WORDS WORTH AS A CITIZEN

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WORDS WORTH AS A CITIZEN

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State Teachers College in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Decatur, Texas

August, 1948.

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CHAPTER I

AN AGE OF REVOLUTION

The later eighteenth century into which William Wordsworth was born and the first part of the nineteenth century into which he lived was a period of revolution in Europe. The thought and the events of this period had a great deal of influence in making Wordsworth the kind of citizen that he was. When considering the changes that came about in the revolutionary period, one often thinks primarily of the French Revolution. However, back of the political events were trends of thought that initiated the changes which the Revolution only matured.\footnote{Crane Brinton, \textit{A Decade of Revolution}, p. 276.} It has been said that a true revolution is "simply a transformation, rapid only by comparison with the long unfolding of human history in the ideas that govern men's minds."\footnote{Crane Brinton, \textit{The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists}, p. 3.} That these ideas which govern men's minds are very closely linked with the political, social, and literary changes of any age is evident.
In the eighteenth century a group of writers known then as the *philosophes* began to denounce the evils of the Old Regime. They advanced ideas which tended to discredit most of the theological, political, and social beliefs of the time. Voltaire and his followers called rationalists tried to solve the problems of society by reason, while Rousseau and his followers known as romanticists tried to solve problems through the authority of the feelings or the moral impulses. All of them preached reforms, many of which were the very ones matured by the Revolution. Because the rationalistic philosophers put so much faith in the power of reason, the eighteenth century is often referred to as the Age of Reason. This group believed that it was only through reason that the secrets of nature and of man's being were explainable. Their political ideas set forth the rights of the individual. Thus the rationalists criticized the various established institutions including the "very authority of the church and of the state."

All beliefs, customs, laws and institutions, the rationalists declared must be submitted to the test of reason, and whatever is not reasonable must be discarded summarily.3

Perhaps the most eloquent expressions of rationalism

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came from Voltaire, who at the age of seventeen had gained some recognition. Forced to leave France because of his ideas, Voltaire went to England, where he studied the "institution, the philosophy, the science, and the literature of England." He became interested in the writings of John Locke and was greatly influenced by them. The English influence is quite discernible in his Lettres Philosophiques, which he published after his return to France. In this widely-read work Voltaire did not hesitate to attack all the evils of the day. The religious intolerance and persecution, which were prevalent in France at that time, received much criticism. "Though Voltaire was bitter in his denunciation of all dogmatic and authoritative religions, the Church of Rome was the special target of his attacks." He demanded religious freedom for the masses, but did not advocate government by the people. In spite of any weaknesses in Voltaire's philosophy the masses of the Revolution looked on him as the man who "prepared us for freedom".4

The Age of Reason had not run its full course by a great deal when the philosophers began to see that there was a flaw in the doctrine of reason. Thus it was necessary for philosophers "to execute a strategic retreat" from

the position they had taken regarding abstract reason. Throughout the period of growing discontent there still remained an optimistic view that whatever was wrong would at some time be set right.

A change in thought or a breakdown in rationalism came at the middle of the eighteenth century. The narrow and cramped conception of man's reason was replaced by a theory much more adequate to his understanding. Pure intellect as a basis for solving all problems no longer satisfied man. Neither did the rationalistic universe any longer satisfy his desire for novelty and excitement. These ideas were too "cold, systematic, and mechanical." The most enthusiastic advocate of the new trend of thought was Jean Jacques Rousseau. Having grown up without being subjected to any discipline and having spent twenty years in an aimless career of vagabondage, Rousseau was quite impatient of restraint. He first came to the attention of the public through an essay entitled Has the Progress of the Sciences and the Arts Contributed to Corrupt or Purify Morals? He answered by saying men were worse

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5 Carl L. Becker, The Heavenly City of Eighteenth Century Philosophers (Hereafter referred to as the Heavenly City, pp. 84-86.  
6 Ibid., pp. 137-138.  
7 Charles Edwin Vaughn, The Romantic Revolt, pp. 3-4.  
for civilization, because it had corrupted their natural goodness. In another essay, On the Origin of Inequality in Man, he tried to show that inequality and injustice did not exist in primitive times. If men were bad yet naturally good, something had caused them to degenerate. In subsequent works Rousseau made a plea for the simple life or a "back to nature" movement to replace the artificialities of a complex age. This idea might be called the key to the Romantic Revival. In Emile Rousseau said that children should develop according to their own nature. This book became an "epoch-making book" in the history of education, because of its emphasis on individualism and natural growth.

After the publication of Emile came Rousseau's Social Contract, a treatise on politics. In this work Rousseau says civil societies exist through the surrender by the members of their individual right to the general will. Sovereignty, therefore, should rest with the people, and any government in existence should derive its authority from the people. The fact that men did not possess freedom was evidence that their sovereignty had been usurped by the rulers. Then people should have the right to depose the ruler or to change the government so that it would restore the freedom of the individual. Regardless of its flaws in logic, this book is "one of the most influential treatises of all time."
The measures framed in the early days of the French Revolution almost without exception bore its mark. "In fact, the very watchwords of the Revolution, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,' were taken from it." Few of Rousseau's ideas were original, but it was through his eloquence that they were made to appeal to men. Rousseau thought that man had gone too far away from nature and thus had brought about most of his own "misery, injustice, and inequality." His central idea, a "return to nature" was the most important controlling influence of the romantic movement. 9

To what extent the philosophers were responsible for the Revolution is uncertain. They had hoped to accomplish their reforms through an enlightened public rather than by violent revolution. Perhaps the "evils and abuses of the Old Regime, not the philosophes, were the primary causes of the great upheaval." However, the philosophes did cause the evils and abuses to stand out more clearly and their attacks on existing institutions greatly weakened the respect for them. These philosophers had a "mission to perform, a message to deliver to mankind." Thus it was with a great deal of enthusiasm that they set about their task.

We can watch this enthusiasm, this passion for liberty and justice for truth and humanity, rise and rise throughout the century until it becomes a delirium, until it culminates, in some symbolical sense, in that half admirable, half pathetic spectacle of June 8, 1794, when Citizen Robespierre, with a bouquet in one hand and a torch in the other, inaugurated the new religion of humanity by lighting the conflagration that was to purge the world of ignorance, vice and folly.10

Since the principles for the reorganization of society came to be based on the doctrines of civil liberty and constitutional government propounded by the philosophers, it is certain that the Revolution would not have been the same without the philosophers.11

Assuming that the French Revolution did come as a result of earlier thought and knowing that the events influenced Wordsworth so greatly, it is well to review some actual happenings of the Revolution. Up to revolutionary times a large majority of the people of France had been peasants who followed the king without any thought of doing otherwise. Their ignorance and lack of power would have kept them from accomplishing a great deal even had they thought of not following their king.12 However, by the eighteenth century the townsmen had increased in numbers as well as in wealth.

10 Becker, *Heavenly City*, p. 43.
Though influences already discussed these people were becoming very conscious of the fact that the upper Estate enjoyed all of the privileges. They began to think that "government of the people, by the king, for the nobles and the rich was oppressive and unjust." 13 Perhaps by the latter half of the eighteenth century a large part of French society had responded to the mental revolution, "a necessary forerunner of the actual revolution." The people no longer believed in the divine right of kings or in the existing system of government. Thus the bourgeoisie began the task of fashioning a new system of both government and society which, as a whole, called for "as thorough a refashioning as mankind has ever conceived." 14 By the summer of 1786 the government had not reached a solution to the financial problem and as a result was completely paralyzed. The only means of avoiding bankruptcy was to do as popular will demanded. The first States-General to be called since 1614 met at Versailles on May 5, 1789. 15

13 Ibid., p. 173.
15 Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, p. 2.
The calling of the States-General might be called a step toward revolution, and then when the commoners won their point concerning the organization of the bodies into the National Assembly, it can be said that the first step of the Revolution had been accomplished.¹⁶ The first few weeks of the National Assembly were critical days. The members lacked training and were inclined to treat all questions from an emotional angle. Therefore the rumors concerning the reversal of the king's orders in regard to the Assembly and the concentration of troops near Versailles and Paris led to insurrection. Swept on by emotion, the populace stormed the Bastille and literally "leveled it to the ground."¹⁷ The symbol of absolutism had been destroyed, and "the Fall of the Bastille was heard around the world."¹⁸

Peasant uprisings continued throughout France until the grievances of the peasants were taken up in the Assembly on August 4. When the Assembly adjourned near dawn, many abuses and privileges had been abolished.

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¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 5-7.
¹⁸ Schevill, op. cit., p. 397.
During this one famous night the National Assembly had voted to abolish the feudal dues, the hunting rights, the sale of public offices, the tithes, the privileges of the nobles and clergy in respect to taxation—in fact most of the privileges of the upper classes.

The session then ended by proclaiming Louis XVI "the restorer of French Liberty." However, it seems that one demand led to another. More rumors, suspicions, and discontent led to "The March of the Women to Versailles." The crowd insisted on taking the royal family back to Paris, and ten days later the Assembly also moved to Paris, where its work was continued. The Assembly voted many reforms, taking privileges from the upper class and giving more rights to the common man. Legislative power was vested in a Legislative Assembly.

In addition to the political reforms many religious reforms were voted. All laws which had deprived people of religious freedom were abolished, and the Catholic Clergy were no longer a separate class. The Assembly tried to make the church into a national church by passing a law called the Civil Constitution of Clergy. This law, the product of men "too practical to understand the illusions of their fellows, yet not practical enough to understand their own," made a division

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19 Becker, Modern History, pp. 223-225.
20 Ergang, op. cit., pp. 659-663.
in French society that had to be closed by force. The law also resulted in the attempted flight of the royal family and a sharp division of opinion in Paris. Many of the clergy as well as the Pope became vigorous opponents of the Assembly. However, Louis was reinstated and he accepted the constitution on September 30, 1791. The National Assembly having completed a "remarkable work of national renovation," thus came to a close.

The Legislative Assembly which met on October 1, 1791, was also doomed to failure. Party divisions within the Assembly, the non-juring priests, and the other absolute rulers of Europe caused discontent. The radicals inside the Assembly were determined to dethrone the king. Political clubs which stirred up agitation sprang into existence. The Jacobin club was one of the most active and influential.

The interests of the patriots of the first Assembly were the interests of moderate men; their ideas were largely the ideas of immoderate men, of men determined once and for all to bring to earth those fair abstractions of Justice and Happiness... Their ideas, fitfully but unmistakably, triumphed over their interests, made their constitutional monarchy impossible, and prepared for the first republic.

21 Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, p. 62.
23 Ibid., pp. 666-667.
24 Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, p. 63.
Marat, Danton, and Robespierre became ruthless leaders and apostles of terror. They and the Girondists wished to abolish the monarchy and set up a republic. It was through their influence that war was declared in April 20, 1782. "Thus began a war which was destined to extend its dominion until it had involved all Europe and carried the French revolutionary ideas around the world." Soon several agitating events led to the suspension of the king. Then came the official establishment of the French Republic, and next the Terror. The first step to the spread of terror was the September Massacres. This action can be accounted for only by saying that the people at that time possessed that "nameless tension and excitement in which crowds become mobs." 

The National Convention soon put a temporary end to the radical uprisings. However, two groups in the convention, the Girondists and the Mountain, continued radical action. Louis XVI was condemned to die, and under the Committee of Public Safety the Terror continued. The Mountain soon triumphed over the Girondists, who became victims of the Terror. The French Republic never knew peace.

25 Schevill, op. cit., pp. 405-406.
26 Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, p. 89.
27 Schevill, op. cit., pp. 409-411
For in these first few months between 1793-94 the experiment begun in 1789 with confidence and almost with unanimity ended in unconcealed dictatorship of a minority, in the exultation of the modest likes and dislikes of ordinary men into heroic loves and hates of men caught in the absurdities of a cause. 28

The suppression of the Catholic Church caused it to become one of the chief enemies of the Revolution. The religious turmoil was to continue until Napoleon realized that he needed the support of the Church. Thus Pope Pius VII was restored to the Papal States and the Concordat of 1802 was passed. 29 As the period of the Convention came to a close, the Directory with Napoleon as the leader became the governing body. Then came the Consulate with Napoleon as dictator and finally the Empire and the Emperor. 30 Through campaigns, coalitions, acquisitions, partitions, and retreats, Napoleon dominated Europe until his final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, June 18, 1815. 31

28  
Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, p. 117.

29  
A. J. Grant and Harold Temperly, Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, pp. 108-109.

30  
Ibid., p. 76.

31  
Schevill op. cit., pp. 423-446.
As has been indicated the Revolution was not confined to France, but spread to all parts of Europe. Its influence in England is of greatest interest in this study. During the whole eighteenth century England was regarded as a country of political uprisings. Of course, these uprisings did not take the violent form they had in France. Only a few individuals wanted extreme Parliamentary reform. However large numbers were hopeful of destroying the more "shocking inequalities." In London the London Corresponding Society duplicated the Jacobin Club of France, but in England the Society "never succeeded in capturing even a town government," nor did it in any affect the structure of British government. Perhaps this was due to the fact that William Pitt did all in his power to keep the revolutionary spirit from spreading in England. After the massacres and the execution of Louis XVI Pitt supported by the king carried his policy of repression even further. However, the London Corresponding Society did spread over England. It even drew up plans for a constitution and celebrated the Fall of the Bastille. After the Declaration of War it was easy to label

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32 Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, pp. 68-73.
33 Ibid., p. 167.
34 Ergang, op. cit., p. 555.
the members of the societies as traitors. Thus prosecutions were begun in 1792. This policy only stirred the Jacobins to more determined action. They presented reforms to Parliament and even tried to hold a convention. Before the convention could get under way, the leaders were arrested. Soon Pitt began an even more active campaign of repression. In the years following 1794 Pitt steadily encroached upon those "sacred English liberties" until he became in many respects an absolute ruler. 35

It has been said that the French Revolution was "the most important event in English history." It helped to release forces which became decisive factors in the establishing of democratic government in Great Britain. At the same time it postponed liberal reform in Parliament for forty years. 36

If the philosophical writings previous to the Revolution inspired much of the revolutionary action in France, the French Revolution in turn inspired and influenced the political writings of that time. In England Edmund Burke became one of the most enthusiastic of the political philosophers. Although Burke had been outspoken in his defense

35 Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, pp. 168-172.
36 Ergang, op. cit., p. 555.
of the American Revolution, in his *Reflections on the French Revolution*, he took a definite stand against the French Revolution. To him the breakdown in existing institutions meant that society was reverting to a state of anarchy. Men should never be incited to disloyalty or to discontent with their rulers. Because of his love for the traditional, he put forth every effort to preserve the heritage of the past. Burke believed that progress should be accompanied by gradual change rather than by sudden change of a whole state of society. One's actions should be determined not by what he might do, but by "what humanity, reason and justice" tell him he ought to do. 38

Numerous books and pamphlets were written in reply to Burke's writings. Godwin's *Political Justice*, based on human perfectibility, was one of the important replies. Godwin stood for "cool rationalism" rather than the "emotional fervor" of Rousseau. He even looked forward to the time when man would be so reasonable and virtuous that he would require no political control. Reason depended upon the cultivation of knowledge. Other writers of the period believed

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37 Brinton, *A Decade of Revolution*, pp. 264-266.

38 Percy Hazen Huston, *Main Currents in English Literature*, pp. 258-259.
almost the opposite, that knowledge often "stifles man's natural ability to reason." Godwin's ideas were rather influential for a time, but soon lost their popularity.39

Thomas Paine's Rights of Man was a still more influential reply to Burke. Although Paine's book definitely set forth the philosophy of the Girondins, its style made it one of the most widely read books of the nineteenth century. Paine, who had traveled widely, was well acquainted with the people to whom the Revolution meant more than mere abstractions. His work is based on the "assumption that the common man, given freedom of opportunity and a proper education, can work out his own salvation." He also asserts that the government is best which governs the least. At the same time he distrusts the rich and powerful, and even looks to the government for protection of the common man.40

Burke, he said, was indifferent to the miseries of the poor, but extolled the sufferings of the upper class. As quoted by Vaughn, "He pities the plumage, he forgets the dying bird."41

The cross currents of opinion served to bring the issues of the Revolution before the people. The emotions aroused

40 Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, pp. 267-268.
41 Vaughn, op. cit., p. 139.
in favor of or against the Revolution were the very emotions that were most likely to give the revolutionary principles of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" a chance to do effective work.\footnote{42} "Liberalism, as yet indubitably monarchical but affirming the right of every people to share in the political direction of the state, had called attention to itself and could never again be treated as a negligible political force."\footnote{43}

The revival of literature was accelerated by finding an atmosphere charged with emotion. In many ways the Romantic Revival was synonymous to the spirit of the Revolution. A brief survey of the rise of romanticism will show these likenesses.

The Romantic Revival came between 1780 and 1830. The age of convention with its adherence to external rules was replaced by an "emotional enthusiasm which... suddenly burst forth to deluge Europe."

The eighteenth century had been aristocratic with a reliance upon general principles; the romantic period began with an assertion of the worth of the individual and a democratic revolt from the old aristocratic appeal of literature.\footnote{44}

\footnote{42} Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, pp. 188-189.
\footnote{43} Scheville, op. cit., p. 453.
\footnote{44} Houston, op. cit., p. 279.
Perhaps some clarification of the term romanticism is needed before the discussion proceeds. Many definitions have been associated with romanticism, and perhaps no single definition can include all the shades of meaning that the word includes. "Romanticism has been variously defined as the 'Renascence of Wonder'; Strangeness added to Beauty'; 'Return to the Middle Ages.'" All of these meanings are characteristic of the age that sought relief from the commonplace. 45

A more inclusive definition is given by Fairchild.

Romanticism is the endeavor, in the face of growing factual obstacles to achieve, to retain, or to justify that illusional view of the universe and of human life which is produced by an imaginative fusion of the familiar and strange, the known and the unknown, the real and the ideal, the finite and the infinite, the material and the spiritual, the natural and the supernatural. 46

A much shorter definition in which Vaughan combines two shades of meaning is probably sufficient.

It is the sense of mystery, the instinct of discontent with the world of 'dry light', of pure intellect, which in truth lies at the root of both. 47

After a period of artificialities and strict adherence to rules in literature there came a need for "fresh ideas"

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46 Fairchild, op. cit., p. 251.
47 Vaughan, op. cit., p. 4.
and individual ways of expressing one's self. "In novel, essay, and lyric men threw off the bonds of convention in search of a manner of expression peculiar to themselves." The world of nature such as mountains and lakes, and the common man took on a new dignity. An interest in mystery and the supernatural, and in strange moods brought about a striking change in the subjects, diction, and form of poetry. Thus we find the literature of the period making a desperate effort to break away from the "shackles of authority" in the same way that the common man did in the French Revolution. 48

Since the Romantic Revolt made itself more prominent in poetry than in other types of literature, it is through poetry that the movement will be traced. Although no group of poets possessed the same romantic tendencies, all of the poets who revolted against the ideas of the Augustan age have certain features in common. The most significant are

a ready openness to the influences of external nature, and an equally ready response to the tenderer springs of feeling; a poignant sympathy with the sadder side of man's experience; with the trouble that comes to him from without or what is yet more characteristic of the time, with the melancholy, sometimes of a more pensive, sometimes of a sterner cast, which besets him from within." 49

49 Vaughan, op. cit., p. 7.
James Thompson is generally thought to have begun the revolt against Pope. In his four books of *The Seasons* he has evidenced some real appreciation for natural scenery, although he has made use of much conventional phrasing. "The poem is historically important as the first example of the Miltonic revival which anticipated coming romanticism." Goldsmith was another precursor of the period who retained some of the tradition of Pope, but who expressed the new sentiment for common humanity and the new interest in nature. Gray and Collins also combine the nature element with the melancholy atmosphere. In all three poets it is the "still sad music of humanity" that appeals to us.

Just when it seemed that the future for romanticism was not so promising, William Cowper came to the attention of the literary world through the publication of *Table Talk*. His language was free of artificialities and his lines flowed "paragraph by paragraph" rather than "couplet by couplet". The *Task* goes even further in its innovations. The religious faith and love of external nature are expressed with eloquence. "The *Task* is probably the earliest poem in our language to reproduce to the imagination the effect left by a given locality...upon the eye."  

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Robert Burns was the most important precursor of romanticism. His poetry is characterized by three qualities. The worth of man and the dignity of human nature are ardently asserted. "A fine fervor, rich satire, and genial observation of humble social relations made these poems the freshest verse English literature had known for more than a century." The second quality is a deep sympathy for nature, and the third is the revival of various phases of Scottish life. "Burns is at his best when expressing "the loves and hates of man, his follies, and his struggles..." There is a passion in his poetry which his immediate forerunners lacked. Burns is highly successful and original in his satires. Both Pope and Burns excel in dramatic portraits, but the contrast is interesting. "Pope's portraits are masterpieces of analysis; those of Burns are dramatic creations." Burns' powers are at their height in his songs. "He has the rich humor, he has the lyric fervor, he has the genius for idealizing common things....." On publication of his Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, "the triumph of the romantic revolt was practically ensured." Then came the publication of Lyrical

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54 Houston, op. cit., pp. 275-276.
55 Vaughan, op. cit., pp. 31-33.
56 Ibid., p. 34.
57 Ibid., pp. 35-37.
Ballads by Wordsworth, the first great poet of the new era.\textsuperscript{58}

From this discussion of the characteristics of a few of the precursors of the romantic period one can see that the period of the Revolution was not essentially romantic. There was a mixture of rationalism and romanticism. Some of the writers were genuine rationalists and some were genuine romanticists, while others were a mixture of both.\textsuperscript{59}

However, as the century advanced the rationalistic conception of nature was gradually replaced by the sentimental conception. Love of external nature became an important element in romantic naturalism. The poet showed an increasingly genuine interest in natural scenes, an increasing tendency to relate them to subjective emotion, and an increasing tendency to represent nature in images derived from the qualities of the object itself rather than from some abstract standard of verbal propriety.\textsuperscript{61}

In the Romantic Movement, which had its beginnings along with those of the French Revolution, the spirit of freedom which brought about the Revolution became a dominant force. The desire for freedom in expression and for an unleashing of the imagination was a revolt against the age of Pope just

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{58} Houston, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 288.
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Fairchild, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 15.
  \item \textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 12
  \item \textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 124.
\end{itemize}
as the French Revolution was a revolt against autocratic government. Thus a demand for a recognition in politics of the rights of man as man is closely related to the desire for unbounded freedom of the individual in the language, form, and subject matter of poetry. The achievement of these desires brought democratic government and the Age of Romanticism.
CHAPTER II

WORDSWORTH'S POLITICAL IDEAS

The circumstances of Wordsworth's early life had perhaps as great an influence upon his beliefs as did the period in which he lived. Certainly the nature of the country around Cockermouth, Wordsworth's birthplace, had a decided influence upon shaping his republican ideas. Wordsworth, the second of five children, was born at Cockermouth, Cumberland, April 7, 1770. There he grew up much like any other boy in similar circumstances until the death of both of his parents. As a substitute for the loss of parental affection he turned to nature. After the mother's death Wordsworth was sent to Hawkshead to school, where he was allowed to partake freely of the beauties of nature. Of his boyhood there he wrote:

Fair seed time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear.

The beauties of the country seemed better teachers to Wordsworth than those he found at Hawkshead. Perhaps his "remarkable susceptibility to the more imaginative and spiritual influences of nature" made this true. There he learned to know

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1 C. T. Winchester, William Wordsworth, pp. 5-7.

a man when he saw one. Distinction and rank were unknown in that region where men were charitable and free from pretense.  

It was my good fortune to have seen
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time.
The face of one, who whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood.

In October, 1787, Wordsworth left Hawkshead to enter St. John's College at Cambridge. There the sensitive young Wordsworth was rather unsocial and therefore unpopular with his fellow students. He formed no intimate friendships, and according to Brinton entered into a state of revolt against school practices. Because of his dissatisfaction with school he welcomed the vacation time. As he had no real home, he spent his vacations with relatives. During his last vacation from school Wordsworth and Robert Jones, "A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer," went on a walking trip to the Alps. At that time the Revolution in France was gathering momentum. The first anniversary of the Bastille was being celebrated, and there were high hopes for an ordered liberty. Although Wordsworth's interest at that time was no greater than that of any other liberal Englishman, the "character of his mind fitted

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4 Prelude, IX, ll. 217-222.

5 Winchester, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

him in a peculiar degree for receiving the full influence of the French Revolution. 7

....It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises and hail
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. 8

Because of the circumstances of Wordsworth's boyhood it is not surprising that the events seemed "nothing out of nature's certain course," and were thus received with optimism. The fact that Wordsworth's father had been a lawyer, and the fact that Wordsworth had gone to college with the hope of becoming a lawyer may have helped to intensify his interest in political matters. 9

It was not until the following year that Wordsworth became highly enthusiastic concerning the Revolution. After leaving Cambridge he spent several months in London. With a great deal of concern England was watching events across the channel. Wordsworth was influenced by what Fox and Edmund Burke had said in Parliament about the Revolution. 10 And Garrod says Erasmus Darwin, a prominent freethinker in religion

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7 Edward Dowden, The French Revolution and English Literature, p. 197.
8 Prelude, IX, ll. 237-243.
and an advanced radical in politics, was responsible for the revolutionary turn given to Wordsworth's mind in 1791. Whatever the cause Wordsworth became increasingly interested in the course of events.

After graduation from Cambridge Wordsworth returned to Paris "ostensibly to perfect himself in the language, but really, it is probable, to see and hear for himself the great drama enacting there." However, he seemed to remain only a curious spectator. From Paris he went to Orleans and then to Blois, where he first came to understand the Revolution. His association with a group of young army officers led to an acquaintanceship with Michel Beaupuy. In his and Beaupuy's walks through the country they came in contact with much poverty and oppression which Wordsworth believed to be, to a great extent, the result of absolute rule. Beaupuy pointed out that it was evils of that kind which the Revolution was fighting. Wordsworth came to believe that the Revolution could and would bring about a regeneration of society in Europe.

.... I with him believed
That a benignant spirit was abroad
Which might not be withstood, that poverty
Abject as this would in a little time
Be found no more.

11 H. W. Garrod, Wordsworth, p. 56.
12 Winchester, op. cit., p. 20.
13 Dowden, op. cit., p. 201.
and finally he

Should see the people having a strong hand
In framing their own laws.\textsuperscript{14}

Wordsworth excused the haste and violence of the early
months of the Revolution by saying they were "only troubled
dawn of a brighter day." Winchester says "it was the first
awakening within him of a great, brooding, unselfish enthu-
siasm,"\textsuperscript{15} while Havens says his stay in France did not add
qualities that were not already present, but merely "called
forth and helped to develop qualities that might otherwise
have lain dormant."\textsuperscript{16} He also says, "Beauuy and Wordsworth
were infected by the prevalent 'belief in the natural good-
ness and virtue of the people and in popular emotion as
being the voice of God.'"\textsuperscript{17} At the time of Wordsworth's
residence in Blois he evidently believed that England al-
ready enjoyed some of the benefits for which France was fight-
ing. In a letter of May 17, 1792, Wordsworth attempted to en-
courage William Mathews by telling him he had the "happiness
of being born in a free country, where every road is open,
and where talents and industry are more liberally rewarded

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{The Prelude}, IX, \textit{11}, 518-522, 530-531.

\textsuperscript{15} Winchester, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 22.

\textsuperscript{16} Raymond Dexter Havens, \textit{The Mind of a Poet}, p. 493.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 503.
than amongst any other nation of the universe." Or could it have been that Wordsworth was becoming dissatisfied with the course the Revolution was taking? Even as late as the September Massacres he expressed only slight doubt as to the course events would take before the final triumph of the Revolution. However he indicates that he still retained an unshaken faith in France.

Yet would I at this time with willing heart
Have undertaken for a cause so great
Service however dangerous.

Fortunately at this time Wordsworth was "forced by a gracious providence of Heaven" to return to England, or, as he says, "doubtless, I should have then made common cause with some who perished." He still retained hopes for the Revolution after his return to England, although those hopes were to suffer cruel disappointment.

On January 15, 1793, Richard Watson, Bishop of Landaff, published a sermon, The Wisdom and Goodness of God in Having Made Both Rich and Poor, and after the execution of Louis XVI he added an "Appendix" criticizing the French Revolution. In this "Appendix" the Bishop admitted that he approved the object

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18 Early Letters, p. 76.  
19 Prelude, x, 11. 152-154.  
19 Ibid., 11. 221-229.  
for which the French people began the Revolution. He then expressed a desire that France and other countries have a constitution like that of Great Britain, but he disapproved the abolition of the nobility, the seizure of church property, and the execution of the king. He disliked a republic more than any other form of government, because under it the people lived under the tyranny of their equals. He had a great deal to say concerning the security of property under British law. The Bishop thought the constitution needed no changes, but should such action become necessary, he did not believe peasants and mechanics capable of changing it. 22

The letter so incensed Wordsworth that he wrote a reply to it. "Because of the vicious purpose of Watson's arguments, and because Englishmen might be swayed by the magic of his name and the authority of his position, rather than by the merit of his doctrines, Wordsworth proposes to do all in his power to destroy Watson's influence by exposing his errors and his ignorance." 23 The letter really gives a complete statement as to Wordsworth's republican faith in 1793. In this Apology for the French Revolution Wordsworth very seriously reprimands the Bishop for bemoaning the death of Louis XVI, when he should bemoan the fact that a people would


23 G. W. Meyer, Wordsworth's Formative Years, p. 104.
put an individual in a position that would make him unaccountable to a "human tribunal." Wordsworth objects to a monarchical form of government because it is contrary to the nature of man.

The office of a king is a trial to which human virtue is not equal. Pure and universal representation, by which alone liberty can be secured, cannot, I think, exist together with monarchy.

He also denounces the system of hereditary authority on the grounds that many who inherit authority are not always capable of performing their duties. He said that hereditary nobility should cease and that "arbitrary distinctions between man and man" should be abolished. A republican form of government, one in which the governors and the governed would have the same interests, should be set up in the place of the hereditary system. Contrary to the Bishop's idea that peasants and mechanics should not legislate, Wordsworth says they make excellent legislators, because he has seen evidence of their success in Switzerland and France. He also cries out against the

26 Ibid., pp. 17-18
27 Ibid., p. 9.
28 Ibid., p. 8.
Bishop's approval of the existing judicial system. Concerning this question Wordsworth's personal experiences with the courts had made him bitter. Thus he says,

I congratulate your Lordship upon your enthusiastic fondness for the judicial proceedings of this country. I am happy to find you have passed through life without having your fleece torn from your back in the thorny labyrinth of litigation.\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{In defense of the excesses of the Revolution Wordsworth says that only a few individuals had suffered, while the masses of the French people had benefited.}\textsuperscript{30} However, he agrees that the methods, sometimes necessary, to achieve the republican form of government are not pleasant.

\textit{Alas, the obstinacy and perversion of man is such that Liberty is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of Despotism to overthrow him, and, in order to reign in peace must establish herself by violence.}\textsuperscript{31}

Meyer says that the vehement tone of Wordsworth's letter was due in part to his inability to get the funds he needed to return to Annette Valon and his daughter Caroline. The injustice of the courts was responsible for his not getting the money from Lord Lonsdale. Then war was declared, and the possibility of returning to Annette became more remote. Added to this Wordsworth's uncle had asked him not to come to his home again.

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.
These conditions should be kept in mind in considering Wordsworth's angry outcry against the social practices of England.\textsuperscript{32}

Wordsworth's first great disappointment in the Revolution came when on February 1, England and France went to war.

\ldots\ldots No shock given to my mortal nature
Had I known down to that very moment.\textsuperscript{33}

In speaking of his beloved England where he wanted to remain he said,

\begin{quote}
Now was I from that pleasant station torn
And tossed about in a whirlwind.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

"Although Wordsworth tried to sustain his faith in the face of events in France his "innermost being underwent a disruption and a disintegration." First he lost faith in the leaders and next in the people themselves. Finally he gave up in despair. "The world in which he lived seemed to have fallen to pieces about him."\textsuperscript{35}

In \textit{Guilt and Sorrows} we find Wordsworth again bitterly criticizing the English society of 1793. His letter to Richard Watson had not exhausted his desire for republican reform in England. Through the two main characters Wordsworth pictures

\begin{footnotes}
\item[32] Meyer, \textit{op. cit.}, 94-95.
\item[33] \textit{Prelude}, I, 11. 268-269.
\item[34] \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 282-283.
\item[35] Laura J. Wylie, \textit{Social Studies in English Literature}, p. 125.
\end{footnotes}
the evils of war. Domestic inequality, lust for empire, and injustice are some of the prevalent evils which are pictured. He brings out the evil results of an imperialistic policy.

Nor only is the walk of private life
Unblessed by Justice and the kindly train
Of Peace and Truth, while injury and strife
Outrage and deadly Hate usurp their reign.
From the pale line to either frozen main,
The nations, forced at home in bonds to drink,
The dregs of Wretchedness, for empire strain.

Wordsworth is crying out for republican action against monarchial society. He wishes to arouse the people to fight for the cause of liberty and the rights of man.

Perhaps this denunciation of English society was the first step toward Godwinism, to which, in his perplexed state of mind Wordsworth turned for a brief period. Up to the time of his great disappointment Wordsworth believed that the essential condition of a good life for the individual was a free development toward nature, and for society it was a submission to the general will. As a "government is the creature of the General Will of a society," the acts of the government were to correspond as nearly as possible to the general will.

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36 Meyer, op. cit., p. 112.  
37 Ibid., p. 117.  
38 Quoted by Meyer, op. cit., p. 116.  
39 Ibid., p. 144.  
40 Ibid., p. 133.  
41 Garrod, op. cit., p. 66.
In fact, it was the general will that made a collection of individuals a society.\textsuperscript{42} Then Wordsworth realized that his ideal society was a failure, that "the French Republic was as bellicose and unjust as the old monarchy had been." Thus he knew that his pattern of government would no better fit the society of England than did the old government.\textsuperscript{43} He turned against Rousseau and the French revolution in favor of Godwinism or extreme rationalism.\textsuperscript{44} However, the dogma did not satisfy him except for a short period. He only became more confused, "more misguided and misleading" until

\begin{quote}
\textbf{... demanding formal proof,}
And seeking it in everything he lost
All feeling of conviction, and in fine
Sick, wearied out with contrarities
Yielded up moral questions in despair.\textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

In a letter written to William Mathews, June, 1794, Wordsworth's political sentiments were apparently unchanged.

I disapprove of monarchical and aristocratical governments however modified. Hereditary distinctions, and privileged orders of every species, I think, must necessarily counteract the progress of human improvement: hence it follows that I am not amongst the admirers of the British Constitution.\textsuperscript{46}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[42] Brinton, \textit{Political Ideas}, pp. 51-52.
\item[43] Ibid., p. 54.
\item[44] Garrod, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 69.
\item[45] \textit{Prelude}, XI, 11. 301-305.
\item[46] \textit{Early Letters}, pp. 119-120.
\end{footnotes}
However, in another letter written in December of the same year, he seems to have changed his attitude somewhat. He says that there are parts of the Constitution upon which "too high a value cannot be set." The government, in Wordsworth's opinion, seemed to have become more tolerant of "correction of abuses."  

Wordsworth did not escape untouched by the reaction and policy of suppression which set in in England after the declaration of war. His brother Richard wrote William that he should be extremely cautious in expressing his political opinions, because through suspension of the Habeas Corpus Acts the ministers had great powers. Dorothy answered the letter and assured Richard that Wordsworth was very cautious in expressing his political opinions as he was well aware of the consequences of a "contrary conduct." However, in a letter to Mathews, May 23, 1794, Wordsworth says that he is of the "odious class of men called democrats," and indicates that he intends to remain so. Later Wordsworth's radical ideas and associations with Englishmen of dangerous repute caused

47 Ibid., p. 46.
48 Ibid., n., p. 117.
49 Ibid., p. 107.
the government to place a secret agent in the vicinity, in 1797.\textsuperscript{51}

There is some disagreement among critics as to the exact period that Wordsworth repudiated his Godwinian theories, but it is generally agreed that in \textit{The Borderers} Wordsworth pictures his own perverse rationalism. Some believe that at the same time he gave expression to his theories, he rejected them.\textsuperscript{52}

Garrod says that Wordsworth seems to have receded from Godwinism not by "gradations, but suddenly."\textsuperscript{53} Wordsworth himself tells us that the means through which he was restored was Dorothy assisted by nature. As to the change in Wordsworth after giving up Godwinism Dowden says that the person who emerged from the "intellectual perplexity and moral confusion" was not a new self, but the same Wordsworth grown to manhood.\textsuperscript{54}

Of himself Wordsworth says that he was no more changed "than a clouded and waning moon." Payne is inclined to believe that Wordsworth became a conservative by natural bent, and that whatever radicalism he retained was the product of intellectual conviction.\textsuperscript{55} Regardless of these various opinions

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{51} Hyer, op. cit., p. 28. \\
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p. 176. \\
\textsuperscript{53} Garrod, op. cit., p. 92. \\
\textsuperscript{54} Edward Dowden, \textit{Studies in Literature}, p. 142. \\
\textsuperscript{55} William M. Payne, \textit{The Greater English Poets of the Nineteenth Century}, p. 143.
\end{flushright}
Wordsworth did become a "rigid conservative distrustful of attempts to reform people in the mass."\textsuperscript{56}

Soon after a trip to France in 1801 Wordsworth began to live in comparative seclusion. Some of his critics thought that this isolation caused him to lose interest in and knowledge of public affairs. However, he did not become totally indifferent to the "political and social evolution of his age."\textsuperscript{57} His letters, political sonnets, and \textit{Convention of Cinctra} show that he remained interested in social and political events. At Racedown and Alfoxden Wordsworth was "forging a new anchor" for his belief in the natural goodness of man. This effort resulted in the greatest of his political writings, the political sonnets and the \textit{Tract on the Convention of Cinctra}. He had found that he could no longer put his trust in tyrant-ruled France.\textsuperscript{58} Yet the hardships and degradation of the working classes and the vulgar luxury of the nobility in England often tended to dishearten him.\textsuperscript{59} In one of these moods he said,

\begin{quote}
Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} Winchester, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 240-241.
\textsuperscript{57} Payne, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{58} Brinton, \textit{Political Ideas}, pp. 54-55.
\textsuperscript{59} Winchester, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 241.
Of stagnant waters . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
Oh! raise us up, return to us again,
And give us manners, virtue freedom and power.

However, England came more and more to embody, in her past achievements and in her present possibilities, that spiritual and natural life which was to him the good life. His sonnets, which catch and bring to focus all his scattered and emotional patriotism, are "supreme expressions of the passion and faith of patriotism." He expresses a melancholy feeling in the sonnet "On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic."

Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great is passed away.

Wordsworth extends comfort to Toussaint L'ouverture and praise to the king of Sweden. With Napoleon's offensive policy he expresses indignation.

When looking on the present face of things,
I see one Man, of men the meanest too!
Raised up to sway the world to do, undo,
With mighty Nations for his underlings,
The great events with which old story rings
Seem vain and hollow; I find nothing great:
Nothing is left which I can venerate.\(^{64}\)

In the "High Minded Spaniard" bitter irony is expressed.

Wordsworth could bear the loss of life and the waste of land,
but when Napoleon ventured to speak

Of benefits, and of a future day
When our enlightened minds shall bless his sway;
Then the strained heart of fortitude proves weak:
Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare
That he has power to inflict what we lack strength
to bear.\(^{65}\)

On hearing that the campaign had reached Switzerland,
Wordsworth's ideal country, he exhorts the people to "cleave

to that which still is left."\(^{66}\) Other sonnets indicate that
he was interested although anxious about events in Europe.

Another year! --another deadly blow!
Another might Empire overthrown!\(^{67}\)

In the **Convention of Cintra**, Wordsworth's patriotic or

nationalistic feeling seems to have reached its height.
He explained his change of attitude toward the war in France
and a regret that his nation had found it necessary to have


a part in the war. He believed that Napoleon could be beaten only by arousing the "dormant national spirits" of the nations of his empire. Throughout the tract Wordsworth attempts to define the moral basis of nationalism. It has a "mystical justification that makes it the true outward mark of the general will of a society, and that renders the nation-state the ultimate political result of the return to nature."  

Justice must either be enthroned above might, and the moral law take place of the edicts of selfish passion; or the heart of the people, which alone can sustain the efforts of the people, will languish.  

The strength of Spain depends upon the strength of other nations. The patriotism, which is at its height in times of stress, must also function in times of peace. Thus it is national honor that causes England to oppose French aggression and that drives Spain and Portugal to resist the attack on their independence: He says "if the standard of honor among all nations can be raised high enough—and it can be raised if sufficient scope is given to the purest and best feelings from which patriotism springs—nations can live in amity and

69 Ibid., pp. 48-49.
70 Brinton, Political Ideas, p. 56.
peace." Thus Wordsworth's *Convention of Cintra* sketches "a theory of nationalism that was to become the political faith of the century." The doctrine of the natural goodness of man which had been propounded by the philosophers had at last found a "settled lodging."

Rannie says that the Battle of Waterloo closed an epoch and thenceforward Wordsworth's social and political feelings took the normal conservative course. He began to doubt the natural goodness of man and believed that absolute freedom for the individual was not a good policy, but that man needed some restraint. He seemed to find almost everything in England to his liking after the overthrow of Napoleon. He approves and upholds the Holy Alliance, but opposes any attempt to reform. The Reform Bill of 1832 became a very important issue with Wordsworth. He feared that the reform movement would go much further than some of the supporters wished. He wrote J. K. Miller on December 17, 1831:

> In the present stage of our affairs, the class that does the most harm consists of well-intentioned men, who, being ignorant of human nature, think that they may help the thorough-paced reformers and revolutionists

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75 *Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. XI, p. 120.
to a certain point, then stop, and that the machine will stop with them. 76

Perhaps basing the idea upon his own experiences, Wordsworth feared the people had been merely incited rather than informed.

When I observe the people should be enlightened upon the subject of politics, I severely condemn all inflammatory addresses to the passions of men, even when it is intended to direct those passions to a good purpose. I know that the multitude walk in darkness. I would put into each man's hand a lantern to guide him. . . .77

Wordsworth was so much opposed to the Reform Bill that he seemed to find in the Constitution virtues that he had never before seen. 78 Most of the schemes of reform proposed gave the predominating influence to the manufacturing interests. To Wordsworth this growth of the industrial system threatened English society. He wrote in December, 1821, to a friend that even though he did at one time believe it "derogatory to human nature to set up property in preference to person, as a title for legislative power," he had since changed his mind. He would support a plan whereby the representation

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77 Early Letters, p. 121.
could be thrown to the property classes. Then again in 1832, in a letter to Lady Bentinck he says,

What I am most afraid of is, alterations in the constituency, and in the duration of Parliament, which will bring it more and more under the dominion of the lower and lowest classes. On this account I fear the proposed Corporation Reform, as a step toward household suffrage, vote by ballot, etc.

Another matter about which Wordsworth was rather expressive concerned the Roman Catholic Church and the giving of concessions to the Church in Ireland. He seemed to fear the disunity which might follow such concession. He believed that a close alliance between the state and the church was advantageous to both, but to be effective must exist between only one church and the state. In 1809 Wordsworth wrote Wranham,

With the Methodists on one side, and the Catholics on another, what is to become of the poor church and the people of England?

As to Wordsworth's opinion of the English constitution in 1831, he wrote,

The Constitution of England, which seems about to be destroyed, offers to my mind the sublimest contemplation which the society of history and government have ever presented to it; and for this cause especially, that its principles have the character of preconceived ideas, archetypes of the pure intellect, while they are, in fact, the results of humble-minded experience.

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80 Ibid., p. 321.
81 Batho, op. cit., p. 161.
Wordsworth recognized that new things must also be good things, and that the test of goodness is unfortunately but unavoidably in human experience.\textsuperscript{83} It was the problem of the government to reconcile external restraint and the inner man. Wordsworth had to find "some common thing, some abstraction for which men could feel a mystical attachment, and from which they could obtain at once satisfaction and discipline of their desires." His idea of nationality provided this meeting place for men's minds. However, his previous experiences caused him to err in choosing the old aristocratic system which was an authority that had outlived the loyalty that produced it.\textsuperscript{84}

Perhaps there was always something wrong with Wordsworth's methods. "At times he seems to denounce what both before and after he acknowledges to be ideal." However, he never ceased to believe and extoll the need of sympathetic and intelligent guidance if society were to maintain its stability against the dangers that threatened its very existence.\textsuperscript{85} Wordsworth did not always keep an open mind on political issues. He might have failed to recognize the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{83} Brinton, \textit{Political Ideas}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 64.
\textsuperscript{85} Wylie, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 144.
\end{flushleft}
greatness of the democratic movement or the beneficent forces at work among the masses. Yet his political principles always remained principles of humanity which, though unpopular then, were essential to the future of England. 86

86 Ibid., p. 148.
CHAPTER III

WORDSWORTH'S RELIGIOUS IDEAS

Of all the elements that go into making a man a citizen, his religion is perhaps the most important. It is his religious ideas which often, if not always, determine his reaction to society. Thus it is that some knowledge of Wordsworth's religious views is necessary to a better understanding of Wordsworth as a citizen. "Wordsworth was fundamentally religious. He craved worship, aspiration, uplift, a sense of awe, of unity, of permanence,—something outside himself that made for righteousness and exaltation."¹ That he did achieve the aspirations for which he longed is evident. His stages of spiritual growth indicate that he went through a religious development which was parallel to and supported by his mental and moral development.² Among critics there has been a great deal of disagreement as to what Wordsworth's religious ideas were. If his political ideas were influenced by his early childhood, certainly his religious ideas were influenced to a much greater degree by his early impressions.

Wordsworth realized that he was indeed fortunate to have been brought up in a region that was so well suited to the

development of his mind.

Much favored in my birth-place, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which ere long
We were transplanted. 3

The school which Wordsworth attended was situated in a rural
village surrounded by the beauties of nature. It was there
that the period of "unconscious receptivity" was lived. 4 Of
those days he said,

... . . . . . . . . I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding catarack
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountains, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. 5

In this period of youth Wordsworth formed many permanent
associations related to the beautiful in nature. These were
the sights that were later to recall the pure and noble sen-
timents experienced there. During the days at Hawkshead the
most powerful element in his religion seemed to be animism. 6

Wordsworth perhaps tells us so in the following lines.

Ye presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And Souls of lonely places! can I think

3 The Prelude, I, 11. 302-304.
4 Wordsworth, Complete Poetical Works, Introduction, p. 28.
5 Tintern Abbey, 11. 75-83.
6 Havens, op. cit., p. 182.
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills.......

Soon the mere physical pleasures took on added meaning, and
while still a child he felt

Gleams like the flashing of a shield;--the earth
And common face of Nature spake to [him]
Rememberable things. 8

Although Wordsworth at that time did not understand all his
feelings, they were very important to his later spiritual
development.

Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until mature seasons called them forth
To impregnate and to elevate the mind. 9

At times he became so absorbed in the "transcendental world
of ideas that the external world seemed no longer to exist
in relation to him, and he had to reconvince himself of its
existence by clasping a tree...." 10  As the poet developed
nature came to have a deeper significance for him.

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake. 11

These delights in nature seem to have culminated in a series
of mystical experiences, which were preparation for his future

The Prelude, I, 11, 464-470.
Ibid., 11, 586-588.
Ibid., 11, 594-596.


The Prelude, 11, pp. 198-203.
office as a poet. Perhaps he saw even then many things in nature that most other people fail to see. The constant association with nature had provided stimulus and training for his insight into the spirit behind nature.

Oft in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind.12

As Wordsworth's mind continued its development toward the spiritual, the external world became less vivid, and "peace, joy, and exaltation" took the place of the earlier feeling of wonder and fear.13

At Cambridge Wordsworth was unhappy and his "imagination slept." However, his first long vacation from school seems to have reawakened his spirit. He describes the animation he felt while looking on the familiar scenes.

... ... ... ... ... When first I made
Once more the circuit of our little lake,
If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine.14
As the old joy in nature returned,
gently did my soul
Pull off her veil, and self transmuted stood
Naked, as in the presence of her God.15

So it was at Hawkshead among the wonders of nature in the early morning that Wordsworth was made conscious of a special poetic mission.

12 Ibid., 11. 348-352. 14 The Prelude, IV, 11. 137-140.
13 Havens, op. cit., p. 156. 15 Ibid., 11. 150-152.
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated spirit. 16

This experience, according to Batho, was really a religious
conversion. "Like other first conversions, it was not im-
mediately followed by action, or at least by the right action."
It might have been that Wordsworth's enthusiasm for French
revolutionary ideas was a groping for fulfilment of his faith
in "the cause" seemed a necessary prerequisite to his en-
lightenment: 17 Then the brief though unsatisfactory turn
to Godwinism interfered greatly with his vision. After this
interruption it was necessary for Wordsworth to go through
a healing period. 18 He says of himself,

I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
Still craving combination of new forms,
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep. 19

With the help of Dorothy the moral crisis passed, and Words-
worth seemed to find himself again. Of Dorothy he said,

She whispered still that brightness would return;
She in the midst of all, preserved me still

16 The Prelude, IV, ll. 333-337.
17 Batho, op. cit., p. 306.
18 Emile Legouis, The Early Life of William Wordsworth,
p. 283.
19 The Prelude, XII, ll. 143-147.
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth.  

Then it was that the mystical experiences continued, each
one becoming more and more significant.

Wordsworth's mystical experiences seemed to arise from
some impressive natural scene in combination with a receptive
state of mind. Usually they started with sense impressions,
and as they progressed the external world was subdued by a
more intense inward feeling. Wordsworth describes the
Wanderer in his youth experiencing such sensations as he
stood on a high hill overlooking a beautiful scene. At
first various forms of nature were primary in his conscious-
ness, but soon

... . . . . . . sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live, they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitations from the living God,
Thought was not.

Havens says that these mystical experiences did not indicate
that Wordsworth had any thought of Deity in mind. "He is
thinking not of Deity but of the glory and the greatness

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20 Ibid., ii. 345-346.
21 Batho, op. cit., p. 308.
22 Havens, op. cit., pp. 165-167.
23 The Excursion, i, ii. 213-219.
possible to the human spirit." Havens later states that he does not mean that Wordsworth's experiences were not spiritual. Instead there is probability that some of the mystical experiences were characterized by a consciousness of Divine Being.\(^{24}\) Wordsworth himself tells us that as he walked "under the quiet stars" or as he watched the "night blackened with a coming storm," he felt a power that caused him to feel an "elevated mood." At such times he says,

\[
\text{Thence did I drink the visionary power;}
\text{And deem not profitless, those fleeting moods}
\text{Of shadowy exultations.}^{25}
\]

Certain it was that these moods were profitable in that they nourished his spiritual life and made him feel a closer bond with nature. Perhaps Wordsworth had not at that time realized the supreme purpose of his moods,

\[
\text{\ldots But he had felt the power}
\text{Of Nature, and already was prepared}
\text{By his intense conceptions, to receive}
\text{Deeply the lesson deep of love which he}
\text{Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught}
\text{To feel intensely, cannot but receive.}^{25}
\]

As he came to a more complete realization of these mystical intuitions, he was conscious of a spirit beyond experiences—"one supreme Power of life closely related to and influencing the soul and heart of man."\(^{27}\)

\(^{25}\) Ibid., II, 311-313.

\(^{26}\) The Excursion, I, 11, 191-196.

... Am I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things. 28

It is well to note that there were various conceptions of the "spirit" or "soul" at the time Wordsworth spoke these words. The idea of divine presence in all phenomena went back to a primitive Oriental religion. This belief, which was a form of pantheism, denied the existence of evil. The pantheism of the eighteenth century, though somewhat changed, identified the universal with God. 29 Although this belief found some adherents in Wordsworth's time, he was not among them. 30 However, he did believe that there was a knowing, benevolent power behind the workings of the world, and that the contemplation of nature provided a stimulus which might be as inspiring as that provided by love or prayer. Thinking on nature would assist one "to see into the life of things." 31

For a system or belief that had approached paganism, Wordsworth "substituted an admiration for Nature...which became

28 Tintern Abbey, 11. 93-102.
a veritable worship." However, this does not mean that the worship was pantheistic. There is some evidence that Wordsworth at one time possessed some ideas that approached patheism, but it is improbable that he ever was a pantheist. Nature was permeated by God, but was not the same as God.

I felt a sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart.

The ideas expressed in these lines could have been those of a pantheist. On the other hand it is quite probable that they were the joyful, inspired thoughts of an orthodox Christian. Rader says that Wordsworth definitely passed through a pantheistic stage. However, it is rather evident that Pantheism as a belief in everything as equally divine was not believed by Wordsworth. It is true that he "believes in law, but in spiritual law; and spiritual law, though it acts uniformly, does not exclude, but expressly includes, the ideas of will and purpose."

Wordsworth sought the universal and thus looked in what he thought was the place to find "universal things."

The simple places and the lowly people were best suited to

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32 Ibid., p. 129.  
33 Havens, op. cit., p. 189.  
34 Ibid., p. 187.  
35 The Prelude, II, 11. 401-406.  
36 Melvin M. Rader, Presiding Ideas in Wordsworth's Poetry, p. 142.  
37 Inge, op. cit., p. 182.
him. In such surroundings his mind created at the same time that it perceived. It was this ability to create or to see a great deal more in nature than does the average man or poet that makes Wordsworth truly great. The fact that he disciplined his mind to this end explains his special gift of perception. Some of our modern thinkers or citizens seem to discipline their minds to see only the materialistic side of nature; thus it is the materialistic side of nature which they see to the neglect of the ideal or spiritual. How much better citizens they would be if a combination of the two could be achieved! As Wordsworth reads into nature his own spirit, he is in turn inspired by the soul of nature.

There I conversed with majesty and power Like independent natures. Hence the place Was thronged with impregnations like the wilds In which my early feelings had been nursed.

Wordsworth's idea that he created at the same time he perceived is based "upon his profound belief in the real divinity of the mind, its oneness with the Infinite Spirit, so that in its purest and most energetic movements it helped to make the beauty it perceived."

Nature has had various meanings to individuals through the ages, such as "man's impotence and nature's ruthless

39 The Prelude, VIII, pp. 631-634.
destruction," or a more satisfaction in its picturesque effects. However, to Wordsworth nature was something more than these. It was an inspiration which came directly to him and revealed the spirit of love through natural objects. Thus he was able to understand the workings of nature.  

He could now interpret his earlier feelings. Too, he had come to a satisfactory solution of what the working force behind the universe was.

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
Musing in solitude I oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
The good and evil of our moral state.

A still greater attainment was Wordsworth's ability and power to transfer his feelings to others. Of Wordsworth's poetry John Stuart Mill said, "It was a medicine for my state of mind...and I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under his influence." If Wordsworth's poetry can do for all his readers what it did for Mill, he must have accomplished the mission bestowed upon him as a "dedicated spirit." It would seem almost impossible to read Wordsworth's

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41 Inge, op. cit., pp. 185-185.
42 The Recluse, ll. 754-762.
43 Quoted by Myers, op. cit., p. 135.
poetry without catching some of his spirit. If we, like Wordsworth could project something of our own spirit into his spirit as manifested through his poetry, surely we should also feel ourselves "at once better and happier." This is the very quality which Wordsworth wished to possess. He wanted to be a religious teacher. Because he worked out a philosophy of life that may be made "a principle of conduct," he holds interest for us. "If we will take him as our guide, he will show us a path which he at least followed to the end, and reached his goal."44 He found "within his creed spiritual liberty, room to realize his personality and his faith."45

Wordsworth's inspiration from nature did not come to him without conscious effort on his part. He who would receive the vision of nature must discipline his mind to that goal. Wordsworth's life was one of "tense mental discipline, involving continued self-denial, not only by imposing self-chosen limitations in many directions, but in foregoing voluntarily the recognition which a little concession to popular taste would have secured for him before his old age."46 In order to achieve the life he wanted, Wordsworth chose a home in a district that was favorable to his development. Many important characters have found solace and inspiration, for

44 Inge, op. cit., p. 175.
45 Batho, op. cit., p. 306.
46 Inge, op. cit., pp. 186-188.
soul, as well as body, in such places as were dear to Wordsworth. In The Prelude he says,

From sources inexhaustible, thoughts poured forth
To feed the spirit of religious love
In which I walked with Nature.

Up to the time of Wordsworth's life at Cambridge nature had been first in his thoughts and man secondary; but as his change to a more spiritual being came about, he put man first. Many references are made in Wordsworth's poetry to the importance of man.

Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
To Nature, and the power of human minds,
To men as they are men within themselves.
How oft high service is performed within,
When all the external man is rude in show,—
Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain chapel, that protects
Its simple worshipers from sun or shower.
Of these...shall be my song; of these,
If future years mature me for the task,
Will I record the praises.

Because of what he wishes to teach, his theme will be

No other than the heart of man,
As found among the best of those who live.

Through his love of nature Wordsworth becomes a poet of democracy. In the "paradise" where he lived he found

Love for the human creature's absolute self,
That noticeable kindliness of heart
Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most,

47 Ibid., pp. 190-191.
49 The Prelude, XIII, 11. 224-234.
50 Ibid., 11. 241-242.
Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks
And occupations which her beauty adorned,
And shepherds were the men that pleased (him) first. 51

These simple shepherds had a great deal to do with establishing in Wordsworth a faith in man at a time when revolutionary ideas had disappointed him. On observing the shepherd and his daily task, Wordsworth became increasingly interested in man. Of this new interest he says:

And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness. 52

Such characteristics as these are found in the strong and proud shepherd of Michael and in the old man of Simon Lee. Wordsworth not only praised the worthy characteristics, but understood the weaknesses.

... . . . . Neither vice nor guilt,
Debasement undergone by body or mind,
Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
Misery not lightly passed, but sometime scanned
Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
In what we may become. 53

He believed that a supreme power presided over all people wherever or whatever they might be. In the city among crowds he was also able to see

51 The Prelude, VIII, 11. 123-128.
52 Ibid., 11. 277-281
the unity of man,
One spirit over ignorance and vice
Predominant, in good and evil hearts;
One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
For the sun's light. 54

Wordsworth wished to discover the possible good in what might seem evil. No man was entirely useless.

'Tis Nature's law
That none, the meanest of created things;
Of forms created the most vile and brute,
The dullest or most noxious, should exist Divorced from good—a spirit and pulse of good,
A life and soul, to every mode of being Inseparably linked. 55

Thus we see that it was man's thoughts and emotions that Wordsworth came to dwell on. Nature was the permanence and reality necessary to man's spiritual satisfaction. Man, who was ever changing, could not supply the permanence needed by him to overcome earthly doubts, but through nature he could acquire the power to transmute his sorrows. 56

As Wordsworth came more and more to contemplate man, his rich mystical visions seemed to fade. He made an effort to open these avenues of thought; but as he did so, they seemed to close and he saw only "glimpses." 57 It was then that he "bowed low to God, who thus corrected [his] desires." 58

54 Ibid., 11. 668-672.
55 The Old Cumberland Beggar, 11. 73-79.
56 The Excursion, IV, 11. 160-185.
57 The Prelude, XII, 11. 275-285.
58 Ibid., 315-316.
In *Intimations of Immortality* Wordsworth says that he has come to the realization that his former ecstasies were only a step in his development—"that there has passed away a glory from the earth," and the "visionary gleam" is no more. However in adapting himself to his surroundings, to the finite world soul, he sees the early glory "die away, and fade into the light of common day." Earthly glories have been replaced by spiritual truths, which are immortal—by "faith that looks through death." This course of development seems quite normal and in keeping with the scheme of the universe. As we gain qualities or powers of one kind, we often lose others. Certainly the gaining of knowledge is in itself a loss of innocence which, though quite in keeping with lack of knowledge, becomes entirely out of order in a later stage of development. Thus it seems nothing but natural that these "earthly glories" should be replaced by "spiritual truths" in Wordsworth. In fact, this must have been the goal which Wordsworth was seeking.

There is a close relationship between Wordsworth's religious progress as revealed in his poetry and his beliefs as manifested in his attitude toward organized religion.

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Many critics say that he was indifferent toward organized religion in his early days. Martin says that he was even hostile to the church, while Havens says "the Bible, the church, the Christian conception of God, the personality of Jesus and His death on the cross" meant little to Wordsworth. The idea that Wordsworth was somewhat antagonistic toward Christianity might have grown out of his reaction to religious life at Cambridge. However, the seeming indifference displayed was probably a lack of sympathy with the Evangelical movement rather than antagonism toward Christianity. A misunderstanding of formulated creeds on the part of critics perhaps accounts for their opinions that Wordsworth was indifferent or even unorthodox. Too, some of his critics were of Evangelical opinions and thus were unsympathetic with his unbelief. Wordsworth's view that moral action was more important than a close adherence to church dogma should not be condemned, for in considering the basic principles for which he stood, one cannot help thinking that he was deeply religious. Certainly Wordsworth advocated all that is considered the result of a firm belief in Christianity. He believed in his idea of true

60 Martin, *op. cit.* p. 79.
happiness and joy and sought to share it with others. His recognition of the importance of the humble and lowly people as possessing the essence of faith is quite understandable. Perhaps his view was somewhat extreme, but the unhappy experience which he had had with the Revolution accounts for it. Certainly through his own faith he was restored and became an advocate of democracy in religion as well as in politics.

Wordsworth was a member of the Church of England and grew up under its influence. The wave of Evangelicalism then sweeping England affected both the Low and the High Church. The High Church, with which Wordsworth was connected, was in the latter half of the eighteenth century "not merely high but dry," a fact which might explain anyone's disinterest. As to Wordsworth's knowledge of or interest in the Bible we also find differences of opinion. Martin believes that Wordsworth did not read the Bible deeply or extensively, while Batho says he was more familiar with the Bible than with any other book. Wordsworth was also quite familiar with the Prayer Book, the Church Catechism, and other religious books.

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66 Martin, op. cit., p. 80.
A popular Anglican book, Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living*, set forth the idea that "God is present by his essence, which, because it is boundless or infinite, cannot be contained within the limits of any place ... so is God not dishonoured when we suppose Him in every one of His creatures, and in every part of every one of them." Similar ideas are set forth in much of Wordsworth's poetry. Thus Wordsworth's awareness of a "motion and a spirit, that impels all thinking things, and all objects of all thought" is not opposed to his early teachings. Through a description of the Wanderer in his home, Wordsworth gives an idea of his own home influences in religious matters.

Pure livers were they all, austere and grave,
And fearing God; the very children taught
Stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word,
And an habitual piety, maintained
With strictness scarcely known on English ground.

Wordsworth probably retained just such reverence throughout his life; in fact he suggests in the Fenwick note to *Decay of Piety* that the duty of church attendance was instilled in him. Like other members of his family Wordsworth had a dislike for the Roman Church. Very naturally these influences

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68 Quoted by Batho, *op. cit.*, pp. 215.
70 *The Excursion*, I, 11, 113-117.
under which Wordsworth grew up had an important bearing on his spiritual and moral development. However, it is rather evident that many of the critics have not given consideration to these facts and circumstances in a formulation of Wordsworth's religious life.

Another point on which Wordsworth was questioned and criticized was his failure to voice his opinions concerning organized religion. The fact that he said nothing in writing about atonement through Christ or punishment for sins, but dealt with the divine or good in man caused many religious people to question his beliefs. His respect for the Church and Christianity kept him from openly speaking against them. In a letter to H. Alford on February 21, 1848, Wordsworth explains his reasons for never having discussed organized religious views.

I was particularly pleased with your distinction between religion in poetry and versified religion. For my own part, I have been averse to frequent mention of the mysteries of Christian faith; not from a want of due sense of their momentous nature, but the contrary. I felt it far too deep to venture on handling the subject as familiarly as many scruple not to... Besides general reasons for diffidence in treating subjects of Holy Writ, I have some special ones. I might err in points of faith, and I should not deem my mistakes less to be deprecated because they were expressed in meter.

72 Ibid., p. 280.
The phase of religion on which Wordsworth did speak was much more needed in his time. Too he would not have become the revolutionist nor the romantic poet had he confined his opinions to conventions of the day. Thus he would not have expressed his convictions.

Wordsworth had every intention of taking orders and held to the idea as late as 1792. That his family expected him to do so is evident. Dorothy wrote to Jane Pollard in March, 1790, saying of William, "When he will go into orders I do not know, nor how he will employ himself, he must, when he is three and twenty either go into orders or take pupils."74

In 1791, Wordsworth, in speaking of a conference concerning his taking orders and accepting a curacy, indicated that he would have to decline any such offer as he was not of age.75 He also at one time spoke of following the course of a friend rather than "vegetating on a paltry curacy."76 Then on May 17, 1792, Wordsworth wrote Mathews from France:

It is my present intention to take orders, in the approaching winter or spring. My uncle the clergyman will furnish me with a title. Had it been in my power, I certainly should have wished to defer the moment. But though I may not be resident in London, I need not therefore be prevented from engaging in any literary plan, which may have the appearance of producing a decent harvest.77

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74 Early Letters, edited by Ernest de Selincourt, p. 28.
75 Ibid., p. 57.
76 Ibid., p. 58.
77 Ibid., p. 75.
From the tone of these letters it seems that Wordsworth retained his plans only because his family expected him to or because it was his only way of making some much-needed money.

Another item to be considered was the situation concerning Annette. Although the father of her child, Wordsworth could not have advanced in the Church had he married Annette, who was a Roman Catholic. All evidence points to the fact that he intended to marry Annette rather than to the idea that he wished to oppose the marriage convention. Before Wordsworth is too severely condemned, it should be remembered that moral conventions in France were very lax at that time, and that Annette's family opposed the marriage. This situation, as well as his interest in the Revolution, was enough to cause Wordsworth to decide against taking orders.\(^78\) He indicates in a letter to Mathews in 1794 that he has almost decided to make such a decision.

All professions I think are attended with great inconveniences, but that of the priesthood with the most...You have learned from Myers that, since I had the pleasure of seeing you, I have done nothing and continue to do nothing. What is to become of me I know not. I cannot bow down my mind to take orders.\(^79\)

Then there is evidence that Wordsworth did not feel himself good enough for the Church. "He felt that his mind was not

\(^78\) Batho, op. cit., pp. 257-260.

\(^79\) Early Letters, p. 109.
properly disciplined for that holy office, and that the strug
gle between his conscience and his impulses would make life
a torture.  

However, the problem was solved by the Calvert
legacy. With the financial help he needed Wordsworth gave
up the idea entirely.  

To say that Wordsworth was non-
religious or unsympathetic toward the Church because he took
this step is probably unfair. Obviously he would have been
quite unhappy with such a life, and it is probable that he
would never have produced the great poetry which he did.
His message as a poet was designed to arouse a spiritual feel-
ing in people just as the message of any clergyman should do,
but the provoking element in his poetry could never have been
so powerful in any form other than poetry. And certain it is
that many more people have had and will continue to have the
advantage of receiving his message.

In deference to Wordsworth and his moral standards, some-
thing further should be said concerning the Annette incident.
Critics have taken diverse views on this subject. Some say
that Wordsworth tried to hide the incident, but the fact that
he did not keep it from his family would discount that idea.  

In answer to the question of his not including the incident
in The Prelude Martin says,

80 "Conversations and Personal Reminiscences,"
81 Batho, op. cit., p. 260.
82 Martin, op. cit., p. 63.
The answer is, I think, in the method of the poem. He was no modern psychologist accustomed to operate with repressions and their consequences. He would not be likely to think that a sin of which he had repented might still enter into his development.\textsuperscript{83}

Martin in taking this position does not attempt to excuse Wordsworth's obligations concerning Annette; he wishes only \textsuperscript{84} to explain his idea in regard to the accusation of hypocrisy.

The fact that Wordsworth did not adhere to all for which Evangelicalism stood does not mean that he revolted against Christianity. Certainly the orthodox ideas of his later years or, for that matter, of the earlier years did not depend on "a rigid interpretation and acceptance of a small and limited set of theological propositions."\textsuperscript{85} It is not the acceptance of theories and dogmas that determines whether or not a man is religious. "He begins to be religious when the limits of his selfhood are so far broken through that he finds community with another self..."\textsuperscript{86} Indeed Wordsworth did just that. Neither did Wordsworth's attendance at church necessarily determine his attitude toward religion. At times when he was in disagreement with some of the practices of the church he seems to have attended more regularly than when he was in agreement with them. It was often the inefficiency

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 64.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 65.
\textsuperscript{85} Batho, op. cit., p. 265.
\textsuperscript{86} Martin, op. cit., p. 74.
of the rector that caused Wordsworth to absent himself from church, but at other times he attended in spite of the fact that the sermons were dull. A letter to Sir George Beaumont on November 10, 1806, indicates this.

Miss Hutchinson and I were at church yesterday. We were pleased with the singing and I have often heard a far worse parson—I mean as to reading. His sermon was, to be sure, as village sermons often are, very injudicious.

The view has been advanced that Wordsworth became more regular in his attendance at church and became stronger in his faith after the death of his brother John. It is true that the dynamic religion of Wordsworth's earlier days gave way to a more static religion—one more closely allied with the practices of the Church. Like most other men Wordsworth needed contact with God through both sources of religion, a fact that is easily explainable as "man in both body and spirit."

The fact that Wordsworth found it necessary to call upon duty as an aid to his later life does not seem a point of disparagement. In the ecstasy of youth he relied "upon the genial sense of youth," but as his vision grows dim, he feels that he will need some other source of power. The confidence and arrogance of youth having gone, he addresses Duty:

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89 Ibid., p. 276.
90 Martin, op. cit., pp. 84-85.
To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee: I myself command
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live. 91

The Ecclesiastical Sonnets are probably typical of
Wordsworth's later life. He became conservative in religion
just as he did in politics. His earlier interest in Nature
and his fellow men was replaced by an interest in the spiri-
tual history of a people. 92 The Sonnets are designed to ex-
tol the English Church. They are "based on Wordsworth's
conviction that justice was not an obligation of one man or
of one epoch, but the wise, brave, temperate impression of
society rooted in the past and hopeful for the future." 93
Since they are ecclesiastical, perhaps they are conventional
and narrow.

From a consideration of Wordsworth's ideas as found in
his poetry and prose and through a study of his attitude
toward Christian dogma and the Church, many and varied con-
clusions have been reached. No definite conclusion as to his
beliefs can be reached. I agree with Batho in regard to
Wordsworth's orthodoxy.

91
Ode to Duty, 11. 49-56.

92
Abbie F. Potts, The Ecclesiastical Sonnets of William
Wordsworth, p. 4.

93
Ibid., p. 9.
If orthodoxy consists in complete absence of doubts and a stressing of human depravity and the doctrine of eternal punishments, Wordsworth was not and never became orthodox. But faith does not consist in unwavering intellectual certainty, and Wordsworth was in good company in preferring to stress another interpretation of Christianity than that which was most vocal in his times.94

Wordsworth's vision of Christianity so far surpassed that of most people that it is difficult to understand his viewpoint. His complete submission to the forces of nature provided for him a clear vision of God as revealed through nature that most of us never realize. Surely there is no one who has not felt at least a tinge of what Wordsworth felt so keenly. His creed seems to embody all that Christian men say that their own creeds should be. Seek and find and share; joy is the result. Of course, one must possess an inward sense of beauty to be able to respond to beauty as revealed in nature or any other God-created thing. Then it is that our enjoyment of nature becomes the product of the perceiving mind and of the object perceived. The mutual joy or love, the result of the interaction of the two, gave Wordsworth the inspiration to produce his great poetry, hence his belief that the external world is fitted to the mind. It does not strike me that such a belief is anything but orthodox. I do not mean that every

94 Batho, op. cit., p. 279.
person could or should find in nature the path to the truth he seeks. It might be found instead in human character. Wordsworth seems to have found inspiration in both. The tranquillizing power of nature might lead more people to a greater joy in their fellow men. And today this quality is perhaps more needed than it was in Wordsworth's time. Certainly the process seems justified if it culminates in a love of man, which is the essence of the teachings of Christ. So it is that one who can transmit a spirit of peace and love into the souls of men should be placed among the great religious poets and among the truly good citizens of all time.
CHAPTER IV

WORDS WORTH'S IDEAS REGARDING EDUCATION

In Wordsworth's day the educational ideas and practices of the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were being questioned and criticized in much the same way that the political and religious practices had been. The rationalist, followers of Locke, and the encyclopedists, followers of Rousseau, as well as the mystics and sentimentalists, were doing much to break down the traditional curriculum and methods of teaching. They made known their preference for an education that would better prepare an individual for life. The attacks on established methods show evidence of a democratic spirit in that they suggested means of educating the masses. It is not surprising that Wordsworth was among the poets who opposed classical education. He, like some other poets, found the restraints of school life irksome to his spirit of love and freedom. Thus he found the schools lacking in the elements that give vitality to education. The purely intellectual training was stressed to the neglect of spiritual training.¹

¹ A. Charles Babenroth, English Childhood, pp. 161-164.
John Longhorne and Joseph Priestly were forerunners of Wordsworth, who recommended knowledge from direct observation. Various others, including Robert Lloyd and Richard Jago, condemned the pedant's school, artificiality, and formality. Rousseau's idea, a return to nature, which was rather widely publicized, bore influence. Since his ideas corresponded with English thought of the day, those interested in educational ideas were influenced by him.² Although few changes were brought about in schools, the utterances of these literary men prepared the way for Wordsworth's ideas concerning national education.³

Wordsworth's own childhood, as well as his later interest in children, was important in forming his beliefs concerning education. As a child at Cockermouth, he was allowed a great deal of freedom in his play among the natural beauties of nature. His mother seems to have possessed the wisdom to allow William to develop without her interference.⁴

In referring to that time Wordsworth says,

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² Ibid., pp. 171-177.
³ Ibid., pp. 211-217.
Oh, many a time have I, a five year's child,
In a small mill-race severed from his stream.
Made one long bathing of a summer's day;
Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
Of yellow ragwort. . .

As he later looks back on these days, he realizes how much they meant to his education. Then at the age of nine Wordsworth was sent to the school at Hawkshead, which was located in a beautiful section of the Lake Country. There Wordsworth followed much the same life of freedom as at Cockermouth. The boys were allowed to roam the countryside when not in classes. The fields, hillsides, rivers, and crags along with various sports were an education in themselves. Even though Wordsworth was superior in intellect, he found this fact no barrier to joining the life of his playmates wholeheartedly. These boys were

A race of real children; not too wise,
Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh.
And banded up and down by love and hate.

It is no wonder that in recalling these extremely happy days Wordsworth believed in an education of freedom and observation.

7 The Prelude, V, 11. 411-413.
After Hawkshead came Cambridge and an entirely different kind of life for Wordsworth. At Hawkshead he had cared much more for nature than for man. There his chief association with men had been with the shepherds and simple people of a small village. Thus he felt a strangeness and some dissatisfaction at Cambridge. Even the surrounding country was entirely different from that at Hawkshead, where he had received so much inspiration. At Cambridge the chief source of learning was books, which Wordsworth did not seem to care for. Of course, he had gained from books his knowledge of Latin and the Roman poets at Hawkshead; but the academic training at Cambridge soon grew quite uninteresting to him, and he became careless with his studies.  

In describing these days he says,

... . . . . . . Companionships, 
Friends, acquaintances, were welcome all, 
We sauntered, played, or rioted; we talked 
Unprofitable talk at morning hours; 
Drifted about along the streets and walks, 
Read lazily in trivial books, went forth 
To gallop through the country in blind zeal 
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast 
Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars 
Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.  

Although Cambridge did fail to supply the necessary training for Wordsworth's poetical genius, the influences of the school

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9 The Prelude, III, 11. 246-255.
were valuable to him. Even illustrious names linked with the college were inspiring to him. He tells how, as he looked from his window, he was able to see

The antechapel where the statue stood
Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.10

Wordsworth tells us that he could not but be impressed by the dignity and tradition connected with the school.

...... I could not print
Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
Of generations of illustrious men,
Unmoved, I could not always lightly pass
Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.11

He enjoyed associating himself with the memories of Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton. Yet Wordsworth was well aware that he was not receiving the kind of training which his mind demanded. He was "ill-tutored for captivity," and thus did not take full advantage of the "in-door study" at Cambridge.12

That the curriculum at Cambridge was probably narrow and mathematical rather than scientific cannot be denied. However, this condition was no more extreme there than at other

10 The Prelude, III, 11. 258-264.
11 Ibid., 11. 275-370.
12 Ibid., 11. 275-370.
schools. In order that the curriculum might accommodate the students from the preparatory schools, only the traditional subjects were taught. Too, these schools were averse to change just as was the society of England. But Wordsworth was the Romantic in regard to education just as he was in regard to political and religious thought. Hence he found the curriculum unsuited to his needs. Certainly his natural independence and habits of freedom, as well as his poetic genius, would not fit into such an atmosphere. On the other hand, had Wordsworth been more scholastically inclined he would not have found so much fault with Cambridge. In looking back over these days he explains:

... I did not love,
Judging not ill perhaps, the timid course
Of our scholastic studies; could have wished
To see the river flow with ampler range
And freer pace.  

To add to his dissatisfaction he was inclined to hold himself aloof—perhaps not from choice, but because of his sensitive and independent nature. His previous custom of pursuing knowledge for its own sake caused him to oppose the competition which some students practiced so energetically. To him examinations were a needless worry. Therefore he called upon nature to be his moral teacher; he looked for universal things.

Wordsworth's school life had a great influence on forming his opinions of education. A number of years later he still retained the opinion that the curriculum at Cambridge had been dull. It should have been of a nature to inspire interest in the sciences, arts, and other useful subjects. Yet he recognized that he, as well as many other students, should have entered into his studies with enthusiasm. Wordsworth also felt that the influence of the Church on the school interfered with its progress. 16 He had looked forward to

A habitation sober and demure
For ruminating creatures; a domain
For quiet things to wonder in; 17

but these things he sought in vain. However, he admitted that the period of training, even though poor preparation for his life, was valuable in that it allowed his mind to develop and served as a transitory period between his freer life at Hawkshead and the life he was to take up independent of school. 18 From these experiences, in addition to his reading of Rousseau, Wordsworth formed some very definite ideas concerning education.

16 The Prelude, III, 11. 381-401.
17 Ibid., 11. 435-437.
18 Ibid., 11. 515-530.
A large part of Wordsworth's concern about education stemmed from his interest in childhood. "More than any other eminent English man of letters, Wordsworth is the poet of childhood." His close, loving observation gave him an insight into the thoughts of children that few have possessed. 19 In childhood he saw a possible solution to the destinies of men. He liked to picture children as having a deep insight into life and an instinctive faith in immortality. The latter quality is brought out in We Are Seven when the child insists that the two children are really living though buried. 20 Wordsworth's belief that a child possesses instinctive wisdom and thoughts of beauty has been much discussed. Perhaps he wishes only to symbolize through his poetic fancy the glory and freshness of childish instincts. This doctrine as brought out in the Ode, says Leslie Stephen, is due to his recognition of the mysterious efficacy of our childish instincts...The great Ode gives most completely the whole theory of that process by which our early intuitions are to be transformed into settled principles of feeling and action. Wordsworth's philosophical theory, in short, depends upon the asserted identity between our childish instincts and our enlightened reason. 21

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19 Babenroth, op. cit., pp. 299-300.
20 Ibid., p. 312.
21 Quoted by Hudson, op. cit., pp. 252-253.
With childhood Wordsworth has associated all that is beautiful and inspirational in life, and through the child he believed that society could be rejuvenated. This idea perhaps accounts for Wordsworth's insistence that the child not be rushed into preparation for the future, but allowed a period of freedom and individualism.\textsuperscript{22} Too, during this period the training of the mother was much more important than that of the schoolmaster.\textsuperscript{23} These ideas represent the idealistic—perhaps fanciful—side of Wordsworth's thoughts in education rather than some of the more practical doctrines that he advocated.

Wordsworth was one of the first to see and state a need for some scheme of education in England. He was also one of the few to recognize that democracy means every man should have an opportunity to be educated.\textsuperscript{24} He told Daniel Stuart in a letter March 26, 1809, that England was in need of a "new education which must be preceded by some genuine philosophical writings from some quarter or other, to teach the principles upon which that education should be grounded."

Although Wordsworth did not consider education a panacea for the social ills of Europe, he did consider it one of the most important remedies. He fervently wished for the time that England

\textsuperscript{22} Babenroth, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 344.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 346.

\textsuperscript{24} Winchester, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 241.
When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
And best protection, this imperial Realm,
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
An obligation, on her part, to teach
Them who are born to serve her and obey;
Binding herself by statute to secure
For all the children whom her soil maintains
The rudiments of letters, and inform
The mind, with moral and religious truth,
Both understood and practised,—so that none,
However destitute, be left to droop
By timely culture unsustained; or run
Into wild disorder; or be forced
To drudge through a weary life without the help
Of intellectual implements and tools. 25

Here we see that Wordsworth appealed to both the Church and
the State to take their share in the education of children.
His views did not agree with those of most of the educational
reformers of his day. He went a step further than his con-
temporaries by pointing out that not only the poor but the
upper and middle classes needed to be educated. 26 In a let-
ter to Wrangham on June 5, 1808, he says, "Begin your edu-
cation at the top of society; let the head go in the right
course and the tail will follow." 27 This theory, as well as
others, was voiced by Wordsworth over a period of years. In
1828, he was still trying to work out a more satisfactory
theory. In a letter to Hugh James Rose, he said:

25 The Excursion, IX, 11. 292-308.
26 Batho, op. cit., p. 214.
It is hard to look upon the condition in which so many of our fellow creatures are born, but they are not to be raised from it by partial and temporary expedients: it is not enough to rush headlong into any new scheme that may be proposed. We must bear the sight of this, and endure its presence, till we have by reflection discovered the cause, and not till then can we hope ever to palliate the evil.28

At the time that Wordsworth began to express his opinions, education in England was dependent upon what the local community wanted to do. The state had neglected its responsibility and continued to do nothing to remedy the situation until eighteen years after Wordsworth had called attention to the need.29 In The Excursion Wordsworth describes one who has grown up without the benefit of any education. He is a ploughboy, who has sluggish, ignorant eyes that "never drew a look or motion of intelligence." Wordsworth asks what his country with

Her equal rights, her churches and her schools--What have they done for him? And, let me ask,For tens of thousands uninformed as he?In brief what liberty of mind is here?30

28 Ibid., p. 348.
29 Bekenroth, op. cit., p. 360.
30 The Excursion, VIII, 11. 429-433.
In the cities a similar picture could have been drawn of the child as a factory worker. Thus Wordsworth condemns the failure of industry to provide for the spiritual and intellectual development of its workers. Lack of education has closed

The infant Being in itself, and makes Its very spring a season of decay! 31

Instead of being trained in a school suitable to his ambitions, the child was a virtual prisoner whose spiritual being was incapable of being stirred, and whose "liberty of mind is gone forever." What can the state expect from citizens who have grown up under such circumstances? 32 When Wordsworth's hopes for sweeping away some of the evils of the day through legislation had been lost, he worked out a theory whereby he thought the education of the child would provide stability for the future of England. 33

The remedies which Wordsworth advocated ranged from changes in methods of teaching to modification of the curriculum and the subject matter of books. First he would minimize bookishness which he felt had played too great a part in the curriculum of Cambridge. He believed that books were

31 Ibid., 11. 290-291.
32 Ibid., 11. 295-325.
too much used to achieve a development of all abilities. The result was a one-sided intelligence. Why could the "guides and warders" of the learning process not realize that

A wiser spirit is at work for us
A better eye than theirs? 34

Although this idea indicates that Wordsworth believed in the superior influence of nature in the educative process, it probably does not mean that he distrusted books altogether, but only in so far as they were overused or misused in the schools. In a letter to Basil Montague on October 22, 1831, Wordsworth asks,

Is not the knowledge inculcated by the Teacher, or derived under his management, from books, too exclusively dwelt upon, so as almost to put out of sight that which comes, without being sought for, from intercourse with nature and from experience in the actual employments and duties which a child's situation in the country, however unfavorable, will lead him to or impose upon him? 35

Other sources of knowledge then should be relied upon. Books should be used more as a source of inspiration and a stimulus to the imagination than as a source for all knowledge. Some of Wordsworth's distrust of books was perhaps due to the subject matter found in children's books up to the last quarter

of the eighteenth century. The religious or moral tone prevalent in nearly all children's books was not suited to the child. Certainly his inherent interests in the supernatural and the world of fancy could not be satisfied by theological explanations. He needed some fairy stories as did Wordsworth in his childhood. He recalled how in his own home in the Cumberland region, the children would wait for the hawker so as to buy chapbooks. Such stories were rare because certain religious groups and some men of letters voiced opposition to them on grounds that they were against the "dictates of reason" So if Wordsworth was somewhat radical in some of his recommendations, perhaps he was over-zealous to rid society of such bigoted views.

Instead of so much stress on book knowledge Wordsworth recommended a free open-air childhood. This training would promote a spirit of freedom, which was an essential to Wordsworth's philosophy of child education. Like Rousseau he was not concerned with making a man of the child as soon as possible. Wordsworth himself had gained so little from teachers

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\[37\]
Ibid., p. 244.
and school and so much from the exercise of his own mental
abilities that he judged the same to be true of other chil-
dren. 38 Throughout his writings on education Wordsworth
insists that formal training is less important than play
and association with nature. Education should be gained
through the activity of the whole man; therefore training
the emotions is as important as training the intellect. To
Wordsworth "confinement to courses stood for instruction,
while freedom for play of the senses and sensibilities in
fields and woods stood for education." 39 In Expostulation
and Reply he pictures himself as being questioned for sit-
ting and observing nature rather than studying his books.
In answer to the query he says,

Think you 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking? 40

While books are a "dull and endless strife,"
One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can. 41

38 Wylie, op. cit., p. 151.
39 Babenroth, op. cit., p. 354.
40 Complete Poems, p. 83.
41 The Tables Turned, p. 83.
From some of the statements made by Wordsworth one might think that he learned all he knew from nature. Of course, he did not mean this, and certainly he learned from other sources. He learned the languages from books and a great deal from the family of which he was a member. His theory of natural development with a minimum of interference is a modern principle of education which has been and is being experimented with today. Wordsworth put stress on the fact that the early sense perceptions of the child make for proficiency in the man. Thus in order that the child might gain the most from his spontaneous joy in what he perceives, Wordsworth would eliminate much of the instruction and supervision that is called education.\(^{42}\)

Purely intellectual training was also condemned on the basis that it failed to meet the social test. A good education should fit a person for the society in which he was to live. Strong home training should precede school life to bring about this desirable result. Dislike of "display in everything, above all in education," caused Wordsworth to deplore training that led to conceit and presumption. "Human learning, as far as it tends to breed pride and self-estimation...is against the spirit of the Gospel."\(^{43}\) Instead

\(^{42}\) Babenroth, op. cit., p. 357.

of such qualities knowledge should produce happiness and
sanity, which are important elements in bringing about a
stable society. Wordsworth held the view that no formal
education was necessary for some people to be happy and
take their places in society. He said that "one of the
most innocent, contented, happy, and, in his sphere, most
useful men" he had ever known could neither read nor write. 44
Surely Wordsworth thought this the exception rather than
the rule. It is perhaps true that he learned a great deal
from the simple people with whom he came in contact at Race-
down and Alfoxden. Of them he says,

        . . . . . . . . When I began to enquire,
            To watch and question those I met, and speak
            Without reserve to them, the lovely roads
            Were open schools in which I daily read
            With most delight the passions of mankind. 45

The fact that Wordsworth was so strongly endowed with abili-
ties caused him to overestimate the powers of people less
happily endowed. It must have been that he was thinking
of these people as a part of a very simple rural society.
Surely such people could not contribute much to any society
in our day.

Although many of the views expressed by Wordsworth are
considered progressive theories and practices today, many

44
Ibid.

45
*The Prelude*, XIII, 11. 150-164.
of his ideas are reactionary. His almost total disregard of analytical reasoning was, no doubt, narrow. One is inclined to be somewhat tolerant toward this idea when he considers that it was the result of Wordsworth's own unhappy experiences with reason and his restoration through the senses. The youth in order to acquire the necessary faculties need not "analyze with scrupulous minuteness, but...accumulate in genial confidence." Of course, in this way the path to knowledge would be "long, difficult, winding, and often times returning upon itself," but that was only as it should be.\textsuperscript{46} Again judging from his own experiences, Wordsworth thought the youth less likely to get on the wrong path of knowledge if he followed the slower more profitable way.

Thus he entreats youth to demand

\begin{quote}
Of mighty Nature, if 't was ever meant
That we should pry far off yet be upraised;
That we should pore, dwindle as we pore,
Viewing all objects unremittingly
In disconnection dead and spiritless;
And still dividing, and dividing still,
Break down all grandeur,
\end{quote}

until in the effort to gain truth we wage

\begin{quote}
An impious warfare, with the very life
Of our own souls.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 325.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{The Excursion}, IV, 11. 958-968.
Yet from revisions in *The Prelude* we find Wordsworth later in life recognizing the benefits of science and mechanical inventions.48

Another phase of education which Wordsworth protested was the advanced education of girls. In a letter to H. J. Rose written on December 11, 1828, he asks, "What is the use of pushing on the education of girls so fast?" He seems to think there would be no demand for the abilities girls would learn in school. He also feared that educated women would not want to do household tasks.49 In an address in 1836, to a group who were preparing to build a new school, Wordsworth indicates that the particular district had not been "infringed upon by experimental novelties," and that the people want to send their children to a school that prepares them for what they will need in later life. Especially would the parents of daughters want the curriculum "confined to reading, writing, and arithmetic, and plain needlework, or any other art favorable to economy and home comforts."50 In an evaluation of these views one must remember that he was writing in a day when women as a group were not well educated. Even with this consideration the view seems narrow.

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48 Batho, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.  
Wordsworth was radically opposed to what he called "infant-schools." Anything that would keep the mother from her child in these early years seemed lamentable to Wordsworth. This was the formative period in which no one could take the mother's place. Those who advocated sending children to infant-schools had confused the meaning of education with tuition. In a letter to Rose in 1823, he explains his view in this way:

Education, I need not remark to you, is everything that draws out the human being, of which tuition, the teaching of schools especially, however important, is comparatively an insignificant part. Yet the present bent of the public mind is to sacrifice the greater power to the less...In the eyes of an enlightened statesman this is absurd; in the eyes of the pure lowly-minded Christian it is monstrous. 51

In other words, some people had become obsessed with the idea of education and infant-schools without giving any thought whatever to the object of the training. Teaching natural history in the infant-schools by use of pictures instead of real experiences was nothing short of "mummery." He vehemently concludes,

Let it then be universally admitted that infant-schools are an evil, only tolerated to qualify...the inability of the mothers to attend to their children...They are most pernicious things and the sooner they are done away with the better. 52

51 Ibid., p. 343.

52 Ibid.
In the same letter Wordsworth becomes so disturbed that some of his statements seem to border on rashness. The question, "Can it, in a general view, be good, that an infant should learn much which its parents do not know?" must have been the product of emotion rather than sane thinking. Not even his dislike for the artificial and love of natural development can explain this idea.

In retrospect it seems odd indeed that Wordsworth could have been at once radical in some views and reactionary in others. Distrust of social reform but realization of a need for it perhaps accounts for some of his attitudes. At times he deplored the lack of education and at others seemed to think that no formal education was necessary for one to take his place in society. Experiments in education have proved that some of Wordsworth's theories are sound principles, while others, especially those concerning what we call nursery schools or kindergartens and the education of women, are totally reactionary. Certainly, however, Wordsworth did much to call attention to the need of a public school system in England.

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Ibid., p. 345.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

From the facts and opinions brought out in this study of Wordsworth from political, religious, and educational standpoints, one might conclude that he was a good citizen or a bad citizen, depending upon the viewpoint of the person drawing the conclusion. Either opinion could possibly be substantiated. Wordsworth was not the civic-minded public servant who is often thought of when good citizenship awards are given. However, it can be said that through his writings, he did much to arouse others to an awareness of political, religious, and educational needs of his country.

Wordsworth's political ideas represent a growth that is not far different from that of any political enthusiast. As a revolutionist Wordsworth showed the youthful enthusiasm that might be expected of anyone particularly interested in a political idea. He saw a need for reform and believed that he saw a solution. That the leaders, who should have possessed more of Wordsworth's passionate desire for the triumph of democratic principles, should become so desirous for power as to turn their energies in that direction to the neglect of their professed democratic beliefs was a bitter disappointment to Wordsworth. This turn of events in addition to the declaration
of war between France and his own country was enough to cause
the crisis in Wordsworth's life. The incident is, however, not to be entirely deplored. It did serve to awaken other
powers—or to mature latent powers—which eventually made him a much better citizen than he would have been without the experience.

Although Wordsworth did become conservative in his political views, he did not lose interest in the welfare of his country. He became increasingly interested in the individual. That he became wary of reform in the mass was only the natural reaction of one who had been so keenly disappointed in his first enthusiasm for reform. To change his opinion was his privilege and does not necessarily brand him as a "comfortable conservative" or an apostate as some of his critics have done. After observing the results of the French Revolution, Wordsworth would have been an idle dreamer had he not given up the belief that freedom could be achieved without danger or that people would adhere to democratic principles without some outside pressure. Wordsworth, without doubt, still wanted reform, but sought to bring it about through emotional appeal to the individual rather than through legislation. Instead of growing narrow and cold, Wordsworth retained a great deal of his breadth of vision. He never ceased to deplore injustice and wrong.
Wordsworth's religious beliefs went through an evolution as did his political beliefs. The controversial points concerning the religion of Wordsworth seem to deal with the question of his orthodoxy rather than his Christian beliefs. There is no doubt that he was a Christian. If he was not at times unorthodox, his efforts to find his real beliefs gave the impression that he was. That he was orthodox in later life seems a settled fact. His interest and faith in humanity and his tolerance of the weaknesses of man are evidences of his Christian beliefs.

The great moral and spiritual appeal found in Wordsworth's poetry is a characteristic of Wordsworth's greatness. To this is added the power to transmute to his readers an elevated joy from which stems lofty thoughts and thence good deeds. Since the relation of nature and the soul pervades the larger part of Wordsworth's poetry, he must have felt a close relationship between God in nature and God in Christ. Certainly the influence of such subject matter on the minds of men has been much greater than a propounding of his doctrine. The sense of unworthiness and imperfection which Wordsworth felt as he grew older is a mark of religious growth rather than decline.

The recognition by Wordsworth of a need for a system of public education and his appeal for such a system are definite marks of the good citizen. Whether or not all the ideas that
he advanced have been proved good does not measure the
citizen. He is measured by the fact that he wished to
improve educational opportunities and that he made this
known. His ideas of learning through experience and free-
dom are popular educational principles today. On the other
hand, his opposition to nursery schools and education for
women was fast becoming out-moded even in his own day. Why
Wordsworth at times seemed to think everyone should have an
education, and at other times thought no formal education
necessary to happiness and usefulness is hardly explain-
able. All of his beliefs concerning education are colored
by a belief in education for life. That the amount or kind
of education needed by individuals in order to take their
places in society varies is, of course, true. However, I
think of no way of life which would not require some edu-
cation for happiness and good citizenship.

Thus we find Wordsworth a good citizen from many stand-
points and a rather poor one from others. His part in the
Revolution, his failure to marry Annette Vallon, and his la-
ter life of comparative seclusion are not characteristics
of a good citizen. However the age of revolt against con-
vention, his financial difficulties, and other circumstances
concerning his personal life partly explain these unfavorable
incidents and conditions. If Wordsworth failed in being the
spirited public citizen, let it be said that his pen took the place of a more active part in trying to improve England and her people. All things considered, the conclusion is obvious that Wordsworth came much nearer being a good citizen than a bad one.
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