both a son of God and a child of the earth. In the vision of these two Victorians, man is held in tension between earthly corruptibility and spiritual immortality, ego and self; a tension which is his source of grief but also his prospect of glory. The self is the spiritual man who brings his earthliness under the power of his spirit, restoring godliness to the creation through acceptance, rather than denial, of earth. Carlyle, echoing Shakespeare in King Lear, recognises in Sartor Resartus that

there is something great in the moment when a man first strips himself of adventitious wrappings; and sees indeed that he is naked, and, as Swift has it, "a forked, straddling animal with bandy legs"; yet also a Spirit and unutterable "Mystery of Mysteries".<sup>4</sup>

just as Dickens proposes, in characters such as Nemo and Jo, a state of utmost dereliction which reveals the essential nobility of man.

Many of Dickens' themes and images are to be found in Carlyle, and it is clear that Dickens discovered in "the sage of Chelsea" an ultimately poetic articulation of his own beliefs. The great themes of dual solidarity, of ontological brotherhood, of conflict between Reality and Appearance, of the dispossessed "nothingness" of the true self, unite the oeuvre of Dickens with the thought of Carlyle up to 1850, the year in which the ambivalent Latter-Day Pamphlets were written. Since the images of Red-Tape, Chancery, disease and divorce used by Dickens seem to have their origin with Carlyle, it is tempting to claim discipleship for the novelist.<sup>5</sup> A temptation which is to be resisted, however, for, influential though Carlyle was, it has been seen that the concept of dual solidarity in man dates from the earliest of Dickens' novels The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club. Moreover, Martin Chuzzlewit, which concerns the parodic, illusory nature of man's architecture of himself and the need for brotherhood, was completed in the same year in which Carlyle produced his analysis of Red Tape and semblance in Past and Present. This was the period of Dickens' firmest adherence to the Unitarianism of Channing and Taggart. It may therefore be inferred that Carlyle was more the influential partner than the master, in this re-affirmation of an ancient vision of selfhood.

If Dickens met in Carlyle, as he had in Channing, with the



validation of his intuitions about man, the explanation lies, in part, in the theological sources common to the American and the Scot. While Channing was acquainted with patristic theology through William Law and the Benevolist interpretation of the Cambridge Platonists, Carlyle had studied these same Platonists at Edinburgh University, together with the Caroline Anglican divines.<sup>6</sup> Hence Carlyle, like Dickens, drank unknowingly from sources shared by contemporary, and often despised, theologians, producing related versions of the self.

Harrold has already indicated the importance of the Cambridge Platonists for Carlyle's reception of Kant's theory of Reason and Understanding.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Carlyle's interpretation of German thought, as a whole, may be said to depend upon his debt to this English religious philosophy.<sup>8</sup>

The implicit distinction in the Cambridge Platonists between Reason and Understanding is one between a quality inherent in the spiritual nature of man and a quality possessed in varying degrees by man which enables him to perceive and comprehend the material world. Man's reason is able to correspond with the reason of the world, intuiting the noumenal reality within or beneath phenomena.<sup>9</sup> This was a renewal of the differentiation between Intellect (*intellectus* or *intelligentia*) and Reason (*ratio*, *rationation*), which was central to the patristic concept of man. Intellect, in this thought, is pure, intuitive knowing, a participation by the intellectual creature in the pure Intellect of God, who has no need of discursive reasoning. Reason, specific to man, is the capacity of the created being for logical, deductive thought-processes, for

what is now commonly termed intelligence.<sup>10</sup> Varying levels of capacity for reasoning do not, therefore, affect each man's identity as an intellectual being. The property of manhood is held quite distinct from the properties of individual men. Patristic "Intellect" is the "Reason" of the Cambridge Platonists, so that their "mind" is the spiritual centre of man, the basis of his selfhood as an image of God. Carlyle adopted just such a distinction between spiritual capacity and human stupidity in his early thought, while his later development manifests the manipulation and conflation of these concepts of Intellect and rationality.

In the German Romantics was obtainable a vision of the self to consolidate Carlyle's learning from this seventeenth century Anglicanism. The German school owed its own debt to patristic theology, in its inspiration from Behmenist and Pietist Christianity, which inherited the spirituality of the Rhineland mystics.<sup>11</sup> Both German and English influences upon Carlyle point towards a relationship with the thought of the Fathers. Hence the development of his concept of man may be explored within the framework of traditional patristic anthropology as fruitfully as it has been analysed in relation to German thought. Such an exploration calls into question an approach to Carlyle which posits a tension between his German Idealism and his native Calvinism. Not only will his themes prove to issue from the patristic theology which pre-dates Idealism, but his thought, understood in the light of this tradition, will be seen to be antithetical to Calvinism. Moreover, the reverses in his later thinking are consistent with the difficulties inherent in this patristic vision of man. His late view of the self will be



seen to arise out of his original conception rather than to constitute a re-assertion of latent Calvinism. "Beast-godhood"<sup>12</sup> is a conjunction permanently fissile, and the self is ever endangered by the claims of the ego.

The Cambridge Platonists found themselves, like many Victorian theologians, combating both religious and secular schools of thought which reduced Man and set a gulf between humanity and God. Like their successors in the nineteenth century, they sought to establish the dignity of man as an image of God. In their belief that the good man is

the Tabernacle of God wherein the Divine Shechinah does rest.<sup>13</sup>

and their demand to man to

Reverence God in thyself; for God is more in the mind of man than in any part of the world besides; for we (and only we here) are made after the image of God.<sup>14</sup>

is seen the same conviction which inspires Carlyle's call for reverence to man as "the true Shekinah".<sup>15</sup>

"Mind" is here the capacity which Carlyle saw in man for becoming spiritual, being

that Faculty, whereby man is made capable of God.<sup>16</sup>

The Reason of the mind

receives what is supernatural.<sup>17</sup>

so that man, by nature graceful, capable of the supernatural, is yet the created recipient rather than origin of Deity. Man is capable of deification, theosis, but is not identifiable with God. Here is the Natural Supernaturalism of Carlyle.

In this belief about the nature of the mind lies the basis

for human equality in the thought of the young Carlyle and the Cambridge Platonists. As the earlier discussion suggested, mind is the common basis of manhood and Reason a universal capacity :-

Every man is born with the Faculty of Reason and the Faculty of Speech.<sup>18</sup>

This spiritual capacity is also for the younger Carlyle an identifying mark of human nature, as averred in Chartism :-

All men, one must repeat, were made by God with immortal souls in them. The Sanspotato is of the self same stuff as the superfinest Lord Lieutenant.<sup>19</sup>

The insistence upon man's capacity for God as his image led the Cambridge Platonists, as followers of the Eastern Fathers, to the assertion of man's natural innocence. Man as he is known is not "in his right mind" :-

Man forc'd himself, offered violence to himself and his principles, went against his very Make and Constitution, when he departed from God and consented to iniquity ... It is as natural for man, in respect of the principles of God's creation in him ... to live in Love and to carry himself well in God's Family; this, I say, is as natural for him, as for a Beast to be guided by his Senses, and for the Sun to give Light.<sup>20</sup>

Yet belief in this primary innocence did not blind the Platonists to the evil in man. As Westcott observed of Benjamin Whichcote, their awareness of glory and order was also one of sin<sup>21</sup>, but of sin as a decline of man to the level of the beast. Man, in their thought, may either "exercise his naturals"<sup>22</sup>, by living spiritually, or live according to the senses he shares with the beast. Whichcote knew both what man is, and what men make of themselves :-

it should be, one man a God to another; but we through our degeneracy make it to be, every man a wolf to another.<sup>23</sup>



So, too, Carlyle in an early essay Biography claims that the spiritual essence of man is distinct from his involvement in evil. Depravity does not affect his being, just as for St. Teresa of Jesus the mirror of the soul is not destroyed by sin, however fouled<sup>24</sup> :-

the Dead are all holy, even they that were base and wicked when alive. Their baseness and wickedness was not They, was but the heavy and unmanageable environment that lay about them, and which they fought unprevailing; they (the ethereal god-given Force that dwelt in them and was their Self) have now shuffled off that heavy environment and are free and pure.<sup>25</sup>

The heavily Platonic overtones of this assertion of innocence, with its suggestion of the god imprisoned in corruptibility, is balanced elsewhere by awareness of the reality of man's involvement with the "beast". The Self is, then, not the perfect but passive prisoner of evil Matter and Time, but a divine potential in man to be realised, or abandoned to the demands of the carnal ego. Innocence is inseparable from earthiness, as Carlyle recognises in Boswell's Life of Johnson :-

What, indeed, is man's life generally, but a kind of beast-godhood; the god in him triumphing more and more over the beast;<sup>26</sup>

Man must remember that he is at once a

pitiful, hungry biped<sup>27</sup>

and

a reflex and image of God's whole universe.<sup>28</sup>

The "beast" begins to triumph when the "pitiful biped" aspires to independent godhead, claiming God-like knowledge, ignoring earthiness yet judging of the eternal by the earthly senses. Hence Carlyle in Sartor Resartus rebukes the scientists who claim knowledge

and control of the Universe :-

Was Man with his experience present at the Creation, then, to see how it all went on? Have any deepest scientific individuals yet dived down to the boundaries of the Universe, and gauged everything there?<sup>29</sup>

And an early essay castigates those who deny the reality of their derived being :-

that "faint possible Theism" which now forms our common English creed, cannot be too soon swept out of the world. What is the nature of that individual, who with hysterical violence theoretically asserts a God, perhaps a revealed Symbol and Worship of God, and for the rest, in thought, word and conduct, meet with him where you will, is found living as if this theory were some polite figure of speech, and his theoretical God a mere distant simulacrum, with whom he, for his part, had nothing whatever to do? Fool! The ETERNAL is no Simulacrum; God is not only There, but Here or nowhere, in that life breath of thine, in that act or thought of thine - and thou wert wise to look at it.<sup>30</sup>

The self made to receive God and to be a microcosm of the Universe must acknowledge its origin in a Power beyond itself. Createdness, derivation and relationship are among the "Facts" of existence for Carlyle, as for the Cambridge Platonists. In this school of thought Man cannot be natural in separation from the source of his nature.

In these themes is found Carlyle's true affinity with Swift, as an inheritor of patristic Anglicanism. For Swift, man was not "a reasonable being", for this would equate him with God, but a creature capable of Reason. As such, he was both capable of God-like Love, (for in this tradition Divine Intellect is synonymous with Divine Charity<sup>31</sup>) and of creaturely frailty and failure. Man must be deflated from his pretensions to an independent and purely angelic status in order to know his creatureliness and his means of



becoming truly God-like. Herein lies the logic of Carlyle's Descendental Transcendentalism.

This position brings both Swift and Carlyle to the abyss of Benson's "agnosticism of faith"<sup>32</sup>, which has proved so perplexing to commentators. Both face the void which is present to men in the inability of rational enquiry to prove the existence of spirit. Only Intellect can intuit the spiritual world, leaving the rational mind bare of data and successful activity. The intellectual "I" may see, but, as the living basis of perception, cannot observe itself or be observed by the ego.<sup>33</sup> This is a condition of "not-knowing" essential to human existence within this thought.<sup>34</sup> But this "abyss of divinity"<sup>35</sup>, the world of the "All" which cannot be analysed into things by ratiocination, becomes true emptiness when all faith is invested in rational investigation. Men who attempt to see with their ears produce their own experience of darkness and insubstantiality. It is this void which Swift and Carlyle attack in their rejection of analysis and self-consciousness. Gulliver makes a void for himself in believing that the truth about his own manhood is to be obtained from observation and analysis. The evidence of likeness to Yahoo and Houyhnhnm, forcing a beast-godhood division, replaces acceptance of his behaviour and responses as indications of his nature. Deduction negates the "knowing" of experience.

So Carlyle attacked the self-conscious hubris of rationalistic definitions of reality. As he advised Sterling, man must be content with the agnosticism of "the All" and the "Immensities", eschewing the reduction of infinitude to rational categories.<sup>36</sup> In

Characteristics he likewise asserts :-

Boundless as is the domain of man, it is but a small fractional proportion of it that he rules with Consciousness and Forethought; what he can contrive, nay, what he can altogether know and comprehend, is essentially the mechanical, small; the great is ever, in one sense or other, the vital; it is essentially the mysterious and only the surface of it can be understood.<sup>37</sup>

The "unconscious" here is not, as is sometimes suggested<sup>38</sup>, the Freudian unconscious of drives and demands issuing from man's animal nature. The "vital unconscious" is the spiritual in man, the "breath of God", which lies "above" rather than "beneath" the ego. Man governed by this unconscious is not man at the mercy of id, but integrated man who, like God, knows without need of knowing that he knows :-

In those days, ... our whole being was as yet one, the whole man like an incorporated will. Such, were Rest or ever-successful labour the human lot, might our life continue to be : a pure, perpetual unregarded music; a beam of perfect white light, rendering all things visible, but itself unseen, even because it was of that perfect whiteness and no irregular obstruction had yet broken it into colours. ... Had Adam remained in Paradise, there had been no Anatomy and no Metaphysics.<sup>39</sup>

But to man out of Paradise, such unconsciousness and "not-knowing" is indeed emptiness, leaving him to feel the insecurity of his creatureliness :-

Thus, like a God-created Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane, ... O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.<sup>40</sup>

Faced with the certainty of mortality and with an apprehension of a reality beyond his infinitesimal life-span, man can truly reflect

What am I but a sort of ghost?<sup>41</sup>



To this understanding of man in confrontation with the mystery of his existence the patristic tradition was no stranger. The Fathers were acutely aware of the insubstantiality and transience of man when considered as a creature living in Time and upon the brink of mystery. Henry Vaughan reflects his relationship to the Fathers and to Carlyle in his own approach to the problem :-

Our present life (saith Chrysostome) is a meere apparition, and differs but very little from a dreame ... Man himself in his outward part, which was taken out of the world, feeles like passions with the world, he is worn, washed, dissolved and changed, he comes hither, he knows not how, and goes hence, he knows not whither.<sup>42</sup>

His contemporary Traherne was less concerned with transience, and more with an affirmation of the existence of the self in Eternity. For Traherne man who knows the finitude of his life must also accept with Carlyle that

"the life-time is encompassed with eternity."<sup>43</sup>

And Eternity, as Rufus Jones says of Traherne's thinking, is

a Reality in which all true realities abide ... the real world for which we were made and which we enter through the doors of love.<sup>44</sup>

For Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh in Sartor Resartus, there is similarly a relationship between love and Eternity. Acceptance of the world as a revelation of an eternal power which is also an eternal love leads Teufelsdröckh to his first recognition of the bonds of love between men. Carlyle's oscillation between awareness of transience and of permanence is inherent in this vision of man as an incarnate image of God, as his Caroline ancestors affirm.

The self, however, although made for Eternity and for encompassing the universe, may be prevented from realising its true nature and destiny by the carnal ego. The distinctions and attributes

of personality and social role obscure man's perception, as Carlyle noted in his journal :-

Pray that your eyes may be opened, that you may see what is before you! The whole world is built, as it were, on light and glory - only our spiritual eye must discern it; to the bodily eye Self is a perpetual blinder, and we see nothing but darkness and contradiction.<sup>45</sup>

This conflict between eternal selfhood and an ego arising from man's time-bound and earth-bound nature is central also to the works of Traherne, as A. L. Clements' study has demonstrated<sup>46</sup>, and to the thought of the Cambridge Platonists. Once more, in the work of these seventeenth century philosophers Carlyle's early view of the self may be discerned and clarified.

For the Cambridge Platonists the self as a microcosm of the world is denied when the personality with its needs is established as the central reality for

All self-seeking and self-love do but imprison the soul and confine it to its own home.<sup>47</sup>

The felicity of true selfhood is attained, by contrast only when man "universalizes himself"<sup>48</sup>, becoming in actuality a microcosm and a self whose "I" is the "I" of the manhood modelled upon the "I Am" of God. In such a case

to enjoy a man's self is the greatest good in the world.<sup>49</sup>

The process of universalisation and self-realisation is consequently also a process of annihilation. The psychic "self" must die; there must be complete renunciation of all individual perceptions and demands which claim to set a man, as a self-possessed entity, apart from, and over-against, the rest of his world. The good man must therefore



make a full surrender of himself to God ... triumphing in nothing but his own Nothingness and in the Allness of the Divinity. But indeed, this his being nothing is the only way to be all things; this his having nothing the truest way of possessing all things.<sup>50</sup>

The self that is and has nothing for itself as an isolated ego is unimpeded in actualising participation in God and enjoyment of the world as God enjoys it, in its totality.

In a similar manner, Carlyle calls for both self-annihilation and self-exaltation. Complementary to the assertion of

the law of Self-denial, by which alone man's narrow destiny may become an infinitude within itself.<sup>51</sup>

is the claim that

The meaning of life here on earth might be defined as consisting in this: To unfold your self, ... it is a necessity for the human being, the first law of our existence.<sup>52</sup>

The operation of these two laws, contradictory outside the framework of the distinction between self and ego, is explained fully by extracts from the early journal and Sartor Resartus :-

Were we not blind as moles we should value our humanity at  $\alpha$ , and our rank, influence etc. [sic] (the trappings of our humanity) at 0. Say I am a man, and you say all.<sup>53</sup>

The fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, Unity itself divided by Zero will give Infinity.<sup>54</sup>

Life, the selfhood which is "being" derived from the Being of God, is denied by the attempt to substitute the "accidents" of individuality for this essence. One major function of the clothing motif in Sartor Resartus is to embody this tendency :-

Clothes gave us individuality, distinctions, social polity; Clothes have made men of us; they are threatening to make clothes-screens of us.<sup>55</sup>

In the Victorian world, as Carlyle knew it, the desire to be separate, individual men was replacing apprehension of underlying common selfhood. "Man" was giving way to "men".

Carlyle is, therefore, neither commending emotional suicide nor rejecting the "modern, ontological self", as Rosenberg suggests;<sup>56</sup> he is indeed affirming ontological selfhood as a fact about man as a race, a concept to which the absolute, individualised self of Rosenberg is inimical.

Yet there is, for Carlyle, a distinctive particularity to the self, but it is a distinctiveness realised within a unity binding him to the "I" of every other. Just as to the Cambridge Platonists each man should be God to another rather than a part of an amorphous mass of divinity, so for Carlyle :-

Round his mysterious ME, there lies under all those  
wool rags, a Garment of Flesh (or of senses)  
contextured in the loom of Heaven; whereby he  
is revealed to his like and dwells with them in  
UNION and DIVISION.<sup>57</sup>

The vision of man as image of God and microcosm of the universe resists the temptations both of extreme nominalist individualism and of extreme monism. Man is not merged in collective Humanity, but finds in it his identity as a brother in a family. It is because man is "the true Shekinah" and "reflex of the All" that, Carlyle suggests

we claim a brotherhood with him, and so love to  
know his History and come into clearer and clearer  
union with all that he feels and says and does.<sup>58</sup>

As for the early Fathers, so for Carlyle "Your brother is your life".<sup>59</sup>

Brotherhood springs from the nature of man and is therefore one more ontological law for Carlyle. The self owes and is owed the



rights and privileges of a brother; the duty of brotherhood is an ontological imperative rather than a requirement of social morality.<sup>60</sup> The conversion of Teufelsdröckh in Sartor Resartus is primarily the refutation of the denial of ontology which had made duty social and man homeless and atomised. Hence hatred and self-assertion against the "Everlasting No" are the necessary preliminaries to the "Yes" of acceptance of the universe. The self which intuitively reality defeats, in this defiance of the "Ewige Nein", the ego which knows only "darkness and contradiction"<sup>61</sup>. Consequently it is not an egotist who emerges from this confrontation, but a self related and derived. Recognition of divine Fatherhood brings also brotherhood and integration with Creation :-

O Heavens, is it in very deed He, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee; that lives and loves in me? ... Man, with his so mad Wants and so mean Endeavours, had become the dearer to me; and even for his suffering and his sins, I now first named him Brother.<sup>62</sup>

The freedom Teufelsdröckh claims against the "Everlasting No" results in the typical Christian paradox of freedom in bondage. He has become free to recognise the inescapable bonds between men. Such liberation challenges contemporary versions of individualistic emancipation: man cannot be freed from his own nature, as Carlyle insists in Past and Present :-

The liberty, especially which has to purchase itself by social isolation, and each man standing separate from the other, having no business with him but a cash account, this is such a liberty as the Earth seldom saw; - as the Earth will not long put up with, recommend it how you may.<sup>63</sup>

Such liberty perverts man's nature and his society, creating a system of relationships parodic of its divine original. Even in Latter-Day

Pamphlets, in which little ontology remains, is found an affirmation of bonding :-

From the "Sacrament of Marriage" downwards, human beings used to be manifoldly related, one to another, and each to all; and there was no relationship among human beings, just or unjust, that had not its grievances and difficulties, its necessities on both sides to bear and forbear, ... But henceforth, be it known, we have changed all that, by favour of Heaven: "the voluntary principle" has come-up, which will itself do the business for us; and now let a new Sacrament, that of Divorce, which we call emancipation, ... be universally the order of the day.<sup>64</sup>

Marriage, an outward sign of the inner reality of relationship, is to be replaced by the visible mark of man's repudiation of any reality beyond individual perception and desire.

It is as a community of brothers that Carlyle proposes society as an organic unity. As brothers participating in one life

men cannot live isolated; we are all bound together, for mutual good or else for mutual misery, as living nerves in the same body. No highest man can separate himself from the lowest.<sup>65</sup>

In its originating Greek philosophy, the concept of "the little world of man" is complemented by that of the cosmos as the "great man", *Makanthropos*. The microcosms have their existence within the *Makanthropos*, constituting his body. Such a vision helped to shape the Christian doctrines of the Church as the Body of Christ and of the incorporation of the universe into Christ, as they were known to the Cambridge Platonists. Man's involvement with man in an organic unity is, in this conception of reality, a cosmic, rather than a social, fact. The social order may either express or pervert this unity but does not originate it. Carlyle, like Channing in his similar assertion of organic community, does not point forward to the discoveries of social science but back to the New Testament



and to patristic philosophical theology.

Carlyle, indeed, would seem to have regarded himself not as disclosing a new principle of relatedness but as reminding modern man of his ancient sin in rejecting human bonds. "Am I my brother's keeper?" was the question of Cain. Carlyle reminds his readers of Genesis in his tale of the Irish widow in Past and Present :-

"Behold, I am sinking bare of help; Ye must help me!  
I am your sister, bone of your bone; one God made  
us: Ye must help me!" They answer, "No, impossible;  
thou art no sister of ours". But she proves this  
sisterhood; her typhus-fever kills them; they  
actually were her brothers, though denying it.<sup>66</sup>

"Bone of your bone" and creature of God, man is a brother to man; the context and allusions to Genesis recall not only Creation but the almost immediate denial of brotherhood by Cain. Modern man is actualising his inheritance from Cain, bringing upon his entire community the "disease" of Cain's homelessness and alienation.

Brotherhood, however inescapable a reality, does yet depend on man for its fulfilment. The derived and related self has responsibility for responsive co-operation in the task of self-realisation. Man is called to labour in the bringing to birth of his own spirit. In Carlyle's understanding, egotism renders man unable to

beget his own so beautiful and virtuous self.<sup>67</sup>

The self which is impeded by ego, as it has been suggested in the discussion of innocence, is a potential, a divine energy, to be expressed in man. As with birth, co-operation is required between man's activity and the gift of life beyond his manufacture.

For the Cambridge Platonists also, following the thought of Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, spiritual selfhood requires the

bringing to birth of God within man, the breaking-forth of the image of Christ within him. To John Smith, the life of the good man is

nothing else but God's own breath within him, and an Infant Christ (if I may so use the expression) formed within his soul.<sup>68</sup>

The formation of this "Infant Christ" is dependent upon man's own responsiveness to what is given him :-

Every man is master of his own fortune under God;  
every man hath himself as he useth himself.<sup>69</sup>

Essence is to be realised in existence, as Daniélou remarks of the doctrine of Gregory of Nyssa :-

Spiritual birth is the result of a free choice, and we are thus in one sense our own parents, creating ourselves as we wish to be and shaping ourselves by our will according to our chosen model.<sup>70</sup>

This doctrine results in part from an interpretation of the "divine seed" mentioned in the First Epistle of St. Peter<sup>71</sup> as the "divine principle"<sup>72</sup> of Christ the word implanted in the heart of man. Central to the imagery of the Cambridge Platonists, Vaughan<sup>73</sup> and Traherne, it was also part of the traditional monastic theology which influenced English literature. One meaning of the pearl in the poem of that name is this pearl-seed of the divine self, Christ the pearl,<sup>74</sup> brought to birth in the consenting creature. Notions of co-creating the self, similar to those of Carlyle, pervade traditional Christian literature. Imagery of the work of spiritual pregnancy and birth were never far from the minds of teachers of the spiritual life. Gueric of Igny counselled his monks in these terms :-

I see by your gift, not one, but countless faithful souls, pregnant with this glorious seed; watch over



your work, lest any of it miscarry. And you, happy mothers of so blessed a child, care for yourselves, until Christ be formed in you.<sup>75</sup>

Similarly, for Meister Eckhart, often linked with Carlyle, the Nativity is not only a historical, but a necessary personal, event :-

Here in time we celebrate a holiday because the eternal birth which God the Father effects unceasingly in Eternity is the same birth he effected here in time, in human nature, ... But what benefit is that to me, if it does not occur also in me? What is all important is that it should happen in me.<sup>76</sup>

Christ the image of the Father and the principle of the self made in the image of God is an embryonic reality in man which man must foster. The gift requires effort.

Consideration of Carlyle's evident relationship to this traditional vision, with its motto "Become what you are", leads to a re-evaluation of his early doctrine of work. This has been too readily interpreted in the light of the (so-called) Protestant work ethic <sup>77</sup>, whereas, upon examination, it proves quite contrary to it. To the young Carlyle work is primarily another term for self-fulfilment. To "unfold yourself" is also

to work what thing you have faculty for.<sup>78</sup>

while the aim of work is not material but spiritual productivity; becoming takes precedence over doing :-

The man is the spirit he worked in; not what he did but what he became.<sup>79</sup>

For extreme Protestants, however, work was understood, not as self-realisation, but as a means of "worldly asceticism" and of self-assurance of election. Man was held accountable for his use of time and the earth, and success as a workman might indicate divine favour, but work could not shape a nature and destiny lying in the power and fore-ordination of God.

It is with the patristic tradition and its adherents that Carlyle's vision of man the worker finds its alliance, consequent upon the common vision of the responsive self. For Gregory of Nyssa work had the primary connotation of self-realisation. Man was not his own architect but he was the workman who actualised his architect's design, as Danielou translates :-

God, having given power to become like him, has allowed us to be the craftsmen of the likeness to him.<sup>80</sup>

In the contemplative, monastic tradition, prayer was work, liturgeia, while work was also understood as prayer.<sup>81</sup> All Godward activity was a means of restoring man to his likeness to God and shaping the earth to his intentions.<sup>82</sup> The God who is endless Rest is also the God of unceasing creative and sustaining activity: man's life as his image shares this quality of restful action in this approach to man, an approach shared explicitly by Carlyle in his myth of Paradise.<sup>83</sup>

To the inheritors of the Fathers in the seventeenth century, work was similarly an expression and fulfilment of man's nature. To Whichcote

No man is well without Action; nothing is more irksome than idleness. A man must use his Faculties and put himself upon Action. Therefore if he be alone and inactive he cannot be well.<sup>84</sup>

And for Traherne, the self must be continuously co-operating with God :-

It is an indelible principle of Eternal truth, that practice and exercise is the Life of all. Should God give you worlds and laws and treasures, and worlds upon worlds, and Himself also in the divinest manner, if you will be lazy you lose all. The soul is made for action and cannot rest till it be employed ... If, therefore, you would be happy, your life must be as full of operation as God of treasure.<sup>85</sup>



Here is found Carlyle's belief both that "Labour is life" and that  
A man perfects himself by working.<sup>86</sup>

It is not, however, only himself that is perfected by work  
but the earth also. Man the worker is also man the co-creator  
with God, who

bodies forth the form of Things Unseen<sup>87</sup>

The self is an incarnate and an incarnating being, once more  
following the pattern of an acting, creating God.

Carlyle's emphasis upon work and Time is therefore not a  
Calvinist doctrine but an affirmation of man's vocation to realise  
spirit which gives importance to his "ghostly" existence in Time.  
The true nature of man is made actual only in the brief span of  
earthly life; it is the imperative of becoming which leads Carlyle  
to admonish himself

Up and be doing! Hast thou not the strongest,  
grandest of all talents committed to thee, namely  
Life itself? O heaven! And it is momentarily  
rusting and wasting if thou use it not - Up and  
be doing!<sup>88</sup>

This is far from Benjamin Franklin's "Time is money", or from any  
more subtle approach to Time, like work, as an aspect of the demand  
for material productivity.<sup>89</sup> The brevity of life is urged that man  
might avoid the cardinal sin of sloth, the failure to live up to  
the glory of his nature.

Work opposes slothful reliance upon a wholly given, perfected,  
selfhood but it also withstands prideful independence and egotism.  
True work, in Carlyle's vision, unfolds what is and therefore denies  
man's pretensions to create himself and his world according to his  
individuality. The self who works will know that

Nature and Fact, not Red-Tape and Semblance are to this hour the basis of man's life.<sup>90</sup>

His time will not be occupied in the manufacture of the "clothes" which obscure man's essence. He escapes, therefore, the spiritual failure of the Dandy against whom it may be said, as to Shakespeare's Oswald, that

a tailor made thee!<sup>91</sup>

The prevalent "Dandyism" which Carlyle discerns in his society is a sham selfhood, a false working, in which man pretends to the status of designer as well as artisan. Like Swift's "nymph" prostitute, man is working to build an artificial self, and in this parodying of reality is dooming himself

never to become a person, to remain a Phantasm.<sup>92</sup>

The refusal to work co-creatively produces the evil of non-being.

Carlyle's early vision of the self is, in its essentials, clearly that of patristic and mystical Christianity. However, as it is also a "demythologised" version of orthodoxy, rejecting the historical Christianity from which it arises, it has been tempting for students of Carlyle to dismiss the traditional elements of his vision and to enrol him among the pantheists or the moderns.<sup>93</sup>

It has been emphasised frequently in this discussion that the doctrine of man as a God-participating intended for theosis makes a firm distinction between Deity and man's divinity. Man is a creature made for receiving the gift of God-likeness and not one inherently "of the same substance with the Father". So, too, for Carlyle man is recipient of the gift of Life, a spiritual being but not himself the source of Life and Spirit. His is not the pantheist substance-mysticism attributed (most probably wrongly<sup>94</sup>)



to Eckhart, for man is not the water-drop lost in the ocean but  
 a floating speck in the illimitable ocean of the All,  
 yet in that ocean; indissoluble portion thereof;  
 partaking of its infinite tendencies.<sup>95</sup>

The "speck" remains itself while participating in the "All", just as the microcosm retains its identity in the Makanthropos. The concept is that of orthodox panentheism, of all things finding their existence in God.

Despite his rejection of the "old clothes" of Christianity, neither is Carlyle an adherent of the modern Religion of Humanity developed by Feuerbach, which advanced the disintegration of the concept of selfhood. In Feuerbach, as in his English translator, George Eliot, there is no concept of the self as person, as a distinct hypostasis.<sup>96</sup> The true self is an abstracted Humanity; each man is less than a self and is to be completed only through incorporation into this collective selfhood. There is therefore a choice only between egotism and immersion in a collective good. Self-denial is demanded not for the liberation of truly personal life, but in order to minimise the personal for the sake of the idealised whole.

Carlyle, however, has been shown to propose an exactly contrary vision. Total perfection lies fully in each man as a "reflex of the All" and a dwelling for the glory of deity. Consequently the perfection of society arises not from submergence of man in an abstract, Heroism, but from the development of each man as a hero creating "a whole world of Heroes".<sup>97</sup> Carlyle's defence of personal selfhood is irreconcilable with the radical reinterpretation of the self proposed by Feuerbach.

Carlyle was not, therefore, secularising "the old theological notion of a divine spark"<sup>98</sup> in order to retain his optimism, but re-sacralising what his contemporaries were rendering secular. Indeed, it is our present ability to consider Carlyle as a secularist which indicates his relative failure in these early works, for the purpose of Descendental Transcendentalism was not one of re-defining the theophanic in secular terms but of abolishing the secular. It is because modern man now inhabits the desacralised universe combatted by Carlyle that he finds difficulty in discussing the divinity of man in terms giving substance to that notion.<sup>99</sup> The ontological basis of Carlyle's early version of the self may be demonstrated further, however, by exploring his relationship to contemporary orthodox theology. It is in the light of the Victorian renewal of the doctrine of the Incarnation that Carlyle's integration with the religious thought of his age may be best discerned.

## II

As the discussion of Dickens has shown, Anglican theology in the Victorian age was also concerned with a defence of the holiness of man and of his essentially social nature. Carlyle, like Dickens, was therefore associated in his thought and intention with those very theologians who attracted his contempt.

In common once more with Dickens, however, Carlyle frequently misunderstood the theological movements of his day and so his



criticisms obscure the existence of the common ground between them. The Tractarians were seen, quite wrongly, as breaking the beast-godhood tension central to his conception of man, as a letter to J. S. Mill reveals :-

In all History, I think Puseyism seeks its fellow! The poor old shovel-hat beginning, at this hour of the day, to assert from the house-tops: I either come out of Heaven and am a god-like miracle and mystery, or else an unfortunate old felt, demanding to be flung to the beggars! - It is the fatallest alternative I ever heard of for the Church of England.<sup>100</sup>

The Tractarians were, on the contrary, keenly conscious both of man's high destiny resulting from the Incarnation, and of his departure from original godliness. While the major emphasis was on the full regeneration of man in baptism, there was also acute sensitivity to his degeneration, to the extent that Maurice was dissuaded from the Movement.

Although the Tractarians' understanding of the self was fully, explicitly, Christological, they shared with Carlyle belief in an "essential affinity" between God and man arising from Creation, for as Cross says of the Incarnation

this doctrine rested upon belief in an essential affinity between God and man. It held that the moral and spiritual law which is rooted in the being of God was at the same time the principle of the ideal human life here on earth.<sup>101</sup>

And their Christology, although emphasising the dependence of the full restoration of the divine image of God in man upon the person of Christ, did not lead them to appropriate the totality of goodness and godliness to the Christian. Pusey held that

There is a difference between good and bad heathen, people acting up to their light and those who do not. And God, no doubt, for Christ's sake, who died for the whole world, accepts those who act up to the light which He gives them.<sup>102</sup>

Although opposed to purely natural theology, the Tractarians saw Christianity as the final and culminating, but not the exclusive, revelation of the divine, Keble following the Fathers in accepting Platonism as the Gospel to the Greeks.<sup>103</sup> The divine image, although much defaced, remains in man<sup>104</sup> and so the soul, or self, is ever, a divine thing, sick through sin.<sup>105</sup>

Carlyle and the Tractarians may thus have differed regarding the means by which man may be called "indefeasibly divine"<sup>106</sup> but they were at one in endeavouring to restore a vision of man's participation in God which allowed equal reality to both orders of being. The Tracts deprecated a religion of Redemption which ignored its relationship to the restoration of mankind, in which

the Incarnation is ... very commonly looked upon in reference only to the Passion of Our Lord, and as a means of His Vicarious Suffering; not as if it had any reference to us, to the sanctification of our nature, because He had "taken the manhood into God".<sup>107</sup>

Baptism is vital as the means of realising this sanctification of the person, given so that

as a living seal stamped upon our souls by the Spirit of Life, and bearing the impress of the Divine Nature, it would renew continually in our souls the image of Him who created us, our Father, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, make us more and more wholly His.<sup>108</sup>

The Tractarians knew, with Carlyle and the Caroline divines, that divine gifts require realisation if the self is to become its full nature.

The apophatic nature of Carlyle's thought, however, tended to widen the apparent gulf between him and the Tractarians. Talk of God as Person was seen by him to become too easily anthropomorphism,



and insistence upon systematic doctrinal formulation, the expression of egotism. That the Oxford Movement was suspected of such egotism is clear from his rhyme upon Pusey in Past and Present :-

The Builder of the Universe was wise,  
He planned all souls, all systems, planets, particles:  
The Plan He shaped all Worlds and Aeons by,  
Was - Heavens - thy small nine-and-thirty Articles.<sup>109</sup>

System, as a human artefact, was as much feared by Carlyle, as by Dickens and Channing.

It was a fear, however, not unknown to Pusey, who was keenly aware of the temptation to restrict God to the limits of the human ego. Concern for dogma was accompanied by sensitivity to the comparative ignorance and blindness of man. The following quotation from one of Pusey's manuscripts is long, but is necessary to explicate a viewpoint which united the orthodox theologian to his often heterodox critic :-

God and His Ways and His Nature we can of course know but in part, and our highest knowledge must be our indistinctest; for that which is most elevated must most surpass our comprehension; ... its very proportions we can only discern here and there as we see "parts of His ways" bearing one upon another; as a whole we see nothing, can judge of nothing; ... Because we are of God, we have some sense for beholding the things of God; but because we are "in the flesh", and "no man can see God and live", the light but parts from between the clouds, lest we should be struck down and blinded. Whatever we gain in distinctness we lose in depth; ... The soul, through that which is divine in it, just putteth forth itself, and half seeth things invisible, but cannot declare or embody them in words. St. Paul's highest revelations and visions were unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter. This is the case with our whole creed; by striving over much at clearness, and practically admitting only what they could make, as they thought, intelligible to themselves, men have narrowed it far below that of the ancient Church.<sup>110</sup>

Both opposed to the egotism of human systems of rationality, the Tractarians and Carlyle shared also the vision of brotherhood. As the discussion of Dickens and the Tractarians demonstrated, the affirmation of brotherhood was implicit in the social doctrine of the Church as the Body of Christ. Furthermore, their renewed emphasis upon the Holy Trinity reawakened sensitivity to the social nature both of God and the Man made in his image. Consequently, as in his introductory quotation to this chapter, R. M. Benson, Pusey's pupil, is found condemning, as strongly as Carlyle, the life of isolation within the ego. For Benson, just as for Carlyle

Thy person is a relative being and thou hast no  
existence save when thou actest for others ...  
It is the law of our nature that our life is  
personal, relative, communicating all that it has ...  
Community is the life of God.<sup>111</sup>

Benson understood God to be continually renouncing himself, "breaking the bounds of His Nature"<sup>112</sup>, as in the kenosis of the Incarnation. Man, his image, was similarly, therefore, an ever-outpouring being, living on behalf of others as well as in relationship and derivation.

Vicariousness and self-surrender are likewise characteristics of the true, heroic self for Carlyle. Selfhood is found in servanthship and in the sacrifice of life. In his early vision, the King is he who takes on himself the weakness of others, in the manner of Christ :-

Is not he their servant, ... who can suffer from  
them and for them; bear the burden their spindle  
limbs totter and stagger under; and, in virtue of  
being their servant, governs them, leads them out  
of weakness into strength, out of defeat into  
Victory.<sup>113</sup>

The vicariousness of God in the Incarnation also underlies the



vision of manhood as a kingship marked by true condescension and self-abandonment :-

Every noble crown is, and on Earth will be forever,  
a crown of thorns. Why was our life given us if  
not that we should manfully give it? ... Descend,  
O Donothing Pomp; ... expose thyself to feel what  
wretches feel, and how to cure it! ... Descend  
thou; undertake this horrid, living chaos of  
Ignorance and Hunger, weltering round thy feet;  
say "I will heal it or I will die foremost in it!  
Such is verily the law, everywhere and everywhen  
a man has to "pay with his life" ... Thou wilt  
never sell thy life nor any part of thy life in  
a satisfactory manner. Give it, like a royal heart,  
let the price be nothing; thou hast then, in a  
certain sense, got all for it.<sup>114</sup>

Here lies the ultimate paradox of self-denial: the man who "dies" to ego discovers that the self thus liberated must continue, because of its nature, to be lost or put to death.

In this concept of the self as both dynamic and kenotic Carlyle, like Benson<sup>115</sup>, is close to the teaching of F. D. Maurice. To these three Victorians, the "law of sacrifice" describes no external ordinance but an inescapable fact of man's nature. It is in this belief in such immutable laws of being that Carlyle is seen most clearly to be allied with contemporary Christian orthodoxy.

Such an alliance with Maurice, as with Pusey, was obscured by Carlyle's impatience with credal formulations. Maurice, too, was suspected of substituting a human Church for a creating God, as the original version of his rhyme against Pusey suggests

Thirty-Nine English Articles  
Ye wondrous little particles,  
Did God shape His universe really by You?  
In that case I swear it,  
And solemnly declare it  
This logic of Maurice's is true.<sup>116</sup>

Maurice, however, recognised that in the Church "religion" had replaced God, and like Carlyle desired to reinstate God as the central

fact of man's existence.<sup>117</sup> Hence there is in Maurice, the theologian of grace, a Natural Supernaturalism akin to that of Carlyle. Man, naturally innocent and capable of God, is neither innocent nor godly in his own strength as an independent being; he is only realised in utter reliance upon God,<sup>118</sup> just as Carlyle's man must know God in every breath and thought.

The discussion of Dickens has already demonstrated, furthermore, the equivalent in the thought of Maurice of Carlyle's "beast-godhood". Man, who knows that in him is

that which is not sin, which is the very opposite of sin.<sup>119</sup>

knows also that he is involved nevertheless in sin, in a condition that contradicts intuitions of innocence, as Maurice insists to a hypothetical opponent :-

That sense of sin, intricately, inseparably interwoven with the very fibres of their being, of a Sin which they cannot get rid of without destroying themselves, does haunt those very men who you say take no account of it.<sup>120</sup>

His colleague Kingsley likewise preached a view of pneumatic selfhood, in which the potential for bestiality was accepted, and grace conceived as the enabler of Nature :-

The Church bids you say, Yes; I have a human nature in me; and what nature is that but the nature which the Son of God took on himself; and redeemed and justified it, and glorified it, sitting for ever now in his human nature at the right hand of God, the Son of Man who is in heaven? Yes, I am a man; and what is it to be a man, but to be the image and glory of God? ... you have divine grace - that supernatural grace and Spirit of God by which man stood in Paradise, and by neglecting which he fell ... Obey that Spirit then, and be men!<sup>121</sup>

For Maurice and Kingsley this vision of the self was intimately related to their defence of the worker through Christian Socialism.



In Maurice's theology the worker is primarily a brother and a co-creator with God in revealing the divine reality of Creation. The Eucharist is the sign of this unity in Christ the Brother, a sign consisting of the fruits of human labour. In preaching of this Eucharist, then, Maurice reminded his congregation not only of brotherhood in God and in earth, but of the linking factor of work :-

Has it struck you that we are not merely the countrymen of Bacon, Shakespeare or Milton, but also of some millions of men, living on our own soil and in our own day, speaking our own tongue, who work with their hands and who have besides those hands, senses which converse with this earth, sympathies that should unite them each to each, spirits that converse with God? ... you can, if you will, say to them, one and all, "Brothers, here are the pledges that you have a great Elder Brother"<sup>122</sup>

For work is the means of unfolding God's intention for the earth, just as the Eucharist reminds man of God's intention for the earthiness of man. Work implicitly, is co-operation in the reintegration of earth with spirit, requiring that men

till the earth and subdue it for God

so that

in due time it will be all God wants it to be.<sup>123</sup>

The Christian Socialist Tracts produced similar views of the worker as the vicegerent of a creative God. Man's capacity for shaping and using the potential of the earth becomes destructive only when he loses sight of the primacy of God :-

the more the powers of nature grow upon our opening sense, do we not see the more that they are powers destined for a service, apt instruments of all good in the hands of those who understand and wisely use them, only destructive to those who mistake them, distrust them, play the slave before them, forget man's holy mission as King of God's earth under his Father's eye?<sup>124</sup>

The destiny of the theophanic self cannot be separated from his unfolding of the earth from which he came, in Christian Socialist thought, as in that of the younger Carlyle.

Maurice shared with Carlyle not only a belief in a divine Reality underlying phenomena but also in man's existence in Eternity. Man must learn to discover his selfhood as dependent upon eternal Reality and not upon the transient products of time. As Carlyle agreed, Fact must be distinguished from Semblance :-

I maintain that Time and Eternity co-exist here.  
The difficulty is to recognise the Eternal State  
under our temporal conditions; not to lose  
Eternity in Time.<sup>125</sup>

Hence there is in Maurice and the Christian Socialists, as in Carlyle, an inherent conservatism. The work of man is the realisation of, and obedience to, unchanging, if hidden, Reality. Society must change in accordance with the immutable law of relationship and not with new ideas about political and social organisation. Fidelity rather than innovation is the key concept, and any political or economic theory must be opposed which betrays brotherhood. Social justice is thus to be sought

not by lonely individual men, but by men as  
brethren and fellow-workers ...

who assert that

... to pretend that any society can ever be  
founded upon competition is about as fearful  
a mockery as to say that a tortured wretch  
rests upon the stake that impales him.<sup>126</sup>

A "free" economy contradicts the bonding of the human organism.<sup>127</sup>

In the early thought of Carlyle have been found concepts characteristic of Tractarian and Christian Socialist doctrines which proposed divine immanence and initiative as the pre-requisite



for human transcendence. The common aim of such thought was the redemption of man from secularity. Carlyle was a man of his age in attempting this redemption but he was, paradoxically, also of his age and of the "world" he rejected, in capitulating to the secular vision of his erstwhile adversaries. This reversal of belief and alliance is the concern of the concluding section of this enquiry.

### III

The vision of selfhood in the later thought of Carlyle may be considered as a form of idolatry, in which the divinity of the self is appropriated to the ego of individuals. The Hero, originally an example of the realised self of man the species, becomes the single Temple of the Shekinah, while his divine gift becomes increasingly equated with his psychological endowments. There is a movement from Man to men and from ontology to psychology.

This development in Carlyle's thought has been understood as an expression of his own egotistic self-inflation<sup>128</sup> or of his native Calvinist belief in election.<sup>129</sup> However, it is possible to consider change as arising from within Carlyle's original position and as illustrative of tendencies within the traditional vision. Furthermore, the conflation of pneuma with psyche, the appropriation of self to the ego, may be considered characteristic of the functioning personality of man as a species, rather than as an expression of

idiosyncratic needs. Carlyle, it may be suggested, fell prey to the human disease against which he had made such eloquent attack.

The Platonic element in the concept of pneumatic selfhood, Carlyle's sensitivity to which has already been remarked, tends towards an isolation of mind, nous, to the few, making capacity for God a property of individual men and not of manhood. It was the specifically Christian understanding of Platonism in the light of the Incarnation which at once restricted "nous" as actual deity to the Incarnate Christ, and widened it, as a reflection of God in men, to the entire race. The discarding of the historical and Christological basis of the patristic vision may thus facilitate a reversion to the Platonic stance.

The pre-Romantic version of pneumatic selfhood available to Carlyle also revealed a Platonic tendency and an uncertainty about the nature of the gifted being. Young's advice to the poet to

Reverence thyself, for that within thee is a god.<sup>130</sup>

marked the genius as a graceful being, a recipient of god-likeness, but limited this gracefulness to the man endowed with particular qualities of the psyche. Only the poet could participate in the divine.

At the same time, however, awareness of

mute inglorious Miltons.<sup>131</sup>

among pre-Romantic poets, suggested that the distinction between men lay in the capacity to articulate, rather than to receive, the gift of poetic vision. Such a confusion is, indeed, found in Carlyle's treatment of the genius, implying his inheritance of the difficulties of his tradition.



Moreover, even the fully Christian version of pneumatic selfhood manifests a similar tendency to isolate and appropriate self to the ego of the few. Saints in the Orthodox and Catholic churches (and Carlyle's hero is akin to the saint<sup>132</sup>) developed away from their initial status. In early Christianity, the saint was an icon of Christ and one in whom the gift of participation in God had been brought to fruition. As the veneration of saints intensified, however, the individual saint became a separate repository of deified manhood, over against the rest of mankind. The humanity of the saint alone had been taken into godhood; the property of the self was identified with particular natures, that is, with individual egos and their gifts.<sup>133</sup>

Among later Protestant "Enthusiastic" sects it was with relative frequency that one of their leaders was declared to be another Christ, a special Incarnation.<sup>134</sup> Once again, the concept of man as a theophany<sup>135</sup> was applied to the personality of the few, weakening belief in one universal human nature. Emphasis on the self as person, unique hypostasis of a common essence, became emphasis on individuality and on individually created natures. "Being" and "personality" began to be synonymous.<sup>136</sup>

While this separation of the divine from the human partly arose from the philosophical influences upon this vision of selfhood, human psychology appears to be a further factor. Both the Gestalt and the Object Relations schools of psychology suggest difficulty for the human mind in perceiving distinctions as existing within unity. In Gestalt theory, the mind interprets distinctions within a whole as a pattern of figure and background, as demonstrated by

the black and white fishes of the Tao symbol.<sup>137</sup> In Object Relations theory, the mind tends consistently towards the "splitting" of good and bad, pleasurable and painful, in an inability to tolerate their co-existence within one entity. Popular illustrations of this tendency are the fairy-tale figures of the good mother and wicked step-mother, or the good father or king and the wicked uncle.<sup>138</sup> These observed tendencies of the human mind would render the beast-godhood tension inherently difficult to maintain and would make the designation of particular personalities as innately divine or bestial a permanent likelihood.

Moreover, the distinction between self and ego appears to be in itself another, almost insupportable, tension for the ego, which is inclined either to limit reality to its perceptions or to gather all things to itself as the origin of reality.<sup>139</sup> The mystical core of most major religions is centred, indeed, upon this human incapacity to recognise reality as independent and transcending of the ego.<sup>140</sup> Carlyle's early attempt at the "redemption" of man and his own later "fall" are well illustrated in the following summary of a modern theologian and student of Jung :-

Generically, - and with all the weakness inherent in a generic statement - evil consists in an infinite variety of alienation between the conscious ego of man and the total self in which he has his place in God's world. And so, generically, salvation consists in the overcoming of this protean alienation. But even apart from the Christological understanding, this generic statement is hedged, for the wise practitioner of Jungian theory, by an almost despairing caution: he who comes to some sense of what is called the self comes under an almost insuperable temptation to claim this realisation "for himself", to appropriate it in terms of the ego.<sup>141</sup>

These tendencies towards "splitting" and "appropriation in



terms of the ego", through the conflation of pneuma and psyche, are evident from the beginning of Carlyle's career. They appear as confusions and contradictions of thought, rather than as settled convictions, in his consideration of the divinity of the genius. In Past and Present genius, like primitive sanctity, is a sign of the glory of the race. It is

the clearer presence of God Most High in a man.  
Dim, potential, in all men: in this man it has  
become clear, actual<sup>142</sup>

When discussed in Sartor Resartus, however, genius is an endowment of personality, an individual attribute rather than a faculty of man qua man :-

It is maintained by Helvetius and his set that an infant of genius is quite the same as any other infant ...

... "With which opinion", cries Teufelsdröckh, "I should as soon agree as with this other, that an acorn might, by favourable or unfavourable influences of soil and climate, be nursed into a cabbage, or the cabbage-seed into an oak."<sup>143</sup>

This distinction between the varying gifts of the personality is unhappy, in the light of Carlyle's total vision, because of the suggestion of differences in species between men of contrasting endowments. The link between oak and cabbage in their belonging to the vegetable world suggests for men no greater link between the genius and the ordinary mind than that of animality, "Plant" may include the variety of vegetable life, but "man" cannot incorporate an entire category of mammals. As yet in Sartor Resartus this belief in distinguishing categories does not over-ride conviction about essential manhood. Still

the meanest Tinker that sees with eyes  
is also

an inscrutable, venerable Mystery.<sup>144</sup>

However, the inner contradictions of Sartor Resartus combined with the definition of genius in Past and Present do indicate a basic flaw in the early thought of Carlyle which prepared for his later reversal of belief. Genius is a revelation of manhood; genius is an attribute of personality from which state the non-genius is forever barred. It is only a short step to the conclusion that only the genius, or the hero into which he is transformed, is a man. That is, there are already grounds for rejecting the early conviction that every "Sanspotato" is a Temple of the Shekinah, holding out the possibility of

A whole world of Heroes; a world not of Flunkies  
where no Hero-King can reign.<sup>145</sup>

This rejection becomes explicit in Carlyle's development of the theory of the Hero, in which "Divine Intellect" is restricted to the hero-king alone. From being the first among equals, a man whose gifts of personality enable his leadership of those sharing with him realised participation in God, he becomes the sole image of divinity, the only man. In 1850 the nation needs, not universal heroism, but

some sort of king, made in the image of God.<sup>146</sup>

The "image of God" now describes not the self of man, but the personality of gifted, individual men. And the distinctions between men, once attributed to the "clothing" of individuality, are now regarded as a matter of "nature" :-

Whom Heaven has made a slave, no parliament of men  
nor power that exists on earth can render free ...  
Heroism, manful wisdom, is not his.<sup>147</sup>



The "slave-soul" is now by nature incapable of possessing the identifying marks of manhood, heroism and intellectual perception. In the exaltation of the hero Carlyle is not, therefore, developing a theory of the Superman. It is, on the contrary, in his early works that the true Superman appears, when Man himself is understood as created for transcendence of his creatureliness. In the later works, the elite of Heroes does not emerge as ontologically superior to Man, but as Man himself: manhood and divinity are concepts removed from the totality of the race and restricted to the few, because of the conflation of the pneumatic and the psychic.

This limitation of manhood in the later works is effected partly through the manipulative use of the term "Human Intellect" as a synonym for "Human Worth". "Intellect" is contrasted with "Human Stupidity", with the inevitable suggestion of an opposition between rational intelligence and dullness;<sup>148</sup> the difference between the spiritual and the psychological is blurred in this way and it is inferred that only the intelligent few are worthy, for the multitude has long been acknowledged as stupid.<sup>149</sup> It is now a question

If the soul is born with divine intelligence<sup>150</sup>  
(my emphasis)

and although this intelligence, "God's Light", has to be increased among men it is, logically, no longer a matter within their power or choice. Man can no longer "reverence himself" and unfold his own worth for worth is no longer innate in all. Men must learn to recognise who are to be revered as selves, and require Carlyle's warning :-

Woe to the people that no longer venerates, as the emblem of God himself, the aspect of Human Worth; that no longer knows what human worth and unworth is.<sup>151</sup>

The concept of a universal, worthy, intellectual nature has now disintegrated. Nature refers not to an ontological reality independent of the psyche, but to the identity of that psyche as it is determined by inheritance and constitution. And so the notion of aristocracy, once deplored by Carlyle, is rehabilitated as meritocracy :-

I can trace the father, and the son, and the grandson, and the family stamp is quite legible upon each of them. So that it goes for a great deal, the hereditary principle, - in Government, as in other things: and it must be again recognised as soon as there is any fixity in things.<sup>152</sup>

It is in this later attitude that Carlyle adumbrates modern approaches to selfhood as either functioning personality or the product of psycho-physiology, the latter, indeed, involving a secularised version of predestination.<sup>153</sup>

The stupidity which is the opposite of "Intellect" or "Worth" is also "Devil's Darkness".<sup>154</sup> Consequently stupidity is related to badness, ungodliness, and, just as intelligence is a matter of birth, so is goodness. The tension between "beast" and "god" is destroyed; some men cannot but become beasts, others divine selves. The Flunky or the valet-soul arises not from rejection of the true selfhood of man but from his original creation. There are good natures and bad natures, the spiritual and the psychological or moral have merged. Once more an implicit tendency in the early works has become an explicit principle. Goodness and badness in Past and Present are both polar opposites and a matter of choice :-

All religion was here to remind us, better or worse, of what we already know, better or worse, of the quite infinite difference there is between a Good man and a Bad; to bid us love infinitely the one, abhor and avoid infinitely the other- strive to be the one and not the other.<sup>155</sup>



The potential beast-godhood implicit in the possibility of striving to realise one element of the tension is yet overshadowed by the emphasis on these distinct categories "good man" and "bad man". The tendency to "split" and to confuse psyche and pneuma is evident. By the time of Latter-Day Pamphlets the possibility of choice has disappeared: the wicked "flunky" or "valet-soul" is wicked by nature.

The "law of the world", as a consequence of this change from a spiritual to a psychological concept of man, is no longer that of brotherhood between selves made in the image of God. In the later writings (post-1850) the law governing relationships is the subjection of the non-human, stupid and bad beings to those possessed of divine manhood. It is no longer possible to use the term "self" with its previous meaning in reference to either category, for the image denied to one is reinterpreted through its appropriation by the other. Consequently, self-realisation cannot be an absolute good in these later works. That only the good may become themselves replaces the law of self-unfolding :-

that a bad man be free - permitted to unfold himself in his particular way, is ... the fatalest curse you could inflict on him; curse and nothing else, to him and all his neighbours.<sup>156</sup>

This development away from selfhood to a vision of individuality is accompanied by an apparent, retrogressive Shakespearean influence upon Carlyle's analysis of kingship and human nature. The early thought of Carlyle reflects the influence of the great tragedies in which the nature of human nature is explored and man is seen to transcend his offices and attributes. Man and his "lendings" are of central concern. However, a later work, Frederick the Great

reveals the Shakespeare of the Histories, centred upon the role of kingship. Frederick's renunciation of himself is not denial for the sake of self-realisation, but a real amputation of his capacity for relationship and creativity to meet the demands of his office.<sup>157</sup> No longer is kingship the demonstration of the identity of the self as a sacrificial servant. In order to be king, Frederick must allow others to be sacrificed on his behalf and to make sacrifices of others. It is this suppression and repudiation of the characteristics of man which give to the biography its predominant tone of harshness. Frederick fashions his own version of himself and of manhood according to the demands of the time as well as of his office. The self has become completely a being of time, just as he has become psychological. As such, he is also transformed from an elusive, living energy to an object capable of making and possessing himself. Frederick's activity as a soldier would appear emblematic of this change from being an outpouring force to being a self-protective object, demonstrating dramatically the question raised in a late essay Two Hundred and Fifty Years Ago :-

How can you be a Self, and not have tendencies to self-defence!<sup>158</sup>

Just as selfhood has become a possession of the psyche, so the law of brotherhood has become subject to the judgement of the psyche. The law is no longer ontological but psychological, dependent upon estimates of moral fitness. In Latter-Day Pamphlets Carlyle declares

In brotherhood with the base and foolish I, for one, do not mean to live. Not in brotherhood with them was life hitherto worth much to me; in pity, in hope not yet quite swallowed in disgust - otherwise in enmity that must last through eternity, in unappeasable aversion shall I have to live with these! Brotherhood? No, be the thought far from me -



They are Adam's children, - alas, yes, I well remember that and never shall forget it; hence this rage and sorrow. But they have gone over to the dragons; they have quitted their Father's house and set-up with the Old Serpent; till they return how can they be brothers? They are enemies, deadly to themselves, and to me and to you, till then; till then, while hope yet lasts, I will treat them as brothers fallen insane; when hope has ended, with tears grown sacred and with wrath grown sacred, I will cut them off in the name of God.<sup>159</sup>

Carlyle demands "divorce" from the bad and the stupid who, according to his own later convictions, do not have the choice of virtue and wisdom. To claim them as strayed brothers is simply a means of adding magnanimity and momentousness to the act of divorce, by implying pain and horror for its perpetrator. The inauthenticity of this claim is suggested not only by the impossible premise of choice. It is evident in the basically impressionistic reference to "Adam's children" as the innocent, for it was precisely Adam who "went over to the Old Serpent". The children of Adam are, by definition, implicated in disobedience and potentiality for evil : Carlyle chooses to ignore the hitherto-acknowledged beast-godhood of the race and the dual solidarity within man's brotherhood.

Furthermore, the final clause suggests the non-existence of the claimed hope: a hope that predicts its own certain end is not properly hope at all. The decision to repudiate his fellows and revise the concept of brotherhood is spuriously ennobled by these inferences of a long-suffering inner conflict.

Man's solidarity in a world of ontological relationship is therefore replaced in the thought of Carlyle after 1850 by the "voluntary principle" previously abhorred.<sup>160</sup> In his last essays and addresses man is no longer presented as a responsive and

related co-creator, but as an organiser, choosing his associations and denying the pain of a living world. The person and his community are objects which may be subdued beneath systems for human "betterment". The king is now the social engineer who can force men into improved shape from the outside. In his Inaugural Address to Edinburgh University the ethos of Frederick the Great prevails :-

I should say there is nothing in the world you can conceive so difficult, prima facie, as that of getting a set of men together as soldiers ... you gather them up, give them very severe and sharp drill; and by bullying and drilling and compelling ... they do learn what is necessary to learn; and there is your man in red coat, a trained soldier a piece of an animated machine ... Very many things could be regimented into this mute system; ... For the saving of human labour, and the avoidance of human misery, the effect would be incalculable.<sup>161</sup>

No longer a sacramental sign of the life beyond him, man meets man not as a microcosm but as a mechanical, man-made part of a man-made whole. Labour is now only to be avoided, for there can be no true self-unfolding in a world devoid of spiritual selfhood. Misery is to be overcome not by means of its endurance by the self-dispossessing man but by a reduction in the concept of the human.

Carlyle ends his literary career in complete agreement with the secular thought of his age. In his works is found not only the reiteration of a traditional vision of selfhood but a demonstration of the difficulties inherent in a vision which unites those concepts man perpetually puts asunder and sunders those he habitually unites.



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17. Whichcote, Aphorisms  
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39. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit., III, Characteristics, 2.
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41. Froude, First forty years, op. cit., II, 87.



42. Vaughan, op. cit., pp.138 & 158.
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48. Whichcote, Benjamin, Works, II, 237, ibid., p.15.
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56. See  
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57. Carlyle, Sartor resartus, op. cit., bk.I, ch.10, p.51.  
To Whichcote "man has a secret genius to humanity; a biass (sic) that inclines him to a regard of all his own kind".

## Works IV, 212

quoted in

de Pauley, op. cit., p.16.

And Campagnac, op. cit., pp.154-5, remarks of the thought of the lesser known Richard Cumberland :-

In the eyes of this natural philosopher, a man is a child of the heavenly father, and more than a social animal - in fact, a member of a rational kingdom having but one solitary end, the good of the whole which is necessarily inclusive of the good of all the parts.

The interiority of the Cambridge Platonists was inseparable from a vision of community.

58. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit., III, Boswell's Life of Johnson, 88-89.

59. Allchin, A. M. Solitude and communion. Papers on the hermit life.

Oxford, S.L.G. Press, Fairacres Publication 66, 1977, p.4.

60. Discussions of duty as perceived by Victorian moralists generally begin from the position of those who, like George Eliot, sought for a basis of morality outside a theistic ontology. Another tendency in Victorian thought is revealed and summarised, however, by the following extract from The true basis of morals by Father George Congreve, S.S.J.E. :-

"Cursed is he that curseth his father or mother".

The reverence and duty of children towards their parents here enforced is not merely an obligation externally imposed; it is an intuitive natural obligation, because man's nature as parent or as child is a reflection of the Godhood. Your fatherhood, who have children, is the reflection in your nature of the Fatherhood of God in the Blessed Trinity. Your relationship to your parents is the reflection in your nature of the relationship of the Only Begotten Son to the Eternal Father. You are thus individually made in the image of the Blessed Trinity.





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However in the light of Vaughan's patristic heritage, it may also be related to the symbolism of the divine seed, its fertilisation and gestation employed in monastic, mystical theology.
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76. Quoted in Kelley, op. cit., pp.76-77. See the consideration of Carlyle's possible knowledge of Eckhart in  
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79. Carlyle, Sartor resartus, op. cit., bk.II, ch.10, p.161.
80. Daniélou, op. cit., p.28.
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83. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit. I,  
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138. For discussion of Object Relations theory in relation to  
world-view, see  
Suttie, Ian D.                             The origins of love and hate  
London, Kegan Paul, 1935.

139. It may be argued that the difficulties for the human psyche of a unitive vision of self questions its validity as an interpretation of reality. This thesis, however, aims to study this version of selfhood as it is found in literature, religious thought and human experience rather than to analyse, philosophically or psychologically, its tenability.
140. For discussion see  
Happold, op. cit., pp.98-100, 106-110.  
Merton, Thomas Merton on Zen  
London, Sheldon Press, 1976, passim.
141. Moore, Sebastian The Crucified is no stranger  
London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1977, p.11.
142. Carlyle, Past and present, op. cit., p.292.
143. Carlyle, Sartor resartus, op. cit., bk.II, ch.2, pp.74-5.
144. ibid, bk.I, ch.10, p.53.
145. Carlyle, Past and present, op. cit., p.35.
146. Carlyle, Latter-day pamphlets, op. cit., Parliaments, p.214.
147. ibid., p.249.
148. ibid., Downing Street, p.113.
149. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit. III,  
Boswell's Life of Johnson, 88.
150. Carlyle, Latter-day pamphlets, op. cit., Stump-orator, p.185.
151. ibid., Model prisons, p.75.
152. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit., IV,  
Inaugural address, 2 April, 1866, 464.
153. See discussion of this question in  
Taylor, Gordon Rattray The natural history of the mind  
London, Secker and Warburg, 1979.



154. Carlyle, Latter-day pamphlets, op. cit., Downing Street, p.113.
155. Carlyle, Past and present, op. cit., p.227.
156. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit., V,  
Shooting Niagara and after?, 8
157. See Cazamian, op. cit., p.44.
158. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit., IV, Two  
hundred and fifty years ago, 384.
159. Carlyle, Latter-day pamphlets, op. cit., Model prisons, p.66.
160. The contradictions and confusions of Carlyle's thought emerge  
most clearly in Latter-day pamphlets which may be considered to  
mark the end of Carlyle's patristically-influenced period.
161. Carlyle, Critical and miscellaneous essays, op. cit., IV,  
Inaugural address, 176-177.

## CHAPTER FOUR



TURF AND TOWERS : THE SELF AND THE INCARNATION IN THE  
POETRY OF ROBERT BROWNING

But we all with open face beholding as in a glass  
 the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same  
 image from glory to glory.<sup>1</sup>

Our very diminutions are sent us to augment our glory.<sup>2</sup>

In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below  
 to live is to change and to be perfect is to have  
 changed often.<sup>3</sup>

I

The Incarnation is commonly accepted as a central theme in the work of Browning, a theme which finds its artistic embodiment in poetry intended to portray the infinite within the finite. Consequently, the relationship between the beliefs and the poetic methods of Browning has been the primary focus of modern study.<sup>4</sup> Less attention has therefore been paid by recent scholars to the vision of selfhood which arises from the poet's religious thought and which reveals his debt to patristic and mystical theology. Students of literature have tended to regard Browning as highly idiosyncratic in his Christian beliefs about the nature and destiny of man<sup>5</sup> while it has been historians of religion who have noted his influence upon late Victorian theological anthropology. Both this idiosyncrasy and this influence are considered to be

products of the Zeitgeist of the later nineteenth century, to the neglect of the poet's links with ancient tendencies in theology. So David Newsome, in citing Browning as a common influence upon the Lux Mundi and Westcott schools of Incarnational theology, identifies their confidence in man with contemporary social optimism :-

these were not the times, and this was not the world, of the theology of the Cross. When Nature appears to be on our side, then God appears to work through Man and through man's achievements. The theology of the Lux Mundi group, insofar as it expressed the mood and philosophy of the times, could hardly fail to be a demonstration of the way in which man had been elevated and ennobled by the supreme event of the Incarnation. In such a way does history shape theology.<sup>6</sup>

It is undeniable, as Ramsey has indicated, that the early decades of our present century saw the marriage of Incarnational theology with Victorian confidence in social progress<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, the formative influences in the development of this theology may be found, not in secular thought, but in the revival of patristic and Platonic studies commenced in the early years of the Victorian age. However shocking to some survivors of the Oxford Movement was Lux Mundi theology and sociology, such thought yet "completes Tractarian beginnings"<sup>8</sup> in its incorporation of aspects of the patristic and Platonic thought of F. D. Maurice.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, confidence in man was not absolute in these Anglo-Catholic schools. A theologian like Bishop Westcott did affirm creation in the image of God, rather than sin, as the starting-point of theology. However, unlike the Benevolists in their reading of patristic thought, he saw also the reality of sin and darkness in the life of man.<sup>10</sup> Pusey's question to his fellows

Is this a Christian society or is it Hell?<sup>11</sup>



had not lost its force for a theology which came increasingly to underwrite claims for social justice, in response to deep awareness of man's failure. Priests such as Stewart Headlam, synthesiser of Tractarianism and Christian Socialism, saw both the glory of man's identity in God and the Hell on earth he made for himself.<sup>12</sup>

Continuity of development in an Incarnational thought based upon the theology of the Fathers may be perceived throughout the century. If Browning was an influence upon the developments and syntheses within this thought, the reasons for his importance are to be found in his relationship to the same patristic anthropology.

For the priests and theologians, direct knowledge of the Fathers and their Caroline interpreters was enriched by the Unitarian approach to patristic themes introduced by F. D. Maurice and by the renewed prominence of Plato. For Browning acquaintance with patristic thought was made both through his direct knowledge of Unitarian and Christian mystical theology and through his relationship with that student of the Fathers, Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Furthermore both theologians and poet shared a Biblical inheritance which affirmed both immanence and transcendence, rejecting anthropomorphism, yet asserting the reality of divine Fatherhood. Such an inheritance also offered the optimism of "eschatological tension", of the knowledge of a world already redeemed but awaiting its fulfilment. The hopefulness of Browning with regard to evil is ultimately that of the reader of St. John's Gospel who accepts the assurance of Christ

Fear not, I have conquered the world<sup>13</sup>

and who consequently embraces the answer to evil given to Julian of

Norwich

All shall be well<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, Browning's belief that man is "growing into God" is no "metaphysic of his own devising"<sup>15</sup> but a conviction inherent in Pauline theology and further developed by the Fathers and mystics. The true self of man is hidden with Christ, perfected Man, in God; man's life is therefore growth towards the fullness of that manhood, towards completion of the image of God in man<sup>16</sup>. In heaven each man will be like Christ, a "first born son".<sup>17</sup> Hence man is not complete and fully revealed in his earthly life, while earth itself progresses towards the end-time. Man's growth in God will be disclosed only when Christ is disclosed in the Parousia, and for the mystics, in the personal Beatific Vision after death.<sup>18</sup> Such was the ground for the patristic doctrine of theosis or deification. Man was created and restored by Christ to become by grace all that the Son is by nature. The incarnate Christ is therefore the final model and goal of human selfhood: the state of manhood exists in Christ and must be grown into by all men.

This vision of a growing, hidden and elusive spiritual selfhood is found in the writings of the English mystic Dame Julian of Norwich, whose affinities with Browning were remarked some years ago by C. M. Addison.<sup>19</sup> Dame Julian bears witness to the diffusion and continuity of this Biblical, patristic approach to the self. Her likeness to Browning illuminates his participation in an ancient theological tradition.

For Dame Julian man is complete only when united to God but in life union is always imperfect, desire exceeding capacity for comprehension and response :-



So I saw him and sought him, and had him and  
lacked him; and this is and should be our undertaking  
in this life, as I see it.<sup>20</sup>

Imperfection is a constant stimulus to growth and further aspiration:  
it is process rather than completed achievement which is important  
for Dame Julian as for the poet.

As with the narrator of Two In the Campagna self eludes  
scrutiny, and as with St. John in A Death in the Desert full  
knowledge comes only when the life of the senses is exhausted, so  
to Dame Julian

our passing life which we have here does not know in  
our senses what our self is, but we know in faith. And  
when we know and see, truly and clearly what our self  
is, then we shall truly and clearly see and know our  
Lord God in the fulness of joy : ... But we may never  
fully know ourselves until the last moment.<sup>21</sup>

This "fulness of joy" will be "rest" but a rest in the eternal,  
renewing action of God. There is in one sense no end to activity  
and change for man :-

then will the bliss of our motherhood in Christ be  
to begin anew in the joys of our Father, God, which  
new beginning will last newly beginning without end.<sup>22</sup>

Man is made for continual progress towards and within the infinite  
God, just as for Browning man is made with "a tendency to God"<sup>23</sup>  
which requires perpetual growth.

Both Dame Julian and Browning reflect the Orthodox conception  
of progress associated especially with Gregory of Nyssa. In his  
doctrine of epektasis man's desire for God produces a progress for  
him as boundless as the infinitude of God :-

the participant's desire itself necessarily has no  
stopping-place but stretches out with the limitless ...  
It is therefore undoubtedly impossible for man to  
attain perfection since perfection is not marked by  
limits; the one limit of virtue is the absence of limit.

How then should one arrive at the sought for boundary when he can find no boundary.<sup>24</sup>

The "perfect round"<sup>25</sup> in heaven is a circle of which the circumference is truly nowhere.

It is this progress which concerns Browning rather than the social progress characteristic of his age. It is a progress in capacity for love and virtue rather than an expansion of the power of man's mind and of his capacity to control existence. Browning placed his confidence not in the "march of mind" of the secularist but in the spiritual nature of man. As for the Fathers, so for the poet man's spirit is not to be equated with his reasoning powers; Browning assured his friend Mrs. Fitzgerald of his conviction that

the soul is above and behind the intellect which is merely its servant.<sup>26</sup>

"Soul" is, in this letter, "religious feeling", not emotion but the intuition of the divine and of relationship to it. And as it is seen in Parleying With Francis Furini, the source of hope for man lies not in his psychological and intellectual properties but in his likeness to God as a loving, moral being :-

Here's ourself - Man, known today,  
Duly evolved at last, - so far, you say,  
The sum and seal of being's progress. Good!  
Thus much at least is clearly understood -  
Of power does Man possess no particle :  
Of knowledge - just so much as shows that still  
It ends in ignorance on every side :  
But righteousness - ah, Man is deified  
Thereby, for compensation.<sup>27</sup>

Progress is therefore not for the purpose of "coming of age" as man independent of God but of ever fuller participation in him.

Change and process are essential for the increasing realisation of man's God-bearing destiny, as A Death in the Desert asserts :-



Man is not God, but hath God's ends to serve,  
 A Master to obey, a course to take,  
 Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?  
 Grant this, then man must pass from old to new  
 From vain to real, from mistake to fact,  
 From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.  
 How could man have progression otherwise?<sup>28</sup>

Man is not master of his own destiny, changing and shaping the future of creation according to his own design, but a seeker prepared to admit the provisional nature of his vision and knowledge. Progress is not a controlled process of "social betterment" but a gradual movement towards truth, which necessitates surrender. Browning's view of man in progress is much like that of St. Paul in describing his quest for perfection :-

this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before I press toward the mark ... Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.<sup>29</sup>

To be perfect on earth is to be engaged on the race, the progress, towards the truth of God which requires abandonment of earlier certainties.

The "evolutionary" thought of Browning is, like his view of progress, essentially patristic rather than Victorian or Hegelian. Evolution is a concept which explains the microcosmic nature of man as a reconciler of earth and Heaven, flesh and spirit. Hence in Paracelsus evolutionary progress is

The law of life, man is not man as yet  
 ... all tended to mankind,  
 And, man produced, all has its end thus far.  
 But in completed man begins anew  
 A tendency to God.<sup>30</sup>

Man is here the summit and consummation of Creation as he is in patristic thought, constituting, as Thunberg says of man in the thought of Maximus the Confessor, "the workshop of the universe".<sup>31</sup>

As the end-point of natural Creation, man encompasses it in entirety; as a spiritual being, he is made for union with God. His fulfilment of his destiny as a creature of earth leads inevitably to his fulfilment of his destiny as a spirit; in so doing he returns the entire Creation to its Creator.<sup>32</sup> These cosmic dimensions to manhood were perceived in an age and a society far removed from that of Browning, yet betray his basic affinities with this earlier mode of thought.<sup>33</sup>

Nor was the concept of the growth of the race towards God foreign to patristic theology. For Irenaeus man could not have been made perfect because the created thing is essentially inferior to its Creator. Consequently man has to evolve and grow as a race :-

God ... was indeed able to bestow on man perfection from the beginning but man was incapable of receiving it; for he was a babe ...

... by ... training, Man, being originated and formed, comes to be in the image and likeness of the unoriginate God: the Father approving and commanding, the Son performing and creating, the Spirit giving nourishment and growth, and Man for his part silently advancing, and going onward to perfection, that is, coming near the Unoriginate. ...

... And it was needful that Man should first be brought into being, and being made should grow, and having grown should come to Manhood, and after Manhood, should be multiplied, and being multiplied should grow in strength and after such growth should be glorified, and being glorified should see his own Lord.<sup>34</sup>

Here in Irenaeus, as in Paracelsus, The Ring and the Book and Parleying With Francis Furini, the evolution of man is towards divinisation rather than towards his earthly supremacy.

This necessity for growth and change in Irenaeus is also a feature of the thought of Gregory of Nyssa. Mutability, which in Greek philosophy was often regarded as evil, was for Gregory not only a potential wound but a potential source of glory :-

what appears to be so terrifying ... can really be as a pinion in our flight towards higher things. ...



... One ought not to be distressed when one considers this tendency in our nature; rather let us change in such a way that we may constantly evolve towards what is better, being transformed from glory to glory ... and thus always improving and even becoming more perfect by daily growth.<sup>35</sup>

The capacity to change in accordance with intuitions of a heaven beyond man's grasp<sup>36</sup> is the only means by which man may become what he so intuitively.

This emphasis upon the glory of man's destiny and the hopefulness implicit in imperfection blinded neither the Fathers nor the poet to the capacity for evil in man. The Fathers were deeply conscious of the damage to the divine image in man and of his subsequent tendency to be ruled by the passions he shares with animal creation, and by his independent rationality. Browning similarly criticised that notion of progress which was an attempt to shape the world according to the psyche of man, resulting in his capitulation to his denied irrationality. My Last Duchess exemplifies such false cultural progress in which the aspiring, God-usurping man reduces the world of living beings to manipulable objects and simultaneously regresses to the animal desire for mastery and for destruction of his opponents.

That other man of culture, Guido, in The Ring and the Book is similarly an embodiment of that attempt to cultivate man which neglects both his identity as a spiritual being and his animal inheritance. A man who denies his spiritual selfhood and asserts only psychic being and rational control will ultimately be governed by the carnality upon which they are based, as Irenaeus had recognised.<sup>37</sup> Animal nature cannot be simply refined away, Browning assured Julia Wedgewood :-

How do you account for the "mere brutal hacking  
Pompilia to pieces", in a nobleman thirty years long

the intimate of Cardinals; is this the case of a drunken operative that kicks his wife to death because she has no more money for gin?

... we differ apparently in our conception of what gross wickedness can be effected by cultivated minds. I believe the grossest - all the more by way of reaction from the enforced habit of self-denial which is the condition of man's receiving culture. Guido tried the over-refined way for years and in his rage at unsuccess let the natural man break out.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to the socially and psychologically refined Guido Browning sets the unsophisticated child-wife Pompilia whose "natural man" is not repressed but is subordinated to her apprehension of the spiritual. Man cannot escape his solidarity with creation as a "natural", animal being subject to "the passions"; the innocent know and transfigure them, the guilty attempt to re-structure the conditions of life.

Awareness of this dual solidarity leads Browning to an interest not only in the manifold appearance of human evil but also in the hidden existence of essential innocence, of what Dame Julian of Norwich termed "the godly will".<sup>39</sup> This patristic concept of "the godly will", which became "the good heart" of Benevolism, was given its full explication by Maximus the Confessor. Maximus, Martikainen explains, held that

man has two wills. One of them is the natural will, which is man's fundamental constitution as the image of God. ... In addition to the natural will man has "gnome", which is the actual will of the fallen man. This will is perverted and it is ruled by passions. Sin results from seduction by the Devil and the mis-use of gnome i.e. man's mis-use of the faculty of self-determination. ... The "gnomic" activity of man must be directed towards his "natural will", which is common to all people.<sup>40</sup>

Consequently all men have a potential God-like innocence and a fallen will. Herein lies the ambiguity which is so often the main feature of Browning's characters. Intuitions of truth and goodness



are discernible by his sinners within the perversions of the "gnomic" will, as is evident in Bishop Blougram in Bishop Blougram's Apology, Mr. Sludge in Mr. Sludge, "The Medium", and Leonce Miranda in Red Cotton Nightcap Country.

This co-existence of innocence and sin is seen at its simplest in the early poetic drama A Blot on the Scutcheon. In this play, two young lovers bring upon themselves and their loved ones tragedy resulting not from deliberately willed evil but from the temporary seduction of their wills by mistrust, fear and need, the "passions". The folly of this aberration in their "gnomic" will cannot, however, destroy the integrity of their "will-to-good", as Law termed the natural will.<sup>41</sup> After the outraged brother Tresham has killed the young lover Mertoun, he tells his offending, and now bereaved, sister Mildred

I saw through  
The troubled surface of his crime  
and yours  
A depth of purity immoveable.<sup>42</sup>

Tresham's fault lies in his inability to perceive such innocence because of his initial equation of a socially dishonourable act with a dishonouring or destruction of nature. Similarly, in Pippa Passes Jules nearly fails to transcend his ego in discerning in Phene only her external degradation to the neglect of her inner purity.

In later works, the relationship between innocence and guilt is less often a simple distinction between external action and internal state. In these poems, spiritual selfhood, the natural will and image of God in man, is more truly obscured and compromised by the demands and passions of the ego, the "gnomic" will under the

sway of carnality. Leonce Miranda in Red Cotton Nightcap Country is an emblem of Browning's mature concept of the self in relationship to the ego. Man's attachment to the "turf" of his own earthiness, of his carnal psyche, is disturbed by intuitions of his denied spiritual nature. Egotistic man, tied to the earth, is agonised by his longing for the "tower" of spirit, for discovery of the "high point" of his being.<sup>43</sup> However, spiritual selfhood is threatened not only by the proximity of "turf" but also by the tendency to interpret the spiritual according to the understanding of the ego. Man on the turf and in the tower is ever tempted to judge of the spiritual in carnal, psychic terms. Hence ambiguity is inescapable, for no deed is without intuitions of God nor without motives of egotism. The "falsish true"<sup>44</sup> is man's lot: Miranda's penitential acts unite truth and falsehood, the spiritual and the egotistic. Desire for reparation is confused with the creature's proud rejection of creatureliness. Burning his hands disfigures rather than purifies Miranda's humanity, yet witnesses to a thirst for goodness. The "leap of faith" from the tower combines aspiration with egotistic testing of God and demand for certainty. This final refusal of the limitations of the creature proves his incorrigible earthliness while the tower yet remains as a testimony to Miranda's spiritual yearning.

That Miranda, like Mr. Sludge, presents in this way an impossible task of judgement for men implies not a world of moral relativism and absence of absolutes, but one of clear opposition between good and evil :-

"Heaven" saith the sage "is with us, here inside  
Each man": "Hell also", simpleness subjoins  
By White and Red describing human flesh.<sup>45</sup>



As in the thought of Carlyle man is in the state of "beast-godhood"<sup>46</sup>, a state of internal conflict which William Law understood as the original sense of election and reprobation :-

all that God rejects and reprobates is nothing else but that corrupt nature which every individual man, Abel as well as Cain, has in himself from Adam as fallen; and all that God elects, predestinates, calls, justifies and glorifies is nothing but that heavenly seed which every individual man, Pharaoh as well as Moses, has in himself from Adam as redeemed.<sup>47</sup>

As early as the poem Paracelsus Browning had, indeed, seen the potential of man as exemplified by the absolutes Christ (the fulfilment of Abel) and Cain. Paracelsus laments

I am not good nor bad enough  
Not Christ nor Cain.<sup>48</sup>

Browning's conception of the perfect self and the isolated, defiant ego was from his early years framed as the opposition between the Christ-like innocent and the Cain-like egotist.

Such inner tension and such a concept of selfhood is at the heart of the presentation of Pompilia in The Ring and the Book. As previously indicated, Pompilia's innocence is not a denial of her involvement with the earth, for she must struggle with her own doubts, fears and needs. But furthermore, the ambiguity of her position expresses the dilemma of the innocent self which has to confront not only the natural tendency to evil, symbolised by her parentage, but also an environment in which only such evil is expected of men. In such a world, man, like the dog of the proverb, has earned himself a "bad name" and only fulfilment of his reputation is anticipated by society. Supporters of Pompilia argue not for her actual innocence but for an attenuated or justified guilt. The worldly wisdom and worldly compassion issuing from

experience of the actuality of man's fallen nature cannot accept the possibility of the battle of Cain and Abel both between Pompilia and Guido and within the girl herself. Browning has restored the vision of the equally Incarnational mediaeval Mystery Cycles in which the fact of Incarnation, of utter innocence entering the human state, is met by scornful disbelief. The "just" man Joseph cannot believe in the innocence of Mary, unless he interprets her as a woman deceived, credulous rather than pure. And after his conversion, the innocent couple face the onslaught of the "righteous" and the slanderous, for whom fallen nature represents the one possibility for man.<sup>49</sup> Pompilia, like Mary and her Son, presents the opposition to man's vision of his identity and as such incurs disbelief, condescension and condemnation. Like Joseph and Mary, Pompilia and Caponsacchi are tried by a public opinion anticipating guilt. Pompilia images forth the Christ-like innocence which is a fidelity to God operative within the inheritance from Cain and therefore within the human experience of weakness and muddle.

As this Christ-like fulfilled self, Pompilia is an Abel to the Cain-like ego of Guido. He, like Cain, acknowledges no laws or obligations other than the imperatives of his own desires. He therefore destroys whatever offends his self-established rights and hates the goodness which implicitly judges him. Guido becomes, indeed, an embodiment of "all that is reprobated by God"<sup>50</sup> in this substitution of his ego and the choices of his "gnomic will" for the "godly will" which constitutes his selfhood. And just as the condemned call upon Christ for salvation, so in extremity Guido invokes Pompilia for his rescue. The assertive ego recognises both its own insufficiency and the supremacy of human purity. This



is Pompilia's ultimate vindication, sealing her identity as an image of Christ. The Ring and the Book is in this sense a drama of salvation, to which the Incarnation, as a principle of selfhood, is central.

Such centrality is affirmed by the vision of the Pope, for whom the evil of the events surrounding Pompilia is but a means of realising man's likeness to God. "Sin and sorrow", conflict and persecution, are the ways through which innocence is actualised, for they are intended to make man

love in him and be beloved  
 Creative and self-sacrificing too,  
 And thus eventually God-like (ay  
 "I have said ye are Gods" - and shall it be said for nought?) ...  
 ... The moral sense grows but by exercise  
 'Tis even as man grew probatively  
 Initiated in Godship.<sup>51</sup>

The pattern for this initiation into a "godship" which is creative and sacrificial is the catastrophe, in human terms, of the life and death of Christ, revealing Godhead within human weakness, pain and failure. Sin led to this particular manifestation of the loving nature of God, being the "happy fault"<sup>52</sup> which brought about man's exaltation. The Pope applies the lesson of Christ's incarnate life to the life of man made in his image. Although there is no explicit theology of the Cross in Browning, his appreciation of the subservience of evil to good in the fulfilling of human selfhood stems from this understanding of Redemption. "Human clay" can be metamorphosed into "divine gold"<sup>53</sup> only by acceptance of God's way to be man, rather than through man's way of trying to be God.

Human enfleshment and divine obscurity was for the Fathers as for Browning, an essential corollary of belief in man as a creature both fallen and redeemed. Man made for participation in God is also

separated man unable to withstand full exposure to the reality of God. That no man can see God, except in the hidden form of the incarnate Christ, and life was held as a truth which rendered enfleshment a merciful gift of God.<sup>54</sup> And for Gregory of Nyssa, in the manner of the poet, enfleshment was understood as ensuring man's moral responsibility. The life of the senses offers man an alternative to God and the opportunity to seek and will relationship with God. A God fully disclosed to man would be irresistible, providing no such possibility of free-choice. God's concealment by the facts of earthly existence is man's liberty.<sup>55</sup> Just such a God who gives freedom by being hidden by the evil in Creation is the God of Bishop Blougram's Apology. And the effects of unmediated self-disclosure by God are seen in Lazarus in An Epistle, containing the strange medical experience of Karshish, the Arab physician. Lazarus can no longer live normally after his experience and he must wait

For that same death which must restore his being  
To equilibrium, body loosening soul  
Divorced even now by premature full growth:<sup>56</sup>

This insistence upon the necessary separation of God from man in Browning's work does not therefore distinguish his thought from patristic and mystical theology. In this theology, as this study has continually emphasised, man is a creature and not a fragment or emanation of deity. Man is made for a participation in the life of God and therefore for a relational union. Absorption in God is the identification of the lover with the Beloved; the self who is created in the image of God is also the distinct hypostasis who is called into a nuptial relationship.

Union requires consent between the partners. Emphasis in



the Eastern Fathers and in Browning upon the free-will of distinct creatures is linked with belief in man's capacity to be the artisan of his selfhood. The God who is free to make and relate to men has made in his image men who are also free to choose or reject both relationship and co-operation in becoming that image. The self is given by God but man is at liberty to fulfil or destroy it. Hence Bishop Blougram asserts

My business is not to remake myself  
But make the absolute best of what God made.<sup>57</sup>

And man the poet, although he has no independent power to create "exnihilo" has the capacity to grow and to restore to life what has previously been created :-

Man, as befits the made; the inferior thing -  
Purposed, since made, to grow, not make in turn,  
Yet forced to try and make, else fail to grow, -  
... Repeats God's process in man's due degree,  
Attaining proportionate results, -  
Creates, no, but resuscitates perhaps,<sup>58</sup>

Man is no source or architect, but a skilled craftsman, imitating and restoring the works of God.

The powers and free-will of man leave him at liberty, however, to deny growth and to aspire to independent creativity, to choose his own interpretation of the "absolute best of what God made". Man can therefore re-model his selfhood and his world according to the demands of his ego while claiming obedience to God. Bishop Blougram decides that the "absolute best" is that which allows him most security and pleasure, building for himself in the image of the cabin the egotist's Ark. This modelling of identity upon the desires of the ego is set against the co-operative work and self-abandonment of Gigadibs. The journalist chooses not to fashion his self-image but to "put his hand to the plough",<sup>59</sup> in order to

reveal the wealth of the earth, that is, of the land and of his own human clay. Blougram seeks to re-structure the conditions of life, Gigadibs to co-operate with life as it presents itself to him.

A distortion of truth similar to that of Blougram is effected in Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society. In this poetic monologue the Prince accepts the givenness of selfhood spuriously, in order to validate the choices of his psychological self. Change is opposed with far from selfless motives :-

There's the root  
Of the evil, source of the entire mistake.  
You see no worth i' the world, nature and life;  
Unless we change what is to what may be,  
Which means - may be i' the brains of one of you,<sup>60</sup>

It becomes clear from the complete poem that Hohenstiel-Schwangau intends "what is" to be identical with his vision of reality. This is defended as a metaphysical good in order to support the claims of his own version of his selfhood. A concept of change as response to idiosyncratic fancy is validly questioned only to legitimise a self-proclaimed divine election as saviour of the old order. Furthermore, acceptance of becoming one's being is perverted into a denial of free-will; he has had, Hohenstiel-Schwangau claims,

one end  
That just the creature I was bound  
To be, I should become.<sup>61</sup>

"Bound" denies the Prince the freedom he clearly exercises. His assertion of a pre-determined identity veils his own decision about his nature. Espousal of belief in the fore-ordained and absolute individual self allows for the unfettered creation of an idiosyncratic self-image and absolves the Prince from any obligation to respond to life.



In other poems Browning expounds a vision of a selfhood which is realised, not through attempts at definition by the ego, but through surrender to the conditions of life. Rabbi Ben Ezra teaches a similar givenness of the self :-

Earth changes but thy soul and God stand sure:  
     What entered into thee,  
     That was, is, and shall be :  
 Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.<sup>62</sup>

But the shaping of the clay requires man's co-operation. This passive clay is also an active partner in creation, for it can refuse "Time's Wheel": the Biblical sources of the image employed here suggest not only man's dependency but also his capacity for rebellion.<sup>63</sup> The artisan of true selfhood is not the one who fashions himself in defiance of his contingency but he who is a responsive being in

this dance  
 Of plastic circumstance,  
 This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest;  
     Machinery just meant  
     To give thy soul its bent  
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.<sup>64</sup>

Herein lies the source of Browning's gusto, his enthusiasm for life - Selfhood can only be realised by surrendering and risking all in the present moment.<sup>65</sup>

Hence Pictor Ignotus is a portrayal not of the failed artist but of the failed man, where the artist may be said to exemplify man as an image of a creative God. His is not a tragedy of time, as De Vane suggests, of one unable to adapt to new modes of perception.<sup>66</sup> Rather is it the ancient tragedy of pride. The painter has refused the development of his self as a being subject to change and the conditions of finitude. He desires an immutability foreign both to creaturely man and to the dynamic God who is his

source. Consequently, he spurns the "market-place" of man's life, the exchange between man and man in a fallen world which realises his capacity for the divine through conflict, challenge and sin. In repudiating the commerce of human relationships, he establishes his own version of divinity, one antithetical to that of the God who entered the market-place in the "admirabile commercium"<sup>67</sup> of the Incarnation, and transformed it from within. The painter rejects such identification in the attachment of his ego to a self-exalting vision of divinity. Originally his talent and insight are equal to those of his successors :-

No bar  
Stayed me ...  
- Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
To outburst on your night with all my gift  
Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk  
From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
And wide to heaven, or straight like thunder, sunk  
To the centre, of an instant; or around  
Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan  
The licence and the limit, space and bound,  
Allowed to truth made visible in man.<sup>68</sup>

But the glory and divinity of man is envisaged as immortality upon earth for his own exalted individual personality :-

Oh, thus to live, I and my pictures, linked  
With love about, and praise, till life should end,  
And then not go to heaven, but linger here  
Here on my earth, earth's every man my friend -  
The thought grew frightful, 'twas so wildly dear!<sup>69</sup>

The immortality the artist desires is that of the psychic, earthly man, with his attachment to the world and his establishment of his ego as an object of adoring love. He aspires to the status of Creator in seeing the earth as "my earth" yet simultaneously witnesses to his failure to realise spirit.

The hubris of this parody of enfleshed godhood is challenged by ineluctable social change. The unsavoury fact of his earthly



humanity is forced upon his consciousness by the rise of those who

buy and sell our pictures, take and give,  
 Count them for garniture and household-stuff,  
 And where they live needs must our pictures live  
 And see their faces, listen to their prate,  
 Partakers of their daily pettiness, ...  
 ... Wherefore I chose my portion.<sup>70</sup>

His portion, in refusing the pettiness of creaturely life, is spiritual death, which is reflected in the frigid sterility of his art. Repudiating his position as an "inferior, made thing"<sup>71</sup> he no longer co-operates with God in revivifying existing forms and in his own growth, but endures suspended animation in the manufacture of lifeless artifices. He is condemned to the continual representation of his own moribund interpretation of eternity and immutability :-

If at whiles  
 My heart sinks, as monotonous I paint  
 These endless cloisters and eternal aisles  
 With the same series, Virgin, Babe and Saint,  
 With the same cold calm beautiful regard,<sup>72</sup>  
 At least no merchant traffics in my heart;

As in Porphyria's Lover the only static condition for man is death, and the only description of his attempt to control life, murder. In Pictor Ignotus the artist has refused the potter's wheel and the firing process which turn "human clay" into "divine gold". He has committed the ultimate sin of refusal to grow, the very essence of sin in the thought of Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>73</sup>

This sin is also evident in the complement to Pictor Ignotus, Andrea Del Sarto, in which Andrea's capitulation to the demands of the market-place expresses his abdication of any responsibility for self-realisation. Responsiveness is replaced by complete, slothful, passivity :-

I'll work then ...  
 Treat his own subject after his own way,  
 Fix his own time, accept too his own price,  
 And shut the money into this small hand  
 When next it takes mine.<sup>74</sup>

The choice of Lucrezia as his wife is not the cause but the result of Andrea's failure in vision. And such failure is not from any defect in perception or sympathy, but from his sloth. Andrea wants the instantaneous and the complete vision, being unprepared for the effort of actualising spirit through his art :-

You smile? Why, there's my picture ready made.  
There's what we painters call our harmony!<sup>75</sup>

Andrea refuses to live up to the glory of man's destiny. But this refusal is never owned by him: when Lucrezia is not blamed as the cause of his failure, then God is proposed as its author :-

the whole seems to fall into a shape  
As if I saw alike my work and self  
And all that I was born to be and do,  
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.  
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead;  
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!  
I feel he laid the fetter, let it lie!<sup>76</sup>

It is Andrea who lays the fetter in his unwillingness to abandon the known and the tangible for the unknown. Like Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau he has chosen to see himself as bound by God in order to validate his own decisions about the nature of his identity. Andrea wills to see himself as enchained by God or by uxoriousness so as never to confront his fear of the cost and effort of human creativity in the expansion of spirit. His option is for safety :-

At the end  
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.  
'Tis safer for me, if the award is strict,  
That I am something underrated here,  
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.  
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day  
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.<sup>77</sup>

This transition from desire for security in eternity to admission of present anxiety underlines the fearfulness at the heart of Andrea's failure. He will not "prove", bring to fruition, his spiritual self



by challenging and overcoming the demands of the fallen world. He is akin to those Browning reproved in a letter to Elizabeth Barrett for believing

chop off your legs, you will never go astray -  
stifle your reason altogether and you will never  
reason ill.<sup>78</sup>

Lucrezia provides, therefore, both excuse and haven for Andrea. Her demands offer the motive for retreat and allow his self-definition of sub-humanity :-

A good time, was it not, my kingly days?  
And had you not grown restless ...  
... 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;  
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey  
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt  
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.  
How could it end any other way?  
You called me and I came home to your heart.<sup>79</sup>

The failure of these two artists in Andrea Del Sarto and Pictor Ignotus embodies the twin temptations which beset fallen man in his role as an artisan of being. Pride may lead to independent activity and sloth to the fear and refusal of spiritual work: both produce lifeless mockeries of creativity.

As the discussions of Carlyle and Dickens have suggested, work in the patristic tradition is related to the unfolding of being. Hence Browning, like these contemporary artists, can both praise work and remain critical of prevalent attitudes towards it in his own society. Man is endangered when one external activity supplants the activity of self-unfolding, replacing the developing self with a constricting, self-defining rôle. So Eglamor, the bard in the early poem Sordello dies when he is no longer able to define his being by his activity as a poet. And in the late poem Shop the confusion of a single activity with identity is sharply attacked

as the cause of the withering of selfhood :-

At back of all that spread  
Of merchandize, woe's me, I find  
A hole i' the wall where, heels by head,  
The owner couched, his wares behind,  
- In cupboard suited to his mind.<sup>80</sup>

Man's identity, his treasure of selfhood, is to be found elsewhere  
than in the activities which earn him his social status :-

I want to know a butcher paints,  
A baker rhymes for his pursuit,  
Candle-stick maker much acquaints,  
His soul with song, or, haply mute  
Blows out his brains upon the flute!  
But - shop each day and all day long!  
Friend, your good angel slept, your star  
Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!  
From where these sorts of treasures are  
There should our heart be - Christ, how far?<sup>81</sup>

These three typical tradesmen are to be creative, in expanding their spirit through activities which represent man's search for the infinite. "The baker paints" but he is not termed "a painter"; his social role is not simply augmented by the addition of another role and defining label; the man who is identified in society by one work-role is also an acting, active, spiritual being. The Biblical allusion of the final verse

Where your treasure is, there shall your heart~~s~~  
be also.<sup>82</sup>

reminds the reader that man's true treasure is to be "laid up in Heaven"<sup>83</sup>, and that Heaven is not found in an external world but within. Man's true work is the discovery of the riches of Christ-likeness within him; "Christ, how far?" is not an emphatic, colloquial expletive but a seal upon the Biblical context of the poem. The man who is called upon to realise himself in the marketplace of life is required to transform both it and himself into a Temple of God rather than to become himself a house of wares.<sup>84</sup>



By contrast with the two failed artists in Pictor Ignotus and Andrea Del Sarto, Caponsacchi in The Ring and the Book demonstrates a selfhood which discovers and discloses itself through becoming an "experimentalist"<sup>85</sup>, through risking and losing the labels and identity gained from society, work and individual choice. Like the narrator of By the Fireside, he learns that the self is revealed not through conscious, planned behaviour but through the obedience to being of its capacity to act. Being is known in doing, in response to the promptings of love :-

How all we perceive and know in it  
Tends to some moment's product thus,  
When a soul declares itself - to wit  
By its fruit, the thing it does.<sup>86</sup>

The self which Caponsacchi finds in his responsiveness to Pompilia's plight cannot be identified with his thinking mind, known personality and personal needs. Prudence, concern for reputation and desire for physical safety all counsel against his choice. It is obedience to an intuition of sacrificial being for others which prompts his action in rescuing Pompilia, and causes the transcendence<sup>e</sup> of psychological manhood. In reacting to the needs of another, Caponsacchi fulfils himself as a true priest and lover. He becomes, indeed, "another Christ" in his willingness to act for another at the cost of his own social identity and his life. In risking failure in the folly of the rescue of Pompilia, Caponsacchi loses himself to find himself. As this redeemed, Christ-like self he is the worthy lover of the innocent Pompilia; together they point to the metamorphosis of human clay into divine gold foreseen by the Pope, whereby each self is Christ to every other.

Caponsacchi fulfils himself by allowing the "soul" "behind"

his intellectual faculties to govern both his mind and body. As in the anthropology of Irenaeus, after St. Paul, the carnal man, composed of mind and body, has become pneumatic, governed by spirit. The clearest expression of Browning's belief in this Pauline and Irenaeian threefold manhood is found in A Death in the Desert, in which "doing" and "knowing" are distinguished from the being of man which makes him capable of God. The self is both the spiritual principle of man and total manhood governed by this spirit :-

This is the doctrine he was wont to teach  
 How divers persons witness in each man  
 Three souls which make up one soul; first, to wit  
 A soul of each and all the bodily parts  
 Seated therein, which works and is what Does,  
 And has the use of earth and ends the man  
 Downwards; but tending upwards for advice  
 Grows into, and again is grown into  
 By the next soul, which, seated in the brain,  
 Useth the first with its collected use,  
 And feeleth, thinketh, willeth - is what knows;  
 Which duly tending upwards in its turn  
 Grows into and again is grown into  
 By the last soul which useth both the first,  
 Subsisting whether they subsist or no,  
 And, constituting man's self, is what Is -  
 And leans upon the former, makes it play  
 As that played off the first: and tending up  
 Holds, is upheld by, God, and ends the man  
 Upward in that dread point of intercourse,  
 Nor needs a place, for it returns to Him.<sup>87</sup>

The self in this vision of St. John in A Death in the Desert is essentially one derived from and related to God, just as in The Ring and the Book the true self is revealed to be related to others in sacrifice. As in the works of Dickens and Carlyle, the self made for deification is of its nature derived, related and vicarious. Even those early poems which focus on the aspiring individual may be found to disclose an appreciation of these identifying marks of selfhood. Far from being affirmations of individualism, Pauline, Paracelsus and Sordello are expressions of the struggle of the



infinite self to apprehend the reality of relatedness. The need for Incarnation is implicit in these poems, for in them the man aspiring to isolated divinity learns of the true divine manhood which enables him to stand with and for, but never above, his fellows. Browning's later acceptance of a full doctrine of Incarnation completes, rather than replaces, this early vision.<sup>88</sup>

The narrator of Pauline is caught between the sense of the infinite which leads him to a usurping affirmation of self-supremacy and the knowledge of limitation. At the opening of the poem, he accurately senses a self which is distinct from personality and relates him to all men. But he immediately falls into the trap of idolatry of the ego, claiming infinitude for himself as an isolated individual :-

I am made up of an intensest life  
Of a most clear idea of consciousness  
Of self, distinct from all its qualities ...  
But linked, in me, to self-supremacy,  
Existing as a centre to all things,  
Most potent to create and rule and call  
Upon all things to minister to it;  
And to a principle of restlessness  
Which would be all, have, see, know, taste, feel all -  
This is myself, and should thus have been<sup>89</sup>  
Though gifted lower than the meanest soul.

There is an urge towards the infinite :-

How should this earth's life prove my only sphere?<sup>90</sup>

but this is distorted by the ensuing distaste for incarnate being and the fact of the limitations of the creature :-

I cannot chain my soul; it will not rest  
In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere ...  
... my soul saddens when it looks beyond;  
I cannot be immortal, taste all joy.<sup>91</sup>

The outcome of this repudiation of derivation, as in Pictor Ignotus, is the experience of inner death. An insubstantial, shadowy self

inhabits an equally shadowy world of self-deception :-

as some temple seemed  
My soul, where naught is changed and incense rolls  
Around the altar, only God is gone  
And some dark spirit sitteth in his seat,  
So, I passed through the temple, and to me  
Knelt troops of shadows, and they cried, "Hail, King!  
We serve thee now and thou shalt serve no more!  
Call on us, prove us, let us worship thee!"<sup>92</sup>

The ego served by its endowments has replaced God as the centre of the speaker's being.

But in the satiation of the demands of the ego comes awareness of being, and recognition of relationship :-

The soul ...  
... would be first in all things, it would have  
Its utmost pleasure filled, but, that complete,  
Commanding, for commanding, sickens it.  
The last point I can trace is - rest beneath  
Some better essence than itself, in weakness :  
This is "myself", not what I think should be;  
And what is that I hunger for but God?<sup>93</sup>

The often-noted absence of any realised "Pauline" in the poem, of any "Thou" to the "I" of the narrator illustrates the isolation of the ego when the desire for infinitude and infinite love denies the corporateness and corporality of men. The "I" of the poem can experience his self only as an absolute centre of endless need and endless desire.

This failure to comprehend a relational selfhood is at the centre of Paracelsus in the characters of Paracelsus and Aprile. Paracelsus claims relationship with God in such a way that he dissociates his own ego from the common state of manhood. There is explored in Paracelsus the same confusion between the pneumatic and the psychic which led to Carlyle's idolatry of ego and the loss of the concept of "beast-godhood". For Paracelsus relationship with God becomes a personal property :-



Black Arts  
 Great Works, the Secret and Sublime forsooth -  
 Let others prize; too intimate a tie  
 Connects me with our God.<sup>94</sup>

The corporateness of "our God" is negated by the assertion of this special, exclusive, bond.

Consequently, relationship to others in recognition of common origin in God, is corrupted into ego-gratification; service is a means of achieving exaltation beyond mankind :-

I seemed to long  
 At once to trample on, yet save mankind,  
 To make some unexampled sacrifice  
 In their behalf ...  
 ... Yet never to be mixed with men so much  
 As to have part even in my own work, share  
 In my own largess.<sup>95</sup>

This idea of sacrifice denies solidarity and true renunciation.

Paracelsus pretends to equality with God in a parodic reversal of Christ in the Incarnation<sup>96</sup>: equality is to be grasped, in rejection of any notion of self-emptying:-

And I smiled as one never smiles but once  
 Then first discovering my own aim's extent  
 Which sought to comprehend the works of God,  
 And God himself, and all God's intercourse  
 With the human mind.<sup>97</sup>

Paracelsus' version of deification is simply the sin of Adam, the attempt to seize divinity rather than to receive it as a gift in relationship<sup>98</sup>. And, as in Pictor Ignotus, it is a purely human notion of divinity to which Paracelsus aspires, one destroying the affinity between God and Man :-

If I can serve mankind  
 'Tis well; but there our intercourse must end :  
 I never will be served by those I serve.<sup>99</sup>

By seeking this false godhood, he destroys not only his potential divinity but also his humanity :-





meaning :-

Man's quest for God ... must take cognizance of the limited means at his disposal : the finite and the limited is the proper sphere of man.<sup>102</sup>

Nor is it solely an expression of the need for Incarnation as a revelation of condescending love.<sup>103</sup> The poem is centred upon the necessity of man accepting a related and relating manhood, in order to be raised to a divinity which fulfils the manhood revealed in Christ.

The Incarnation, therefore, is at the heart of this poem, insofar as it demonstrates the truth of manhood being taken into Godhood through God's solidarity with men. The pattern for man's ascent to God is to be found in the fellowship of God with men. Hence Browning's addition of 1849 to Canto II was later removed not because it is inconsistent with the meaning of the poem<sup>104</sup> but because it unnecessarily intrudes that meaning upon the reader :-

Man's weakness is his glory - for strength  
Which raises him to heaven and near God's self  
Came spite of it : God's strength his glory is  
For thence came with our weakness sympathy  
Which brought God down to earth, a man like us.

The parodic nature of the aspiring Paracelsus is in itself sufficient clarification of the relationship between man and the God who is claimed as his origin and the source of his human fellowship.

To Sordello, Browning's third variation on a theme, the patristic adage "Your brother is your life"<sup>105</sup> is even more appropriate. Sordello is initially a doubly isolated individual. He is ignorant of his family relationships, of his derivation from, and rootedness in, a human and historical situation and group. He is isolated from peer relationships and contemporary society. Sordello is therefore deprived of those major human experiences which affirm the notion

of the self as deriving from, and belonging to, others. In such a vacuum intuitions of spirit become perverted and appropriated to the ego. The world is seen as Sordello's possession :-

I must, ere I begin to Be  
Include a world, in flesh, I comprehend  
In spirit now; and this done, what's to blend  
With? Nought is Alien in the world - my Will  
Owns all already.<sup>106</sup>

He rightly understands himself as a microcosm of the world, but this microcosmic selfhood lacks for Sordello the aspect of relationship found in patristic theology. The poet Traherne, heir of the Eastern Fathers, expresses an intoxication with the self similar to that of Sordello, but with this one vital difference :-

You never enjoy the world aright, till the Sea floweth  
in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens  
and crowned with the stars: and perceive yourself to be  
the sole heir of the world, and more than so, because  
men are in it who are everyone sole heirs as well as  
you. ... Till your spirit filleth the whole world ...  
till you love men so as to desire their happiness with  
a thirst equal to the zeal of your own; ... you never  
enjoy the world.<sup>107</sup>

Sordello's progress in the poem is towards an appreciation of this relationship and love to all men, in a selfhood which is distinct from his personality and roles. His education begins in his encounter with Eglamor. Through his part in the death of the bard after his defeat, Sordello first learns that his desires and actions affect men; that the demand for unlimited supremacy may constrict the life of others.

But Sordello learns also from supplanting Eglamor that one defining role cannot circumscribe his self. Rejection of his identity as a poet leaves him receptive to intuitions of a relationship between men independent of social rôles. Such relationship, however, is initially understood in terms of



leadership. Like Paracelsus, Sordello would be above mankind, the "head" of the body of humanity; men exist for the sake of his completion :-

Descried he aught  
 Novel in the anticipated sight  
 Of all those livers upon all delight?  
 This phalanx, as of myriad points combined,  
 Whereby he still had imaged the mankind  
 His youth was passed in dreams of rivalling,  
 His age - in plans to prove at least such thing  
 Had been so dreamed - which now he must impress  
 With his own will, effect a happiness  
 By theirs, - supply a body to his soul  
 Thence, and become eventually whole.<sup>108</sup>

His experience in Ferrara teaches him of the inadequacy of such subjection of all to the one. Just as his self encompasses all, so too, Sordello realises, the body of humanity contains his self and he belongs with men :-

Already you include  
 The multitude; then let the multitude  
 Include yourself.<sup>109</sup>

Sordello, like Paracelsus, has to learn the truth of the Incarnation: that man's likeness to God is fulfilled in complete identification with the human state. "I am among you as one who serves"<sup>110</sup> is the statement of the realised self, of Man modelled upon Christ. Once more, Browning's acceptance of the historicity and uniqueness of the Incarnation is adumbrated by this Christological model of selfhood.

The necessity of this historical and complete God-Manhood is, perhaps, foreshadowed by the failure of Sordello. The solely human man is unable, of himself, to maintain the dual nature of the self as a distinct person and as a brother, and to reconcile power with love. For Sordello distinctiveness and solidarity, power and love compete. In his external situation Sordello is literally a potential

microcosmic reconciler of the conflicts of his social world, a being in whom opposing worlds may meet and be integrated. By birth he belongs to one party, by human sympathy to another. His inheritance is of right to power and authority, to the exercise of the attributes of earthy man, his moral allegiance to spiritual brotherhood. The "plastic dance of circumstance" calls upon him to endure and transcend this tension within himself, rather than to choose between solidarity with "flesh" or with "spirit". But this task of accepting himself as a distinctive and reconciling being demands from him utter detachment from his hard-won sense of integrity and identity for the sake of an uncertain future. His death is a refusal of this detachment :-

What he should have been  
 Could be and was not - the one step too mean  
 For him to take - we suffer at this day  
 Because of.<sup>111</sup>

Sordello can neither live nor "die for the people" because he cannot die to his own sense of worth, to the final claims of the ego. Man by himself is unable to give himself away for his brothers in the act of reconciliation.

Both the content and imagery of these early poems connect them with Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came. This poem, as Isobel Armstrong has suggested, is also about the quest for the "nub of selfhood".<sup>112</sup> Like the narrator of Pauline, Childe Roland concludes his quest as

one going into the dark  
 To fight a giant.<sup>113</sup>

His way is that of the knight in fairyland confronting the innermost mysteries, as it is also in Paracelsus :-

The mortal whose brave foot  
 Has trod, unscathed, the temple court so far



That he descries at length the shrine of shrines,  
 Must let no sneering of the demons' eyes,  
 Whom he could pass unquailing, falter now  
 Upon him, fairly past their power; no, no -  
 He must not stagger, faint, fall down at last,  
 Having a charm to baffle them; behold  
 He bares his front : a mortal ventures thus  
 Serene amid the echoes, beams and glooms!  
 If he be priest henceforth, if he wake up  
 The god of the place to ban and blast him there,  
 Both well! What's failure or success to me?<sup>114</sup>

Paracelsus also demands that man set the horn to his lips, undaunted in questioning the nature of his being.

The shrine in Paracelsus, man's nature as a temple of deity, is in this later poem the Tower, the resonances of which have been discussed in considering Red Cotton Nightcap Country. The tower as the "inner keep"<sup>115</sup> of the "interior castle"<sup>116</sup> is a familiar image in mystical literature. In Browning's usage here its identity as the self is confirmed by the suggestions of uniqueness and impenetrability, being "blind" and "without a counterpart In the whole world".<sup>117</sup> But the tower, like the shrine in Paracelsus, is ambiguous, for to Roland the turret is also "blind as the fool's heart".<sup>118</sup> The fool's heart, to the Psalmist, is one in which it is said "there is no God".<sup>119</sup> This allusion, taken in the context of the confrontation of King Lear with "unaccommodated man" which provides the background of the poem, makes the meaning of the Tower and the quest quite clear. As in Paracelsus the venturing man may discover in his shrine a deity to serve or a malignant power to destroy him. The inner nature of man offers no light upon itself, suggesting in this obscurity the absence of any goodness, that is, Being, within it. Like the fool's heart, it witnesses only to non-being. But it is precisely the fool who denies God. The mad Lear who faced human nakedness was restored through receiving the grace-ful

love of Cordelia. The enigmatic Tower may enclose a giant of Love. To search for the self is a perilous undertaking, for it offers no prior assurance about the nature of that self so found, and the ashes of non-being may be encountered before the glory of Being.

The quest for the Tower, like the leap of Leonce Miranda in Red Cotton Nightcap Country, is therefore an enterprise of faith which involves painful knowledge of the "turf" of earth-bound man. The seeker is pre-disposed to anticipate evil and not good from the Tower, because the journey lies through the desolation, maliciousness and infidelity of man's earthiness. Before the spiritual reality of man can be finally challenged, man must experience his involvement with a fallen, suffering world, as the Desert Fathers and mystics had always accepted. The nightmare terrain through which Roland passes is withered creation awaiting redemption along with man, and which man encompasses :-

I cannot help my case  
'Tis the Last Judgement's fire must cure this place  
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free.<sup>120</sup>

It is therefore also the world of man's own fallen nature in which desire for vengeance is dominant, a world of rigorous, even malicious justice :-

Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe,  
I never saw a brute I hated so;  
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.<sup>121</sup>

This is the paranoid world of the Psalmist, anticipating not love and brotherhood, but snares and deceits of the enemy :-

My first thought was, he lied in every word  
That hoary cripple with malicious eye.<sup>122</sup>

Suspicion, hatred, antagonism and inability to forgive are ruling passions, encouraged by the memory of infidelity :-



I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face  
 ... till I almost felt him fold  
 An arm in mine to fix me to the place  
 That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace!  
 Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.<sup>123</sup>

As in The Ring and the Book the apprehension of innocence is opposed by the pressing actuality of evil, which consequently shapes man's understanding of his essence.

As in Pauline, Paracelsus and Sordello the solitary seeker yet discovers his involvement with a fallen world and with the lives of others. The egocentricity of these protagonists and their destructiveness to others, the desire of Paracelsus to "trample on mankind" and Sordello's responsibility in the death of Eglamor, are echoed in Roland's experience :-

how I feared  
 To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek  
 Each step ...  
 ... It may have been a water-rat I speared  
 But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.<sup>124</sup>

The journey of an apparently isolated and self-contained individual cannot take place outside the context of relationship, whether for good or ill.

The paradox of the quest in all four poems is the nature of the attainment of its end. The valour of the challenge is rewarded with, rather than fulfilled by, the perception of the end, and is given when the assertive ego is exhausted. The narrator of Pauline comes to understand that his goal is rest; Sordello's decisive crisis is not of his seeking; illumination for Paracelsus comes when this questioning, power-craving man is close to death. The tower, similarly, is not discovered by Roland but revealed to him :-

Burningly it came upon me all at once,  
 This was the place! ... Duncce,  
 Dotard, a-doing at the very nonce,  
 After a life-time spent training for the sight!<sup>125</sup>

The innermost self is present but eludes the mind while it clings to its own expectations and preconceptions. The man who confronts the mysterious reality of his being is both responsible and dependent upon grace. The moment of epiphany is the moment of despair of the natural powers which led to this point. It is therefore also a moment of loss: Roland "dies" to his sense of self-sufficiency and prepares to abandon life in facing unknown reality. Roland succeeds where Sordello fails, in realising selfhood through renunciation of all that his ego possesses.

The aspirations and failures of the protagonists of these early poems, and their distillation in this later work, witness to Browning's concern not with individuality but with manhood. These heroes explore the condition of man rather than their personalities. Their experience reveals the reality of derivation, relationship and vicariousness, while their particularity images forth the microcosmic nature of the person, as Symons recognised :-

when he (Browning) is most universal he is most individual. ... Every man is for him an epitome of the universe.<sup>126</sup>

But, if "the whole lives in the part" as Henry Jones discerned<sup>127</sup>, the part, as Sordello demonstrates, lives in the whole. There can be neither isolated good nor evil men, but each bears upon the other. Hence the real relationship between man arises from the fact of manhood and not from his social organisation. Men act upon men as spiritual entities within a spiritual whole, influencing the orientation of that whole by their own directedness. Of such a concept of relationship Pippa Passes is Browning's main expression, forming a complement to the failure in selfhood of Sordello.

Pippa is not the direct cause of change in those who hear her,



nor is it her "sympathetic imagination" which acts as "a secular analogy of grace".<sup>128</sup> She does not, in fact, enter empathetically into the lives of "the four happiest people in Asolo". In personality and imagination, Pippa remains outside them, uncomprehending of their trials and misery, while she feels after a union independent of subjective response :-

Now one thing I should really like to know  
 How near I ever might approach all these  
 I only fancied being, this long day:  
 ... Approach I mean so as to touch them, so  
 As to ... in some way ... move them if you please,  
 Do good or evil to them some slight way.  
 For instance, if I wind  
 Silk tomorrow, my silk may bind  
 And border Ottima's hem.<sup>129</sup>

At the level of her ego, Pippa is not aware of her real relationship with Ottima which is far more intimate and profound than that of the spinner of silk to its purchaser. She still participates in "the wound" of Two in the Campagna, in the isolation of individuality, just as she shares the fallen world's belief in men as "God's puppets".<sup>130</sup> The poem proves both to be illusory in demonstrating Pippa's real relationship to her fellow-citizens and vindicating an innocence which underlies the distortions of the ego.

It is Pippa's innocence, her will-to-good which is the image of grace in the poem. Its effect is not causative of change but liberating of the will-to-good in those she touches. In the world Pippa perceives in her innocence,

"God's in his heaven -  
 All's well with the world!"<sup>131</sup>

is a truth, for she discerns the harmony issuing from God, of which she is part. And so Pippa sings not of man's world shaped by gnostic will, but of the world of the natural will. As such her song

awakens in her listeners their own response to goodness and harmony, enabling the integration of gnomic and natural will. That is, they are alerted to the battle within themselves between self and ego, to the captivity of innocent spirit to the desires and perceptions of psychic man.

Sebald is a man in bondage to the ego. Response to Pippa's song is the arousal of his own will-to-good and of awareness of enslavement. He is freed to make his choice of good or evil. Consequently he perceives that Ottima has been to him not a person but an illusory, desirable object who had equally made of him a possession. Their relationship has been based on mutual fantasy and so Ottima is evil in her non-entity :-

My God, and she is emptied of it now!  
 Outright now! - how miraculously gone  
 All of the grace - had she not strange grace once? ...  
 ... To think  
 She would succeed in her absurd attempt  
 And fascinate by sinning,<sup>132</sup>

And so, once recognised, this world of I-it relationships can be forsworn and reality welcomed :-

Though I be lost,  
 I know which is the better, never fear,  
 Of vice or virtue, purity or lust,  
 Nature or trick!<sup>133</sup>

Response to Pippa's goodness enables Sebald to re-assert the primacy of goodness within man.

Pippa is a vital link in a chain reaction, for Ottima is also liberated to make new choices. The lustful, ruthless woman discovers a capacity for a love which is self-relinquishing and vicarious rather than all-devouring :-

no, no, Sebald, not yourself, kill me!  
 Mine is the whole crime. ...  
 ... Not me - to him, O God, be merciful!<sup>134</sup>



Similarly, Pippa's song awakens in Jules his desire for truth and beauty, distorted by its direction towards the inanimate and by the consequence of substituting rivalry for relationship. Man's approval, his definition of beauty and success had become his central values, the egos of men supplanting the self derived from God :-

Oh to hear  
God's voice plain as I heard it first, before  
They broke in with their laughter! I heard them  
Henceforth, not God!<sup>135</sup>

Jules comes to acknowledge that artistic responsibility and responsiveness belong to man in the nurturing of other selves. Pippa's song revives intuitions of this creative, God-like self and enables him to discern the innocence, the will-to-good, in the abused Phene.

In comparable ways, Luigi's struggle between existence for others and for the satisfaction of his ego is resolved through response to Pippa's song, while the Bishop is confirmed in his threatened orientation to goodness. The "sinners" are enabled to realise neglected innocence, the "righteous" are not only established in their fidelity to goodness but brought to awareness of their fellowship in sin. The proud monsignor comes also to ask for mercy. Each character touched by Pippa's song re-orientates himself towards the goodness in himself and consequently also towards his fellows.

There has been, therefore, a realisation of spiritual relationship between Pippa and these important citizens of Asolo. Such a relationship defies the barriers of egotism and social distinctions between men and extends far beyond the lives of those

who have been directly touched. Just as in Dickens' Bleak House man's "bonding in being"<sup>136</sup> transcends all the limitations of his social existence.

Browning, as I have already suggested, perceived primitive bestiality, Adamic manhood, as the fuel for the behaviour of God-usurping egotists in their reduction of men to controllable objects. Caliban Upon Setebos explores this primitive being in its essential nature, illustrating the poet's belief that Victorian pretensions to progress were but a regression to bestiality. Browning, like Dickens, knew that his world was one in which the prehistoric creature might be anticipated.

Caliban alternates between Satanic rivalry with God and grovelling subjection.<sup>137</sup> His apprehensions of power within both Setebos and himself are devoid of any accompanying awareness of relationship and derivation. Caliban is either an "I" in competition with the "I" of Setebos, or an object lacking any sense of his own selfhood. When Setebos is felt to be supreme, Caliban cannot say "I": ~~he~~

Will sprawl, now that heat of day is best.<sup>138</sup>

and he is to himself

a sea-beast, lumpish, which he snared, ...  
... Plays thus at being Prosper in a way  
Taketh his mirth with make-believe.<sup>139</sup>

Whereas, as the emulating "I", all else exists as play-things and victims or as sources of gratification :-

Look now, I melt a gourd-fruit into mash,  
Add honey-comb and pods, I have perceived, ...  
... Put case, unable to be that I wish  
I yet could make a live bird out of clay;  
Would I not take clay, pinch my Caliban  
Able to fly?<sup>140</sup>

The creator, divine or human, is only the manipulator of his own creatures.



In considering Setebos, Caliban uses "I" of himself when he can imagine equality rather than submission :-

He is strong and Lord  
Am strong myself, compared to yonder crabs. ...  
As it likes me each time, I do; so He!<sup>41</sup>

but the equality proposed results in an apprehension of parallel rather than reciprocal existence. Caliban cannot conceive of I-Thou relationship either between Setebos and himself, or himself and his fellow-creatures. Nor can he understand himself and his powers as derived from those of Setebos, making him the participant in the "I" of his Creator. Caliban acknowledges only the powerful manipulation of Setebos, the projection of his own qualities, or the benign but indifferent existence of The Quiet. Transcendant benevolence has no link with man. Power exists within and beyond man but no affinity between the two is apprehended. Primitive man is therefore left to the vicious exercise of his own power and lust, and to his expectations of a world shaped by them. Caliban is natural man in need of the Incarnation to establish not only the unity of The Quiet with the powerfulness of Setebos but also the affinity between this loving Power and the nature of man. He needs the revelation of a God who has the relationships of Father and Brother with Man and who therefore makes loving mutuality the ground for human community. Caliban is not yet a man until he achieves this understanding of derived and related selfhood. It is such rudimentary manhood towards which Browning's villains have returned and from which his egotists must grow. Caliban Upon Setebos is less an essay in natural theology than it is an epitome of Browning's concept of psychic man.

The major aspects of Browning's thought about the self have

been seen to be those of patristic and mystical theology, a theology which informed much of the religious thinking of the Victorian period. Browning's participation in this traditional vision may be further substantiated by a study of his acquaintance with this theology and of his kinship with some of his major Christian contemporaries.

## II

As Maynard and Berlin-Liebermann have indicated,<sup>142</sup> the religious perspective in the household of the young poet was somewhat broader than the Evangelicalism of his mother might suggest. The family reading included a liberalised Calvinism which exposed them to a covenant theology restoring man's moral responsibility. Moreover, his father's deep knowledge of Rabbinical theology introduced the son not only to Hebraic thought but to the Greek-influenced Judaism greatly similar to patristic thought. In this way, alternative visions of man were available in the poet's earliest environment.

Furthermore, the young Browning much favoured Quarles' Emblems in which were found extracts from the Fathers and Doctors of the Church; these similarly widened the popular Calvinist approach to man. Although the majority of quotations emphasised sin and frailty, some few asserted the glory of the self as the image of God, the necessity of progress and the relationship of failure to perfection :-

O my soule, stamp't with the image of God  
Love him of whom thou art so much belov'd.<sup>143</sup>



In vain he lifteth up the eyes of his heart to  
 behold his God who is not first rightly advised  
 to behold himself, ... to see thy God is perfectly  
 to see thyself.<sup>144</sup>

(Love) maketh God man, and man God; things temporall,  
 eternall; mortall, immortall;<sup>145</sup>

Be alwayes displeased at what thou art, if thou  
 dost desire to attain what thou art not: for where  
 thou hast pleased thyself, there thou abidest:  
 But if thou sayest I have enough, thou perishest:  
 Alwayes adde, alwayes walk, alwayes proceed;  
 neither stand still, nor go back, nor deviate:  
 He that standeth still, proceedeth not;<sup>146</sup>

It is no such hainous matter to fall afflicted;  
 as being down to be dejected; It is no danger for  
 a soldier to receive a wound in battel, but after  
 the wound received, through despair of recovery to  
 refuse a remedy; for we often see wounded champions  
 wear the Palm at last, and after fight, crowned  
 with glory.<sup>147</sup>

The literary diet of Browning in his early manhood also increased his acquaintance with a vision of the self derived from patristic anthropology. The poetry of George Herbert, much admired by Browning, embodies many of the patristic themes found in the later poet. Mutability and imperfection have for Herbert, as for Gregory of Nyssa, a double implication : reminders of man's frailty and impermanence as part of the natural creation, they are also means of shaping for flight. Capacity for affliction allows the development of Easter wings which redeem the mortality of the creature. Such shaping through sin and conflict is modelled upon the crucifixion of Christ in Herbert's poetry, as it is in that of his admirer.

The pervasive flower imagery in the poetry of Herbert further reinforces this vision. Man is a "frail, momentanie bloom"<sup>148</sup> but as such he is made for participation in a cycle of growth in which the imperfection of withering is necessary to fruitfulness. And Herbert's flower-like man, dependent upon grace, is man surrendered

to the pruning forces of life. Like the artist in Pictor Ignotus, the subject of Herbert's poetry is always faced with the choice of rebellion or obedience, spiritual life or death, as, notably, in The Collar and Affliction 1 :-

Yet, though thou troublest me, I must be meek;  
In weakness must be stout,  
Well, I will change the service and go seek  
Some other master out.<sup>149</sup>

Furthermore, Herbert's man, whether in glory or misery, always belongs to God, being derived from him as "thy dust"<sup>150</sup> and being created for union with him. The anguish of Herbert's poetry is that of the man who knows he has gone astray from his nature into "the land of unlikeness". In poems like Clasping of Hands salvation is restoration both to likeness and relationship to God. And, as with Browning, the relationship to God of the microcosmic person implies relationship to all other men. Each man is "the Church", the house of God whose existence is set within the larger body of "The Temple". The life of each man is linked with those on the threshold of divine life and with the company of The Church Militant. In the manner of Sordello every man represents the whole of which he is one part.

English Romanticism was also a further formative influence upon Browning's view of the self, for it provided insights which married with his theological knowledge. Shelley and Keats offered Browning a view of selfhood which distinguished self from ego, in distinguishing between vision and individual fancy. For Shelley the self, understood as an isolated ego, was inimical to the true nature of man.<sup>151</sup> Man the poet, like the skylark, must sing the song that is his as the property of his species; the subjective song of the skylark is the expression not of individual personality



but of the nature of the bird. Man the poet is to voice, similarly, the experience, the suffering and the glory of manhood; in this sense he is a voice of the spirit of man. Possession of the gift of song is necessarily accompanied by solidarity with mankind. Of such a belief both Shelley's political activity and his poetry are evidence, while the early poem Alastor, like Keats' Endymion, teaches the necessity of embracing relationship and creatureliness.

This acceptance of manhood, for Keats and Shelley, requires both detachment from ego and involvement in "the vale of soul-making",<sup>152</sup> in the manner of Browning's Caponsacchi. Individuation is distinguished from individuality. Hence Shelley's captive Prometheus has to abandon individual passion and hatred in order to free the spiritual power of the world he encompasses and represents. Keats' Hyperion in Hyperion, a Vision must lose half of himself and then become "ghostly"<sup>153</sup> before he is granted the vision of reality. The spiritual, visionary self lies "behind" psychological individuality in all three poets.

Shelley's atheism, which Browning adopted for a time, was, in part, an apophatic theology similar to that of Carlyle. Like Carlyle, Shelley knew that the Infinite defeated man's image-making faculty, for

the deep truth is imageless<sup>154</sup>

but he also knew that this truth was given expression in the life of man, the infinite through the finite. The paradox of Shelley's belief is seen in Adonais in which continued non-personal life for Keats is asserted in a poem which is the testimony of love for, and belief in the worth of, the particular person. Browning's belief in Shelley's incipient Christianity is akin to Keble's acceptance

of a "Christian" Vergil and Plato. More than a desire to save literary heroes, it is the perception within their works of beliefs found to be more fully articulated in a Christian theology.<sup>155</sup>

Furthermore, research for his own early collections of poetry brought Browning acquaintance with patristic thought. Study of the background for Paracelsus entailed familiarising himself with the Behmenist thought of the period<sup>156</sup>. In Boehme there was available to the poet the concepts of man as an image of God and as a microcosm and mediator of the universe. There was also a strong emphasis upon the nothingness of the self apart from God and the necessity of man's co-operation in the realisation of his spiritual selfhood :-

If you are Zion, a reborn and newly found child -  
show your power and virtue and set forth the child  
Jesus out of you so that man might see that you  
are His wet-nurse. If not, then Christ's children  
will say that you have found only the child of history,  
only the cradle of the child.<sup>157</sup>

From Browning's own testimony, some direct knowledge of the Fathers during this period must be assumed. In explaining to Elizabeth Barrett the meaning of Bells and Pomegranates as sound and sense, poetry with thought, music with discoursing, he continued

It is little to the purpose that such is actually  
one of the most familiar of the Rabbinical (and  
patristic) acceptances of the phrase. ... Faith  
and good works is another fancy.<sup>158</sup>

Although he cites examples of the use in mediaeval iconography of the pomegranate as a symbol of good works, it is possible that Browning may have known the explanation of Aaron's robe given in Gregory of Nyssa's The Life of Moses :-

The golden bells alternating with the pomegranates  
represent the brilliance of good works. They are



the two pursuits through which virtue is acquired, namely, faith towards the divine and conscience towards life.<sup>159</sup>

Rabbinical studies may have led Browning to read The Life of Moses or to have become familiar with its contents, which embody many of the themes of his poetry. However, the exact nature of the poet's knowledge of the Fathers at this time must remain conjectural. That the poet did, nonetheless, receive considerable exposure to patristically-influenced religious thought through his relationships may be more firmly established.

The friendship of Browning with the Unitarian, later "free-thinking", William Johnson Fox is frequently cited as evidence of Browning's own heterodoxy. The views of Fox in his later years, in which traditional Christianity was totally eschewed, have tended to be taken as evidence of the poet's religious radicalism.<sup>160</sup> However, the beliefs of Fox in the early decades of the century were shaped by Benevolism, a development of Cambridge Platonist theology, and by the Unitarian interpretation of the Fathers and these seventeenth century Platonists. Some Unitarians in the early years of the nineteenth century had returned to the writings of the early Church in their defence of Arianism and had claimed Whichcote and his colleagues as co-religionists.<sup>161</sup> Consequently the "modern" Fox presented many traditional concepts in his works, despite his occasional rationalism and millenarianism. At times in Fox the "mind" appears slightly more as a rational than a spiritual faculty, and man's growth to perfection is seen in terms of earthly mastery. Such millenarian hopes were not, however, unique to Fox. Significant Episcopalians such as Thomas Erskine of Linlathlen also held Millenarian views which greatly influenced

F. D. Maurice. A theologically-based optimism was awakened at an early stage in Browning's century.

This optimism of Fox, like that of Browning and Gregory of Nyssa, springs from belief in the supremacy of Goodness and the non-entity of evil.<sup>162</sup> As for Julian of Norwich, so for Fox "sin is necessary"<sup>163</sup> as the midwife of good :-

evil is of temporary duration, admitted into the plans of God on account of the good to which it is subservient, destined to destruction and to be succeeded by an otherwise unattainable degree of universal felicity.<sup>164</sup>

There is confidence, too, that progress, the process of growth, is the law of life :-

But for wisdom, happiness  
Blessed life and life to bless,  
Love, the soul of deity  
And progress through eternity  
Did God make man.

For cultured earth and conquered wave,  
Fancy bright and science grave,  
Mind and heart with blending powers,  
Building more than Eden's bowers  
Did God make man.<sup>165</sup>

Fox is quite as immanentist and confident in man as a co-creator with God as were the Catholic theologians of the close of his century. If Browning was an influence upon their thought it was through his continuation of this approach fostered by Fox.

Fox was, indeed, akin to the Tractarians in his emphasis upon the glory of man arising from his indwelling by God, although they would have debated with his neglect of Christology. Man, to Fox, is not substantially divine, but the temple of his Deity, a familiar Pauline theme :-

"Make us a god", saith man :  
Religion followed Art,  
And answered, "Look within  
God is in thine own heart -



His noblest image there and holiest shrine,  
Silent revere - and be thyself divine.<sup>166</sup>

For Fox "heart" and "mind" are often used synonymously to denote the spiritual intelligence of man which is also for the patristic tradition his capacity for "reasonable love"<sup>167</sup> :-

We trust the heart of man  
In the deep workings of the mind  
The law and love of God we find  
And providential order scan -  
We trust the heart of man.<sup>168</sup>

Here is Browning's belief in the supremacy of soul above ratiocination, as seen in Parleying With Charles Avison and in his pervasive concern for the primacy of the intuitive "heart" over the purely rational "head".

The hopes for the earth and the belief in the glorious destiny of man which are found in the works of Fox spring from his conviction of the centrality of God to man's life. Man is made for fulfilment in the Pleroma, in which God is all; the vision of completion is akin to the doctrine of apocatastasis developed by Gregory of Nyssa :-

God is love - his dominion is boundless - his agency is that of omnipotent benevolence. Whatever be the aberrations in their course, from him his creatures spring and to him they shall ultimately be re-united that he "may be all in all". For Earth must always have its imperfections and sufferings; ... Our fairest fancy of millennial glories fades and is eclipsed in comparison with the state where there shall be no death - where we shall form one holy and blessed community with the good of all ages and nations; and the gates will only close on that which would defile, embitter or destroy. Then shall we pass on through successive aeras of blessedness, each glowing with higher splendour, to that consummation of overwhelming glory, too dazzling to be steadily contemplated, when shall be achieved the final triumph of almighty love - when redeemed and ransomed multitudes, the remaining victims of evil, shall be emancipated from its last retreats: and, the darkest mind illumined, the foulest bosom purified, not one vicious impulse shall be felt, and not one tear shall fall through the illimitable regions of the universe of God;<sup>169</sup>

To Elizabeth Barrett is unanimously accorded the major responsibility for the shaping of the poet's mature religious beliefs and hence for his acceptance of Dissenting Christianity. However, although the influence of Elizabeth is beyond dispute, its nature requires cautious explication. While the overt emphasis upon the historical Incarnation appears only in the poems dating from Browning's relationship with Elizabeth Barrett, as I have suggested the early poetry depends upon an implicitly incarnational vision of man. The themes of patristic anthropology, gained from study and friendship, and affirmed by personal religious intuition, were fully restored to their Christological source by Elizabeth rather than replaced by her with the tenets of Evangelicalism.

Although a Nonconformist, Elizabeth Barrett, as an excellent Greek scholar, studied for some considerable period the works of the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom.<sup>170</sup> Her tutor Mr. Boyd was also familiar with the remaining Cappadocian, Gregory of Nyssa, and it was under such influence that Elizabeth adopted universalism.<sup>171</sup> The patristic Anglicanism of Richard Hooker and the Benevolist Unitarianism of William Ellery Channing were for her further confirmation of the Cappadocian vision of the exaltation of man in Christ.<sup>172</sup> It was this traditional Christianity which Elizabeth offered her husband.

The catalogue of Browning's library lists several copies of the works of Basil, Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom, mostly the property of Elizabeth.<sup>173</sup> It is certain that the poet gained fuller knowledge of patristic theology through his wife. It remains a matter for speculation whether Browning, himself a sound



student of Greek, undertook, as a result of this influence, his own study of these Fathers of the Church.

From Gregory Nazianzen, whether directly or indirectly, Browning would have gained confirmation of his belief in man and a full Christological basis for human solidarity. For Gregory the mystery of man who is both "human clay" and "divine gold" is part of the mystery of the God who assumed human likeness :-

What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?  
 What is this new mystery that concerns me? I am  
 small and great, lowly and exalted, mortal and  
 immortal, earthly and heavenly. I share one  
 condition with the lower world, the other with  
 God; one with the flesh, the other with the  
 spirit. I must be buried with Christ, arise  
 with Christ, be joint heir with Christ, become  
 the Son of God, yea, God Himself.  
 .. This is the purpose of the great mystery for  
 us. This is the purpose of God, Who for us was  
 made man and became poor, to raise our flesh and  
 recover His image, and remodel man, that we  
 might all be made one in Christ, who was perfectly  
 made in all of us all that He himself is,<sup>174</sup>

And man the image of an incarnate God requires growth and probation for the fulfilment of his identity :-

(God) placed him, great in littleness on the  
 earth; a new Angel, a mingled worshipper, fully  
 initiated into the visible creation, but only  
 partially into the intellectual; king of all  
 upon earth, but subject to the king above;  
 earthly and heavenly; temporal and yet immortal;  
 visible and yet intellectual; half-way between  
 greatness and lowliness; in one person combining  
 spirit and flesh; ... the one that he might  
 continue to live and praise his Benefactor, the  
 other that he might suffer, and by suffering be  
 put in remembrance, and corrected if he became  
 proud of his greatness. A living creature  
 trained here, and then moved elsewhere; and,  
 to complete the mystery, deified by its  
 inclination to God.<sup>175</sup>

The "tendency to God" perceived in Paracelsus is here seen in its Christological origin.

The "training" and "suffering" of Gregory is the aspiration and imperfection of Browning. Desire for that which lies beyond man's comprehension is the one means of deification; God acts :-

as an object of wonder to become more and more  
an object of desire, and being desired to purify,  
and by purifying to make us like God;<sup>176</sup>

In Basil the Great was available confirmation of the primacy of innocence and love. For Basil the Fall could not destroy man's inheritance from a God of Love, nor his responsibility and freedom in fully realising this heritage :-

when the creature was made (I mean man) a certain Word was disseminated among men, having within itself the tendency towards an adaptation to love. The pupils in the school of God's commandments having received this Word are by God's grace enabled to exercise it with care, to nourish it with knowledge, and to bring it to perfection. ... we possess the power to love implanted in us at the moment we were constituted.<sup>177</sup>

Browning increased his knowledge of the patristic tradition through his study of the German mystics during the period of the success of Colombe's Birthday.<sup>178</sup> These mystics, Eckhart, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, and their followers attempted the interpretation of the patristic heritage in terms of scholasticism. As such they provided a vital, if often misunderstood, link with pre-rationalist theology.

Following the Eastern Fathers, Ruysbroeck taught of a God indwelling the soul, yet distinguished in substance from man :-

we are united to God without medium above all  
virtues, where we carry His image in the apex  
of our created essence; yet also we remain  
ever in ourselves like to Him and united to Him  
by means of His grace and our virtuous life.<sup>179</sup>

Likeness to God requires the co-operation with God in "virtuous life" also demanded by Browning. The self must realise its identity as an



image of God for Ruysbroeck, just as for Eckhart the pure virgin soul must give birth to Christ. Similarly for Tauler, as Ozment suggests, "the soul is God's oyster",<sup>180</sup> giving of itself in the making of its pearl. Browning's "idiosyncratic" beliefs about man's growth into godhood may be seen to relate directly to this traditional mystical Christianity.

The sensitivity of the poet to this traditional thought links him with currents in English religious life from which he appears quite isolated. Tractarianism did much to revive interest in patristic theology, Basil the Great and John Chrysostom proving to command a wide readership.<sup>181</sup> "Broad" Churchmen such as Charles Kingsley were keenly interested in mystical theology, Kingsley himself editing a selection of sermons by Tauler.<sup>182</sup>

Tractarian thought, although essentially conservative, nevertheless opened up new approaches to man and his social relationships through its emphasis upon the Incarnation. As Peck suggests in The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement, the Greek Christology restored by the Movement enabled a greater appreciation of the fundamental nature of humanity :-

The doctrine of the enhypostasis of the Lord's human nature finds the reality and fulness of his humanity precisely in association with His Deity: which obviously means that divine personality "already contains within itself all that goes to make up human personality", so that the act of Incarnation was no cosmic freak, because its possibility was given in the nature of personality, human and divine. I think we must allow that this was one valuable contribution in the teaching of Apollinaris, namely, that there was already a human element in God, which alone made Incarnation possible. At all events this thesis finds a place in the ultimate presentation of Greek Christology; and it follows that human personality, created, limited as it is, must be regarded as of divine kinship.<sup>183</sup>

To the Tractarians Incarnation was not a prelude to a mechanical or legal process of Atonement, but a restoration of man as the true Shekinah, the dwelling-place of Christ.<sup>184</sup> The germs of later Anglo-Catholic convictions inhere in this renewed doctrine.

Acceptance of the necessity of growth and change provides a further link between the poetry of Browning and Tractarian theology. Man must become what his baptism makes him. Consequently, Tract Sixty-Seven, Scriptural Views on Holy Baptism, quotes St. Cyprian with approval :-

We cannot bear the heavenly image, unless we realise the likeness of CHRIST in that which we have begun to be. For this is it, to have changed what thou wast not and begun to be what thou wast not, that thy Divine birth may shine forth in thee,<sup>185</sup>

Moreover, Browning's belief in the law of progress is given forceful expression in the works of Pusey's pupil, R. M. Benson. For Benson man is to grow into the activity of an infinite God; as for Gregory of Nyssa, his progress has no end :-

Our life is to be a life of progress. ...  
... Man's sense of progress is in earthly development, our sense of progress is in heavenly detachment. Our spiritual life is not to be a violation of that great law of our nature, the law of progress; but it is to be its great, its truest perfection ... Man becomes fit for heaven by an exhaustless energy of being, until he rises from earth to heaven, not wearied by the toil of earth, but capable by the preliminary toils of earth of entering into those vaster energies which constitute the blessedness of the soul, as it rises into the activity of God. Society must develop the energies of each individual man. Society is the sphere in which man is to be proved.<sup>186</sup>

This is the self as it is found in the poetry of Browning, perpetually active and surrendered to the shaping, perfecting powers at work in human life.



For theologian, as for poet, personal progress not only takes place in society but is inseparable from acknowledgement of solidarity in that society. Benson's comments on the isolated genius sum up Browning's views in Paracelsus and Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society :-

A man who can so advance in everything as to be in any sense of the word self-sufficient or independent is advancing into a position at variance with the primary law of our nature. A man who is so self-contained as not to be bound to the sympathies of the society round about him is violating the true law of his being. In the advancement of wealth, or of science, or of the intellect, he may seem to attain to a height which isolates him; but, as the highest peaks of the material universe are barren, so must such an isolation of human advancement terminate in barrenness also.<sup>187</sup>

Benson's insistence upon the social, relating nature of man is one in spirit and source with that of F. D. Maurice, as the discussion of Carlyle has indicated. For Maurice the brotherhood of Christ with man destroyed the concept of isolated individuality. Hence he could aver to R. C. Trench :-

I am more and more convinced that we must not use personal and individual as synonymous words, but that, in fact, we shall have most sense and a most lively realisation of our distinct personality when we cease to be individual and delight to contemplate ourselves as members of one body in one Head.<sup>188</sup>

With Benson, Maurice understood being towards, and being on behalf of, others as essential aspects of man's identity.

But if, in the theology of Maurice, sacrifice was involved "in the very original of the universe" and hence in man, there was also in him "the eternal opposite" of sacrifice - sin.<sup>189</sup> Just as for Browning man is held in tension between Christ and Cain, so for Maurice, as James Martineau perceived

Original Sin ... is not, in his ... view, a prior condition giving way to "reconciliation" as posterior: but both exist together in all men.<sup>190</sup>

And the immanentism of Browning is also that of Maurice for whom the Incarnation was a sanctification of human life and relationships. "Flesh helps spirit"<sup>191</sup> because it is relationship in the flesh which provides man's only means of perceiving spiritual reality. Maurice's colleague Kingsley thus advised one seeking his guidance :-

Those ... who are spiritually enlightened, have learnt to believe that these relationships to man are the symbols of relationship to God, ... That we are brothers and sisters, in as far as we are children of the same Heavenly Father. And finally, that these human relationships are given us to teach us their divine antitypes; and therefore that it is only in proportion as we appreciate and understand the types that we can understand the antitypes.<sup>192</sup>

And for Kingsley, as this letter explains, such learning from love of the type was one which continues into eternity. Human growth was not held to be limited to the finitude of earthly existence.

Like Fox, Maurice and Kingsley had hopes for the restoration of the world, through the full realisation of human brotherhood under the Fatherhood of God. Like the Tractarians, they held that the truths about manhood issued from the truths about Godhood revealed in Christ. The Unitarian's emphasis upon God the Father is found by these theologians, as by the poet, to require a corresponding emphasis upon the Son as God-Man. One remark of Father George Congreve, disciple of Benson in the Society of St. John the Evangelist, expresses the governing principle of the Incarnational theology of both the poetry and the age of Browning :-

A man without God is no more truly a man than a corpse is.<sup>193</sup>



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28. ibid., VII, A death in the desert, 142.
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53. Browning, Works X, The ring and the book, l 1617; 128.
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55. For discussion see Lossky, op. cit., p.224.
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57. ibid., IV, Bishop Blougram's apology, 252.
58. ibid., VIII, The ring and the book, ll 712-729, 29-30.
59. Gospel according to St. Luke, ch.9, v.62.
60. Browning, Works, XI, Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, 145.
61. ibid., XI, Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, 135.
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65. This vision of response to the "infinite moment" would seem to invite comparison with the teaching of de Caussade on the "sacrament of the present moment". See  
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66. De Vane, W. C.      A Browning handbook  
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92. ibid., 1, Pauline, 22.
93. ibid., 1, Pauline, 37.
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98. Contrast Paracelsus' idolatry with the Christian vision of man's exaltation by God given by Gregory of Nyssa :-

though He is so great that He can grasp all creation in His palm, you can wholly embrace Him; He dwells within you, nor is He cramped as He pervades your entire being, saying: "I will dwell in them and walk among them (2 Cor-6:16)".

in

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Here the "grasping" is the gift of God and not an action of man. Paracelsus typifies one form of Neo-Platonic ascent to God which ignores concepts of love and grace.

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100. ibid., II, Paracelsus, bk.3, 109.
101. ibid., II, Paracelsus, bk.3, 30.
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105. Allchin, Solitude and communion, op. cit., p.4.
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## CHAPTER FIVE

THE COTTAGE OF THE HEART AND THE CHURCH OF DARKNESS :  
SELFHOOD AND THE INDWELLING CHRIST IN THE WORKS OF GEORGE MACDONALD

When we gain a brother, we gain God.<sup>1</sup>

You must build for yourself ... a little cell in the depths of your soul ... retire into this solitude and give yourself up to the Holy Spirit so that He may transform you into God.<sup>2</sup>

I

Modern critical attention is most commonly paid to George MacDonald as a writer of fantasy and fore-runner of modern psycho-analytical theory.<sup>3</sup> The accuracy of his dream-narratives and his acute awareness of the powerful, hidden aspects of man's nature invite comparison with Freud and Jung. This awareness, however, may be more profitably understood, not as an adumbration of developments in depth psychology but as a response to patristic and mystical Christianity. Such response relates the author not only to the Christian past but to the theological renewal of his own century and its expression in contemporary literature.

The tradition to which MacDonald belonged is made quite explicit in his many novels, sermons and essays which provide a key to the imagery of his highly-wrought and elusive fairy-tales and parables. His works must be read as a whole if an image-vocabulary is to be established. In these works there is evident not only his breadth of religious sympathy but also his perception of the continuity of the Christian experience of the self, uniting men so apparently



diverse as Jacob Boehme and John Henry Newman.<sup>4</sup> As this study has indicated, this experience is one of the inherent glory of man as a created image of God and of the consequently illusory nature of the psychological self in isolation from God. For MacDonald there is a clear distinction between the true selfhood derived from, and related to God, incorporating personality, and the "natural" selfhood which constitutes that personality, the product of heredity and environment. The question for each man is

Shall I be born of God, or of mere man?  
Be made like Christ, or on some other plan?<sup>5</sup>

The choice is between "godness" or "selfness", "original nature" in the image of God or "ancestral nature" in the image of purely animal creation.<sup>6</sup> The ego frequently appears therefore as the "bastard selfhood" which usurps the rightful "Christ-self", the image of the first-born.<sup>7</sup> Only this Christ-self derived from God can properly say "I" :-

Thou art the only person, and I cry  
Unot the father I of this my I.<sup>8</sup>

In accordance with the patristic tradition, this notion of derivation is strictly relational and graceful. Man is not fallen divinity imprisoned in matter but the child of a father, dependent upon him for being, but capable of electing for rebellion or obedience. The self exists in God but must become itself through responsive co-operation with God, uniting an active passivity with the responsibility of a co-creator :-

yea, only he  
Who sonlike can create  
can ever be;  
Who with God wills not,  
is no son, not free ...  
...But thou art making  
me, I thank thee, sire,

...I will help thee; - gently  
                   in thy fire  
 I will lie burning; on thy  
                   potter's wheel  
 I will whirl patient.<sup>9</sup>

As in the thought of Eastern Fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa, sonship is at once a truth of creation, of grace, through the restoration of man in Christ, and of personal obedience to the facts of nature and grace. Irenaeus had perceived it thus :-

In the nature ... which we have by creation, we are, so to speak, all children of God, because we are all created by God. But in respect of obedience and learning we are not all God's children, but such as believe in Him and do His Will. ... And because Apostasy was ruling unrighteously over us, and we who by nature belonged to God Almighty were thereby alienated contrary to nature, ... the Word of God, ... righteously set Himself against the aforesaid Apostasy, ransoming from it the things which are His own.<sup>10</sup>

Sonship is natural to man, depravity unnatural. MacDonald, too, acknowledges that what man is in God is not what he appears to be on earth :-

My holy self, thy pure ideal, lies  
 Calm in thy bosom, which it cannot leave;  
 My self unholy, no ideal hies  
 Hither and thither, gathering store to grieve -  
 Not now, O father! now it mounts, it flies,  
 To join the true self in thy heart that waits,  
 And one with it, be one with all the heavenly mates.<sup>11</sup>

As in the theology of Gregory of Nyssa man is a "thought" of God and a created, free, being.<sup>12</sup> As such he has reality only when this divine thought and man's actuality coincide. The psychic self which is only the product of earthly transience has no permanent substance.<sup>13</sup>

To MacDonald, in the tradition of Greek Christology, humanity is implicit in God. Truly spiritual man is expressive primarily of the Creator rather than of Creation. Humanity is an attribute of God rather than a descriptive term for the animal homo sapiens.



Consequently MacDonald denies the doctrine of the two natures of Christ, who, he avers, assumed flesh but did not take on a humanity already his.<sup>14</sup> Hence the human childhood of Christ is understood as a manifestation of the nature of God which renders the child holy. Christ

Was, is and ever shall be divinely childlike. He could never have been a child if he would ever have ceased to be a child, for in him the transient found nothing. Childhood belongs to the divine nature.<sup>15</sup>

So, the Old Man of the Fire, the final gateway to Heaven for Tangle in The Golden Key is the eternal infant. The theme of holy childhood pervading MacDonald's work is more, then, than an inheritance from Romanticism, it reflects the humanity of God and the divinity of man whose life is a theophany.

However, this holy childhood, in a manner similar to Dickens, refers not to a state of immaturity, but to the condition Boehme termed "child-ship", one of the ever-innocent and ever-new trusting relationship with the Father characterised by Jesus. Hence Diamond in At the Back of the North Wind is "God's baby" not because he is physically a child, but because of his responsive trustfulness towards God as mediated by North Wind and his contentment with an identity defined by relationship. Yet this "baby" is also a mature man. Diamond's control of his father's horse and cab, with his resulting capacity to maintain his family, indicates full manhood in two ways. Materially, the child achieves the tasks of the adult. Spiritually, he has succeeded in mastering the passions of the earthly man, integrating them so as to sustain the life of his "family" of psychological attributes. (This use of the term "family" will be clarified at a later point, in the discussion of Biblical imagery).

Diamond is both the relating child and the self who has brought carnality under subjection to the spirit. He therefore stands as an icon of the perfect God-Man, a truly immortal Diamond.

The divine childship of Christ is also his divine brotherhood with man. And if God's sons are called to be like the Son, they are therefore also called to be brothers to one another. As the narrator of Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood insists

When God comes to man, man looks round for a neighbour.<sup>16</sup>

MacDonald fiercely opposed the popular Calvinism which made election rather than creation and restoration in the image of Christ the source of a restricted, rather than a universal, selfhood and brotherhood. In Robert Falconer the young hero who gives the novel its title struggles with the problem of brotherly love for the reprobate. His solution is given to his grandmother in the form of a speech about the lost, to be made to the saved at the Heavenly Banquet :-

Noo, we hae nae merit, an'they hae nae merit,  
an' what for are we here and them there? But  
we're washed clean and innocent noo; and noo,  
whan there's no wyte lying upo' oursel's, it  
seems to me that we micht beir some o' the  
sins o' them 'at hae ower many. I call upo'  
ilk ane ye 'at has a frien' or a neebor down  
yonner, to rise up an taste nor bite nor sup mair  
till we gang up a' thegither to the fut o' the  
throne, an' pray the Lord to lat's gang and due  
as the Maister did afore's, and beir their griefs,  
and cairry their sorrows doon in hell there; gin  
it may be that they may repent and get remission  
o' their sins an' come up here wi' us at the  
long last,<sup>17</sup>

The self made in the image of Christ the man for others must likewise own a vicarious selfhood. The imperative to give the self for others is an ontological demand issuing from God's nature. So Charley Osborne in Wilfrid Cumbermede declares :-

If there were such a thing as a self always giving  
itself away - that self would be God.<sup>18</sup>



As Florovsky has said of sacrifice as it is understood in Orthodox theology, it is a root law of spiritual existence.<sup>19</sup> And similarly, in this theology there can be no sanctification for man apart from his brothers and no genuine desire in man for God which is not also desire for God for his brother.<sup>20</sup> MacDonald's affinities are clear.

Emphasis on brotherhood in MacDonald's works is accompanied by emphasis on the uniqueness of each man in relation to God. Each man is a particular expression of manhood formed after the likeness of God. In Robert Falconer he explains :-

My reader must not ... suppose that I do not believe in an individual relationship between every man and God, yes, a peculiar relationship, differing from the relationship between every other man and God! But this very individuality can only be founded on the broadest truths of the Godhood and the manhood.<sup>21</sup>

Men have absolute distinctiveness, for each derives his "I" from the God who is "I Am". Man must therefore seek particularity through obedience to God and not through emphasising aspects of his materiality. Only in this way can he avoid immersion in the matter from which his psychological individuality arises; in The Marquis of Lossie this view is expounded thus :-

It is when a man is most a man, that the cause of the man, the God of his life, the very life himself, the original life - creating Life, is closest to him, is most within him. The individual, that his individuality may blossom, and not soon be "massed into the common clay", must have the vital indwelling of the primary Individuality which is his origin. The fire that is the hidden life of the bush will not consume it. Not only then has each his individual relationship to God, but each man has his peculiar relationship to God ... There is no massing of men with God.<sup>22</sup>

The search for brotherhood is identical with the quest for personal distinctiveness, for both have their end only in God :-

Outside the making God we cannot meet  
Him he has made our brother;

The journey towards "peculiar relationship" with God will be the  
discovery of fellowship :-

homeward thus  
To find our kin we first must  
turn our wandering feet.<sup>23</sup>

The separate path along our individual spoke of the wheel leading to  
God, its hub, yet brings us closer to men until we meet in him. The  
image of Abba Dorotheus perfectly represents MacDonald's understanding  
of communion within diversity.<sup>24</sup> There is room in such a vision  
neither for the absolute individual of late European Romanticism  
nor for the "Religion of Humanity" with its collective selfhood.

MacDonald yet recognised a solitariness within the consciousness  
of man which seemed to be linked with the obscurity of the transcendent  
God. The God of "many mansions" is never known in his entirety to  
man. Each man enters one chamber of God hidden to others; equally,  
he has his own mysterious solitude known only to God. As expressed  
in Unspoken Sermons, there is necessarily "a flight of the alone  
to the Alone" :-

In every man there is a loneliness, an inner chamber  
of peculiar life into which God only can enter. I  
say not it is the innermost chamber - but a chamber  
into which no brother, nay, no sister can come. ...<sup>25</sup>  
by his creation then, each man is isolated with God.

A degree of inner isolation and incommunicability, as Augustine and  
Meister Eckhart acknowledged<sup>26</sup>, are aspects of the selfhood of man  
the brother.

In these themes of distinctiveness and brotherhood, as in those  
of growth, co-creation and sacrifice, may be seen the relationship  
between MacDonald and contemporary theologians. Newman similarly



felt the unique distinctiveness of the self which resisted the notion of collective or massed humanity :-

every being ... must live within himself for ever.  
He has a depth within him unfathomable, an infinite  
abyss of existence. ... A multitude is a collection  
of souls.<sup>27</sup>

Yet Newman also accepted that this personal loneliness was lived out within a membership of the Body of Christ which defied the claims of individualism.<sup>28</sup>

MacDonald's view of the related, particularised self is, indeed, that of Tractarianism generally. Renewal of emphasis upon the corporate nature of Christian life was accompanied by stress upon the necessity of personal conformity to Christ. Pusey urged his congregations to consider God as caring for each

as if He existed but for thee.<sup>29</sup>

and as desiring to make each a reflection of some distinctiveness in himself. But to Pusey this love of God for each person is love, not for his individual personality, for his psychological diversity, but for his exalted manhood which makes him a member of Christ :-

He who is Perfect God became Man ... and now  
has taken our manhood into God, ... (it is) not  
lost, as in the ocean of Divinity, but for ever  
glorified, filled, in-oned with God. ... Blessed  
indeed was Adam before the Fall. ... Yet what his  
bliss to ours if we be Christ's? ... What to be  
sons of God as creatures, to this our sonship  
by being very members of the Eternal Son?<sup>30</sup>

MacDonald would dispute with Pusey about the distinction between sonship by Creation and by adoption, reflecting differences within patristic theology.<sup>31</sup> However, both were equally assured that the value of the person derived from a manhood capable of godhood.

Even more akin to MacDonald on this theme was R. M. Benson, Pusey's disciple. As the discussion of Carlyle and Browning has

shown, Benson was convinced that man's selfhood represented the social, relating nature of God. But relational selfhood was also particular, Benson believed, for God informs each man with his own distinctive consciousness :-

Man is called into the great movement of the Divine Being. The voice of God calls the individual soul, and absorbs the individual soul into itself, not, as philosophers may think, into nothingness, but rather into such a consciousness of personality as it could not have before; absorbs it into the consciousness of the eternal oneness of the life of God. Such is the end for which all mankind is formed.<sup>32</sup>

To the Tractarians relationship with God was that of the child to the Father. Pusey urged tender, child-like trust in God to those he counselled and an understanding of human relationships as lessons about God :-

We must be like little children resting on His Bosom ... ; if we must cry, it must be on our Father's bosom and be hushed there.<sup>33</sup>

You ask, "What is the good that the Deity should bid us ask, since He knows already what we want? God teaches us through our children. Is it not a happiness to a child to look up into a father's or a mother's face, and ask for what it wants, and have it given to them? Is it not nature to hold up its little arms and ask for what it wants?"<sup>34</sup>

Divine sonship entails for Pusey the realisation of true childship in man.

Realisation means growth, a process of becoming. The self in the thought of MacDonald, made for growth into his "ideal self" in God, is also the self made for endless progress which is found in the works of Benson. In his retreat address Progress, Benson parallels the vision of epektasis developed by Gregory of Nyssa<sup>35</sup> :-

Infinite is the advance of the soul by which we are called to the central glory of God, and yet the movement in the soul is a real movement,



becoming continually more intense, its operations becoming continually multiplied and glorified. The soul is borne onward into the glory of the Being of God, until at last it meets God, not to find itself arrested in progress, not to find a stopping-place in that contact, but, meeting God, and God meeting the soul, to rise in the fullness of the divine majesty, moving onwards in individual progress towards the full manifestation of God.<sup>36</sup>

While little is said by MacDonald of progress after union with God, much is to be found on the subject of continuous growth towards the end of union with him. The self ~~an~~ earth is ever provisional and in active search :-

Because I am not save as I am in thee  
My soul is ever setting out to win thee...  
... I know thee~~o~~, knowing that I do not know thee  
Nor ever shall till one with thee I know thee.<sup>37</sup>

This "setting-out" begins, but does not end, with earthly life. In Donal Grant the title character is convinced that his making has but begun; progress for man must be measured by ages and not by years. Similarly in Phantastes Anodos encounters wooden men scarcely distinguishable from trees, who believe their vocation is to trample upon others. Their rudimentary bodies reflect equally rudimentary humanity : their hewing into Christ-selves, should it occur, will require a time-span far exceeding the normal life-time.

Such a vision of the self in progress involves also an "unknowing", an agnosticism which is also available in Benson's thought. Man is not growing towards a fully identified, fully comprehended fixed-point; he must accept becoming something which he cannot know, in the darkness of faith, as Julian experiences in Within and Without :-

My life, my being, all that meaneth me,  
Goes darkling forward into something - what?  
O God, thou knowest. It is not my care.  
If thou wert less than truth, or less than love,

It were a fearful thing to be and grow  
 We know not what. ... let thy own design in me work on,  
 Unfolding the ideal man in me!  
 Which being greater far than I have grown,  
 I cannot comprehend, I am thine not mine,  
 One day, completed unto thine intent,  
 I shall be able to discourse with thee.<sup>38</sup>

The self, therefore, in Benson and in MacDonald is a potential, an energy rather than a static entity. A comment by Alain Riou on the dynamic nature of the image theology of Maximus the Confessor points to MacDonald's participation in an ancient vision of selfhood and to his true relationship to modern thought :-

This concept of the image as at once a present and a future state, an image in becoming and an image in its perfection, this block in man between nature and person, have given rise to the evocation of a certain kind of dramatic and very modern "existentialism".<sup>39</sup>

It is in existentialist theology as it is found in the evolutionary thought of Teilhard de Chardin and indeed, in the understanding of the dynamic nature of the universe in quantum physics that MacDonald's modernity may be located.

The energetic, elusive self called upon to give itself away or to break the bounds of its known identity, in imitation of a self-outpouring God is also found implicitly in the work of F. D. Maurice. The similarities between the thought of MacDonald and of Maurice, to whom the former attributed his conversion to Anglicanism, are manifold. It is clear that the theologian exerted a great influence upon the author, an influence which affirmed and extended, rather than created, his own theological thought.

While in his first, and only, Congregational parish in Arundel, the new minister MacDonald had encountered and approved of the Benevolist Unitarianism of William Ellery Channing, whose beliefs have been studied in relationship to Dickens. Writing from Arundel



to his father, MacDonald asserted :-

Far rather would I be such a Unitarian as Dr. Channing than such a Christian as by far the greater number of those that talk about his Divinity are. The former truly believes in Christ - believes in him far more than the so-called orthodox.<sup>40</sup>

It will be recalled from the discussion of Dickens that the principal<sup>al</sup> themes of Channing's preaching were of the nobility of human nature in its creation after God's image, of the subsequent brotherhood of the men sharing that image and of the existence of the unique personhood within the organic unity of mankind. Channing also espoused a vision of progress remarkably akin to that of Benson, one almost certainly derived from the same Biblical, and possibly from the same patristic, sources. In the formerly Unitarian Anglican priest Maurice MacDonald would have discovered the major beliefs of Channing firmly established upon an orthodox Trinitarian Christology.

Although not denying, as did MacDonald's usage, two natures in Christ, the term humanity in Maurice's theology means the nature of the race as found in Christ. Christ, and not fallen nature, defines man and provides the "only ground of human sonship".

If, therefore, in the thought of MacDonald and Maurice manhood is only identifiable in terms of an incarnate God then also God is apprehended and revealed only through enfleshed life. Human sonship and human parenthood teach of divine fatherhood; human institutions may foreshadow the divine. So, English education, Maurice believed, was based upon

the assumption that we are actually united to the Father of all in His Son; ... Such education assumes an actual relationship to the ground of all consciousness of it; an Actual and Living Being to

be the ground of that relation. That assumption brings our common life into harmony with our life as connected with the Kingdom of Heaven; each illustrates the other.<sup>41</sup>

To Maurice's associate, Kingsley, the mystery of the human mother and child points outward beyond the facts of human relationships to the mystery of eternity :-

as for the wonder of that sight ... I tell you this: That physicians and the wise men who look into the laws of our nature, of flesh and blood, say that the mystery is past their finding-out; ... if one could find out the full meaning of those two words, mother and child, one would be the wisest philosopher on earth, and see deeper than all who have ever yet lived, into the secrets of this world of time which we can see, and of the eternal world, which no man can see, save with the eyes of his reasonable soul.

And yet it is the most common every-day sight, ... It shows us how we are to despise nothing which God has made; above all to despise nothing which belongs to human nature, which is the likeness and image of God.<sup>42</sup>

So, too, MacDonald extolled the every-day relationships of parent and child, brother and sister but only when they fulfilled their sacramental function as outward signs of inner reality by pointing to the ground of relationship in God and hence to a wider brotherhood :-

Why does my brother come of the same father and mother? Why do I behold the helplessness of his infancy? ... Is it not that love may grow Lord of all between him and me ... I have had the sons of my mother that I may learn the universal brotherhood. For there is a bond between me and the most wretched liar that ever died for the murder he would not even confess, closer infinitely than that which springs only from having one father and mother. That we are the sons and daughters of God ... is a bond closer than all other bonds in one.<sup>43</sup>

Hence that parenthood which fails in sacramentality and in producing the brotherly self earns fierce rebuke, as in David Elginbrod :-



Mrs. Appleditch did not in the least love her children because they were children and committed to her care by the Father of all children; but she had loved them dearly because they were her children.<sup>44</sup>

Such children become the property of their parents and fall victim to the triumph of the "ancestral self", the ego, over the "god-self". The egotism of restricted parenthood is more fully presented in the Satanic Mr. Wylder in There and Back, who refuses any fatherhood behind his own psychological parenthood of his daughter Barbara :-

He was proud of her - selfishly proud. Was she not his? Was he not "the author of her being"? If he did not quite imagine he created her, he certainly never thought of anyone but himself having to do with her existence. All the credit was his! He forgot even what share her mother might claim; not to mention what in her might belong to the Sum of Thing, the insensate Pan.<sup>45</sup>

Family relationships may destroy the selfhood of its members through pride and possessiveness, and also through the egotism found to underlie rigidity and severity. Bad human fathering may lead to total rejection of God and consequently to failure in selfhood. The suicide of Charley Osborne in Wilfrid Cumbermede is due to his inability to trust a self and a world whose nature is defined by the reflection of deity in his repressive father. Similarly, in If I had a Father the search for the self through reconciliation between parents and their children is almost thwarted by the disruptive activity of the street-boys for whom fathers can only be a curse.

Work, likewise, is enhanced by the Incarnation for through it men are enrolled as fellow-workers with God. Maurice's efforts in working-class education are matched by the centrality of the skilled artisan and farmer in the novels of MacDonald: Richard Tuke

the blacksmith and book-binder, Andrew Comin the cobbler, Cosmo Warlock the farming laird. Each participates in fashioning the world of man and each surrenders himself to the shaping forces of life, defying self-creation.

This view of work leads to a conservatism in MacDonald comparable with that which has already been noted in Maurice, Carlyle and Dickens: to seek to rise out of the labouring-class is an endorsement of Godless devaluation of work. MacDonald desired to re-establish the true worth of God's fellow-workers who defy the egotism of current beliefs about wealth and status. The aspiring labourer may be an aspiring self-made man, intent upon his own "betterment" more than upon furthering the Kingdom of God. In There and Back the musings of Barbara Wylder on the worth of Richard Tuke as a poor, working, man are sternly reproved :-

By being a true workman, Mr. Tuke was a gentleman!  
... What if the working-man were to turn out the real lord of creation, and the gentleman have to black his boots! There was something like it in the Gospel!

She did not know that in general the working-man is as foolish and unfit as the rich man; that he only wants to be rich and trample on his own past. The working-man may perish like the two hundred of the crew, and the rich man be saved like the Ancient Mariner.<sup>46</sup>

Man's creation in the image of God renders irrelevant human estimations of status and worth. Yet these judgements of rank do provide a means of expressing in some of MacDonald's works a present spiritual inequality. The ideal and the actual self conflict; many men are only on the first steps towards actualising their spiritual nature, some are in the process of destroying it entirely. In the two tales of Princess Irene and Curdie the distinction between royalty and the miners suggests that between



pneumatic and carnal selfhood. Curdie is able to see great-grandmother because he is of royal blood - he has already become dimly aware of a spiritual inheritance as well as the ancestral nature of his earthy miner's identity. Curdie is receptive to more than the evidence of his senses whereas the miners

knew very little about the upper world, and what might take place there. They knew silver from copper ore; they understood the underground ways of things and they could look very wise with their lanterns in their hands searching after this or that sign of ore, or for some mark to guide their way in the hollows of the earth; but as to great-grandmothers, they would have mocked Curdie all the rest of his life for the absurdity of not being absolutely certain that the solemn belief of his father and mother was nothing but nonsense. Why, to them the very word "great-grandmother" would have been a week's laughter! I am not sure they were able quite to believe there were such persons as great-grandmothers; they had never seen one.<sup>47</sup>

The brotherhood between saint and sinner cannot deny a certain "aristocracy of the spirit". The child who has begun to realise his pneumatic selfhood is further advanced towards the manhood of Christ than the adults whose sole concern is with the observable facts of their psychological and material life. Nor does brotherhood protect against the possibility that men may forfeit humanity altogether, by ignoring spirit. Curdie is warned :-

all men, if they do not take care, go down the hill to the animals' country; ... many men are actually all their lives, going to be beasts. People knew it once, but it is long since they forgot it.<sup>48</sup>

"People" like Origen had taught that evil might become second nature, reducing man to sub-humanity.<sup>49</sup> The Cambridge Platonists had warned of the inner enmity of "the beast" of man's inheritance from earth.<sup>50</sup> In his own day, men who shared the Christian tradition of MacDonald recognised that man the consummation of the earth, its high-point,

was capable of "falling down the scale of creation". Kingsley speaks for Maurice, the Oxford Movement and the other literary subjects of this study when he warns of the fate of those who quench spirit :-

it is not over the dumb animals we must mourn. For they fulfil the laws of their being; and whatever they seek, they seek their meat from God.

Rather must we mourn over those human beings who, being made in the likeness of God, and redeemed again in that likeness by our Lord Jesus Christ, and baptised into that likeness by the Holy Spirit, put on again of their own will the likeness of the beasts that perish; and find too often, alas! too late, that the wages of sin are death.<sup>51</sup>

For Maurice this bestiality is also the evil of insubstantiality. Man without God has no being and can only masquerade as human, substituting the fabrications of the ego for the self. The resulting "vain show"<sup>53</sup> is the shadow-self which pursues Anodos in Phantastes, after his encounter with the Alder-Maiden. As James Hinton expressed it, ego is but "defect of being", creating in men "an emptiness where there should be a fullness"<sup>54</sup>. Carnal man, who depends for a sense of being upon the transience of his perishable animal nature has fallen prey to illusion, to the "prelest" which is the essence of evil for Russian inheritors of Orthodox theology.<sup>55</sup> In Biblical terms, he is seeking and storing his treasure of selfhood from and in the corruptibility of the world, rather than from Heaven and in Heaven.

MacDonald knew not only the theology of Channing and Maurice, "in whom the theology of the Fathers came to life"<sup>56</sup> in Anglicanism, but also that of Jacob Boehme and his non-juring interpreter, William Law. Reading the Bible in relation to these similar theologies, he produced in his works images and expressions which



are deeply traditional expansions of Biblical symbolism and which reveal his affinities with Christian mystical thought. Only Boehme and Law, deep mines of patristic and mediaeval wisdom, and Boethius may be cited with certainty as influences upon MacDonald. He can only be understood, however, in the light of the total tradition, if he is not to be mistaken, as he is by his literary biographer Wolff, as an idiosyncratic Christian owing more to the heterodoxies of Swedenborg and Novalis than to mainstream Christianity. A study of MacDonald necessitates therefore, in addition to consideration of his patristically-influenced contemporaries, an exploration of his use of the Bible. It requires furthermore an explication of his debt to Boehme and Law and of his response to the English literature shaped by the Christian mystical tradition. Such a division is inevitably artificial, separating what MacDonald's synthesising mind so tellingly unites. It remains, however, one means of momentarily catching some of his most elusive images and of illuminating more concealed thematic images. Since Biblical and Behmenist thought is so closely interlinked in MacDonald, interpretation in some instances must be cumulative rather than self-contained; partial analysis of images in the following section is completed in the discussion of Boehme.

## II

In the Bible MacDonald perceived primarily not a doctrine of election but of the Fatherhood of God and the hiddenness of the self, formed after Christ, in God. Just as Christ was veiled before men

in the Incarnation, he remains concealed in each man. Christ is truly not "deus absconditus" but "deus incognitus". Hence the romance theme of the "fair unknown" frequently provides the structural image for MacDonald's novels in which the Christ-self is vindicated or discovered. The earthly life of Christ may be held to make him the archetypal "fair unknown", who "came to his own and his own knew him not"<sup>57</sup>, became a slighted, ill-treated servant who achieves the ultimate task of knighthood in the Redemption.

This pattern is most clear in the novel Sir Gibbie. The dumb waif, Gibbie, has been the street urchin who has guarded not only his own alcoholic father but the many drunks in his environment, each identified as "father" by the child. Left in complete destitution after the death of his father, he travels back to the highland estate which is his unknown patrimony. There, acting as a hidden servant, he brings upon himself hostility and persecution until, after a cruel flogging, he is taken in by a shepherd's wife who recognises his identity :-

Then with a horror of pitiful amazement, she saw a great cross marked in two cruel stripes on his back; ... could it be that the Lord was still, child and man, suffering for his race, to deliver his brothers and sisters from their sins? - wandering, enduring, beaten, blessing still? accepting the evil, slaying it and returning none?<sup>58</sup>

Gibbie has been an innocent servant among the lost, and is the saving victim of the powerful. His restoration to his inheritance brings salvation not only for the people of his estate, but for the usurping laird of his property and the derelicts among whom he was reared. During the process of his education as a "gentleman" he also brings judgement upon those designated his guardians, for,



like Christ, his innocence and simplicity reveal to them their need of conversion. Confronted by Gibbie, the wife of his guardian, the clergyman Sclater, realises that

She must see to her hidden house. She must take dust-pan and broom and go about a little.<sup>59</sup>

Gibbie's dumbness and apparent foolishness seal the identification with Christ. His muteness recalls a Christ silent before his persecutors; moreover, it represents the constant childlikeness of Christ who was the "Verbum infans", the unspeaking Word. Closely associated with this is his status as a holy fool, living according to the New Testament in a way which scandalises the respectable and affirms the folly of the Cross. In the mystical tradition, the holy fool and the holy child were exemplified in Christ who witnessed to "ignorant wisdom": to be conformed to the likeness of Christ involved precisely the denudation, holy idiocy and silence of Gibbie.<sup>60</sup> MacDonald presented the tradition anew for his age.

This Christ-self in Gibbie, however, is always evident insofar as he endures little conflict with his "ancestral nature" and its shaping by his deprivations. Unlike Christ, he has no temptations in the desert. Lacking desire for self-preservation, bearing no resentments, without need to receive love, only once does Gibbie suggest his psychic humanity, in responding thus to a blow from Mr. Sclater :-

Half-stunned, he started to his feet, and for one moment the wild beast which was in him, as it is in everybody, rushed to the front of its cage.<sup>61</sup>

This absence of struggle and of the tension between Adam and Christ in Gibbie gives the novel an air of unreality. He is less than fully

incarnate, withdrawn from the realities of the fallen human condition which Christ embraced.

On account of this idealisation and the explicit cross-imagery in the flogging, Gibbie is readily acknowledged as a Christ-self. This tends to obscure the more realistic uses of the "fair unknown" theme in such novels as There and Back and Wilfrid Cumbermede. In these novels, the dispossessed heir comes back to his own home and family as a servant and must undergo not only calumny and persecution, but also purgation of ego, before he can claim his inheritance and restore order. The hero is unconsciously an image of Christ, but must come to fulfil his sonship to God, by losing his attachment to his self-definition and desires. In Wilfrid Cumbermede Wilfrid comes to realise that what he has regarded as his "self" and as love are illusory, because he has been focussed away from his source :-

All love is a worship of the infinite; what is called a man's love for himself is not love; it is but a fantastic resemblance of love; it is a creating of the finite, a creation of death.<sup>62</sup>

If Gibbie bears the cross from the cruelty of others, Wilfrid has to undergo an inner death in order to be free both to own and to relinquish his inheritance upon its restoration to him. He is then fully a Christ-self because freely giving away himself and his own, becoming rich in making himself poor for the sake of the beloved.

Similarly, Richard Tuke in There and Back is in the pattern of Christ as a dispossessed son, known as an artisan, who returns to his own estate. In the course of his growth he undergoes persecution from his relatives while learning of the full extent of "family" bonds. In discovering and caring for Alice and Arthur Manson, whom he believes to be his brother and sister, Richard's capacity for



unjudging love and loyalty is tried. He finds himself capable of refusing prosperity for their sake, choosing sacrifice in affirmation of relationship. Voluntary relinquishment of his birth-right is accompanied by the denudation of learning that his parents are not his progenitors. His familiar identity is destroyed in the establishment of a wider concept of fatherhood and motherhood. Unlike Gibbie, Richard does not attain to this stripped and sacrificial selfhood without struggle, without a contest with God, involving a purgatorial fever which acts as a "crucible of love" in detaching him from the needs of the ego.<sup>63</sup>

All-important is the "fair unknown" image in Malcolm and its sequel The Marquis of Lossie. The fisherman Malcolm, the circumstances of whose birth are surrounded by secrecy, is in some respects like Sir Gibbie in the natural innocence of his character. However, unlike Gibbie, Malcolm requires the guidance and wisdom of his tutor Mr. Graham for the shaping of his selfhood. But this shaping is also effected by involvement in the self-emptying experience of Christ. Before learning that he is heir to Lossie and laird of the people whose instinctive leader he has been, Malcolm undergoes suspicion, calumny and rejection. As with Christ in his home region, so with regard to Malcolm many are prepared to believe only the worst, unable to accept the identity of one reared among them.

Furthermore, Malcolm is also subjected to doubts about his own nature, and stripped of pride or security in his beliefs about his ancestry. He becomes "nobody" in his own eyes before he is exalted. Being led to believe that he is the natural son of the landowner Mrs. Stewart, a parentage which he bitterly rejects, he is



thrown into confusion about the value of manhood :-

as his material form came from the forms of his father and mother, could his soul come from their souls? or did the Maker, as at the first he breathed his breath into the form of Adam, still, at some crisis unknown in its creation, breathe into each form the breath of individual being? If the latter theory were true, then, be his origin what it might, he had but to shuffle off this mortal coil to walk forth a clean thing, as a prince might cast off the rags of an enforced disguise, and set out for the land of his birth. If the former were the true, then the well-spring of his being was polluted, nor might he by any death fling aside his degradation, and show himself other than defiled.<sup>64</sup> (my emphasis)

The discovery at the close of Malcolm that he is in fact a "prince in rags" is the confirmation of the latter theory. His "individual being" derives from God and is made according to the image of Christ the first "prince in rags", whose vocation was similarly the restoration of his people.

Malcolm's dilemma about his nature and origin is reflected in the distorted mirror of the "mad laird", the true son of Mrs. Stewart. Hated by his mother for his deformities and hating her in return, the laird is obsessed by his sense of alienation from all human relationship, expressed in his perpetual cries "I dinna kna whaur I cam frae" and "I hae no mither, I hae only a wuman". The laird learns to identify as "the Father O' Lichts" the power he experiences under the night sky, but his social ostracism leaves his intuitions of God unfleshed and himself a stranger in the world. In one sense he is another variant of the holy fool, whose madness speaks of man's need for God and challenges the ways of the world. In another, he is a living emblem of man's fallen condition; seeking after the ground of his selfhood in God he is yet dumb and misshapen through his inheritance from earth, estranging him both from his



divine nature and from the contentment of the beast. He figures forth the tension between the "ancestral nature" and the "god-self" which Malcolm must overcome in fulfilling his princely identity.

If Malcolm is identified as a Christ-self in the novel of that name, even more so is he in its sequel, The Marquis of Lossie. In this second novel, Malcolm deliberately conceals his true status to become a servant to his half-sister Florimel, in order to protect her from the evil of her surroundings and from premature awareness of her illegitimate birth and rank. Before achieving Florimel's purgation and full control of his lands, Malcolm experiences further trials and rejection from sister and friends. The brother is also the despised and rejected one.

A related pattern is evident in Mary Marston, in which the title character relinquishes her share in her dead father's business to become a servant and agent of restoration to both employers and friends. Her name Mary hints at the notion of the self as a Christ-bearer, the "handmaid of the Lord" who, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, is an icon of Christ and his mother. Mary acts as a "spiritual midwife", bringing forth the Christ in others, while enduring the calumny and rejection of Christ himself. Her marriage with the blacksmith Joseph confirms this identity.

Close to MacDonald's heart were the parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Shepherd, with their hope of the welcoming father and the beloved son among the lost. Many of MacDonald's sons in his novels are, therefore, prodigals; men like Walter Colman (Home Again) and Alec Forbes (Alec Forbes of Howglen) who fall into illusion in the course of the novel, and like Lord Lossie (Malcolm) and Mr. Redmain (Mary Marston) who set out upon the long road of repentance.

MacDonald is concerned not with the prodigal upon his return but at his moment of awareness amongst his husks. Neither the long and painful process of metanoia nor the purgatorial suffering involved in confronting injured love<sup>65</sup> is shirked, while the assurance of acceptance is maintained. Victorian and modern critics who have censured MacDonald for sentimentality because of the centrality of these parables have disregarded his emphasis upon the agonizing disruption of man's known self in repentance.<sup>66</sup>

If the Christ-self is latent in the prodigal to be redeemed, he is also present in the son who sets out, like the Good Shepherd, to find and save the father. Christ may, indeed, be seen as both the Prodigal and the Shepherd, sent away into the "land of unlikeness" to save the lost by becoming sin. The mission of the title character in Robert Falconer, therefore, is not, as Wolff suggests, an inverted, disguised expression of MacDonald's longing for his mother.<sup>67</sup> Rather is it the presentation of the Christ-self's co-operation in the Son's calling to retrieve the damned. Falconer has struggled through to acceptance of God's universal fatherhood and of man's consequent sonship. This sonship is fulfilled in the restoration of his earthly father not only to his human, but also to his divine, relationships. Robert finally seeks not so much his biological parent as another divine son. The reversal of roles in this salvation of son by father images forth the nature of the Christ-self as the perpetual child, redeeming the prideful world of the adult.<sup>68</sup> It completes the understanding of the disturbance by God of human expectations.

As earlier discussion of MacDonald has suggested the self which is, in God, must begin to become itself in its earthly life. This



paradox finds its expression in his works in the Biblically-inspired images of the house, room or castle-tower, whose secrets must be discovered. These images have three Biblical mainsprings. The God who is man's "dwelling-place"<sup>69</sup> and is possessed of a house of "many mansions"<sup>70</sup> is himself a many-mansioned God, to whose nature man conforms. Such a usage has already been seen in the consideration of solitariness. Secondly, the image of the total being of man as a house for God or for demons to occupy is a familiar idea in the Gospels. Man is the house built on rock, or swept clean and repossessed by demons, or prepared for the return of the owner or bridegroom. Such imagery, building also upon the symbolism of the Cantic of Canticles is a common-place of mystical literature, as seen in St. Teresa of Jesus' Interior Castle and St. John of the Cross' The Ascent of Mount Carmel. MacDonald's writings may be firmly placed within this tradition of Biblical exegesis. Thirdly, and supreme in importance, is the notion of the secret room for prayer found in the Gospels. Traditionally, this has been understood as the "heart" or the innermost centre of man, the "enclosure of the heart" or the "interior cell" found in monastic spirituality of the East and West.<sup>71</sup>

If the castle or house is the total being of man, cellars imaging forth the earthiness of man and central rooms his psychological attributes, then the tower is the high-point and citadel of the self, the enclosed heart. The tower is, therefore, paradoxically, also the "cottage of the heart", as it is identified in The Lost Princess. The recurrent cottages in MacDonald's tales are the lowly places in which wisdom and simplicity are found and the true identity of man put to the proof, as Rosamund in The Lost

Princess and Anodos in Phantastes discover. It is also in Lilith the house of Sorrow in which man finds his tears of repentance at the beginning of the process of metanoia, that is, as MacDonald suggests, of transformation into God.<sup>72</sup> The "gift of tears" which commence as tears of contrition and grow into tears signifying surrender to God, a divine breakthrough, is, in Orthodox theology, the mark of spiritual childbirth, of the blossoming of the divine image into full likeness.<sup>73</sup> MacDonald's cottage is this heart wherein such spiritual labour takes place. Furthermore, just as the "heart" is for the Fathers the place besieged by the demons of the passions, so too the moss-covered cottage in The Lost Princess is beset by wild beasts. Upon making this discovery Rosamund is advised by the Wise Woman

I saw how you rushed into the middle of the ugly creatures; and as they ran from you, so will all kinds of evil things, as long as you keep them outside of you, and do not open the cottage of your heart to let them in.<sup>74</sup>

The seeming impenetrability of the cottage is its enclosure, its vigilance against the onslaught of the enemy. It may, therefore, also be the place of violent conflict and awareness of evil: it is to the heart that the passions come to do battle. In the cottage of the Wise Woman Rosamund knows not peace but sin and rebellion. Gregory the Great would have explained her experience thus

The place of battle is the heart of the one who hears the Word of God. ...

The heavenly things it hears begin to have their attraction but long-standing habits arise to suggest that the message should be despised. The struggle then gets worse because what the teacher commands, the evil spirits cry down by dissuasion.<sup>75</sup>

The tower, to the imperceptive also a mean and lowly place, is



directly associated with the cottage in The Princess and the Goblin and The Princess and Curdie. Both tower and cottage is inhabited by a wise mother-figure who prepares for her offspring the safeguarding thread which links him or her with the heart. The tower is of the same nature whether in the many-faceted personality or the humbler smaller one. Princess Irene has a castle, Curdie only the small dwelling on the mountain-side. Each is built upon earth and each has a potential elevation. Nobility in either springs from their "heart" and not from their psychological attributes; danger for either comes from the goblins of ego-directed earthiness. Irene, moreover, has also to bear the enmity of potentially rebellious servants, the psychological gifts lacking in Curdie. When the princess is most at risk from her rebellious mind and undermining instincts, appropriate shelter is found in the cottage of Curdie.

Both Curdie and Irene present in themselves potential Christ-likeness, but their marriage presents the perfection of the Christ in man. As frequently happens in allegory, an aspect of a trait may both stand for a total being and for a part. If Irene may be read as the innocence and gentleness of the Christ who is a child and Prince of Peace nascent in man, Curdie is Christ-like solidarity with earth, the integration of creation with Creator. Full selfhood figures forth both these attributes of Christ.

If such an interpretation of the Castle is accepted, the identity of the king-papa no longer raises the problems occasioned by Wolff's reading. He is not the Father,<sup>76</sup> but a subordinate force to Irene. The king-papa is the summit of Irene's psychological being, the reason, which can rule her faculties but cannot transform or destroy the goblins. This requires the spiritual power of great-

grandmother, the natural intuition of God in the heart, working in the budding Christ-self. It is when the king-papa of reason, which belongs to ancestral nature, is absent, sick or betrayed that Irene is subjected to the onslaught of passions and deranged faculties. The spirit leans on the psyche and is supported by it when it is responsive to that spirit. This king-papa is almost out of contact with great-grandmother, is frequently engaged elsewhere and is betrayed by illusion. What better description of the reason of fallen man as traditionally conceived?

If the king-papa is not a badly imagined God the Father in these tales, neither is Curdie an ambiguous innocent because he, like the goblins, is associated with underground life.<sup>77</sup> As previously suggested, Curdie is precisely an image of reconciliation, of pneumatic man growing out of a carnal inheritance. Furthermore in the goblins, MacDonald condemns not the passions and instincts of man in themselves, nor the exploration of them in mining, but the orientation of these instincts towards their own perpetuation, making man only bestial. The goblins do not wish to provide material for the reason and the spirit, king-papa and Irene, as do Curdie and his father. They desire to make life totally an underground affair with the land above ground providing mere grazing for them.<sup>78</sup> Curdie, indeed, finds gold in the depths of the castle's foundation: the earth sustaining the goblins may yield riches when brought into right service. That the purified passions and their source may be truly beautiful is also learnt by Anodos at the close of Phantastes, when purgation is at an end :-

If my passions were dead, the souls of the passions, those essential mysteries of the spirit which had embodied themselves in the passions, and had given to them their glory and wonderment, yet lived, yet glowed, with a pure, undying fire.<sup>79</sup>



Any remaining doubts about MacDonald's meaning here may be dispelled by recalling that his goblins are capable of transformation into harmless, playful brownies and by comparing the following use of the image :-

Not even Shakespeare could do without his poor little brothers who preceded him, and, like the goblins and gnomes of the drama, got everything out of the bowels of the dark earth, ready for the master.<sup>80</sup>

The Castle: a parable has also been found problematical by Wolff, who reads the tale as a parable of society.<sup>81</sup> The problems resolve themselves, however, when it is understood in the light of MacDonald's use of traditional house imagery in conjunction with his own interpretation of its inhabitants. As in the Curdie tales, the Castle represents the total being of man, the condition of its inhabitants the inner state of his being. The elder brother, the Christ-self, the image of the Elder Brother, is held bound and captive by the younger children, the powers and desires of the psychological, carnal being intent upon their own gratification. The elder sister, a relative of Irene's great-grandmother, may be understood, as, like her, conscience or the natural response to God, made unhappy by rebellion. The inner world of man has broken out in defiance of the Christ-self's demand for the ordering and purifying of physical and psychic being in preparation for the Father. There yet remains in him some spiritual intuition opposing the repudiation of being.

Behind this tale lie two Gospel parables. The captivity of the elder brother reflects the story of the binding of the strong man before robbing his house.<sup>82</sup> Here the man is to be despoiled of his treasure of selfhood. And the party for relatives and friends

held in the usurped house parallels the parable of the evil spirit bringing its companions into the newly-emptied house.<sup>83</sup> When the being of man, the Christ in him, is ignored and banished, the empty being is open to possession not only by its own immediate passions, but also by related thoughts and desires and the passions of others. Such ideas are clarified in The Lost Princess :-

there is no fault that does not bring its brothers and sisters and cousins to live with it.<sup>84</sup>

and Castle Warlock

The soul that is empty, swept and garnished, is the soul ... where God is not, where therefore other souls come and go at will ... and make the man the slave of their thoughts and desires.<sup>85</sup>

The guests who refuse the invitation are the virtues, which can find no place in the now vicious and false self.

The appearance in the midst of the party of the elder brother broken from his chains signifies the disruption of this false self at the beginning of repentance. At the height of rebellion the denied self breaks through into consciousness and begins to re-possess its home. The true self is being and is therefore indestructible and irrepressible. There must be a world-shaking resurrection within man of the love and goodness, the reality, hitherto literally pinned down. The mystery of the Atonement is repeated in each man. In attempting to live to himself by stifling his inheritance from God, he experiences in himself both the crucifixion of Christ and the resurrection of the principle of life. MacDonald was convinced that this process in the adamant sinner was inevitable, as his rhetorical questioning in Unspoken Sermons reveals :-

May not then one day some terrible convulsion from the centre of his being, some fearful earthquake



from the hidden gulfs of his nature, shake such a man so that through all the deafness of his death, the voice of the spirit may be faintly heard, the still small voice that comes after the tempest and the earthquake.<sup>86</sup>

After the "earthquake" in The Castle comes not the death of the younger children but their full life, in harmonious direction towards their source. Life has triumphed over defect of being.

Castle and cottage are controlling images of Phantastes. The chest in the house Anodos inherits from his father is analogous to the cottage and tower, the small, enclosed place within the larger building or landscape. Anodos finds his God-given "heart" within the house of his psychic being derived from his father. In opening the chest he meets, like Irene, his great-grandmother, the conscience which is his mediating link with his inheritance from God. So, he enters fairyland, the world of his inner spiritual reality in which he engages in the battle for the heart.

His first cottage, in which he is both uncertain about the reality of fairyland and yet intuitively its existence is the initial discovery of the state of his heart, into which scepticism and materialism have entered. The ambiguity of the cottage belongs to Anodos.

The house of the Alder-maiden reflects one polarity of this ambiguity and is parodic of the purified cottage of the heart. Here he is held captive to illusion which would make him the victim of Ash, devouring self-orientation which is all-consuming in its fruitless attempt to amend the defect of being of this egotism. The heart is the Christ-indwelt centre but also the place in which man meets his own corruption and deceitfulness.

Similarly, love can lead to freedom, as Anodos frees the White

Lady, but also to enslavement when it is but desire for possession of the beloved. The White Lady and the Alder-Maiden represent two tendencies in Anodos, the one toward the being and free love of God, inherent in man as God's image; the other towards devouring love of the ego, the lust that leads to spiritual death.

The White Lady, as this tendency to God in Anodos, is freed from her burial within him but escapes Anodos because he is far from purged from grasping ego. She is still too easily confused by Anodos with her parody, the Alder-Maiden. He discovers her once more as but one of many living statues in the many-roomed Castle he comes upon. Among the many potentially living qualities and powers of the personality of Anodos stands the once-buried motive for his quest. Again it flees upon his attempt to appropriate her, and cease the search. The White Lady must go ahead of Anodos as the stimulus to his repentance, his growth towards ultimate Christ-selfhood. That she is not his end but the principle leading to his consummation is confirmed by Anodos toward the close of the tale :-

Another self seemed to arise, like a white spirit from a dead man, from the dumb and trampled self of the past. Doubtless this self must again die and be buried, and again, from this tomb, spring a winged child; but of this my history as yet bears not the record. Self will come to life even in the slaying of self; but there is something deeper and stronger than it, which will emerge at last from the unknown abysses of the soul: will it be as a solemn gloom, burning with eyes? or a clear morning after the rain? or a smiling child, that finds itself nowhere and everywhere?<sup>87</sup>

It is the smiling child Christ whom Anodos finds in vision, if not in fact, when he finally sees the White Lady as the bride of the silver-armoured knight. This perfected self, the Christ-knight of the mediaeval tradition upon which Phantastes is based,



had earlier been encountered as the fallen knight with rusted armour. Anodos meets both his actual and ideal self. The White Lady leads to this ideal. Anodos' shame in discovering the room marked "Sir Anodos" further marks his awareness of the gulf between the nobility of his true self and his experienced identity; a gulf which desire for the White Lady causes him to bridge in a moment of insight.

In his castle Anodos is fed invisibly and reads books whose contents enter directly into consciousness. He encounters within him powers of imagination and awareness of other levels of being. He recovers also the simplicity of the receptive, trusting child. Anodos lives in his castle like the innocent child, Clare Skymer in A Rough Shaking; Clare solely absorbs life until care and want alert him to the need for responsiveness. His receptivity has provided the necessary resources. So, too, in this state, Anodos enters the experience of Cosmo before beginning upon his trials. In this tale of the lover who endangers the beloved by his possessiveness and consequently saves her only by renouncing his own life Anodos learns of the sacrificial nature of the love and selfhood half-unwittingly sought. The Biblical theme of the imperative to lose life in order to gain it provides the consistent background to all that befalls Anodos in fairyland.

As the Alder-maiden parallels, parodically, the White Lady so Anodos' visit to the "Church of Darkness" parallels the later sojourn in the cottage of the wise woman. The "heart", like the self in "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came" by Browning, gives evidence only of the fallen state when interpreted by the ego. Like Rosamund in The Lost Princess, Anodos perceives an ogre in his

heart. The ego finds the judgement of love and wisdom, rather than itself, to be wicked and threatening, for it opposes all that the ego calls life and self. Hence Anodos is met by his own insubstantiality as this "ogre" informs him :-

It is only your shadow that has found you ...  
Everybody's shadow is ranging up and down  
looking for him ... Yours has found you, as  
every person is almost certain to do who looks  
into that closet, especially after meeting one  
in the forest, whom I dare say you have met.<sup>88</sup>

It is a pervasive theme of MacDonald's works, that those unpurged of ego experience intuitions of God as themselves evil and terrible, for in them their own nature is reflected. Anodos sees an ogre because he is becoming a giant of devouring lust, like Ash. Similarly the nurse in At the Back of the North Wind is becoming a wolf, North Wind tells Diamond :-

I had to make myself look like a bad thing before  
she could see me. If I had put on any shape other  
than a wolf's, she would not have seen me, for  
that is what she is becoming inside.<sup>89</sup>

and in The Princess and Curdie great-grandmother explains to the children that

If a thief were to come in here just now, he  
would think he saw the demon of the mine, all  
in green flames, come to protect her treasure,  
and would run like a hunted wild goat. I should  
be all the same, but his evil eyes would see me  
as I was not.<sup>90</sup>

MacDonald's images cannot be limited to one rational explication, but their meanings may be inferred through collation of such related usages.

When Anodos, now chastened, again enters the cottage of the heart he finds not only wisdom and love but knowledge of sorrow and suffering. He is fully initiated into the world of pain and



sacrifice earlier experienced through the imagination. As in Lilith, the cottage which houses the Wise Woman, the inner light, is the dwelling of the Lady of Sorrows. The interior spiritual mother shares the pain of man's coming to birth as a Christ-self: the bitterness of metanoia for man, it is suggested, is a cause of sorrowing also to the God whom the Wise Woman reflects. The anguish involved in sacrifice, Anodos learns, is close to the centre of reality.

The experience in the two cottages of darkness and of love is once again paralleled by that of the two towers. The contrast between cottage and tower here would seem to be between the polarities of lowliness and true meanness and spiritual exaltation and degradation. In the towers Anodos knows heights and depths, in the cottage the two possible meanings of earthiness, corruption or solidarity. In the first tower Anodos learns to prepare himself, to forge armour, for spiritual combat, uniting all his faculties for the one assault. His ego is forgotten as his being flows out in the song which strengthens and heals.

After the defeat of the giants Anodos learns that truly "self will come to life even in the slaying of self"<sup>91</sup>. Success has resurrected the inner enemy. Falling prey to adoration of the ego, he finds that the heart, wrenched from God, may become a dungeon. Riding through the forest, captivated by his new self-image as a successful spiritual warrior, he meets another knight :-

When he drew near, I was astonished to see that  
his armour was like my own. His horse, too, was  
like mine in colour, form and motion; save that,  
like his rider, he was greater and fiercer than  
his counterpart. The knight rode with his beaver up.  
As he halted opposite to me in the narrow path,  
barring my way, I saw the reflection of my countenance

in the shining steel on his breast-plate. Above it rose the same face, - his face, only larger and fiercer. I was bewildered, I could not help feeling some admiration of him; but it was mingled with a dim conviction that he was evil and that I ought to fight him.<sup>92</sup>

Instead of fighting, Anodos submits to self-love, to find himself locked in a tower where

behind me lay the horrible shadow.  
... I had a terrible conviction that the knight and he were one. ... Now I was indeed in a pitiful plight. There was literally nothing in the tower but my shadow and me.<sup>93</sup>

Like Agnes in The Lost Princess, in the encounter with the heart Anodos discovers his isolation within the illusory self he has fashioned.

Release from the tower is effected by the capacity for self-forgetfulness attained in the previous tower, and foreshadowed in earlier moments. This ability for renunciation is imaged forth in the liberating power of the singing girl whose globe of solipsism Anodos had broken in the past. The girl no longer possesses to herself her being and her song; both pour from her in music which frees. She is an image of sacrificial selfhood. She is also an Alder-maiden become a White Lady through Anodos' destruction of her globe; that is, she is the symbol of his triumph over the ego, hitherto incomplete. Selfhood demands a breaking-open, as the image of the open daisy suggests in The History of Photogen and Nycteris. Nycteris, reared only for the night and knowing only the light of her spherical lamp, realises that the breaking of the closed daisy completes it :-

The flower was a lamp itself! The golden heart was the light, and the silver border was the alabaster globe, skilfully broken, and spread wide to let out the glory. Yes; the radiant shape was plainly its perfection.<sup>94</sup>



Ego finally conquered in Anodos, he is able to advance to consummation of the self that gives itself away, in dying while exposing idolatrous evil. Man must die to self in order to be free to be himself by dying for others.

The chest, cottage or tower of the heart is found by Anodos, and the many wanderers in MacDonald's tales, by accident or in a time of crisis. It is stumbled upon when men get lost in the mystery of themselves. It is like the treasure in the field in the Gospel parable, a gift present but hidden. In the novels of MacDonald, the cottage and its treasure is frequently represented by the lost or hidden room, containing either secret riches or a mystery of evil, suffering and love. Characters in these novels must follow the exhortation of Isaac the Syrian and

Enter eagerly into the treasure-house that is within you.<sup>95</sup>

This imagery is used somewhat too explicitly in Donal Grant, to which the likeness of the person to a house is central. Donal tells Arctura, the heiress of his employer that

A house is so like a human mind which gradually disentangles and explains itself as you go on to know it.<sup>96</sup>

Similarly, the contrast between the "ancestral" self and the "god-self" can be expressed in terms of the total edifice and the hidden room.

Donal explains :-

Where the house continues in the same form, the builders have more or less transmitted their nature, as well as their house, to those that come after them.<sup>97</sup>

but that there remains in the inherited building that secret, central room which is the dwelling-place for God. Within the limitations of inherited nature there is the freedom of the sons of God. The person

can and must dominate nature.<sup>98</sup> In this novel, the room, that is, the heart, is the long blocked-up chapel, the ignored spiritual heritage of Arctura and her father. It is found to contain the body of a repudiated wife and child. Donal gives its meaning for Arctura thus :-

We have found ... the place they used to pray to God in, built up, lost, forgotten, filled with dust and damp - and the mouldering dead lying there before the Lord, waiting to be made live again and praise him. It is long since you first were aware of the dead self in the lost chapel; a hungry soul soon missed both, and knows, without being sure of it, that they are there somewhere. You have kept searching for them in spite of all persuasion that the quest was foolish.<sup>99</sup>

The heart, closed to God, has become the grave of the mother and child, the hope of new life and icon of the Incarnation. The Christ-self and his creaturely mother, the high-point of the soul, have been stifled. The spiritual womb of the heart has become a tomb. However, Arctura was alerted to the existence of the room by the jew's harp inserted in the chimney of the chapel. There is a harp of the spirit keeping alive the memory of the heart, creating unease until it is disclosed, cleansed and restored. The harp is MacDonald's less mythological equivalent of the doves of Lilith, or the pigeons of great-grandmother in the Curdie tales, those promptings of the spirit or messengers of grace.

A similar pattern operates in Castle Warlock, in which the hidden room is a literal treasure-house which restores the penurious Warlock family. The denudation of the family and Cosmo's humiliation in the world's eyes are the preliminaries to discovery of hidden wealth. It is only in extremity, in absolute destitution that the family discover their long-concealed treasure. Similarly, it is



only in the concomitant radical self-dispossession of Cosmo that he finds his treasure of selfhood. Wealth, status, reputation, loved property and the beloved woman, all are lost or endangered. Cosmo has to detach and negate himself entirely before coming into his inheritance. His story illustrates, in the material, worldly terms popular in the parables of Jesus, the lines of St. John of the Cross :-

To come to possess all  
 desire the possession of nothing.  
 To arrive at being all  
 desire to be nothing.<sup>100</sup>

Just as in the fairy-tales the cottage and tower offer more than they would seem to promise, so the secret of Cosmo's room is concealed in an insignificant scrap of paper. As the cottage is stumbled upon, so the meaning of the paper is given in a sudden flash of insight through a dream. Cosmo labours for his reward, but it remains a gift to him and not a due payment.

Castle Warlock is, indeed, "a homely romance", a tale of domestic spiritual chivalry. The happy ending of this parable, with its virtue repaid, is not intended as realism in human terms but as true portrayal of divine reality in which the poor do inherit the earth.

A variant upon the pattern of the discovery of the hidden-room forms the basis of another novel The Elect Lady. In this novel, the Biblical statement "where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also"<sup>101</sup> is translated literally into the image of the treasure-room. Fordyce, the laird of a small estate has become obsessed with ecclesiastical antiquities. These he conceals in the former dining-room of his house, which he terms his closet,

his place of prayer. His treasure-trove of belongings, the trappings and possessions of the ego, has quite replaced God both in his external house and in his inner being. The heart is no longer the place of refreshment for his "family" of faculties and gifts or the place in which God is met, just as the dining-room of the house no longer serves its purpose. Once again the heart has become a tomb enclosing treasures, once holy and vital, now desecrated and dead. The miser of material goods, particularly of goods associated with the sacred, is a fitting emblem of the egotist who seeks to appropriate all creation to his own created being.

The vision of the self in MacDonald may be seen, therefore, to arise from, and to be expressed in terms of, the New Testament and its traditional exegesis. The interpretations of meaning so derived may be completed by examining MacDonald's debt to Jacob Boehme, and William Law, understood within their tradition.

### III

The Lutheran mysticism of Germans such as Johann Arndt and Jacob Boehme owes much to the heritage of the Fathers transmitted through the Rhineland mystics. The "unlearned" Boehme, under the guidance of Martin Möller, had access to this mystical theology which forms the ground of his distinctive theosophy.

In the works of Boehme is found the concept of man as an image of God who is also the microcosm and mediator of the world. Like Maximus the Confessor and Isaac of Stella, Boehme believed



that this tension in man reflected the work of Christ in encompassing Creation and reconciling it with its Creator :-

Man is the great mystery of God, the microcosm,  
as the complete abridgement of the universe. ...  
... Man ... is a complete image of God, or of  
the Being of all being.<sup>102</sup>

As Martenson says, man in Boehme~~s~~ is destined, consequently

to be the mediator between heaven and earth,  
between spirit and nature; the creature in whom,  
after completing the creative work, God might find  
his Sabbath rest.<sup>103</sup>

The result of such a belief is the conviction that the ego of man, his separate, psychological identity is nothing, non-entity. The Fall is the turning of man's desire away from the "I Am" of God towards himself, a view as patristic as it is Lutheran<sup>104</sup> :-

In that life, which God is in me, I hate sin  
and death; and according to that life which yet  
is in my selfhood, I hate the nothing, viz. the  
Deity. Thus one life fights against the other  
and there is a continual contest in me.<sup>105</sup>

Like the school of his predecessor Eckhart, Boehme calls both the ego and God nothing, giving the term diametrically opposed meanings. God is no-thing, an All transcending ideas of objects and their finitude. He is the abyssal God away from whom men turn towards those partial and created things which have no independent substance. Hence when man chooses his created ego he is turning to the nothingness, the insubstantiality, of the creature from the no-thingness of God. Only by renunciation of this nothingness may man enter the abyssal no-thingness. Hence for William Law, goodness and badness are determined solely by this criterion :-

God Himself cannot make a creature to be in itself,  
or as to its own nature, anything else but a state  
of emptiness, of want, of appetite etc.  
... The highest life ... cannot possibly be good and  
happy, but by the life of God dwelling in and in

union with it ...

... The difference then of a good and a bad man (is) - solely in this, that the one concurs with the living, inspiring God within him, and the other resists it, is, and can be only, chargeable with evil because he resists it.<sup>106</sup>

The evil man is therefore implicitly committed to non-existence, to the life of a shadow. Patristic agreement with this view was available to MacDonald through The Consolation of Philosophy of his much-loved Boethius :-

the wicked ... not only cease to be powerful but cease to be at all. ... I am not trying to deny the wickedness of the wicked; what I do deny is that their existence is absolute and complete existence. ... A thing exists when it keeps its proper place and preserves its own nature. Anything which departs from this ceases to exist, because its existence depends on the preservation of that nature.<sup>107</sup>

That nature, says Boethius, is capacity for God, for becoming by grace what God is by nature.

In this patristic and Behmenist thought is found the full import of MacDonald's "shadow-self" and of the dialogue between North Wind and Diamond in At the Back of the North Wind in which North Wind tells the child that at home

"I am nobody there, Diamond!"

"I am very sorry."

"Why?"

"That you should be nobody."

"Oh, I don't mind it!"

... You will be very glad someday to be nobody yourself."<sup>108</sup>

This "nobody" is the self participating in the no-thing of God, just as the shadow of Anodos is his own nothingness. The contest in him between White Lady and Alder-maiden is Boehme's battle between the choice of the Deity and of the individual selfhood. Each man is poised between the "strong, true self" and the "false



shadowy self", as Rosamund learns in The Lost Princess. The Rose of the World may become either Christ, the Rose or the rose of the corruptible, transient world.

The shadow-self, therefore, understood in the light of Boehme's teaching, is not to be likened to the "shadow" as conceived by Jung. Jung's "shadow" is the denied aspects of the self, positive as well as negative, which must be re-owned and integrated into the total personality. The shadow is simply a dissociated energy or trait of the self which is enhanced by its re-assimilation. It is the rejection of what the shadow comprises which is its evil, rather than its own nature.<sup>109</sup> The shadow in MacDonald's work is quite otherwise. As non-being it is by nature inimical to being, to true selfhood. Man must accept that, Godless, he is

hanging in a ceaseless vertigo of existence  
upon the verge of the gulf of his being,  
without support, without refuge, without aim,  
without end.<sup>110</sup>

However, this acceptance is not an integration of any powers; it involves destroying the potency of non-entity by revealing its illusoriness. Hence, in David Elginbrod Eufra Cameron, under the sway of the mesmerist von Funkelstein, must resist the attraction of the hypnotic evil of illusion to gain wholeness. The division between the conscious self and the mesmerised somnambulist points to the contest between the true self and her shadow, her captivity to the created. Awareness of infidelity and non-being must be brought into the self and the "godly will" of that self must penetrate and destroy the shadow :-

It had been a terrible struggle but she had overcome.  
Nor was this all : she would no more lead two lives,  
the waking and the sleeping. Her waking will and

conscience had asserted themselves in her sleeping acts; and the memory of the somnambulist lived still in the waking woman. Hence her two lives were blended into one life; and she was no more two but one.<sup>111</sup>

Such is the nature of the redeemed self who brings into its restored being knowledge of the sin from which he has been reclaimed.

The shadow has, therefore, greater kinship with the Freudian "Thanatos principle", the rejection of life and desire for non-being which is linked to the pursuit of gratification. For the shadow to MacDonald is death-in-life, as Wilfrid Cumbermede realises in the novel of that name, and as Unspoken Sermons teaches regarding the fire of judgement :-

that which they thought themselves shall have perished; that which they felt themselves, though they misjudged their own feelings, shall remain - remain glorified in repentant hope. For that which cannot be shaken shall remain. That which is immortal in God shall remain in man. The death that is in them shall be consumed.<sup>112</sup>

This shadowy, dead self is also the bestial self in the thought of Boehme, for it is man solely in his inheritance from the earth :-

the godless man loses his noble image ... and becomes a formless spectre, like a hellish worm or abominable beast.<sup>113</sup>

When man rejects his godliness he is dehumanised, becoming likened to the animal in his subjection to the passions of the natural creation. Once more Boethius reinforces the message of Boehme :-

You cannot think of anyone as human whom you see transformed by wickedness. You could say that someone who robs with violence and burns with greed is like a wolf. ... The man who is lazy, dull and stupid, leads an ass's life. ... So what happens is that when a man abandons goodness and ceases to be human, being unable to rise to a divine condition, he sinks to the level of the beast.<sup>114</sup>



So, too, for MacDonald domination by the shadow leads man to the unnatural state of the beast, the threatened fate of Rosamund in The Lost Princess. The Wise Woman

saw that something special must be done, else she would be one of those who kneel to their own shadows till feet grow on their knees; then go down on their hands till their hands grow into feet; then lay their faces on the ground till they grow into snouts; when at last they are a hideous sort of lizards, each of which believes himself the best, wisest and loveliest being in the world, yea, the very centre of the universe. And so they run about forever looking for their own shadows.<sup>115</sup>

This capacity for return to the beast of man's psychic origin is the ground for what Wolff believes is MacDonald's preference for animals above people.<sup>116</sup> Believing with Boehme that man fulfils the totality of creation, MacDonald held also that only man was capable of degradation. The imagery of the evolution of animals, and indeed, trees, into man, understood as a literal belief by Wolff<sup>117</sup>, is a means of expressing the "tendency to man" in non-human creation which man may make into "a tendency to God"<sup>118</sup>. Man is foreshadowed by the animal world :-

No one understands animals who does not see that everyone of them, even amongst the fishes, it may be with a dimness and vagueness infinitely remote, yet foreshadows the human.<sup>119</sup>

Animals, therefore, have an orientation upwards to man, while living in accordance with their own nature: this is their goodness. Man can choose to consummate the tendency to God but only he can consequently choose to deny his nature: his animality is a repugnant aberration. Hence in Phantastes there are both beautiful, loving trees waiting to be human, that is waiting for the consummation of creation in man, and the rudimentary men, little

distinguished from trees.

Man, in this thought, is constantly faced with alternatives, between God and the "strange mother"<sup>120</sup>, earth, between perfection and degradation, between becoming a murderer or a life-giver. For William Law this condition was clear :-

Every temper or passion that is contrary to the new birth of Christ, and keeps the holy Immanuel from coming to life in the soul is, in the strictest truth of the words a murderer and killer of life.<sup>121</sup>

Man the murderer is also man the mother. He is required to give birth to himself through response to God. Man's spirit must allow itself to be overshadowed by the Spirit of God if the Christ-self is to be actualised. Hence Boehme regarded man as both the image of Christ and his wet-nurse :-

If you are Zion, a reborn and newly found child - show forth your power and virtue and set forth the child Jesus out of you so that man might see that you are His wet-nurse.<sup>122</sup>

And William Law took up Behmenist thought, employing the imagery of the "divine seed" much-favoured by the Cambridge Platonists :-

all that man is called to, every degree of new and perfect life, every future exaltation and glory he is to have from the mediation of Christ, is a full proof that the same perfection was originally his natural state and is still in him in such a seed or remains of existence as to admit of a perfect renewal ...  
... you are to conceive of the holy Jesus, the Word of God, as the hidden treasure of every soul, born as a seed of the Word in the birth of the soul, immured under flesh and blood till as a daystar it arises in our hearts and changes the son of our earthly Adam into a son of God.<sup>123</sup>

So, too, in the works of MacDonald the work of becoming the self is that of spiritual labour, as the discussion of "the cottage of the heart" has implied. In the verse, the image of birth and



re-birth is common :-

But he who would be born again indeed,  
Must wake his soul unnumbered times a day,  
And urge himself to life with holy greed.<sup>124</sup>

While in the novels accounts of spiritual births abound, with such characters as Mr. Graham (Malcolm, The Marquis of Lossie) and David Elginbrod, in the novel of that title, acting as spiritual midwives. Such birth was, for MacDonald, not emotional experience but an ethical renewal. Man had to come not only to recognise the truth but do it, also. To be like Christ is to act like him. Rebirth is therefore the recovery of spiritual life involving man's acceptance of the fact that

his religious life and his human life are one;  
... he must do the thing he admires. The Ideal  
is the only absolute Real; and it must become  
the Real in the individual life as well.<sup>125</sup>

Or, as Boehme suggested, man must bring forth the Christ-child and not his empty crib.<sup>126</sup>

The underlying image of the woman or the mother in man's spirit within this notion of the inner birth of Christ in Boehme may be linked to his concept of the Virgin Sophia. It would seem that the tradition he received, of the soul as the virgin mother and therefore as a model of the Blessed Virgin Mary<sup>127</sup>, was interpreted into suitably non-Mariological terms by Boehme. Sophia, while not God himself, is the glory and wisdom of God, his mirror and means of his manifestation. She

bears ... but is not the divine principle ...  
(she is) the mother in which the Father works.<sup>128</sup>

The way to Christ is by way of marriage with the Virgin Sophia, who has been with the soul since birth, its stimulus and guide. She is both bride and the one through whom Christ is fulfilled, a mother.

She has, therefore, all the attributes of Mary as the mirror of God, who is bride, mother and gateway to Christ. Boehme, indeed, considered that the Virgin Sophia was united with the soul of Mary, so that all said of Mary in fact belongs to Sophia. Consequently, just as the Virgin Mother was taken as the expression of the indwelling principle of the soul, the highest point of natural creation's response to God which says "Yes" to God in providing the flesh for Incarnation<sup>129</sup>, so the Virgin Sophia. So it seemed to Berdyaev, for whom the Virgin Sophia was equated with the Blessed Virgin as

the female cosmic soul of humanity.<sup>130</sup>

It would appear that MacDonald also understood the Virgin Sophia in this way, as the earthly mediator of the heavenly implicit in man and in nature. His old-young Wise Woman and great-grandmother are more explicitly than the Virgin Sophia mothers, less obviously brides. In Phantastes the bridal quality is quite clear. In this same tale the recurrence of the female as child, young woman and aged parent-figure reveals also the aspect of Sophia as mirror of a God who is both the "ancient of days" and the eternal child. Moreover, in Phantastes, as in the Curdie tales and At the Back of the North Wind, these changes reflect the changefulness of Nature, ancient yet constantly renewed into youth and maturity. The association of the moon with these female figures seals this identification, for in Boehme's philosophy, Luna, the moon, is the corporeal mediator of the heavenly.<sup>131</sup> As such, the moon was generally for MacDonald the earthly shadowing of the Sun, God; an explanation is offered in Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood :-

The face of a loving old man is always to me like a morning moon, reflecting the unrisen sun of the



other world, yet fading before its approaching light, until, when it does rise, it pales and withers away from our gaze, absorbed in the source of its own beauty.<sup>132</sup>

MacDonald would appear to combine Boehme's Virgin Sophia with the Christian-Platonic concept of Dame Natura, the created vicegerent of God: both, indeed, would appear to belong to the same family of ideas. But MacDonald's "Granny Nature" is also the Lady Philosophy of Boethius, the natural wisdom or intellect of the soul. The size-changing great-grandmother in Phantastes and the waxing and waning North Wind would seem to be inspired by the opening pages of The Consolation of Philosophy<sup>133</sup>. The Wise Woman is cumulatively identified with the capacity of Nature, in its widest sense, for responding to, and reflecting, God, so enabling the transforming union of the creation with its Creator.

Moreover, even more clearly than in Boehme is the recurrent woman-figure associated with the Virgin Sophia as but another expression of the Virgin Mary. As earlier discussion has proved, the White Lady, Wise Woman or great-grandmother, is neither God nor the Christ-self but she by whom the Christ-self is attained. She is a created mediator of the divine, indwelling man, the truly vital part of his creaturely being. As such, like the Wisdom of the Apocryphal books, she is closely associated both with Christ and the Holy Spirit: showing forth one, she is the agent of the other. The great-grandmother's pigeons in the Curdie tales are akin to the dove symbolic of the Holy Spirit; the Lady Mara's doves in Lilith make the kinship more explicit. As the creatures of a creature they represent the response of spirit to the Spirit: like seeks like. Furthermore in this same fantasy, the Lady of

Sorrows, Mara, is the daughter of Eve through whom the Spirit's "gift of tears" is given, and through whom restoration may come for the children of Adam. Man in Lilith goes through Mara to Christ, as in Catholic theology he goes through Mary to Christ. And the Virgin Mary is also "Mater Dolorosa", Our Lady of Sorrows, suffering at the pain of redemption experienced in the flesh she has given, just as Mara weeps at the anguish created by repentance. The inner principle or high-point of natural creation is clearly identified as the inner woman, as the hand-maid of the Lord. It is the inner womanliness of Man, his inner Mary, who shows man the inner Christ, just as "Granny Nature" shows forth God.

Not surprisingly, therefore, in MacDonald's thought womanhood, like childhood derives directly from the nature of God, as Julian claims of his wife Lilia in Within and Without :-

My need of her is but thy thought of me,  
She is the offspring of thy beauty, God;  
Yea, of the womanhood that dwells in thee.<sup>134</sup>

And earthly womanhood is closer to godhood than is manhood: in Phantastes Anodos enters one land in which women have not arms but wings; Geoffrey in Mary Marston is criticised because

He did not know that in a woman's love there  
is more of the specially divine element than  
in a man's - namely, the original, the unmediated.<sup>135</sup>

The discovery of the womanly, whether within the person or in another is therefore an essential part of the recovery of the self in God's image, as it was in patristic and monastic theology. The Fathers and early mediaeval monks had no fear of asserting the womanliness of the soul, calling both Christ and his images "mother". Similarly the contemplative journey to God was considered to include the healing of the division between male and female.<sup>136</sup> In



MacDonald's works the actual woman is presented both as a gateway to God and as a sign of the need for inner integration.

In the poem A Hidden Life, the beloved woman is "the Beauty", whose unattainable state increases desire for God, source of beauty. It is woman qua woman who here presents the ideal, independently of her characteristics as a fallen personality. In the earlier work Within and Without the love for the woman both leads to, and away from, God. Aspiration towards God is separated from Julian's longing for his wife, a possessive and self-orientated love. The love that should flow outward to God through the woman, Lilia, turns back on itself and makes the mediator into an idol.

In the later novel Wilfrid Cumbermede and the tale The History of Photogen and Nycteris the quest of the man for union with the woman is a preliminary to inner re-integration. In Wilfrid Cumbermede Wilfrid's love for Mary Osborne is a love which has been turned into an evil by his desire for the possession of its object. In the loss of Mary, he learns that she was for him an unacknowledged prefiguring of the divine :-

It was the eternal, the lovely, the true that  
in her I had been worshipping.<sup>137</sup>

But this woman who externally shadowed the divine indirectly leads Wilfrid to the discovery of another, inner woman. In his dreams Mary is "his Athanasia", his immortality. No longer is she the woman but the principle in him leading to eternal life, Christ. Wilfrid loses Mary as an external marriage partner but in the suffering of loss passes beyond the earthly woman into actual union with the Virgin Sophia, attaining Christ-selfhood and healing the division in himself between male and female. This is, of course,

also the ultimate meaning of the marriage between Irene and Curdie in The Princess and Curdie.

The History of Photogen and Nycteris is a further affirmation of this vision of male-female selfhood. It is necessary to interpret the sun and moon imagery of this tale with caution, as it does not appear to have the significance usual in the works of MacDonald. Although the previously cited image of the open daisy suggests the perfection of day over night, this is counter-balanced in the tale by the moral superiority of Nycteris. Photogen's relationship to the Sun and that of Nycteris to Night and hence to the Moon, do not associate them with God and Nature respectively. Rather sun and moon, night and day indicate an incompleteness which requires the complementarity and perfection of their union, a union so effected that the sun and moon imagery of Revelation is recalled. Their perfection points to that state in which divisions will be ended, when Christ is all in all.

Sun and moon, night and day reflect simply the differing characteristics of man and woman, unnaturally polarised in fallen humanity. Photogen, who is reared by the witch Watho to know only daylight and to fear the unknown darkness, is a creature of vitality and aggression, rationality and action. Nycteris, reared only to know night, and fearful hence of daylight, lives a life of quivering sensitivity, intuition and tenderness. Only together do they represent the complete human life which has rationality and intuition, powerfulness and tenderness, knowledge and acceptance of mystery. However, boy and girl are not naturally so disparate: it is the malice of the witch that has caused unilateral development. The Fall, the illusion of the Evil One, is apparently triumphant in



the separate male and female.<sup>138</sup> But even such malice has not prevented their inheritance of the eyes of each other's mother: each possesses inherently the capacity for perception belonging to the other. Love discovers and develops the lost potential in their union. A relationship begun in outer complementarity ends in inner complementarity: Photogen loves night for the sake of Nycteris, she day for the glory it brings to Photogen. Each retains a distinguishing factor but achieves alongside it the characteristic of the other. The relationship is no longer one of mutual dependency arising out of deficiency but of love of man-woman for man-woman. In becoming so, it also reaches beyond itself into a union of God-man-woman with God-man-woman; their love has grown into that God-like love of selves freely giving themselves away rather than seeking assuagement of needs and pain. Assimilation to the image of Christ requires an inner union to which the earthly union of marriage may be a path. Once more MacDonald agrees with the mystical tradition in affirming ascent to the Uncreated by way of the creature while affirming the vision of the spiritual marriage with the Virgin Sophia gained from Boehme.

#### IV

If the religious tradition of MacDonald is evident in his works, equally so is his inheritance from his literary past and from his older English contemporaries, who have been the subjects of this study.

The mediaeval and Renaissance literature which owed many debts

to patristic and monastic theology was inevitably influential upon the widely-read MacDonald. Attention can be given here only to those literary artists whom MacDonald himself acknowledged as germane to his understanding and presentation of the self and its discovery.

MacDonald's use of dreams in novel and fantasy to reveal the self as an inner territory or landscape owes much to the mediaeval tradition of dream-literature. In particular Piers Plowman may be seen to have some influence upon the meaning and structure of Phantastes. In both the dreamer searches for an ideal, led on by an elusive, shifting figure, Piers and the White Lady. Meeting alter egos, falling into temptation and despondency, receiving enlightenment, nurture and forgiveness are the fate of each, before the indwelling Christ is recognised as the object of the quest. The Christ-Piers who fights for man in man's armour is the elusive knight whom Anodos finally sees in visionary insight as the spouse of his White Lady. For both dreamers the experience is one of revelation of the Incarnation in its meaning for man and the beginning of its spiritual appropriation.

Knowledge of the mediaeval drama would also seem to have suggested to or confirmed for, MacDonald the use of parallel and parodic beings and dwellings to represent differing experiences, principles and states of the self. Just as he found in Law an internal division presented as the external conflict between Cain and Abel, so in the morality drama interior combat was seen to be expressed by reifying warring principles and locating them in differing exterior dwellings. MacDonald uses mediaeval techniques in embodying traditional mediaeval thought.



Such practices were appreciated by MacDonald as they were employed by Edmund Spenser. To him MacDonald also owes a debt of influence in his treatment of traditional images for the self-castle, tree, flower and garden, and for his use of the fleeing-maiden motif. The fluidity of MacDonald's dream-images clearly owe their inspiration to Spenserian dream-like narrative technique. Spenserian, too, is the conception of the inner world as that of fairy, one which lies near to normality but not openly accessible to the conscious mind. Curdie's "royal" blood is also evidently of the same stock as the fairy ancestry of Spenser's heroes in The Faerie Queene. In Spenser, as in MacDonald, the "self" of the everyday world is not wholly identifiable with the reality of the self who is recapitulating in his own life the drama of salvation and the growth of the integrated New Man.

MacDonald further valued Spenser and Sidney for their allegiance to the mediaeval concept of courtesy in which the true man was the "gentil" man, after the pattern of Christ, who fulfilled noble lordship in dutiful servitude. This vision is echoed by MacDonald in his natural gentleman, Sir Gibbie, and Shargar in Robert Falconer. An essay in A Dish of Orts fully acknowledges such appreciation of Sidney for establishing Christ as "the first true gentleman that ever breathed".<sup>139</sup>

Donne also, in another essay in that collection, is valued for his vision not only of man the microcosm, and image of God, but of his life as a shadowing of divine reality. Furthermore, Donne is seen to perceive the life of God hidden in man, which requires his co-operation in revealing, in rejection of self-creation. MacDonald quotes from, and comments upon, The Crosse :-

As perchance carvers do not faces make,  
 But that away, which hid them do take,  
 Let Crosses so take what hid Christ in thee,  
 And be His Image, or not His, but He.

... It recognises the fact that the divine nature lies at the root of the human nature, and that the polish which lets the spirit shine out in the simplicity of heavenly childhood is the Polish of Manners of which all social refinements are a poor imitation.<sup>140</sup>

For Donne, to whom "the heart" is a bastion possessed by the enemy<sup>141</sup>, as for MacDonald, depravity is the unnatural state of man.

In the poetry of George Herbert and Henry Vaughan, theological as well as literary heirs of the tradition exemplified in Donne, MacDonald perceived the tension between the "god-self" and the usurping ego. The thought and personality of Herbert is a pervasive force in the historical novel Saint George and Saint Michael, in which Vaughan is a major character, a "soul physician" teaching of the sickness of egotism :-

Shall I tell thee what hath possessed thee? ... His name is Self and he is the shadow of thy own self. First he made thee love him, which was evil, and now he hath made thee hate him, which is evil also. ... When that demon king of shades is once cast out, and the man's house is possessed of God instead, then first he findeth his true substantial self, which is the servant, nay, the child of God.<sup>142</sup>

For both poets man is the meeting-point of the earthly and the divine, in whom the sense of sin is accompanied by awareness of man's destiny in Christ. In Vaughan especially the glory of man shines through the sense of loss and decay. The "shining days of angell infancie"<sup>143</sup> are lost to fallen man but remain for him the goal of his growth in the journey back to child-ship. For Vaughan and Herbert, as for MacDonald the child is the authentic self who owns derivation and relationship: "childhood is health".<sup>144</sup>



The microcosmic nature of man and his consummation of creation find expression in the pervasive flowery and animal imagery of these two poets. To Herbert, man is

ev'rything  
And more: He is a tree yet bears no fruit  
A beast, yet is, or should be, more:  
... He is in little all the sphere,  
Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they  
Finde their acquaintance there.<sup>145</sup>

But the man who was at first "a treasure" is also now the self-entrapped ego, a "sick, toss'd vessel dashing" against himself.<sup>146</sup>

For Herbert, too, only man, the summit and epitome of creation, can descend the scale of being and become trapped by the illusory substantiality of the mortal world.

Similarly in Vaughan the "divine seed" in man may be fostered into glory or left to perish amid disorder and frailty, as in the poem of that title :-

give wings to my fire  
And hatch my soul, until it fly  
Up where thou art, amongst thy tire  
Of stars, above infirmity; let not perverse  
And foolish thoughts add to my bill  
Of forward sins, and kill  
That seed, which thou  
In me didst sow.<sup>147</sup>

From Vaughan, as this quotation shows, was available not only confirmation of the concept of the "divine seed". The imagery of the newly hatched, winged self also provides the inspiration for the aeranths in The Golden Key and for the many latent images of the newly-born, flying self in MacDonald's work.

The "divine seed" imagery is also incorporated in these poets with images of man as God's flower. The flower parable told by Hugh in David Elginbrod owes much to Herbert's The Flower and Vaughan's Unprofitableness. Man must accept growing to be what is given him:

to be as a distinctive seed. His status may be that of the weed in his own eyes, because he is an "unprofitable servant"<sup>148</sup>, but this too is to be embraced as a fact of created existence. Pain and corruption stem only from resistance, as Hugh's story of the snowdrop who had longed to be a rose also teaches. The seed

said to itself: "It's all right: I will be what I can". And thereon it yielded to the wind, drooped its head to the earth, and looked no more on the sky, but on the snow. And straight-way the wind stopped and the cold died away, and the snow sparkled like pearls and diamonds: and the flower knew that it was the holding of its head up that had hurt it so; that its body came of the snow, and that its name was snow-drop. And so it said once more "It's all right!" and waited in perfect peace. All the rest it needed was to hang its head after its nature.<sup>149</sup>

The flower no longer risks losing its paradise through pride, as in Herbert's The Flower.

MacDonald's imagery of box, room and house to express the mystery of the nature of God and man was certainly affirmed, if not inspired, by these poets. Herbert particularly employed the image of the box and treasure-chest to express the hidden things of God and man<sup>150</sup> while man the flower and poet is also man the dwelling-place for God.<sup>151</sup> Vaughan similarly acknowledged man to be "a ruined place" but also to be the cottage in which God chose to dwell with man.<sup>152</sup> The imagery of growth and pilgrimage to God is accompanied by static images of given, concealed reality in the poetry of Herbert and Vaughan, as in the works of MacDonald.

The living connection between man, nature and God proclaimed by these two poets was one MacDonald also discerned in William Wordsworth. The Romantic poet spoke to MacDonald of the fatherhood of God in the entire creation, as he explains in the essay Wordsworth's Poetry :-



if man be the child of God, would he not feel to be out of his element if he lived in a world which came, not from the heart of God, but only from his hand? This Christian pantheism, this belief that God is in everything, and showing himself in everything has been much brought to light by the poets of the past generation, primarily Wordsworth.<sup>153</sup>

To MacDonald, Wordsworth was not the proponent of natural religion but the spokesman of the Christian understanding of nature. What Wordsworth saw in nature, MacDonald claimed, he saw because revelation had prepared him for it :-

Do not suppose that I mean that man can do without more teaching than nature's, or that a man with only nature's teaching would have seen these things. No, the soul must be tuned to such things.<sup>154</sup>

Wordsworthian themes such as the unity of natural creation and the wisdom of both fool and child are so much a part of patristic tradition that the poet cannot be claimed as a source for MacDonald, but only as an interpreter for him of that tradition. However, the germ of the tale The Golden Key may be clearly perceived in She dwelt among the untrodden ways. Lucy, "a violet by a mossy stone" passes from her beloved into the mysteries of the universe. Tangle and Mossy in The Golden Key are the human equivalents of flower and stone, Mossy living so attentively to the earth that the moss grows over him, Tangle being a hidden, if undeveloped, bud of self. After discovering her "heart" and her partner in Mossy, Tangle dies and in her purgative journey to Heaven visits the Old Men of the Sea, Earth and Fire. She is indeed "rolled round with earth and rocks and trees" in a process, not of absorption, but of learning and purification. Like the narrator of the poem, Mossy is left to know the grief of separation and desire for full reunion. From such a basis in this poem of Wordsworth MacDonald developed one of his most perfect tales of man's passage through life into the

life of God.

With his contemporary Dickens MacDonald shared many beliefs about the nature of the self. In both, selfhood is brotherhood and child-ship. The isolated self is a fiction inimical to society as a community of brothers. Consequently in each author no man suffers alone and the fact that the sins of the fathers affect their sons offers the victim or heir of evil the opportunity to end it by Christ-like endurance and refusal of its transmission. The pattern of destruction of evil through sacrifice, found in the later novels of Dickens, provides the central theme of teaching and debate in discursive novels of MacDonald such as The Vicar's Daughter and in the children's story Ranald Bannerman's Childhood.

The related theme of the necessity of death to the ego in discovery of a sacrificial selfhood underpins the later novels of Dickens and the entire corpus of MacDonald. To be a self is to be "no-man". But it is also to be a distinctive person. For both Dickens and MacDonald individuation is based upon the "truths of the Godhood and the manhood", making each an image of the All and a particular person whose possible eccentricity is sharply distinguished from self-willed differentiation from the body of mankind.

In the works of both authors is found an acceptance of the dual solidarity and inner battle of man who is both Christ and Cain in potential. It is arguable also, that Dickens shared, in an inarticulated fashion, MacDonald's belief in man-womanhood. Dickens' need for the angelic woman, evident in his novels and his private life, could be said to relate to his own sense of inner division, a division apparent in the gulf between his frenetic, domineering



activism and the contemplative values of his literary works.

Dickens greatly admired the works of MacDonald<sup>155</sup>, who himself attempted to imitate Dickens in Guild Court. It was not only for literary skill, however, that MacDonald valued Dickens. In the tale Butcher's Bills the author is urged as "medicine for the soul".<sup>156</sup> It is clear that he recognised in Dickens his own beliefs and concerns, beliefs supported by their common inspiration, Unitarianism. Both men of considerable impatience with theoretical, institutional religion, they combined criticism of the prevalent Christian orthodoxy with the embodiment in their work of some major themes of early Christian thought and experience.

A similar unity of opinion is evident between MacDonald and Browning, a poet whom the former much respected. For both men, as for Dickens, the self is a microcosm deriving its "I" from the "I" of God, maintaining particularity in unity. The tension between Christ and Cain is again central to Browning, whose belief in man's growth into God is shared by MacDonald. In the works of each artist progress and process are laws of existence, while refusal to become one's given being is a self-imposed sentence of death.

Unitarianism was, again, influential in the lives<sup>fe</sup> and thought of Browning, as of MacDonald. They shared also knowledge of the Fathers and their German interpreters, the Eckhartian mystics and Boehme. Each had absorbed patristic and mystical teaching from its sources as well as from its varied contemporary interpretations.

This relationship between MacDonald, Dickens and Browning points, furthermore, to the affinities between MacDonald and his fellow Scot Carlyle. Carlyle's education in the thought of the Cambridge Platonists and of the German Romantics produced in him in

early years beliefs about the self similar to the Christological convictions of MacDonald. The "beast-godhood" division in man the microcosm, the ontological laws of sacrifice and brotherhood and Natural Supernaturalism belonged to the creed of MacDonald and the young Carlyle, just as they did to that of Browning and Dickens.

In the works of MacDonald, varied in kind and in quality, the beliefs common to these three giants of his age may be most clearly seen to belong to the patristic tradition of mystical theology. These works point to the continued life of that tradition in his period and to a unity of vision between the theologian and the literary artist. The relative stature of MacDonald as a poet, novelist and fantasist remains a subject for further study, but in his importance as an interpreter of a theological version of selfhood he is not unworthy of his great contemporaries, Dickens, Browning and Carlyle.











42. Kingsley, Good news of God, op. cit., The Christ-Child, p.149.
43. Unspoken sermons, op. cit., p.207.
44. MacDonald, George David Elginbrod  
new ed., London, Hurst and Blackett, no date, p.318.
45. MacDonald, George There and back  
London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, no date, p.84.
46. ibid., p.132.
47. MacDonald, George The Princess and Curdie  
London, Blackie and Son, 1899, pp.20-21.
48. ibid., p.96.
49. Origen, op. cit., p.174.
50. The "beast" was the designation for the earthly part of man commonly used by the Cambridge Platonists. It recalls also, of course, the Franciscan use of the term "Brother Ass" for the body, which served to remind man of his solidarity with the created world.
51. Kingsley, Westminster Sermons, op. cit., Death, p.219.
52. See Maurice's appreciation of the evil of insubstantiality in Maurice, F. D. Eustace Conway  
London, Richard Bentley, 1834, 3 vols., 1, 282-3.
53. Quoted in Vidler, op. cit., p.37 (Lincoln's Inn Sermons III, p.90 - a copy of which I have been unable to obtain).
54. Hinton, op. cit., p.140.
55. For discussion see Chariton of Valamo, The art of prayer  
Igumen  
ed. Ware, Timothy  
trans. Kadloubovsky, E. and



Palmer, E. M.

London, Faber and Faber, 1966, p.40 and note 2 to this page.

56. Allchin, Kingdom of love and knowledge, op. cit., p.174.
57. Gospel according to St. John, ch.1, v.II.
58. MacDonald, George                      Sir Gibbie  
London, Hurst and Blackett, 1880, p.123.
59. ibid., p.255.
60. Seward, op. cit., pp.63-68.
61. Sir Gibbie, op. cit., p.271.
62. Wilfrid Cumbermede, op. cit., p.482.
63. A term used to describe the mystical experience and teaching on asceticism of St. John of the Cross. His teaching on the death of the ego is directly comparable with that of MacDonald, especially as it is found in Lilith.

See

Dicken, E. W. Trueman                      The crucible of love: a study of the  
mysticism of St. John of the Cross  
and St. Teresa of Jesus

London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1963.

64. MacDonald, George                      Malcolm  
London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, no date, p.310.
65. See Lossky, op. cit., p.234.
66. For Wolff's favourable comments on contemporary criticism of MacDonald's view of God, see  
Wolff, op. cit., pp.258-261.
67. ibid., p.228 and 15.
68. Seward, op. cit., pp.7-11.
69. Deuteronomy, ch.33, v.27.

70. Gospel according to St. John, ch.14, v.2.
71. For discussion and illustration of the concept of the "enclosure of the heart" in Catholic and Orthodox spirituality, see Elizabeth of Dijon, op. cit., pp.59,96.  
Chariton of Valamo, op. cit., pp.45-46.
72. In Lilith Mr. Vane's night in the house of Mara, Lady of Sorrows, begins the process which ends in his atoning manhood: repentance culminates in likeness to Christ. See MacDonald, George Lilith  
2nd ed., London, Chatto and Windus, 1896, p.337. See also p.232.
73. See Ware, op. cit., pp.134-5.
74. MacDonald, George The lost princess  
in  
MacDonald, George The gifts of the Child Christ  
ed. Glynn E. Sadleir  
London, Oxford, Mowbray, 1973, 2 vols., 1, 260.
75. Quoted and discussed in Squire, op. cit., pp.55-56.
76. As in Wolff, op. cit., p.178.
77. ibid., p.166.  
See also the discussion in  
Manlove, C. N. Modern fantasy  
Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p.84.
78. MacDonald, George The princess and the goblin  
new ed. London, Blackie and Son, 1911, ch.19, p.188.
79. MacDonald, George Phantastes  
new ed., London, Chatto and Windus, 1894, ch.24, p.271.
80. MacDonald, George A dish of orts  
enlarged ed., London, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., no date, p.103.



81. Wolff, op. cit., p.127.
82. Gospel according to St. Luke, ch.11, v.22.
83. ibid., ch.11, vv.24-26.
84. Gifts of the Child Christ, op. cit., 1, The lost princess, 230.
85. MacDonald, George Castle Warlock  
new ed., London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, no date, p.311.
86. Unspoken sermons, op. cit., pp.92-93.
87. Phantastes, op. cit., ch.22, p.249.
88. ibid., ch.8, pp.91-92.
89. MacDonald, George At the back of the North Wind  
London, Blackie, 1899, pp.411-45.
90. The Princess and Curdie, op. cit., p.77.
91. Phantastes, op. cit., ch.22, p.249.
92. ibid., ch.22, p.241.
93. ibid., ch.22, p.243.
94. The gifts of the Child Christ, op. cit., 1, The history of  
Photogen and Nycteris, 94.
95. Quoted in Ware, op. cit., p.71.
96. Donal Grant, op. cit., p.262.
97. ibid., p.262.
98. See discussion in Lossky, op. cit., p.122 and note also  
Riou, op. cit., p.37.
99. Donal Grant, op. cit., p.272.
100. St. John of the Cross, op. cit., Ascent of Mount Carmel, 1, 13, p.103.
101. Gospel according to St. Luke, ch.12, v.34.
102. Boehme, Signatura rerum, op. cit., p.3.
103. Martenson, Hans L. Jacob Boehme  
with notes by Hobhouse, Stephen  
London, Rockcliff, 1949, p.148.

104. Luther was, of course, influenced by the patristic mysticism of the Rhineland. For discussion see Ozment, op. cit. and Williams, Rowan, op. cit.
105. Boehme, Signatura rerum, op. cit., p.105.
106. Law, Liberal and mystical writings, op. cit., pp.29-30.
107. Boethius The consolations of philosophy  
trans. & introd.  
Watts, V. E.  
Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1969, bk.IV, II, p.122.
108. At the back of the North Wind, op. cit., p.107.  
See also Book of Strife, op. cit., Dec.21, p.105.
109. See for discussion  
Jung, Carl G. Four archetypes  
trans. Hull, R. F. C.  
London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972, pp.142-152.  
See also the study by a Jungian therapist  
Claremont de Castillejo, Knowing woman  
Irene  
New York, Harper and Row, Harper Colophon Books, 1973.
110. Unspoken sermons, op. cit., p.47.
111. David Elginbrod, op. cit., p.376.
112. Unspoken sermons, op. cit., p.44.
113. Boehme, The way to Christ, op. cit., p.29.
114. Boethius, op. cit., bk.IV, III, p.125.
115. Gifts of the Child Christ, op. cit., I, The lost princess, 231.
116. Wolff, op. cit., pp.177, 373.
117. ibid., pp.167-168.
118. Browning, Works, op. cit., 11, Paracelsus, bk.V, 172.



119. The princess and the goblin, op. cit., ch.13, p.132.
120. Boehme, The way to Christ, op. cit., p.112.
121. Law, Liberal and mystical writings, op. cit., p.23.
122. Boehme, The way to Christ, op. cit., p.136.
123. Law, Spirit of Love, op. cit., p.407.
124. Book of Strife, op. cit., May 21, p.105.
125. David Elginbrod, op. cit., p.376.
126. Boehme, The way to Christ, op. cit., p.136.
127. See the discussion of the tradition through Origen and Maximus the Confessor in Schürmann, op. cit., pp.25-27.
128. Boehme, The way to Christ, op. cit., introduction, p.9.
129. See the discussion by Ratzinger, op. cit.
130. Quoted in Martenson, op. cit., p.156.
131. Boehme, Signatura rerum, op. cit., p.96.
132. Annals of a quiet neighbourhood, op. cit., p.98.
133. Boethius, op. cit., bk.1, 1, pp.35-36.
134. Poetical works, op. cit., 1, Within and without, pt.XIII, 99.
135. Mary Marston, op. cit., III, 151.
136. See the discussion of Maximus the Confessor's synthesis and clarification of patristic teaching in Thunberg op. cit., pp.396-460.
137. Wilfrid Cumbermede, op. cit., p.482.
138. See Thunberg, op. cit., pp.400-405.
139. A dish of orts, op. cit., p.34.
140. ibid., p.191.
141. Donne, Works, op. cit., VI, Holy Sonnet XVIII, 449.
142. MacDonald, George Saint George and Saint Michael  
4th ed., London, Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1883, pp.345-6.

143. Vaughan, op. cit., The retreate, p.249.
144. Herbert, op. cit., Holy Baptisme 11, p.65.
145. ibid., Man, p.106.
146. ibid., Miserie, p.116.
147. Vaughan, op. cit., Disorder and frailtie, pp.277-278.
148. Gospel according to St. Luke, ch.17, v.10.
149. David Elginbrod, op. cit., pp.111-112.
150. Herbert, op. cit., as in Ungratefulnesse, p.98.
151. ibid., Man, pp.106-107.
152. Vaughan, op. cit., Buriall, p.258.
153. A dish of orts, op. cit., p.246.
154. ibid., p.256.
155. See Wolff, op. cit., p.5.
156. The gifts of the Child Christ, op. cit., II, Butcher's Bills, 226.



## CHAPTER SIX

"WHAT I DO IS ME" : SELFHOOD AS A VISION OF UNITY

The just man justices, keeps faith  
That keeps all his goings graces,  
Acts in God's eyes what in God's eyes  
He is, Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The vision of the self which has been the subject of this study, the self distinctive and integrated, is also the self which overcomes all opposition between the person and the "other", for Christ plays in ten thousand places,<sup>2</sup>  
Each individuated being, however conscious of his differentiated uniqueness, as was Gerard Manley Hopkins, has the image of Christ as the centre of his identity. Awareness of incommunicable particularity in the self may properly accompany assurance of communion through brotherhood and participation in one image, as the works of Dickens and MacDonald reveal. A need for a certain caution would seem to be indicated, therefore, in generalising upon the self-consciousness and sense of self-division said to typify the later Victorian era.

The exploration of this vision in Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald has also suggested how this quest for unity between self and others, individuality and sociality, led to a deeper reconciliation of other dichotomies in Victorian thought. For the search after an understanding of man based upon his likeness to God produced inevitably an assertion of the unity of activity with being in the authentic self. God's Being is known, in his



acts: so, too, men who are his images must be themselves in their action, reflecting divine simplicity. There is room in this version of selfhood neither for the extreme passivity and aestheticism of the emphasis upon being associated with Walter Pater, nor for the growing mercantilist tendency towards self-creation. In the works of the writers considered here the "self-made man" is exposed as a chimaera, while he who refuses to co-operate in self-realisation through "doing the truth" is condemned as not yet fully man.

Furthermore, this model of selfhood resolves the tension between self-fulfilment and social duty. Man must live in accordance not with a moral imperative distinct from, and contrary to, his nature, but with that nature as an image and son of God, "another Christ". To the upholders of this concept of the self Duty became paramount as an expression of an internal demand for harmony between social organisation and man's very being. Brotherhood was not perceived as a demand occasioned by the observed requirements of social life. It was a fact of existence the recognition of which was essential to the self's appropriation of his own identity. In this approach a very different note is sounded from that of moralists such as George Eliot who retained a notion of ~~d~~uty devoid of its spiritual, ontological foundations. It suggests that caution may also be necessary when generalising upon the attitude to ~~d~~uty in the Victorian period, in attributing its ascendancy to the loss of ontology within ethical systems. Discussion has disclosed the retention of belief in ontological laws governing the self and society by men as different in ethos and milieu as Thomas Carlyle and R. M. Benson, whose lives spanned

the century.

The division between the private and the social self and between personal and societal needs was considered to be illusory in this vision of man. Equally false, therefore, proved also the tension between self-realisation and self-sacrifice. Sacrificial, vicarious being was seen simply as conformity to the nature of the self as an image of a self-emptying, self-abandoning God. Such a vision must be differentiated once more from that requirement of sacrifice which issued from the rejection of personal selfhood on behalf of a concept of Humanity. In the literary works studied in the foregoing pages the self is affirmed and perfected by renunciation. By contrast, in the works of George Eliot the self is to be renounced as unworthy before the demands of a larger ideal or the necessities of others; sacrifice is not understood as a basic dynamic of human selfhood.

Finally, this traditional version of the self also offered a resolution of the polarity between man as a "beast" and as a "god", the respective emphases of contemporary popular religion and the developing natural and social sciences. Men were regarded in their relationship to God as sons and images, but also in their solidarity as creatures with a frail, contingent earth and with one another in estrangement from sonship. The self was to know community in an imperfection and an ignorance transcending his own actions and responses. He was seen as truly a guilty innocent, a beast-god, in whom godhood was destined to triumph. Such selves are the heroes of Carlyle, the willing victims and derelicts of Dickens, and the ever-progressing servants and teachers of MacDonald. Solidarity in subjection to "the human condition" is no longer in these



characters in conflict with apprehensions of the original goodness of the self. Yet again, therefore, there is need for caution in considering the rejection among some Victorian men of letters of the concept of Original Sin. As the discussion has shown, the view of Original Sin held by the Eastern Fathers had greater affinity with Dickens' understanding of it as an inherited mortal frailty and an inherited environment which encourages sin than with the Calvinist doctrine. It is consequently necessary to distinguish those who contested the popular interpretation of Original Sin from those who discarded the doctrine entirely, for a belief in determinism or in moral progress. The growth and perfectibility of the self implicit in the traditional vision as it is found in Browning and MacDonald is not to be conflated with the Victorian confidence in social engineering and the "March of mind".

The full extent of the life of this version of selfhood in nineteenth-century thought and letters offers an immense area for investigation. This present study in only four writers and with reference only to the major theologians of Tractarianism and Christian Socialism can only indicate its existence and something of its nature, pointing towards fields for further exploration. The underlying references to the paradoxical Gerard Manley Hopkins offer but one hint at the extensiveness and variety of the life of this tradition beyond these limits. Hopkins, like Newman, was acquainted with both the Tractarian and the Roman approach to the nature of man. He discovered also in Duns Scotus not only a philosopher who championed particularity. Scotus held, with some of the Eastern Fathers, that the Incarnation was central to God's purpose for man: from Eternity the Father had intended in his Son

the transformation of man's "human clay" into the "gold" of divine sonship. This link between the inheritance of Hopkins and that of Dickens, Carlyle, Browning and MacDonald points to the many streams of traditional thought which were tapped in their century in the restoration of a vision of man unified and glorified, of "matchwood" transfigured into "immortal diamond".



Notes to Chapter Six

1. Hopkins, op. cit., As Kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies  
draw flame, p.95.
2. ibid., p.95.

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