

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Vanderbilt University
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**Finding God in All Creation:
The Sacramental Poetics of Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J**



Hopkins' sketch of a beech tree on the grounds of Godshill Church, Appledurcombe

“Pied Beauty”

Glory be to God for dappled things –

For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;

And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him.

~Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

Psalm XIX (*The New Jerusalem Bible*)

1. [For the choirmaster Psalm Of David] The heavens declare the glory of God, the vault of heaven proclaims God's handiwork,
2. day discourses of it to day, night to night hands on the knowledge.
3. No utterance at all, no speech, not a sound to be heard,
4. but from the entire earth the design stands out, this message reaches the whole world. High above, he pitched a tent for the sun,
5. who comes forth from his pavilion like a bridegroom, delights like a champion in the course to be run.
6. Rising on the one horizon he runs his circuit to the other, and nothing can escape his heat.
7. The Law of Yahweh is perfect, refreshment to the soul; the decree of Yahweh is trustworthy, wisdom for the simple.
8. The precepts of Yahweh are honest, joy for the heart; the commandment of Yahweh is pure, light for the eyes.
9. The fear of Yahweh is pure, lasting for ever; the judgments of Yahweh are true, upright, every one,
10. more desirable than gold, even than the finest gold; Yahweh's words are sweeter than honey, that drips from the comb.
11. Thus your servant is formed by them; observing them brings great reward.
12. But who can detect one's own failings? Wash away my hidden faults.
13. And from pride preserve your servant, never let it be my master. So shall I be above reproach, free from grave sin.
14. May the words of my mouth always find favour, and the whispering of my heart, in your presence, Yahweh, my rock, my redeemer.

Psalm XIX

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

God's Glory in Creation and the Law

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims God's handiwork.

² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.

³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;

⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

In the heavens God has set a tent for the sun,

⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.

⁷ The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;

the decrees of the LORD are sure,
making wise the simple;

⁸ the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;

the commandment of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eyes;

⁹ the fear of the LORD is pure,
enduring forever;

the ordinances of the LORD are true
and righteous altogether.

¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;

sweeter also than honey,

and drippings of the honeycomb.

¹¹ Moreover by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.

¹² But who can detect their errors?

Clear me from hidden faults.

¹³ Keep back your servant also from the insolent;
do not let them have dominion over me.

Then I shall be blameless,
and innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable to you,

O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

“God’s Grandeur”

~Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

“The World Is Too Much With Us”

~William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850)

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers; —
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

“Spring and Fall:
to a young child”

Márgarét, áre you gríeving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you wíll weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórror’s spríngs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It ís the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

~Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

“Binsey Poplars”

felled 1879

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
Of a fresh and following folded rank
 Not spared, not one
 That dandled a sandalled
 Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow & river & wind-wandering weed-winding bank.

O if we but knew what we do
 When we delve or hew —
Hack and rack the growing green!
 Since country is so tender
To touch, her being só slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
 To mend her we end her,
 When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
 Strokes of havoc unselfe
 The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.

~Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.





“I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it. Its inscape is mixed of strength and grace, like an ash tree. The head is strongly drawn over backwards and arched like a cutwater drawing itself back from the line of the keel. The lines of the bells strike and overlie this, rayed but not symmetrically, some lie parallel. They look steely against the paper, the shades lying between the bells and behind the cockled petal-ends and nursing up the precision of their distinctness, the petal-ends themselves being delicately lit. Then there is the straightness of the trumpets in the bells softened by the slight entasis and by the square splay of the mouth. One bell, the lowest, some way detached and carried on a longer footstalk, touched out with the tips of the petals an oval – not like the rest in a plane perpendicular of the axis of the bell but a little atilt, and so with the square-in-rounding turns of the petals...

~Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.
May 18, 1870

