

7. SIGN POSTS ON THE PILGRIMAGE

Newman's poems are indeed sign posts on the pilgrimage and show the direction he was taking. The poems unveil the guiding ideas or principles which lead him on to his goal. There is a clear pattern of unity threading through the body of the work and that unity is the poet's spiritual quest. Poems such as St. Bartholomew's Eve,¹ "Solitude"² and "Epiphany-Eve"³ manifest the pilgrim's preoccupation with spiritual realities, his quest after the Truth and the themes of angels, faith and that of death. Memorials of the Past⁴ was intended only for his immediate circle and this is addressed to members of the family. The poem "My Birthday"⁵ reveals the pilgrim's early sense of the transience of life while "A Birthday Offering"⁶ addressed to his brother Frank conveys his awareness of a spiritual vocation. The poems composed for his departed sister Mary such as "Consolations in Bereavement,"⁷ "A Voice from Afar"⁸ and "A Picture"⁹ point to that Celestial City towards which the pilgrim poet journeys. The undercurrent in the reflections of the first two poems is resignation to God's will. There is neither the battering of Donne nor the pessimism of Tennyson or Arnold. The first among the above mentioned poems portrays death not as a victor over sickness and decay, claiming its victim, but as a glorious conqueror over Time, the Destroyer. Without bitterness and without questioning, the poet makes sad remembrance of his sister who has gone to her heavenly dwelling. "A Voice from Afar," conveys deep and quiet feeling and is most simple in its tenderness.

The pilgrim as he advanced on his journey was exposed to scientific and social changes as well as to religious controversy. He noticed that holy shrines were replaced by stock exchanges, industries and other evidences of growing

materialism. Hence he became more and more conscious of what was in his view, the vital issue: the nation's spiritual vocation. The poem "Wanderings," ¹⁰ has these lines:

I went afar; the world unroll'd
Her many-pictured page;
I stored the marvels which she told,
And trusted to her gage.
Her pleasures quaff'd, I sought awhile
The scenes I prized before;
But parent's praise and sister's smile
Stirr'd my cold heart no no more. (5-12)

During his tour in the Mediterranean, he was delighted by historic sites and beautiful scenes and the variety of famous men who had lived and performed heroic events there. But the pilgrim's thoughts of these were intertwined with his thoughts of the Biblical prophets, apostles and the Greek Fathers of the Church who were his real models. Hence he was becoming gradually detached from the narrow circle of home and family and drawn towards the concerns of the Church.

The tour was in fact a great weaning experience for the pilgrim. His spiritual journey was turned completely towards his ultimate goal, absolutely placing his trust in Providence. This single-minded quester began to concentrate more and more on the spiritual world.

The poem "Substance and Shadow" ¹¹ deals with the pilgrim's Christian Platonic vision of the world which forms the nucleus of his poems as a whole. Newman wrote this poem at the sea coast. The tidal waves that rise and fall might have brought to his mind the imperfect and fleeting nature of earthly goods and life itself.

This sonnet contains ancient as well as original wisdom, and expresses it in clear and lofty terms. Today Mankind worships 'An idol substance' (3) which has the power to hurt

man while it has no power to save him ultimately. The octave of the sonnet depicts modern men who live in the midst of illusions, considering these to be the realities. In the beginning of the poem, the poet depicts modern men of science who 'grope in learning's pedant round' (1). They mistake 'fantasies of sense' (2) or sense perceptions to be the only source of knowledge, which to the poet is but idolatry. The Bible often uses the word 'idol' to refer to false gods. Modern men of science create false gods of science and technology to replace the God who alone is the 'Substance' or the only Reality. Even though scientific facts have great power in themselves, they are but 'shades of being' (4) and unsubstantial things, when weighed against the Ultimate Reality. Limited scientific experiments and sense perceptions are but 'poor show' (7), as they have no 'Truth' or 'Life' (7) in themselves. They have no ultimate control over destiny, yet men can use the creations of their genius to injure or to heal themselves in their 'brief trial-ground' (5), which is this life. He uses the word 'sane' as a verb meaning to restore to emotional or psychological health. Man's worship of scientific and material wealth alone, without the balance of spiritual health, was to Newman a form of insanity. But it has no power to destroy 'Truth' or 'Life'—God and life are immortal. Hence the ultimate control lies not in the 'idol substance' but in the only 'Substance' which is God.

The sestet portrays human nature created in the image of God: "Son of immortal seed, high-destined Man!" (9). Hence men should be conscious of their high fortune and should refrain from misusing their 'dread gifts' (10). Men must not assume the place of the Creator but use their God-given gifts to understand the meaning and purpose of life. When men make use of the inventions of their genius to serve a higher purpose, with the help of Heaven, they would not be frustrated by earthly

obstacles and would fulfil their high-destiny. The poem embodies Newman's rejection of the mechanical philosophy prevalent in the ideas and programmes of the utilitarians. He used Victorian caution to remind men as to what in fact is the reality of their lives.

The words that form the keystones to the edifice of the poem, and the ones on which certainties are to be found are all given in capitals—Truth, Life, Man, Heaven. If 'Man,' who is 'high-destined,' realizes this fact, he would then find the 'Truth,' which would impart 'Life' to him and lead him to 'Heaven' where he would realize his immortal nature and high destiny. The title of the poem "Substance and Shadow" expounds the poet's philosophy in a noteworthy manner. There are also phrases in which we get echoes of Wordsworth and his "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." The line 'Each mind is its own centre,' has echoes of Milton's Paradise Lost.

The poem is well composed, following the Petrarchan sonnet pattern. It has the underlying iambic pentameter pattern, but the poet's knowledge of the classical verse forms enabled him to use variations from the set patterns to give the nuances of his thought its fitting expression. Thus variations are used for better outcome. There is choriambus—an iamb and a trochee combined to make a metrical foot of two stressed syllables, enclosing two unstressed syllables—/ ∪ ∪ /. For example, 'Stirring or still' is a choriamb. / So are 'Son of immortal seed.' 'Home to itself,' 'Aided by Heaven.,' 'unthwarted still.'

As is the usual practice with Newman, here too the sound accompanies the sense and helps to convey it in an apt manner. The idealism of the poem is expressed in the sound pattern. The octave has deep [U] and [O] sounds prevailing which convey a sense of man's groping in the shadows, but the four lines of the sestet have [ɔ] and [a] sounds, while the last couplet

culminates in [i] sound. The poem is an example of the poet's thorough grip on the verse forms.

The sonnet conveys to us Plato's theory with regard to substance and shadow which was likewise Newman's own belief. Newman wrote: "For Thou art Thyself the seat and centre of all good, and the only substance in this universe of shadows, and the heaven in which blessed spirits live and rejoice."¹² Even his epitaph written by himself expresses this philosophy, Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem— from shadows into reality. This belief of the poet has parallels in the eastern philosophy. The Hindu philosophy considers life as Maya or unreality. As a child, Newman imagined life to be a dream,¹³ and the pilgrim conveys this idea of the impermanence and insubstantiality of the world on different occasions.

As the poet was the zealous guardian of religious values, many of the poems breathe intense fervour and passion to champion the cause of religion. "Progress of Unbelief"¹⁴ is a sonnet which glows with genuine and fervent indignation at the then prevalent irreligious tendencies of his country. The poem was written in 1833 after the introduction of the Reform Bill in 1832. It was a time when men began to legislate what belief should be and what it should not be. The Bible as a Holy Book was being replaced by books of science and reason.

Though Newman wrote the poem at Corsica aboard the ship, the fact that back home in England, the Government was using religion for political expediency greatly disturbed him. His deep concern about this lent to his poems the qualities of passion, zeal and intensity reminiscent of the prophets in the Old Testament. The State began to take precedence over the Bishops on the management of the Church of England. The eroding religious values of his native land kept his mind preoccupied with thoughts of reconciling the struggle between spiritual theory with the new utilitarian and liberalistic tendencies of

the age.

Overwhelmed by the increasing faithlessness of his beloved country, he begins the poem, referring to autumn which is in contrast with the time of the year when he writes it: "Now is the Autumn of the Tree of Life" (1). It is an echo of Shakespeare's Richard II: "Now is the winter of our discontent." Thus in the month of June, he refers to autumn, making it clear to the readers that even though it might be spring or summer in nature, the soul of England experiences but autumn. Men think that with the progress that they have achieved, summer will last forever.

In this poem faith is personified as the 'Tree of Life' (1). The poet uses the metaphor of autumn to describe the shedding of the dogmas of faith from human minds and hearts in the same manner in which the autumnal leaves fall and die: "Its leaves are shed upon the unthankful earth" (2). Like the autumnal leaves the dogmas of faith fall 'upon the unthankful earth,' for men are ungrateful for these life-giving precepts on which their civilization is built. The metaphor of 'leaves' whirling in the wind portrays a picture of utter chaos and confusion. Such is the state of England, deprived of its faith. The dogmas of faith have become 'a prey to the winds' strife' (3) that is, a prey to the modern attitudes of men. They lack religious sensitivity, are 'Heartless' and hence do not realize that they need religious faith, when material prosperity fails them. Men live in their smug complacency, irrespective of what happens to religious doctrines—they "close the door, and dress the cheerful hearth" (5) and are comfortable. The poet conveys the fact that economic and industrial progress have made them 'self-trusting' (6) and in their luxurious homes they set up for themselves 'a household Baal,' (7) a false god of progress.

The poet brings out the imbalance in the life of the

country where the material progress is contrasted with religious retrogression. The result is that religious values are in danger of complete disappearance. The imagery drawn upon Nature, from the season and from the Bible adds to the keenness and seriousness of the situation. Personifications, metaphors and figures of speech are made effective use of, to portray a vivid and a realistic representation of the faithless state, in the octave of the sonnet.

The sestet portrays the poet's firm decision to work against the growth of non-belief: "But I will out amid the sleet, and view" (8). Even the syntax of the line conveys the poet's daring out alone for the task of accomplishing his mission of eradicating the non-religious tendencies of the men of his time. The force in the line reflects the impelling powers that drive the poet to action. The poet stands in contrast to those who in the octave "close the door, and dress the cheerful hearth" (5). The language is rich and suggestive. Even in the most adverse of circumstances, 'amid the sleet,' he would unflickingly and staunchly work to curb the power of 'Unbelief.'

Next, Faith is depicted as "shrivelling stalk and silent-falling leaf" (9), for faith withers away from the hearts of men and disappears quietly. But as they are 'of choicest scent and hue' (10) to the poet, he goes on to lament the faithless state of his country: "for she, once pattern chief / Of faith, my Country, now gross-hearted grown, / Waits but to burn the stem before her idol's throne." (12-14). The country has become bloated up repulsively with materialistic and utilitarian ideas and has grown coarse and unrefined. The adjectival phrase 'gross-hearted' illustrates emphatically the state of degradation in which his country lives. The concluding lines form the anticlimax. The poet's religion and his country are at crossroads, for the country would sooner do

away with faith than lose material benefits: "burn the stem before her idol's throne" (14). Losing its faith, the country takes refuge in ancient idol worship and it rears 'a household Baal,' while the pilgrim poet wanted his country, England "to be the 'Land of Saints' in this dark hour, and her Church the salt of the earth." ¹⁵

Hardly has any poet sung under such strong personal sorrow at the dishonouring of Faith by an unbelieving generation. As far as this pilgrim is concerned, in 'the Autumn of the Tree of Life,' compromise should not be the order of the day. It is impossible to miss the fervent indignation that burns within the poet, and he strains forward to war with disbelief. The sound echoes the sense especially in the last two lines, which predominate in deep [?] sounds when his country reaches almost to the end of its faith. The poet uses sound devices to effect slow reading and to impress upon the reader's mind the deteriorated state of contemporary men.

The poems of the second stage in the pilgrim's journey, in general, revolt against the shallow popular religion. Newman exuded vitality and his poems pierce through 'joint and marrow,' disturbing the self-complacency of confident men with their swift shafts. The poems reflect Newman's troubled spirit, his anxieties and fears and his need for the men of the times to be chastened and disciplined in spirit and body.

Among one of the strikingly grave lyrics of Newman, we find "The Two Worlds." ¹⁶ This poem illustrates how consistent his religious outlook had been through the crushing events of his long storm-tossed life. Here we discern the earnest youth who wrote the poem "Solitude," still a single-hearted pilgrim, with his mind set absolutely on the end of the quest which is depicted in a mystical vein in The Dream of Gerontius. "The Two Worlds" portrays the main stay of his life which saved him from breaking down. That of course was his unshakable belief

in the sole reality of the invisible world, placed against this world of flux and transience. His hope for a heavenly recompense outweighed his earthly disappointments.

There is a wistful melancholy in the lines, for the world of Newman seems to be 'out of joint' with the times. The poem illustrates how at the very moment when the poet experiences the pain of renouncing: "The tender memories of the past, / The hopes of coming years" (19-20), he is also deeply conscious of a hundredfold reward. Being caught up in this world of human travail, the poet begins the poem with a heart-rending prayer: "Unveil, O Lord, and on us shine / In glory and in grace" (1-2). Then the poet places the two worlds in their bewildering juxtaposition: "This gaudy world grows pale before / The beauty of Thy face" (3-4). It is only the 'Kindly Light' of the Lord that can give an insight into the nature of this 'fairy ground' which deceives us with the promise of happiness here and now: "Till Thou art seen, it seems to be / A sort of fairy ground, / Where suns unsetting light the sky" (5-7). This last line was a powerful warning to his country men who gloried in the splendour of their colonial days, conscious that the sun never set in the British Empire, spread so far and wide. Even such a mighty Empire like that of Great Britain of the nineteenth century, was nothing but an unreal Empire that had only a short duration of existence.

The poet prays for the 'keener' and the 'purer beam' of the light of the Lord to transcend our vision so that we get an insight into the heart of the truth, that the Lord alone is our only true Home, so bright amidst the shadows of this world. The poet already having discovered that Home by faith, is enlightened on the nature of this world:

Its noblest toils are then the scourge
Which made Thy [Christ's] blood to flow;
Its joys are but the treacherous thorns

Which circled round Thy [Christ's] brow. (13-16)

The poet uses contrasting images to make the meaning clear and vivid. In the first stanza the 'the gaudy world' grows 'pale' and here the 'noblest toils' are 'scourge'[s], 'Its joys' are but 'the treacherous thorns.' In his search for pleasures, man weaves 'the treacherous thorns' which 'circled round' the 'brow' of Christ at His passion. The poet depicts the human mind and its hidden motives which though seemingly noble, hide within it those treacheries for which Christ died to atone. Therefore the poet makes a confession to the Lord:

And thus, when we renounce for Thee
 Its restless aims and fears,
 The tender memories of the past,
 The hopes of coming years,
 Poor is our sacrifice, whose eyes
 Are lighted from above;
 We offer what we cannot keep,
 What we have ceased to love. (17-24)

Yet we know that the renunciation and the sacrifice that the poet made on his pilgrim journey to the Lord did cost him all that he held most dear in life.

The poem is highly subjective. The pilgrim poet was able to resign himself to God's will and say 'Poor is our sacrifice' even when he had not ceased to love the things he had sacrificed. But he transcended his experiences of failures and it looks as if the agonizing prayer which the pilgrim had made in 1833 for 'Kindly Light' in the poem "The Pillar of the Cloud" is granted him lighting up his beaten tracks with the vision of Heaven. Hence this world after imposing its cross upon him becomes once more the herald of that other world.

In Meditations And Devotions written in 1855, we find earlier echoes of this poem written in 1862. The pilgrim reflects:

I know, . . . and from sad experience I am sure, that whatever is created, whatever is earthly, pleases but for the time, and then palls and is a weariness From mere prudence I turn from the world to Thee: I give up the world for Thee — I renounce that which promises for Him who performs. 17

Newman had the habit of seeing reality as being composed of two opposite elements. In his own character and thoughts we find a balance between opposites. He had opposite qualities and dispositions which it is not easy for one and the same individual to harmonize to a high degree.¹⁸ Thus intent on the world to come, he was yet interested in what was going on here below. He was endowed with keen senses, attached to his earthly environment and had sound knowledge of classical history and literature. Though he loved classical knowledge, he loved his more faith and put some restraints on his interest in the Classics. In his Mediterranean journey while being in the midst of a rich classical tradition, he turned to Bible and the Christian tradition, which points to an eternity to which the whole creation moves on its earthly pilgrimage. The poet would use every God-given gift including a fine art like music, as the poem "The Isles of the Sirens,"¹⁹ portrays:

Music's ethereal fire was given,
Not to dissolve our clay,
But draw Promethean beams from Heaven,
And purge the dross away. (5-8)

"The Elements" and "Judaism" are two tragic choruses which portray the Sophoclean spirit effectively. J. M. Flood has commented that in these poems Newman, "possessed the Greek spirit to a degree scarcely ever shown by any other English poet."²⁰ With their Aeschylean and Sophoclean spirit, these poems reflect a Greek austerity and gnomi^c concentration, in tune

with Newman's own verse habits. The choric model enhances his disciplined plainness and he uses the free movement of the Greek choric verse. These two poems are examples of the highly imaginative faculties that the poet possessed.

These poems are also examples of Newman's knowledge of classical literature. A chorus by its very nature comments on the action and teaches the audience. Newman being a pilgrim teacher, uses this dramatic device to instruct. The people of his time with their classical education would grasp the teaching when they read it. If not for this didactic purpose he would have preferred to bury his knowledge of the Classics.

In "The Element"²¹ the poet depicts man's ability to tame the brute forces of the earth:

Man is permitted much
 To scan and learn
 In Nature's frame;
 Till he well-nigh can tame
 Brute mischiefs, and can touch
 Invisible things, and turn
 All warring ills to purposes of good.
 Thus, as a god below,
 He can control
 And harmonize, what seems amiss to flow
 As sever'd from the whole
 And dimly understood. (1-12)

Next he gives a criticism of the claims of science. Even though science has solved many of the riddles of Nature, existence and calamities, it is unable to understand fully or to explain totally the tragedy in the elements. The poet finds that only 'One Hand has sway' (15) over the elements and that is God's. The poet cautions man to realize his feebleness, for even when he is 'fully skill'd,' he 'Still gropes in twilight dim' (27). Here we get an echo of Aristotle's reference of man to bats. Aristotle remarked that the

difficulty is not in the facts but in us: "For as the eyes of the bats are to the blaze of days, so is the reason in our soul to the things which are by nature most evident of all."²² Man who 'grope's' in darkness is 'Encompass'd:' "By fearfulest powers / Inflexible to him" (29-30). This helps him to discern his powerlessness and turn to God in wisdom, for He alone: "Holds for us the keys of either home / Earth and the world to come" (35-36).

God's infinite creative and preservative powers are unfathomable and the achievements of science can never succeed in resolving the mystery of the universe. The cosmic enigma is wrapped up in the ineffable transcendent mystery which lies beyond the range of science. In the poem "Warnings"²³ the poet gives the context of contemporary dispute between science and religion and asks: "Can science bear us / To the hid springs / Of human things? ". (7-9) The poet knows that the providential warnings by which God prepares souls for sorrow can be comprehended by imaginative insight which in fact is the true guide to the "hid springs / Of human things ?" Then in an unusual stanza pattern, which is almost 'Browningesque,' in a deliberately difficult cadence he asks "Are such thoughts fetters / While Faith disowns / Dread of earth's tones" (13-15). The poet reaches the conclusion that it is only Faith which is able to read 'on the wall' 'Heaven's letters' (17-18) that is the signs sent by God to human beings. This is a Biblical reference to the prophetic writing on the wall during a great feast given by Belshazzar.²⁴ Newman implies that many such divine warnings are given to the men of the time but even the Victorians needed an interpreter like Daniel of old who could read and understand God's ways.

"The Elements" could be compared with one of the great choruses of Sophocles in Antigone. The poem is also faintly suggestive of a chorus in the Choephoroe of Aeschylus. The poem testifies to the poet's skill in comprehending Aeschylean moods. It is characteristic of Newman. It is Newman striving after the 'One Hand alone' which holds sway over the elements and it is he who

reaches out and feels in the darkness of this world the touch of the Divine Hand which stretches out to lead him to certainties beyond what this world can offer.

"Judaism" ²⁵ is another tragic chorus in the the Greek spirit. Here the poet draws exceptional analogy between the Jewish people and the outcast Oedipus Coloneus. Aeschylus himself, noted for the scope and grandeur of his conceptions and style, would have been delighted to have written what Newman writes on the Jewish race. The comparison of the Jewish race with that of Oedipus Coloneus is faultless.

The poem begins with a magnificent apostrophe to the Jewish race: 'O Piteous race!' (1) because this once chosen people of God, have now become the symbol of God's rejected people. As a result they are 'aged blind / Unvenerable' (5-6) and wander from place to place, banished from their heritage, through their sins. The poet's reference to the distinguished figure of Oedipus Coloneus of Sophocles as the symbol of God's rejected people, in their woeful destiny, is indeed remarkable. Like him, they too bear a curse with them, are no where at home and carry their sad present while at the same time they nurse a mysterious hope for the future. The poet compares the Jewish race to Oedipus Coloneus thus:

I liken thee to him in pagan song,
In thy gaunt majesty,
The vagrant King, of haughty-purposed mind,
Whom prayer nor plague could bend:
Wrong'd, at the cost of him who did the wrong,
Accursed himself, but in his cursing strong,
And honour'd in his end. (7-13)

These lines form the best possible summary of Oedipus, the hero of the two major Greek tragedies. Here we find the strange contrast in which the Sophoclean irony delights--though Oedipus is king of all men and seems to be the happiest, he is

the most afflicted of men. The Greek hero in his woeful dignity carrying an inherent curse, resembles a Jew who is destined to wander. Both the pitiable protagonists are trapped by tragic destiny.

The poet mentions the 'Proffer of precious cost' (28) by Christ which was His own very life to appease Heaven and thus to save the suffering race. It did not prevail against the pride of the Jewish nation. This lamentable event brings to the poet's mind the irreligious attitudes and the ignoble life situations of the men of his time. Such distressing state of events inspired this tragic chorus.

The poems of the journey were composed by Newman in response to the challenge of championing the cause of religion and they were woven in and out of his response to Sicily too, showing the intertwining of his reaction to natural beauty, classical and Christian history, the state of the Church and a sense of nemesis and summons to action. This is the reason why he wrote at Ithaca of Exodus and why his thoughts centred round Moses instead of on Ulysses. Even the tragic choruses are intertwined with spiritual reflections.

There are poems of the journey in which a historian's interest mingles with that of a lover of classical beauty and with that of a Romantic's love of nature. The poems also reflect something of Newman's preoccupation with the illusory nature of life, earthly glories, and mirror the world of the spirits and of the life to come. The best among such poems are "Reverses," "Messina," "Corcyra" and "Memory."

In the first two stanzas of the fine lyric "Reverses,"²⁶ the poet blends images of nature beautifully and most effectively with symbols taken from history:

When mirth is full and free,
Some sudden gloom shall be;
When haughty power mounts high,

The Watcher's axe is nigh.
 All growth has bound; when greatest found,
 It hastes to die.
 When the rich town, that long
 Has lain its huts among,
 Uprears its pageants vast,
 And vaunts--it shall not last !
 Bright tints that shine, are but a sign
 Of summer past. (1-12)

These form instances of the decay of splendour at its height, and they are appealing due to their universality. Images of contrast are used to illustrate the fleeting nature of earthly goods and worldly achievements. Thus against 'full' 'mirth' there is 'sudden gloom;' 'haughty power' and 'the Watcher's axe' face each other; 'all growth' but 'hastes to die.' Natural surroundings and built-up civilizations are alike impermanent. Nature and human art are sign posts which point to the decay of growth and splendour.

The third stanza forms the climax. Here friendship is portrayed as the most precious and as the most fragile of earthly possessions in comparison to the might of nature and the splendour of civilizations. In the poet's opinion true friendship cherished by loyal hearts affects human lives more keenly than the overthrow of great empires.

Such poems are remarkable for the grandeur of their stylistics, the purity of taste and the radiance of the total impression. The poem "Reverses" has a striking monosyllabic vigour. It is hard to find short poems that equal these qualities. Swinburne, the great pre-Raphaelite poet-critic commented that the poems of Newman have 'a genuine lyric note' and spoke highly of the Victorian's poetry.²⁷ The early lyrics and The Dream of Gerontius have a unique beauty, while the "The Pillar of the Cloud" and some of his religious lyrics are

among the most direct and passionate expression of strong feelings.

At the sight of the historic Mediterranean sea, the setting of Greek and Roman Epic songs, Newman's love for classic scenes could not be restrained. The past civilizations remind him of the decay of empires yet his heart is moved by the land of classical beauty. In the poem "Messina,"²⁸ he rebukes himself for the attraction he feels: "Why, wedded to the Lord, still yearns my heart / Towards these scenes of ancient heathen fame ?" (1-2) The pilgrim's all-embracing power of understanding prevents him from surrendering to the doctrine of the sole sufficiency of man which marks the humanism of Renaissance. He realizes the fatal flaw of the neo-pagan philosophy which stops at the human level.

By the time the poet comes to the latter part of the poem, he attains true wisdom and is able to read in the growth and decay of these civilizations each individual's history. He is moved to 'sympathy with Adam's race:'

'Tis but that sympathy with Adam's race
Which in each brother's history reads its own.
So let the cliffs and seas of this fair place
Be named man's tomb and splendid record-stone,
High hope, pride-stain'd, the course without the
prize. (10-14)

They had built up splendid civilizations, which are demolished to the grounds. They stand as sepulchres-- "man's tomb and splendid record-stone"--which are 'pride-stain'd ' and are reminders of 'the course with out the prize.' The living walk over the tomb of those ancient actors and warriors. Thus past and present merge in a piercing experience of desolation and beauty. The past is the reminder to the poet of the transience of every worldly achievement. The Christian pilgrim pauses to reflect at this sight:

The past and the present! Once these hills were full of life! I began to understand what Scripture means when speaking of lofty cities vaunting in the security of their strongholds. What a great but ungodly sight was this place in its glory! and then its history; . . . 29

Faithful to the Petrarchan sonnet tradition, the poet presents the problem in the octave. The tone of the poem is revealed at the very outset by the telling question with which the poem begins. The octave portrays the 'restless' yearning of the poet for those pagan lands, their 'sweet arts' and their 'mad deeds' which are spectacular in human eyes. The sestet resolves the problem, for the poet finds the answer that every individual born of 'Adam's race' must face the growth and the decay of every earthly splendour.

As the poet moves on by the ancient Greek islands, he is reminded of the Greek City-States and of the classical poets and philosophers who sang of its glory. In the poem "Corcyra,"³⁰ the poet writes of the once famous race who 'on the sea held sway' (4), causing 'a hundred states to drown' (6). Once again it is a reminder to the poet that every 'history' is 'spent and run' (9).

Hence the historian's interest is turned to solemn reflections on the eternal fate of each long vanished actor in those once sensational scenes. The poet envisions himself walking over their tombs. The past history of these ancient towns summons up the ghostly present for the poet: "while pondering the fierce deeds then done, / Such reverence on me shall its seal impress / As though I corpses saw, and walk'd the tomb" (12-14). The poet finds in the fleeting nature of worldly splendours some cleansing morals for mankind. Civil war causing defeat could also be a reference to eighteenth century England which faced civil wars in its colonial empire.

Between 1780 and 1790 the two empires established were India and Australia. This poem was written in 1833 and the empire in decay may refer to China. These were uncertain times and were not the time of the great nineteenth century imperialism which came later. Such musings may have inspired this poem written as the Lenten season approached with its call to repentance.

The poem possesses a macabre beauty and it also foreshadows The Dream of Gerontius. Among the poems that achieve a marked refinement and simplicity and are very compact with concise expression, together with their messages for men, are "Desolation," "Zeal and Patience," "Declension," "Sympathy," "Humiliation," "Sensitiveness," "Warnings," "The Age to Come," "Hora Novissima," "The Witness" and "Flowers Without Fruit."

In the sonnet "Memory," ³¹ as in "Corcyra," the light that plays on the present scene is a gleam from the world of spirits. In "Memory," the poet portrays the present as the prophet of the future. The power of memory which he possesses is the pledge of its might in the days to come, when he the pilgrim would have gone the way from whence none returns:

And so, upon Death's unaverted day,
As I speed upwards, I shall on me bear,
And in no breathless whirl, the things that were,
And duties given, and ends I did obey.
And, when at length I reach the throne of Power
Ah! still unscared, I shall in fulness see
The vision of my past innumerable deeds,
My deep heart-courses, and their motive-seeds,
So to gaze on till the red dooming hour. (5-13)

Looking forward to the end of the quest, the pilgrim offers up a prayer: "Lord, in that strait, the Judge! remember me!" (14). In fact, what happens hour by hour is that the living hastens

on to join the ranks of the dead who are still alive at a different level.

An air of loneliness and melancholy broods over the Mediterranean poems. The visions of departed earthly glories and empires laid in the dust lend to the poems the voices of the grim warnings of the Old Testament prophets. In their religious realism these poems remind us of Crabbe with a touch of Bunyan and reflect Cowper in their homely diction. The poems of the voyage are full of spiritual content, sincerity and a unique fervour. Often times his extraordinary zeal glows warmly through the veil of his restraint, constant ardour for God's people and solicitude for their vocation runs through the whole of his poetic being.

Newman, the pilgrim had the most appreciative eye for the sensuous beauties of nature. It was in his quest for the beauty of the Unknown that he was instinctively drawn towards the unlimited variety of sights and sounds of nature. His highly sensitive soul responded with wonderful immediacy to the rich variety of nature's loveliness manifested in its various seasons, flowers, birds, animals, scents, music and colours.

In the poem "Nature and Art" ³² he sings of the glories of living creation set against the 'dull' lifeless works of art produced by man. He pours out his heart in sorrow in the poem, for the beauty of nature he had to leave behind. He loved the 'wooded hills,' the plain fields, the herds of cattle 'The leaves rustling in the breeze' (37), the songs of birds, the sunbeam that 'glides along' (41), the insect that "Floats softly by, or sips the flower" (43). The poet sang of 'the dewey rain' that 'descends' the 'brisk showers the welkin shroud' no less the 'angry brow' that 'Frowns' from 'the red thunder-cloud;' 'hailstorm' that 'pelts' and 'lightning' that harms nature. But for Newman who held a sacramental view of nature, its beauty was but another step towards the experience of the

overwhelming beauty of the Creator. Hence it was 'living Nature' with its outward and visible sign of the divinely Invisible that inspired Newman's art.

In the poem "The Trance of Time,"³³ the poet writes of 'The season-measured year,' with its 'fairy guise' which inspired his imagination. But unlike some other poets, for example Sarojini Naidu, who ascribed no mystic importance to nature and who was thrilled in the loveliness of its seasons, Newman found nature beautiful and breath-taking, yet a veil, holding back great truths of a higher life.

He has recorded the rhythms of the seasons in nature. Spring which sings of heaven, 'the summer flowers' (5), 'the autumn's bowers' (7), 'rich autumnal lights' (17), and 'winter's social ring' (18), were dear to him. All the same he was aware: "Long days are fire-side nights, / Brown autumn is fresh spring" (19-20). So the changes in nature and all discriminations of seasons did not affect him, for he could 'antedate,' 'Heaven's Age of fearless rest' (32). The poem also expresses the truth of the transience of life and that this world is but a shadow which would pass out of existence in a short duration like 'the short-lived four' seasons of the year. Man has nothing of lasting value, 'no owner's part' in this transitory world.

Poems such as "Heathen Greece" and "To Edward Caswall," illustrate clearly that Newman drew a certain sustenance from the Romantics. The heroine of Newman's novel Callista, being weary of life in tropical Africa, sang this song "Heathen Greece"³⁴ in wistfulness and with great longing to have a vision of those cool Grecian islands. Through her song, the poet paints for us the beautiful Grecian islands, its seas, rivers, mountains and 'Elysian' fields, with the sensibilities of a Romantic. The song reflects the beauty of the singer, the cadence of her soft voice and the wistfulness that overpowers

the sad heroine.

The places mentioned in the poem are portrayed with realism. The poem is born out of his marvellous power of visualization. The poet describes 'the Islands of the Blest' (1) that 'stud' 'the Aegean Sea' (2), and 'the deep Elysian rest' (3):

It haunts the vale where Peneus strong
Pours out his incessant stream along,
Where the craggy ridge and mountain bare
Cut keenly through the liquid air, (4-7)

'array'd' in their 'pure tints.' The 'craggy ridge and mountain bare' 'Scorn earth's green robes' because they 'change and fade,' while the former 'stand in beauty undecay'd' and are at the same time 'Guards of the bold and the free.'

The poem excels in rhythmic beauty, and even the visual appeal of the poem is admirable. This is one of such poems of Newman which expresses a melancholy and a sensuous emotion in a penetrating melody which is all his own. Poems such as these bear witness to his profound and original genius. John K. Ryan places it side by side with Poe's "The City in the Sea."³⁵

In the lyric "To Edward Caswall,"³⁶ Newman lingers in the enchanting company of nature. The poet describes the beauties of nature, in its richest, luscious and rapturous state. The description of each flower and blossom, mirrored in the stream is perfect:

Once , o'er a clear calm pool,
The fulness of an over-brimming spring,
I saw the hawthorn and the chestnut fling
Their willing arms, of vernal blossoms full
And light green leaves: the lilac too was there,
The prodigal laburnum, dropping gold,
While the rich gorse along the turf crept near,
Close to the fountain's margin, and made bold

To peep into that pool, so calm and clear:--
 As if well-pleased to see their image bright
 Reflected back upon their innocent sight;
 Each flower and blossom shy

Lingering the live-long day in still delight. (1-13)

The poet makes the best use of metaphors and personifications here. These lines could be compared with the best in Wordsworth and they are transparent and amazingly fluent, like the 'overbrimming' spring itself.

The title of this beautiful poem may come as a surprise. But the works of Newman, both in prose and poetry have such awkward titles. As he, the pilgrim had embarked on the bold task of correcting the times, he gave his works cold titles, suggesting straight forward paths to the men of his times who looked for what pleased the senses forgetting their higher call as human beings. Neither did he seek after any literary fame. As a result we see his occasional works along the pilgrimage bearing titles which are as plain as the idea he intended to convey through them. Hence the poem written for Edward Caswall has the title "To Edward Caswall."

It was for his sisters that Newman wrote the poem entitled "My Lady Nature and Her Daughters."³⁷ In this poem he compares the delight ladies take in dress, dances, and their round of homely tasks with the beauties and activities of nature. It speaks about nature but much more about ladies. The poet finds the graceful mirth of ladies the loveliest sight on earth. He also depicts the 'lighter moods of mind' of Lady Nature, in her birds and beasts and their antics and sports.

Next the poet speaks of the 'birth of Poesy' (73) in nature's lap, and of the natural resorts the wealthy men enjoy from the bounty of Lady Nature. But 'work-day souls' (82) turn not to 'High-born Nature' but to 'lady-lighted home' (88) to regain their strength and to befriend their humble lot amidst

a rude and unkind world. Though Lady Nature bears her sway amidst the spheres, it is her daughters, the ladies, who rule over hearts.

While for Hopkins, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," nature with all its delights left Newman's heart longing for God. For he realized that the blessings of nature could offer no lasting satisfaction to his heart. Newman and Francis Thompson are of the same view. Thompson wrote: "Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth."³⁸ Newman could be compared with Rabindranath Tagore for whom also nature was an unending source of inspiration and a symbol of divine grace and beauty. But Newman was cautious of the beauties of nature lest they tear him apart from God. Yet both these poets use images from nature to symbolize their yearning for a union with the Divine.

In his early poems qualities such as simplicity of thought and direct appeal to the individual humanity are expressed. They also have a romantic fragrance and an energy peculiar to Byron and Shelley.³⁹ Newman employed his genius to give a poetic flavour to the demands of a religious call to live a life of total commitment and painful sacrifice.

To think of Newman the poet, is to think of the saintly mystic, who wrote "The Pillar of the Cloud" and The Dream of Gerontius; or those serious sombre hymns of Lyra Apostolica. He is generally regarded as a poet who made it his vocation to emphasize the necessity of transcending the temporal world and entering into a timeless, eternal zone where one would be one with the Creator, and rightly so.

The light verse does reveal a happier side to the pilgrim in contrast to the holy and ascetic side of his temperament. His humour flashes through his work from time to time, all throughout his long span of life. His semi-comic album verses convey qualities of wit blended with logical designs. Further,

he obviously had the capacity for stanzaic invention too. An album verse, he wrote in 1829, "Opusculum" ⁴⁰ has these lines:

Fair Cousin, thy page
is small to encage
the thoughts which engage
the mind of a sage
such as I am. (1-5)

The next stanza reads:

'Twere in teaspoon to take
the whole Genevese lake,
or a lap-dog to make
the white Elephant sac-
-red in Siam. (6-10)

These lines portray the comic element brought out through astonishing logical wit.

It was a pursuit of young ladies of the time to make gentlemen write verses in their albums. Newman would write them with a light touch and evident humour. The album verse "Seeds in the Air" ⁴¹ ends thus after pointing out how the poetic Muse could be nourished:

All this is a fiction;
I never could find
A suitable friction
To frenzy my mind.
What use are empirics?
No gas on their shelf
Can make one spout lyrics
In spite of oneself! (25-32)

Newman composed "A Rhyming Letter" ⁴² in 1863. The nonsense technique here conveys as usual what is common to his light verse, a spontaneity and seeming effortlessness. It is a letter of thanks to Miss Charlotte Bowden who had sent him a cake baked by her:

Who is it that moulds and makes
 Round, and crisp, and fragrant cakes ?
 Makes them with a kind intent,
 As a welcome compliment,
 And the best that she can send
 To a Venerable Friend?
 One it is ,for whom I pray
 On St. Philip's festal day
 With a loving heart, that she
 Perfect as her cakes may be.
 Full and faithful in the round
 Of her duties ever found;
 When a trial comes, between
 Truth and falsehood cutting keen;
 Yet that keenness and completeness
 Tempering with a winning sweetness.
 Here's a rhyming letter, Chat,
 Gift for gift, and tit for tat. (1-18)

This letter of thanks shows clearly that even in later years Newman's playful wit and his sense of fun never deserted him. T. S. Eliot's "A Practical Possum" composed in 1947, as a letter to a girl who had sent him a lavender bag, found its earlier echo in Newman's "A Rhyming Letter." Such verses and the one "Valentine to a Little Girl"⁴³ reveal how much the pilgrim cared about people and how they brought him the love of God.

Newman's light verses offer us a glimpse into the workings of a mind that could see, not only the serious, the awe inspiring and the glory of the world to come, but also the comic side of life, its sense of nonsense. Far from being a stern and gloomy fanatic who shunned contact with his fellow men, Newman delighted his friends, being alert even to the trivial things, and imparting a humorous note to more serious matters. But this is not the popular image of Newman seen by most Newman

scholars. Many of them seem to be unaware of this lighter side of his temperament.

Something in the rhyme, the rhythms, the syntax and the imagery of these light verses reminds us of nursery rhymes--the nonsense poetry that children love so dearly.

Newman, the pilgrim was at the same time both an introvert and an extrovert, an idealist and a man of action; he was serious and yet endowed with a fine sense of humour. He considered human life on earth as a means to reach Eternity. His pilgrimage was a progress towards God.

Notes

- 1 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 244-261.
- 2 John Henry Cardinal Newman, Verses 3-4.
- 3 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 49-52.
- 4 John Henry Newman, Memorials of the Past (Oxford, 1832).
- 5 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 6-7.
- 6 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 22-24.
- 7 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 33-34.
- 8 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 42-43.
- 9 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 34-37.
- 10 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 72-73.
- 11 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 71-72.
- 12 John Henry Newman, "God The Sole Stay for Eternity"

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- 13 Maisie Ward, ed. Apologia pro Vita Sua 1.
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- 16 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 209.
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- 32 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 25-27.
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- 37 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 39-41.
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- 41 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 54-55.
- 42 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 210.
- 43 Elisabeth Ann Noel. Diss. 189-191.