

## A PLACE FOR POETRY IN THE FOSTERING OF SPIRITUALITY<sup>1</sup>

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This paper had its source in an account of my practice in talks given during my time on the staff of the Pontifical Scots College in Rome to students for the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church, in which the encouragement of 'openness to the riches of music, art, and literature' was a guiding principle. It is offered here in the hope that it may prove useful to those in the ongoing practice of the ministry of the Word.

Matthew Arnold's definition of culture (in the preface to *Culture and Anarchy*) provides a useful starting point: 'a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been said and thought in the world'.

In this regard, poetry is important for two main reasons: firstly, where something valuable needs to be said, good poetry can frequently point it up or sum it up as nothing else can; and secondly because, in line with the dictum of Keats, 'poetry should surprise by fine excess, and not by singularity; it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost as a remembrance.'<sup>2</sup> Poetry's usefulness lies partly in its succinctness, and partly in its capacity of being memorable to the listener. To this may be added what I describe as 'a private heresy' that great lines can be as profound and affecting by their sound as by their content!

### The talks to students

The subjects of these talks fell into two broad categories – those which I felt in duty bound to give, and those which arose from purely personal choice. Within the duty category fell a series on the 'Seven Deadly Sins', seasonal topics, say about Lent or Advent, or directly vocational themes like counselling, preaching, or bereavement. The last-mentioned is especially rich in poetical support, and I found myself returning again and again to certain lines of Thomas Gray and of Wilfred Owen, e.g.:

'Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,  
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?'

(from *Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*)

OR

'Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,  
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.'

(from *Anthem for Doomed Youth*)

Within the 'Pleasure' category appositeness had its place, but here whim and memory are also factors. Among my list I see such titles as *Aloneness*, *Friendship*, *Thanksgiving*, and 'Today'. In the last I always quoted the anonymous seventeenth-century lines about the 'good thief' (Luke 23:43ff), to whom our Lord said, 'This day you will be with me in paradise'; the conclusion runs:

And take this rule from me,  
Pity thou him, he'll pity thee.  
Use this,  
Ne'er miss,  
Heaven may be stol'n again.'

On rare occasions I would take an entire poem and offer the students what C S Lewis, in his *Letters to Malcolm* on prayer, calls 'festoons', thoughts arising from the lines in the form of decorations, offsetting beauties already present with the help of a little more light here, a little more colour there. I have attempted to do this with pieces as diverse as Psalm 138, delightfully translated by Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, John Henry Newman's 'Lead, kindly light', at once a popular hymn and a good poem, and Robert Burns' 'Holy Willie's Prayer', that glorious attack upon hypocrisy. I also used in this connection T S Eliot's 'A Song for Simeon', itself a kind of 'festoon' on the 'Nunc Dimittis' (Luke 2:29ff), and Gerald Manley Hopkins' 'May Magnificat', imaginatively derived from Mary's original 'Magnificat' (Luke 1:46ff).

The Church's liturgies down the centuries have been adorned with lovely verse, in the Western rite nearly always in Latin. There are splendid models of it in the Masses and Offices of the major festivals of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and of some of the great saints. Quite outstanding are the Sequence 'Lauda Sion', composed by Thomas Aquinas for the festival of Corpus Christi, the sombre 'Dies Irae',<sup>3</sup> the tender 'Ave, maris Stella', and the martial 'Vexilla Regis prodeunt',<sup>4</sup> written in the sixth century for Holy Week by Venantius Fortunatus.

Something of a liturgical revolution occurred in the course of the Second Vatican Council. What it did was to promote and encourage the use of the vernacular wherever possible. Inevitably, the translations of some of the finest Latin verse are distinctly inferior, and good new work in English has not been sufficient to replace it. Many rediscoveries have been made, however, among our Renaissance and Classical poets, who are well represented among the Divine Office's 'Hymns and Religious Poems', more than one hundred of them, most readily available in *Morning and Evening Prayer*.<sup>5</sup> Among the riches to be found are the early 'Adam lay y-bounden' and 'I sing of a maiden'; three of John Donne's 'Holy Sonnets' (including the forceful 'Batter my heart, three-personed God'); some sensitive pieces by George Herbert (including the delicate 'Love bade me welcome'), and some compositions by comparatively modern poets, among them Gerald Manley Hopkins, T S Eliot, and Edwin Muir, whose 'One foot in Eden' will surely become a religious classic.

There is no denying that most of the cultural awareness of my original hearers came from television, where even the BBC provides but scantily for the enthusiast of verse! Nevertheless, my personal apostolate in promoting a poetic experience went on, and my conviction is unshaken that what the poets have written may be frequently relevant to a spiritual ministry, and at times inspiring. In offering the young men extracts from good compositions, I encouraged them to build up, in the years ahead, their own 'treasuries' of memorized passages – or even single lines. Perhaps later on they would include some of them in their private meditation periods, or incorporate them judiciously into their sermons. I hoped that some might even reach the stage of being able to feel with A E Housman (in 'The Name and Nature of Poetry'): 'If a line of poetry strays into my memory, my skin bristles so that the razor ceases to act!'

The 'by heart' approach is, in my view, a more profitable procedure than the giving of general advice about the use of collections or anthologies, despite the undoubted worthiness of volumes such as *The Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, and the older *Oxford Book of English Mystical Verse*. In her Introduction to *A Book of Comfort*, Elizabeth Goudge wrote: 'The collection and hoarding of bits and pieces is basic to all animals, from the squirrel with his nuts laid by in a hollow tree for comfort in the dark days, to the anthologist with his oddments stored up in his memory for a similar purpose. Anthology-making is also ... highly enjoyable, with the advantage of

literature over nuts that it can be shared without personal loss to the holder'. I merely wanted my students to be their *own* anthologists of poetry!

### The talks in particular

Though of an eclectic disposition, I have tried at times to tackle and enjoy long poems in their entirety. I spent one conscientious September reading through the whole of 'Paradise Lost'. Many sections held me spellbound, and from them I determined to select certain lines consonant with Milton's own avowed purpose:

'That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal Providence.  
And justify the ways of God to men.'  
(Bk 1, 24-26)

After all, competent theologians are bound at some stage to wrestle with the doctrinal implications of 'the fall'! It is unlikely, however, that if any of the lads attempted to read the epic, or part of it, they would find the type of thrill that came the way of Keats when he first looked into Chapman's 'Homer'! Yet if even occasional lines were to attract them, the effort would not have been worthless. Among the gems I offered them was Lucifer's defiance:

'What though the field be lost?  
All is not lost; the unconquerable will  
And study of revenge, immortal hate.  
And courage never to submit or yield,  
And what is else, not to be overcome.'  
(Bk 1, 105ff)

and the description of the disguised fiend:

'... him there they found  
Squat like a toad, close at the ear of Eve.'  
(Bk 4, 799ff)

Nonetheless, I felt equally free to pluck my blossoms from short poems. Sonnets were often right for my purpose, and I did not avoid using tried favourites like



Spenser's 'Most glorious Lord of life', Milton's 'On his Blindness', or the best-loved among Shakespeare's output. Spirituality will not be fashion's slave!

Sometimes there is a close relationship between the tenor of works of widely differing styles and periods. For instance, in my talk entitled 'Trapped', I developed the quaint assertion of Dorothy Parker (in 'The Waltz'): 'There I was, trapped like a trap in a trap' (sic) and quoted from the following disparate pieces: 'The Snare' by James Stephens; 'Reynard the Fox' by John Masefield; and 'Venus and Adonis' by Shakespeare. Each has its own poignancy in relation to a situation of fear, helplessness, and impending doom. Here are brief illustrations from them.

'I heard a sudden cry of pain!  
There is a rabbit in a snare ..  
Little one! Little one!  
I am searching everywhere!' (Stephens)

'And all the way, that wild high crying,  
To cold his blood with the thought of dying.  
The born and the cheer, and the drum-like thunder  
Of the horse-hooves stamping the meadow under.' (Masefield)

'By this poor Wat, far off upon a hill,  
Stands on his hinder legs with list-ning ear,  
To hearken if his foes pursue him still:  
Anon their loud alarums he doth hear;  
And now his grief may be comparéd well  
To one sore sick that hears the passing-bell.' (Shakespeare)

Although the date or style may be incidental, I generally adverted to the author's period and approach where this seemed helpful. Thus with Chaucer, the 'Prologue' in especial, I outlined the ecclesiastical background of the age. Once again, however, this time in my talk on 'Language good and bad', I found lovely alternatives from other writers. For example, I placed the poor Parson's remark about his flock: 'if gold ruste, what shall iren do?' parallel with the last line of Shakespeare's Sonnet 94: 'lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds'. I briefly described the ambience of modern writers, too, where their aim is set or their work peculiarly defined, and will cite three by way of illustration, with an excerpt from each. Pre-eminent is W B Yeats, beset by the complexities of

the Irish situation, from practical politics to the more fay aspects of the 'Keltic twilight'. Preferring his imagery to his statecraft, I gave the students, in my talk on 'Time', strong figures like:

'The years like great black oxen tread the world,  
And God the herdsman goads them on behind,  
And I am broken by their passing feet.'

(*'The Countess Cathleen'*, Scene 5, conclusion)

Dylan Thomas, with his idiosyncratic genius for portraying people and scenes, has provided in 'Under Milk Wood' a local Welsh atmosphere of colour and originality. Some of the best lines come at the beginning, e.g. 'It is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black'. That final epithet is a tiny symbol for me of the man's mastery over word and sound.

George Mackay Brown, perhaps a lesser poet, has nevertheless a subtle appreciation of the beauty of his native Orkneys, and sensitivity to their people's lot. In this case, a Scottish response is more immediate than for Yeats or Thomas. In 'The Funeral of Ally Flett', for instance, the students readily identified with the pathos in the death of the young tearaway:

Because the hour of grass is brief  
And the red rose  
Is a bare thorn in the east wind  
And a strong life  
Runs out and spends itself like barren sand  
And the dove dies  
And every loveliest lilt must have a close,  
Old Betsy came with bitter cries.'

## **Gerald Manley Hopkins**

Of all the Christian poets from whom I regularly drew material, Gerald Manley Hopkins was and is my favourite. Sometimes I was teased because so much of his work crept into the talks! Not that the technique or technicalities of the poet were a principal concern; too much about 'inscape' or 'sprung rhythm' might have scared off the students for life! What did concern me was the application of his ideas to the members of the College at that time and beyond. They were often surprised by the simplicity and directness of several of the early poems,

e.g. 'Easter' and 'Rosa Mystica', though I endeavoured to let them sense a developing delicacy in others, e.g. 'Winter with the Gulf Stream' which abounds in those natural images Hopkins was later to elaborate, and in uncomplicated touches at once transferable to spiritual interpretation, such as:

'A simple passage of weak notes  
Is all the winter bird dare try.'

With the more difficult later poems, I had to tread warily. This meant disciplining my wishes to rhapsodize over the glories of 'The Windhover' or 'As kingfishers catch fire', and obliged me to bypass 'The Wreck of the Deutschland'. Still, I found a number of the sonnets helpful, the darksome ones, like 'I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day', and the brighter ones, like 'God's Grandeur' and 'Spring'. The latter always makes me smile at the way in which the octave given over to the splendours of Nature makes way for a sestet of deep spirituality by demanding rhetorically: 'What is all this juice and all this joy?'

Since Hopkins was a Jesuit priest, and since the Gregorian University in Rome is run by members of the same Order, I found it interested the students to know something of the man's interior struggles, of his spiritual life (cf. 'The Habit of Perfection'), and of his pastoral concern (cf. 'Felix Randal'); and I tried to link all that with the prospect of the students' personal battles later on and with the need for compassion towards others in their ministry. Inevitably, cases of mental sickness will come their way, so I gave them the following words to think about from Sonnet 70, 'Patience, hard thing!':

'... Natural heart's ivy, Patience masks  
Our ruins of wrecked past purpose.'

I also offered them the words of Sonnet 65:

'O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall  
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap  
May who ne'er hung there.'

## Thompson, Chesterton, Belloc

Three other poets from whom I chose much material were Francis Thompson, G

K Chesterton, and Hilaire Belloc, all Roman Catholics and all having something to offer to any pastor in many a memorable line. Taken as autobiography or as a broader view of the plight of man's soul attempting to flee from God, 'this tremendous lover', 'The Hound of Heaven' is a masterpiece of astonishing spiritual insight. It is *not* merely an exercise in Victorian piety but should stand high in any company by the sharpness and power of its metaphors alone, e.g.:

'In the rash lustihood of my young powers,  
I shook the pillaring hours  
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,  
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years...'

'The Kingdom of God' is a fine piece, too, with its striking paradoxes and inventive imagery. Among the latter, the students seemed to like best:

'The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.'

Chesterton, himself a master of paradox, attracted them by his forthrightness. 'Lepanto' has its faults as an indirect 'apology' for the Christian ethic, but its spirit of dedication to 'the cause' appears to quicken the pulse of youth! Yet it is in some of the byways of his poetry that unexpected treasures lie hid. One of his earliest efforts is called 'A Prayer in Darkness', and measures up to Pamela Barnard's criterion for fine lines: 'they make your toes tingle!' It ends:

'Men say the sun was darkened, yet I had  
Thoughts it beat brightly, even on Calvary;  
And He that hung upon the torturing tree  
Heard all the crickets singing, and was glad.'

I quote often too from a couple of his hymns, 'O God of earth and altar', and 'Hymn for the Church Militant', with its appeal to idealism:

'Cleanse us from ire of creed or class...  
Sow in our souls, like living grass,  
The laughter of all lowly things.'



When it comes to Belloc, I disagree with those who assert that his best verses come in the *Cautionary Tales*, and am mildly dismayed that the naughty Matilda has found a place in the august pages of *The New Oxford Book of English Verse*! A few modern critics (David Harsent is one) are loath to praise his poetry at all. I would contend that his sonnets, particularly those on the months of the year, are instinct with human understanding and attain a good level of technical ability. Indeed, I usually started my first talk to the newly-arrived first-year students with his epigram:

‘Kings live in palaces, and pigs in styes  
And youth in Expectation. Youth is wise.’

After that, lovely pieces such as ‘Your life is like a little Winter’s day’, or ‘Almighty God, whose justice like a sun’ led on to excerpts from longer poems like the witty ‘To Dives’, which ends deliciously: ‘They order things so damnably in Hell!’, or the ‘Ballade to Our Lady of Czestochowa’, with that haunting couplet:

‘You shall receive me when the clouds are high  
With evening, and the sheep attain the fold.’

Nor did I lose the chance of quoting, as a model of economy with words, the exquisite ‘The early morning’.

### Other Christian poets

Good things were to be found for my intentions in many Christian poets, though I eschewed the perils of offering the students work that has perhaps more merit as religiosity than as verse! On the other hand, where writing of high quality was available I used it freely, taking authors as diverse in time and circumstance as the doughty Scots, William Dunbar and William Drummond; or Robert Southwell and Richard Crashaw; or the 19<sup>th</sup> century ladies, Christina Rossetti, and the American, Emily Dickinson. Recurring favourites from each, with their applications are: the third stanza of ‘The Lord is Risen’, including the lines:

‘Sprungin is Aurora radius and bricht,  
On loft is gone the glorious Apollo..’

which I read at Eastertide. Dunbar has even contrived to turn the Latin ending of each stanza, 'Surrexit dominus de sepulcro', into an English iambic pentameter!

Drummond, in 'St John Baptist', achieves for his sonnet a strong climax:

'Only the echoes, which he made relent,  
Rung from their marble caves Repent! Repent!'

That formed part of my material for Advent.

Southwell's 'The Burning Babe', which came into my Christmas talks, has moving words put into the mouth of the Christ-Child:

'My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns;  
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns.'

Crashaw's 'The widow's mites' consists of four lines, perfectly equivalent to the incident described in the gospel (Mark 12:41ff). The second couplet – 'multum in parvo' – runs:

'The other's wanton wealth foams high, and brave,  
The other cast away, she only gave.'

Christina Rossetti's sonnet, 'St Peter', is applicable to Passiontide. These two lines seem well worth committing to memory:

'Lord, I have heard the crowing of the cock  
And have not wept; ah, Lord, Thou knowest it.'

Dickinson's 'It is an honourable thought' is a minuscule reflection on the soul's immortality, and contains this ingenious figure:

'And kingdoms like the orchard  
Flit russetly away.'

I had, too, quite a long list of what I call 'singletons', poems or parts of poems written by authors otherwise unrepresented in the talks. Here are three short examples: 'Christmas Trees', Geoffrey Hill's testimonial to the heroism of Dietrich Bonhoeffer;<sup>6</sup> 'The old woman', Joseph Campbell's touching portrait of old age, that ever-growing area of pastoral concern; and Roy Campbell's 'Upon

a gloomy night', the opening poem in his translations of the Spanish of St John of the Cross. 'He proves', wrote Father Martin D'Arcy, 'that translation can be a stimulus and an original pleasure to a genuine poet'.

To qualify the paragraphs above, I must add that I did not scruple to avail myself of the work of non-Christian poets where their insights suited my purpose, e.g. translations of Sir Rabindranath Tagore, or the 'Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam', described by the editors of *The English Parnassus*<sup>7</sup> as the language's 'most finished expression of the spirit's darker broodings, its most searching music in the minor key'. Indeed, there could be no more salutary reminder of the fleetingness of time than this (which I introduced in a talk called 'Time'):

'The Bird of Time has but a little Way  
to fly – and lo! The Bird is on the Wing.' (from stanza 7)

### **The application of poetic experience, communal and personal**

Central in my approach to the spiritual talks was the practical application of poetic experience to the students' community and personal living. I hope it has been becoming clear that such was the orientation, but, to be more specific still, I will focus attention on a few passages entirely related to the one or the other sphere. The quest for individual holiness and a spirit of service to others are basic to the priesthood, and to every ordained ministry.

On the personal side, 'The Shepherd's Song' from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, by John Bunyan, deals both with the theme and with the point of humility, and the lines have a compelling simplicity:

'He that is down needs fear no fall,  
He that is low, no pride;  
He that is humble ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.'

A H Clough's 'Say not, the struggle nought availeth' stresses the need for courage and perseverance (which I linked to the words in Hebrews 3:13: 'every day, so long as this "today" lasts, keep encouraging one another'). Take the fourth stanza:

'And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light;  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
But westward, look, the land is bright.'

In 'Judas', the Scots poet R W Buchanan raises the wide issue of temptation and sin in our lives, with a telling use of ballad-metre. Here is the affecting conclusion:

'The supper wine is poured at last,  
The lights burn bright and fair,  
Iscariot washes the bridegroom's feet,  
And dries them with his hair.'<sup>8</sup>

On the communal side, the madrigal 'Crabbed Age and Youth', attributed to Shakespeare, conveys a message about the necessity of becoming 'all things to all men' after ordination, and alerts the young men to some of the starker realities of the 'generation gap'. It makes its point in a neat series of antitheses, the opening illustrating the point:

'Crabbed Age and Youth  
Cannot live together;  
Youth is full of pleasance,  
Age is full of care...'

John Betjeman's 'In Westminster Abbey' lent lightness of touch to my theme, 'Judge Not', and hits hard but subtly:

'.. Gallant blacks from far Jamaica,  
Honduras and Togoland;  
Protect them, Lord, in all their fights,  
And even more, protect the whites.'

Robert Graves' 'The Cool Web', compactly philosophical, found a place in my treatment of 'Style', i.e. clear communication. The third stanza is replete with significance for prospective clergymen!

'There's a cool web of language winds us in,  
Retreat from too much joy or too much fear:  
We grow sea-green at last and coldly die  
In brininess and volubility.'



The latter statement should be recalled by preachers with a tendency to wordiness!

It would be hard to say precisely how such passages could be fitted into the spiritual lives of the students. At any rate, it is a golden rule that, on the personal side, freedom of method in prayer is essential. In fact, in that houseful of fifty, all sorts of spirituality were absorbed, from the 'traditional' to the 'charismatic'. So far as the poetry goes, I could deal with it outwith the talks, since I saw my flock individually roughly once a fortnight. In this area, they were characteristically frank! Even when it comes to 'meditation', where each one was expected to spend half an hour daily in private reflection, this principle holds good: 'if what you want to say or pray has already been better expressed by a poet, then let his words say or pray it *for you!*' Possibly the holy Augustine was taking another view after rejecting the allurements of Virgil, for he wrote in the 'Confessions' (Book 1, section 13): '... I grieved for Dido; slain as she was by the sword, she put an end to her woe, while I too followed after the lowest of your creatures, forsaking You, earth going unto earth'. Still, leading pastors of our own day – Cardinal Hume and Bishop Agnellus Andrew among them – were fully aware of the positive role of good literature. Even my own Ordinary at that time, Cardinal Gray, belying his outward manner declared his interest in poetry. I remember his quoting with relish, in his rich Edinburgh intonation, Robert Herrick's 'To keep a true Lent', and how he approved the advice:

'To show a heart grief-rent;  
To starve thy sin,  
Not bin;  
And that's to keep thy Lent.'

## The spoken word

Consequential upon the effect of poetic content on the mind should be a sensitivity to the beauty of the spoken word. A good deal of ministry consists of preaching and teaching, and much could be lost if the tidings proclaimed were presented less persuasively, less professionally than they should. Hamlet's advice to the players is *mutatis mutandis*, equally applicable to clerics:

‘... but if you mouth it (the speech), as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines.’

Again, Berowne in ‘Love’s Labour’s Lost’ inveighs against preciosity. Another pitfall for the unwary communicator:

‘Taffeta phrases, silken terms precise,  
Three-piled hyperboles, spruce affectation,  
Figures pedantical...’

Yet quotations, aptly and discerningly employed, may serve to sharpen the thrust of a sermon.

I chivied the lads at times by reminding them of the saying attributed to Thomas Betterton: ‘actors speak of things imaginary as if they were real, while you preachers often speak of things real as if they were imaginary!’ To which may be added S T Coleridge’s description of prose as ‘words in their best order’, and of poetry as ‘the best words in the best order’.<sup>9</sup> I believe there is a place in homiletics for something of each. *Le mot juste* has special value in thematic sermons or in addresses to children. Hence I would go to the great Romantic poets to show how a perfect use of English, disciplined by the demands of prosody, owes something to inspiration and much to astute workmanship. Let the following short illustrations suffice.

Wordsworth’s reflection (‘The Prelude’, Book 1, 340ff) on human interdependence states in twenty-nine words what Papal documents explicate in reams!

‘Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
Like harmony in music; there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
In one society.’

Keats manifests consummate skill with words, in the Odes above all. ‘To a Nightingale’ speaks of illness and death, those pastoral companions of every priest or minister, in this way:

‘The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies...'

The problem is one of selection, how on the one hand to avoid satiety, and, on the other, to whet the students' appetites.

### Concluding thoughts

Although poetry could be dispensed to the students 'till the cows come home', the result would be far less serviceable than the completion of that rural event, but for a positive response! What determined me to continue was the fact that interest *had* been shown by my youthful, candid groups.

Believing, like Robert Frost, that 'poetry begins in delight and ends in wisdom',<sup>10</sup> I hope that hearers have been enriched by the thoughts, words and sounds of good poetry.

To end, here are three quotations which I used when 'milestones' on the road to the priesthood were reached, i.e. the end of first year, candidacy, and major orders respectively:

- a) '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.'  
(Francis Quarles, 'Epigram')
  
- b) 'O young Mariner,  
Down to the haven,  
Call your companions,  
Launch your vessel,  
And crowd your canvas,  
And, ere it vanishes  
Over the margin,  
After it, follow it,  
Follow the Gleam.'  
(Final lines of Tennyson's 'Merlin and the Gleam')

- c) 'I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence;  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.'  
(Robert Frost, 'The Road Not Taken', v.4)

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- 1 A slightly shortened and altered form of a paper given to the Aberdeenshire Theological Club in February 2008, entitled *A place for poetry in the spiritual formation of ecclesiastical students*.
- 2 Letter to John Taylor, 27 February 1818.
- 3 [A translation of 12 lines of the original by Sir Walter Scott embodied in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* appeared as Hymn 161 in the *Revised Church Hymnary*. Of these lines Mr Gladstone said, 'I know of nothing more sublime in the writings of Sir Walter Scott – certainly I know of nothing more sublime in any portion of the sacred poetry of modern times, I mean of the present century, as the 'Hymn for the Dead' – Ed.]
- 4 [A translation by John Mason Neale of four verses of the original ten appeared as Hymn 257 in *CH3*, and of other four verses, made for a parish mission in Aberdeen, as Hymn 256 there – Ed.]
- 5 Collins, 1976.
- 6 In the volume, *Tenebrae*, 1978.
- 7 W MacNeile Dixon and H J C Grierson.
- 8 *Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, no. 315.
- 9 'Table Talk', 12 July 1827.
- 10 Quoted in E Albert's *History of English Literature*.