

APOCALYPTIC PATIENCE IN THE POETRY OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS AND CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

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Poem 162

Patience, hard thing! The hard thing but to pray,
But bid for, patience is! Patience who asks
Wants war, wants wounds; weary his times, his tasks;
To do without, take tosses, and obey.
Rare Patience roots in these, and, these away, 5
Nowhere. Natural heart's-ivy Patience masks
Our ruins of wrecked past purpose. There she basks
Purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day.
We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills
To bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills 10
Of us we do bid God bend to him even so.
And where is he who more and more distils
Delicious kindness?—He is patient. Patience fills
His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know.

This version of Hopkins's poem "Patience—hard thing!" comes from the 1990 Clarendon Press Edition of *The Poetical Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins* edited by Norman MacKenzie. In his commentary MacKenzie neatly sums up the currently accepted sources for Hopkins's virtue of patience. He first cites Thomas Aquinas's words that patience is "the voluntary and sustained suffering of arduous and difficult things for the sake of virtue or profit." Then he quotes Thomas à Kempis who said that "the truly patient man . . . whatever adversity befall him . . . receives all with thankfulness, as from the hand of God, and esteems it 'great gain' . . . Be thee therefore prepared for battle." A further significant source is the founder of the Jesuits, Saint Ignatius Loyola, who in *The Spiritual Exercises* advises: "Let him who is in desolation strive to remain in patience, which is the virtue contrary to the troubles which harass him" (349-50). MacKenzie finally points the reader to Isaiah: "Yet it was the will of the Lord to / bruise him" (53.7-12). James Finn Cotter has also identified the Book of Job as an important source for the theme of patience in the poem.

The theme of patience is common in Victorian and indeed in English poetry because of its frequent occurrence in the Old and New Testaments. However, few commentators, if any, identify the Apocalypse¹ as a source for the theme, which quite specifically relates it to the last things. In the Apocalypse Christ through St John acknowledges that "I know thy works and thy labour and thy patience and how thou

¹ Biblical references are to the Douay English translation (completed early in the seventeenth century at Douay, France) used by the Roman Catholic Church. In the Douay translation the last book of the New Testament is called the Apocalypse, in the King James version it is called The Revelation of St John the Divine (the contested authorship of this book has not been discussed in this paper).

canst not bear them that are evil" (2. 2) and he promises that "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly" (3.10-11).

It is unfortunate that the apocalyptic source for Hopkins's poem has been overlooked because a knowledge of this context adds significantly to our understanding of the poem. When patience is used apocalyptically it necessarily implies a particular historical, political and eschatological frame to our reading. This frame interprets history as a pattern of crisis, the present as a time of persecution, with justice belonging to end-time. Further, argues Steven Goldsmith, despite its revolutionary rhetoric, the action this historical paradigm supports is politically conservative, it promotes the upholding of institutional order and the suppression of dissent (49). This article will focus on one of Hopkins's poems—Patience—hard thing!—and will argue that these historical, political and eschatological elements are present in his use of patience. Hopkins was not the first, or only, Victorian to use patience apocalyptically. He had an important predecessor—Christina Rossetti—to whose work I will compare and contrast his use of the theme.

As in Aquinas's definition of patience the Apocalypse associates patience with suffering. In the first chapter John introduces himself as "your brother and your partner in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience in Christ Jesus" (1.9) and in the second chapter John, quoting Christ, praises the Christians of Ephesus saying, "And thou hast patience and hast endured for my name and hast not fainted" (2.3). A relationship between patience and suffering is prominent from the opening lines of Hopkins's poem. Patience is a "hard thing" because to ask for patience is also to ask for "war," "wounds" and "weary . . . times [and] tasks." With patience comes doing "without," "tosses" and obedience to authority in the face of suffering. One virtue cannot be had without the other because patience can only "root" and grow in tribulation or "nowhere." Hopkins had a first-class classical education and so it is probable he is punning patience with the Latin verb *patior* which means to bear, support, undergo, suffer and endure (Lewis and Short 1314).

Hopkins strengthens the connection between these concepts through his use of caesuras after "patience" and "hard thing," which adds stress to these words and slows the meter, imprisoning "patience" and "hardness" together, and forcing the reader to pause on them and ponder their relationship. Hopkins then, in a similar way, uses caesuras and stresses to link the hardness of patience with "war," "wounds," and "weariness." If the first line was weighty, then this third line is ponderously slow due to the heavy alliteration of "Wants war," "wants wounds," "weary" and "without." The alliteration enables Hopkins to play on the two meanings of "wants." The primary meaning is desire for war and wounds but, ironically, it is the human condition usually to desire a lack of war and wounds (lack, of course, being the secondary meaning of "want"). But, as we shall see, a lack of war and wounds, and the patience they instil, could lead to loss of the eternal life, which is Hopkins's ultimate want.

Hopkins also uses the end rhymes to support the meaning of the first quatrain. The poem links "pray" at the end of the first line to "obey" at the end of the fourth line thereby suggesting that it is obedience in the face of suffering which should be our prayer. This is supported by the couplet of lines two and three which rhymes "asks" and

“tasks,” thereby highlighting that our prayer is not for comfort or ease but to be put to the test by burdensome activity.

Like Hopkins Christina Rossetti identifies patience as an important theme in the Apocalypse. In 1893 Rossetti published a lengthy commentary on the book titled *The Face of the Deep*; in her Prefatory Note she remarks that “A dear Saint . . . once pointed out to me Patience as our lesson in the Book of Revelations. Following the clue thus afforded me, I seek and hope to find Patience in this Book of awful import.” Rossetti also associates patience with suffering. She makes this connection from the very beginning of her commentary on the Apocalypse in the first poem in the Prefatory Note:

O, ye who love to-day,
Turn away
From Patience with her silver ray
For Patience shows a twilight face,
Like a half-lighted moon
When daylight dies apace.

But ye who love to-morrow,
Beg or borrow
To-day some bitterness of sorrow;
For Patience shows a lustrous face
In depth of night her noon;
Then to her sun gives place.

Rossetti describes patience as a virtue which requires “bitterness of sorrow.” It shines most bright in “depth of night.” Elsewhere in *The Face of the Deep* Rossetti states: “The patient soul, lord of itself, sits imperturbable amid the jars of life and serene under its frets. . . . Tribulation cannot but be a privilege, inasmuch as it makes us so far like Christ” (26). She explains the apparent paradox of patience/suffering and her use of darkness in her poem saying:

Patience goes with sorrow, not with joy. And by a natural instinct sorrow ranges itself with darkness, joy with light. But eyes that have been supernaturalized recognize . . . how darkness reveals more luminaries than does the day: to the day appertains a single sun; to the night innumerable, incalculable, by man’s perception inexhaustible stars. (*Face of the Deep* 116)

Readers familiar with the Apocalypse will recognise that behind this relationship between patience and suffering is a particular view of history which constructs the present as a time of crisis and persecution. Bernard McGinn says that an essential characteristic of the apocalyptic tradition is a deterministic view of history:

A divinely predetermined pattern of crisis-judgement-vindication that marks the End. Apocalypses that show any interest in history at all have some variation on this pattern, that is, they see the present time as one of some form of crisis (most frequently, the growth of evil and the persecution of the just); they look forward to judgement in which the wicked are punished and the just approved. ("Early Apocalypticism" 10)

In the apocalyptic theory of history it is in the future at the end of time that the righteous will be granted justice. Why did this belief develop? McGinn postulates that "this view of history and the end was produced for purposes of consolation and theodicy among a subject people frequently labouring under a strong sense of persecution" ("Revelation" 526). The Apocalypse asserts that the reward of patience in the face of persecution is justice. Christ promises: "He that shall lead into captivity shall go into captivity; he that shall kill by the sword must be killed by the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints" (13.10).

In the apocalyptic tradition to ask for patience implies the belief that one is persecuted and is awaiting justice. And behind the speaker's request for patience in "Patience, hard thing!" can be seen both the belief that he has been harshly or unjustly treated and the desire for compensation. What is he seeking justice for? The answer is in line 7: "Our ruins of wrecked past purpose." But what could be these "wrecked past purposes"? Hopkins's sense of crisis is broadly three-fold: personal, political and cosmic. The reader who has knowledge of Hopkins's personal history can easily interpret the wrecks biographically. MacKenzie dates this poem at around Spring 1886 when Hopkins had been Professor of Greek at University College Dublin for two years. Hopkins felt that his time in Ireland was an unproductive banishment in an alien land. He wrote to his friend Robert Bridges in February 1887: "Tomorrow morning I shall have been three years in Ireland, hard wearying wasting wasted years" (*Letters* 250). And he worried that his poems might be used in a harmful way. In his private retreat notes written at Beaumont in September 1883 Hopkins reveals: "Today I earnestly asked our Lord to watch over my compositions, not to preserve them from being lost or coming to nothing, for that I am very willing they should be, but they might not do me harm through the enmity or imprudence of any man or my own . . . and this I believe is heard" (*Sermons* 253-54).

On a political level Hopkins feared that Ireland was on the brink of revolution and civil war. In a letter dated June 1886 to Alexander Baillie, Hopkins advocated Home Rule for Ireland arguing that "[Home Rule] is a blow at England . . . but it is better that [it] shd. be by peaceful and honourable means . . . which otherwise may come by rebellion, bloodshed, and dishonour" (*Further Letters* 127). However, the text of the poem points to a third and cosmic "wreck." In "Patience—hard thing!" there is a movement from the speaker's personal suffering to the general, historical suffering of humanity and one of the ways Hopkins achieves this movement is by using the biblical myth of the garden. David Lawton, in *Faith, Text and History*, notes the importance of garden imagery in the Apocalypse: "[These] recurrent symbols . . . form one of the central and most anguished myths of the Bible . . . Apocalyptic arises out of exile from

the land, from the garden kept by God" (173). In line 6 Hopkins plays on the meaning of apocalyptic "patience" with the plant "Natural heart's-ivy Patience." By juxtaposing the two, Hopkins allows the reader to interpret the plant, as well as the virtue, biblically.

Hopkins describes patience as "natural heart's-ivy" which masks the "ruins" or "wrecks." Ivy has a long tradition in literature. In Flower Books, which were popular gifts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the agreed meaning of ivy was fidelity in friendship, marriage and adversity (*Language and Poetry of Flowers* 22; Ingram 350; Tyas 306). In Renaissance emblem books, which were widely admired and reproduced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ivy was used to represent sinful humanity's patient climb toward God on the firm foundation of Christ and the Gospels. For example, George Wither, in *A Collection of Emblems*, first published in 1635, has ivy climbing a pyramid (fig.1). In the verse he likens the vine, weak in itself, to humanity which, just as the vine obtains strength from the pyramid, acquires strength from the grace of God. He concludes:

Continue, Lord, this Grace, and grant we may,
 Firm hold, on our supporter, always lay:
 So climbing, that we nor neglect, nor hide
 His Love, nor over-climb it, by our pride.
 Thus, our yet staggering weakness, shall at length,
 Be fully changed into perfect strength. (4: 226)



Fig.1 George Wither, *A Collection of Emblems* (1635). Book 4, Emblem 18

Such interpretations in emblem books of common images form a continuing iconographic tradition in English literature in the same way as biblical images. And Hopkins was well aware of this emblem tradition. Karl Josef Holtgen, in an article on English emblem books and their Jesuit models, notes that "Hopkins' language and thinking often have an emblematic quality" and that Hopkins had access to emblem books in the library of Stonyhurst College which had copies of Quarles, Scupoli and the Jesuit emblem writers Paulus Zettl, Hermann Hugo, and the Jesuit emblem books *Typus Mundi* and *Partheneia Sacra* (90).

In commentaries on Hopkins's poem ivy is interpreted simply as a plant well-known to cover ruins thereby producing a sense of desolation and age. I propose that it also has the function of representing the frailty of humanity which gains support and strength by clinging patiently to the heart of God. The line, "natural heart's-ivy Patience masks / Our ruins of wrecked past purpose," then can be interpreted as meaning that the virtue of patience is like ivy which, weak in itself, gains its power from its closeness and reliance on the heart, which is the divine. It is through this partnership between ivy and the heart that patience can climb from the ruin of the Fall.

Hopkins presents the relationship between the heart and ivy as "natural" by hyphenating the two words thereby visually tying them together for eternity. The heart to which the ivy clings is not only the bruised heart of the speaker and humanity but also the sacred heart of Jesus. Like ivy, the heart and its close relationship with patience, has a long history. Michael Wheeler, in *Death and the Future Life*, discusses the religious tradition behind the heart. He quotes as an example the anonymous author of *St Gertrude's Life*:

Tribulation and affliction of the heart are the Lord's language to His elect . . . that which is most pleasing to God is to maintain interior patience and to desire that the entire will of God may be accomplished in them. Such an answer does not reach heaven in the usual manner of human communication, but resounds, as it were, through that sweetest divine organ, the Heart of Jesus. (347)

In the Apocalypse Christ says "know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts" (3.23). Frank Marucci argues that Hopkins believes that the common and superficial sense is unmasked by "the heart to whom the discovery of the true and deep sense is entrusted" (41). Troubles of the heart are a link between the human and the divine and point from the present to end-time.

If the ivy and the heart can be interpreted biblically then "Our ruins of wrecked past purpose" become not simply a personal tribulation of the speaker (note that Hopkins says "our wrecks" and not "my wrecks"), or a political crisis, but a cosmic "wreck"—the ruin of humanity at the Fall. In this reading "Our ruins of wrecked past purpose" are sin and death which were brought into the world in the past by Adam and Eve's impatience with God's law. We are still suffering from these "ruins" because of humanity's continuing sinfulness and rejection of Christ. The garden imagery reveals that the speaker is not only looking for the personal justice which Christ the judge will

deliver at end-time, but he is also looking for the regeneration of our pure and sinless state, and the restoration of our close relationship with God, which was lost at the Fall. The apocalyptic context clarifies that the speaker in "Patience, hard thing!" is waiting specifically for the end of human history.

The connection between patience and the Fall reveals a paradox: humanity cries to God for patience to endure injustice and persecution, but because of the Fall injustice and persecution can be seen to be just punishment for our sinfulness. Therefore patience is needed to endure not injustice but justice. This is a feudal interpretation of patience. In the medieval period patience was linked closely with loyalty to authority, and so impatience akin to treason and rebellion. In discussing the medieval poem *Patience* by the Gawain-Poet, John Gardner explains:

God punishes disloyalty, or impatience. . . . [T]he poet argues first the futility of disloyalty to an omnipotent God, then the beauty of loyal service to a God whose omnipotence is wholly in the service of His love for and loyalty to His creature. Patience is not to be confounded with mere endurance of hardship. It is, rather, virtually unlimited endurance, either in a lord or in a vassal, because of devoted love. (51)

Adam and Eve's impatience is treasonous to God's authority. Job's complaint of unjust persecution can be interpreted as rebellion against God's authority. Patience is an act of submission to God as King. Hopkins strongly identifies God as King: "God is a sovereign and the love of subjects towards their sovereign lies first and foremost in willing obedience...we are God's things, his goods and chattels, his property, his slaves" (*Sermons* 54). And he identifies Christians as knights. In his private writings on the Kingdom of Christ, Hopkins argues:

Knights follow the profession of arms and having been knighted are bound by allegiance, fealty, loyalty, chivalry, knighthood in a word, to live up to a standard of courage above the civilian and even above the private soldier. And an adult Christian is [a knight] (for Confirmation is spiritual knighthood). (*Sermons* 163)

In the Apocalypse, Christ's kingship is clearly seen in his leadership of God's army in the last battle: "And the armies that are in heaven followed him..And he hath on his garment and on his thigh written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (19.14-16). And so one of the sufferings to be patiently anticipated and endured is war. John encourages the faithful to be patient in awaiting the final battle at the second coming of Christ at the end of time.

The speaker in "Patience—hard thing!" also suffers patiently in preparation for war. Hopkins says that one who asks for patience, "Wants war, wants wounds." Hopkins's choice of the word "wants" places the war and wounds in the future because to "want" implies that one does not have it in the present. It is also interesting to note that Hopkins did not choose the word "need." A "want" is unnecessary while a "need" is

necessary, thus a "want" emphasises that there is a certain degree of choice involved; it implies a personal gain.

But what is the personal gain to be had by patiently "wanting" war? Once we have interpreted patience to be apocalyptic, the war referred to in the poem logically becomes the apocalyptic battle at the end of time. The personal gain to be had by "wanting" apocalyptic war is justice and redemption, and because of God's gift to humanity of free will, redemption is a personal choice. John teaches that patience is the determining quality of those who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Apocalypse 14.12). And it is the patient faithful who will be saved from final damnation: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation" (3.10-11). In the final chapter of the Apocalypse Christ promises: "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works" (22.12).

Rossetti also sees justice and personal redemption to be the reward for patience. She links the two in her commentary when she studies the promise of Christ repeated by John: "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Apocalypse 3.10). Rossetti reflects that "the Philadelphian saints by patience obtained the special promise we are considering. We ourselves a thousand and a thousand times by impatience have forfeited our claim to it. They thus were guaranteed exemption from an awful impending trial" (*Face of the Deep* 117). In Part Two of a very early poem, "Three Nuns" (composed in 1849) Rossetti explicitly identifies salvation as the reward for earthly patience: "And for my patience will my Lord / Give an exceeding great reward."

The Apocalypse exhorts its readers to wait patiently promising "Behold, I come quickly," which highlights a paradox or tension at the heart of the book and indeed at the heart of Hopkins's poem. This tension revolves around patience which holds within itself both passive and active, boredom and suffering, waiting and war, present and future. Hopkins captures the paradox in his use of the word "bid" in relation to patience. He uses the word twice in the poem, in the opening lines, "Patience, hard thing! The hard thing but to pray, / But bid for, patience is!" (1-2) and toward the end of the poem, "we do bid God bend to him even so" (11).

Hopkins also links the two concepts in "The Starlight Night," a poem written nine years earlier. In the octet of this poem the speaker has been admiring the night sky and he quietly concludes: "Ah well! it is all a purchase, all is a prize" (8). But then he quickly and energetically exclaims in the first line of the sestet: "Buy then! bid then!—What?—Prayer, patience, alms, vows" (9). Eternal life is a purchase, it is a prize which has to be bought or bid for with, amongst other things, patience. In the final lines of the sestet the night sky becomes an image for eternal life when the speaker relates the pattern of the stars to the walls of heaven: "These are indeed the barn; withindoors house / The shocks. This piece-bright paling shuts the spouse / Christ home, Christ and his mother and all his hallows" (12-14). In both poems Hopkins uses patience actively to "bid" to God for redemption. When we bid to God for patience, we bend to Him, even though our hearts "grate" and our wills rebel.

Another image in "Patience, hard thing!" which captures both active and passive is the ocean: Patience "basks / Purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day." According to MacKenzie, the "Purple eyes" are the purple black fruit of the ivy plant which resemble eyes. Imperial purple also represents "supreme power" according to *The Sentiment of Flowers* (1869). But the Jesuit emblem book *The Devout Hart* (1634) in the emblem titled "The Heart Consecrated to the Love of Jesus is a Flourishing Garden" reads "Let the Heart be crown'd with the rose of virtue with the snowy flower, of innocence, with the purple of patience" (Luzvic 161). "Purple" may be linked with "patience" by more than just its alliteration. Further on in the poem, "purple" will be linked to the killing "bruise" on the heart. Purple-eyed patience lazes luxuriously in a still, hot sea of leaves, but often the traditional literary image of the sea is of sudden and constant change, uncontrolled power, darkness and danger. Job, who is considered by many to be the literary model of patience, cries to God to right the injustice of his persecution. God answers: "Who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth as issuing out of the womb . . . I set my bounds around it, and made it bars and doors: And I said: Hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no further. And here thou shalt break thy swelling waves" (Job 38.8-11).

John Amos Comenius's *Orbis Pictus*, a teaching text published in 1659, pictures the relationship between patience and the ocean: "Patience endureth calamities and wrongs, meekly like a Lamb, as Gods fatherly chastisement. In the meanwhile she leaneth upon the Anchor of Hope, (as a ship tossed by waves in the sea)." (341). The picture of patience basking in the sea then, despite its apparent static quality, may carry within it the seeds of disturbance and crisis.

Rossetti also acknowledges that patience holds within itself both active and passive qualities. In "Where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt" she prays "Nerve us with patience, Lord, to toil or rest, / Toiling at rest on our allotted level" (2). The reason that patience can hold these apparent opposites within itself is because it is a divine rather than a human virtue. Patience is passive in its waiting but active because in waiting patiently we are actively imitating God who is patient toward humanity. It is God's patience which explains His apparent slowness in returning to us. Peter uses apocalyptic imagery in his explanation of this to the early Christians in his Second Letter:

The Lord delayeth not his promise as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burned up. (3.9-10)

Therefore, it is humanity's proper role to wait and watch patiently for God's time at God's choosing. This is the interpretation Francis Quarles places on patience. Quarles's *Emblems*, although first published in 1643, was still extremely influential in the nineteenth century (Moseley 25). "Emblem 15" in the first book comments on the verse from the Apocalypse: "The devil is come unto you, having great wrath, because he

knoweth that he hath but a short time" (12.12; fig.2). The image Quarles attaches to this quotation is of the soul being attacked by sword and arrow as it ascends toward heaven, and the epigram that goes with it is:

My soul, sit thou a patient looker on;
 Judge not the Play before the Play is done:
 Her Plot has many changes: Every day
 Speaks a new Scene; the last act crowns the Play.

Patience looks and waits for the last act, the apocalypse, which draws the curtain on human history.



Fig.2 Francis Quarles, *Emblems* (1643). Book 1, Emblem 15

It is the belief that patience is an imitation of God which allows Hopkins and Rossetti to endure the tediousness of waiting. For both, the patient suffering in their poems can be simply the triviality and boredom of day-to-day life. Hopkins in "Patience—hard thing!" describes his "times" and "tasks" as "weary" and Rossetti, in "The Lowest Room" says, "So now in patience I possess / My soul year after tedious year, / Content to take the lowest place, / The place assigned me here" (270-73). Both poets link patience with boredom. Rossetti says bluntly in *The Face of the Deep* that "Patience is irksome, experience tedious; but then without hope which is their result life were a living death" (514). Hopkins, from the time he was at Oxford, also believed that this hope of salvation through imitating the patience of Christ answered the triviality of life. In January 1866 he wrote to his friend E.H. Coleridge:

It is incredible and intolerable if there is nothing wh. is the reverse of trivial and will correct and avenge the triviality of this life . . . I think that the trivialness of life is . . . done away with by the . . . incredible condescension of the Incarnation . . . that our Lord submitted not only to the pains of life . . . or the insults . . . but also to the mean and trivial accidents of humanity. (*Further Letters* 8-9)

According to Steven Goldsmith it is this waiting in reaction to injustice and persecution (whether personal, political or cosmic) which marks the Apocalypse as a deeply conservative work:

The image of the end of history may invoke a crisis that invites participation in historical conflict, but it can also serve to represent an immanent order and authority that lie beyond history. Revelation yokes the transcendence of history with the suppression of dissent, the politics of apocalypse promotes institutional order . . . [it is a] deeply contradictory text." (49)

In being patient humanity shares with Christ the experience of triviality and waiting. Logically, then, we cannot escape sharing in Christ's patient suffering. In Hopkins's poem, if patience is interpreted apocalyptically, then the ivy can be interpreted biblically, the tribulation is humanity's Fall, and the war is the apocalyptic battle. This logically leads to the interpretation of the speaker's weariness, patience and obedience as an allusion to Christ. The "wounds" then become Christ's wounds on the Cross (or stigmata which suggests the strong apocalyptic image of martyrdom) and the patience and obedience bring to mind Christ's obedience in the face of suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. The ultimate expression of God's patience with humanity is Christ's death on the cross.

The patience of the speaker is the patience of Christ the martyr, and the patience of the martyr is apocalyptic. In *The Martyr* (24 May 1846) Rossetti says:

He would prove and try her,
 But would not deny her,
 When her soul had pass'd, for His sake, patiently.

.....
 "Death I do entreet thee,
 Come! I go to meet thee;

.....
 On she went, on quickly (1: 22-4, 34-5, 43)

As the martyr is calling for Christ in the moments of her death Rossetti uses the words "come" and "quickly" which are echoes of John's final words in the final chapter of the Apocalypse (and of the Bible): "He that giveth testimony of these things saith: Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (22.20).

Like the ivy and the heart, the relationship between patience and martyrdom has a long history. Geoffrey Whitney has an emblem in which Christians are being herded toward the sword and the fire with the hand of God holding towards them a laurel crown (fig.3). The verse attached to the image explains:

Through the torments strange, and persecutions dire,
 The Christians pass, with patience in their pain:
 And end their course, sometimes with sword, and fire,
 And constant stand, and like to lambs are slain.
 Because, when all their martyrdom is past,
 They hope to gain a glorious crown at last.

Sic probantur.
 To M. ANDREWES Preacher.



THROUGH THE tormentes straunge, and persecutions dire,
 The Christians passe, with pacience in their paine;
 And ende their course, sometime with sworde, and fire,
 And constant stand, and like to lambes are slaine.
 Bycause, when all their martirdome is past,
 They hope to gaine a glorious croune at laft.

Fig.3 Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (1586)

Patience is the path to Christ. In the final lines of "O, ye who love to-day" Rossetti argues: "For patience shows a lustrous face / In depth of night her noon; / Then to her sun gives place" (10-12). In punning "sun" with "Son" (Christ) Rossetti is saying that patience "gives place" to, or is replaced by, Christ. In *The Face of the Deep* she reflects: "O Lord Whose symbol is the unchanging sun, enlighten us to be thy faithful sequent moons; waxing to Thee, waning to ourselves, walking in brightness, reflecting and spreading abroad Thy glory. Lighten our darkness, I beseech Thee, O Lord. Amen" (122). Rossetti associates patience with the reflective, passive and feminine moon. A study of the masculine and feminine aspects of patience, and indeed ivy, cannot be attempted here, but, I believe, would prove an interesting and valuable exploration.

In "Patience, hard thing!" God also shares the virtue of patience with humanity: "And where is he who more and more distils / Delicious kindness? – He is patient. Patience fills / His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know" (12-14). Line 12 is the turn of the sonnet, and it is here that the speaker explicitly states what he has hitherto implied: that in being patient humanity is imitating God. Usually the turn of a sonnet occurs at the start of line 9, but Hopkins delays the turn to line 12—why? Because the delay forces the reader to experience, in the process of reading the poem, what the poem expresses: humanity's patient waiting for God, and God's patient waiting for humanity. According to Paul Fussell, a delayed turn is a Miltonic variation of the Petrarchan sonnet form (120), and the subject matter of Hopkins's sonnet is very Miltonic indeed. Hopkins's poem is about the relationship between God and humanity, the Fall and Redemption. It is *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* in fourteen lines.

Hopkins finishes the poem with a lovely, gentle image of a natural, sweet reward of waiting patiently, the slow accretion of honey in the comb: "Patience fills / His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know." We know that honey can only be had by hard work, obedience and waiting patiently. Whitney uses honey in his emblem for peace (fig.4). The emblem is a soldier's helmet which bees have renovated into a hive. "Which doth declare," Whitney says, "the blessed fruits of peace,/ How sweet she is, when mortal wars do cease" (138). The gentle, regular rhythm of the iambic feet of "that comes those ways we know" finishes the poem in the iambic pentameter conventional to the Petrarchan sonnet form (Fussell 114). After such a journey of pain and tribulation, the poem ends on a peaceful note.

The movement in Hopkins's poem "Patience, hard thing!" covers the beginning to the end of human history—from "Alpha" to "Omega" (Apocalypse 1.9), from Genesis to Apocalypse. For Hopkins, like John of Patmos, "the fact of Christ conditions the whole of human history" (Scott 526). Sitting behind the Apocalyptic and biblical imagery is a specific idea of history which has dominated Western thought. M.H. Abrams sums up this view neatly: "The Book of Revelation incorporates and confirms the biblical paradigm [which] attributes to earthly history a single and sharply defined plot . . . and [this] plot has a controller who orders it toward its outcome . . . history has an intelligible and end-determined order" (343-44).

The apocalyptic context gives the heart of this poem a darkness which goes beyond the purely personal to a particular view of human history. A knowledge of that context invites the reader to situate the poem firmly within the tradition of present history as a time of isolation, exile, persecution and crisis and the unspoken future

(which takes place beyond the end of the poem) as a time of judgement and justice. It encourages obedience to paternal, political, ecclesiastical and divine authority, even in the face of suffering, and promotes the belief that political and social change is not in the hands of the individual in present-time, but is the responsibility of God in end-time.



TH E helmet stronge, that did the head defende,
Beholde, for hyue, the bees in quiet seru'd:
And when that warres, with bloodie bloes, had ende.
They, hony wroughte, where fouldiour was preferu'd:
Which doth declare, the blessed fruites of peace,
How sweete thee is, when mortall warres doe cease.

Fig.4 Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (1586)

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