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A COMPARISON OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE REVEALED IN  
THE POETRY OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON WITH THAT IN THE PSALMS OF DAVID

By

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## INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Problem Stated and Delimited

Upon first glance, the relation between David, King of Israel, and the man, Ralph Waldo Emerson, indeed appears obscure. One, from the ancient world, the head of a monarchy, adhered strongly to the theology of Hebrew tradition. The other, of the modern world, subject of a democracy, vigorously attempted to reduce the dogmatism attached to the Christian faith. Yet despite these vast differences there are many comparisons between their religious experiences. These comparisons are of great interest, for they reveal those elements of religious experience which even environmental differences are unable to destroy. So strong are such elements that they can occur regardless of the age in which a man lives, or the conditions under which he dwells. Even more interesting are these comparisons in view of the fact that they are made between two men with widely differing views on the question of dogma, for they reveal those experiences which can occur apart from the creed by which an individual lives.

The differences in the religious experience of these two men are also of vast importance. Because they have such widely differing backgrounds, they present a challenging field of study whose purpose would be to determine the relationship between varying environment and religious experience on the one hand, and a man's creed on the other. More specifically, such a study can consider wherein

a particular experience of God influences an individual's interpretation of life.

In attempting to make such a study, it is necessary to determine each man's creed and personal experience as accurately as possible. However, in this particular study it will not be possible to present a thorough investigation of either man's theology. The interest lies not primarily in the theology, but in the religious experience behind it. Therefore only a concise general survey of each man's theology will be presented, with a view toward associating it with his life history. It will also be necessary to confine the presentation of each man's life history to those elements which seem to have bearing upon his creed. Therefore these facts will by no means be complete, but will be presented insofar as they have bearing upon the particular question.

#### B. The Problem Justified

Because David and Emerson do have such widely differing backgrounds, the problem of uncovering the relationship between creed and experience will be a relevant one. The records of their life history and works, which are the means of solving this problem, are well preserved and easily accessible. However as there is question concerning David's authorship of certain Psalms, those which are particularly doubtful will be avoided. The Psalms selected for this study are numbers 8, 19, 11, 59, 56, 54, 7, 13, 35, 57, 18, 51, 32, 101, 15, 24, 41, 3, 4, and 23.

A comparison between David's and Emerson's writings will also

be relevant in view of the fact that they are both poetry. Poetry as art is a record of deep experience, uncovering its creator more completely than do his predominantly logical prose writings. Art also uncovers states of mind because it portrays both the rational and unrational sides of experience. Because there is direct access to both men's art, therefore the research in this problem is open to interesting discovery.

#### C. The Method of Procedure To Be Used

The first step in this study will be to present the main points of each man's creed or theology, as revealed in his poetry. In presenting these points, it will often be necessary to preserve accuracy by supporting conclusions with direct quotations from each man's works. Where this is not possible, a description will be used, with reference to the particular work under consideration.

After having presented each man's theology, the main points of comparison and contrast will be considered. Following this, elements in both men's lives will be recorded in order to discover the relation between their religious interpretations and their particular experiences.

#### D. Sources of Data

Primary sources available for this study are the American Standard version of the Holy Bible and the Riverside edition of Emerson's Complete Works. Another valuable primary source in connection with Emerson's works is Newton Dillaway's edition of quotations



from Emerson's essays, letters, poems, and notes, The Gospel of Emerson. Finally, Emerson's journals, which reveal his thoughts and reactions first hand, are also easily accessible.

Secondary sources pointing up each man's life experiences and clarifying the interpretation of each man's poetry are plentiful. These sources will help determine the relation between a man's philosophy and his particular experience of God.

CHAPTER I

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE  
REVEALED IN THE POETRY OF EMERSON

## CHAPTER I

### AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE REVEALED IN THE POETRY OF EMERSON

#### A. Introduction

The nineteenth century, one in which the new life of America first began to develop, was a generation when men sought release from the political, economic, and religious pressures of the Old World. Among those who pioneered for freedom stood one who not only knew what he believed, but was also able to express it. Because of his wisdom the early Americans soon bestowed upon him such titles as "the sage of Concord," "the oracle of New England," and "the wisest American." Yet all did not regard him as one whose ways were to be imitated, for the freedom of his ideas appeared to them as heresy. These whispered that insanity ran in his family and denounced his views as Quakerish.

Wherever he spoke on religious subjects many in his audience seemed to think that he "came to unsettle Christian beliefs." They looked upon him as a devil's advocate and not infrequently hurled bitter accusations at him.<sup>1</sup>

Yet his reputation for sincerity, freshness of approach, and benignity outlived the charges of his critics, and the charm of his writings still ranks with that of Hawthorne, Longfellow, Whittier, Whitman, and Lowell. In view of these facts, it should be of great value to

. . . . .

1. Fred Eastman: Men of Power, Vol. III, pp. 111, 112.

examine the personal beliefs contained within his poetry, with a view toward understanding the experiences which made him the man that he was.

## B. The Discovery of God in the World

### 1. God in History

The poetry of Emerson reveals that he found God primarily in his surroundings, in people and within the beauties of Nature. But one poem, the Boston Hymn,<sup>1</sup> manifests that he also discovered God working in historical events. It pictures him as a Person actively engaged in speaking to the pilgrims who have just arrived on the shores of a new land, their hearts filled with the flaming vision of freedom. Now that they have reached their destination, God directs them in building new homes and in setting up principles of government. He commands them concerning their primary purpose, that of unbinding the captives and freeing the slaves. He is therefore pictured as a God of will and just purpose, with the power to reveal his desires to man. Not only can He communicate his purposes but He reveals an unwavering, unhalting, omnipotent will in fulfilling them.

My will fulfilled shall be,  
For in daylight or in dark,  
My thunderbolt has eyes to see  
His way home to the mark.<sup>2</sup>

It is by the power of this will that God first gave the Pilgrims the

. . . . .

1. Emerson's Complete Poems, p. 204.
2. Ibid.

vision of the west land and now is enabling those who have reached this land to carry out his purpose. To Emerson, therefore, the establishment of the young land of America, founded on its principles of democracy, stands as evidence of a God revealed through history.

## 2. God in Nature

### a. The Symbolic Meaning of Nature

It was not only the discovery and establishment of this new land, however, that spoke to Emerson of the purpose, justice, and power of God. The very existence of the world itself revealed to him God's power, for it was full of symbolic meaning, speaking of spiritual realities, and pointing to the great Mind by which it was undergirded. The beauties of Nature for Emerson were symbolic of great spiritual principles, and spoke to him not in mute, inexpressible language, but in living tones. In hearing their voice, he looked beyond the woods, rivers, fields, and birds, seeking to know their message. He claimed that Nature had revealed to him, her son, more of purpose

In one wood walk, than learned men  
Can find with glass in ten times ten.<sup>1</sup>

He disclosed that he often was compelled to return to a familiar wood not knowing why, yet later discovering that it was "to read the sense the woods impart."<sup>2</sup> The nature of the learning he acquired is described in these immeasurable lines:

. . . . .

1. Emerson's Complete Poems, The Walk, p. 366.
2. Op. cit., The Miracle, p. 369.

And oh, the wonder of the power,  
The deeper secret of the hour!  
Nature, the supplement of man,  
His hidden sense interpret can.  
What friend to friend cannot convey,  
Shall the dumb bird instructed say.<sup>1</sup>

The experience described is profound and not totally expressible, revealing knowledge which had been contained in his own "hidden sense," lying dormant, needing to be awakened by a source of like meaning. There was therefore within Emerson that which responded to Nature and played with her a tune, a tune which surprised the hearer himself, who knew it was born from within as well as from without. It was this meaning Nature disclosed which made her symbolic to Emerson of something other than herself.

In expressing this symbolism, Emerson often portrayed the personification of Nature. In fact, certain lines from "The River" could be called Emerson's description of Nature's personality. Having a language and the capability of making herself understood, she sighs, admonishes, loves, knows, sympathizes, and pities. However, this is only because she contains and reveals something other than herself, because she "holds and boasts the immeasurable mind."<sup>2</sup> Having regarded Nature as a shell containing ultimate reality, Emerson constantly sought to discover the meaning of that which she unveiled.

b. The Transparency of Nature

In noting Emerson's discovery in Nature of the immeasurable mind, one immediately ponders the relation he found between mind and nature. Are mind and nature one or are they separate in Emerson's

. . . . .

1. Ibid.
2. Op. cit., The River, p. 386.

thinking? One seeks to discover whether nature was actually personified for him or whether she revealed to him a Person separate and distinct from herself. His own words on the subject of spiritual reality shed some light upon the answer to this question.

I believe in the existence of the material world as the expression of the spiritual or the real, and in the impenetrable mystery which hides (and hides through absolute transparency) the mental nature, I await the insight which our advancing knowledge of material laws shall furnish.<sup>1</sup>

But from these words alone, the question of whether or not the mental nature can be discovered as separate from the material, is unanswerable. Perhaps the clearest light is gleaned from two simple lines found in the poem, "Woodnotes."<sup>2</sup> These lines,

Delights the dreadful Destiny  
To fling his voice into the tree,

reveal that the voice Emerson heard in Nature was both one and separate from her. For if Destiny's voice was flung into the tree, it was once existent apart from it, but now is unified with it. Because of this unity, Emerson constantly speaks to nature as to a Person. Such lines as these reveal Emerson's discovery in Nature of mind, law, and will.

Who leaves the pine tree leaves his friend,  
Unnerves his strength, invites his end.<sup>3</sup>

And speaking again of the pine tree, he pictures it as saying,  
"He is great who can live by me."<sup>4</sup>

. . . . .

1. Dillaway, N. The Gospel of Emerson, p. 33.
2. Emerson's Complete Poems, p. 52.
3. Op. Cit., Woodnotes, p. 49.
4. Op. Cit., p. 49.

In noting the way in which Emerson personified Nature, it should be stressed that he did not identify Nature with the voice that spoke through her, but looked through her to find that voice, as one looks through a glass at the substance it contains. For example, in his poem, "Peter's Field," he saw not primarily the lonely field, the hemlock wood, or the sun, but the spirits, ghosts, and gods.<sup>1</sup> Therefore he found within Nature a message, because through her transparency was revealed that which hid within her.

c. The Revelation of God in Nature

Like every man who wonders about nature's beauty, existence, and origin, Emerson questioned her meaning. For example, "The Rhodora" finds him wondering about the beauty of a flower, finally asking it whence it came. After his musing, he reaches the conclusion, "The self same power that brought me. . . brought you."<sup>2</sup> Therefore nature to him was not ultimate, for it originated somewhere, the origin of the flower being the same source of his own existence. But Power, like destiny, is only a force. One still wonders whether Emerson found personified force in nature, or whether he found force that revealed a Person.

For one seeking an answer to this question, certain lines in "Woodnotes" contain much food for thought. They describe the experience of an individual, perhaps Emerson, baffled and hurt, looking for meaning in nature. He does not primarily address nature,

. . . . .

1. Op. Cit., p. 363.
2. Op. Cit., p. 38.



however:

And thou shalt say to the Most High,  
"Godhead! all this astronomy,  
And fate and practice and invention,  
Strong art and beautiful pretension,  
It cannot be,--I will look again."<sup>1</sup>

The discouraged individual, disappointed with the emptiness and folly he supposes to surround him, is answered under a pine tree, told to soothe himself in its shade and to be content with what he finds.

Enough for thee the primal mind.  
That flows in streams, that breathes in wind.  
Leave all thy pedant lore apart  
God hid the whole world in thy heart.<sup>2</sup>

He has addressed the Godhead, called to Him as a Person, and has received an answer. He is pointed first toward a primal mind, found within all the elements of nature, and secondly, to his own heart, the place where all that has meaning has been hidden. But it was hidden there by a person, God, who is separate from Nature, yet within her.

Other lines which reveal God as more than a force occur within the same poem:

Not unrelated, unaffied,  
But to each thought and thing allied,  
Is perfect Nature's every part,  
Rooted in the mighty Heart.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Nature's elements cohere not because they are rooted in power, but in a mighty Heart. The distinction between the concept of God as "force" or "power" and as "heart" proves that though it is often

. . . . .

1. Op. Cit., p. 38.
2. Op. Cit., p. 56.
3. Newton Dillaway: The Gospel of Emerson, pp. VII-3.

difficult to attribute personality to Emerson's God, "heart" points to personality in a more positive way than does "force." This is Emerson's discovery of God in the world, a simple but profound revelation, which forever tied him to Nature, and made him return to her for meaning and strength.

### C. The Existence, Idea, and Nature of God

Perhaps the most difficult part of analyzing Emerson's religious experience is the attempt to discover his concept of God. That he discovered him in the world is evident, but the personal attributes he assigned to him are not readily distinguishable. It is in attempting to find them that one discovers Emerson's hatred of anything that approaches dogmatism. So obscure is he about the nature of God, that one critic hails him as a new prophet of Christianity,<sup>1</sup> while another openly attacks him as a pantheist.<sup>2</sup> Rather than try to prove him one or the other, this study will endeavor to understand him from both viewpoints, after which a conclusion will be drawn. Before examining disputable points, however, those characteristics of Emerson's concept of God which are certain will be presented.

One indisputable characteristic of Emerson's God is the quality of immanence. Each element within the universe is founded upon one principle and pervaded by it. God lives and dwells in

. . . . .

1. Newton Dillaway: The Gospel of Emerson, pp. VII-3.
2. A. H. Strong, American Poets and Their Theology, p. 57.

every element and creature.

He is the essence that inquires.  
He is the axis of the star;  
He is the sparkle of the spar;  
He is the heart of every creature;  
He is the meaning of each feature;

Emerson's immanent God is also absolutely sovereign, for He is the only principle upon which the universe exists, and there is therefore no contrary force to oppose Him. That which appears to be against God's ways is in reality being used to accomplish his purposes. Even the shabby, unfortunate beggar begs by God's command.<sup>2</sup>

The enigma is, however, that although Emerson declared God immanent and indwelling every man and aspect of nature, he also asserted him to be above creation. For Emerson's matchless "Bohemian Hymn" will forever acquit him from the charge of denying God's transcendence. There he has in these words declared that

. . . the Universal Friend  
Doth as far transcend  
An angel as a worm.<sup>3</sup>

Before proceeding to examine those points in Emerson's theology where he has stressed consecutively the personality and the impersonality of God it is necessary to point out that because of his hatred of dogmatism, he often appears vague. The following quotation from Baildon supports this theory.

He is so keen to perceive the "other side" of questions and facts that it is not always possible to tell what the "resultant" of his thought is. . . Opposite theses

. . . . .

1. Emerson's Complete Works, Woodnotes, p. 59.
2. Op. Cit., Life, p. 350.
3. Op. Cit., p. 359.

might be supported from. . . (his works), although certain main principles be at their foundations.<sup>1</sup>

It will therefore be necessary to examine obscure passages as keenly as possible, for they perhaps will lead to the clearest indications of the nature of the experience which produced them.

Among those portions of Emerson's poetry that stress the personality of God, certain lines from "Life" contain a clear revelation of his personal attributes.

The rules to men made evident  
By Him who built the day,  
The columns of the firmament  
Not firmer based than they.<sup>2</sup>

Emerson here found God the Creator separate from Nature, active and purposeful.

In addition to these personal attributes, Emerson in other lines revealed God as One who maintained a personal relationship to man. The words in "Written at Rome"<sup>3</sup> describe the emotion of a despondent man seeking a completeness he has not yet found. A tender voice comforted him, urging him to wait and trust his destiny to the beneficent hand of the One who has lovingly watched and brooded over him. In no other poem was Emerson more certain that God was a personality. Here he pictured him as a God of benevolence, love and concern, knowing man's experiences and caring about his welfare. No more complete representation of God as a person exists in Emerson's poetry.

. . . . .

1. H. B. Baildon: Ralph Waldo Emerson, p. 12.
2. Emerson's Complete Poems, p. 358.
3. Op. Cit., p. 397.

Other poems, however, so strongly assert the impersonality of God that one sometimes suspects Emerson of having a split personality. For example, in "Woodnotes," after Emerson has called God the eternal Pan and Creator of the world, he describes the manner in which He gave the gift of life. After God added form, feature, nature, heat and light to every living thing, He finally added Himself.

Into the fifth himself he flings  
And conscious Law is king of kings.<sup>1</sup>

The culmination of creation in Emerson's mind occurred when an abstraction, Law, became conscious king of kings. This is in extreme contrast to Emerson's former pictures of God as a living Person, and not as a personified abstraction.

Even when Emerson represented God as a voice speaking to man, he sometimes attributed impersonality to that voice. In "Voluntaries" he portrays a young man being stimulated by a whisper to fight and preserve freedom.

So near is God to man,  
When Duty whispers low, THOU MUST,  
the Youth replies, I CAN.<sup>2</sup>

The low whisper is after all but Duty personified. Here the principle, the ideal, Duty, has become personified in much the same manner as did "Conscious Law."

The crowning example of this type of personification is found in the poem "Worship,"<sup>3</sup> where Emerson exalted the nature of

. . . . .

1. Op. Cit., p. 59.
2. Op. Cit., p. 207.
3. Op. Cit., p. 279.

"Jove." He described him as very near, flooding with blessings, yet deaf to prayers and as one whom it is impossible to depict because it is not known which part of him is human and which is divine. Therefore one would conclude that it is impossible to know God as a person because one would find it hard to distinguish between Him and the self, or Him and humanity.

There are within Emerson's poems, therefore, two pictures of God, one a personality and the other an abstraction. It must be recognized that within Emerson's religious experience, both Gods were included. But it should also be readily admitted that the majority of his poems emphasize the impersonal aspect of God's characteristics. How the two ideas were reconciled in his personal logic is not easily discoverable, without recourse to his prose writings. There one finds him loathe to expressing any definite ideas:

Do not speak of God much. After a very little conversation on the highest nature, thought deserts us and we run into formalism. . . Personality and impersonality might each be affirmed of Absolute Being; and what may not be affirmed of it in our own mind?<sup>1</sup>

Of primary importance in this quotation is the observation that Emerson, when forced to call God by a name, calls him the Highest Nature and Absolute Being. Though he concedes to Him both personality and impersonality, he nevertheless finally identifies him by abstract expressions. Therefore, it is justifiable to say that he leaned very heavily toward an impersonal interpretation of God.

. . . . .

1. Newton Dillaway: Op. Cit., p. 67.

D. God in the Life of Man

1. The Nature of Man

Emerson's ideas of the nature of man are numerous and more readily discoverable than those on the nature of God. Contrary to the judgment of some critics, he did not deny human sin. For the poem "Goodbye" deplores man's frozen heart, lore, conceit and pride,<sup>1</sup> while "The World Soul"<sup>2</sup> shuns the world's base politics and ensnaring trade, finally affirming that men

. . . plot and corrupt each other,  
and. . . despoil the unborn.

"The Sphinx"<sup>3</sup> also represents man as guilty, weak, infirm, and jealous. And "The Hymn" recognizes man's need for repentance in speaking of that portion within an individual which gives entrance to angels that "knock at meek contrition's door."<sup>4</sup>

Regardless of man's sin, however, Emerson regarded him as being close to God when close to nature. In "Woodnotes" he declared that "The lord is hay, the peasant grass," which suggests that the lord is nature devoid of life and purity, while the peasant is nature full of intended usefulness and beauty. In using the analogy of hay and grass he expressed that both are essentially the same element, but one is emptied of nature's substance while the other is filled with it. His statement, "Crime is virtue thrown off the rails"<sup>5</sup>

. . . . .

1. Op. Cit., p. 3.
2. Op. Cit., p. 15.
3. Op. Cit., p. 22.
4. Op. Cit., p. 393.
5. Baildon, Op. Cit., p. 29.

demonstrates his conviction that even evil is simply good on the wrong path. That is, both good and evil are different manifestations of the same basic substance.

In much the same manner he showed that the sinful man is merely the one preventing the divine from shining through him, while the pure one is that who is visibly reflecting God's nature. For the lines on "Life" declare that the real individual is not the one following unworthy ends or that one who is physically ill. But he is known and loved when he serves as a channel of the rivers of God, "from deep fontal heavens that flow."<sup>1</sup> The manner in which man yields to the divine within him is by obeying the inner voice which indwells him. For Emerson described insight as knowledge that grows as man yields to the inner voice, and as perception which acts as the crest of a wave winging him away from the commonplace. By continual submission to the inner voice, man becomes a shell through which the power and energy of Nature flows into action.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Emerson conceived of the true man as the one who worked in harmony with Nature.

## 2. Man as a Part of the Perfect Whole

Emerson's poetry also shows that the man who thus has become united with Nature and filled with deep insight, can continue to be illumined. Not only has he a depth of knowledge concerning the meaning of the universe, but he also begins to feel a part of

. . . . .

1. Emerson's Complete Poems, p. 352.
2. Op. Cit., Pan, p. 360.



the universe, working in harmony with it. There is a deep security in this knowledge. The condition upon which this knowledge continues is the man's oneness with nature, as expressed by the following lines:

Throb thine with Nature's throbbing breast,  
And all is clear from east to west.  
Spirit that lurks each form within  
Beckons to spirit of its kin;  
Self-kindled every atom glows  
And hints the future which it owes.<sup>1</sup>

The man who has attained that knowledge may continue steadfastly obeying the inner voice and realizing his oneness in God's plan. Those in the world who serve the inward law are of God's own select family of sons, represented by Emerson as ideal individuals who see as God sees. He has within him the hope that one day these minds will be united in one, adhering to one another, and forming the structure of the world itself.<sup>2</sup> Therefore man does not only realize his unity with the perfect whole in the present, but he also looks forward to complete unity with the world in some future time.

There are many passages beautifully describing Emerson's present unity with the perfect whole. Once, as described in one passage, when standing in "Peter's Field," he thought he saw the underwoods bend toward each other in kindness, while he also observed each flower making obeisance to the other as a man unto his friend. Then, catching the vision of a river gliding below him while its wave sparkled before his eyes, he replied within the mood of the moment,

I catch thy meaning wizard wave;

. . . . .

1. Emerson's Complete Poems, "Nature," p. 281.
2. Op. Cit., "Prayer," p. 381.

The River of my Life replies.<sup>1</sup>

Again, the River of his life was that divine spark within him that responded to the divine spark within nature.

### E. The Meaning of Eternal Rights

#### 1. The Ultimate Triumph of Good

A man like Emerson, who became so absorbed with his own relation to the rest of nature, would of necessity hold certain views concerning the abiding nature of those forces which make for Good. Seeing as much loveliness as he did, Emerson would have to find a hope for its survival, for the defeat of all which challenged or opposed it. As can be seen from the illustrations of poetry already cited, Emerson was little concerned with the problem of evil, because he did not believe in its reality. To him, evil was illustrated by anything out of harmony with the perfect whole. But even evil is ruled by the same principle or force which rules the Good. In "The Park" he readily expressed this thought by the lines which say

That Night or Day, that Love or Crime,  
Leads all souls to the Good.<sup>2</sup>

And in the poem "Mithridates," he not only invites virtues and delights to fill him and use him, but likewise calls methods, might, means, appliances, reputed wrongs and braggart rights to have their sway over him. So great was his faith that all leads to Good, that he

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1. Op. Cit., Peter's Field, p. 364.
2. Emerson's Complete Poems, The Park, p. 84.

was willing to invite all into his life.

This undying optimism carried itself to an even greater degree in the poem "Illusions."<sup>1</sup> Here Emerson was overtaken by the awareness that all in the world is so subject to change that nothing can be firmly anchored. This thought so despaired him that he declared even his precious, everlasting stars to be in reality fleeing. Finally he asserted all law and the world to be "endless imbroglio." Instead of becoming captivated by a morbid pessimism, however, Emerson suddenly in characteristic spirit became very certain that even in turmoil he rode to power and endurance. Even from the phenomenon of illusion he extracted hope and stability. This was hope that remained changeless within change, for it was the never-ending optimism of his own soul.

In this optimism he was convinced of the conquering power of man's eternal rights. In the poem, "Voluntaries," where he defended the necessity to maintain freedom, he was confident that though a soldier may have met death in defending it, nevertheless the spirit behind eternal rights is ever-awake and undying. Of the songs defending eternal rights, he said

Speak it firmly, these are gods,  
All are ghosts beside.<sup>2</sup>

Thus he is absolutely assured that all events lead to the triumph of the Good, and that eternal rights will see their day of perfect realization.

. . . . .

1. Op. Cit., Illusions, p. 286.
2. Op. Cit., p. 209.

## 2. The Individual's Part in This Triumph

Emerson portrayed the ultimate triumph of the Good as a battle in which man himself took part. In fact man could not help but be directed to the Good, even as a drop is fated to feed a flower, or as the shower of snow is fated to find its Alp.<sup>1</sup> One way in which he is thus directed might be suggested in the poem "Caritas," where Emerson mused about man's malice becoming peace, and his sinful weeds beauty, when he is led by the angel Hope.<sup>2</sup> Hope is that which comes from within, so that man in partaking of the triumph of Goodness is to follow an inner voice. This thought is also stressed in Emerson's "Freedom," where advice is given to enable one to understand freedom's secret. The individual is told not to counsel with flesh and blood, but to rush to do that which he feels is right.<sup>3</sup> Intuition, feeling, the inner voice, are the guides by which he acts.

In following these guides he is certain to receive aid from higher powers, for he does not stand alone in his seeking.

Around the man who seeks a noble end,  
Not angels but divinities attend.<sup>4</sup>

In realizing such ends, a man is certain to know victory, though he may even meet death. For the man who uses courage to answer duty's call has conquered justice, though he himself may be slain. In the final picture God will glorify and crown him a victor over pain and death.<sup>5</sup> In these thoughts Emerson reassures himself that noble

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1. Op. Cit., p. 355.
2. Op. Cit., Caritas, p. 284.
3. Op. Cit., Freedom, p. 198.
4. Op. Cit., Life, p. 349.
5. Op. Cit., Voluntaries, p. 209.

struggle in the present world will receive reward and will never end in vain.

#### F. The Meaning of Religion

In having declared that the inner voice is found within every man, Emerson defended individual ability to act apart from religious dogma. In "The Problem," he conceived of the litanies of all nations and the religions of all ages to be born of one spirit.<sup>1</sup> For him the Rock of Ages was not a rock contained only within one religion, but an element diffused indiscriminately into the air as a power house for thought and its fair mansions.<sup>2</sup> If a man led a virtuous life and awaited the uplifting of Truth, he said, Truth was bound to come to him regardless of his religious affiliation.<sup>3</sup>

Emerson was convinced that no one required religious affiliation, for he was certain that it was not only the star that shone 2,000 years ago that announced a miracle, for "every star is Bethlehem star."<sup>4</sup> Miracles to him do not only occur within one religious sect, but are events which manifest themselves in any age and every place. Perhaps one of the greatest miracles of the middle east was the prayer of Ali by the Syrian waters, a child of nature responding to her beauty.<sup>5</sup> Therefore Emerson conceived of religion simply as man's response to the spirit in nature.

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1. Op. Cit., pp. 6-9.
2. Cf. Op. Cit., Life, p. 355.
3. Cf. Ibid., p. 358.
4. Cf. Strong, American Poets and Their Theology, p. 82.
5. Cf. Emerson's Complete Works, The Waterfall, p. 370.

#### G. Summary and Conclusion

In having analyzed the religious experience found within Emerson's poetry, it was found that he discovered God primarily in nature, though he also recognized him as revealed through history. Having experienced both the personality and impersonality of God, Emerson seemed to describe his personal attributes in conflicting manners, but in the final analysis it was discovered that he more readily thought of God as an abstraction rather than as a person. He experienced God's immanence, sovereignty, and transcendence, and believed that He lived within the individual who yielded to the divine voice within him. In his poetry he portrayed himself as being at one with nature in yielding to this voice.

Believing in God's sovereignty, he was confident of the ultimate triumph of Good and in his own part in that triumph. His own response to nature's voice was his source of experiencing religion. The conclusion, therefore, is that Emerson's religion was a simple one because he divorced from it all dogma and returned to find God in nature and in himself. In doing so, he was never committed to adhere to any absolute standard aside from the dictates of his own conscience, and therefore sought no authority in establishing communion with God.

CHAPTER II

AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE  
REVEALED IN THE POETRY OF DAVID

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### AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE REVEALED IN THE POETRY OF DAVID

#### A. Introduction

David, the youngest son of Jesse, was born in Bethlehem and lived approximately between the years 1047 to 977 B.C. The testimony of the Bible to his work as a poet and musician is found outside the Psalter in several passages.<sup>1</sup> In addition to these poetic and musical abilities he possessed other traits which made his personality stand out far above those of his contemporaries. As King Saul, emotionally and mentally disturbed, sought one who could relieve his spirit, a servant recommended that he call for the young man David.

. . . Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Beth-lehemite, that is skilful in playing, and a mighty man of valor, and a man of war, and prudent in speech, and a comely person; and Jehovah is with him.<sup>2</sup>

That testimony to his character should be remembered through all ages as one of the highest recommendations ever given a young man. Accompanying this ancient testimony are many modern ones, such as the following.

(David). . . succeeded in winning not only a name unequalled in glory by any other King of Israel, but also a halo of kingly fame as ruler of the community of the true God,

. . . . .

1. I. Sam. 16:17,18; 18:10; II Sam. 1:19-27; 6:5; I Chron. 25.
2. I Sam. 16:18.



unattainable by a sovereign of any other nation of antiquity . . . . We recognize in him the glorious originality of a creative spiritual power, such as rarely shows itself in any people: while round the chief hero a crowd of other figures are woven into the mighty drama.<sup>1</sup>

Having at hand such records of his character, it should be interesting to follow the poetry of this man who had such an influence in the ancient world. In doing so, it will be possible to see his inherent beliefs and to determine his interpretation of life.

## B. The Discovery of God in the World

### 1. God in History

The poetry of David, although primarily concerned with personal experiences rather than with those of his people as a whole, reveals that he regarded Jehovah as the God of his nation. In one Psalm which he wrote during a time of fierce struggle caused by his personal enemies, David enlarged his concept of God's greatness by referring to Him not only as his own God, but as "Jehovah God of hosts, the God of Israel."<sup>2</sup> Besides picturing Jehovah as God of the nation Israel, this Psalm also presents Him as a universal God, for it proves David's desire for his enemy's defeat by his pleading for their recognition "that God ruleth in Jacob, unto the ends of the earth."<sup>3</sup>

Jehovah is once again pictured by David as the God of his nation in a Psalm written during a time of illness and sorrow.

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1. From a quotation by Ewald, in Macnuff, J. R., Tales of the Warrior King, p. XVI.
2. Ps. 59:5. Cf. Perowne, The Psalms, p. 425.
3. Ps. 59:13.

Regardless of the fact that his heart was heavy because his physical discomfort was heightened by his discovery of false friends, David ended this Psalm on a note of praise.

Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel,  
From everlasting and to everlasting.  
Amen, and Amen.<sup>1</sup>

Once again David was comforted by the fact that Jehovah was not only his own God, but the God of Israel.

David's poetry does not contain any description of the way in which Jehovah became the God of Israel, but that it pictures Him as such reveals that he regarded this as a historical fact. Because he never attempted to prove the truth of this to his readers one concludes that he simply assumed it in his basic thinking. The philosophy behind this thinking is that God is the first cause behind all historical events involving David, his nation Israel, and other peoples.

Far more plentiful than evidences of God in national history, however, are those references in David's poetry which show his discovery of God at work in personal history. Psalm 18, a record of his characteristic experiences and attitudes, vividly recounts his fear when on one occasion he was encompassed by the cords of death.

In my distress I called upon Jehovah,  
And cried unto my God:  
He heard my voice out of his temple,  
And my cry before him came into his ears.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. Ps. 41:12.
2. Ps. 18:6a.

The entire Psalm is a record of Jehovah's answer to David's desperate cry.

He delivered me from my strong enemy,  
And from them that hated me; for they were too mighty for me.<sup>1</sup>

Many other Psalms contain similar records of Jehovah's deliverances.<sup>2</sup>

In one of them David revealed that the reason for his worship and praise of Jehovah was that Jehovah had delivered him out of all trouble.<sup>3</sup> God's goodness, therefore, was revealed to David through his activity in helping him to overcome his personal struggles.

Perhaps the most important of these struggles took place before David became king of Israel, while Saul and his men pursued him in various attempts to take his life. Finally, however, when Saul fell in battle by his own sword, and when Jonathan his son fell with him, David was so stunned and grief-stricken that he was unable to recognize that Jehovah's purpose to make him king was being remarkably fulfilled. He could only lament the humiliating fact that Israel's glory had been slain, and that the shield of the mighty had been cast away. This lament, full of tender regard and deep pity for Jonathan, reveals his inability to comprehend the situation by the thrice repeated exclamation, "How are the mighty fallen!"<sup>4</sup> Though Jehovah's name is not mentioned in this song, inherent in David's words are his emotions of awe and fear in the realization that those who once lived and prospered are now dead and lifeless.

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1. Ps. 18:17.
2. Ps. 59:16,17; 56:13; 3:7; 4:7,8.
3. Ps. 54:6,7.
4. II Sam. 1:19-27.

These words are a record both in David's personal history and in Israel's national history, that the invisible working of Jehovah's mighty hand had wrought for David a position upon the throne of Israel.

Following the establishment of David upon the throne, and his realization that he had come safely through an abundance of harrowing experiences, David recorded his testimony of God's faithfulness:

As for God, his way is perfect;  
The word of Jehovah is tried;  
He is a shield unto all that take refuge in him.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore his recognition of God's activity in his personal life is David's primary testimony of God revealed in history. The activity is of a God of perfect purpose and faithfulness, who stands as a comfort to those who depend on Him.

## 2. The Discovery of God in Nature

### a. The Symbolic Meaning of Nature

As David surveyed the earth he regarded every one of its aspects as an evidence of the excellent name of Jehovah. While gazing at the heavens, he saw God's glory above them, and declared them to be "the work of his fingers." He affirmed that the moon and stars were ordained by him, and that sheep, oxen, beasts, birds and fish were "the work of his hands." These thoughts, which are recorded in Psalm 8, reveal that David did not regard the qualities

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1. Ps. 18:30.

of nature as an end in themselves, or admire them primarily for their own worth, but that he found their greatest value in the fact that they evidenced the personality of their Creator.<sup>1</sup>

The well known opening of Psalm 19 illustrates this point even more forcibly.

The heavens declare the glory of God;  
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.

David did not consider the heavens without pondering the truth which they declared about God, their Creator. In the following lines of the same Psalm he reasoned that the declaration of this truth is constant and continuous, and that it is universally received.<sup>2</sup> David heard nature's voice by contemplating this truth, and regarded such knowledge as available to all of creation throughout the world.

There is no speech nor language  
(This) . . . voice is not heard.  
(Its) . . . line is gone out through all the earth,  
And (its) . . . words to the end of the world.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore to David Nature stood as a witness of someone much greater than herself, her Creator.<sup>4</sup>

b. Transparency of Nature

In regarding Nature as being apart from God, David did not rule out the idea that she could directly manifest the indwelling nature of the Creator. One passage in his poetry, seems to show that once, at least, he regarded nature as a direct manifestation

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1. Kirkpatrick, The Psalms, p. 39, Note 3.
2. Ps. 19:3,4.
3. Ibid.
4. Scroggie, The Psalms, pp. 123-125.

of the mind and power of God. In Psalm 18, as David describes his desperate situation in being overtaken and surrounded by enemies, he records God's answer to his cry in the form of a thunderstorm.<sup>1</sup> Because God was wroth for David's sake, the earth rocked and trembled, while the foundations of the mountains quaked and were shaken. As the storm began, smoke came out of Jehovah's nostrils, and fire out of his mouth.

He bowed the heavens also, and came down;  
And thick darkness was under his feet.  
And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly;<sup>2</sup>  
Yea, he soared upon the wings of the wind.

In describing Jehovah in the midst of the storm, David saw him present in the heavens, in the darkness, and upon the wings of the wind. He also heard his voice in the thunder of the heavens, and in the hailstones and coals of fire. The storm finally is referred to as "Jehovah's rebuke, . . . the blast of his nostrils." This picture of God in the storm may or may not be considered David's literal view of happenings. It is revealing, however, in the sense that here David regarded Jehovah as directly resident within nature. The following quotation may be a portrayal of David's feelings as he wrote this Psalm.

. . . (The Israelite) did not contemplate. . . (Nature's) wonder and beauty and variety simply for their own sake. All spoke to him of God's power and glory and beneficence, or supplied him with emblems and figures for the delineation of God's attributes and working. Thus the thunder was to him the Voice of God, and all the terrible phenomena of the storm were an expression of the majesty of the

. . . . .

1. Ps. 18:7-15.
2. Ibid., v. 9,10.

Eternal Sovereign of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

It seems logical that this was David's emotion as he desired to portray the intensity of the power Jehovah had demonstrated in delivering him. He seems to have said, "The indescribable force of God's might was made evident to me as I heard his voice thundering in the storm which followed my desperate cry." In that time of trouble, therefore, David became aware of God's power by regarding Him as present within natural phenomena. Nature was the transparent door through which her Creator could be seen.

c. The Revelation of God in Nature

Having regarded Nature as the evidence of God and the portrayal of his attributes, David was certain of her meaning. As God's creation and the reflection of his glory, she stood as a universal and continual reminder to every creature that Jehovah is God. Creation awakened in David a feeling of awe and reverent wonder. He pondered man's insignificance in comparison with the splendor of God revealed through his works, and questioned, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"<sup>2</sup> While admiring Nature, he suddenly spoke to Someone. His wonder not only stimulated him to ponder, but it caused him to address a question. With ease and simplicity he conversed with Jehovah, for Nature's presence was an assurance to him of her Creator's presence. The question is asked in a direct, natural, manner, and yet with a tone of awe. What is frail, mortal

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1. Kirkpatrick, The Psalms, p. 147.  
2. Ps. 8:42.

man, in comparison with all the majesty of creation, and why has the Creator given him dominion and granted him authority?<sup>1</sup> This question reveals that Nature had turned David's mind to God and to his purpose. God was the great unitor of man and nature, the One who had ordained to each its relative position in creation, and the One in whose hands rested all final authority and power.<sup>2</sup>

### C. The Existence, Idea, and Nature of God

From beginning to end, David's writings clearly testify that he thought of God as a personality. Even his description of Jehovah's voice and power in the storm is later developed in the same Psalm as evidence that Jehovah is a Person, for He suddenly breaks loose from the storm and reveals his activity apart from natural phenomena. The power He demonstrated in the storm is described as the same power He wielded in David's life, through intelligent, purposeful channeling.

He sent from on high, he took me;  
He drew me out of many waters.

\* \* \*

He delivered me, because he delighted in me.<sup>3</sup>

In conceiving of God as a Person, living, active, and aware of earthly conditions, David often symbolically portrayed his physical features. For example, in one Psalm David spoke of Jehovah's eyes beholding events on earth, and of his eyelids trying the children

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1. Ps. 8:6. Cf. Scroggie, *The Psalms*, V. 1, p. 74.
2. Ps. 8:5,6.
3. Ps. 18:16,19b. Cf. Perowme, *The Psalms*, V. 1, p. 188.



men.<sup>1</sup> In another, when calling to God, he said, "Give ear to the words of my mouth."<sup>2</sup>

Often David emphasized not the physical features of Jehovah, but his emotions. Once, while feeling unjustly persecuted, he demanded that God arise in anger and awake for his cause.<sup>3</sup> Again, in relating a distressing situation, he pictured God as possessing such concern over him that he numbered his wanderings and put his tears in a bottle.<sup>4</sup> He therefore thought of God as One who hears, knows, sympathizes, considers, and acts according to his judgment of the situation. He regarded him as reacting to his personal experiences in specific ways. For example, when David was imperiled by the fear of death, he expected God actively to intervene for his rescue.<sup>5</sup> As David thought of God in this light, he responded to him in an act of trust and faith.

Such a response is shown in a Psalm written when he felt forsaken and forgotten by Jehovah, as he appealed for Jehovah to return. Before he had completed the Psalm, he was so confident of Jehovah's action that he could already anticipate his future rejoicing upon the answer to his prayer.<sup>6</sup> This response shows that David considered his experience an interaction with a living personality. He trusted Jehovah in the same manner in which one would trust any individual whom he regarded lovingly.

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1. Ps. 11:4c.
2. Ps. 54:2b.
3. Ps. 7:6.
4. Ps. 56:8.
5. Ps. 18:6.
6. Ps. 13:5,6.

This trust is illustrated by several Psalms written in various situations in David's life. When enemies plotted unjustly against him, he demanded that God strive, fight, stand up, and say to his soul, "I am thy salvation."<sup>1</sup> He expected God's working in power as one would expect a personal friend to offer his services in a distressing situation. Again, while suffering in illness, he had full confidence that Jehovah would "support him upon the couch of languishing."<sup>2</sup> He was certain that God's sympathy would be proven by his personal ministry in alleviating his sufferings. Even when he felt separated from God by sin, he dared call upon him to heal the situation, though he feared his anger.<sup>3</sup> Like a child experiencing fear in the knowledge that he has broken his parents' standard of obedience, David encountered God in hopes of forgiveness. After having acted against Him, he still pleaded that Jehovah would blot out his transgression, cleanse his sin, purify him and wash him.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is seen that in despondency, in persecution, in illness, and in sin, David evidenced continual trust in this Person, Jehovah. In all of these examples he responded not only to the situations in which he was placed, but also to the Person he believed to be in and above them.

Bound up in this response are all of David's implicit ideas of God's characteristics. His portrayal of God's physical

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1. Ps. 35:1-3.
2. Ps. 41:3a.
3. Ps. 51:12.
4. Ps. 51:1,2,7.

features, eyes and ears, indicates that he regarded Him as One with a perception and knowledge of human affairs.<sup>1</sup> His portrayal of God's emotions indicates not only his awareness to these affairs, but his reaction toward them. In turn, the nature of his reaction presents many other aspects of his personality.

For example, Jehovah's anger shows that He not only sees what takes place on earth, but that He also judges these events. This judgment, however, implies his right to judge. One passage, in which David speaks of a God who saves the upright in heart because He is a righteous judge, is evidence of this implication. In David's mind, it is this aspect of God's character, his righteousness, which makes him worthy to judge. It is God's righteousness which demands that man also be righteous.

Jehovah trieth the righteous;  
But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

\* \* \*

For Jehovah is righteous; he loveth righteousness:  
The upright shall behold his face.<sup>2</sup>

The farthest logical development of God as judge is the expectancy of God's activity in judgment. Judgment implies the power to reward and punish. That David had full confidence in this power is shown by these lines:

God is a righteous judge,  
Yea, a God that hath indignation every day.  
If a man turn not, he will whet his sword;  
He hath bent his bow, and made it ready.  
He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death;  
He maketh his arrows fiery shafts.<sup>3</sup>

. . . . .

1. Perowne, The Psalms, p. 148, Note on v. 4-7.
2. Ps. 11:5,7.
3. Ps. 7:11-13.

Just as any emotion gives vent to action, anger results in active judgment.

Like His anger, Jehovah's concern also shows his definite response to events on the earth. It is an aspect of that in his personality which loves. Like the aspect of judgment, it is portrayed by David's expectancy of definite action. When in fear, he becomes reassured that Jehovah will meet him with lovingkindness.<sup>1</sup> In one Psalm, when David seemed to be particularly anxious while hiding from powerful enemies, his fear developed into such firm trust in God's deliverance that he sang,

I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the peoples:  
I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.  
For thy lovingkindness is great unto the heavens,  
And thy truth unto the skies.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps David's greatest expectation of God's love is shown specifically, however, in the Twenty-Third Psalm. Here David pictures the majestic, holy God as his own shepherd, tenderly caring over him as one of his sheep, making him to lie down in green pastures, leading him beside still waters of rest, and guiding him in paths of righteousness. David so thoroughly sees his God as a shepherd that he even imagines the comfort of his rod and staff as he walks through the valley of death's shadow. There is no more tender picture of a loving God than in this Psalm. Therefore David saw God's concern not as an emotion of passive awareness, but as one finding its out-working in gentle and merciful love.

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1. Ps. 59:10a,16b.
2. Ps. 57:9,10.

Behind David's expectation of God's activity in human events, such as his judgment and his love, is his belief that God is powerful. This is inherent in his confidence that He will preserve from enemies, heal in illness, cleanse from sin, and guide in life's experiences. These ideas show that to David, God was far above men in being sovereign over all earthly events. Above and beyond this concept of sovereignty, David thought of God as a God of glory, whose name is excellent in all the earth. This was already borne out in the discussion of his nature Psalms, 8 and 19.

In summary, David's Psalms reveal that God, in being aware and in perceiving, was conceived of as a Person; in judging, was conceived of as a righteous Person; in loving, was conceived of as a merciful Person; and in extending activity and power into human affairs, was shown to be a sovereign Person. Finally in being above both man and Nature, through the majesty of creation, He was revealed as a transcendent, glorious Person. These attributes are those David inherently wrote into his Psalms as he brought Jehovah into everyday, human experiences.

#### D. God in the Life of Man

##### 1. The Nature of Man

In meditating upon man's position in Jehovah's plan of creation, David concluded that man was created only a little lower than the angels, was purposed to have a position of glory and honor, and was given dominion over the works of creation.<sup>1</sup> Running contrary

. . . . .

1. Ps. 8.

to this belief in man's high destiny, however, David often spoke of wicked men, workers of iniquity with sin in their mouth, and pride, cursing and lying upon their lips. These are characterized by their belief that no one hears or cares about their acts.<sup>1</sup> They are described as violent men who ". . . have not set God before them."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, though David visualized man's high destiny in God's purpose, he reasoned that men who had not considered God had fallen far short of that purpose.

David's description of the specific sins in man which are against God are carefully listed in two Psalms, 15 and 24. There he recognized that slander, deceitful swearing, falsehood, gossip, evil doing, and unlawful gain were acts able to lead men far from the fulfillment of their high destiny.

However, in these two Psalms he also saw those qualities which would lead men to realize God's purpose. A man who walks uprightly, uses his money honestly, and controls his tongue, is on his way to fulfilling that purpose. He is to have a continual attitude of unselfishness and unchangeableness. In addition he should be considerate of neighbors, friends, and the poor, with a low opinion of the corrupt man and a respect for the God-fearing man. Finally, he should have clean hands and a pure heart.<sup>3</sup> In David's mind, such qualities fulfill God's requirements for man's righteousness.

In addition to speaking of the wicked and the righteous,

. . . . .

1. Ps. 59:2,13,7.
2. Ps. 54:3.
3. Ps. 24.

David also presented a third type of man, the righteous man who had fallen prey to some specific sin. In Psalm 51 he set forth the position of such a man. Formerly, he had been in fellowship with Jehovah, but now he is guilty of iniquity, transgression and blood-guiltiness. He has realized his own propensity for sin and is well aware of God's anger. Therefore he begs God's cleansing and forgiveness. That David believed such a man obtained forgiveness is expressed in Psalm 32, where he spoke of the blessed man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered. This man, who has been restored from sin, has a trust in God's power to cleanse, a submissiveness to his will, and a sensitivity toward the awefulness of sin. He attempts to obey God and submit to his guidance.<sup>1</sup> Therefore David presents three pictures of man, the wicked, the righteous, and the restored sinner who is forgiven.

## 2. Man As a Part of the Purpose of God

It has already been shown that David thought of Jehovah as a righteous God demanding that man also be righteous. If a man fulfills that demand God will be alligned with him by throwing his power on his side.

With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful.  
With the perfect man thou wilt show thyself perfect;  
With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure  
And with the perverse thou wilt show thyself froward.  
For thou wilt save the afflicted people  
But the haughty eyes thou wilt bring down.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. Ps. 32:8,9.
2. Ps. 18:25-27.

The man whose character portrays mercy, perfectness, and purity, will be aided by God in trouble. Conversely, the man who behaves in a contrary manner loses the strength of God's aid.<sup>1</sup> David did not personally expect God's aid if he were unrighteous. Once, when calling for help in affliction, he said,

If there be iniquity in my hands;  
If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me;

\* \* \*

Let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it;  
Yea, let him tread my life down to the earth,  
And lay my glory in the dust.<sup>2</sup>

David believed that the man who fulfilled God's demand of righteousness was to enjoy certain privileges. In believing himself to be such a person, he was certain that he knew Jehovah's loving-kindness. In periods of distress his confidence transformed his fear into peaceful trust, as is shown by the following quotation.

In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid;  
What can man do unto me?<sup>3</sup>

Such confidence enabled him to stand firm at all times. Even upon hearing the words of mockers who did not believe in God, David was able to address God with the words,

Thou hast put gladness in my heart,  
More than they have when their grain and their new wine  
are increased.<sup>4</sup>

When his life was sought by would-be murderers, he was able to say

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;

. . . . .

1. Leslie, The Psalms, pp. 316,317.

2. Ps. 7:3b,4a,5.

3. Ps. 18:32.

4. Ps. 56:11.



Let thy glory be above all the earth.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, the man who is a part of Jehovah's purpose enjoys confidence in all circumstances.

David's use of words in describing Jehovah also indicates advantages of the man with whom God works hand in hand. In Psalm 18 he confessed God to be his strength, refuge, rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn, and high tower. In that Psalm, in referring to God, nine times he called him "my God" as if the very power of the infinite were in his possession. Scroggie defines the thought of this Psalm as omnipotence coming to the aid of impotence.<sup>2</sup> In exchanging his weakness for God's strength, David thought of God as a hiding place from conflict and warfare, and as a protection from its darts. As he sought God's protection, he thought of himself as taking refuge in the shadow of his wings.<sup>3</sup> Psalm 23 shows that he not only looked to him for refuge, however, but for refreshment, rest, restoration, purpose, courage, comfort, sustenance, lavish affection, overflowing provisions, and assurance for the future.

David did not believe, however, that a man could always enjoy the privileges of being alligned with God. There were times in his life when he felt he had sinned against God, when he was in deep suffering. He said that his bones were wasted away and that Jehovah's hand was heavy upon him.<sup>4</sup> In contrasting his emotions at such a time with those of his former enjoyment of blessings, he

. . . . .

1. Ps. 57:5,11.
2. Scroggie, Psalms, V. 1, p. 120.
3. Ps. 57:1c.
4. Ps. 32.

said, "My moisture was changed as with the drought of summer."<sup>1</sup> It was at such a time, however, that he looked to God for cleansing. In begging God's forgiveness, he promised, "I will teach transgressors thy ways and will sing aloud of thy righteousness."<sup>2</sup> By these words he showed that his idea of a man who was alligned with God was that he lived for the praise of God.

Perhaps the most complete testimony he gave of God's faithfulness to such a man occurred when he attributed all his personal victories to Jehovah with the words,

Thy right hand hath holden me up,  
And thy gentleness hath made me great.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore it is seen that David in considering himself God's servant, attributed to Him the honor he received in life in triumphing over enemies and in acquiring the kingship of Israel. Man in being part of God's purpose is to be righteous, is to follow God's guidance, and is to praise Him, that others may know His name.

#### E. The Meaning of Eternal Rights

##### 1. The Ultimate Triumph of Justice

As David constantly prayed and pleaded for the defeat of his enemies, he believed God to be on his side. When he was wronged he did not neglect to tell Jehovah, for he believed evil would be avenged. In his mind, the very course of history would cause

. . . . .

1. Ps. 32:46.
2. Ps. 51:13,14.
3. Ps. 18:35.

evildoers to fall into the trap they had set for others.<sup>1</sup> For example, in writing of Saul, he said

He hath made a pit, and digged it,  
And is fallen into the ditch which he made.  
His mischief shall return upon his own head,  
And his violence shall come down upon his own pate.<sup>2</sup>

According to him, therefore, evil is to be repaid by evil, and evil is its own punishment.

David's very prayers prove that he believed in the triumph of justice. However, it was not to occur because goodness or righteousness has power in itself, but because God has power.<sup>3</sup> Justice is to prevail because the just God has power to give it victory.<sup>4</sup> In Psalm 35 he calls upon God to act according to this very principle. He tells of malicious people who had accused him falsely and repaid his good with evil. In having regarded them as friends, he had mourned and prayed when they were sick. But they in turn rejoiced in his struggles and gathered against him. David calls to God, "Lord, how long wilt thou look on?"<sup>5</sup> He is assured that a just God cannot apprehend evil without acting against it. His question "How long" shows that he cannot conceive of Jehovah remaining passive in the face of such circumstances.

Therefore it can be said that David believed justice would triumph because of the character of God. First, because God is powerful enough to combat evil, and second, because his love of righteousness

. . . . .

1. Leslie, The Psalms, p. 317.
2. Ps. 7:15,16.
3. Maclaren, The Psalms, V. 1, pp. 342,3.
4. Ps. 59:12,13.
5. Ps. 35:19a.

demands that he act in any situation which transgresses his ways.

## 2. The Individual's Part in This Triumph

As long as David believed himself righteous, he expected to share in the triumph of justice. He never lost his sense of God's friendship except when he was conscious of sin. His victory over evil was a victory over those he considered against God's purposes. It was not only his personal victory, but it was also the victory of Jehovah. Therefore he believed that the righteous man who called to Jehovah could expect deliverance from enemies, for he looked upon Him as a righteous God hating evil. Jehovah's deliverances were evidence to him that such a man has shared in the triumph of justice.

### F. The Meaning of Religion

In reviewing David's ideas about God in the life of man, one might well wonder whether his expectance of Jehovah's deliverances against personal enemies was not merely a selfish sort of religion. He might conclude that in the end, the only gain David knew from his relationship with God was personal gain. What were David's ideas about religion? Did he believe that his relationship to God made any difference to the rest of the world?

Perhaps this question might be answered by considering David's reactions to Jehovah's deliverances. In such instances, he usually resorted to praise.

I will give thanks in the great assembly,  
I will praise thee among much people  
And my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness

And of thy praise all the day long.<sup>1</sup>

David thought that the end result of man's trust in Jehovah is man's praise of Jehovah.<sup>2</sup> His trust during difficult circumstances looks forward to the time when he shall hail Jehovah's righteousness. David's idea of religion was first that one know God as faithful, and then that he tell others of his faithfulness. Therefore the end result of religion was the proclamation of God's name.

When David proclaimed God's name through his writings, he was able to advise that the godly man who prays at a time when God is near will not be overwhelmed when the overflowing of great waters reaches him. He will have God as a hiding place, be preserved from trouble, and encompassed with songs of deliverance. Those who disobey God, "the wicked," however, shall experience many sorrows.<sup>3</sup> But the righteous man will never be moved.<sup>4</sup> Finally, the worthy man shall receive good of God.

He shall receive a blessing from Jehovah,  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore David sought to tell others of Jehovah's righteousness, in his desire that these benefits might be known. David also believed that his religion was worthy because his God was the one and only God. Though only the Jews believed in Him David thought of him as a universal God. For in asking God to consume the wicked, he said,

. . . . .

1. Ps. 35:18,28.
2. Maclaren, The Psalms, V. 1, p. 343.
3. Ps. 32:10.
4. Ps. 15:5c.
5. Ps. 24:5.

And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob,  
Unto the ends of the earth.

He believed therefore that his idea of worship was the true one, because he knew the true God. In his burst of praise at the end of Psalm 24 he shows his exalted concept of his God.

Who is this King of glory,  
Jehovah of hosts,  
He is the King of glory.<sup>1</sup>

David's own God, his friend, for him was also the very King of glory. He therefore believed that religion consisted in that relationship with the one true God which would lead a man to find joy and glorify Jehovah's name.

#### G. Summary and Conclusion

Through the study of David's poetry it was found that he recognized God to be at work both in history and in nature. Historically he regarded Him as the first cause behind all events involving himself, his nation and other peoples. Because his poems were primarily personal he was most concerned with evidences of God's activity within his own life. In nature David discovered God as Creator, separate from his creation, although he also represented Him as immanent on one occasion. Through the evidence of both history and nature, he experienced God as a Person with awareness, perception and emotion. He thought of Him primarily as a Person of righteousness, judgment, lovingkindness, sovereignty and transcendence. This God

. . . . .

1. Ps. 24:10.

was represented as favoring the righteous, and bringing destruction upon the wicked. Because David believed Him to be both righteous and powerful, he was confident that justice would triumph over evil. He represented the righteous individual as sharing in this triumph insofar as he personally experienced God's deliverances from evil. Through these discoveries David considered the essence of religion to be that relationship with the one true God which would lead an individual to spread his name to others as a result of the joy he had experienced. He therefore continually committed himself to be faithful to One God, Jehovah, the King of glory.

CHAPTER III

THE MAIN POINTS OF COMPARISON AND CONTRAST REVEALED  
IN THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF EMERSON AND DAVID



## CHAPTER III

### THE MAIN POINTS OF COMPARISON AND CONTRAST REVEALED IN THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES OF EMERSON AND DAVID

#### A. Introduction

The inherent beliefs in the poetry of Emerson and David have been discovered. These men, separated by years and environment, will now be drawn together in a direct comparison and contrast. The discoveries of this process will not be the answer to the problem of their distinctive religious experiences, but only a springboard for further study and discovery.

First, in realizing that procedure, each man's philosophy will be held alongside that of the other in an attempt to discover the general likenesses between them. Then the points of contrast will be noted. When these things have been accomplished, the way will have been paved for a concise summary including the main points of likeness and similarity between these two philosophies.

#### B. Points of Similarity

The writings of Emerson and David which were analyzed reveal that these authors both experienced a God revealed through history and through nature. Historically, each regarded God as the God of their nation. While Emerson described a God of justice, purpose, will, and omnipotence as the One who directed the Pilgrims in building America, David represented a Person of omnipotence as the God of his nation

Israel. The God of America and of the nation Israel, therefore, have one characteristic in common, that of omnipotence.

Through nature, each man found the revelation of God and his characteristics. While Emerson discovered that nature spoke in living tones, David discovered that she declared constant, continuous, universal truth. As Emerson found evidence of "the immeasurable mind" through nature, David found evidence of the Creator through nature. Emerson constantly regarded nature as the voice of God, and David once, at least, regarded a natural phenomenon, the storm, as the voice of God. For Emerson, this voice represented power, mind, and heart, which are elements of personality, while for David, it spoke of purpose, majesty, glory, and sovereignty, which are characteristics of personality. Finally, each man was led to speak as he pondered the wonders of creation. While Emerson spoke directly to the immanent, eternal spirit he believed to be in nature, David spoke to the transcendent God he believed to be above nature. Therefore each man discovered the revelation of that which is beyond nature, and learned to reckon upon the reality of that discovery.

In the analysis of both men's poetry, it was found that there were times when each experienced God as a Person, although Emerson stressed his personality. Even aside from the question of personality or impersonality, each man experienced the sovereignty and transcendence of God. When Emerson did experience personality however, he found God to be active, purposeful, and aware of events on earth. More than once he described his emotions of concern and love. At such times he thought of himself as maintaining a personal relationship

with God. These points fit into the general pattern David consistently used, though he enlarged his concept of God by describing more characteristics of his personality.

In addition to these common discoveries, each man believed he could find a position in his world where he could work in harmony with God. Emerson represented himself as being at one with nature, while David regarded himself as being in harmony with God's purpose for man. While Emerson recognized two types of men, the sinful and the pure, David found men to be both wicked and righteous, though he also described a third type of person, the restored sinner. It is possible that Emerson also believed in this third type, for he spoke of repentance. In reference to the pure, or righteous man, both men believed that the individual in harmony with God follows a guide in life. Emerson spoke of serving the inner law, while David spoke of following God's condition of righteousness. In attempting to follow these guides in the realization of the ideal life, each man experienced power. Emerson described the power and energy of nature flowing within him, while David told of the power manifested by God for his sake. Therefore both discovered the joy known by the person who has found his place in God's world.

Though both realized many unfavorable conditions existed in that world, each believed that "the right" would find its final triumph. Emerson, believing that divine help would accompany the man seeking a noble end, experienced continual hope and optimism. David, believing that Jehovah's personal deliverance would be extended to the righteous man in distress, evidenced unflinching trust and confidence.

In relation to the belief that "right" would find its final triumph, each man held that certain rewards would result from the doing of good and evil. On the one hand, Emerson believed that the noble man would be crowned and glorified by God, while on the other, David believed that the wicked would be rewarded by destruction. Both men believed that an eternal spirit guarded justice. For Emerson it was this undying spirit which safeguarded eternal rights, while for David it was the eternal God who insured justice. Each man, therefore, was confident that there was hope for the realization of justice even though the world was full of evil.

Finally, each man believed that religion had behind it one distinct true spirit. Emerson declared that this same spirit undergirded all religion, while David declared that there was but One, universal, true God. Therefore each man believed that in the final analysis, true religion was supported by one, universal source of truth.

### C. Points of Contrast

In comparing David and Emerson, it was found that each discovered God both in history and in nature. However, Emerson found God primarily in nature, while David found Him primarily in personal history. Emerson constantly spoke of the peace he felt as he addressed the spirit within nature, while David wrote primarily of the trust he experienced as he called upon Jehovah for help and strength.

Where each spoke of him in nature, certain basic contrasts are to be found. As Emerson spoke, he spoke directly to nature,

believing himself to have addressed the spirit behind nature, while David spoke directly to God, who he believed was above nature. In reference to nature therefore, Emerson primarily thought of God as immanent, while David thought of Him as transcendent. For Emerson, God dwelled within nature, while for David He was the great link between man and nature.

Where David dwelled upon God present in personal history, he constantly referred to a God who helped overcome struggles and delivered from distress. He described Him as a God of faithfulness and perfect purpose. Emerson seldom referred to such qualities being characteristic of his God. He listed no specific examples of God's deliverance from enemies, illness, or sin, as did David, though he did tell of times when he received comfort from God. Where David gave specific personality concepts of his God, such as judgment, righteousness, and lovingkindness, Emerson remained silent. Therefore David more often experienced God as a Person, and had a more developed concept of his personal characteristics.

Each did experience God's personality, as has been pointed out, but where David stressed personality, Emerson stressed impersonality. For him, words like Law, Duty, Nature, and Being, were often exchanged for the word God. He thought of God as immanent to the degree where it was impossible to distinguish between God and the self. For David, however, God was always a Person separate from the self, who responded actively to human situations and who elicited response in the attitude and actions of the man who trusted Him. It is not to be said that Emerson did not describe a God such as the one David characterized, but that such a portrayal is limited to only a few of

his poems, while the majority of them talk of God's impersonality.

In considering the nature of man, it was discovered that each found him to be basically the same in nature. Where Emerson believed that man became pure through close association with nature, however, David believed that one became righteous by living righteously. A clue to David's concept of the motivation behind such righteous living is to be found in the fact that he described the wicked as those "who had not set God before them." Therefore, the man practicing righteousness is the one who does set God before him. The final source of character for Emerson was nature, while for David it was God.

In speaking of man's harmony with the perfect whole, Emerson saw the pure man as a channel of the rivers of God and yielded to the divine voice within him, while David did not express such oneness with his God. David saw the righteous man trying to live up to God's purpose, and described the separation he felt through sin and the restoration brought about by repentance. Therefore, Emerson sought to maintain contact with the inner voice, while David tried to maintain fellowship with his God. Emerson believed Hope kept man realizing his high purpose of harmony with the universe, while David believed Righteousness would fulfill that destiny in him. For Emerson, the realization of that destiny would lead a man to see as God sees and to be united with nature, while for David, it would mean living in God's purpose and experiencing God's power. Therefore, while Emerson had a sense of unity and oneness with God, David had a sense of possessing Someone other than himself.

Though each man believed in the final triumph of eternal rights, their concepts of good and evil differed. For Emerson, evil was good on the wrong path, but for David, evil, or wickedness, was that which angered God's sense of righteousness. Therefore Emerson believed in the sovereignty of God to the extent where only one main principle existed in the universe, while for David there were two.

Finally, though each man saw essentially one true spirit to be undergirding religion, Emerson spoke of a spirit, while David spoke of a Person. For Emerson, religion was man's response to the spirit in nature, while for David, it was man's relationship to the One true God.

#### D. Summary and Conclusion

The most distinctive points of comparison between these two men's religious experiences are found in the fact that each believed God was revealed in history and in nature, and found his omnipotence, immanence, sovereignty and justice through these media. Each also discovered that man could find a position in which he worked in harmony with the universe, and that he had grounds for hoping in the final triumph of goodness. Finally, each believed that there is one universal source of truth. For both, then, the universe pointed to God and held the promise of the triumph of truth and justice.

The outstanding points of contrast are found in the fact that while one experienced God primarily in nature, the other found him most often in personal history. For the first, he was regarded most often as immanent, while for the second he was regarded primarily

as transcendent. One emphasized his impersonality through the use of such words as Law, Duty, Nature, and Being, while the other consistently pictured him as a Person with specific personality attributes. One believed that God was the one main principle at work in the universe, and that evil was merely good on the wrong path. The other maintained that two main principles existed, that which was in keeping with God's righteousness, and that which violated it. For the first, in realizing a position of harmony in this universe, man maintained purity through communion with nature, while for the second, this was accomplished by obedience to God's precepts. Therefore, while the one constantly thought of God as being inseparable from his inner spirit and from his world, the other pictured Him as Someone above and distinct from himself and from creation. For the first, communion with God was his response to the spirit in nature, while for the second it was his response to a transcendent Person. The overall contrast then, is to be found in the fact that while for Emerson, God was inseparable from his world, for David, God was above his world.



CHAPTER IV

THE RELATION OF EMERSON'S AND DAVID'S RELIGIOUS  
INTERPRETATIONS TO PARTICULAR EXPERIENCES

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELATION OF EMERSON'S AND DAVID'S RELIGIOUS INTERPRETATIONS TO PARTICULAR EXPERIENCES

#### A. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter will be to find some of the primary influences in the lives of these individuals, Emerson and David, which affected their beliefs. In determining this it will be necessary to examine the background of important events in their lives. This includes their ancestry and environment, the quality of their education, outstanding events in their youth and early manhood, their relationship to key persons who influenced their thought, and any other important factors. While considering these elements it will be of value to find the period of each man's life during which certain poetry was written, especially that poetry which deviates from the usual pattern. For example, it was noted that Emerson usually stressed the impersonality of God. It would therefore be of interest to discover the particular experiences he underwent when he stressed the personality of God. As David often emphasized the life of a righteous man, it would also be valuable to study the conditions under which he portrayed the sorrows of one who had committed sin. After having briefly noted the relationship between belief and experience in each man's life, the various influences which had direct bearing upon their poetry will be summarized.

B. Elements in Emerson's Life  
Having Direct Bearing Upon His Poetry

1. Background

The factors in Emerson's background which set the stage for the drama of his life were the age and place in which he lived, the people with whom he was to spend his early years, and the patterns of thought prevalent at that time.

a. Environment

Behind Emerson was a broad background of ideas of Christian origin, including New Testament emphases of the Fatherhood of God, the divine destiny of man, the worth of the individual, and the certainty of life after death. In addition to this religious background was the background of distinctly American ideas. That country, founded by individuals who were in pursuit of freedom, was experiencing "the vital energy of a new generation. . .--a generation striving to release itself from the political and economic and religious repressions of the Old World."<sup>1</sup> This spirit was probably one of the effects of the age of Rationalism, which promoted the development of new ways and ideas. Even eighteen years before Emerson's address on the American scholar, Bryant had already given his dictum that American poets should not imitate, but seek to be original.<sup>2</sup> Emerson therefore lived in an age and atmosphere which sought to free itself from old modes of thought while it was at the same time undergirded with the ideas and influences of former ages.

. . . . .

1. Fred Eastman: Men of Power, p. 68.
2. Strong: American Poets and Their Theology, p. 52.

The records of such ideas were readily available to those who had the means for books. Early in his life, Emerson was brought in contact with the genius of past ages through this means. His schooling began before he was three.<sup>1</sup> "Born in the city, Emerson's young mind first found delight in poems and classic prose, to which his first instincts led him as naturally as another boy's would to go fishing."<sup>2</sup> Through such literature the thinking of past ages was to enter and mingle with his own. Therefore he was brought in contact with many vital ideas with which he could face the challenge of his day. That he faced this challenge with a mingling of Christian ideas and a touch of his own originality, is not surprising.

b. Ancestry

Of great importance in shaping Emerson's thinking were the traditional ideas of his family. "He (was). . . the descendant of eight generations of Puritan Clergymen, the inheritor of their thoughtfulness and contemplation, their spirit of inward and outward communion."<sup>3</sup> His father, a Unitarian minister of the First Church, Boston, was described as "a pleasing preacher of somewhat latitudinarian doctrine, and no stickler for the mere forms of religion."<sup>4</sup>

Because his father was a Unitarian, Emerson would therefore be naturally inclined toward certain forms of thought. Channing, the great Unitarian thinker of his day, had propagated a distinct interpretation of the Christian gospel. He emphasized the divine fatherhood of

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1. Eastman, op. cit., p. 77.
2. Emerson's Complete Poems, p. xvi.
3. Frothingham, "Transcendentalism in New England," p. 222.
4. Strong: American Poets and Their Theology, p. 51.

God in One Person only, and had great faith in the moral perfection of that God. According to him, the doctrine of man's depravity would be an impeachment of divine character. He believed that Jesus' great aim was to perfect human character by freeing men from sin and lifting humanity to its divinest possibilities of life. He taught the dignity of human nature, and especially emphasized the idea that all minds are of one family, one origin, and one nature.<sup>1</sup> Believing that religion is instinctive to man, he said

. . . how natural it is that we should find so many of the same truths in widely different faiths, sublime moral precepts outside of Christendom, in the words of philosophers and sages.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting that Emerson's poetry supports this theory.

Out of the heart of nature rolled  
the burdens of the Bible old.<sup>3</sup>

Even offhand, apart from any detailed study, it is possible to see that many of Emerson's ideas rooted directly in Channing's Unitarian Teachings. His belief that evil is good on the wrong path fits in with Channing's dislike of the doctrine of the depravity of man, while his belief that all religion has but one source, corresponds with Channing's emphasis on the oneness of human minds.

## 2. Youth

When Emerson was eight, his father died, leaving his mother with five boys for whom to care. She was a conscientious, intelligent woman who saw to it that her sons were educated. In addition to

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1. Unitarianism, Its Origin and History, pp. 185-190.
2. Op. cit., p. 190.
3. Ibid.

performing the daily chores, her boys had to participate in spelling contests, reading, Latin school, English study, ciphering, the singing of hymns and Bible recitation.<sup>1</sup> There was little time for play. When Emerson did play, he did so by himself, or with one of his brothers.<sup>2</sup> He therefore developed the habit of being predominantly intellectual and solitary.

Of great importance in his life was Emerson's frequent contact with his mother's sister, Mary Moody Emerson. Through youth and manhood, he was loved, spurred on and keenly criticized by this aunt, an eager and wide reader, inspired by religious zeal, high minded, but eccentric. She was a very intellectual woman, whose mind was so sharp that Thoreau pronounced her "the wittiest and most vivacious woman he knew."<sup>3</sup> The December issue of the Atlantic Monthly of the year 1883 contains an article on this woman written by Emerson himself. The following quotation is from that article: "Her life is a fruit of Calvinism and New England, and marks the precise time when the power of the old creed yielded to the influence of Modern Science and humanity. . . ." Also in the article are characteristic quotes from her diary, such as these.

I felt, till above 20 years old, as though Christianity were as necessary to the world as existence:--was ignorant that it was lately promulged, or partially received. . . I said to God, (today,) "Yes, I love thee and all thou dost (though) . . . Thou sheddest frost and darkness on every path of mine.

A woman of such learning and wit undoubtedly left an indelible

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1. Eastman, op. cit., p. 78.
2. Ibid., p. 76.
3. Ibid., p. 78.

impression on Emerson. The nature of his reaction will later be measured by his own words of her, uttered in his early manhood. In his youth he was influenced mainly by her, his studies, and his books, having found little time for play.

### 3. Early Manhood

Emerson's early manhood included the days from his college education through those events which led him to choose his profession and settle upon his own individual philosophy of life.

#### a. From Harvard to Divinity School

While at Harvard from 1817 to 1821, Emerson was not an outstanding scholar. He seemed to be more interested in his outside reading, than in his studies. "He plodded conscientiously through his daily classes and let his imagination soar only in the evenings when he retired to his room to read Hindu and Persian literature."<sup>1</sup> Concerning his new thoughts and discoveries, he would write faithfully to his Aunt Mary.

Following his graduation from Harvard, he was not at all sure that he desired to enter into the ministry. Having turned his thoughts toward literature, rhetoric, and the arts, he had applied for a position at the Boston Latin School, but was rejected on the ground that his college academic standing had not been high enough.<sup>2</sup> While he despaired at his mediocrity, his Aunt Mary told him he was indulging in self-pity and urged him to get away into the woods for mediation in seclusion

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1. Eastman, op. cit., p. 82.  
2. Ibid., p. 83.

and let nature speak to him of larger things.

He went. In the two years that followed he often went. He began to work himself out of his self-pity, to strengthen his fibre against discouragement, and to turn his mind from brooding. . . .<sup>1</sup>

It was therefore upon his Aunt's advice that he began to find solace in nature.

After three years of teaching he threw aside his doubts about the ministry and decided to dedicate his hopes to the church. Having begun professional studies under Dr. Channing's general direction, he prepared to enter Cambridge Divinity School in February, 1825. On December 17, 1824, he wrote his aunt that he could not consent to any creed which taught that God was an imperfect moral being, "a double deity," who "botches up the ordinances of the God of Nature."<sup>2</sup> This reveals that Emerson, like Channing, emphasized the idea of a moral God in One Person.

Having entered Divinity School, he became rebellious of those who began speaking with authority on the nature and characteristics of God, for he felt they had no evidence for their words.<sup>3</sup> His rebellion did not have a chance to develop much farther, however, for one month later, ill health forced him to suspend his studies and leave Cambridge. Finally, because he began attending lectures as soon as his health improved, he was approbated to preach in 1826, at the age of 23.

Immediately afterward, his health took another turn for the

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1. Ibid., pp. 85,86.
2. Emerson and Forbes: Journals of Ralph W. Emerson, V. 2, pp. 32,33.
3. Ibid., p. 59.



worse. He suffered from rheumatism, a stricture in the lung causing extreme pain, and a general weakness preventing him from taking any exercise. The writings in his journals show that during this time he had much time for reading and thought, and pondered frequently on death, immortality, and God.<sup>1</sup> Much of his time was spent strolling in the woods, meditating quietly beside brooks, and picking blueberries in the fields. Solitude and nature became precious to him. Finally, by 1829, his health began to improve, and he was able to consider accepting his first pastorate. Through Channing, he developed the idea of a moral God in One Person. Through his own observations of the ministry of the day, he concluded that the exact nature of God could only be imperfectly understood, and believed himself closest to Him when in contact with nature.

b. Old North Church, Boston

Just before Emerson was installed as pastor of the Second Church of Boston, he fell in love and became engaged to Ellen Tucker, daughter of a Boston merchant. Being established in the parish with his bride, he carried on his minister's duties with a high heart. His happiness, however, was soon to be abruptly ended. Shortly within a year of his marriage his wife became so ill of tuberculosis that he had to take her to the South. Soon after their return she died. A few days later he wrote in his journal, "Five days are wasted since Ellen went to heaven to see, to know, to worship, to love, to intercede-- Reunite us, O Thou Father of our spirits."<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. Ibid., pp. 86-127.

2. Emerson and Forbes, op. cit., p. 356.

Even after many months his writings on Ellen appeared in his journals, and thoughts of immortality and of God were recorded among them. Such writings as these are characteristic of that time.

Let me not fear to die,  
But let me live so well  
As to win this mark of death from on high,  
That I with God, and thee, dear heart, may dwell.

I write the things that are,  
Not what appears;  
Of things as they are in the eye of God  
Not in the eye of man.<sup>1</sup>

The one great principle in the universe, the immanent God, became deeply rooted in his mind.<sup>2</sup> His loss of Ellen turned his thoughts toward immortality and the reality of God.

He began to pursue philosophy to such an extent that he felt himself a misfit in the ministry. The thought and worship of the church restricted him. "A new wine had begun to ferment in his thinking about religion. Sooner or later it would surely burst the old wineskin."<sup>3</sup> Finally, he told his congregation that in regard to one of the rites of the church, the Lord's Supper, he could administer it as a service of commemoration but could not sincerely regard it as a sacrament established by Christ for all his followers in all centuries. He offered his resignation, which was regretfully accepted by the congregation. Despair settled upon his heart. His health, also, broke down again.<sup>4</sup> He wrote a farewell letter to his congregation and sailed for Europe in 1832. He had no idea what he would do next.

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1. Emerson and Forbes, op. cit., pp. 394, 395.
2. Cf. Ibid., p. 398.
3. Eastman, op. cit., p. 95.
4. Scudder: The Lonely Wayfaring Man, p. 5.

He must make a fresh start.<sup>1</sup>

c. Trip to Europe

The trip to Europe was a time of seeking new thoughts and inspirations. While Emerson was at Rome, he wrote the poem, "Written at Rome," which, as shown in Chapter 1, revealed him hoping in a God of benevolence, love, and concern, who spoke with a tender voice. It is a poem with a highly developed idea of God as a Person, very similar to David's God. It was at the time that Emerson was in need of a new start, as he looked forward to finding encouragement, that he experienced this kind of God. The analyses of his later poems, show, however that this God became impersonal again, in his thinking.

By the end of his European journey Emerson's inner hope had returned, and he was further inspired by his visits with people he had long admired, people such as Carlyle, Landon, Coleridge, J. Stuart Mill, and Wordsworth. Carlyle was to have the greatest influence upon him. Emerson said of him,

The comfort of meeting the man is that he speaks sincerely; that he feels himself to be so rich, and that he is above the meanness of pretending to knowledge which he has not, and Carlyle does not pretend to have solved the great problems, but rather to be an observer of their solution as it goes forward in the world.<sup>2</sup>

By the time he was ready to return from Europe, Unitarianism was left behind. Emerson was ready, like Carlyle, to let his ideas evolve and grow, and therefore to do away with the old, if necessary.

Emerson came home. . . . The native Unitarianism, republicanism, skepticism, were henceforth not enough. Emerson "transcended"

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1. Eastman, op. cit., p. 96.
2. Ibid., p. 99.

these in search of the headier, more dangerous realities which he identified with what he called the soul. German philosophy and Oriental scriptures were new fields in which he was to read.<sup>1</sup>

Emerson had found his fresh start.

d. Concord

After he returned to America, Emerson married Miss Lydia Jackson of Plymouth, and established a home at Concord. He had left traditional religion, the city, and the Old World behind, and now went to nature as his teacher, his inspiration. "His practice during all his life in Concord was to go alone to the woods almost daily, sometimes to wait there for hours, and, when thus attuned, to receive the message to which he was to give voice."<sup>2</sup> He gave lectures on the living God dwelling in man and in nature, emphasizing the visible universe as a symbol of the spiritual. Even friendly Unitarians warned against heresy and dangerous doctrines. But Emerson simply said, "I deny personality to God because it is too little, not too much."<sup>3</sup> He had established the habit of gaining serenity and courage from communing with nature, and admitted openly that his strength and his doom was to be solitary.<sup>4</sup> His own individual beliefs were becoming well anchored, and as he continued to write and lecture, they were more firmly established.

4. The Evolution of Major Thought Patterns

Through his environment Emerson had breathed in the spirit

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1. Van Doren: Portable Emerson, p. 10.
2. Emerson's Complete Poems, p. xxii.
3. Ibid., p. xxiv.
4. Ibid., p. xxiii.

of American independence and self reliance, which manifested itself in him through his insistence upon originality in thought. Perhaps this very spirit helped him to realize his dissatisfaction with his family's traditional faith, as he sought wider horizons. From his contact with Channing's Unitarianism, however, he did see a single great Principle at work in the universe, a moral God in One Person. Mary Moody Emerson, the one individual who might have turned him toward a more personal interpretation of this God, had failed, for Emerson's own estimate of her type of faith was recorded at the end of his article in the December issue of the Atlantic Monthly. He said, "I confess that when I read these papers, (her diary) I do not feel that religion has made any progress in our community. . . ." Yet it was through her advice that he first retired to nature to find strength. Undoubtedly, this contact with nature in his early manhood mingled with the ideas he had gleaned in Persian and Hindu literature while at Harvard, and sowed the seeds which were later to develop into his type of transcendentalism, ". . . a method of thought compounded of English idealism, German intuitionism, and Oriental immanence."<sup>1</sup> These challenging ideas he had obtained from his reading proved more valuable to him than his contact with the ministry of the day, which, he thought, glibly spoke of the nature and character of God. His final break with traditional religion was hastened by the tragedy of his first wife's death, his dissatisfaction with the ritual of his church, his resignation from his pastorate, and his following

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1. Strong, op. cit., p. 55.

battle with ill health. After a fresh start through his visit to Europe he followed the pattern of solitary contemplation he had begun in boyhood and gained courage and strength from the voices of philosophers of the ages combined with the voice of the Spirit in Nature.

C. Elements in David's Life Having  
Direct Bearing upon His Poetry

1. Background

Of importance in David's background are the age and place in which he lived, his ancestry, and his upbringing. These will bring an understanding of the forces which combined to strengthen his faith in a personal God.

a. Environment

Bethlehem, the town of David's birth, was historically obscure, yet important. Though the town had never come to any great prominence in the history of Israel, it had associations with Jacob's life, for there was Rachel's tomb, and memories of Ruth's gleaning in Boaz' field, for this was the place to which she had come.<sup>1</sup> No doubt David had heard the stories of these scriptural characters, and associated them with the locality in which they occurred. The way in which these lives told of the activity of Jehovah, God of Israel, probably imbued itself deeply in his mind.

David was a child during the reign of King Saul, who had been accepted by the people as the anointed of God through Samuel the prophet.<sup>2</sup>

. . . . .

1. Taylor: David, King of Israel, p. 14.
2. 1 Sam. 9:15,16.

It was an age in which a man like Samuel was respected and trusted, for his words were avowed to be those of the Lord. It was a time of visions, when Samuel himself said he was called by the voice of God.<sup>1</sup> The people who followed him trusted that Jehovah, God of Israel, had complete control over the government through Saul, the anointed of God. The Atmosphere in which David lived, therefore, declared that Jehovah was real, for he spoke to the prophet Samuel even as he had spoken to Israel's forefathers.

Perhaps David was given the advantages of attending one of the schools of the prophets which had been established to maintain a knowledge of the law in Israel.<sup>2</sup> But, if he was not, then certainly nature was his teacher.

(Bethlehem's). . . site is two thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean, on the northeast slope of a long gray ridge with a deep valley on either side. . . . On the gentle slopes of the hills the fig, olive, and vine grow luxuriantly; and in the valleys are the rich corn-fields where Ruth once gleaned. . . . The moorlands around Bethlehem. . . do not, however, present features of soft beauty, but are wild, gaunt, strong,-- character breeding.<sup>3</sup>

David, like Emerson, had frequent contact with nature, and especially in his early years found the revelation of God there.<sup>4</sup>

b. Ancestry

From the table at the end of the book of Ruth, taken in connection with that prefixed to the gospel of Matthew, we learn that Jesse was the ninth, in direct descent, from Judah, the son of Jacob. . . .<sup>5</sup>

. . . . .

1. 1 Sam. 3:9, 12-15.
2. Meyer: David, Shepherd, Psalmist and King, p. 14.
3. Ibid.
4. Ps. 8:19.
5. Taylor, op. cit., p. 17.

Because of this direct ancestry from Jacob, through his father Jesse, David probably treasured the stories of the founding of Israel more deeply than did other boys. In addition, it is thought that David's mother was a devout woman, who had strongly impressed the worship of Jehovah upon him, for he called himself "the son of God's handmaid."<sup>1</sup> Through both his father and his mother, then, he must have been educated to fear God, and to realize His activity in Israel's history.

## 2. Youth

Not much is recorded in the scriptures regarding David's youth, except for the fact that he was a young shepherd.<sup>2</sup> It is conjectured that he must have spent many leisure hours playing the harp, for in later years he was acknowledged as a skilled musician.<sup>3</sup> He therefore apportioned his time between actively roaming on the mountain side and quietly contemplating over his music. Aside from this, little else is known concerning his early years.

### a. Samuel's Anointing

The day that Samuel the prophet came to anoint David the chosen of Jehovah was probably just an ordinary day in his life. It is not known whether David understood that Samuel's mission was to appoint a prince and a king for Jehovah. No one knows what it meant to David when he came in fresh from the field to see the prophet Samuel gathered with the family, and to have him rise and anoint him with oil. But it is known that after this event occurred, "the Spirit

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1. Ibid., p. 18.
2. 1 Sam. 16:11.
3. 1 Sam. 16:18,23.



of the Lord came upon David from that day forward."<sup>1</sup> David's personal feelings about this are not recorded. But it must be admitted that his life from that point on contained a strange power and charm that drew everyone to him. Saul, the servants of the royal household, Michal, Saul's daughter, Jonathan, Abigail, Achish, Ittai, and the soldiers of Judah, were all to be held by the indefinable attractiveness of his personality.<sup>2</sup> One wonders whether this was not the evidence of the fact that God's Spirit was upon him.

b. Goliath

Not long after David was anointed, the Philistines, Judah's enemies were encamped in the field of Shochoh, about seven or eight miles from Bethlehem.<sup>3</sup> One of their soldiers, Goliath, nine feet two inches in height, had boastfully challenged Judah's dismayed army to send some individual to come and battle against him. All feared. That is, all except the young David. When he had heard this challenge, he rose in indignation, saying, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"<sup>4</sup> According to David's thinking, the army of Israel was God's army. Having been taught this from childhood, he believed. God's protection was real to him. The atmosphere in which he had been raised and his own faith made Jehovah just as perceptible to his senses as was Goliath.

David felt strongly that he was capable of accepting the giant's challenge, and even Saul could not deter him.<sup>5</sup> Believing it sufficient

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1. 1 Sam. 16:13.
2. Meyer, op. cit., p. 29.
3. Taylor, op. cit., p. 44.
4. 1 Sam. 17:26.
5. 1 Sam. 17:21-37.

that he went in the name of Jehovah, he met Goliath without armour, but with a seemingly harmless sling in his hand. Before the crowd knew what had happened, Goliath had been slain by a small round stone that had been shot into his forehead. Then David did just as he said he would. He took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, ". . . that all the earth (might) . . . know that there is a God in Israel."<sup>1</sup> Doubtless, from that day forward, David's faith in the living Person, Jehovah, was never the same as it had been previously, for the exercise of it had made it stronger and bolder.

### 3. Early Manhood

David found a companion in early manhood whose faith in Jehovah was equal to his. This was Jonathan, Saul's son. The evidence of Jonathan's faith is found in his attitudes.

. . . On the memorable occasion when Jonathan went forth with his armour-bearer as his sole companion, to attack the Philistine stronghold, he said in a spirit of sublimest trust, "It is all one to the Lord to save by many or by few;" and in after-days, when he parted from David for the last time, in the wilderness of Ziph, we are told that "he strengthened David's hand in God."<sup>2</sup>

David was to need such a friend, for many hazardous experiences were in store for him.

#### a. Saul's Jealousy

Because David had slain the giant, his popularity began to surpass that of Saul, whose jealousy led him to attempt David's murder. Twice he had tried to pin him to the wall with a javelin.<sup>3</sup> Following

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1. 1 Sam. 17:46.
2. Taylor, op. cit., p. 59.
3. 11 Sam. 18:11.

this, one event after the next found David miraculously escaping attempts upon his life.<sup>1</sup> Finally he was forced to separate from Jonathan, and to hide away as a desperate fugitive. At Nob he took for food the holy shewbread from the hand of Ahimelech, the priest,<sup>2</sup> while at Gath, he feigned madness when King Achish recognized him as an enemy of the Philistines.<sup>3</sup> Later, at the cave of Adullam, he hid in darkness from Saul's soldiers.<sup>4</sup> Despite this desperate situation, twice, at Engedi and Ziph, when David had unexpected opportunities to slay Saul and thus become king, he spared his life instead, saying, "God forbid that I should raise my hand against Jehovah's anointed."<sup>5</sup> Jehovah was so real to him that he trusted He would destroy Saul Himself. One can imagine how strongly David's faith was reinforced when he received news that Saul had fallen upon his sword in a losing battle against the Philistines.<sup>6</sup> Once again he realized that his faith in Jehovah had spared his life.

b. Entrance into Kingship

When Saul fell, David was acknowledged king by the tribe of Judah; but the other tribes, at the instigation of Abner, placed Ishbosheth, the younger son of Saul, on the throne, thus occasioning a civil war. On the death of Ishbosheth, however, the contending parties submitted to David, who was to reign for thirty years.<sup>7</sup> At

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1. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 63,64.
2. 1 Sam. 21.
3. Ibid.
4. 1 Sam. 22.
5. 1 Sam. 24:6; 26:9,10.
6. 1 Sam. 31:4.
7. 11 Sam. 1:4; 5:3.

that time, according to the fulfillment of Samuel's prophecy, he considered himself the anointed of Jehovah, as Saul had been. His very position as king of Israel, then, was evidence to him of Jehovah's power. His faith was again reinforced by experience.

At the beginning of this reign, David experienced one victory after another over his enemies.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Nathan the prophet had reported a vision in which God had promised David to be the father of an everlasting kingdom.<sup>2</sup> David, the anointed of Jehovah, had risen from the position of shepherd boy to the status of a king over a throne established by Jehovah himself.

#### 4. David's Disobedience and Its Results

Having enjoyed seventeen years of unbroken prosperity, being successful in every war, David, when established as King at Jerusalem, took unto him many concubines and wives, against the law of Moses, which forbade the multiplication of wives on the part of Hebrew kings.<sup>3</sup> The sultry day on which he decided to take Bathsheba also, who was already married to Uriah, a soldier on duty in battle, was only the beginning of a great sin and disobedience. For added to David's guilt of adultery was that of murder, which was committed through his arrangement for Uriah's death in battle, in order that the adultery might not be discovered.

One year later he was approached by Nathan the prophet, who tactfully led him to see that he had descended into the home of a poor

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1. 11 Sam. 2:5,8,10; 12:29; 21:15; 1 Chron. 18-20.

2. 11 Sam. 7:11-17.

3. Meyer, op. cit., p. 194.

man and taken his one ewe lamb, although his own folds were filled with flocks.<sup>1</sup> Then followed Nathan's prophecy that Bathsheba's child would die, and that much shame and humiliation would be brought upon him and his entire household.<sup>2</sup> David acknowledged his sin to be against Jehovah,<sup>3</sup> and Nathan promised him that the Lord had put away his sin. It is believed that at this time David wrote Psalm 32, his description of the sorrows of sin, and the joy of forgiveness.

Despite the fact that David had been forgiven, much calamity befell him. Two years after he had committed his disobedience, one of his sons treated his sister as David had treated Uriah's wife. Then this son was slain by his brother Absalom. Soon afterward, Absalom rebelled against his own father, in an attempt to overthrow his reign. This most disastrous and terrible blow was ended by Absalom's death, which caused David deep inward pain.

David previously had believed himself righteous. Now he knew that he had committed deep sin, and felt that God in his mercy had forgiven him. But it was a turning point in his life. Previously he had known only victory. Now he experienced trouble, despair, and humiliation. If at any time his faith would have given way, it might have been in these years when he was so bitterly afflicted. But his trust in Jehovah became steadfast submission. He had experienced Jehovah not only as a God of power and faithfulness, but as a God of righteousness.

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1. 11 Sam. 12:3-8.
2. 11 Sam. 12:11-14.
3. 11 Sam. 12:13.

## 5. The Evolution of Faith

Because David was nurtured in an environment which fostered a faith in a personal God, Jehovah, he probably experienced God as a Person from the beginning of his life. Bethlehem, his native town, was a spot well marked by scriptural accounts of Jehovah's activity in Israel's history. His own family could trace its descent from the scriptural characters associated with this activity.

In addition to this environment, the age in which David lived also fostered a strong faith in Jehovah. For it was a day of prophets, and visions which heard Jehovah's voice speaking intelligibly to men. David had direct contact with this voice through Samuel the prophet, who came to anoint him as God's chosen king.

David's faith in the reality of this anointing probably grew as his belief that Jehovah would protect him was affirmed through his slaying of Goliath, his many escapes from Saul, the news of Saul's death, and finally, his entrance into kingship. His faith in a personal God therefore not only remained, but grew through these experiences.

After David became king, his seventeen years of success reaffirmed his faith in God. However, his great disobedience to the law of Israel made him realize that he was no longer righteous, and he confessed his sin. The following years of disaster and tragedy revealed God's righteousness to David. His former faith developed into an attitude of submissiveness towards the events surrounding him. It retained its strength, but was colored by the realization of his dependence upon God's mercy, and the reality of God's righteousness.

D. Comparison and Contrast of  
Emerson's and David's Experiences

The most outstanding contrast between the influences in these men's lives is the obvious, expected one, that of the character of the ages in which they lived. Emerson's age was one that experienced a release from traditional ideas, while David's was one that experienced a reaffirmation of its faith, through the activity of Jehovah. It is therefore to be expected that each man's religious experience would have been molded to some degree by the influence of his environment.

But the men were not wholly the products of their environment. Each experienced a life crisis in which he might have chosen for himself a new type of religious experience. For Emerson, that crisis took place during the European journey which followed his wife's death, his own dissatisfaction, and his ill health. It was during this time that his poetry recorded his experience of a personal God. He might have continued growing in that type of experience. But he rejected that idea and sought rather to develop his inner hope by meeting the great men of his day. He developed the pattern of an evolutionary faith which grew as it met new ideas, and expressed itself through his relationship with the immanent God in nature.

For David also, a period of tragedy and disaster in his life might have opened the way for him to reject his former experience of God. He might have rebelled, and somehow sought to make a fresh start. But by that time he knew God too well. The very fact of

his present suffering was interpreted by him as the result of his sin. Therefore his faith grew to regard Jehovah as a Person of power, truth, and righteousness. This faith was expressed as a simple relationship with the transcendent God.

#### E. Summary and Conclusion

David and Emerson were both affected by the age in which they lived, by the people they met, and by the nature of their personal experiences. For Emerson, the decisive influences were his contact with many ideas through literature, his experience of Channing's Unitarianism, Mary Moody Emerson's intellectualism, Carlyle's liberalism, and his own reaction to the ministry of the day. For David, these influences were his contact with the faith of his people, his relations with the prophets Samuel and Nathan, and his personal experiences of victory over Saul, resulting in his entrance into kingship.

Where Emerson's faith was reinforced by contemplation and communion with nature, David's was strengthened by the record of Jehovah's activity in his personal experiences. Though each man was molded to a considerable extent in his thinking by environment, each might have gone in a different direction. During the points of crises in each of their lives, they entered into decisions which determined the pattern of their thinking for the remainder of their days.



GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

## GENERAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The fact that Emerson found God primarily in nature, and experienced him as immanent and impersonal, while David found God primarily in personal history, and experienced him as transcendent and personal does not necessarily mean that the religious experiences of the two men were completely different. For they agreed on many points. For each, a God of omnipotence, sovereignty, and justice was revealed through history and through nature. For each, too, sinful and pure men were found in the world. Both believed that the pure man could live in harmony with the universe, and had a firm basis upon which to look forward to the final triumph of the "right."

For Emerson, the pure man found harmony with the universe by communing with nature, and by letting nature's power work within him. He therefore recognized a law to be present in nature, which he felt could direct a man's life aright. This law he said to be found within himself, as he spoke of following the inner law.

For David also, there was a law to be followed in living within God's purpose. But in his case, the law was the written record of God's commandments recorded in his people's holy writings. Therefore David's law was a revealed, explicit law, while Emerson's was inner and implicit. But this does not say that their laws differed. Emerson's inner law may have been much like the ten commandments David tried to follow.

But the fact that Emerson's God was immanent and impersonal

shows that he did not know Him apart from nature. He may have experienced Him as such but he did not repeat this experience enough to recognize Him in this manner. This is shown by the fact that he did not represent God as actively present in his personal experiences, as did David. David recounted scores of experiences in which God had delivered, forgiven, comforted, and helped him. Emerson was not concerned with accounts of this sort. His God was a highly impersonal one, not revealing Himself apart from his creation.

The second great difference between the beliefs of Emerson and David are found in the fact that while one saw but one principle at work in the universe, the other saw two. Emerson was a monist, while David was a dualist. For Emerson, good and evil were reducible to the same principle, while for David, good and evil were two separate, distinct, realities.

The age in which each man lived did much to determine these differences in their beliefs. Emerson's age did not speak of the activity of a personal God, as did David's. It was an intellectual age which sought to divorce itself from past traditions, but David's age was one of a faith which tended to cement past beliefs. Therefore, while Emerson fled the supernatural, personal God of the religion he knew, David held on to Him.

Yet, in the final analysis, each man's experience was not only answerable to his environment, but also to the personal interpretation given by his individual choice. Why did Emerson rebel against Mary Moody Emerson's Calvinistic leanings while he chose to accept her advice to retire to nature? And why did not the men in

Judah's army display the same faith in Jehovah that David showed when Goliath shouted his challenge? Only they themselves knew. Emerson and David therefore were not only separated by environment, but by their personal choice of the type of religious experience that appealed to them.

In conclusion, therefore, it can be stated that despite varying environment and religious experience, the comparisons between the two men's creeds show that the implicit revelation Emerson found in nature corresponds to a certain degree with the explicit revelation David found in personal history in written revelation. Each man's experience of God was influenced by the nature of his environment and the spirit of his age. If Emerson had lived in a period when prophets and visions were prevalent, he might have interpreted God in a highly personal manner. On the other hand, if David had lived in a time when supernaturalism was regarded as a fading fancy, he might have retired to find the eternal spirit in nature. Yet, in the final analysis, each man's experience was determined not by environment, but by personal choice, for there were some men in Emerson's age who believed in a personal God, while there were some in David's age who did not exercise faith in Jehovah.

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