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# "DID I GUESS AT THAT PAUL KNEW?" THE INFLUENCE OF PAULINE THEOLOGY ON ROBERT BROWNING

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"DID I GUESS AT THAT PAUL KNEW?"

THE INFLUENCE OF PAULINE THEOLOGY  
ON ROBERT BROWNING

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"DID I GUESS AT THAT PAUL KNEW?"

THE INFLUENCE OF PAULINE THEOLOGY  
ON ROBERT BROWNING

Thesis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in English at Longwood College.

By

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Farmville, Virginia

1976

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I

Robert Browning was a religious man. He has been called a "religious poet" and a Poet-Prophet. His thought is New Testament, and one does not have to read much of his poetry to recognize the similarity of religious tenets found in his poetry and in The Epistles of St. Paul. In his own time this similarity led to conjectures that the poet had some Hebrew ancestry:

And whether or not he had any Hebrew blood in his veins, he certainly had much of the Hebrew character in his mental and spiritual composition. His robustness of energy, his vehemence of courage, and, above all, his quick transitions of thought--these are intensely Hebraic.<sup>1</sup>

Though this statement doubtless falls into the realm of pure speculation, the intellectual affinity between Browning and St. Paul is undoubted. Aside from Browning's use of one line references or quotes, --e.g. "As certain also of your own poets have said" (Acts 17:28);<sup>2</sup> "Builder and maker, (Heb. 11:10) thou, of house not made with hands!" (II Cor. 5:1);<sup>3</sup> "Prince of Power of the Air" (Eph. 2:2);<sup>4</sup> "ever a fighter" (II Tim. 4:7)<sup>5</sup>--the most obvious kinship between the two writers is their belief in the Incarnation, and their gospel of Love. Stockton Axson, A. Austin Foster and Hugh Martin refer to the similarities between Browning and St. Paul, but there is at this time no known study showing the Pauline influence on Browning's poetry, an influence both profound and pervasive. The present study is offered as a contribution to this neglected area of Browning's poetry. The



thesis which emerges is the recognition of the close relationship between Browning's philosophy and theology and the Pauline ethics and theology.

The perspicacious minds of the Apostle and the Poet incarnate Carlyle's "Hero, Prophet, Poet." To Carlyle,

The Poet is a heroic figure belonging to all ages; whom all ages possess, when once he is produced, whom the newest age as the oldest may produce;--and will produce, always when Nature pleases. Let Nature send a Hero-soul; in no age is it other than possible that he may be shaped into a Poet.<sup>6</sup>

Browning and St. Paul were indeed products of their times even if their works were often misunderstood and their intellects unfathomed by those unable "to read a poem well."<sup>7</sup> Browning perplexed "most English people of his age, as the Apostle Paul . . . puzzled the fisherman apostle Peter with, as Peter writes, 'some things hard to be understood'."<sup>8</sup> Both, however, exemplify Carlyle's statement that "Prophet and Poet, well understood, have much kindred of meaning. . . . they have penetrated . . . the sacred mystery of the Universe."<sup>9</sup> The Prophet or Poet, Vates, having penetrated this mystery has been sent "to reveal that to us."<sup>10</sup> This writer contends that there are no greater plenipotentiaries of Love and Beauty that Carlyle advocates than St. Paul and Browning. Too, these men demonstrated the Carlylean concept that



Poetry [is] metrical, . . . being a Song. . . .  
 A musical thought is one spoken by a mind that  
 has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing;  
 detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the  
melody that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of  
 coherence which is its soul, . . . All inmost things,  
 . . . are melodious; naturally utter themselves in  
 Song. . . . Poetry, therefore, we will call musical  
Thought. The Poet is he who thinks in that manner.<sup>11</sup>

Evidently, Mary Ellen Chase heard the "melody" of St. Paul's  
 "exalted prose."<sup>12</sup> Regarding the Pauline epistles, she stated that  
 "it was perhaps their very excellence as works of art rather than  
 their historical and theological value which ensured their preservation  
 and immortality."<sup>13</sup> Unquestionably, she regarded St. Paul as a Carlylean  
 "Prophet-Poet."

Whether the glorious description in II Corinthians  
 11, verses 22 to 31 inclusive, of St. Paul's  
 willing sufferings is finer than the poetic  
 prose which extolls charity in I Corinthians 13,  
 or whether either quite equals chapter 15 of I  
 Corinthians on immortality is a matter of personal  
 taste and individual criticism. In all three the  
 greatest of the apostles proves himself among the  
 greatest of literary artists in his translation  
 of that inner rhythm of his spirit into the  
 perfection of words: . . .<sup>14</sup>

Browning, the Poet-Prophet, was one of the subtlest analysts  
 of the human mind and his poetry dealt with the human soul. His  
 writings exemplify his own spiritual and impassioned intellect. The  
 ambivalent poet sang not only of the beautiful and romantic but  
 also of the ugly and prosaic. Often his poetry is harsh, faulty, and  
 obscure; nevertheless, his melodies are rhythmically simple and

beautiful. Browning was the optimistic, inspiring and enlightening prophet of his world.

It is interesting to note that the world of St. Paul, to which he believed himself pre-ordained to preach, remarkably paralleled that of Browning. He was the spokesman for his time, for, like Browning, Paul knew his world. With his syncretistic Diaspora Judaic and Hellenic background, Paul responded to the commission to win not only Jews but those outside the Law.

The Jews during the first century were troubled. They had lived in the thought that they were glorified in the position of God's chosen people. However, wars and humiliating defeats had lessened their pride and prestige. When Rome overran Jerusalem, Pompey defiled the Holy City and ignominiously invaded the Sacred Holy of Holies. The hope of restoring David's exalted kingdom disintegrated with the Roman conquest. The people were doubting the protection of their God--had He lost his power or had He rejected his people?

The Greek world, which to orthodox Jews was "outside the Law," was in a similar state of disruption. Following the Hellenistic conquests, the first century Greeks were now under a centralized government. Their city government was destroyed along with their compatible religious-political associations, since the political head of the city-state had also served as the religious leader.



The loss of their religious-political community erased any provision for a stable, comfortable existence for man. Their mood and their defeatist attitude are apparent in The Book of Acts and in Paul's letters to the Romans, and the Corinthians, and are brilliantly depicted in Browning's Aristophanes' Apology and Balaustion's Adventure.

Although they were fought on foreign soil, wars and their aftermath were similarly familiar to Browning. He was born in 1812, into a world of turbulence and unrest. Napoleon was marching on Russia, and England was apprehensive. Wellington's army had been sent to help the Spaniards dethrone Napoleon's brother, Joseph. If Napoleon realized his dream of an European Empire from Siberia to the Atlantic, how would England defend herself?

As in any wartime, the economy of the country was affected. America had declared an embargo against England. Consequently, the cotton weaving mills were without the raw cotton imported from America; without the raw material the machines were idle, and the laborers were without work. Frustrated with conditions, the workers resorted to rioting and a special constabulary was sworn in; the yeomanry of Lancashire and Yorkshire "were called to active duty and an armed camp was set up in Sherwood Forest."<sup>15</sup> London was almost under martial law following the assassination of the prime minister, Spencer Perceval, as he addressed the House of Commons. Then in June, America declared war on England. "The first months of Robert Browning's



life were filled with the pounding of gunnery practice, tolling [of] alarm bells, and the tramping of men marching north to defend England against the cotton rioters or south to Portsmouth to ship out for service to Spain, Germany, or America. All this upheaval was to continue until the Battle of Waterloo in June, 1815, . . . "16

In addition to the political and commercial conditions, one of the greatest influences on the thought of Browning's England was the growth of science. Steam had been put to use and machinery had replaced handcraft. By 1840, electricity and the telegraph were realities. In biology, the theory of evolution, the orderly development of life from simple to complex forms, was formulated by Charles Darwin. His book, The Origin of Species, was published in 1859, one of the most important dates in intellectual history. Darwinism shook the foundations of the religious teachings of man's holy origin, and Herbert Spencer, in his Synthetic Philosophy, applied evolution not only to plants and animals, but also to society, morality and religion. Man increasingly asked himself--am I a machine or a man with a soul?

Both Browning and St. Paul were sensitive to the religious disorders of their times. In the first century A.D., Jews and Greeks alike realized the need for a universal faith. Judaism abandoned the exclusivity of its monotheism and now realized that Yahweh, lord of heaven and earth and ruler of mankind, was a greater

God than they imagined. The Jews during this period were unwilling to pronounce the name of God. It was too holy to be spoken by mere man. For man to communicate with a transcendent God,

the Jewish theologians posited intermediaries such as the angels, the Spirit of God, and the Shechima or Presence of the Deity.<sup>17</sup> Yet even through these mediators an authentic word of God was scarcely to be heard; the writer of I Maccabees bemoans the "great distress in Israel, such as had not been since the time that prophets ceased to appear among them" (9:27).<sup>18</sup>

The Greeks were similarly aware that their old polytheisms were too small for the world. The Platonists, Cynics, and Skeptics were critical of the traditional beliefs. The Epicureans professed that things happen by chance; therefore, there is no need to be concerned with supernatural things. The traditionalists, faithful to their deities, assigned the attributes and names of many deities to one and then exalted that deity to a universal or cosmic god.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the Hellenistic cults presented man in a frantic and futile quest for revelation. They used innumerable means of contacting their deities--visions, dreams, divination, astrology, ecstasy and oracle--but the gods remained remote and mute.

Also, first century man needed the security of a religious community. Devout Jews formed settlements such as Qumran. Diaspora Jews, separated from Jerusalem and the Temple, built local synagogues, organized the community which was laity led, and appointed a rabbi to



instruct them. These people had a sense of belonging to a community. They were loyal to the Torah and felt a membership in the society of God. Since their city-states had been destroyed, the Hellenists turned to the fellowship of the mystery cults. However, membership in these cults and their rites did not provide a complete, intimate community spirit such as the Diaspora Jews knew.

Another cause of concern for the people of this pessimistic age was the question of the meaning of history. Both Jews and Greeks believed that the world was on a downward trend, that things were getting worse, and that man had no apparent control over his destiny. Consequently, history must be under some mighty force which controls these events. While the Greeks maintained that a blind power of chance which they called tyche or Fortune (Fate) determined their lives, the Jews adopted the belief of predestination. The problem then facing Judaism was to understand why the God of Israel had predetermined such a future for his chosen people. The prophets proclaimed--wait upon the Lord!

Browning's age, too, was one of religious turmoil. During the nineteenth century, there were two dominant viewpoints concerning the existence of man. One, the optimistic, posited a continuous progress from a lower to a higher form of life, whereby man could reach a Utopia. Tennyson affirmed that "one far-off divine event, / To which the whole creation moves."<sup>20</sup> The other, the survival of the



fittest, fostered and encouraged pessimism. For every person who survived, many might have succumbed. In terms of social history, the working class was in a struggle for existence, in which the rich and hard working were fit to survive and the poor and lazy were doomed to perish. Tennyson also perceived the ruthlessness of his world:

. . . earth is darkness at the core,  
 Are dust and ashes all that is;  
 . . . . .  
 And God and Nature then at strife,  
     That Nature lends such evil dreams?  
     So careful of the type she seems,  
 So careless of the single life,  
 . . . . .  
 'So careful of the type?' but no.  
     From scarp'd cliff and quarried stone  
     She cries, 'A thousand types are gone;  
 I care for nothing, all shall go.  
 . . . . .  
 O life as futile, then as frail!<sup>21</sup>

Browning, on the other hand, confidently asserted that,

. . . No creature's made so mean  
 But that, some way, it boasts, could we investigate,  
 Its supreme worth: fulfils, by ordinance of fate,  
 Its momentary task, gets glory all its own,  
 Tastes triumph in the world, pre-eminent, alone.  
 Where is the single grain of sand, 'mid millions heaped  
 Confusedly on the beach, but, did we know, has leaped  
 Or will leap, would we wait, i' the century, some once,  
 To the very throne of things? . . .  
 As firm is my belief, quick sense perceives the same  
 Self-vindicating flash illustrate every man  
 And woman of our mass, and prove, throughout the plan,  
 No detail but, in place allotted it, was prime  
 And perfect.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, better government, higher moral ideals, and the betterment of the underprivileged were the aspirations of Victoria's

England. During the 1840's, an altruistic attitude developed towards Matthew Arnold's "populace." The wrongs in industrialism, the inequalities of birth and opportunity received needed attention. The philanthropic spirit was eager to cure social ills. Indeed, it was held that the poor existed for the rich to show charity. The novels of Dickens painted the horrors of poverty and championed the cause of helpless school children under scurrilous schoolmasters; Elizabeth Barrett, as a protest against child labor, asked, "Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers, . . . ?"<sup>23</sup> and Benthamism emerged as a religious, as well as philanthropic, philosophy.

All this social and scientific upheaval contributed to the Victorian search for a religious identity.<sup>24</sup> In fact "soul searching," so apparent in Browning's Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, became a major occupation. Sometimes it resulted in a strengthened faith, but some individuals, under the impact of the Darwinian shock, espoused the Epicurean philosophy voiced in Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. Man was still chagrined from the impact of Galileo's discoveries that the earth was no longer the center of the universe. In the latter part of the century, Sigmund Freud explored the unconscious, the Id, and man faced the realization that he was, indeed, "made a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9). At the same time, the extremists of the Oxford Movement wanted The Church of England restored to the hierarchy of the Pope and the Vatican. Although Browning was irre-



sistibly drawn to the aesthetic aspects of the Catholic Church, especially its art and music, he, like other Victorians, feared the resurgence of interest in the Church of Rome and its emphasis on ceremonials.<sup>25</sup>

Another factor, contributive to the unrest of Browning's time, was the rise of the triumphant middle class. His own family occupied that position; they were conscious of existing between the old aristocracy, whose structures they abhorred, and the rising lower class, whose claims they feared, and shared the belief that their work and good fortune had created an Empire. Nonetheless, though optimistic about the future, and strongly addicted to the idea of progress, they could not avoid being influenced by the voices of doubt and disaster and occasionally succumbing to both. They had an insatiable appetite for information and knowledge and, ironically, the now popular newspapers and periodicals fostered a naturalistic or realistic attitude. This pervasive tone, however, did not always imply the universal gloom of James Thomson's "The City of Deadful Night." Most Victorians struggled to find a unifying principle to reconcile government and the rights of man, duty and the free will to do as one pleased, romanticism and realism, good and evil, life and death, even though the struggle might lead, for a time, to loss of faith.

Browning's faith, however, ultimately became unaffected by doubt and negativism. His early religious beliefs had been established by his parents. He was very religious in his youth, although

he was sometimes annoyed by orthodox preaching, and religion remained an integral part of his life, except for a brief period of self-proclaimed atheism after he had read Shelley at the age of sixteen. He was at home in any church service yet advanced no particular creed.

Browning's religion did not consist in the expression of pious opinions. It certainly did not consist in the muttering of party Shibboleths. It had little to do with the subscription to formal Creeds. But it had everything to do with that most essential element of every honest man's religion--the living of an upright, honest and helpful life. In fact, Religion and Life were to him, as they ought to be to all people, synonymous terms. Character was the only true test of the value of a man's religious principles. A bad or an indifferent religion was one that turned out a bad or an indifferent man, and a good religion was one that turned out a good man. Browning believed that a man always strove to live up to his Creed, only his real Creed and his professed Creed were not always identical. But no amount of Creed-reciting could atone for a mean character.<sup>26</sup>

In other words, he was a devout man in tune with his times; unfortunately his times were not attuned to him. The poet did not share the bleak, dismal pessimism of the scientific thinkers. Browning could see the benefits of science, and he acknowledged that time was a necessary element for the constructive growth that it pronounced.

" . . . progress is / The law of life, man is not Man as yet."<sup>27</sup> He realized the difficulties of the scientific approach, but he retained his faith and trust in God and immortality. He could envision all the evils, injustices, defeats and sorrows of this life as a training



period for the noble and greater life to be. Suffering and sin are a part of the divine plan, and, if man can accept the will of God, he can face all problems and mysteries of life. But, ironically, even though this tenet is the summation of Christian doctrine, his orthodox generation was impassive to his exuberant, exultant, glorifying optimism. He was a Poet-Prophet whose message, like those of the Hebrew prophets, was heard by "dull of hearing"<sup>28</sup> ears in his own time, but which reached the ensuing generations.

Not that Browning was a systematic theologian. He did not believe in eternal punishment. He did find it difficult to accept some of the gospel story from an historical standpoint; nevertheless, the "Myth of Christ"<sup>29</sup> as advanced by David Friedrich Strauss in Leben Jesu and by Ernest Renan in Vie de Jesus was totally repellent to him.

He remained a Puritan in much, but it was a Puritanism modified . . . by keen artistic sympathies, and by a searching mind and far-reaching intellectual curiosity, . . . He was not an ascetic, in the sense of one who despises the pleasures and beauties of the world, but he was one in the more technical sense of moral discipline. For him, as for the original Puritans, life was a school or a battle field.<sup>30</sup>

Browning believed that sin or Hell was a separation from God. Man can experience a spiritual death, but, through hope and faith, can overcome the evil. To remain apathetic or complacent was to him the greatest sin. Life was a struggle, but not to fight back was to waste the integrity of the inner man. Failure in life is natural,

and, even if the goal is not always attained, disappointment or dissatisfaction can still point to the ultimate ideal or perfection desired. Browning believed that God's love is manifested in man, in that sacrificial love not only for a spouse or family, but for all humanity. Further, he believed that God is the ultimate truth; that man can find truth through love; and, that immortality is man's relationship to God here on earth, which continues beyond death.



## II

The Apostle and the Poet experienced long periods of doubts and soul searching before they declared their faith in Christ, their belief in God's sacrificial love of humanity, and their conviction that immortality is an extension of man's relationship to God on earth and after death. Paul's conversion is usually associated with the sudden dramatic experience on the Damascus road. Browning resolves his doubts in Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day and "Saul."

As the persecutor, armed with instructions from the High Priest in Jerusalem, Paul had set out for Damascus to find the heretic followers of the Nazarene and return them to the Holy City for trial, judgment and, usually, death. But on the road to Damascus, Paul was confronted by Jesus, the cataclysmic transforming crisis of his life.<sup>31</sup> Paul surrendered wholly and completely to Christ. The three days of blindness and fasting were heartrending ones for him. The physical and spiritual ministrations of Ananias in Damascus further enhanced the conversion experience, and the door of Christian fellowship was opened to Paul by the very people he had come to Damascus to persecute.

The conversion experience may have been sudden and irrevocable on the Damascus road, but it was perhaps the culmination of a long process of which even Paul himself was unaware. Paul was becoming disillusioned about the Law. He believed the Law could save a man if he strictly adhered to it. Paul himself doubted he could fulfill the moral law, those external observances and the inward fulfillment which should

reward and free the soul. Paul could not reconcile this outward adherence to the Law as the vehicle to enable him to possess the inner peace and tranquility for which he yearned. Actions could be controlled, but not emotions! Paul was aware of this conflict before his conversion, and his intensity and his determination to annihilate the new sect reflected his own doubts and misgivings.

The stoning of Stephen had an emotional impact on Paul. The Apostle no doubt knew much about Stephen and the Nazarene. They appeared to have the qualities of inner peace, contentment, confidence and courage manifested in their way of life and conduct that Paul had been striving for without success. Stephen was exemplar of this way of life and Paul, perhaps motivated by jealousy, approved of his stoning and probably instigated it. Paul was not insensitive to the cruelty of Stephen's martyrdom, to the impassioned speech of the man committing his soul to the Lord, envisioning the Holy Spirit, and praying for mercy for his executioners (Acts 8:55-60). The serenity with which Stephen accepted death and the vision of his God forced Paul into a deeper probing of his allegiance to the Law.

The influence of Jesus himself may have contributed to the conversion. It is not known if Paul ever saw Christ. There is strong contention that he did or he could not have written of the character of the Christ as he did. Paul says in II Corinthians that he knew Christ "after the flesh" which has also been interpreted as "the Jesus of



history."<sup>32</sup> Paul certainly knew of Jesus through the persecutions of his followers and his contact with their primitive church. Their convictions and knowledge were inseparable from those of the declared Messiah. Also as a Pharisee, the prime manipulators in the events of Christ's death, Paul could hardly have been innocent of what was known or professed.

Similarly, Browning was long plagued by his own doubts and the doubts of those around him. It is not surprising, then, that the poet put into words his own Christian beliefs and convictions. It was a personal tragedy for Browning that finally produced Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day. Elizabeth Barrett Browning had recognized the Christian convictions of her husband and had encouraged him to put them in writing. The sharp contrast of the joyful birth of his son with the illness and death of his mother finally brought Browning face to face with his faith in and doubts of God, his belief in immortality, and his conception of man's soul. Under the influence of Elizabeth's piety and the questioning atmosphere of his Victorian society, Browning wrote the poem which most fully expressed his faith.

In "Christmas-Eve," by use of the dramatic monologue,<sup>33</sup> Browning vividly portrays his visions of the three ideologies of the day-- Non-Conformist (Dissenting), Catholicism, and Rationalism. "Out of the little chapel I burst / Into the fresh night-air again." The very opening line jars the reader out of any reverie or reflective feeling he may have had

at the outset of a religious poem. Browning describes each worshiper who comes to the chapel on Christmas Eve. He is the "one sheep over" in the "flock." He "soon had enough of it. / The hot smell and human voices" and "flung out of the little chapel."

Browning leaves the formal textual preachings of the chapel, where he can find no solace or union with the worshipers, and goes to the chapel of Nature:

. . . For me,  
 I have my own church equally:  
 And in this church my faith sprang first! . . .  
 I found God there, his visible power;  
 Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense  
 Of the power, an equal evidence  
 That his love, there too, was the noble dower. . . .  
 . . . "But all is God's"--whose plan  
 Was to create man and then leave him  
 Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,  
 But able to glorify him too,  
 As a mere machine could never do, . . .  
 Love's sum remains what it was before. . . .  
 . . . Oh, let men keep their ways  
 Of seeking thee in a narrow shrine--  
 Be this my way! And this is mine!

The first vision appears and the rapturous and awed poet perceives the divine presence:

This sight was shown me, there and then,--  
 Me, one out of a world of men,  
 Singled forth, as the chance might hap  
 To another if, in a thunderclap  
 Where I heard noise and you saw flame,  
 Some one man knew God called his name.  
 For me, I think I said "Appear!  
 Good were it to be ever here.  
 If thou wilt, let me build to thee  
 Service-tabernacles three,  
 Where, forever in thy presence,  
 In ecstatic acquiescence.



Far alike from thriftless learning  
 And ignorance's undiscerning,  
 I may worship and remain!"  
 Thus at the show above me, gazing  
 With upturned eyes, I felt my brain  
 Glutted with the glory, blazing  
 Throughout its whole mass, over and under,  
 Until at length it burst asunder  
 And out of it bodily there streamed,  
 The too-much glory, as it seemed,  
 Passing from out of me to the ground,  
 Then palely serpentine round  
 Into the dark with mazy error.  
 All at once I looked up with terror.  
 He was there.  
 He himself with his human air,  
 On the narrow pathway, just before.  
 I saw the back of him, no more--  
 He had left the chapel, then, as I.  
 I forgot all about the sky.  
 No face: only the sight  
 Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,  
 With a hem that I could recognize.

The vision reminds him "Where two or three should meet and pray, /  
 He would be in the midst, their friend."<sup>34</sup> The realization comes to  
 the poet that "Folly and pride o'ercame my heart" and he has put himself  
 above the simple worshipers in the chapel.<sup>35</sup> In the subsequent pas-  
 sages, the visions make him realize that love and humility are essential  
 to the worship of God. Thus, if one does not possess these, he can not  
 truly enter the house of God, be it the Independent Chapel or St.

Peter's at Rome:

"So he said, so it befalls.  
 God who registers the cup  
 Of mere cold water, for his sake  
 To a disciple rendered up,  
 Disdains not his own thirst to slake  
 At the poorest love was ever offered:  
 And because my heart I proffered,

With true love trembling at the brim,  
 He suffers me to follow him  
 Forever, my own way,--dispensed  
 From seeking to be influenced  
 By all the less immediate ways  
 That earth, in worships manifold,  
 Adopts to reach, by prayer and praise,  
 The garment's hem, which, lo, I hold!"

Although, like most Victorians, he was staunchly anti-papal, Browning believed that the "love of those first Christian days" which wrought miracles should not be forgotten or cast aside. Neither should the art or music of them be neglected, even if the pretentiousness of the ceremonies and their surroundings can overshadow the spirituality of the service. "Left outside the door" our poet asked himself why:

. . . wait here lonely and coldly,  
 Instead of rising, entering boldly,  
 Baring truth's face, and letting drift  
 Her veils of lies as they choose to shift?  
 Do these men praise him? I will raise  
 My voice up to their point of praise!  
 I see the error; but above  
 The scope of error, see the love.

The Christmas-Eve discourse of the Professor of Göttingen disturbs the poet even further by his rational approach to the origins of Christianity:

. . . this lake,  
 This reservoir, whereat we slake,  
 From one or other bank, our thirst? . . .  
 The popular story,--understanding  
 How the ineptitude of the time,  
 And the penman's prejudice, expanding  
 Fact into fable fit for the clime,



Had, by slow and sure degrees, translated it  
 Into this myth, this Individuum,--  
 Which when reason had strained and abated it  
 Of foreign matter, left, for residuum,  
 A Man!

The "Myth of Christ" is unraveled by knowledge and reason, and Jesus emerges only as a Man, not a divine, supernatural Christ. Browning shared St. Paul's antipathy toward the "Jesus of history" as evidenced in the controversial "after the flesh" (II Cor. 5:16). Christ is the ultimate "man" of God by the same reasoning that Harvey is "circulation" and Shakespeare is "poet" and Euclid is "teacher." The flaw in this reasoning is that reason gives us no explanation for the insight necessary for such ultimates. The questioning poet asks:

. . . "Had we seen  
 The heart and head of each, what screen  
 Was broken there to give them light,  
 While in ourselves it shuts the sight,  
 We should no more admire, perchance,  
 That these found truth out at a glance,  
 Than marvel how the bat discerns  
 Some pitch-dark cavern's fifty turns,  
 Led by a finer tact, a gift  
 He boasts, which other birds must shift  
 Without, and grope as best they can."  
 No, freely I would praise the man,--  
 Nor one whit more, if he contended  
 That gift of his from God descended.  
 Ah friend, what gift of man's does not? . . .  
 What is left for us, save, in growth  
 Of soul, to rise up, far past both,  
 From the gift looking to the river,  
 And from the cistern to the river,  
 And from the finite to infinity,  
 And from man's dust to God's divinity?

Browning then concludes that it is not enough just to believe in God





buffoonery. / Of posturings and petticoatings, . . . In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery!" Browning optimizes that the Professor of Göttingen will find in the dusk of his life, "something more substantial / Than a fable, myth or personification-- / May Christ do for him what no mere man shall." The poet choosing the chapel says "I choose here! . . . And refer myself to THEE, . . . May truth shine out, stand ever before us!"

"Easter-Day" is written as a dialogue between a believer and a doubter. The theme, "Howvery hard it is to be / A Christian! Hard for you and me," begins the poem. The poet explains that one must Believe and along with Faith show Obedience. The difficulty of being a Christian lies not in the professing or adopting a faith, but in living that faith! How willing is the Christian to renounce the world and all its glories just to be a witness?

Browning now envisions Judgment Day. Having chosen the things of the earth, he hears his doom:

. . . Thou art shut  
 Out of the heaven of spirit; glut  
 Thy sense upon the world: 't is thine  
 Forever--take it!  
 . . . . .  
 Over the Eden-barrier whence  
 Thou art excluded. Knock in vain!

When the realization of his choice engulfs him, the pilgrim hungers for beauty, truth, the fullest uses of his senses and intellect. He appeals for admittance to the Kingdom through Art, Music, Philosophy, and

Knowledge.<sup>36</sup> All failed him "who sit'st outside" because they were all things of the world.

Browning understood Paul's belief that the Christian is to love and be loved, to deny personal aspirations (Phil. 4:11; I Tim. 6:17; Heb. 13:5), and to be concerned for others. Both men comprehended that love was the key that unlocked the door:

I let the world go, and take love!  
 Love survives in me, albeit those  
 I love be henceforth masks and shows,  
 Not living men and women; still  
 I mind how love repaired all ill,  
 Cured wrong, soothed grief, made earth amends  
 With parents, brothers, children, friends!  
 Some semblance of a woman yet  
 With eyes to help me to forget  
 Shall look on me; and I will match  
 Departed love with love, attach  
 Old memories to new dreams, nor scorn  
 The poorest of the grains of corn  
 I save from shipwreck on this isle,  
 Trusting its barrenness may smile  
 With happy foodful green one day,  
 More precious for the pains. I pray,--  
 Leave to love, only!

Acknowledging love as the basis of God's plan, the Christian felt embraced by God and awoke on Easter-Day. He had experienced a resurrection of his own. Back in the world again, Browning determines that a Christian will alternate between faith and doubt, will struggle to resolve his inner conflicts, and will know, in spite of God's love, that it will continue to be

. . . hard  
 To be a Christian, . . .



But Easter-Day breaks! But  
Christ rises! Mercy every way  
Is infinite,--and who can say?

Like Paul, Browning did not completely resolve his religious doubts until he understood the vicarious suffering of Christ and the message of the Incarnation which he recorded in Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day. The poet was on the threshold of this revelation in the first version of "Saul."

. . . 'Let one more attest  
I have lived, seen God's hand through a life-  
time and all was for best'?

In the 1855 revision of "Saul," having declared his stand in Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day, Browning, having experienced his own Damascus revelation, proclaimed:

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest,  
't is I who receive:  
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power  
to believe.  
All's one gift: . . .  
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst  
thou--so wilt thou! . . .  
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, . . .  
It is by  
no breath,  
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins  
issue with death!  
As thy Love is discovered almighty . . .  
Thy Power, that exists with and for it, of being  
Beloved! . . .  
'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for!  
my flesh, that I seek  
In the Godhead!<sup>37</sup> I seek and I find it. O Saul,  
it shall be  
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man  
like to me,

Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a  
Hand like this hand  
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!<sup>38</sup>  
See the Christ stand!"

Once Browning accepted these concepts, he knew, as did Paul (II Tim.  
1:12-13), in Whom and in what he believed.

---



III

Having recognized the similitude of their conversion experiences, one can justifiably postulate that Browning associated with Paul mentally and spiritually, and, consequently, the poet referred to the Apostle frequently in his poetry. In "Up at a Villa and Down in the City," Reverend Don So-and-so has reached "the skirts of Saint Paul." The poet refers to the moral restrictions pronounced in Galatians<sup>39</sup> (3:10; 5:19-21) in "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister." Browning again shows his esteem for Paul in "Cleon." The pagan has difficulty believing a "barbarian Jew" knows the secret of life and immortality, but Cleon intuitively recognizes that "Christus is one with Paulus." Bishop Blougram also calls upon Paul when arguing his beliefs. Caponsacchi has been called Browning's "spirit" and the Pope, his "soul"; hence, it is not surprising that much of Paul appears in The Ring and the Book. Caponsacchi, "the warrior-saint," likens his trial to that of Onesimus (Phil. 1:10-18) and wants surcease from his judges as Paul did from King Agrippa (Acts 25, 26). The Pope in contemplation and pensive deliberation asks, "How nearly did I guess at that Paul knew?"

The Apostle said that the greatest gift was "charity (love)" (I Cor. 13:13). The Poet declares:

Too much love there can never be,  
.....  
..... Whoever can take  
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake  
Conceive of the love,--that man obtains  
A new truth; . . .<sup>40</sup>

Paul knew long before Browning, that

. . . life with all it yields of joy and woe,  
 And hope and fear,--believe the aged friend,--  
 Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,  
 How love might be, hath been indeed, and is.<sup>41</sup>

In I Cor. 8:1-3, Paul says knowledge can be damaging and can produce conceit in the individual. He maintained that true knowledge is humbling and leads to love. For Paul, love is the evocation of the revelation of God's love through Christ, and it is a constructive love. Wherever good and worthwhile work is being done in the world, the divine spirit is in action. This is one of the main themes in Paul's gospel. Browning caught the spirit of constructive Christian love when he wrote:

Be love your light and trust your guide, with these  
 explore my heart!  
 No obstacle to trip you then, strike hands and souls,  
 apart!<sup>42</sup>

Or as Martin says, "Browning, as he often insists, believes with the Apostle Paul that knowledge in this life must be partial and will vanish away, but 'there are three things that last forever: faith, hope and love; but the greatest of them all is love.'"<sup>43</sup>

Speaking through St. John, the Apostle of Love, Browning makes his statement of Paul's agape in "A Death in the Desert."

"If I live yet, it is for good, more love  
 Through me to men: . . .  
 . . . I wrote, and men believed,  
 Then, for my time grew brief, no message more,



No call to write again, I found a way,  
 And, reasoning from my knowledge, merely taught  
 Men should, for love's sake, in love's strength believe; . . .  
 We whom God loves? When pain ends, gain ends too.  
 To me, that story--ay, that Life and Death  
 Of which I wrote 'it was'--to me, it is;  
 --Is, here and now; I apprehend naught else.  
 Is not God now i' the world his power first made?  
 Is not his love at issue still with sin,  
 Visibly when a wrong is done on earth?  
 Love, wrong, and pain, what see I else around?  
 Yea, and the Resurrection and Uprise  
 To the right hand of the throne--what is it beside,  
 When such truth, breaking bounds, o'erfloods my soul,  
 And, as I saw the sin and death, even so  
 See I the need yet transiency of both,  
 The good and glory consummated thence?  
 I saw the power; I see the Love, once weak,  
 Resume the Power: . . .  
 The love that tops the might, The Christ in God.  
 Then, as new lessons shall be learned in these  
 Till earth's work stop and useless time run out,  
 So duly, daily, needs provision be  
 For keeping the soul's prowess possible,  
 Building new barriers as the old decay,  
 Saving us from evasion of life's proof,  
 Putting the question ever, 'Does God love,  
 And will ye hold that truth against the world?'  
 . . . . .  
 I say, the acknowledgment of God in Christ<sup>43</sup>  
 Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee  
 All questions in the earth and out of it,  
 And has so far advanced thee to be wise. . . .  
 "And when man questioned, 'What if there be love  
 Behind the will and might, as real as they?'--  
 He needed satisfaction God could give,  
 And did give, as ye have the written word:  
 But when, beholding that love everywhere,  
 He reasons, 'Since such love is everywhere,  
 And since ourselves can love and would be loved,  
 We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not,'--  
 How shall ye help this man who knows himself,  
 That he must love and would be loved again,  
 Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,  
 Rejecteth Christ through very need of him?

The lamp o'erswims with oil, the stomach flags  
Loaded with nurture, and that man's soul dies.

. . . . .  
. . . Have ye yet to argue out  
The very primal thesis, plainest law,  
--Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,  
A master to obey, a course to take,  
Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?  
Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,  
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,  
From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.  
How could man have progression otherwise?"

In Hebrews 10:11-18, Paul again stresses that Christ's sacrifice was the one single offering that would perfect those who are sanctified. It also established the new covenant. By the vicarious suffering of Christ, man realizes his sins are forgiven, and he can return to God in faith, love and obedience. Man must be humbled by Christ; he must feel the peace that only He can impart; his self-righteousness tempered by Love. Then man can experience that living Power that will not let him go. That is faith. If that faith does not lead to hope then it is not a sincere faith. When we have known the sacrifice of Christ, we have a living hope in our souls.

In "An Epistle," Browning writes of an Arab physician, Karshish, traveling in the Holy Land after the crucifixion. He has a long meeting with Lazarus, and he later attempts to make a scientific analysis of all the Jew has told him. Suddenly, he exclaims:

The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?  
So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too--  
So, through the thunder comes a human voice  
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!



Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!  
 Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,  
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love,  
 And thou must love me who have died for thee!"  
 The madman saith He said so: it is strange.

Paul warned his generation that only by faith could they hear the voice of God. If they hardened their hearts, they too could "wander in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:7-11). Browning admonishes his generation through Bishop Blougram:

How you'd exult if I could put you back  
 Six hundred years, blot out cosmogony,  
 Geology, ethnology, what not,  
 (Greek endings, each the little passing-bell  
 That signifies some faith's about to die),  
 And set you square with Genesis again,--  
 When such a traveler told you his last news,  
 He saw the ark a-top of Ararat  
 But did not climb there since 't was getting dusk  
 And robber-bands infest the mountain's foot!  
 How should you feel, I ask, in such an age,  
 How act? As other people felt and did;  
 With soul more blank than this decanter's knob,  
 Believe--and yet lie, kill, rob, fornicate,  
 Full in belief's face, like the beast you'd be!

Browning believed that a Christian had to have an intimate relationship with God. God's love was manifest in man; consequently, man could find peace, assurance and faith in a belligerent world. The poet realized that man could not live in his world and not experience doubt and discouragement. Bishop Blougram says:

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,  
 A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,  
 A chorus-ending from Euripides,--<sup>45</sup>  
 And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears  
 As old and new at once as nature's self,

To rap and knock and enter in our soul  
 . . . . .  
 . . . You call for faith:  
 I show you doubt, to prove that faith exists.  
 The more of doubt, the stronger faith, I say,  
 If faith o'ercomes doubt. How I know it does?  
 By life and man's free will, God gave for that!  
 To mould life as we choose it, shows our choice:  
 That's our one act, the previous work's his own.

The Pope even at his advanced age conceded:

All to the very end is trial in life:  
 At his stage is the trial of my soul  
 Danger to face, or danger to refuse?  
 Shall I dare try the doubt, now, or not dare?

Abt Vogler is also cognizant of worldly pressures, and he ponders thus:

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to  
 clear,  
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the  
 weal and woe:  
 But God has a few of us whom he whispers in  
 the ear;  
 The rest may reason and welcome: 't is we  
 musicians know.

The musician also knew that man had to believe in the truth of God's  
 spirit in his mind and soul.

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will  
 that can,  
 Existent, behind all laws, that made them  
 and, lo, they are!

Browning continually reassures his readers of the reality of the presence  
 of God.

'T is truth,  
 All truth and only truth: there's something here,  
 Some presence in the room beside us all,  
 Something that every lie expires before:<sup>46</sup>



Paul interpreted suffering as discipline (Heb. 12:3-11). For every joy, there is sorrow; for every gain, there is loss; for every kindness, a hurt. Wisdom and courage are the rewards of the high price of painful discipline. As Browning puts it:

. . . happy that I can  
 Be crossed and thwarted as a man,  
 Not left in God's contempt apart,  
 With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,  
 Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.<sup>47</sup>

The poet depicts hell as the place where men have just what they want:

Hadst thou learned  
 What God accounted happiness,  
 Thou wouldst not find it hard to guess  
 What hell may be his punishment  
 For those who doubt if God invent  
 Better than they. Let such men rest  
 Content with what they judged the best.  
 Let the unjust usurp at will:  
 The filthy shall be filthy still:  
 Miser, there waits the gold for thee!  
 Hater, indulge thine enmity!  
 And thou, whose heaven self-ordained  
 Was, to enjoy earth unrestrained,<sup>48</sup>  
 Do it! Take all the ancient show!

Paul uses weakness or infirmities as stepping-stones, rather than stumbling-blocks, to radiate God's power (II Cor. 12:9). Weakness or defect often opens people to that state where they are receptive to God's spirit. There is an urgent sense of need and a deep reliance on prayer. Self confidence can be built on a dependence on God, and we come to that deep dependence when we have experienced something that is too great for us. When we have been totally emptied, God can fully come in. Pompilia's

definition of God makes Him responsible for these experiences.

God the strong, God the beneficent,  
 God ever mindful in all strife and strait,  
 Who, for our own good, makes the need extreme,  
 Till at the last He puts forth might and saves.

Sin and sorrow are necessary for a full realization of the power of faith and love. The Pope comprehends that all choices "emanate" from God's plan and "incomprehensibly the choice is Thine."

I can believe this dread machinery  
 Of sin and sorrow, would confound me else,  
 Devised--all pain, at most expenditure  
 Of pain by Who devised pain--to evolve,  
 By new machinery in counterpart,  
 The moral qualities of man--how else?--  
 To make him love in turn and be beloved,  
 Creative and self-sacrificing too,  
 And thus eventually God-like, (ay,  
 "I have said ye are Gods,"--shall it be said  
     for naught?)  
 Enable man to wring, from out all pain,  
 All pleasure for a common heritage  
 To all eternity: . . .

Browning avows that man has a duty to uphold God's love. In "Saul," he asserts:

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst  
     thou--so wilt thou!  
 So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest,  
     uttermost crown--  
 And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up  
     nor down  
 One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by  
     no breath,  
 Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins  
     issue with death!  
 As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty  
     be proved  
 Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being  
     Beloved!



Pompilia in her intuitive innocence perceived man's role in God's plan:

So, let him wait God's instant men call years;  
 Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,  
 Do out the duty! Through such souls alone  
 God stooping shows sufficient of his light  
 For us i' the dark to rise by.

Browning again advocates:

'Teach, Man, thy beast his duty first of all  
 Or last of all, with blows if blows must be,--  
 How else accomplish teaching?' Reason adds,  
 'Before man's First, and after man's poor Last,  
 God operated and will operate.'<sup>49</sup>

Paul and Browning were convinced of the magnanimity of God's love and benevolence. However, they also recognized the lawgiving power of the Almighty that must be obeyed (Heb. 3:10).

In "Caliban upon Setebos," Browning portrays the worship of a god of power. Caliban is a low sensuous fellow whose chief pleasure is to lie idly on the sand by the sea. There is one upsetting factor in his existence--his god, Setebos. Caliban is afraid of his god's power. Whenever Setebos is about, Caliban pretends to be very unhappy so that his god will not be envious of his happiness and will leave him alone. Caliban watches a procession of crabs move by him to the sea. As he treats the crabs, so he imagines God deals with human beings:

He is strong and Lord.

'Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs  
 That march now from the mountain to the sea;  
 'Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,  
 Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.  
 'Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots  
 Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;  
 'Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,

And two worms he whose nippers end in red;  
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Caliban realizes his folly at berating Setebos and shows his fear for his God when he says:

What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!  
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird--or, yes,  
There scuds His raven that has told Him all!  
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind  
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,  
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze--  
A tree's head snaps--and there, there, there, there, there,  
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!  
Lo! 'Lieth flat and loveth Setebos!  
'Maketh his teeth meet through his upper lip,  
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month  
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape!<sup>50</sup>

Browning wanted man to raise himself above the level of a "Caliban."  
Man was not meant to grovel in fear before God. Any acknowledgment of a Deity that came from fear could not be a noble, deep or true religion. However, he was, like Paul, of the persuasion as evidenced in "Saul" that there is an "obeisance in spirit"--"the submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete." There can be no true worship without "that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too."<sup>51</sup>

The two writers were compatible in their views concerning the salvation of man. Browning believed in man's worth, his senses, his spirit, his soul. The development of a soul was his greatest concern. Life's trials were the best groundwork for spiritual growth. Man must participate in life--he can not shut himself away. The poet recognized that man is a combination of human and pneuma, external and internal. He is a



creation in God's image and his past is nothing in comparison to his future immortality. And in spite of setbacks, man must strive. "God means mankind should strive for and show forth / Whatever be the process to that end."<sup>52</sup> As Paul expressed it: "forgetting those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). This command is a recurrent theme throughout Browning's poetry.

"In Paul's epistles, Browning has read of the Christian life as a battle in metaphors which Paul took largely from active struggles: war and fighting wild beasts and athletic contests."<sup>53</sup> Paul "charges" Timothy to "war a good warfare" (I Tim. 1:18) and not to "war" with the mundane but to "please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier" (II Tim. 2:4). Timothy is commanded by Paul to "fight the good fight" (I Tim. 6:12) and when his ministry is finished, he, like Paul, may say, "I have fought a good fight" (II Tim. 4:7).

Browning employs Paul's military metaphors in "Prospice," when he says:

Fear death?--to feel the fog in my throat,  
 The mist in my face,  
 When the snow begins, and the blasts denote  
 I am nearing the place,  
 The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
 The post of the foe;  
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,

Yet the strong man must go:  
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,  
 And the barriers fall,  
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,  
 The reward of it all,  
 I was ever a fighter, so--one fight more,  
 The best and the last!

In "Rabbi Ben Ezra," Browning is depicting not only the conflict between Youth and Old Age, but also the conflict of life itself:

Grow old along with me!  
 The best is yet to be,  
 The last of life, for which the first was made:  
 Our times are in his hand  
 Who saith, "A whole I planned,  
 Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"<sup>54</sup>  
 . . . . .  
 Then, welcome each rebuff  
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
 Each sting that bids not sit nor stand but go!  
 Be our joys three-parts pain!  
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
 Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!  
 . . . . .  
 And I shall thereupon  
 Take rest, ere I be gone  
 Once more on my adventure brave and new:  
 Fearless and unperplexed,  
 When I wage battle next,  
 What weapons to select, what armor to indue.  
 . . . . .  
 So, still within this life,  
 Though lifted o'er its strife,  
 Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,  
 "This rage was right i' the main,  
 That acquiescence vain:  
 The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

"The Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, bade Timothy 'Endure hardness as a good soldier,' and in his Epistle to the Romans wrote: 'We glory in tribulation also: knowing that tribulation worked patience; and patience,



experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed." 55

Browning reiterates in "Bishop Blougram's Apology:"

No, when the fight begins within himself,  
A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,  
Satan looks up between his feet--both tug--  
He's left, himself, i' the middle: the soul wakes  
And grows. Prolong that battle through his life!  
Never leave growing till the life to come!

And the Pope, addressing his "warrior priest," concurs:

Was the trial sore?  
Temptation sharp? Thank God a second time!  
Why comes temptation but for man to meet  
And master and make crouch beneath his foot,  
And so be pedestalled in triumph? Pray  
"Lead us into no such temptations, Lord!"  
Yea, but, O Thou whose servants are the bold,  
Lead such temptations by the head and hair,  
Reluctant dragons, up to who dares fight,  
That so he may do battle and have praise!  
Do I not see the praise?--that while thy mates  
Bound to deserve i' the matter, prove at need  
Unprofitable through the very pains  
We gave to train them well and start them fair,--  
Are found too stiff, with standing ranked and ranged,  
For onset in good earnest, too obtuse  
Of ear, through iteration of command,  
For catching quick the sense of the real cry,--  
Thou, whose sword-hand was used to strike the lute,  
Whose sentry-station graced some wanton's gate,  
Thou didst push forward and show mettle, shame  
The laggards, and retrieve the day. Well done!  
Be glad thou hast let light into the world,  
Through that irregular breach o' the boundary,  
The same upon thy path and marched assured,  
Learning anew the use of soldieryship,  
Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear,  
Loyalty to the life's end! Ruminant,  
Deserve the initiatory spasm,--once more  
Work, be unhappy but bear life, my son!

The Pope, himself armed "with Paul's sword," asks:

Where are the Christians in their panoply?  
 The lions we girt about with truth, the breasts  
 Righteousness plated round, the shield of faith,  
 The helmet of salvation, and that sword  
 O' the Spirit, even the word of God.

Those armed with faith can walk confidently with God, "the Omnipotent,  
 Omniscient, Omnipresent."

"There is a way:

'T is hard for flesh to tread therein, imbued  
 With frailty--hopeless, if indulgence first  
 Have ripened inborn germs of sin to strength:  
 Wilt thou adventure for my sake and man's,  
 Apart from all reward?" And last it breathed--  
 "Be happy, my good soldier; I am by thee,  
 "Be sure, even to the end!" . . .  
 . . . I go to prove my soul!<sup>56</sup>  
 I see my way as birds their trackless way.  
 I shall arrive! what time, what circuit first,  
 I ask not: but unless God send his hail  
 Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,  
 In some time, his good time, I shall arrive:  
 He guides me and the bird! In his good time!<sup>57</sup>

Not only did Paul think of a Christian life as a battle, but also  
 one of a contest, a race (I Cor. 9:24), and a prize fight (I Cor. 9:26-27).  
 The words "toil" and "strive" are the vocabulary of the games of track and  
 field which Paul used to imply the strenuous activity man can endure  
 (Col. 1:29). Man must train not only physically but also in godliness.  
 As man "wrestles" (I Tim. 4:10) like an athlete in competition, life can  
 be secure because of his training and efforts (I Tim. 4:7-8; I Cor. 15:10;  
 Rom. 15:30). To Paul even prayer was a "strenuous" exercise and prayers,  
 not only for one's self but "laboring" for others, will make man "stand  
 perfect and complete" (Col. 4:12).

During Paul's lifetime, races were run with the prize in a conspicuous place. The runner concentrated on the object, and, if he looked behind, he usually lost. It was imperative that he "press toward the mark for the prize" (Phil. 3:14). Paul's "prize" was "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14). The prize could be won by any who listened to the higher calling, or God's summons to eternal life. Christ calls people, and their reward for obeying the call will be an exalted life.

Christians have before them an endless field of endeavor, and can never assume, while they live on earth, that their task is finished . . . there is always a height which has not yet been attained. Paul had found it so in his own life, which is the only one he can really know, and he believes that what is true of him must likewise be true of every Christian man.<sup>58</sup>

Paul also says that if man "strives" for perfection, he will not win the trophy unless he "strives" by the rules (II Tim. 2:5; I Cor. 9:25). If he does, he will finish the "course" a winner (II Tim. 4:7; I Cor. 15:58; I Tim. 4:15; Phil. 2:16).

Like Paul, Browning uses "athletic" and "warrior" metaphors to portray Caponsacchi.

Our adversary who enjoys the task!  
 I rather chronicle the healthy rage,--  
 When the first moan broke for the martyr-maid  
 At that uncaging of the beasts--made bare  
 My athlete on the instant, gave such good  
 Great undisguised leap over post and pale  
 Right into the mid-cirque, free fighting-place.  
 There may have been rash stripping--every rag



Went to the winds,--infringement manifold  
 Of laws prescribed pudicity, . . .  
 Sprang'st forth the hero! In thought, word and deed,  
 How throughout all thy warfare thou wast pure, . . .  
 And troop you, somewhere 'twixt the best and worst.

Striving for perfection is one of Browning's dominant themes--  
 human aspiration. Andrea Del Sarto says, "Ah, but a man's reach should  
 exceed his grasp / Or what's a heaven for?" It is not so much what a  
 man does that counts as what he "aspires to be." Napoleon mused, "My  
 plans / That soar, to earth may fall."

Through the person of Rabbi Ben Ezra, Browning expresses this  
 philosophy:

For thence,--a paradox  
 Which comforts while it mocks,--  
 Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:  
 What I aspired to be,  
 And was not, comforts me:  
 A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute  
 Whose flesh has soul to suit,  
 Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?  
 To man, propose this test--  
 Thy body at its best,  
 How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use:  
 I own the Past profuse  
 Of power each side, perfection every turn:  
 Eyes, ears took in their dole,  
 Brain treasured up the whole;  
 Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn"?  
 . . . . .  
 For pleasant is this flesh;  
 Our soul, in its rose-mesh  
 Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:  
 Would we some prize might hold

To match those manifold  
 Possessions of the brute,--gain most, as we did best!  
 . . . . .  
 As it was better, youth  
 Should strive, through acts uncouth,  
 Toward making, than repose on aught found made:  
 So, better, age, exempt  
 From strife, should know, than tempt  
 Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!  
 . . . . .  
 Thoughts hardly to be packed  
 Into a narrow act,  
 Fancies that broke through language and escaped;  
 All I could never be,  
 All, men ignored in me,  
 This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.<sup>59</sup>

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,  
 That metaphor! and feel  
 Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,--  
 Thou, to whom fools propound,  
 When the wine makes its round,  
 "Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize today!"

Fool! All that is, at all,  
 Lasts ever, past recall;  
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:  
 What entered into thee,  
 That was, is, and shall be:  
 Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee 'mid this dance  
 Of plastic circumstance,  
 This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest:  
 Machinery just meant  
 To give thy soul its bent,  
 Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.<sup>60</sup>  
 . . . . .  
 Look not thou down but up!  
 To uses of a cup,  
 The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,  
 The new wine's foaming flow,  
 The Master's lips aglow!  
 Thou, heaven's consummated cup, what needst thou with  
 earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,  
Thee, God, who moulded men;  
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,  
Did I--to the wheel of life  
With shapes and colors rife,  
Bound dizzily--mistake my end, to slake thy thirst:

So, take and use thy work:  
Amend what flaws may lurk,  
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!  
My times be in thy hand!  
Perfect the cup as planned!  
Let age approve of youth,<sup>61</sup> and death complete the same!

Browning had no patience "with the slothful,<sup>62</sup> with the mawkish, the unmanly."<sup>63</sup> Each man on earth had his purpose according to God's plan. "In the eye of God, / pain may have a purpose and be justified."<sup>64</sup> Doubts and failures may have been an integral part of that plan, but "turning his back" was not man's answer. "That which seems worst to man to God is best, / So, because God ordains it, best to man."<sup>65</sup> God gave man a mind to make a choice. Pompilia knew that "God plants us where we grow."<sup>66</sup> Man was given dominion over all growing things because God gave him an opportunity to make a choice. The choice may be difficult; success or failure may ensue, but Do something and Accept the consequence.

Never again elude the choice of tints!  
White shall not neutralize the black, nor good  
Compensate bad in man, absolve him so:  
Life's business being just the terrible choice.<sup>67</sup>

Browning accepted life and met it "with the faith and courage of Paul who met the wild beasts at Ephesus."<sup>68</sup> He knew that imperfection, doubt, failure existed. Coupled with sorrow, frustration, separation from God (sin), these stumbling blocks strengthened moral personality,



if man would continue to look beyond. "Abt Vogler," "Andrea del Sarto," "Fra Lippo Lippi," "The Grammarian's Funeral," "Pictor Ignotus" are exemplar of man given a choice--will man not despair as David questions:

I will?--the mere atoms despise me! Why  
 am I not loth  
 To look that, even that in the face too? Why  
 is it I dare  
 Think but lightly of such impuissance? What  
 stops my despair?  
 This;--'t is not what man Does which exalts  
 him, but what man Would do!

Browning shows his compassion for the three Frenchmen who found suicide the better choice in "Apparent Failure," and he hopes their "success" will be winning "the prize of the high calling of God" (Phil. 3:14).

How did it happen, my poor boy?  
 You wanted to be Buonaparte  
 And have the Tuileries for toy,  
 And could not, so it broke your heart?  
 You, old one by his side, I judge,  
 Were, red as blood, a socialist,  
 A leveller! Does the Empire grudge  
 You've gained what no Republic missed?  
 Be quiet, and unclench your fist!

And this--why, he was red in vain,  
 Or black,--poor fellow that is blue!  
 What fancy was it, turned your brain?  
 Oh, women were the prize for you!  
 Money gets women, cards and dice  
 Get money, and ill-luck gets just  
 The copper couch and one clear nice  
 Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,  
 The right thing to extinguish lust!

It's wiser being good than bad;  
 It's safer being meek than fierce:

It's fitter being sane than mad.  
 My own hope is, a sun will pierce  
 The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;  
 That, after Last, returns the First,  
 Though a wide compass round be fetched;  
 That what began best, can't end worst,  
 Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

Paul saw "through a glass darkly" (I Cor. 13:12). Browning could also look through the dreariness and weariness of everyday living and see above and beyond it. Whatever sorrow, sadness, tragedy or meanness was at work, he could retain his optimistic spirit. No matter how much evil, some good could be attained. There could be perfection from imperfection. St. Paul and Browning both had mystical tendencies, and both believed that at the soul's core there could be one great revelation, one infinite moment, even for a choleric reprobate like Guido.

"That Paul had visions is clear not only from Acts 9:3; 16:9; 22:17, 18; 27:23; but also from Gal. 1:16; 2:2."<sup>69</sup>

Visions and revelations of the Lord denote different kinds of experience. Visions are mental pictures which have definite shape and form. Revelations are truths made clear to and apprehended by the insight of the soul.

The apostle now relates an experience that . . . was some kind of ecstasy, the contents which he cannot describe. He heard words which cannot be reported and which it would be sacrilege to repeat even if he could. . . . He would not have us try to penetrate his mind here. He seems even to dissociate himself from it. It was something that happened to him in such a way that he felt himself a mere onlooker (II Cor. 12:1-4).<sup>70</sup>

In connection with Browning, visions and revelations are usually associated with Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day and "Saul." In the former,

"he was there" and, wherever He led, the poet held "the garment's hem."  
 "The Judgment Day" brings the revelation that "love is the best" and, no  
 matter "How very hard it is to be / A Christian!" God's love and "mercy  
 every way / Is infinite."

In "Saul," David enters the royal tent and is aware of something  
 other than the King's presence:

At the first I saw naught but the blackness:  
     but soon I descried  
 A something more black than the blackness--  
     the vast, the upright  
 Main prop which sustains the pavilion: and slow  
     into sight  
 Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest  
     of all.  
 Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tentroof,  
     showed Saul.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms  
     stetched out wide  
 On the great cross-support in the centre, that  
     goes to each side;  
 He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as,  
     caught in his pangs  
 And waiting his change, the king-serpent all  
     heavily hangs,  
 Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance  
     come  
 With the spring-time.

David intuitively knew that his King had separated himself from the all-  
 penetrating love of God. Sin and selfishness had isolated him from human  
 love and devotion and had plunged his soul into darkness.<sup>71</sup> To David,  
 the image of Saul was foreshadowing of Calvary. Through his singing, he  
 realized that if he, a lowly shepherd boy, could "suffer for him" that he  
 loved, what indeed could God in love do also?



David had seen the vision of the Incarnation and for him,

The whole earth was awakened,  
 hell loosed with her crews;  
 And the stars of night beat with emotion, and  
 tingled and shot  
 Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge:  
 but I fainted not,  
 For the Hand still impelled me at once and  
 supported, suppressed  
 All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet,  
 and holy behest,  
 Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the  
 earth sank to rest.  
 Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered  
 from earth--  
 Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's  
 tender birth;  
 In the gathered intensity brought to the gray  
 of the hills;  
 In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the  
 sudden wind-thrills;  
 In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each  
 with eye sidling still  
 Though averted with wonder and dread; in the  
 birds stiff and chill  
 That rose heavily, as I approached them, made  
 stupid with awe:  
 E'en the serpent that slid away silent,--he felt  
 the new law.  
 The same stared in the white humid faces up-  
 turned by the flowers;  
 The same worked in the heart of the cedar and  
 moved the vine-bowers:  
 And the little brooks witnessing murmured,  
 persistent and low,  
 With their obstinate, all but hushed voices--  
 "E'en so, it is so!"

Browning again views, in the "Epilogue" to Dramatis Personae,

That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows,  
 Or decomposes but to recompose,  
 Become my universe that feels and knows!

Bishop Blougram admits that though his "doubt is great / My faith's still greater, then my faith's enough" and he can visualize that "grand Perhaps."

Through his knowledge of Art and Music, the poet lifted his readers to visionary heights. Andrea del Sarto, musing with his Lucrezia, discovers

Why, there's my picture ready made,  
 There's what we painters call our harmony!  
 A common grayness silvers everything,--  
 All in a twilight, you and I alike . . .  
 . . . the whole seems to fall into a shape  
 As if I saw alike my work and self  
 And all that I was born to be and do,  
 A twilight piece. . . .  
 I do what many dream of all their lives,  
 --Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,  
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town;  
 Who strive--you don't know how the others strive  
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared . . .  
 Yet do much less, so much less. . . .  
 . . .--so much less!  
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.  
 There burns a truer light of God in them,  
 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,  
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.  
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,  
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,  
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,  
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.  
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here. . . .  
 I, painting from myself and to myself,  
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame  
 Or their praise either. . . .  
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,  
 Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray  
 Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!

The painter comprehends that with all his skill, his painting, though faultless, lacks soul. He could "pardon" the fault in the arm painted by Rapheal because the "soul is right." His own art could reproduce true life,

but nothing more. Andrea, bound to his soulless beauty, Lucrezia, could manifest nothing greater than his own soul for all his perfection and technique.

Fra Lippo Lippi, on the other hand, was a maverick painter who painted "sense" more than "soul." For him, art did not need to preach a sermon or teach a lesson. He could not "forget there's such a thing as flesh." All of nature and its creatures were from God, so the painter needed only to reproduce what was already there.

Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,  
 Left foot and right foot, go a double step,  
 Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,  
 Both in their order? Take the prettiest face, . . .  
 Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,  
 And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?  
 Or say there's beauty with no soul at all--  
 (I never saw it--put the case the same--)  
 If you get simple beauty and naught else,  
 You get about the best thing God invents:  
 That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,  
 Within yourself, when you return him thanks.

The ordinary man of the world is so insensitive to "The beauty and the wonder and the power, / The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades" and he forgets that "God made it all!"

--For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,  
 For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,  
 The mountain round it and the sky above,  
 Much more the figures of man, woman, child.  
 These are the frame to? What's it all about?  
 To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,  
 Wondered at? oh, this last of course!--you say.  
 But why not do as well as say,--paint these  
 Just as they are, careless what comes of it?  
 God's works--paint any one, and count it crime



To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works  
 Are here already; nature is complete:  
 Suppose you reproduce her--(which you can't)  
 There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."  
 For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love  
 First when we see them painted, things we have passed  
 Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;  
 And so they are better painted--better to us,  
 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;  
 God uses us to help each other so,  
 Lending our minds out.

Unlike Fra Lippo, who recognized his talent and used it well, Pictor  
 Ignotus, too conscious of the world and the acceptance by humanity, stifled  
 his own genius. The gift that God gave him was lost and he knew that he  
 could never do as he had once dreamed.

--Never did fate forbid me, star by star,  
 To outburst on you night with all my gift  
 Of fires from God: nor would my flesh have shrunk  
 From seconding my soul, with eyes uplift  
 And wide to heaven, or, straight like thunder, sunk  
 To the centre, of an instant; or around  
 Turned calmly and inquisitive, to scan  
 The license and the limit, space and bound,  
 Allowed to truth made visible in man.  
 And, like that youth ye praise so, all I saw,  
 Over the canvas could my hand have flung,  
 Each face obedient to its passion's law,  
 Each passion clear proclaimed without a tongue;  
 Whether Hope rose at once in all the blood,  
 A-tiptoe for the blessing of embrace,  
 Or Rapture drooped the eyes, as when her brood  
 Pull down the nesting dove's heart to its place;  
 Or Confidence lit swift the forehead up,  
 And locked the mouth fast, like a castle braved,-- . . .  
 What did ye give me that I have not saved?  
 Nor will I say I have not dreamed (how well!)  
 Of going--I, in each new picture,--forth,  
 As, making new hearts beat and bosoms swell, . . .  
 Oh, thus to live, I and my picture, linked  
 With love about, and praise, till life should end.

Browning adroitly uses art and artists to enlighten man to the knowledge that each in his own way should lift others to God. Fra Lippo, the loveable, rascal monk, strives for this in his painting. The poor Ignotus, unable to reach beyond himself, lived unfulfilled and his soul died as his pictures may "surely, gently die!"

Browning truly loved music. In "A Toccata of Galuppi's," the poet-musician proficiently proclaims his message of human aspirations harmoniously and discordantly:

What? Those lesser thirds so plaintive, sixths  
diminished, sigh on sigh,  
Told them something? Those suspensions,  
those solutions--"Must we die?"  
Those commiserating sevenths--"Life might  
last! we can but try!"

"Were you happy?"--"Yes."--"And you?"  
--"Then, more kisses!"--"did I stop them,  
when a million seemed so few?"  
Hark, the dominant's persistence till it must  
be answered to!

So, an octave struck the answer.

It is at the organ of Abt Vogler that Browning majestically manipulates the stops and swells to reach the glories of heaven. Vogler, "extemporizing upon his invention," hears that one "common chord," attains that "one infinite moment."

There shall never be one lost good? What was,  
shall live as before;  
Then evil is null, is naught, is silence implying  
sound;  
What was good shall be good, with, for evil,  
so much good more;

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven  
a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good  
shall exist;  
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor  
good, nor power  
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives  
for the melodist  
When eternity affirms the conception of an  
hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for  
earth too hard,  
The passion that left the ground to lose itself  
in the sky,  
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the  
bard;  
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear  
it by and by.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's  
evidence  
For the fulness of the days? Have we with-  
ered or agonized?  
Why else was the pause prolonged but that  
singing might issue thence?

.....  
Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her  
reign:  
I will be patient and proud, and soberly  
acquiesce.  
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord  
again,  
Sliding by semitones till I sink to the minor,  
--yes,  
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on  
alien ground,  
Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from  
into the deep;  
Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my  
resting-place is found,  
The C Major of this life: so, now I will try  
to sleep.

Both Browning and St. Paul loved people. The Apostle ministered to



slaves, soldiers, men, women, any child of God. No creature was too affluent or too poor to be beyond the Apostle's concern. Browning also desired to reach all people. Much as Christ spoke in the parables and through the nameless men and women of the miracles, Browning spoke through the lesser known people of the Italian Renaissance.

His seemingly unimportant, innocent characters have the profoundest influence. Pippa thinks her holiday a waste, but, through her, four people are enlightened. The little mill girl, having her "holiday," is filled with the joy and happiness of a beautiful day, which is reflected in her laughter and singing as she wanders through the streets of the town. In her fantasies, she is tasting the pleasures of the "Happiest Four in Asolo." However, when her song, "God's in his heaven--/ All's right with the world!", is heard by the Four, things are, indeed, made right. Ottima and Sebald, adulterers and murderers, are shamed into suicide. Jules, tricked into a marriage with a girl far below his expectations, takes pity upon Phene, and they plan for a rewarding and satisfying life. Luigi, to orphaned Pippa, is the "happiest" of all. Her song touches his inner soul, and he rejects the sanctuary of his mother's home for honor and duty. The fourth "happy" person is the bishop. In reality, he is her uncle and is being persuaded by the servant to "sell" Pippa. Hearing her lilting song, the bishop realizes the heinousness of the plan.

Browning used Pippa as an unknowing servant of God. Unconscious of

the good she has done and the evil and intrigue around her, she asks

Now, one thing I should like to really know:  
 How near I ever might approach all these  
 I only fancied being, this long day:  
 --Approach, I mean, so as to touch them, so  
 As to . . . in some way . . . move them--if  
     you please,  
 Do good or evil to them in some slight way.  
 For instance, if I wind  
 Silk to-morrow, my silk may bind  
 And border Ottima's cloak's hem.  
 Ah me, and my important part with them,  
 This morning's hymn half promised when I rose!  
 True in some sense or other, I suppose.

God bless me! I can pray no more to-night.  
 No doubt, some way or other, hymns say right.

All service ranks the same with God--  
With God, whose puppets, best and worst,  
Are we; there is no last nor first.

Pompilia, "bleeding out her life," personifies the vicarious suffering of Christ; Caponsacchi, the Pope, and Guido are touched by her love and forgiveness. Pompilia gives a spiritual awakening to the three men who touch her life. Caponsacchi was aware of a change within himself when her smile first "Burnt to my brain, as sunbeam through shut eyes." The full realization of goodness and love (Christ) comes to him "by the revelation of Pompilia."

To have to do with nothing but the true,  
 The good, the eternal--and these, not alone  
 In the main current of the general life,  
 But small experiences every day,  
 Concerns of the particular hearth and home:  
 To learn not only by a comet's rush  
 But a rose's birth,--not by the grandeur, God,--  
 But the comfort, Christ.

The faith of the aging Pope is confirmed by Pompilia's intuitive simplicity.

First of the first,  
 Such I pronounce Pompilia, then as now  
 Perfect in whiteness: stoop thou down, my child,  
 Give one good moment to the poor old Pope  
 Heart-sick at having all his world to blame--  
 Let me look at thee in the flesh as erst,  
 Let me enjoy the old clean linen garb,  
 Not the new splendid vesture! Armed and crowned,  
 Would Michael, yonder, be, nor crowned nor armed,  
 The less pre-eminent angel? Everywhere  
 I see in the world the intellect of man,  
 That sword, the energy his subtle spear,  
 The knowledge which defends him like a shield--  
 Everywhere; but they make not up, I think,  
 The marvel of a soul like thine, earth's flower  
 She holds up to the softened gaze of God!  
 It was not given Pompilia to know much,  
 Speak much, to write a book, to move mankind,  
 Be memorized by who records my time.  
 Yet if in purity and patience, if  
 In faith held fast despite the plucking fiend,  
 Safe like the signet stone with the new name  
 That saints are known by,--if in right returned  
 For wrong, most pardon for worst injury,  
 If there be any virtue, any praise,--  
 Then will this woman-child have proved--who knows?-- . . .  
 . . . My flower,  
 My rose, I gather for the breast of God,  
 This I praise most in thee, where all I praise,  
 That having been obedient to the end  
 According to the light allotted, law  
 Prescribed thy life, still tried, still standing test,-- . . .  
 Thou at first prompting of what I call God,  
 And fools call Nature, didst hear, comprehend,  
 Accept the obligation laid on thee, . . .  
 . . . Go past me  
 And get thy praise,--and be not far to seek  
 Presently when I follow if I may!

In keeping with her loving nature, Pompilia prayerfully hopes



For that most woeful man my husband once,  
 Who, needing respite, still draws vital breath,  
 I--pardon him? So far as lies in me,  
 I give him for his good the life he takes,  
 Praying the world will therefore acquiesce.  
 Let him make God amends,--none, none to me  
 Who thank him rather that, whereas strange fate  
 Mockingly styled him husband and me wife,  
 Himself this way at least pronounced divorce,  
 Blotted the marriage-bond: this blood of mine  
 Flies forth exultingly at any door,  
 Washes the parchment white, and thanks the blow.  
 We shall not meet in this world nor the next,  
 But where will God be absent? In his face  
 Is light, but in his shadow healing too:  
 Let Guido touch the shadow and be healed!

With death imminent, Guido calls out

Sirs, my first true word, all truth and no lie,  
 Is--save me notwithstanding! Life is all!  
 I was just stark mad,--let the madman live  
 Pressed by as many chains as you please pile!  
 Don't open! Hold me from them! I am yours,  
 I am the Granduke's--no, I am the Pope's!  
 Abate,--Cardinal,--Christ,--Maria,--God, . . .

The light breaks forth and Guido beholds love personified:

Pompilia, will you let them murder me?

#### IV

Although compatible in things of the Spirit, one very obvious difference between the Apostle and Browning is their view on marriage. St. Paul, believing that the parousia was at hand, placed celibacy over marriage because it is of the Spirit and pleases the Spirit; whereas in marriage, a man or woman cares for the things of the earth and pleases the wife or husband (I Cor. 7:32-35). Browning recognized this frame of mind of Paul, for Guido, appearing before the court, says, "My lords have chosen the happier part with Paul / And neither marry nor burn" (I Cor. 7:9).

The Corinthian Christians must have felt the difference in standards between the Christian and pagan community. They had written to Paul concerning marriage.<sup>72</sup> Marriage did not appeal to him and intimate sex relationships appeared distasteful. He definitely felt it was better "for a man not to touch a woman" (I Cor. 7:1), although this is strictly Paul's thought, and he does not invoke the authority of Christ and present it as a "commandment of the Lord" (7:25). There is some sound judgment in Paul's celibate point of view. Paul leaves to the individual conscience the unanswered question--how does one who has never experienced family problems minister to those in such relationships?

However, Paul does not label marriage a sin. He does advise proper conduct for the marriage. Despite his own predilections, he urges those in the bonds of matrimony to make it spiritually, mentally, and physically complete. He was apparently oblivious to the happiness and joy in the

household of Priscilla and Aquila. Yet he recognized the strength of the sex drive and said "if they cannot contain, let them marry" (I Cor. 7:9).

In Colossians 3:18-19, Paul admonishes husbands and wives in their relationships to each other. "Wives submit as is fit in the Lord, Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." It is difficult to establish exactly what Paul intended, as he does not posit or establish strong family doctrines. The social conditions of Colossae at the time are vague, so it is doubtful whether or not Paul was speaking out against the male authoritarian household. The decline of the emphasis on eschatology has become apparent and Paul may be mellowing in his acceptance of marriage, even though "he had small use for women and disapproved of marriage."<sup>73</sup> The pagan society of Thessalonica, however, was sex-oriented, and in his letter to the Thessolonians, Paul lashes out against immorality and free love.

The plight of the "widows" is discussed in I Timothy 11-15. Paul illustrates his preferential concern for the church itself over marriage. It would save the reputation of the church if some of the widows were to marry, because during some of their visitations, they gossip and undermine the church. Also, they are an expense and drain the treasury. Some widows have an opportunity to remarry, but because of commitments made to the church, if they do, they consequently break faith with Christ and again injure the church. If the widows by marrying aid the community,



it is better to marry and establish a family. Paul again poses an unanswered question--will this union be a loveless marriage or will it establish a Christian home?

In contrast, Browning was imbued with familial love. His boyhood and youth were spent in the security of a loving family. Then, in "manhood's prime vigor," he met and loved Elizabeth Barrett, and their mutual respect and admiration grew into a love that transcended time and place. The marriage was idyllic and a companionship of mind and spirit. She immortalized her love for him in Sonnets of the Portugese. Browning also writes of the immortality of a deep love that carries over beyond death as in "Evelyn Hope," "In the new life come in the old one's stead. . . . You will wake, and remember, and understand." In "Prospice," he declares:

Then a light, then thy breast,  
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
And with God be the rest!

The blending of soul and spirit is pronounced in "One Word More."

There they are, my fifty men and women  
Naming me the fifty poems finished!  
Take them, Love, the book and me together:  
Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.  
. . . . .  
Love, you saw me gather men and women,  
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,  
Enter each and all, and use their service,  
Speak from every mouth,--the speech, a poem.  
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,  
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving:  
I am mine and yours-- . . .  
Pray you, look on these my men and women,

Take and keep my fifty poems finished;  
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also!

. . . . .  
 God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures  
 Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,  
 One to show a woman when he loves her!

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!  
 This to you--yourself my moon of poets!  
 Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,  
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!  
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you--  
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.  
 But the best is when I glide from out them,  
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,  
 Come out on the other side, the novel  
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,  
 Where I hush and bless my self with silence.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,  
 Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,  
 Wrote one song--and in my brain I sing it,  
 Drew one angel--borne, see on my bosom!

Again using the metaphor of the heavens, Browning says:

All that I know  
 Of a certain star  
 Is, it can throw  
 (Like the angled spar)  
 Now a dart of red,  
 Now a dart of blue;  
 Till my friends have said  
 They would fain see, too,  
 My star that dartles the red and the blue!  
 Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:  
 They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.  
 What matter to me if their star is a world?  
 Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

Paul enjoyed the companionship of families and friends and enjoyed their hospitality during his travels. During extended visits, he asserted his independence and supported himself by his tentmaking trade. The

sharing with another mortal soul, as in marriage, was lost to him, because he was so consumed with his passion for Christ. But in Corinth, in the home of Priscilla and Aquila, Paul was exposed to the atmosphere which Browning depicts in "By the Fireside:"

My perfect wife, my Leonor,  
     Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,  
 Whom else could I dare look backward for,  
     With whom beside should I dare pursue  
 The path gray heads abhor?  
 . . . . .  
 When, if I think but deep enough,  
     You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme;  
 And you, too, find without rebuff  
     Response your soul seeks many a time  
 Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.  
 . . . . .  
 My own, see where the years conduct!  
     At first, 't was something our two souls  
 Should mix as mists do; each is sucked  
     In each now: on, the new stream rolls,  
 Whatever rocks obstruct.

Think, when our one soul understands  
     The great Word which makes all things new,  
 When earth breaks up and heaven expands,  
     How will the change strike me and you  
 In the house not made with hands?<sup>74</sup>

Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,  
     Your heart anticipate my heart,  
 You must be just before, in fine,  
     See and make me see, for your part,  
 New depths of the divine!  
 . . . . .  
 Worth how well, those dark gray eyes,  
     That hair so dark and dear, how worth  
 That a man should strive and agonize,  
     And taste a veriest hell on earth  
 For the hope of such a prize!

You might have turned and tried a man,



Set him a space to weary and wear,  
 And prove which suited more your plan,  
 His best of hope or his worst despair,  
 Yet end as he began.

Browning, however, is aware of Paul's implication of another side of the coin. In The Ring and the Book, Guido Franceschini personifies the dictatorial master of the household. He adheres to the "law." The Count properly bargains and arranges for his wife:

Father and mother shall the woman leave,  
 Cleave to the husband, be it for weal or woe:  
 There is the law:<sup>75</sup>

Having been properly acquired, Pompilia, the bride, was to behave as a bride, to "submit herself and afford pleasure." She was a possession and her feelings were of no consequence to Guido. However she was treated, Guido, as husband and master, was within the proprieties of church and state. He cajoled the judges:

'T is scarce the gravity of the Court  
 Will blame me that I never piped a tune,  
 Treated my falcon-gentle like my finch.  
 The obligation I incurred was just  
 To practise mastery, prove my mastership:--  
 Pompilia's duty was--submit herself,  
 Afford me pleasure, perhaps cure my bile.  
 Am I to teach my lords what marriage means,  
 What God ordains thereby and man fulfils  
 Who, docile to the dictate, treads the house?  
 My lords have chosen the happier part with Paul  
 And neither marry nor burn,--yet priestliness  
 Can find a parallel to the marriage-bond  
 In its own blessed special ordinance  
 Whereof indeed was marriage made the type:  
 The Church may show her insubordinate,  
 As marriage her refractory. How of the Monk  
 Who finds the claustral regimen too sharp

After the first month's essay? What's the mode  
 With the Deacon who supports indifferently  
 The rod o' the Bishop when he tastes its smart  
 Full four weeks? Do you straightway slacken hold  
 Of the innocents, the all-unwary ones  
 Who, eager to profess, mistook their mind?--  
 Remit a fast-day's rigor to the Monk  
 Who fancied Francis' manna meant roast quails,--  
 Concede the Deacon sweet society,  
 He never thought the Levite-rule renounced,--  
 Or rather prescribe short chain and sharp scourge  
 Corrective of such peccant humors? This--  
 I take to be the Church's mode, and mine.  
 If I was over-harsh,--the worse i' the wife  
 Who did not win from harshness as she ought,  
 Wanted the patience and persuasion, lore  
 Of love, should cure me and console herself.

. . . . .  
 I taught my wife her duty, made her see  
 What it behoved her see and say and do,  
 Feel in her heart and with her tongue declare,  
 And, whether sluggish or recalcitrant,  
 Forced her to take the right step, I myself  
 Was marching in marital rectitude!

. . . . .  
 Well, let me have the benefit, just so far,  
 O' the fact announced,--my wife then is my wife,  
 I have allowance for a husband's right.  
 I am charged with passing right's due bound,--such acts  
 As I thought just, my wife called cruelty.

He concludes his defense and prevails upon the court to .

Go forward, face new times, the better day.  
 And when, in times made better through your brave  
 Decision now,--might but Utopia be!--  
 Rome rife with honest women and strong men,  
 Manners reformed, old habits back once more,  
 Customs that recognize the standard worth,--  
 The wholesome household rule in force again,  
 Husbands once more God's representative,  
 Wives like the typical Spouse once more and Priests  
 No longer men of Belial, with no aim  
 At leading silly women captive.

One wonders what trick of mind Browning intends when he mouths Paul's metaphor of the church as bride in both Guido's and Pompilia's monologues. Does the poet want a malevolent "Christ-like" husband to be revered or does he want the reader to be aware of some benevolence beneath all the Count's draconian machinations?

Flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone, the bride  
 To groom as is the Church and Spouse to Christ:  
 . . . "Thy desire  
 Shall be to the husband, o'er thee shall he rule!"

One thing is clear, Guido in his complete humanness uses the law but fails to live it. To him obedience is paramount.

Pompilia, bought by the "dirty piece of marriage coin," was told she "was a wife" and,

since Christ thus weds the Church,  
 And therefore turned he water into wine,  
 To show I should obey my spouse like Christ.

Her innocent nature told her she must liken her husband to Christ and love him as she would Her Lord. However, her sensitivity and intuitiveness made her realize that her concepts of love, obedience, and submission were antithetical to those of her husband:

I felt there was just one thing Guido claimed  
 I had no right to give nor him to take;  
 We being in estrangement, soul from soul: . . .  
 . . . There my husband never used deceit.  
 He never did by speech nor act imply  
 "Because of our souls' yearning that we meet  
 And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine  
 Wear and impress, and make their visible selves,  
 --All which means, for the love of you and me,  
 Let us become one flesh, being one soul!"



He only stipulated for the wealth;  
 Honest so far. But when he spoke as plain--  
 Dreadfully honest also--"Since our souls  
 Stand each from each, a whole world's width between,  
 Give me the fleshly vesture I can reach  
 And rend and leave just fit for hell to burn!--  
 Why, in God's name, for Guido's soul's own sake  
 Imperilled by polluting mine,-- I say,  
 I did resist; would I had overcome!

The "love" and "marriage" of Pompilia and Caponsacchi, however, epitomized the ideals expressed by St. Paul.

He is a priest;  
 He cannot marry therefore, which is right:  
 I think he would not marry if he could.  
 Marriage on earth seems such a counterfeit,  
 More imitation of the inimitable:  
 In heaven we have the real and true and sure.  
 'T is there they neither marry nor are given  
 In marriage but are as the angels: . . .  
 Be as the angels rather, who, apart,  
 Know themselves into one, are found at length  
 Married, but marry never, no, nor give  
 In marriage; they are man and wife at once  
 When the true time is.

The blending of soul and spirit in the love of Christ was the "passion" of Paul. The Apostle, Pompilia, and Caponsacchi were united in the "bond" and love.

The communion of flesh, soul, and spirit as a unifying whole is a prevalent theme in Browning's poetry. The poet believed that the meeting of body with body and soul with soul was the Incarnation of love--one body, one soul, one love (God). Each has its place in human glorification of the Creator. Fra Lippo Lippi says, "soul and sense of him grow sharp alike, . . . If you get simple beauty and naught else / You get about the

best thing God invents." In "A Death in the Desert" and in "Rabbi Ben Ezra," Browning reiterates, "But see the double way wherein we are led, / How the soul learns diversely from the flesh!" and "All good things / Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than / flesh helps soul!" The poet recognizes man's frailty in matters of the flesh and concedes that every relationship would not be an uplifting of souls. This is exemplified in the destructive love of Andrea del Sarto for his Lucrezia.

Paul abjured these noxious influences. The Apostle wanted man to renounce anything of the flesh (earth) that separated him from and kept him from walking in the Spirit of Christ. If man was protected by the armor of Christ, then he could walk in the light (Rom. 13:12-14). The things of the earth shall pass away, and if men are committed to Christ and regiment their mode of life as a spiritual body, then men can resist temptations (I Cor. 15:50). Evil springs from flesh. It is the rejection of moral standards and the loyalties of love (II Cor. 12:21). Paul was sensitive to this atmosphere in his church, and so was Robert Browning.

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,  
 See reasons and reasons; this, to begin;  
 'T is the faith that launched point-blank her dart  
 At the head of a lie-taught--Original Sin,  
 The Corruption of Man's Heart.<sup>76</sup>

Man manifests these corruptions in immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, murder, drunkenness, and carousing (Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:19).



Once man took a woman, in Paul's mind, it should be for life. Divorce was uncalled for unless one mate was a pagan and the divorced mate would then serve the church. To Paul, the marriage vows were inviolate. Browning had one love. After her death, that love apparently strengthened. He translated a portion of Dante and wrote it in her Bible, "Thus I believe, thus I affirm, thus I am certain it is, that from this life I shall pass to another, there, where that lady lives of whom my soul was enamoured."<sup>77</sup>

Two keynote words in both St. Paul and Browning are "joy" and "rejoice." The "Joy" with which Paul received the gospel of forgiveness, redemption, and resurrection was not lost to him. "Rejoice" is constantly on his lips as he preaches. "Joy" and "Rejoice" are used again and again by both writers. They appear repeatedly in Phillipians,<sup>78</sup> but the other epistles are also a contagious communication of joy (Rom. 14:17; Heb. 12:2). If they are not used per se, they denote a state of mind. "'Joy' for the Christian is inseparable from love and impossible without it" (Gal. 5:22).<sup>79</sup> Armed with joy and love, every soldier of Christ can rejoice in any confrontation, no matter how difficult the struggle.

"Joy" is almost synonymous with "Browning." His poetry sings it and he himself is described as "joyful" in whatever fashion an exuberant, zestful spirit can be. Perhaps Foster said it best--"ROBUST MANLINESS"<sup>80</sup> and "BOUYANT FAITH."<sup>81</sup> Even Guido speaks of "Joy upon earth."<sup>82</sup> Saul bursts forth with "How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit



to employ / All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!"  
 Rabbi Ben Ezra says that everything will not always be bright and  
 beautiful, but there is delight in the nearness of God and the struggle  
 itself.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
 Were man but formed to feed  
 On joy, to solely seek and find and feast;  
 Such feasting ended, then  
 As sure an end to men;  
 Irks care the crop full bird? Frets doubt the  
 maw-crammed breast?

Rejoice we are allied  
 To that which doth provide  
 And not partake, effect and not receive!  
 A spark disturbs our clod;  
 Nearer we hold of God  
 Who gives, than of his tribes that take, I must  
 believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff  
 That turns earth's smoothness rough,  
 Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!  
 Be our joys three-parts pain!  
 Strive, and hold cheap the strain;  
 Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never  
 grudge the throe!

The young soldier in "Incident of the French Camp" is described  
 as "smiling in joy" both in the performance of his duty and in his  
 acceptance of death.

Cleon, a pagan caught between two worlds, realizes:

For so shall men remark, in such an act  
 Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,  
 . . . . .  
 . . . while my life,  
 Complete and whole now in its power and joy,

Dies altogether with my brain and arm,  
 Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?  
 . . . . .  
 Till life's mechanics can no farther go--  
 And all this joy in natural life is put  
 Like fire from off thy finger into each,  
 So exquisitely perfect is the same. . . .  
 . . . the more he gets to know  
 Of his own life's adaptabilities,  
 The more joy-giving will his life become. . . .  
 That there's a world of capability  
 For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,  
 Inviting us, . . .  
 . . . life's inadequate to joy,  
 As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take. . . .  
 And so a man can use but man's joy  
 While he sees God's. . . .  
 . . .--thou dost except a case--  
 Holding joy not impossible to one  
 With artist-gifts--to such a man as I  
 Who leave behind me living works indeed;. . . .  
 Confound the accurate view of what joy is  
 (Caught, somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)  
 With feeling joy? . . .  
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove  
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more:  
 But, knowing naught, to enjoy is something too. . . .  
 I know the joy of kingship: . . .  
 . . . every day my sense of joy  
 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified  
 By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen; . . .  
 When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy--  
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth, . . .  
 Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,  
 I dare at times imagine to my need  
 Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,  
 Unlimited in capability  
 For joy, as this is in desire for joy,  
 --To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.

In his first poem, Pauline, Browning knew that joy was a necessary element in life.

'T was in my plan to look on real life,



The life all new to me; my theories  
 Were firm, so them I left, to look and learn  
 Mankind, its cares, hopes, fears, its woes and joys;  
 And, as I pondered on their ways, I sought  
 How best life's end might be attained--an end  
 Comprising every joy.

The poet and the apostle shared the joy of and rejoiced in the assurance of immortality through the knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. Communion with God will strengthen man and his faith. All things on earth are infused with the spirit of God, and man continues to manifest that spirit in Eternity. Leave all things to God, but hope to grow in knowledge. Man must also love. Love is God and God is eternal; therefore, Love is eternal.

The greatest of the gifts given to man carries him from the now to whatever heaven God had planned for him. Those who are in Christ, death cannot defeat or destroy. "A life which begins in faith expresses itself through love and is sustained by hope of salvation. . . . Love is not only the greatest gift of the Spirit; it is the only one which abides through eternity" (I Cor. 13:13; I Thess. 1:3; Col. 1:3-4).<sup>83</sup> The Christian who is bound to Christ by faith cannot be destroyed by death. The saving blood of the Lord opened the door of the heavenly sanctuary for Man (Heb. 9:23-26). So, "Death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Cor. 15:55). Man makes his choice here on earth of the type of life he will lead, and whatever follows in the hereafter, the Day of Judgment begins with that choice (I Cor. 15:28; Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:1-9).<sup>84</sup>

Death may be thought of as an extinction, but not by Robert Browning.



"Death, death," wrote Browning once, referring to the pessimistic tone of much of the literature of his day, "it is the harping on death that I despise so much. In fiction in poetry, French as well as English, and I am told in America also, in art and literature, the shadow of death, call it what you will, despair, negation, indifference is upon us. But what fools who talk thus! Why, amico mio, you know as well as I, that death is life, just as our daily momentarily dying body is none the less alive, and ever recruiting new forces of existence. Without death, which is our churchyard, crapelike word for change, for growth, there could be no prolongation of that which we call life. Never say of me that I am dead."<sup>85</sup>

Browning was naturally emotionally shaken by death, but, in each experience, his indomitable spirit prevailed. He affirmed his faith in Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day following the death of his mother to whom he was devoted. When Elizabeth died, he could say

I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,  
 And bade me creep past.  
 No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers  
 The heroes of old,  
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears  
 Of pain, darkness and cold.  
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,  
 The black minute's at end,  
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,  
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,  
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,  
 Then a light, then thy breast,  
 O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,  
 And with God be the rest!<sup>86</sup>

Sixteen years later, his faith and trust were again reaffirmed in La Saisiaz.<sup>87</sup> Miss Ann Egerton-Smith, a dear friend of twenty-five years, died unexpectedly. The friends had said good night anticipating an early

morning appointment for a mountain climb.

I will ask and have an answer,--with no favor,  
 with no fear,--  
 From myself. How much, how little, do I in-  
 wardly believe  
 True that controverted doctrine? Is it fact to  
 which I cleave,  
 Is it fancy I but cherish, when I take upon my  
 lips  
 Phrase the solemn Tuscan fashioned, and de-  
 clare the soul's eclipse  
 Not the soul's extinction? take his "I believe  
 and I declare--  
 Certain am I--from this life I pass into a better,  
 there  
 Where that lady lives of who enamored was  
 my soul"--where this  
 Other lady, my companion dear and true, she  
 also is?

. . . . .  
 Man through darkness, which to lighten any  
 spark of hope sufficed,--  
 What shall then deter his dying out of darkness  
 into light?  
 Death itself perchance, brief pain that's pang,  
 condensed and infinite?  
 But at worst, he needs must brave it one day,  
 while, at best, he laughs--  
 Drops a drop within his chalice, sleep not  
 death his science quaffs!  
 Any moment claims more courage, when, by  
 crossing cold and gloom,  
 Manfully man quits discomfort, makes for the  
 provided room  
 Where the old friends want their fellow, where  
 the new acquaintance wait,  
 Probably for talk assembled, possibly to sup in  
 state!  
 I affirm and reaffirm it therefore: only make  
 as plain  
 As that man now lives, that, after dying, man  
 will live again,--  
 Make as plain the absence, also, of a law to con-  
 travene



Voluntary passage from this life to that by  
 change of scene,--  
 And I bid him--at suspicion of first cloud  
 athwart his sky.  
 Flower's departure, frost's arrival--never  
 hesitate, but die!  
 . . . . .  
 Hope the arrowy, just as constant, comes to  
 pierce its gloom, compelled  
 By a power and by a purpose which, if no one  
 else beheld,  
 I behold in life, so--hope!

"A Grammarian's Funeral" reflects Paul's convictions that regardless  
 of suffering or failure on earth, life will be rewarded and come into  
 its own in heaven.

No end to learning:  
 Earn the means first--God surely will contrive  
 Use for our earning.  
 Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:  
 Live now or never!"  
 He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs  
 and apes!  
 Man has Forever." . . .  
 Oh, if we draw a circle premature,  
 Heedless of far gain,  
 Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure  
 Bad is our bargain!<sup>88</sup> . . .  
 He ventured neck or nothing--heaven's success  
 Found, or earth's failure:  
 "Wilt thou trust death or not?" He answered  
 "Yes!  
 Hence with life's pale lure!"  
 That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
 Sees it and does it: . . .  
 That low man goes on adding one to one,  
 His hundred's soon hit: . . .  
 So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,  
 Ground he at grammar; . . .  
 Well, here's the platform, here's the proper  
 place:  
 Hail to your purlieus,



All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
 Swallows and curlews!  
 Here's the top-peak; the multitude below  
 Live, for they can, there:  
 This man decided not to Live but Know--  
 Bury this man there?  
 Here--here's his place, where meteors shoot,  
 clouds form,  
 Lightnings are loosened,  
 Stars come and go! Let joy break with the  
 storm,  
 Peace let the dew send!  
 Lofty designs must close in like effects:  
 Loftily lying,  
 Leave him--still loftier than the world suspects,  
 Living and dying.

The Pope expresses the innate love for Christ and the salvific power  
 of the cross so deeply imbedded in the heart of Browning.

Well, is the thing we see, salvation?

I

Put no such dreadful question to myself,  
 Within whose circle of experience burns  
 The central truth, Power, Wisdom, Goodness,--

God:

I must outlive a thing ere know it dead:  
 When I outlive the faith there is a sun,  
 When I lie, ashes to the very soul,--  
 Some one, not I, must wail above the heap,  
 "He died in dark whence never morn arose."  
 While I see day succeed the deepest night--  
 How can I speak but as I know?--my speech  
 Must be, throughout the darkness, "It will  
 end:

The light that did burn, will burn!" Clouds  
 obscure--

But for which obscuration all were bright?  
 Too hastily concluded! Sun-suffused,  
 A cloud may soothe the eye made blind by  
 blaze,--

Better the very clarity of heaven:  
 The soft streaks are the beautiful and dear.  
 What but the weakness in a faith supplies

The incentive to humanity, no strength  
 Absolute, irresistible, comports?  
 How can man love but what he yearns to help?  
 And that which men think weakness within  
     strength,  
 But angels know for strength and stronger  
     yet--  
 What were it else but the first things made new,  
 But repetition of the miracle,  
 The divine instance of self-sacrifice  
 That never ends and aye begins for man?  
 So, never I miss footing in the maze,  
 No,--I have light nor fear the dark at all.

Browning loved his Lord. Deep in his heart of hearts he may have realized that he was "by necessity ordained"<sup>89</sup> as Paul had been (I Cor. 9:16). Perhaps, too, he intuitively knew that he was

. . . some mortal, born too soon,  
 Were laid away in some great trance--the ages  
 Coming and going all the while--till dawned  
 His true time's advent: . . .<sup>90</sup>

but his faith and love for Christ compelled him to preach as did St. Paul and St. John so the time would never be when

. . . there is left on earth  
 No one alive who knew (consider this!)  
 --Saw with his eyes and handled with his hands  
 That which was from the first, the Word of Life.  
 How will it be when none more saith "I saw"?<sup>91</sup>

Paul cared not for bonds or afflictions that awaited him in his ministry, neither did he "count life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 30:24). When he knew his "departure is at hand," Paul confidently stated, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up



for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Browning was also exuberant at the hour of his departure. Proof-reading the third verse from the "Epilogue" to Asolando,<sup>92</sup>

One who never turned his back but marched  
 breast forward,  
 Never doubted clouds would break,  
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted,  
 wrong would triumph,  
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
 Sleep to wake.

he said to his daughter-in-law and sister, "It almost looks like bragging to say this, and as if I ought to cancel it; but it's the simple truth; and as it's true, it shall stand."<sup>93</sup>

Browning proclaimed love as the answer for his personal faith and his indestructible soul. He could love in the dismal chapel or in the grandeur of St. Peter's Basilica, and proclaim that love to humanity. Ironically, because of this at-one-ment in any surroundings and his empathy with humanity, Browning was considered unorthodox. He believed in the dignity of man and his perfection and salvation. God was omnipotent and omnipresent, not a remote god in the universe, but a God manifested in Man. Browning's spirit was filled with the spirit of God, and he offered that spirit to the world.



## Appendix

### Paul's Theology<sup>94</sup>

The experience on the Damascus road and the faith in the Risen Christ as the Son of God which developed from his experience turned Paul the Pharisee into an apostle and made him the first theologian.

. . . his vision was post-pentecostal. It put him on an equal footing with the Twelve who had seen the Kyrios. . . . He compared that experience to God's creation of light: . . . The compulsion of divine grace pressed him into the service of Christ; . . . His response was one of vivid faith, in which he confessed with the early Church that "Jesus is the Lord." . . . But that experience illumined in a creative act Paul's mind and gave him an extraordinary insight into what he later called "the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4).<sup>95</sup>

The "revelation" (Gal. 1:16) impressed Paul with the unity of divine action for the salvation of all men which is manifested in the Old and New Testament. The Father who revealed his Son to Paul was the same God whom the Pharisees had served. The conversion experience did not alter his fundamental commitment to the "One God."<sup>96</sup>

The vision taught him the soteriological value of the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. Paul shared the Messianic expectations, but the vision of Jesus taught him that God's Anointed One had already come. The revelation impressed him "with the soteriological and vicarious value of the death of Jesus of Nazareth in a way he had never suspected before. . . . Paul saw Christ taking upon himself the Law's curse and transforming it into its opposite, so that he became the means of freeing men from its malediction."<sup>97</sup> The cross was no longer a

stumbling block but the power and wisdom of God.

Paul frequently spoke in triads. As each individual has his chronological age, so each Christian has his spiritual age--childhood (infancy), adolescence (youth), and adulthood (maturity). A believer of mature years can be an infant in the full revelation of God's salvific plan for man. Paradoxically, one, young in years, may be the embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

The middle years, adolescence, are the periods of agnosticism or even atheism. The man in search of a soul strives to juxtapose the external with the internal. His humanism (flesh) overshadows or negates his spirit (pneuma), and man diligently quests for a symbiotic unity of mind and soul. The simple, blind (infant) faith can be shaken and the world rushes in. A catastrophe plunges the wanderer into the depths of despair, but even these are in God's plan. What mortal man may consider a great loss is, in reality, what God plans as gain. All Christians do not necessarily experience a conversion like Paul's, but they can live through their adolescence and by honest, sincere prayer and commitment to God's will, mature into that new Creation.

Another trinity of words associated with Paul is revelation, conversion and commission. To the Apostle they were one and the same. Once God has revealed his son, Jesus Christ, one must repent and accept him as Lord and Savior. Man's salvation is the saving blood of Christ and the grace of God. The acceptance of these gifts assures man of life



eternal. When man accepts and recognizes that he is filled with the Holy Spirit, he acknowledges that he is a new being in Christ so filled with love and a new beginning that he must share and proclaim the good news.

God had revealed himself to men throughout their history. To his early people, he manifested himself in the ark of the Holy of Holies. He manifested himself on earth through his Son. In the present he manifests himself through man as the Holy Spirit. If man is truly the manifestation of God and dwells in Christ, then he must indeed sing a new song, make a joyful noise, and walk in the Light as a temple of God.

As did Browning, into his own questioning world, Paul embarked exuberantly, hortatively, tentatively, apprehensively, determinedly to proclaim his euaggelian--the good news of Jesus Christ! Paul's gospel is Christocentric. The Pauline doctrines are justification by faith, the Life in Christ, expiation, the new creation, reconciliation and the church (ekklesia). Underlying all his kerygma, didache and paraclesis is the one ultimate gift of God--love!

Paul's basis for justification came from the legal tradition of Judaism. In this sense, justification was the result of a trial wherein the accused was found innocent of all charges and was restored to society as one who had been justified by acquittal. Paul took this relationship and transferred it to the relation existing between his own soul and God. Before his call by Christ, he had sought to satisfy his relationship to God by keeping every law of the Torah. He had felt that only under these



circumstances could he meet God's moral requirements and be at peace with himself and God, but the harder he tried, the further from God he seemed to be. He had reached an impasse. Then he experienced the love of God in Christ and found a new way to God. He realized that man could not initiate the approach to God himself, any more than he could ever reach a state of such sublime morality to permit him to attain to the presence of God. Paul had to reassess the law. Never again would it hold the place it once did. Now, Christ was the ultimate fulfillment of what the Law had begun. "What the Law could not do" had been done by the gracious act of God in Christ.

Paul uses a number of terms to describe what has happened to one who has been justified by faith. He has been redeemed. He has been reconciled<sup>98</sup> or returned to God's favor and intimacy after a period of estrangement and rebellion. Man is again "at-one-ment" with God. Through the passion, death and resurrection, of Christ, men's sins are expiated. There can be no expiation without blood; henceforth, the First Good Friday is the Christian Day of Atonement. Christ's blood was shed as a willing sacrifice to bring about the reconciliation of man with God. Paul preaches the "love" of the Father and the "love" of Christ. When man in faith beholds God's love in Christ's death and understands that the alienation rests with man and not God, then reconciliation begins. The justified man is redeemed, reconciled and transferred to the kingdom of God.

Paul's theology triumphantly asserted that Jesus was and is the

Messiah! God's long promised day of redemption had come. The new life of the justified man was the work of Christ and no other. Christ was truly human with the appearance of sinful man. As the second Adam, Christ, by his obedience, in contrast to the disobedience of the first Adam, had reversed the stream of death and had brought life and immortality to the human race. By the power of the resurrection, the firstborn son of God had become the Son of God, the life-giving Spirit, and had created the Church.

The church as the people of God had as its supreme mission to bring into being the knowledge and salvation of God to all people. Paul uses the familiar metaphors--the bride of Christ, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the living God and the dwelling place of God--to convey the communal spirit and the sacredness of the Church. The life "in" the spirit in the church points to the day when the reconciliation began in the Church is complete and embracing to all people.

Like the new creation, man is love. The gift of the Spirit is love, faith is the recipient of love. Man's whole life is yielded to God. The Christian is to love and be loved. He must give of himself, deny all personal aspirations (worldly goods) and exemplify love in a concern for others. One in the spirit is the manifestation of the power of God working within him. Man is the earthen vessel, a clay pot, into which a loving father pours the Holy Spirit. If he walks in the spirit, he can enjoy the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentle-



ness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. These gifts are so freely and abundantly given that the vessels overflow. Receptivity becomes activity. Once man dies into life, he has to change and he has to share the good news.

This newness of life cannot be contained autonomously. The new creation walking in love, must obey the commandments--"You shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37), and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:39).<sup>99</sup> The Christian must be concerned and involved! This Christian concern should include not only the individual by also the koininia.

Paul admonished and chastised any covetousness, self-righteousness or exploitation. He discouraged the use of glossolalia. He rebuked the Corinthians for their misuse of the Lord's supper. The "love feast" or "agape" supper was celebrated by rich and poor both of whom were to share alike. The affluent and prestigious often ate first and left little for the poor whose contribution at best was meager. To Paul, this destroyed the love and spiritual blessing for which it was intended.<sup>100</sup> He warned his church against the ways of sin and the wrath of God. Also, he cautioned them not to be self-righteous or complacent in their assurance of acceptance or the Day of Judgment. Salvation by grace was a gift of God. In whatever manner Paul addressed his churches, his primary purpose was the edification of the law of Christ--faith, hope and the greatest of all--love!

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>A. Austin Foster, The Message of Robert Browning (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Browning, "Cleon," The Complete Poetical Works of Browning, ed. Horace E. Scudder (Cambridge: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1895), p. 358.

This and all subsequent references to the poetry will be to this edition.

Quotations from the Bible are presented from the King James Version.

<sup>3</sup>"Abt Vogler," p. 383.

<sup>4</sup>The Ring and the Book, p. 506.

<sup>5</sup>"Prospice," p. 395.

<sup>6</sup>Thomas Carlyle, "The Hero as Poet. . . .," English Prose of the Victorian Era, ed. Charles Frederick Harrold and William D. Templeman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938; Sixteenth printing, 1974), p. 183.

This and all subsequent references to Carlyle will be to this edition.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>8</sup>Stockton Axson, "Browning: His Times, His Art, His Philosophy," The Rice Institute Pamphlet, XVIII, No. 4 (October, 1931), 146.

<sup>9</sup>Carlyle, p. 184.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. See: Rom. 16:25; I Cor. 2:7; II Tim. 1:9.

<sup>11</sup>Carlyle, p. 185.

<sup>12</sup>Mary Ellen Chase, The Bible and the Common Reader (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 296.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 292.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 304.



<sup>15</sup>Rosemary Sprague, Forever in Joy (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1965), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>For detailed discussion see: D. E. H. Whitely, The Theology of Paul (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), Chapters I, II, III.

<sup>18</sup>William Baird, Paul's Message and Mission (New York, and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 22.

<sup>19</sup>See: I Cor. 15:42-53; Eph. 2:12; I Thess. 4:3-8; II Tim. 2:17-18. Browning's: "Caliban upon Setebos," "Cleon," "Karshish."

<sup>20</sup>Alfred Tennyson, "In Memoriam," The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson, ed. W. J. Rolfe (Cambridge: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), p. 198.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., XXXIV, p. 171; LV, LVI, p. 176.

<sup>22</sup>Fifine at the Fair, XXXIX, p. 707.

<sup>23</sup>Elizabeth Barrett, "The Cry of the Children," Poetry of the Victorian Period, ed. Buckley and Woods (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1965), p. 382.

<sup>24</sup>During the nineteenth century, scholars were beginning to interpret the "ethics" of Paul, and their investigations paralleled the years of Browning's wrestling with doubt. Considering his profound knowledge of the Bible, it is a reasonable assumption that the poet read these new interpretations with interest. Aware of this new ethic viewpoint and consideration of Paul, Browning could reasonably have recognized his own affinity with the mind of Paul. See: Victor Paul Furnish, Theology and Ethics in Paul (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1968), Appendix pp. 242-251.

<sup>25</sup>St. Paul, too, was exposed to the conflict between spiritual religion and pretentious ceremonies, and he dealt with this problem in his epistle to the church of Colossae. "His rejection of the ascetic practices popular in the East is expressive of the final harmony attained by him in the disciplining of his many-sided nature in which the ascetic tendency was held in check by a clear realization of its dangers."

[ sic ital ]

Ernest Sutherland Bates, ed., The Bible Designed to Be Read As Living Literature (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1936; Sixteenth printing, 1943), p. 1167.



<sup>26</sup>Foster, p. 175.

<sup>27</sup>Paracelsus, p. 47.

<sup>28</sup>Heb. 5:11.

<sup>29</sup>"Christmas-Eve," p. 323.

<sup>30</sup>Hugh Martin, The Faith of Robert Browning (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1963), p. 45.

<sup>31</sup>Four accounts of this even appear in the New Testament (Acts 9:3-12; 22:6-21; 26:12-18; Gal. 1:12-16). In his epistles, Paul refers to it as the work of divine grace and power, transforming and commissioning him as Christ's messenger (I Cor. 9:16-17; 15:10; Eph. 3:7-9; I Tim. 1:12-16).

<sup>32</sup>This is one of the most controversial verses.

The human estimate of men was abolished at the Cross. . . . standards of value disappear in the light of Calvary. . . .

When Paul goes on to say that even though he may have "once regarded Christ from a human point of view," he does so no longer, he must not be taken as meaning more than the words convey. . . . Equally impossible is the idea that Paul refers to his knowledge of the earthly life and deeds of Jesus. Whether or not he had come into contact with Jesus matters little.

The Interpreter's Bible (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), X, 336-337.

<sup>33</sup>A dramatic monologue consists of a narrative spoken by a single character, enhancing his own comments and enlarging upon the circumstances of which he is speaking. From his own knowledge of the events described or by inference from the poem itself, the reader can assess the mind and integrity of the narrator and the value of his views. Browning's fondness for the form provided him with the technical impersonality of the dramatist rather than the exploitation of a poet's own personality. Although Browning was basically a very private person and enjoyed an unblemished reputation, by employing the dramatic monologue, he could communicate with his public a persona rather than as a person.

Wherever a dramatic monologue is quoted, this writer believes that character's statement consistent with or illustrative of the poet's own attitudes.



<sup>34</sup>See: I Cor. 5:4.

<sup>35</sup>See: Rom. 12:3, 16; I Cor. 4:6.

<sup>36</sup>See: I Cor. 8:1.

<sup>37</sup>See: Rom. 1:20; II Cor. 12:9.

<sup>38</sup>See: Rom. 7:6.

<sup>39</sup>"This letter of St. Paul to the churches of Galatia has been called the Christian declaration of independence because of its bold assertion that this new religion is, indeed, new and not based upon the old."

Chase, p. 296.

"Epistle to the Galatians, a short but very important letter of Paul, containing his passionate polemic against the perversion or contamination of the Gospel of God's grace. It has aptly been described as 'the Magna Charta of spiritual emancipation' and it remains as the abiding monument of the liberation of Christianity from the trammals of legalism."

The Zondervan Bible Dictionary, ed. Merrill C. Tenny (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), p. 294.

"Paul's Liberalism appears at its best in his letter to the Galatians, termed by Professor Edgar J. Goodspeed 'a charter of religious freedom.' Its immediate occasion was the backsliding of the churches founded by him in the cities of Galatia which under the influence of other teachers had reverted to a narrow Judaizing insistence upon the ceremonial side of the Mosaic law. Paul realized clearly that this tendency, if allowed to develop, would make Christianity into a local Jewish heresy instead of the world religion which he conceived it to be. Hence the energy of his denunciation, rivaling the utterance of the Old Testament prophets in its contempt for empty forms and ritual." [sic ital]

Bates, 1113.

<sup>40</sup>"Christmas-Eve," p. 322.

<sup>41</sup>"A Death in the Desert," p. 386.

<sup>42</sup>Ferishtah's Fancies, p. 932.

<sup>43</sup>Martin, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup>See: I Thess. 3:11-13.

<sup>45</sup>See: Heb. 3:15.

<sup>46</sup>The Ring and the Book, p. 448.

<sup>47</sup>"Easter-Day." p. 335.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 332.

<sup>49</sup>Ferishtah's Fancies, p. 937.

<sup>50</sup>See: Col. 2:9. Also, see: W. David Shaw, The Dialectical Temper (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 198.

<sup>51</sup>See: Phil. 2:12.

<sup>52</sup>"Bishop Blougram's Apology" p. 355.

<sup>53</sup>Axson, p. 193.

For Paul's military metaphors see: I Thess. 5:8; Eph. 6:10-17; Col. 2:5; II Cor. 6:7; 10:46.

<sup>54</sup>See: Titus 2:2-3.

<sup>55</sup>Axson, p. 188.

<sup>56</sup>For detailed study of the poet's "soul" in Pauline, Paracelsus, and Sordello, see: Thomas J. Collins, Robert Browning's Moral-Aesthetic Theory 1833-1855 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967).

<sup>57</sup>Paracelsus, p. 17. See: Eph. 6:15.

<sup>58</sup>The Interpreter's Bible (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955). XI, 91.

<sup>59</sup>See: Rom. 9:21; Heb. 11:4.

<sup>60</sup>See: II Cor. 5:17.

<sup>61</sup>See: Rom. 9:12.

<sup>62</sup>See: Rom. 12:11; Heb. 6:12.

<sup>63</sup>"Epilogue," p. 1007.

<sup>64</sup>Ferishtah's Fancies, p. 936.



<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 932. See: II Tim. 1:6-10.

<sup>66</sup>See: I Cor. 3:5-6.

<sup>67</sup>The Ring and the Book, p. 564.

<sup>68</sup>Axson, p. 163.

<sup>69</sup>The Interpreter's Bible, X, 405. Also see: Col. 2:18.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>See: Rom. 1:21.

<sup>72</sup>Responding to the Corinthians, "Paul set forth the general nature of the social obligations involved and the pragmatic character of all conduct. Only in his treatment of women did the ascetic strain inseparable from the mystic element in him interfere with the rationality of his outlook." [sic ital]  
Bates, p. 1121.

<sup>73</sup>Chase, p. 288.

<sup>74</sup>See: II Cor. 5:1.

<sup>75</sup>See: Rom. 7:2; I Cor. 7:39.

<sup>76</sup>"Gold Hair," p. 378.

<sup>77</sup>As quoted in: Sprague, p. 144.

<sup>78</sup>Chase, p. 302.

<sup>79</sup>The Interpreter's Bible, X, 566.

<sup>80</sup>Foster, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>82</sup>The Ring and the Book, p. 485.

<sup>83</sup>The Interpreter's Bible, X, 196.

<sup>84</sup>Resurrection and Judgment (Eph. 2:13; Col. 12:13; II Cor. 1:9; II Tim. 1:10). Heaven is now (II Cor. 11:25-26; Phil. 1:18-26).

<sup>85</sup>Foster, p. 15.

<sup>86</sup>"Prospice," p. 395.

<sup>87</sup>This poem is best remembered for its "Prologue."

Good, to forgive;  
 Best, to forget!  
 Living, we fret;  
 Dying, we live.  
 Fretless and free,  
 Soul, clap thy pinion!  
 Earth have dominion,  
 Body, o'er thee!

Wander at will  
 Day after day--  
 Wander away,  
 Wandering still--  
 Soul that canst roar!  
 Body may slumber:  
 Body shall cumber  
 Soul-flight no more.

Waft of soul's wing!  
 What lies above?  
 Sunshine and Love,  
 Skyblue and Springs!  
 Body hides--where?  
 Ferns of all feather,  
 Mosses and heather,  
 Yours be the care.

<sup>88</sup>See: Heb. 12:14-17.

<sup>89</sup>La Saisiaz, p. 854.

<sup>90</sup>Paracelsus, p. 16.

<sup>91</sup>"A Death in the Desert," p. 386.

<sup>92</sup>This volume was published on the day of the poet's death.  
 The "Epilogue" reiterates his earliest affirmation of immortality.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time  
 When you set your fancies free,



Will they pass to where--by death, fools think,  
 imprisoned--  
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you  
 loved so,  
 --Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!  
 What had I on earth to do  
 With the slothful, with the mawkish, the un-  
 manly?  
 Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivell  
 --Being--who?

One who never turned his back but marched  
 breast forward.  
 Never doubted clouds would break,  
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted,  
 wrong would triumph,  
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
 Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time  
 Greet the unseen with a cheer!  
 Bib him forward, breast and back as either  
 should be,  
 "Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed,--fight on,  
 fare ever  
 There as here!"

<sup>93</sup>"Works," p. 1007.

<sup>94</sup>The Appendix is provided for the convenience of the reader in order that he may have a ready reference to Paul's theology and a background for his understanding of its pervasiveness throughout Browning's poetry.

<sup>95</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, S. J., Pauline Theology: A Brief Sketch (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentic-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 9.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>98</sup>For discussion of Paul's neglect of the term "forgiveness" see: John Knox, Chapters in a Life of Paul (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1950), p. 147.

<sup>99</sup>See: Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; Col. 3:14.

<sup>100</sup>See: Whitely. pp. 166-185. Baptism and Eucharist.



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