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Catholic Teaching in Patmore's The Angel in The House and The Unknown Riel

By

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Dedication

To the boys and girls the future fathers and mothers of America.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Creighton University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of English

Omaha, 1937
CATHOLIC TEACHING IN PATMORE'S THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE AND THE UNKNOWN EROS

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: PATMORE'S POSITION AMONG THE POETS OF THE CATHOLIC LITERARY REVIVAL

BY SISTER M. BERTILLA HARMEL, O.S.B.

III: SOURCES OF PATMORE'S THEORY OF ART

IV: CATHOLIC TEACHING ON MARRIAGE

V: STUDY OF THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

VI: STUDY OF THE UNKNOWN EROS

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

The world of today, as at various times in the past, seems to be at a crucial point. This age of science, which was thought to be supreme, has apparently led us astray. The world has seemed to lose its way and to have been abandoned by the radical social and religious forces that have dominated it for so long. Among the questions which converge to bring about the present crisis, none are more vital than those concerning the family and religion. No serious have been the problems that have occurred in modern thought. Not only have the main tenets of family life and religion been called into question, but also the very idea of God. That is, the very idea of God, which threatens Church and family and has been productive of great good. They have become the cause of widespread efforts to restore both family and religion to something like their pristine vigor. A renewed interest in the family and a deeper appreciation of reli-
INTRODUCTION

The world of today, as at various times in the past, seems to be at a crucial point. This age of science, which was to make man supreme, has apparently only enslaved him through the radical social and religious changes it has engendered.

Among the questions which converge to bring about the present state of world-wide unrest and turmoil, none are more vital than those concerning the family and religion. So serious have been the inroads on the family through divorce and other nefarious practices, that society, of which the family is the basis, is seriously threatened. Religion, no less than the family, has been profoundly affected by the changes that have occurred in modern thought. Not only have the main tenets of faith been attacked, but various countries are engaged in the age-old, vain attempt to wipe out the very idea of God.

Strange as it may seem, these very dangers which threaten Church and family have been productive of great good. They have become the cause of widespread efforts to restore both family life and religion to something like their pristine vigor. A renewed interest in the family and a deeper appreciation of reli-
gion as the mainstay of the individual and society is the happy result thus far. Yet much remains to be done.

Since the aim and end of these two great movements in behalf of the family and of religion are excellently portrayed in the main works of Coventry Patmore, the writings of this poet are of peculiar interest in our time. Patmore's poem, *The Angel in the House* illustrates the true conception of nuptial life as found in Catholic doctrine, while *The Unknown Eros* depicts the Christian soul in its advance toward the God of love.

If the family is to be reinstated in its proper place, it will be so only when the contracting parties in marriage adopt ideals like those in *The Angel in the House*. If the promises of the present return of religion to its first fervor are to be fulfilled, the sentiments in *The Unknown Eros* must once more enter fully into the life of the Christian.

As education is one of the means of securing these results, it is not altogether a matter of wonder that the works of Coventry Patmore should have a strong appeal to the present writer. As an educator, called upon to instill correct principles and ideals into the
mind of youth, The Angel in the House is of interest to her from a speculative viewpoint. As a Christian and a religious her interest in The Unknown Eros is speculative and practical as well.

It is the purpose of this thesis to make a study of the philosophy of love as contained in Patmore's two great epics, The Angel in the House and The Unknown Eros. If this work will prove of any aid in making the poetry of Coventry Patmore more widely known, the writer will have achieved her purpose.
CHAPTER I

PATMORE'S POSITION AMONG THE POETS OF THE

CATHOLIC LITERARY REVIVAL

Among the great Catholic revival poets of the
nineteenth century, no one occupies a more important
position than Coventry Patmore. In spite of his in-
tense individualism this poet is in every respect a
typical figure of the Catholic literary revival. His
genius from a purely literary point of view is suffi-
ciently considerable to make him interesting in him-
self and to give him a noticeable place in the shifting
pageant of the nineteenth century. But what mainly
distinguishes him from other composers of delicate
lyrics and amorous romances is the fact that as an ex-
ponent of Catholic thought and sentiment he has played
a distinct role.

About the middle of the nineteenth century
there was a rebirth of interest in Catholic doctrine
affecting many in the highest intellectual circles.
This movement in religion which centered around Newman,
soon made itself evident in the literature of the time.
A group of poets with Patmore, de Vere, and Gerard Hop-
kins in the lead, formed a new literary movement known

1. Basil Champneys, Coventry Patmore, II, 41.
today as the Catholic literary revival. The object of the revival was to return to English literature its essential Catholic spirit with all its former vigor. Since Patmore is one of the leading exponents of this movement, it is the purpose of the writer to trace the influence of this single poet only, referring to other writers only in so far as they have influenced his life and work.

Born July 23, 1823, at Woodford, Essex, Coventry Patmore grew into a precocious child that was looked upon as a budding genius by an extremely interested father. From his mother, a handsome, stern woman and rigid Presbyterian, Coventry inherited strength of character and tenacity of purpose. Biographers assure us that Coventry had no religious instruction in early youth; nevertheless it is probably the early impressions received from his mother that account for his later interest in religion. It was from her he inherited his deeply religious nature, as the following quotation from his autobiography testifies: "From the time I could speak until I was five years old my mother made me repeat the Our Father every night at her knees." ¹ Unfortunately the mother was not permitted to

¹. Basil Champneys, Coventry Patmore, II, 41.
follow up this beginning with further religious training because of opposition by Coventry's father.

At the age of eleven, Coventry read a few sentences in a devotional book which filled him with the thought, "What an exceedingly fine thing it would be if there really was a God!" This was most probably the beginning of that life-long pursuit of the things of God which later characterized Patmore's entire career. At various times in his life this idea is brought up again showing that the question of the possibility of a Supreme Being lingered on in the subconscious mind of the poet.

Coventry's father, Peter George Patmore, a man of literary pursuits, forbade any interference with the freedom of his son's intellect, especially in matters of religion. He imbued him with a desire for omnivorous reading, chiefly the works of Dante, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. He encouraged his son to attain proficiency in mathematics, chemistry, and art; for art he showed remarkable talent. He imparted to him high ideals of truth and purity. Having

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2. Ibid., 42.
3. Ibid., 41.
finished an exhaustive study of the plays of Shakespeare at the age of sixteen, young Patmore found himself dissatisfied with the idea that tragedy ended in death. This to him was no solution, and he cast about for something to satisfy this lack or craving. His search finally brought him "face to face with religion."4

Coventry at the age of sixteen attended school in France for a short time. Paris with its social charms did not appeal to this timid, shy boy. Hence in many of his earlier poems he emphatically manifests his dislike for the French. However, during his school days at Paris he developed an affection for the daughter of Mrs. Catherine Gore, a popular novelist. Though this youthful love was seemingly slight, it might be called his "matriculation into the school of love, and initiated him in the mysteries of emotion and feeling which were the foundation of his later poetry."5 It is important to note that Patmore did not attend Oxford nor Cambridge. His education was procured at home.

About this time Coventry Patmore, although not

5. Basil Champneys, op. cit., I, 42.
seventeen, thought seriously of taking orders in the Anglican Church, but as he had some difficulty in accepting the Thirty-nine Articles, he abandoned the idea in favor of poetry. His first volume of poems appeared in 1844. According to literary conventions these were critically reviewed. His critics had no difficulty in tracing his poetical genealogy. In one way or other he imitated Tennyson, Wordsworth, Browning, or even Leigh Hunt. Hunt had praised Coventry's earliest poems and was no doubt a stimulus to his future efforts. Later on, Hunt's literary character became repugnant to the younger poet. Patmore untiringly continued the renovation in diction and prosody begun by Wordsworth and Coleridge, Edmund Gosse thinks it rather difficult to find traces of Wordsworth and Coleridge in Patmore's early works. His continuous development of mysticism was but the culmination of Blake's primal fire. All critics fail to find traces of Elizabeth Barrett in Patmore's poetry, yet it is she who has influenced him more than anyone else. Though this

6. Ibid., 45.
8. Edmund Gosse, Coventry Patmore, 23.
first volume did not receive popular recognition, it
is worthy of note that Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton appreciated
the young poet's talents and in a letter encouraged him
thus:

Your pages abound with unmistakable testimo-
nials of no common genius; not one which does
not proclaim the mind and heart of a Poet. I
honestly, and without compliment, think the
promise you hold out to us -- is perfectly
startling, both from the luxuriance of your
fancy, and the subtle and reflective inclina-
tions of your intellect. . . . As yet you
seem to me to lean more towards that class of
Poets who are Poets to Poets -- not Poets to
the Multitude. . . . The "form" shows the
Poetical gift and the substance is more than
the Gift -- it is the Manhood or the God-head
behind it. With regard to form. While you
seem to me to excel, and perhaps to exuberate
in original felicity of phrase and expression
I doubt if you have attended sufficiently to
variety and sustained music in rhythm. Most
of your poems are really in almost the same
metre. . . . In Hubert and others, the running
the sense into lines over the rhyme, is not
only too often, but, to my poor judgment, too
inartistically indulged . . . . I urge you to
reconsider details. It seems to me that in
common with Tennyson, you cultivate details to
the injury of the broad clear whole . . . .
The Poet, in indulging fancy, must remember
that it is not by fancy alone that he secures
us -- His strong hold is the heart -- and when
he deserts that, he must hold the firmer to
our understanding or common sense. .

It is significant that Patmore adopted the prin-
ciples laid down in E. Bulwer-Lytton's letter, and later
reiterated them in his own prose works. The use of these principles led to the gradual perfecting of his later poetry in form as well as in substance. This first volume became the initial milestone in our poet's literary career. Love and Religion are the two themes of all Coventry Patmore's poetry. He thinks an artist must be inspired by a "real apprehension of the mysteries of faith."\(^{10}\)

About 1844 Coventry Patmore encountered financial reverses. His father had speculated wildly in railway stocks and had come suddenly to ruin. Consequently the elder Patmore with his wife fled secretly to the Continent, leaving Coventry and his brother Gurney to shift for themselves. Practically penniless, Coventry was not prepared for this strange state of affairs; however, he made the best of the situation and for the next year lived a hand-to-mouth existence on contributions to periodical literature and translations from German and French.

It was during this year of struggle that Coventry Patmore made the most valuable acquaintance of his early life. He met Tennyson, also a struggling young

\(^{10}\) Calvert Alexander, S. J., \textit{op. cit.}, 116.
poet, who was suffering from financial and physical depression. Together they conversed on literature, together they shared the meal of the humble tavern, or spent half the night in walks through the city. This intimacy lasted for seven years. In 1856, without any apparent reason for estrangement, they separated never to meet again. Patmore truthfully acknowledged his enslavement to Tennyson and regretted the days when he followed Tennyson about "like a dog." It is indubitably true, however, that Tennyson by his mature judgment had been exceptionally helpful to the young poet.

Through the mediation of Monckton Milnes, who was introduced to Patmore while dining at Mrs. Proctor's, the impoverished poet was appointed assistant librarian at the British Museum. His initiation into London literary life forced him to realize the weaknesses of his early verses. Emerson's genius, which had now reached its zenith, attracted Patmore. In a moment of luminous enthusiasm he declared: "I am a lover of Ralph Emerson." But his love for him did not blind him to Emerson's dis-
crepancies. We see young Patmore, "as by instinct put-
ting his finger on that want of quality of reverence
his own people." Unlifted by companionship with
with regard to God," which was to be the rift in the
lute of his admiration for the American philosopher.13
No more influential person crossed the path of
our young poet than Emily Augusta Andrews, the daughter
of a Congregational minister. In 1847, after a brief
courtship, he married this charmingly beautiful woman,
whose beauty and innocence were the object of many a
Pre-Raphaelite pen and brush. For fifteen years this
"Angel in the House", faithfully filled the role of
wife and mother. Even though death claimed her in her
youth, she was in her husband's memory "the transcendent type of nuptial beauty."14 Edmund Gosse, a contemporary of Patmore's has left us the following account
of this happy wedded life.

Never, therefore, since the beginning of the
world, was a poet more happily situated in relation to the personal bent of his genius than Patmore was in his first married experience. He had formed as we have seen, a certain exclusively aesthetic notion of marriage as a sacrament. He possessed already the inward and spiritual sense; by an astonishing good fortune, he now received a perfectly harmonious

13. Ibid., 36.
wife the outward and visible sign of grace. He came into possession of what Hooker so subtly calls "God's secrets, discovered to none but to His own people." Uplifted by companionship with this stately and kindly creature, daily illuminated by her simplicity, he slowly gained, not merely what seems a very profound insight into the nature of womanhood, but the precise experience which was needed to make him, beyond all his peers, the consecrated laureate of wedded love.

For years Patmore cherished the idea of writing a poem in praise of the solemnities of marriage, but this could not be accomplished until he had actual experience with married life, nor would it have been accomplished "had the partner of his earlier manhood been less qualified to serve as a revelation to him of the perfection to which a woman, as wife and mother may attain." Emily Patmore furnished to the poet a picture of ideal womanhood; to her he was indebted for inspiration, suggestion, direction, and criticism. To her he attributed the completeness of The Angel and emphasizes the fact that "many of the best thoughts in it stand verbatim as she gave them to him." Thus we see that

15. Ibid., 45-46.
17. Ibid., 119.
she was of invaluable assistance to him in the writing of this poem. His deep insight into the feminine soul could not have been achieved without her companionship.

An important event of this time was Patmore's association with the Pre-Raphaelites, a brotherhood founded in 1848 for the purpose of restoring the ideas of the Middle Ages. Patmore was not a Pre-Raphaelite, but through his prestige promoted the designs of Millais, Holman Hunt, Woolner, and the Rossettis. Edmund Gosse tells us that they all "looked up to Patmore for his intellectual insight and maturity." Our poet contributed short poems to The Germ, the official magazine of the Pre-Raphaelites. Gabriel Rossetti enthusiastically praised these poems. Though there was no actual break in Patmore's friendship for Rossetti, they gradually drifted apart. For F. G. Stephens and Woolner, Patmore retained his friendship to the last. Patmore's poetry of this period does not reflect the influence of his friends.

Patmore soon recognized with Coleridge that poetry like science was difficult and subtle, and "there ought to be a reason not only for every word, but for

the position of every word."\textsuperscript{19} At this time Patmore thought Coleridge to be the "best master among moderns of poetic art, both by theoretic teaching and by example, setting, as he held in the few poems which were worthy of his genius, the highest standard of accomplishment."\textsuperscript{20} It is quite evident that the dominating thought of Patmore's articles at this time was his own poetic education. Originality and maturity of thought are evident, while mysticism is rapidly developing. Patmore considered Shakespeare a great moral teacher and held that in most of his plays reward and punishment are meted out to the recipient according to his deserts. Some, probably to settle the religious question.

To Patmore, Tennyson's poetry was most pleasing; to be a friend of Tennyson's was a great privilege. Tennyson readily understood and appreciated the beautiful character of Emily Patmore. He showed intense interest in The Angel in the House, and by his criticisms was of invaluable assistance to Patmore. On the other hand, Patmore reviewed and criticized Tennyson's work and considered him the ideal poet. In the beginning of


20. \textit{Idem.}
their friendship, Patmore was considerably younger in age and in poetry than Tennyson. When Patmore attained an age of poetic independence or assumed a critical attitude towards Tennyson, some rift came in their friendship.

The two years following the death of his wife Emily were years of anxiety for Patmore. The care of his six young children engrossed his minutest attention at every moment of the day. Responsibility, melancholy, and the great religious question were ever uppermost in his mind. Something was drawing him Romewards. In February, 1864, two years after his wife's death he went to Rome, probably to settle the religious question. Aubrey de Vere was in Rome, and he introduced Patmore into the best Catholic circles. Here he met Marianne Byles, who recently had been received into the Church by Cardinal Manning, himself a convert from Anglicism. Miss Byles helped Patmore settle his religious doubts, and in a short time he announced his reception into the Catholic Church by an eminent Jesuit, Father Cardella. With his coming into the Church, peace and supreme rest took possession of his soul. During the remaining thirty-two years of his life, never a shadow of religious doubt in regard to the doctrines of the Catholic
Church ever entered his mind. Of Miss Byles, Patmore writes: "I had never before beheld so beautiful a personality and this beauty seemed to be the pure effulgence of Catholic Sanctity."21 After a short friendship, Patmore married Miss Byles. Mary Patmore became a second mother to his children and by her unselfish devotion and tact won their sincere affection. She had a literary education and was no doubt the inspiration of his mystical odes. Through her deep religious influence the poet kept "his work at the highest level of orthodoxy and spiritual intensity."22 Patmore's mystical tendencies were developing, and these implied a new standard of poetry. He now devoted much of his time to the study of mystical writers: St. Bernard, St. John of the Cross, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Theresa. Patmore is now entering upon a new stage of his unique poetic career. Again his theme is love, but it is love awakened to all the ecstatic beauty of the Divine Being. Patmore considered this Unknown Eros to be the "mine" of Catholic mystical theology, the setting forth of the intimate union of the

22. Ibid., I, 216.
soul of the individual with Christ. To the poet's surprise, some of his odes called forth the disapproval of certain of his Catholic contemporaries. Newman did not like "mixing up amorousness with religion." Due to the uninterested reaction of readers towards one section of these odes, Patmore unfortunately burned them.

Now at the age of fifty-four, in order to strengthen his devotion to the Mother of God, which was not any too well grounded, he undertook a pilgrimage to Lourdes. The result was the realization that "the prayers of thirty-five years had been granted." His poetic inspiration had been renewed, accompanied by the vision that Mary was the perfect type of womanhood. As a debt of gratitude to Mary he wrote The Child's Purchase, in which he dedicates his artistic and poetic attainments to Christ's Virgin Mother. This prayerful poem in honor of our Blessed Lady is considered one of the finest of its kind in English Literature.

After nineteen years of alienation from Tennyson, after his mother's death this young child became a little orphan. After the marriage of Emily Noronis with the rest of her life was received into the Catholic Church.

24. Ibid., 66.
25. Ibid., 68.
son, Patmore wrote to his former friend, expressing his regret that any misunderstanding should have arisen to estrange them. However, although Patmore sent a copy of the *Unknown Eros* to Tennyson, this gesture did not renew their former intimacy. It is interesting to note that Patmore made every effort to attend Tennyson's funeral, but arrived too late.

According to Mr. Basil Champneys this breach is the only one that estranged Patmore from any of his friends. True, his joining the Church, his second marriage, his partly secluded life, and his work as reviewer of poetry caused some separation from his friends, at least for a time, but Patmore was ordinarily quick to remove the grievance and renew the friendship.

In his relations with the members of his own family Patmore was always most happy. Emily Honoria, his oldest daughter, showed signs of unusual ability at an early age. She looked upon her early companionship with her mother as the happiest experience of her life. After her mother's death this young child became a little mother to her brothers and sisters. Soon after her father's second marriage Emily Honoria with the rest of the children was received into the Catholic
Church. Emily attended a convent school and at the age of eighteen expressed a desire to become a nun. Her father readily granted permission, and accompanied her to the convent. This beloved daughter, Sister Mary Christina, died young.

As his first wife Emily had been the ideal of conjugal love and had inspired The Angel in the House, so his daughter Emily Honoria was the ideal of the Odes. In no small measure did mother and daughter realize, each in her own chosen sphere, the poetical ideal. Patmore’s view, that Divine Love should be the off-spring of Human Love, found here a fulfillment in reality. It was his privilege to have a wife and a daughter who embodied his highest conceptions of natural and of Divine Love.

In 1874, after several years of life as a recluse, Patmore left his beautiful country home at Heron Ghyll, went to London and renewed old intimacies with Procter, Lord Loughton, Palgrave, Carlyle and Ruskin. His friendship for Carlyle was of long duration. The latter writer highly praised Tamerton Church Tower, also The Angel in the House. This friendship ceased only with Carlyle’s death.

Patmore also numbered Ruskin among his intimate
friends. Ruskin had often visited Patmore during his first wife’s lifetime, and corresponded with him during his years as a recluse. This friendship was renewed in London when Ruskin became godfather to Henry John, Patmore’s youngest son. He also took a personal interest in Patmore’s daughters. Ruskin was ever courteous and obliging but quick to take offense.

Patmore’s sixteen years of happy married life with Mary Byles were closed abruptly by her sudden death in 1880. A year later he married Harriet Robson. His life with her, like that with his two former wives, was one of peace and contentment. To this union was born a son, Francis Epiphanus, who proved to be the joy of Patmore’s later years.

In 1884 Patmore gave himself unreservedly to the writing of prose. His Principle in Art, Religio Poetae, and The Rod, the Root, and the Flower, reveal a subtle philosophy of aesthetics. Mr. Herbert Read complains that the above works are not sufficiently appreciated, and declares “that no poet since Wordsworth and Coleridge, not even Matthew Arnold has such a clever conception of the poet’s function.”

One prose work, the Sponsa Del, probably the work showing the highest literary ability and containing the inspiration of all his writing was never published. He had given instructions to have it published after his death. In 1887, he showed the manuscript to Father Gerard Hopkins, S. J., who remarked "that's telling secrets," so Patmore subsequently destroyed it. Even if Patmore's most important prose were destroyed, enough remained to give him a distinguished place among the prose writers. *Religio Poetae* undoubtedly shows Patmore at his best.

Patmore's latest intimate literary friendship (1892) was with Alice Meynell. He admired her poems and her prose works and considered her as one of the foremost writers of the day. When a poet laureate was to be chosen for England after Tennyson's death, many suggested Patmore to fill the post, but he suggested Alice Meynell. She had the highest appreciation for his Odes. She recognized their true worth from a literary view-point, and saw in them a beauty and meaning hidden from the people of his day. For some years Patmore made his headquarters at her home in London. It was there that Patmore met Francis Thompson, the poet whose works "show similarity in thought, and not in-
frequently in form, to those of Patmore." Patmore, never a robust man, had very early in life suffered from lung trouble. In 1895 a marked change came over him; he had frequent attacks of dizziness. Mr. Basil Champneys, his most intimate friend, persuaded him to consult a physician. In December of the same year he contracted pneumonia and, after a few days illness, died a most beautiful death. While Father O'Connell, the weekly chaplain, was reading the prayers for the dying, being overcome by grief he paused; Patmore continued, saying, "Depart, thou Christian Soul". Clothed in the Franciscan habit the poet was laid to rest in the Catholic portion of the Lymington cemetery.

Patmore realized that the love of God had fled from England; his mission as a poet was to restore this love by showing it can be made to enter into the most ordinary circumstances and duties of everyday life. As love had been the keynote of this great poet's life, so in death he reiterated his theme, "I love my God best." Like Dante, Patmore's theme was love, human and divine. Each had derived immeasurable wealth from the

study of the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas. Patmore achieved his purpose — he elevated dogma to song.

Theodore Maynard asserts that Patmore "was the most considerable Catholic poet since Dante." 28


Keenly aware of this fact, Coventry Patmore selected his models from eminent sources. As a result, his theory of art is interesting in itself, even aside from the subject matter of his works.

To Patmore, the position of the poet has particular advantages. The bard, unlike the painter, is free to treat of sublime truths without fear of bringing ridicule or profanation on the doctrine he sets forth. Should the poet expound subtle philosophy or profound theology, it matters not; for the few will understand, while the others will merely attribute his expressions to poetic license or extravagance, and will not consider the poet to be in earnest. On the other hand should the saint employ a similar latitude in speech, he would perhaps have to fear being too implicitly believed, or receiving the praise of men for the holiness through which he has acquired his knowledge. 1

CHAPTER II

SOURCES OF PATMORE’S THEORY OF ART

When an author essays to give poetical expression to high truths, it is essential that his manner of presentation correspond to the loftiness of his theme. Keenly aware of this fact, Coventry Patmore selected his models from eminent sources. As a result, his theory of art is interesting in itself, even aside from the subject matter of his works.

To Patmore, the position of the poet has particular advantages. The bard, unlike the saint, is free to treat of sublime truths without fear of bringing ridicule or profanation on the doctrine he sets forth. Should the poet expound subtle philosophy or profound theology, it matters not; for the few will understand, while the others will merely attribute his expressions to poetic license or extravagance, and will not consider the poet to be in earnest. On the other hand should the saint employ a similar latitude in speech, he would perhaps have to fear being too implicitly believed, or receiving the praise of men for the holiness through which he has acquired his knowledge.  

Before going further it is important to note that Patmore conceives the poet as one who has not merely written verse; he is one whose powers make him a seer. This idea is clearly expressed in his *Religio Poetæ*.

I may say, without fear of contradiction from those who are at all well read in the works of St. Augustine, St. Bernard, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis of Sales, St. John of the Cross, and a score of others like them, that the amount of substantial poetry, of imaginative insight into the noblest and loveliest reality to be found in their writings, is ten times greater than is to be found in all the poets of the past two thousand years put together.²

According to Patmore, the message of these gifted intellects, while not having the outward form of poetry, is nevertheless essentially poetic because of its sublimity. Realizing, however, that the outward form and diction plays no insignificant part in aiding the mind to grasp an idea, our poet employs all the resources of language to bring his fellowmen to his point of view. This intention is indicated in Patmore's preface to *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower* where he says:

> And far be it from me to pose as other than a mere reporter, using the poetic intellect and

imagination so as in part to conceive those happy realities of life which in many have been and are an actual and abiding possession; and to express them in such manner that thousands who lead beautiful and substantially Catholic lives, whether outside or within the visible Church, may be assisted in the only true learning, which is to know better that which they already know.  

The position of the poet then, affords him a wide field of action and a corresponding amount of freedom in the means used to attain his aim. But this freedom will be productive of good results only when based on sound principles of art. To insure the excellence of his work, therefore, Patmore familiarized himself with the best that has been thought and written, and drew from thence the guiding rules of his art. Thus, his perusal of the Apostle of the Gentiles taught the English poet that one of the essential characteristics of true art is its power to inspire men with joy. Patmore devotes an entire chapter of his *Principle in Art* to the discussion of "Cheerfulness in Art". He points out that all truly great literature of all times -- the works of Dante, Shakespeare, Calderon, the Greek *Tragic" for example, is due in large part to the exquis-

3. Coventry Patmore, *The Rod, the Root, and the Flower*, VI.

and Indian myths, and above all, Holy Scripture are pervaded with a spirit of joy. The reason for this is that "good art is nothing but a representation of life; and that the good are gay is a commonplace." Since this gaiety is the result of goodness, it follows that good art requires good morals. Consequently the proper subject for the bard is "the rectitude of humanity." This does not mean that the poet should select religion as his direct subject, or that his work should never represent infractions of law. True art requires only that, although sin and disaster are portrayed in a work, the whole, nevertheless, redounds to the praise of righteousness. Another element that enhances the beauty of art is pathos. This idea Patmore garnered from Aristotle's Rhetoric, in the section where the philosopher treats of pity. The English writer found numerous illustrations of pathos in Holy Writ, in tragedy, and in simple tales, and he himself employed it with good effect in his own poetry. The appeal of his short poem, "The Toys", for example, is due in large part to the exqui-

5. Ibid., 6.
6. Ibid., 21-22.
While the effect of pathos is readily sensed by the average person, there is another factor in art which is not so easily detected and which our poet calls "the point of rest" in art. Taking for his thesis Coleridge's saying that "all harmony is founded on a relation to rest", Patmore illustrates this principle as exemplified in literature. The point of rest in any work of art he defines as "the least interesting point in the whole work." It is the punctum indifferent to which all that is interesting is more or less unconsciously referred.

The plays of Shakespeare furnish numerous examples of this device. In these, the point of rest takes the form of an unobtrusive character which serves as a norm or balance between the excesses of various other characters of the same drama. Thus, in the tragedy of Hamlet, Horatio is the mean which throws into ordinary, workaday life, and affords a point of repose amidst the turmoil occasioned by the Dane and his former friend. Horatio's
character is
a peaceful focus radiating the calm of moral solution throughout all the difficulties and disasters of surrounding fate; a vital centre, which like that of a great wheel, has little motion in itself, but which at once transmits and controls the fierce revolution of the circumference.

This point of rest is not necessarily always a character in literature. It may be a refrain in poetry, the chorus in a song, an inconspicuous detail in a painting, a rest or pause in a musical composition. An instance of this point of rest in Patmore’s poetry was severely criticized in an unsigned article in a contemporary magazine. The poet closes a glowing description of a happy day in a newly wedded life as follows:

I thought, indeed, by magic chance,
A third day) from Heaven to win,
But as, at dusk, we reached Penzance,
A drizzling rain set in.

This entire stanza, but especially the last two lines, serves as a readjustment from a delightful excursion to ordinary, work-a-day life. But the critic, unable to draw this inference, is indignant at “such stuff.”

Perhaps there is no phase relating to his art

8. Ibid., 15.

that Patmore has discussed at greater length than that of the language of the poet. This aspect of his work is of special interest because of the fact that it was precisely this—his mode of expression—which caused even several of his best friends and critics to view askance some of his work. Thus, the nature of the symbols and parables, the imagery and comparisons employed in portions of *The Unknown Eros* called forth remonstrances from Newman and others. But Patmore, steeped in the literature of ancient religion and mythology, the works of St. Augustine and the early Christian writers, the mystics of later centuries and the imitable pages of Holy Writ, held to his views and his style of writing.

In his later prose works the English poet indicates his reasons for the phraseology he employed:

Sensible things alone can be expressed fully and directly by sensible terms. Symbols and parables, and metaphors—which are parables on a small scale—are the only means of adequately conveying, or rather hinting, supersensational knowledge. "He spake not without a parable." Hebrew, Greek, Indian, and Egyptian religions all spoke in parables; and poets deal in images and parables simply because there is no other vehicle for what they have to say.10

The readiness of some to take exception to certain forms of expression Patmore regards as a result of the different outlook on purity moderns have as compared to that of the ancients. He points out that the greatest and purest of the "Fathers of the Church" were in the practice of addressing their flocks with an outspokenness which is not surpassed even by the ancient expounders of the Eleusinian and Bacchic mysteries, or for that matter, by the Bible itself.\textsuperscript{11}

The poet maintains that the attitude of the ancients is preferable to that of the moderns, an attitude which has its origin in the Reformation. He goes further and attributes the anthropomorphic character of ancient religions to the knowledge, although partly obscured by the time, of primitive revelation. For Patmore, the pagan beliefs in the communication of gods and goddesses with mortal men were a remnant, vague and shadowy though it was, of the doctrine of the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{12} Again, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity was apprehended by Plato and other Greek philosophers under the analogy of a being consisting of "three sexes."\textsuperscript{13} He finds in pagan

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 69.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 51.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 53.
\end{itemize}
belief a commentary on Christian unbelief.

The Pagan who simply believed in the myth of Jupiter, Alcmena, and Hercules, much more he who had been initiated into the unspeakable names of Bacchus and Persephone, knew more of living Christian doctrine than any "Christian" who refuses to call Mary the "Mother of God." 14

When Patmore's reflections on the subject of his style have been weighed, therefore, the conclusion is in his favor. If the poet is to show forth the eternal significance of human activity, he must be permitted the same liberty in his creations which in ages past was accorded saints and sages. And Patmore, with his wide reading from the most orthodox sources, became imbued with principles of poetic art which made him the master poet he was.

CHAPTER III

THE CATHOLIC TEACHING ON MARRIAGE

Most of the poetry of Coventry Patmore deals with love, and a great part of this love poetry treats of conjugal love. Thus, the subject matter of The Angel in the House is principally premarital love, while that of the Victories of Love, which is a sequel to the earlier work, follows the love of husband and wife in all its ramifications. Although Patmore wrote both of these poems before his conversion to the Catholic faith, the aspect of love in them is in accord with the teaching of the Church. A brief consideration of the Catholic doctrine on marriage will make this point clear, and is, therefore, not out of place in a study of Patmore's works.

The creation of man was the crowning manifestation of God's love in the morning of the world. According to the Divine plan, man is not only to be head and this union of man and woman, that is night of the kingdom of this earth, but is destined for endless bliss with God Himself and those other marvels of His creative work, namely the angels. Unlike His plan in regard to the angels, however, God did not create all men in the beginning. Instead of doing so, He, by

an act of His Divine condescension, designed to cooperate with His own creatures in the propagation of the human race. For this purpose He instituted marriage:

For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and she shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.¹

Through this divine institution of matrimony, man and woman become the instruments and in a peculiar way, the helpmates of the Creator. They cooperate in the creation of a being made to the image and likeness of God and destined for the very courts of Heaven itself. This it is that constitutes the sublime dignity and sanctity of matrimony.

An institution of this nature, that has God for its author, cannot but be possessed of characteristics designed to preserve it intact and to further its ends. These characteristics are clearly indicated by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical on Christian Marriage:

And this union of man and woman, that it might answer more fittingly to the infinitely wise counsels of God, even from that beginning manifested two most excellent properties -- deeply sealed, as it were, and signed upon it -- namely, unity and perpetuity.²

¹ Matthew, XIX 5,6.
In proof of this assertion the pontiff appeals to the Gospel which shows clearly that "this doctrine was declared and openly confirmed by the divine authority of Jesus Christ."  

In the course of the ages this doctrine of the unity and perpetuity of marriage had, unfortunately, been lost sight of, and society had suffered deeply in consequence. With the coming of our Divine Redeemer, however, marriage was not only restored to its pristine vigor, but was still further ennobled and sanctified.

Before revealing to men His plan for the renewal and exaltation of family life, Our Lord, as was His custom, furnished mankind with an example. He gave His Blessed Mother and holy foster father as the highest models of Christian parents, and to all men He gave a perfect pattern of ideal home life during the years He spent with Mary and Joseph at Nazareth. There amid the lovely hills of Galilee, Jesus grew in age and wisdom before God and men. The few glimpses holy scripture vouchsafes us concerning this "hidden life" are singularly beautiful and instructive. The members of the Holy Family had their joys and sorrows as do all who

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3. Ibid., 60.
pass through this vale of time. These joys were always deepened and the sorrows softened by being consecrated to the All Holy. In a similar way the lights and shadows that come and go in all earthly homes can be transformed into the cloud and the pillar of fire that lead to the Promised Land.

Again, the incidents related in sacred scripture regarding the early life of Our Lord, while they concern all members of the Holy Family, seem always to converge in the Divine Child. Just so in the life of ordinary families, the joys and hopes of parents are ordinarily centered in their children. It is in the care of those immortal souls which God has intrusted to their loving charge that parents find their chief joy and happiness.

Another aspect of the life of the Holy Family is strikingly illustrated in what the Gospel records, and that is the relation of the various members to one another. Thus Jesus is the Creator of heaven and earth, yet He was subject to His own creatures. His Mother was destined to be the Queen of Heaven, yet she faithfully carried out the behests of St. Joseph, her inferior.

Matthew, XIX, 9. 

After having given mankind an example of
ideal home life, Christ enforced this model by actual
practice those things which pertain to the
precept in regard to matrimony. Thus He restored the
unity and indissolubility of marriage by forbidding
bills of divorce and excluding polygamy, polyandry,
and other perversions when He said:

\[\text{And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.}^4\]

But this was not all. Besides renewing domestic life by restoring marriage to its primitive sanctity, Christ secured still further blessings for the married by raising matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament.\(^5\) The benefits and graces resulting from this act of divine goodness are clearly enumerated by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical on marriage:

\[\text{This sacrament not only increased sanctifying grace, the permanent principle of the supernatural life, in those who, as the expression is, place no obstacle in its way, but also adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers. By these gifts the parties are assisted not only in understanding, but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing ef-}\]

\[\begin{align*}
4. & \text{Matthew, XIX, 9}. \\
5. & \text{Pope Leo XIII, op. cit., 62–63.}
\end{align*}\]
fectively, and in successfully putting into practice those things which pertain to the marriage state, its aims and duties, giving them in fine rights to the actual assistance of grace, whenever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state.  

Truly the gifts and graces of this great sacrament bespeak the divine tenderness of a God who will not suffer Himself to be outdone in generosity. For, although clothed with superhuman dignity and inherent sacredness, marriage entails many cares and sacrifices on the part of those who would fulfill its obligations faithfully. In view of this fact, the all wise Creator not only provided natural joys to offset the burdens of married life, but He ordained that the seeming obstacles to happiness should serve instead as bonds to strengthen the ties of domestic life. To make this possible, God had especially intervened already in the beginning to give the marriage contract form and law. It was but natural that an institution so dear to the heart of the Creator should be proportionately favored in the New Covenants, provided for the protection of these rights.


Dispensation.

Perhaps the most noticeable effect of Christ's solicitude in regard to marriage was the reinstatement of woman in her rightful place of honor in the home. This in turn redounds to the welfare of the child, to that of the entire domestic circle, and to society in general. For woman is endowed with gifts of nature and grace that fit her in a peculiar way to brighten the pathway of life here on earth. This truth was brought out very beautifully by our present Holy Father Pius XI when he said:

For if the man is the head (of the family) the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place of ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love. 8

This view of the present pontiff in regard to the relations of husband and wife is the traditional one of the Church. Knowing that family life can proceed harmoniously only when the rights of the individual are respected, Christianity, from its earliest beginnings, provided for the protection of these rights.

While the husband remained the head of the family his

rule was not to be autocratic, nor was the position of
the wife to be one of inferiority. Both were to be
bound by the same moral law, for both are spiritual
equals. The seeming disproportion of power between
husband and wife, parents and children, was to be bal-
anced by the bonds of religion and affection. Perhaps
this idea of perfect personal equality is nowhere ex-
pressed more clearly than in the sweeping declaration
of the Apostle of the Gentiles: "For as many of you as
have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ . . . .
There is neither male nor female. For ye are all one
in Christ Jesus." 10

These considerations show that the relative po-
sitions of the family members are not so much the re-
sult of law, as that the law itself is the outgrowth of
the physical inequalities of those comprising the family
unit. The law is formulated by the needs of the family;
the family is not modeled on the requirements of the
law. This is only another instance in which the spirit

Study of the Family, 30, ff.


of a law proves superior to its letter. For in the intimate and delicate relations of family life, there arise of necessity many situations that are more easily and amicably settled by mutual sacrifice of individual interests than by a rigid adherence to any law may end by defeating the very purpose or end for which the law exists.

When rightly understood then, there is nothing humiliating, far less degrading, in the relative status of husband and wife. Quite the contrary. As one writer on the subject points out, there is a hint in Genesis in regard to woman, "that far from being of secondary value, she, unlike man, is, not from the slime of the earth but springs from a living human being."¹¹

In the light of this fact man's hegemony over woman is not so much that of a master to command as that of a guardian to shield and treasure this God-given companion and helpmate in his earthly sojourn. It is for this that man has been intrusted with the agency of the human race. Even after the fall of our first parents this ordinance of God remained unchanged,

as a writer in the Catholic Encyclopedia points out.

Referring to the decree that Eve was to be under the power of her husband, this scholar remarks:

Doubtless this last did not imply that the woman’s essential condition of equality with man was altered, but this sentence expressed what, in the nature of things, was bound to follow in a world dominated by sin and its consequences.12

Hence it follows that far from diminishing the respect due to woman, the conditions resulting from the fall only made esteem for her more imperative because of the greater heroism now required on her part. This can be readily inferred from the many passages of holy scripture which are replete with the praise of woman. It can be inferred from the great blessings accorded to personages in the Old Testament who were noted for the love and fidelity of their married life. How else explain the reward that awaited the loyalty of Elcana, the father of Samuel, of Joachim and Zachary, or of the humble carpenter of Nazareth, Joseph, the "just man"?

All these were singularly favored as they had been singularly faithful in discharging the duties of a

If God thus guarded the interests of His handmaids in the Old Testament, He showed an even greater solicitude in their behalf when He later appeared on earth. For then He, so to say, summed up the benefits He had formerly given singly, and to various of His faithful servants, to bestow them in all their richness and fulness on each single bride of later times. This is evident from passages of that exquisitely tender blessing of the bride given during the nuptial mass:

O God . . . look with favor upon this Thy servant who now, upon entering the holy state of marriage, humbly seeks the help of Thy protection. May the yoke that is upon her be one of love and of peace; spotless and true to her married life in Christ; may she follow always the saintly models of her sex; may she be dear to her husband as Rachel was; wise as Rebecca; long-lived and faithful as Sara. . . . may she gain strength from the practice of virtue; may her demeanor befit her state, and her modesty inspire respect; may she be apt in the knowledge of heavenly truth, favored with offspring, upright and incorruptible; may she come at last to the peace of the blessed and the glory of heaven above; and may they both see their children's children unto the third and the fourth generation, and come at length to a happy old age.

The entire text of the Church's marriage rite is characterized by a continual, gentle pleading with the Almighty Father to bless and protect His children.
who are entering this holy state of matrimony. Thus it becomes clear that marriage is nothing less than a means of sanctification for the parties contracting it, through the permanent title to special graces it procures for them. For this reason St. Paul likened the union of husband and wife to the sublime union of Christ with His Church. This idea is well brought out in an article on marriage by Rev. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B.

Marriage is God-made, not man-made. From the very first it has a kind of foreshadowing of the Incarnation of His Son. Marriage has not in itself even a full and complete existence. It cannot accomplish its highest purpose, the procreation of children, without the Almighty supplementing and completing the parental function by creation of the child's soul. Even in its natural condition, marriage oversteps the boundaries and limits of this world and its powers. It needs God in a special sense to complete it.

But if we consider Christian marriage we find that God has dignified it even infinitely more. He has made it one of the seven sacraments of His Church -- a grace-conferring institution. More than that He has placed it in the midst of the living power-stream of Christianity, in that stream of grace which circulates between Christ and His Church. He has made it a symbol of the Mystical Body of Christ, a type or picture of the union of Christ and
In this Mystical Body, there is the closest union of love and life between Christ, its head, and the faithful, who are its members. There is a similar deep fellowship of love and life in the union of husband and wife in marriage, making their natural union a symbol of the supernatural union between Christ and the members of His Church. Moreover, just as men derive supernatural life from their union with their divine Head, so do they derive their natural life from the union of man and woman. "In the Mystical Body men are endlessly reborn to grace; in marriage men are endlessly born for grace."14

In both instances, in the natural as well as in the supernatural sphere, God acts as the life-giving principle. It is this fact of the Creator's participating in the generation of children that constitutes the mystery of marriage. It is this that makes it a


"great sacrament". And just as the other sacraments become channels of grace for those who receive them worthily, so also do those who cooperate with the graces of matrimony find in it the path leading to life everlasting.

Sedley Patmore was inspired to write _The Angel in the House_ and its sequel, _The Victorians of Love_ through reading the love poetry of world famous poets like Spenser, Shakespeare, Petrarch, and especially Dante. In the course of Patmore's reflections on these works, it occurred to him that though many had written in praise of love outside the married state, none had ever accorded wedded love its deserts. He then determined to devote his labors to this, "The
CHAFER 17

STUDY OF THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE

Coventry Patmore's beautiful poem, *The Angel in the House*, justly merits to be classed as an epic on wedded life. In this work the poet has faithfully portrayed and clearly analyzed the various stages of love between man and woman from its first delicate budding in adolescence till its rich flowering later in the married state. So truly does Patmore define the bonds of matrimony, so reverently does he treat of its sanctity, that the perusal of the poem cannot but serve to show at their true value the dignity of wedlock and the sacredness of family life.

Coventry Patmore was inspired to write *The Angel in the House* and its sequel, *The Victories of Love* through reading the love poetry of world famous poets like Spenser, Shakespeare, Petrarch, and especially Dante. In the course of Patmore's reflections on these works it occurred to him that though many had written in praise of love outside the married state, none had ever accorded wedded love its deserts. He then determined to devote his labors to this, "The
first of themes, sung last of all."

Patmore's work was to be a poem on domestic felicity. To him, marriage, the rearing of a family, and all the concomitants of wedded life, were the sources of poetic inspiration, as they were also the Jacob's ladder of fruitful communication between this world and the world to come. In conformity with this idea, Patmore represents the author of The Angel in the House as a married man, blessed with a loving wife, and little innocent children. This fact adds immeasurably to the general effect of the poet's message. For it stamps the writings, not as the work of a poetic dreamer, weaving impossible theories of life, but as the sincere outpourings of a glad husband and devoted father who knows whereof he speaks.

In the structure of The Angel in the House, Patmore by his reflectiveness and ingenuity made the poem a distinctive work. His epic begins with a prologue and is divided into two books. Each book of the epic contains twelve cantos. Preludes introduce each canto, and these contain reflections, aphorisms, and epigrams suitably portraying the incidents of the story, all directly pertaining to the subject of love or woman-
hood. They, too, while giving the philosophical and intellectual setting, comment on the narrative and omit the homely details. In this arrangement Patmore perhaps was following Grecian ideas, or he wished to introduce diversion to break the monotony of the story. The loveliness of the preludes with their exquisitely pure poetry enchant the reader.

As individuality was a striking characteristic in Patmore's life, quite naturally this unique gift left its impress on his poetry. At a time when originality and metrical variety were considered supremely important, Patmore strangely stood apart from his fellow poets in the choice of metre. In *The Angel in the House*, he deliberately chose as the medium of his message the iambic rhymed octosyllabic quatrain "as being a gay and jocund measure eminently adapted to a study of successful love and happy marriage."

In his *Essay on English Metrical Law*, Patmore states his reason for choosing this simplest of forms: that due to its unusual rapidity of movement, it lent itself to a marvelous by using such a vehicle for a simple

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itself easily to lyrical delights. In this essay he also "defines the rhyme royal . . . as the most heroic of measures; and admits that blank verse which he never used is, of all recognized English metres, the most difficult to write well in." Since Patmore expresses his aversion for trochaic and dactylic feet, and limits himself almost exclusively to the iambic, Symonds thinks the poet unable to handle anything else with flexibility. This critic also notes that Patmore was at his best when writing the four-line stanza of eights. Symonds asserts that while Patmore did "marvelous things with one idea and the iambic metre," it was really a hindrance to him for he could see nothing beyond them. Because he was a poet of one idea, and one metre, he was unable to criticize his own art, but he could pass judgment on Wagner's music or Leonardo's paintings.

Katherine Bregy agrees with most of the critics that the metre is commonplace and as such lends itself easily to "parody and perversion." She thinks Patmore "has avoided the pitfalls of his form and his theme to a marvel," by using such a vehicle for a simple

story. To those who merely find it "sweet and innocuous," Miss Bregy recommends the message of the Wedding Sermon. 3

Maurice Egan comments on the "prejudice against the domestic poetry of Coventry Patmore," and says that those who do not like it will not appreciate Wordsworth either. Egan agrees that many like The Angel in the House and enjoy jingling rhymes, but to him they suggest Mother Goose Melodies, or nursery stories. 4

In an article written on The Unknown Eros in the Catholic World in 1877, the author whose name is not mentioned, says of The Angel in the House:

The verse is sweet and pleasant and flowing as the subject; but it is a song to while away a drowsy hour, not to cause us to halt and listen in the busy march and fierce strife of life. 5

Frederick Page argues that it would be easy to class the metre of The Angel in the House as negligibly monotonous and trivial, all the more so since Patmore admitted he was tired of the metre; but his choice for simplicity, not luxuriance.

using it was that it is the most rapid and high spirited of all English metres particularly suited to his poem "A hymn bright-noted like a bird's." Later when the metre of The Unknown Eros was praised at the expense of The Angel in the House, Patmore "knowing the essential unity of all his work," remarked satirically that he would recast The Angel in the House in the irregular metre, which would not have been impossible since he had written Amelia, a narrative poem in that metre. Patmore looked upon this latter poem as his most artistic work. His critics desired that only the narrative parts of The Angel in the House be written in blank verse.

Osbert Burdett thinks it was "the absence of models, no less than the nature of the subject, that led Patmore to adopt the simplest of metres." The simplicity of the theme would not lend itself to an elaborate metre. Burdett concludes that Patmore's aim was simplicity, not luxuriance.

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Individuality was the keynote of every phase of Patmore's writings; and how important this individuality or style was, may be gleaned from no less authoritative source than from our poet's letter to Mr. Campbell, written in 1888.

I did not complain of want of form, but of style, which is a totally different thing. Style appears to me to be the very innermost soul and substance of poetry — a thing beyond words, the all and alone precious individuality of the singer — inexpressible by words, but yet breathed through them when the poet is a true one. When I said that manner was more important than matter in poetry, I really meant that the true matter of poetry could only be expressed by the manner. A poet may be choke full of the deepest thought and the deepest feeling, may express them brilliantly and stiringly, and yet he may not be a poet of the first order, if the expressions want that ineffable aroma of individuality which I mean by style.

That Patmore had never changed his standards regarding style may be inferred from a letter written nearly forty years earlier to Allingham in which the poet, in evaluating a poem of Sydney Dobell's, praises it as being remarkably perfect in every way, except that it lacks individuality and unprecedentedness, the

only two qualities necessary to a poet. This indi-
individuality is strikingly depicted in Patmore's style. He
has a style of his own, one perfectly devoid of imita-
tion, and this one feature marks him as a great artist.

Critics have often drawn attention to the fact
that the title of the first part of this epic is not,
as some might at first suppose, a sentimental one. Os-
bert Burdett asserts that Patmore used the word "Angel"
in its strict theological sense. In the theological
sense angel means messenger of God. It now remains to
determine which character in his poem the author wished
to designate as the Angel. Alice Meynell protests
against the "angel" to be the woman, and is more in-
clined to think that the "angel" is love:

It is possible that this early poem The Angel
in the House is contemned because the reader
takes the 'Angel' to be the woman, and an
Angel obviously feminine is a kind of senti-
mentality. But I prefer to take the 'Angel'
to be Love. Patmore's masculine mind probably
referred the name rather to such an angel as
he who in the Old Testament took up a prophet
by the hair of his head and carried him across

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The present writer finds no more reason for objecting to regard woman as the "Angel" in the home than to accept the present Holy Father's pronouncement that woman is the "heart" of the family. The angels, the messengers of God, have always been sent by Him to make known His will, and to guide men to their true destination. In a similar way, woman was originally God-given or heaven-sent to be the companion and helpmate of man. The poet himself could not bring out this more clearly or strongly than when, referring to his beloved, he writes:

I loved her in the name of God
And for the ray she was of Him.

Throughout his work, Patmore represents woman in this light, as the embodiment of grace, goodness, namely his desire of winning fame as a poet. He shares beauty, and mystery, as "both heaven and the way."

Thus it would seem that if the word "Angel" is understood to be, not a term of endearment, but an appellation, typical of the role of woman in the home, the title is not sentimental even when referring to woman. As a matter of fact, Patmore himself seems to have con-

curred in the popular opinion that the "Angel" represented the character of the wife and mother in the home. He always referred to his first love, a certain Miss Gore, whom he had met in Paris as "the first angel". Moreover, if the "Angel" represents love, as some would hold, the earlier inference that the angel represents woman would still hold good, since Patmore, in several instances identifies Honoria with Love.

The prologue of Book I opens with a fitting scene characteristic of the nature of the poem. The poet is represented as strolling happily through the fields with his wife, on the eighth anniversary of their wedding. "Their children shouting by the way" form their escort. In these surroundings, the poet reverts to a subject he had often mentioned to his wife, namely his desire of winning fame as a poet. She shares his hopes, and eagerly questions him regarding the theme of his proposed work. Rejecting what may seem to be more pretentious subjects, the poet confides to his wife his plan of immortalizing her by a poem on,

Your gentle self, my wife,
And love, that grows from one to all.

With growing enthusiasm the poet outlines his project to his gracious and sympathetic listener.
Standing there in the garden as in another Eden, with his wife beside him and the songs of their children borne to them on the breeze, the poet feels an exaltation of spirit. The sweet companionship of his wife and the joy evoked by the presence of his happy children have so wrought on his mood that he is straightway inspired to begin his poem.

The poet who essays, as Patmore did, to worthily celebrate love in all its phases, is in need of great aid if he is to accomplish his aim. What more natural then, that, in the opening Prelude of his song, our poet should seek power and enlightenment from "Primal Love". This augurs well for the success of his undertaking, for it indicates the source and the basis of the poet's philosophy of love, that

*... sole mortal thing*
*Of worth-immortal.*

For Patmore, love is a reality possessed of hidden mysterious powers by which it "persuades the soul from height to height." And, although others had considered the subject of wedded love unworthy of a serious song, this poet promises his readers confidently that a reward awaits those who receive his message in the right
Yet, know ye, though my words are gay
As David's dance, which Michal scorn'd
If kindly you receive the Lay,
You shall be sweetly help'd and warn'd.

The last line of this quotation is significant: it shows at once that the path of love is not without its difficulties over which one must be "helped", nor free of dangers against which one must be "warned". At the outset then, the poet testifies that love, like all things else in this world, is subject to vicissitudes, and that therefore it is not merely a matter of romantic sentiment but an affair which requires the exercise of practical common sense and thoughtful care as well. The fact that his poetry reflects this idea does not detract but adds to the benefit to be derived from the perusal of Patmore's work.

After a discussion of his subject matter in the preludes of the first canto, the poet proceeds to the narrative portion. Here are noted the first faint glimmerings of love, when Felix Vaughan, the lover to be, after an absence of six years, visits at the home of the benign Dean Churchill and his three lovely young daughters, Honoría, Mary, and Mildred. The young man recalls how, on his former visits, the mother of these
young women had still been living, and how he had been impressed by the quiet dignity and kindliness of her demeanor: her smile at once conferr'd High flattery and benign reproof; And I, a rude boy, strangely stirred Grew courtly in my own behoof.

The womanly graces Vaughan had earlier admired in the mother, he now finds reflected in the daughters, especially the eldest. And just as the presence of the older woman had tempered his boyish exuberance, the atmosphere breathed in this recent visit refined and soothed his spirit.

The analysis of love's origin, which has its beginnings in admiration, is continued in the second canto. In the first prelude, the poet expresses his hope of writing That hymn for which the whole world longs, A worthy hymn in woman's praise;

No likened excellence can reach Her, most excellent of all, The best half of creation's best, Its heart to feel, its eye to see, The crown and complex of the rest, Its aim and its epitome.

With increasing ardor the poet outlines the underlying purpose of his work:

I'll teach how noble man should be
To match with such a lovely mate;
And then in her may more the more
The woman's wish to be desired,
(By praise increased), till both shall soar,
With blissful emulations fired.

... . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Until (for who may hope too much
From her who wields the powers of love?)
Our lifted lives at last shall touch
That happy goal to which they move.

The last prelude indicates a defect that would
spoil woman's charm and "numb" the pleasure of her ad-
"lack of lovely pride," a too eager desire on the part
of woman to attract notice. Her graces are not to be
squandered, but reserved as the due of the one able to
appreciate and to win them.

When the poet again takes up the thread of the
narrative section of his verse, he describes an inter-
esting stage of love. He enumerates the belles, who at
the school of love, his range of choice finally narrows
successive periods had commanded the attention of the
down until it settles in Honoria Churchill. The third
youthful Vaughan. These charmers numbered no less than
sixteen! Although little short of amusing, this ac-
count is not without a serious aspect. It is typical
of expansive, early love, which admires all members of
the fair sex almost equally:

I never went to Ball, or Fete
Or Show, but in pursuit express
Of my predestined mate;
And thus to me who had in sight
The happy chance upon the cards,
Each beauty blossomed in the light
Of tender personal regards;
And, in the records of my breast,
Red-lettered, eminently fair,
Stood sixteen, who, beyond the rest,
By turns till then had been my care.

This early form of mild courtship is not without its
beneficial effect, as a present day authority on the
family points out:

The attraction of the sexes during this period
of so called "puppy love" is usually not ac­
accompanied by any deep and abiding affection for
any particular individual. The boy centers his
attention upon a series of girls and the girls
take the same attitude toward the boys. It is
in reality a trial-and-error period and usually
plays no unimportant part in the selection of a
suitable mate. It serves gradually to shape in
the mind of the youth and maiden a picture of
an ideal companion, of the kind of partner they
hope some day to take in marriage. Moreover,
it is an experience that fits the individuals
for the more serious love making of later life. 12

After this, Vaughan's early apprenticeship in
the school of love, his range of choice finally narrows
down until it centers in Honoria Churchill. The third
canto describes the transports of the lover when he re­
alizes that he has met the "destined maid." In these
rhapsodies of the lover a new element in his affections

12. Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B., An Introductory
Study of the Family, 251.
is revealed. It is the desire to suffer for the sake of his beloved. This readiness to sacrifice for another is the supreme test of all love, whether of man or of God. It is indicative of the power love imparts to the lover, enabling him to perform almost superhuman tasks. When Vaughan finds himself thus impelled by love to deeds of heroism, he realizes that the source of this overflowing joy is a holy thing, a means to virtue. Keenly aware of this, he deplores the fact that not all women husband the power that is theirs in this gift of love.

If there was any doubt in the mind of Vaughan as to whether he actually preferred Honoria to her other sisters, it is instantly dispelled on his visit to her home a week after his enthronement of her in his affections. On arriving at the deanery he finds a would-be rival in the person of Frederick Graham, cousin-in to Honoria. With amazing swiftness the lover now grows confirmed in his choice of the eldest daughter, who each moment assumes fresh beauties in his estimation that allude a protest from Castor Buddon. When once reassured of Honoria’s love, he subjects himself to a searching examination to ascertain in what respect he might still improve and thus become more worthy of her.

The psychological import of this scene bears witness to the skill of the poet in representing the most subtle and complex operations of the emotions. Although the rivalry between the two young men was short-lived, its brief existence sufficed to show what harm its presence may work in human lives, and how inimical it is to love.
Patmore makes use of this incident to again introduce into his tale an element of that subtle humor which characterizes the poem throughout. The lover's feelings have been wrought up to such a pitch by his recent experience that they do not subside until, in truly quixotic fashion, he vanquishes a whole host of rival cousins of Honoria in a dream:

And, then, I dreamed that I, her knight,  
A clarion's haughty pathos heard,  
And rode securely to the fight,  
Cased in the scarf she had confer'd  
And there, the bristling lists behind,  
Saw many, and vanquish'd all I saw  
Of her unnumber'd cousin-kind,  
In Navy, Army, Church and Law.

The psychological import of this dream bears witness to the skill of the poet in representing the most subtle and complex operations of the emotions. Although the rivalry between the two young men was short lived, its brief existence sufficed to show what harm its presence may work in human lives, and how inimical it is to love.

The fourth Canto celebrates the praise of woman. This section of Patmore's poem is so favorable to womankind that it elicits a protest from Osbert Burdett, one of the leading critics of our poet. Mr. Burdett's criticism is as follows:

In the Prelude to the fourth canto, entitled 'The Rose of the World', Patmore dares to affirm that woman has been 'marred less than man
by mortal fall*. This hard doctrine means that woman, being the substance (while man is but the form) of truth, has a power of making 'the faithless' not only conceive heaven, but also the hope of attaining it. The passage is interesting because it is typical. Patmore's highest exaltation of woman always resolves itself into praise of her unconscious power of making visible to man spiritual truth to which he would be blind unless they were reflected in the mirror of her body for him. Her glory, in fact, is to be the means whereby man may obtain his full perception of Reality, and all nature combines to endow her with graces, external and internal, for this purpose.13

Apparently this critic does not fully share Patmore's "idea" in this regard. Be that as it may, our poet gives evidence of sound reasoning. If woman was made for man, it is but logical to conclude that the Creator endowed her with a wealth of natural graces and spiritual qualities so that she would be a "helpmate" in the best sense of the term. From this results woman's peculiar power of enhancing virtue, and thus drawing out the best that is in man. The poet glories in enumerating her graces and their wholesome effect on love:

And still with favour singled out;
Marr'd less than man by mortal fall,
Her disposition is devout,
Contem'n'd not those who did not love;
And I could not but feel that then
I chose with something of my grace.

Patmore, 22-23.
Her countenance angelical;

Her modesty, her chiefest grace,
The oestus clasping Venus' side,
How potent to deject the face
Of him who would affront its pride!
Wrong dares not in her presence speak,
Nor spotted thought its taint disclose
Under the protest of a cheek
Outhragging Nature's boast the rose.

In the story section of this canto, the poet discloses the sentiments awakened in the heart of the lover, Vaughan, on his return from a morning call on Honoria:

... then to my room
I went, and closed and lock'd the door,
And cast myself down on my bed,
And there, with many a blissful tear,
I vow'd to love and pray'd to wed
The maident who had grown so dear;
Thank'd God who had set her in my path,
And promised, as I hoped to win,
That I would never dim my faith
By the least selfishness or sin;
Whatever in her sight I'd seem
I'd truly be; I'd never blend
With my delight in her a dream
'Twould change her cheek to comprehend;

And, if she wish'd it, I'd prefer
Another's to my own success;
And always seek the best for her,
With unofficious tenderness.

Rising, I breathed a brighter clime,
And found myself all self above,
And, with a charity sublime,
Contemn'd not those who did not love;
And I could not but feel that then
I shone with something of her grace,
And went forth to my fellow men.
My commendation in my face.
The last stanza shows that the contemplation of womanly graces does not make the lover a mere dreamer, but a man of action. Inspired by woman's example, man in his turn lets his charity go out to his fellowmen. This is a striking proof that woman exercises a subtle and powerful influence in the affairs of the world, even though she holds a subordinate place.

In the next two cantos, the poet discusses some of the difficulties which beset the path of love, and concludes that perfect love is rare. Its sweetest fruit is reserved for those who are prayerful as well as joyful during the time of courtship:

They safely walk in darkest ways when it is meant to Whose youth is lighted from above, Where, through the senses' silvery haze, Dawns the veil'd moon of nuptial love! Since the marriage depends largely on precaution to safeguard this important element of family life, Love's first law is order. Before attempting to win the love of Honoria, Vaughan obtains the ready consent of her father, the Dean. The candor of the youth in avowing his love and in frankly stating his material prospects meets a like response from the older man, and the suit is begun with the father's "blessing and his pray'r". The introduction of business interests at this moment might seem irrelevant. What have
money and estate to do with love? The poet is endeavoring to show here that love is an affair of the head as well as of the heart. He intimates that love generally thrives best when the lovers are more or less on a parity, not necessarily in the possession of worldly goods, but in regard to standards of living, customs, interests and ideals which are often the result of temporal possessions. While it is possible to overemphasize these factors, they still demand a certain amount of consideration, since love may be subjected to great strain and even injury on account of too great a clash of ideas in matters of this nature.

For Patmore then, courtship was what it is meant to be -- a preparation for married life; and since the success and happiness of marriage depends largely on love, the poet wisely takes every precaution to safeguard this important element of family life. Courtship is not a detached phase of love, a time for building castles in the air which are to fade away like a mirage once the threshold of matrimony is crossed. Courtship is rather a time for sowing the seed which is to bear fruit in the life about to be entered upon. It is a time for high ideals and sentiments to take deep root lest they wither away later instead of thriving
into luxuriant blossom and fruit.

It is because Patmore was fully aware of this important fact that in the section of his epic dealing with courtship he dwells so long on the beauty, the wonder, the mystery, and the immortality of love. He laments the torpor of so many who do not avail themselves of the opportunity during this time of becoming permanently imbued with the idea of the greatness and sacredness of love:

Love wakes men, once in a lifetime each;
They lift their heavy lids, and look;
And, lo, what one sweet page can teach,
They read with joy, then shut the book.
And some give thanks, and some blaspheme,
And most forget.

Such as these fail to recognize the true meaning and the hidden power of love.

The "tragedy" which sometimes results from such an attitude towards love forms the content of the preludes of the ninth canto. Here the author discusses the lot of the wife who gradually finds that her love meets with no response on the part of her husband. A failure of this nature Patmore attributes to a lack of appreciation on the part of the man:

Is nature in thee too spiritless,
Ignoble, impotent, and dead,
To prize her love and loveliness
The more for being thy daily bread?
And art thou one of that vile crew
Which see no splendour in the sun,
Praising alone the good that’s new,
Or oyer, or not yet begun?

Evidently Patmore has not patience with that type of husband who seems to think that his efforts to please and to cultivate love may cease with the ringing of the wedding bells. Commenting on this tendency, a writer of today observes:

The downright neglect which some men show their wives after marriage is appalling. Nothing contributes so much to turning marriage into a mockery. Love, like everything else, needs nourishment. You can starve the strongest love to death by indifference and neglect. A wife’s love is the greatest fortune a man can possess. It is worth every effort made for it.

... 

Some men think that a wife is like an object, which, once obtained, may be used or laid aside as it suits them. Such men come to grief.14

In connection with this discussion it is but fair to remark that, in some instances, although perhaps more rarely, the husband is the neglected partner. It is quite possible that a man may find himself mated with a pleasure seeking, selfish woman who fails to

reciprocate his love and withholds the devotion and affection he has every right to expect. Regarding the blindness of such husbands and wives the poet says:

Endow the fool with sun and moon;
Being his, he holds them mean and low;
But to the wise a little boon
Is great, because the giver's so.

The next canto bears the caption "Going to Church." The lover, Vaughan, is now represented as endeavoring to trace the relationship between his love for Honoria and his love for his Creator. His love for the former is so ardent, that the lover fears it springs from unworthy motives, and is supplanting his love for God. After earnest prayer and reflection he discovers that he loves Honoria for the virtues which render her so attractive, and that his love of God still is uppermost, although not experienced or apprehended in the same manner as that for his fiancee.

Thus reassured, the lover on a Sunday morning is "proud" to take his passion into church. He sees in divine love a powerful ally of human love, enabling it to rise above the allurements and deceptions of the senses, not by merely repressing natural feelings, but by raising them to the highest heights of which they are capable. Religion it is that keeps passion limpid and free from dross, making human affection the sign
and symbol of a higher love.15

Even when directed toward the infinite and
sanctified by religion, love can fail in its exalted
mission. The havoc which then results is shown by the
poet in his compassionate representation of the poor
harlot in Canto XI. But here again religion holds out
hope and the blessed means of reconciliation with an
all merciful God. In this same canto entitled The
Dance, Patmore indicates the inviolable rules to be
observed in order that love suffer no blight:

Lest sacred love your soul ensnare,
With pious fancy still infer
'How loving and how lovely fair
Must He be who has fashion'd her!'

Love's perfect blossom only blows
Where noble manners veil defect.
Angels may be familiar; those
Who err each other must respect.

In the story Vaughan is made to realize how easily the
least infringement of the rules of courtesy and respect
can injure love. When dancing with Honoria he is be-
trayed into an inadvertence:

It was as if a harp with wires
Too proud of the sustaining power
Of my, till then, unblemish'd joy,
She, answering, own'd that she loved too.

---

My passion, for reproof, that hour
Tasted mortality's alloy,
And bore me down on eddying gulf;
I wish'd the world might run to wreck,
So I but once might fling myself
Obliviously about her neck.
I press'd her hand, by will or chance
I know not, but I saw the rays
Withdrawn, which did till then enchant.
Her fairness with its thanks for praise.

Filled with "measureless remorse" the lover makes atonement by his faultless demeanor during the remainder of the evening. He has learned that it is only by scrupulously observing a proper degree of reserve that love offers the fullest returns.

The twelfth and last canto of Book I again takes up the strain of gladness. This section marks the climax of the story, since it gives an account of the engagement. The poet has chosen an appropriate background for this blissful occasion. It is in a garden on a quiet evening, silent save for the faint chimes of the cathedral, that Vaughan wins the consent of Honoria to become his wife. The happy lover thus describes the event:

It was as if a harp with wires
Was traversed by the breath I drew;
And, oh, sweet meeting of desires,
She, answering, own'd that she loved too.

In the second book the poet records the events which took place between the betrothal and the wedding.
of Vaughan and Honorla. These are all discussed from
the viewpoint of their bearing on love. Thus the ru-
mors of war afloat when Patmore began this division of
his poem, lead him to note the effect such a national
disturbance has on love: War is "home-destroying" and
therefore unworthy of the poet's song.

But if love is affected by dissension between
nations, it is no less so by differences in family re-
lationships. The poet hints at this when he traces the
course of the lover in gradually winning the esteem and
good will of those who are soon to be his close rela-
tives. Honorla, "with true love's treacherous confi-
dence" acquaints Vaughan with the half teasing, half
serious objections with which Aunt Maude had greeted
the announcement of their engagement. Before the close
of his visit therefore, the lover makes it a point to
dispel the prejudices of this amiable old woman. While
adjustments of this nature may seem to be of minor im-
portance, they nevertheless add to the general peace of
love and cannot, therefore, be neglected.

Many of the phases of love mentioned earlier
are again touched upon by the poet in the course of the
second part of his work. In the County Ball Vaughan
casts a retrospective glance over his progress in love
and muses in this wise:

Well, Heaven be thank'd my first-love fail'd
As, Heaven be thank'd, our first-loves do!

He continues in the same strain, vainly trying to find a basis for the devotion he once lavished on his "first-loves." He concludes that these passing infatuations rested mainly, perhaps solely, on such unreliable attractions as beauty and girlish manners. While he is pluming himself on his good fortune in being affianced to one so far superior to any "first-love", he is brought face to face with an important truth. It is this: The first-love he was depreciating could nevertheless be very acceptable to another, who in turn could see nothing to admire in "The Churchills". The inference from the "first-love" is that the final choice of a companion in marriage should not be made hastily. Such attractions are apt to prove transitory, and the married couple will find themselves ill matched. Longer time for consideration would probably have revealed the unfitness of the parties thus mated and would have enabled each to find a more suitable companion for life. Yet even in such an event the poet offers consolation:

Love, if there's heav'n, shall meet his dues,
Though here unmatch'd, or match'd amiss.
But if the lover contrasts his love for his fiancée with the transient regard he bestowed on his "first-loves", there is another love his life has known with which he would fain compare his affection for Honoria. The comparison is not explicitly stated but rather implied. When visiting the abode of his childhood, soon to be the home of his bride and of himself, the lover says:

I loiter'd through the vacant house,  
Soon to be hers; in one room stay'd,  
Of old my mother's. Here my vows  
Of endless thanks were oftener paid.

Who can tell what subtle and mysterious influence a mother's love for her son exercises in refining and elevating his love for his wife? Perhaps no one except the one who deigned to use a mother's love as an analogy of His own love for "the children of men." It was in his mother's room hallowed by sacred memories that Vaughan could best nourish his love for Honoria. In the course of his meditations on wedded love, Vaughan answers the objections of those who protest against what seems to them unreasonable preference a husband has for his wife. In what is a wife particular? Are not other women as beautiful, and wise, and kind? Say, how has thy Beloved surpass'd So much all others? She was mine!
The brief answer to this query contains in itself two essential characteristics of wedded love, namely unity and indissolubility. It is the oneness, the exclusiveness of love that forms its chief joy and abiding strength.

Although marital love is by its very nature exclusive, it nevertheless reacts beneficially on mankind in general. The poet indicates this when he recounts the progress made in civilization thus far due to the influence of love. He looks forward hopefully to the possible future heights that may be reached.

The remaining cantos of the second book reiterate the counsels contained in the earlier sections. In a prelude entitled *Frost in Harvest* the poet again warns the lover not to grow lax in his attentions after marriage:

The gulf o'erleapt, the lover wed,
It happens oft; (let truth be told),
The halo leaves the Sacred head,
Respect grows lax, and worship cold.

Yet should a man, it seems to me,
Honor what honourable is,
For some more honourable plea
Than only that it is not his.

The lover who is true to his marriage vows will reap abundant reward:
I vow'd unvarying faith, and she,
To whom in full I pay that vow,
Rewards me with variety
Which men who change can never know.

The concluding canto presents the lovers as husband and wife. The former now finds himself still wooing the wife he has already won. He now discovers, however, that there is an inner sanctuary of his wife's personality "sacred to Heaven" which he can never penetrate, a depth which he can never hope to sound. Yet this only enhances her worth in his affections. Finally, as time passes, his joy in love, instead of abating, only increases and he looks into the future with a glad heart, confident that it will more than redeem its promise. The story closes with an epilogue in which the reflections of the last canto are confirmed. Vaughan is shown on their wedding anniversary happily conversing in the garden with his beautiful "ten-years' wife" while their children play about among the flowers. These little ones are singled out by the father as being the chief bonds of the affection between his wife and himself when he says:

I did not call you "Dear" or "Love",
I think, till after Frank was born.

And then the wedding anniversary is fitly brought to a close as the happy family repairs to church:
To offer thanks at Evening Prayers
In three times sacred Sarum Close.

In The Angel in the House Patmore has left the account of an ideal courtship. In The Victories of Love, a sequel to The Angel, the poet offers a practical application of the principles and ideals outlined in the earlier work. The later poem, however, differs from The Angel in several respects. When Patmore had finished The Angel in the House, he wrote to William Allingham an English poet, asking for criticism on it:

Write and tell me whether you think the poem will stand complete as I now propose to leave it; and if you have any suggestions of a positive kind to make, i.e., of additions to the "love-lore" or of "dodges" by which to impress it more clearly, they will be acted upon to the best of my power."

In this same letter Patmore expressed himself as being "tired of the metre," and spoke of continuing the subject in "another work." The other work is The Victories of Love in which Patmore adopted another form and metre and selected different characters for the leading roles. The form of this later poem is that of letters written in octosyllabic metre. The two leading characters of The Angel, Vaughan and Honoria, are subordinated, and

the main interest centers around Frederick Graham, Vaughan's former rival, and his wife, Jane.

The title, Victories of Love is well chosen for in this poem, Patmore, so to say, puts his philosophy of love to the test and vindicates it. He shows that even in the case of a marriage in which the parties seem not so well suited to each other, and where their path is beset by poverty and other difficulties, love can triumph and bring peace and happiness.

According to the story Frederick Graham, a sailor, having been unsuccessful in his suit of Honoria Churchill, his cousin, marries the chaplain's daughter, Jane. In a letter to his mother, Frederick describes his wife:

Jane is not fair, yet pleases well
The eye in which no others dwell;
And features somewhat plainly set,
And homely manners leave her yet
The crowning boon and most express
Of Heaven's inventive tenderness,
A woman.

This marriage was entered upon somewhat hastily, it seems, after Frederick had vainly tried to console himself over his loss of Honoria Churchill. His mother had wisely counseled him not to act without due consideration: marriage is blessed. Later, death takes two of the little ones. Yet this loss only seems to strengthen
At least, my Son, when wed you do,
See that the woman equals you,
Nor rush, from having loved too high,
Into a worse humility.

The advice reaches him too late, and in answering his
mother's letter he expresses himself as satisfied with
his choice of Jane. His young wife, however, is not
entirely happy. She feels herself to be beneath Fred­
erick in station, and his extreme kindness only accen­
tuates their inequality in her eyes.

The coming of their first child brings a change,
as Frederick testifies:

But when the new-made Mother smiled,
She seem'd herself a little child,
Dwelling at large beyond the law
By which, till then, I judged and saw;
And that fond glow which she felt stir
For it, suffused my heart for her;
To whom from the weak babe, and thence
To me, an influent innocence,
Happy, reparative of life,
Came, and she was indeed my wife.

It is the joy of the mother, divinely foretold, which
raises Jane in the estimation of her husband. From now
on they have a common interest in the little "wonder"
who has taken up his abode with them. Throughout The
Victories of Love Patmore emphasizes the fact that the
"victories" are largely due to the children with which
this marriage is blessed. Later, death takes two of
the little ones. Yet this loss only seems to strengthen
the bonds of love in the family.

Jane had long been troubled over her husband's indifference to religion. The death of their children induces Frederick to turn to God, and Jane writes to mother that one more barrier to the love between her husband and herself has been removed.

And, in that time of our great grief,
We talked religion for relief;

Oh, what a bar is thus removed
To loving and to being loved!
For no agreement really is
In anything when none's in this.
Why, Mother, once, if Frederick press'd
His wife against his hearty breast,
The interior difference seem'd to tear
My own, until I could not bear
The trouble. 'Twas a dreadful strife,
And show'd, indeed, that faith is life.

While Patmore rightly believed that children and religion were the leading factors in the growth of wedded love, he realized that there are others which, although of minor importance perhaps, are not to be despised. Thus he approves of a judicious attention to dress and adornment on the part of a wife after marriage as well as before. He points out that similarity of tastes should be cultivated to a certain extent.

These and like matters will do much to brighten and smooth the path of love.
Another idea Patmore brings out is the truth, often overlooked, that each one's personality is distinguished by an individuality making it unique in some respects. If these traits are permitted to develop, a pleasing originality will result. This idea is illustrated in Jane, the wife of Frederick. While not conforming to the general type of the women in the society in which she moves, this timid young woman nevertheless commands the respect and interest of that society. Furthermore, the very traits in which she differs make her attractive and constitute her main charm.

In these and other similar points touched upon by our poet, Patmore emphasizes the fact that if true love is present, many seeming dissimilarities and difficulties can be bridged over or vanquished. Moreover, love will never be perfect in this life, but its very imperfection may be a fruitful source of grace leading on to the perfect love of the life to come. Patmore's epic on love is brought to a close by the Wedding Sermon which is a summary of his philosophy of wedded love. The opening lines,

The truths of Love are like the sea
For clearness and for mystery,

hint at Patmore's favorite maxim that love, rightly perceived devotion to God is single-hearted,
understood, is the key to unnumbered joys here, and the means of attaining happiness hereafter. To youth, first love is like a vision of the Promised Land which transfigures life. In their bewilderment, Maiden and Youth may mistake this vision of the future for the present. They may forget that the path to the Promised Land winds through a desert in which, indeed, they are fed by the manna of love, but which takes on green verdure and flowers only as it progresses toward the favored country. But if married life is not a perpetual honeymoon, it will, nevertheless, fulfill the first promise of love if the lovers but avail themselves of the opportunities offered to attain happiness in this state. This follows from the fact that all love has its source in God and returns to Him unless human perversity directs it into forbidden channels.

The poet next contends that "the love of marriage", because it unites "self-seeking to self-sacrifice", is the most perfect form of love, though not so high. As love which Heaven with single eye considers.

Osbert Burdett insists that there is no necessary contradiction in these two statements. The perfect married lover is he whose devotion to God is single-hearted,
though, unlike the contemplative, he arrives at it through the aid of human love. In fact such single-heartedness alone would make him the perfect husband, the man, that is to say, who, to take a phrase from The Rod, the Root, and the Flower, meets the unequal claims of the Divine and the human with equal duty. 

Perhaps the matter will be rendered more clear by quoting the Church's teaching in regard to virginity.

A life of perpetual virginity dedicated to God is held to be better than one of marriage. This is not because marriage is bad, or that it is merely a concession to human fraility; but because that which is lower in our nature is thereby more completely conquered by the higher; because this ideal makes possible the unhindered fulfillment of the heroic works of Christian charity; and finally because there can be, among the unmarried, closer union with God, since their hearts are less divided and their oblations more complete. The last consideration is of the utmost importance since man has been created for the supernatural and is destined to be transformed into the likeness of God. Furthermore, celibacy is valuable in representing the independence of the higher aims in life as opposed to the ascendency of the family impulses and aims; thus safeguarding marriage and keeping it from being degraded from the dignity of the sacrament to a mere matter of gratification. It is valuable also to those, who from some natural causes, cannot marry. It happily enables them to look upon their state as a hallowed one, not as one of necessity and of frustrated existence. 

Continuing his praise of wedded love, the poet refers

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to the supernatural character of marriage as indicated by St. Paul when he compared it to the union of Christ with His Church. In glowing terms Patmore describes the heights of sanctity which may be attained in marriage:

No giddiest hope, no wildest guess
Of Love's most innocent loftiness
Had dared to dream of its own worth,
Till Heaven's bold sun-gleam lit the earth.
Christ's marriage with the Church is more,
My Children than a metaphor.
The heaven of heavens is symbol'd where
The torch of Psyche flash'd despair.

Here Patmore seems to approach nearest to what theologians teach constitutes the sacredness of the marriage union namely, the fact that in every marriage there is a third partner, God, Who intervenes in the parental function to complete it by the creation of the soul.

In the Mystical Body, besides the Person of Christ, and His mystic Bride, the Church, there is Another, the most Holy Trinity: so in marriage, besides the man and woman, there is the Third Partner, God. This is that inherent dignity and sanctity of the very nature of marriage, which has led men everywhere to surround it with sacred, religious rites. That marriage cannot derive from nature alone either its end or its means is forcibly shown by Dr. Karl Adam, a celebrated German professor of theology. "Its principal end", he says, "the generation of children, cannot be attained unless God, the Creator of the spirit, intervene in the paternal function and complete..."
Marriage being thus sanctified and enriched, it is easy to understand how it can become a fountain of grace and a means to holiness for the wedded pair.

Still, holy and sacred as its nature is, marriage stands in need of safeguards. The poet draws attention to this when he counsels the need of conjugal restraint:

Love's inmost nuptial sweetness see
In the doctrine of virginity!
Could lovers, at their dear wish, blend,
'Twould kill the bliss which they intend;
For joy is love's obedience
Against the law of natural sense;
And those perpetual yearnings sweet
Of lives which dream that they can meet
Are given that lovers never may
Be without sacrifice to lay
On the high altar of true love,
With tears of vestal joy.

Lest anyone should think that he meant to imply that the marital relation was something to be only reluctantly tolerated, the poet immediately adds that religion gives her heartiest blessing and sanction to the reasonable use of this right by the wedded pair, so long as they observe

The Church's indispensable
First precepts.

In connection with this idea of romanticism

Knowing that the marital relation may serve love's highest spiritual ends, the poet wishes only to admonish lovers against any abuse or the immoderate use of this right. In substance, Patmore's verse here echoes St. Augustine's statement of the Church's doctrine: "The bodies of the married are holy, so long as they keep faith to each other and to God."

Having justified the lawful pleasures of married life, the poet discusses the idealism usually found in persons newly wed:

Lovers, once married, deem their bond
Then perfect, scanning nought beyond
Desired change;
For love to do but to sustain
The spousal hour's delighted gain.

But time and a right life alone
Fulfill the promise then foreshown.

Patmore does not condemn this romantic attitude, neither does he take a cynical view of it. He merely wishes to point out that it is an ephemeral element in married life, which will gradually give way to deeper and more real joys. The love which lights up the present is in such familiarity will wither; the only way to reach that calmer, finer affection which will be the later reward of mutual aid and fidelity to duty, on the part of the wedded pair.

In connection with this idea of romanticism
Patmore mentions a reaction which may follow, namely, a doubt or feeling of uncertainty as to whether the
lovers have made the correct choice of a mate. Should such doubts assail husband or wife, the poet bids them trust in God:

Who never fails, if ask'd to bless
His children's helpless ignorance
And blind election of life's chance.

As the emotional idealism of early love subsides, the lovers may think that their life-dream was but an illusion. In their dismay at finding that either mate falls short of the ideal, they may rashly attempt to refashion each other to fit the cherished model each has deemed the other to be. The poet, insisting that time alone will work this desired change, warns:

• • • leave ill alone;
Who tries to mend his wife succeeds
As he who knows not what he needs.
He much affronts a worth as high
As his, and that equality
Of spirits in which abide the grace
And joy of her subjected place;

Just as harshness will embitter or crush love, too much familiarity will wither it. The only way to reach love's perfection is for husband and wife to make use of the sure means married life provides. For this end the poet bids them rely on

• • • their work done well,
Discreet with mutual aid; on might
Of shared affliction and delight;

Apparent by Heaven's kind, impartial plan,
on babes, chief fount
Of union, and for which babes are
No less than this for them, nay far
More, for the bond of man and wife
To the very verge of future life
Strengthens, and yearns for brighter day,
While others, with their use, decay.

So subtle and so elusive are the psychical influences
which nourish love, that they defy definition or even
description. It is these finer, spiritual elements
whereof hearts have account,
Though heads forget;
which gradually transform life until the "primal curse"
is reversed to blessings.

Finally, Patmore points out that "Though love
is all of earth that's dear," it will never be perfect
in this life. He therefore urges lovers to dispel all
vain regrets since "few wed whom they would." Patmore
does not mean to imply by this that later married life
is a time of disillusionment. He merely wishes to show
that too many look upon happiness as something ready
made and given to them by others, while it is more
often a product of their own soul's making. There is
no reason for discouragement for

By Heaven's kind, impartial plan,
Well-wived is he that's truly man
If but the woman's womanly,
As such a man's is sure to be.

Apparently, Patmore lays much of the burden of respon-
sibility for the success in married life on the man.

Of a less romantic temperament than woman, there is more need of conscious effort on the part of man to foster love. If he does so, the poet promises that his reward shall be the development of the most precious elements and capacities of personality:

And he who is but just and kind
And patient, shall for guerdon find,
Before long, that the body's bond
Is all else utterly beyond
In power of lover to actualize
The soul's bond which it signifies,
And even to deck a wife with grace
External in the form and face.

Patmore's philosophy of love then, is found to be sound, practical, joyful, and holy. Love is the most precious gift which an infinitely wise and loving Creator has bestowed upon His creatures. True love is the greatest natural influence in life. When sanctified by man's cooperation with divine grace, love becomes a golden bond which draws all men to eternal union with God in Heaven.

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A. Coventry Patmore, "Aurora Ditis", The Rock, the Book and the Flower, CIVIL, 68.
CHAPTER V

STUDY OF THE UNKNOWN EROS

The Poet alone has the power of so saying the truth "which it is not lawful to utter," that the disc with its withering heat and blinding brilliance remains wholly invisible, while enough warmth and light are allowed to pass through the clouds of his speech to diffuse daylight and genial warmth.¹

This saying of Coventry Patmore indicates at once the subject matter, the style, and the purpose of his greatest work, The Unknown Eros. The "truth" of his subject matter, expressed in "the clouds" of his figurative diction, was intended as a message that would "diffuse daylight and genial warmth." Like the Apostle of the Gentiles who enlightened the Greeks concerning their Unknown God, this English poet of the last century endeavored to draw the attention of men from the false ideals prevalent in much of the literature of his time, and center their aspirations on eternal verities. Since Catholic writers of our day are following a similar trend, an examination of some of the poems in The Unknown Eros, may prove interesting as

¹ Coventry Patmore, "Aurea Dicta", The Rod, the Root and the Flower, CVII, 35.
well as timely. By its lofty apartness from the poetry of its time, *The Unknown Eros* reveals the intense individuality of its author. Patmore's extraordinary mastery of style is undoubtedly due to his poetical views of the mechanics of poetry. He considers metre, diction, pause and rhyme not accidental but essential to good poetry. Our poet has thoughts and a way of expressing them which are entirely his own. Although he uses rhyme more sparingly, he secures finer and more subtle effects by it in his later work. It may seem that he utterly disregards form. His long and short lines however are ingeniously moulded to fit his thought. His regular irregularity of metre admirably combines freedom, elasticity and flexibility; these latter qualities have distinctly marked his odes as novel.

Patmore's diction is quite simple, direct and extremely vivid. He at times attains subtle effects by the use of the most commonplace English words and incidents as in the opening lines of "The Toys". It is in this later verse, free, fluid, intensely emotional and mystically exalted that Patmore claims a high rank among the lyrical poets of England.

In his *Preface to Poetry*, Theodore Maynard
ranks Patmore with the greatest of poets. Mr. Maynard's reason for doing so is because Patmore has made poetry "out of what is the supreme but most intractable of all subjects" — mysticism. It is the elusive nature of this subject which accounts also for the difficulty in interpreting its content. On the other hand, the mystical element in Patmore's *Unknown Eros* admits of a variety of interpretations so long as truth remains intact. Our poet himself draws attention to this fact when he says: "The words of Scripture and of the ancient mythologies and profoundest Poets may, indeed, be credited with containing and intending all the truths which they can be made to carry." It is with this understanding that this study of *The Unknown Eros* is offered.

The first book contains twenty-four odes on various subjects, and the second eighteen on mystical subjects only. The stately loveliness of lyrical narrative found in *The Angel in the House* has turned to an austere tone of beauty; the simple octosyllabic line

This series of odes ranging in length from twelve to a hundred lines, and in length of line from two syllables to sixteen, is written in the Pindaric form. Patmore chose this form of verse because he believed that all English verse depended upon the pause, which he conceded should not be placed at the end of a line simply because the line contained so many syllables; the pause is to be placed at the end of the thought or where the speaking voice would naturally take a breath. The rhythm rises and falls, pauses and hurries on, to correspond with the varying intensity of the emotion. Patmore while adding much to the musical quality of English verse did not utterly disregard rhyme in his Odes; he considered it a mere accessory. For the perfection of his verse he rhymes at indefinite intervals, a license which he counterbalances skillfully and successfully by unusual frequency in the recurrence of the same rhyme.

The odes follow a metrical law and are not free verse. Most of the odes as regards content are quite complete in themselves, the only connecting link being the metre which Patmore calls "catalectic because it
employs the pause with freedom." He also called the meter the "free" tetrameter because the long lines have eight iambics, and the short lines which occur irregularly have the time of six or four. This subtle irregular arrangement encouraged compression; therefore the standard of the Patmorean Ode is tightened: no superfluous word or syllable is put there just to fill in or make up the number of poetic feet. Though The Angel in the House unconsciously echoes with a Tennysonian ring, the odes faintly glimmer with a Miltonic or Cowleyan tinge, and always they are entirely independent of any contemporary influence.

Basil Champneys says that these poems were eagerly appreciated by those who failed to see the beauty of blissful thought and poetic skill in The Angel in the House. Patmore keenly resented this unusual preference shown by critics for The Unknown Eros, whose inherent beauty he attributes to the change of form. 4 The poet in a moment of literary rapture declares: "I have hit upon the finest metre that ever was invented, and on the finest mine of wholly unworked

material that ever fell to the lot of an English poet.\textsuperscript{5} The "mine", according to Calvert Alexander, was Catholic mystical theology, especially the idea so dear to the mystics, of setting forth the intimate union of the soul of the individual with Christ in the language of the most exalted type of earthly union — the soul as the spouse of Christ.\textsuperscript{6}

Arthur Symons substantiates the above statement when he writes:

\begin{quote}
Whether Patmore ever acknowledged it or no, or indeed whether (says Gosse) the fact has ever been observed I know not, but the true analogy of the Odes is with the Italian lyric of the early Renaissance. It is in the writings of Petrarch and Dante and especially the Canzoniere of the former that we must look for examples of the source of Patmore’s later poetic form. The canzoni of Petrarch are composed in stanzas of varying, but in each case uniform length, and every stanza corresponds precisely in metrical arrangement with every other stanza in the same canzoni. Patmore has not followed the Italian habit of mingling rhymed and non-rhymed verse, nor did he ever experiment in wholly unrhymed irregular lyrical verse.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

In the Proem the poet’s "Mentor" chides the bard for his silence and urges him to use "thought’s

\begin{flushright}
5. Ibid., 252.
\end{flushright}
steel probe" in behalf of Truth. The poet at first protests: "O, season strange for song!" then he consents: "And yet some timely power persuades my lips."

In spite of the apparent indifference with which the world may receive his outpourings, the poet resolves to sing on, sustained by the hope of better things to come. The Proem closes with a beautiful prayer to the Holy Spirit for Grace and guidance:

And Thou, Inspirer, deign to brood
O'er the delighted words, and call them Very Good.

Patmore was fond of dwelling on the idea that man glimpses at the supernatural from his experience with what is natural; "The natural first, afterwards the supernatural" became an axiom with the poet. This saying is an echo of the truth that one of the ways of arriving at a knowledge of God is by means of His visible creation. Indeed some theologians, among them Duns Scotus, Suarez, St. Bernadine of Sienna and St. Francis de Sales maintain that, even had man never fallen from his original state, the Son of God would nevertheless, have become incarnate. They base this
assertion on man's inability to comprehend how God could love that which is so far beneath Him. To afford men some slight idea of this stupendous truth, God sent His Divine Son as proof of His love for them.

When rearranging the poems included in The Unknown Eros, Patmore wished to establish a more or less gradated sequence in their order. Thus he selected all the poems dealing with "the natural" for the first division of his work. He draws a comparison, for example in "St. Valentine's Day", "Winter", "Wind and Wave", between the seasons and other natural phenomena, and the various stages of the soul in its relations with, or its progress toward union with God. Thus the poem entitled "Winter" may not inaptly be compared to the soul, stripped of all worldly attachments and wholly given to God. A good husbandman knows that the ground which has been, so to say, well wintered, in the sense that harmful insects have been destroyed and the soil improved through the action of the weather, will yield a good harvest, other things being favorable. The soul undergoes a similar process of freeing itself from defects and in other ways disposing itself for the action of the Divine Sower.

In "Beata" the poet describes the glad response
of a soul, cheered and vivified by a special gift or light of Divine grace shed upon it. The last two lines —

Nothing of Heaven in thee showing infinite,
Save the delight,

are reminiscent of St. Catherine of Sienna who remarks in her Dialogues that the only thing about the soul that is infinite is its desire for love.

A similar emotional tone is present in "The Day After Tomorrow". A feeling of deep joy at the anticipation of union with a loved one pervades this poem. It is interesting to note here that the length of the lines seems to impart a sense of calm which results in absolute rest and stillness at the close of the verse.

While musing on this future happiness, the poet is suddenly arrested by the thought of what might result were he to suffer the loss of heaven. His consequent reasonings are embodied in "Tristitia". He seems to think that even were he "Lost beyond measure, sadden'd without end," the knowledge of the unalloyed bliss of a loved one would still comfort him. But the most interesting point in this poem is contained in Patmore's reason for believing that his grief would be assuaged. He intimates that God, the "estranged Friend"
of the lost souls, will yet show them clemency:

Yea, in the worst remorse in these lines,
And from His Face most wilfully accurst
Of souls in vain redeem'd
He does with potions of oblivion kill.

Remorse of the lost Love that helps them still.

Lest anyone should charge him with being unorthodox,
the poet quickly subjoins:

Know, Dear, these are not mine
But Wisdom's words, confirmed by divine
Doctors and Saints.

The poet's representation of God
With love deep hidden lest it be blasphemed,
Aiding lost souls is a striking means of impressing men
With the depth of God's goodness and mercy.

The three poems immediately following "Tristitia" are dedicated to the poet's first wife. "The Azalea" recounts a dream in which the poet dreams that his wife is dead, then awakes. His first thought is a sentiment of gratitude that it was but a dream, but when fully awake he realizes that the dream is also a reality. This poem like "Departure", is a description of his wife's death, and "Eurydice", the account of the poet's repeated quest or search for his wife in dreams are characterized by lyric beauty and pathos.

But if Patmore has written deeply emotional poems on his wife, he has written just as feelingly of
children, as his famous poem "The Toys" and "If I Were Dead" testify. The poignant remorse in these lines, softened by delicate pathos, lends a depth and beauty equal to that of the verses to the poet's wife. Here, as elsewhere in his poetry, Patmore shows himself happily free from the least shade of sentimentality.

Another characteristic of these poems and one that adds a note of sincerity, is the autobiographical element they contain. This self-revelation of the author is especially evident in "Tired Memory". Two years after the death of his first wife, Patmore had married again, and this poem is a kind of apologia addressed to his departed companion. The art shown in treating a subject of such delicate nature bears witness to the good taste and skill of the poet.

Of a somewhat different nature and tone are the poems of this group which deal with political affairs in England: "Peace", "1880-85", and "1867". In these verses the author presents what he himself styles "A Pessimist's Outlook". But Patmore thinks himself justified in such a view of the political life of his time, and because of his stand in this matter has been...
The writer personally fails to agree with Patmore's adverse views of democracy. English history of the nineteenth century offers an account which is anything but flattering to the English nation. At the close of a discussion of the industrial revolution and the misery attendant on it, a present day historian writes:

Such was the situation brought about by the Industrial Revolution in England. It was based upon too much injustice to be permanent. Injustice usually contains the germs of its own destruction, and in this case, the situation arising from the Industrial Revolution contained the germs of democracy and of the labor movement.

When one reads of the miserable condition of the "masses" against whom the poet inveighs, it is indeed difficult to understand how Patmore can continue to deplore the needed reforms. If the poet had practiced the counsels he gives in "Let Be" when writing his political odes, he might have been more restrained in his denunciations. "Let Be" is a gentle yet earnest reminder to refrain from judging by outward appearances or without the "tremendous and imperceptible" which at least have their hold on man.


By means of these political odes Patmore tried perhaps to show how society may reflect various phases in the life of the soul, but as intimated before, these verses add a note of discord to the general harmony of Book I. It will be remembered, though, that discords are an important element in music, just as tears are invariably a component of man's life here on earth.

The closing poems of Book I, "Saint Yet Sinner", "Victory in Safest", "Remembered Grace", and "Vesica Piscis" emphasize the need of perseverance in poems renders Book I a fit representation of the "natural" world Patmore is depicting in this first section of The Unknown Eros.

Hence, although probably designed for a different purpose by the poet, the jarring note of these political poems renders Book I a fit representation of the "natural" world Patmore is depicting in this first section of The Unknown Eros.

Not only natural phenomena, society at large, and man in his more intimate relations with others, but man in his relation to the universe is treated in this first group of poems. "The Two Deserts" may be regarded as an exaltation of man, the masterpiece of creation. Despite the velocity of movement and the prodigious size of the planets and other heavenly bodies, the poet ranks them lower than the "torment of innumerable tails" in the "minute waterdrop" which at least have life. And how far above both of these extremes is man! For, the Universe, outside our living Earth,
Was all conceiv'd in the Creator's mirth,
Forecasting at the time Man's spirit deep,
To make dirt cheap.
The poet, like St. Peter, cannot see any success
in his past labor, yet resolves to follow his inspir-
the findings of science. The wonders and
marvels it revealed instead of detracting from Man's
position in creation, only served to elevate him as
lord and master of this world and heir of heaven.

In Book II of The Unknown croc Patmore fitly
introduced the poem of this section with an ode which
strikes the keynote of this entire group, "The Unknown
"Faint Yet Pursuing", "Victory in Defeat", "Remembered Grace", and
"Vesica Piscis" emphasize the need of perseverance in
the presence of the Holy Spirit within it. The
good:
Should Heaven withdraw, and Satan me amerce
of power and joy, still would I seek
Another victory with a like reverse;
Because the good of victory does not die,
As did the failure's curse,
And what we have to gain
Is, not a battle, but a weary life's campaign.

The poet describes the soul filled with fervor,
setting out on the narrow path, buoyed up by spiritual
consolation. But the advent of sorrow and adversity
quickly changes all: for a means to impart the knowledge
of so good a lesson. But how proclaim this heav-
only love and glory,
The sweetness melted from thy barbed hook
Which I so simply took.
Yet even failure is a gain:
Yet what returns of love did I endure,
When to be pardon'd seemed almost more sweet
Than aye to have been pure!
In the final poem of this group "Vesica Piscis" the poet, who, like St. Peter, cannot see any success from his past labor, yet resolves to follow his inspiration, even though it be only to "speak but of forgotten things to far-off times to come."

In Book II of *The Unknown Eros* Patmore fitly introduces the poems of this section with an ode which strikes the keynote of this entire group. "The Unknown Eros" represents the soul, awakened to a dim realization of the presence of the Holy Spirit within it. The soul becomes conscious of this holy presence through a sudden "blind and unrelated joy" which it experiences. Wondering and enraptured, it longs

> For chains and thongs
> Woven of gossamer and adamant

To bind it to the "unguessed'ud want" with which this heavenly visit has inspired it.

Following a similar line of reasoning John H. Newman states that the soul casts about for a means to impart the knowledge of so good a God to others. But how proclaim this heavenly Lover?

> In what veil'd hymn
> Or Mystic dance

Would he that were thy Priest advance
> Thine earthly praise, thy glory limn?

The poet's question is an old one: how can one explain
the supernatural and spiritual in terms of the natural.

To solve this problem Patmore adopts the same means that are employed in Holy Writ: he introduces symbols, figures and analogies. Patmore's choice is significant because it is precisely on account of his medium of expression that he was criticized by some of his most appreciative friends, as for example, Newman and Aubrey de Vere. Newman disliked the "amorousness" in The Unknown Eros. But Patmore, steeped in the writings of St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Bernard and other mystics, held to his chosen method. It seems that the poet was justified in doing so. For St. Teresa, when once discoursing on the language employed in some passages of scripture, remarked that the lyric beauty of much of the verse in the Bible is God's way of effecting in man a realization of His love.

Following a similar line of reasoning John H. Gardiner states that the unsurpassed vividness of Hebrew poetry and its unfailing hold on our imagination may be ascribed to this fact, that it always expressed emotions directly and concretely through sensations instead of describing

them by words which are abstract and therefore pale.  

At the same time this author extols the wisdom of such a style of language:

A literature which is able to express itself through these inalterable sensations has a permanence of power impossible to any literature which is phrased largely in abstractions and in inferences from these sensations.  

It is probably for reasons similar to the foregoing that Patmore held to the models he found in the Bible and in the writings of mystics. But our poet also made use of pagan rites and myths in his poetry dealing with some of the sublimest truths of Christianity. Should he not then be charged with incongruity in his writings? Patmore clears himself of this charge in some of his prose works where he maintains that many of the ancient myths are remnants of primitive revelation and therefore originally were not heathen myths. Consequently he does not hesitate to represent the most intimate relations of the soul with God by these heathen myths.

In defense of Patmore on this point a statement


of our Holy Father Pope Pius XI may be quoted. Speaking of the schismatic churches in the eastern hemisphere he remarked:

It is not generally realized what valuable, excellent and profoundly Christian elements still remain in fragments of the ancient Catholic faith. Boulders loosened from an auriferous rock are also auriferous. The venerable forms of Eastern Christianity retain such sanctity in their objects that they deserve not only respect but also sympathy. If the eastern schismatic churches are credited with sound remnants of Catholic doctrine it is possible that Patmore was not so far from truth as might at first seem when he ascribed hidden, sublime truths as the basis of some pagan rites and beliefs.

Since Patmore is going to use earthly espousals as a type of the soul's union with God, he dedicates a poem to the description of the two most noteworthy unions on earth: that of our first parents and that of our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph. In "The Contract" the poet advances the opinion that, but for the Fall, all marriages here on earth were to have been "virgin spousals." Whatever be the value of this supposition,

16. Jacques Maritain, "Address to the Italian University Federation". The Things That Are Not Caesar's, 175.
this poem is aptly placed near the beginning of Book II, for it foreshadows the content of the poems that follow.

Having introduced his subject and the type under which he will represent it, the poet next indicates the source of the doctrine he presents. This source or teacher is the Church described in "Arbor Vitae." At first sight this poem may seem disappointing. This "tree" so "deformed", scarred and blackened by tempests, and "never pruned" scarcely seems a proper representation of the Church. Yet, on second thought the symbol becomes quite appropriate. Despite its great age, the storms it has weathered, the branches that have been broken off, and the unseemly blotches on its bark, this tree "Is all antiquity and no decay" and produces "rich" fruit of "heart-succouring savour." In spite of persecutions, heresies, schisms, and false doctrines that have attacked the Church through the ages, it still remains the "Tree of Life." Happy are those who follow its teachings! Beside the Church's doctrine is the hollow, baneful doctrine of "Time's civility" that "eats its dead-dog off a golden dish."

As the Church on earth undergoes many trials, so much the soul suffer adversity during its sojourn in
this life. This is the message of the poem following "Arbor Vitae," and entitled "The Standards". The occasion for the poem is given in an explanatory note:

"This piece was written in the year 1874 soon after the publication of an incendiary pamphlet by Mr. Gladstone against the English Catholics occasioned by the Vatican Council." At this time the Catholics in Germany were being "Put to the splendid proof" by Bismark, the Iron Chancellor of William I of the Hohenzollern dynasty. Patmore thought that the Catholics of England were to meet with a like fate, and exhorted them to follow the right standard. The uneven length of the lines, the numerous short lines, the exclamations and the rapid movement of "The Standards," makes this poem read like the rousing battle hymn it is.

This tone of defiance is replaced by one of a very different note in "Sponsa Dei". Here the soul is represented as a "Maiden fair" who is the "Bride" of God. The soul's striving toward and longing for God is but "A reflex heat" from the "immense desire" of the Creator for His creature. The striking idea here expressed is that the fulfillment of the soul's desire

17. Coventry Patmore, Coventry Patmore's Poems, 319.
rests with itself rather than with God, Who waits to crown, beyond thy brain's conceit,
Thy nameless, secret, hopeless longing sweet,
Not by-and-by, but now,
Unless deny Him thou!

In "Legem Tuam Dilexi" the poet protests against the term "Infinite" as a synonym for God. "Infinite" is a word terrible; at feud with life, and the braced mood of power and joy and love;
Patmore is writing of the love of man for God, and he rightly insists that no one can love an abstraction.

Here as in "Sponsa Dei" Patmore again represents God as wooing man:

What is the chief news of the Night?
In every star that drifts on the great breeze!
And these Mean Man,
Darling of God, Whose thoughts but live and move
Round him; Who woos his will
To wedlock with His own, and does distil
To that drop's span
The atta of all rose-fields of all love!

The remainder of "Legen Tuan Dilexi" is in praise of the religious life and begins

The soul select assumes the stress of bonds unbid, which God's own style express
Better than well,
And aye hath, cloister'd borne,
To the Clown's scorn,
The fetters of the threefold golden chain:
It might seem strange that among the poems in Book II, which are grouped together because they refer to the supernatural, Patmore should have included an apostrophe to the body. Yet here again the poet's taste is correct. The body is not only destined for eternal glory but is the recipient of ineffable graces and dignities even in this life. Like other of Patmore's poems not a little of the beauty in "To the Body" arises from the fact that its phraseology echoes or suggests words of holy scripture. Thus the majestic opening line:

Creation's and Creator's crowning good; echoes the account of man's creation in Genesis. Rightly does the poet address the body as "Wall of infinitude" for it is the "temple of the living God." How truly does he proclaim it:

Foundation of the sky,
In Heaven forecast
And long'd for from eternity,
Though laid the last;

for the words, "Let us make man to our own image and likeness" are the utterance of Eternity Itself — the Blessed Trinity! Again when the poet refers to the body as a

Little sequester'd pleasure-house
For God and for His Spouse;
he is simply playing a variation on the theme, "My de-
lights were to be with the children of men". 18

Having dwelt on the mission of the body in this
life, the poet hints at its eternal destiny:

Form'd for a dignity prophets but darkly name,
Lest shameless men cry 'Shame!'  

The prophets' words can do no more than "darkly name"
for "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and neither
hath it entered into the heart of man what God hath
prepared for them that love Him!" Pondering on this
wondrous destiny, the poet recalls with sorrow that the
body yet lends itself to the commission of evil. Happ-
pily he finds an expiation for this "false fealty" in
the body's detention in the grave. Toward the close of
this ode, Patmore introduces two lines which may be
considered autobiographical:

O, if the pleasures I have known in thee
But my poor faith's poor first-fruits be,
What quintessential, keen, ethereal bliss
Then shall be his
Who has thy birth-time's consecrating dew
For death's sweet chrism retain'd,
Quick, tender, virginal, and unprofaned!

The first two lines of this quotation probably refer to
spiritual favors granted the poet, for in the remaining

verses he compares himself with others more blest.

The consideration of man's sublime destiny in
"To the Body" makes the poet long for the power to show
men in what true greatness and wisdom consist. But

How sing the Lord's Song in so strange a Land?

Prophets to whose blind stare
The heavens the glory of God do not declare,
Skill'd in such question nice
As why one conjures toads who fails with lice
And hatching snakes from sticks in such a swarm
As quite to surfeit Aaron's bigger worm;
A nation which has got
A lie in her right hand,
And knows it not;

This is the strain the poet follows in "Sing Us One of
the Songs of Sion". It is interesting to note here that
Patmore does not condemn men for probing into the se­
crets of nature. He mourns the fact that with all their
"findings", many scientists do not find the Creator of
"the heavens"; with all their learning sages know noth­
ing of the author of all knowledge.

The poet knew well that men would contradict
and protest against his song, saying that his message
was not for them. In "Deliciae Sapientiae De Amore"
the poet answers their objections by declaring that all
men of whatever calling or state in life are called to
the marriage feast of the Lamb. The same argument forms
the basis of "The Cry at Midnight." Here the poet gives the reason why his song is not appreciated; why his words ring strangely in the ears of many today:

For what’s a Saint to them
Brought up in modern virtues brummagem?
With garments grimed and lamps gone all to snuff,
And counting others for like Virgins queer,
To list those others cry, 'Our Bridegroom's near!'
Meaning their God, is surely quite enough
To make them rend their clothes and bawl out,
'Blasphemy!'

The next poem, "Eros and Psyche", is a dialogue between the soul and the Holy Spirit. The soul—Psyche, while longing for God and calling on Him, suddenly becomes conscious of His Divine Presence. Eros, the Divine Bridegroom assures the Psyche that He first desired her and reminded her of His sufferings, His conflict with the powers of Darkness for the salvation of souls:

O Mortal, by Immortals' cunning led,
Who shew'd you how for Gods to bait your bed?
Ah, Psyche, guess'd you nought
I craved but to be caught?
Wanton, it was not you,
But I that did so passionately sue;
And for your beauty, not unsoath'd, I fought
With Hades, ere I own'd in you a thought!

The light vouchsafed Psyche makes her exclaim:

What dim, waste tracts of life shine sudden,
like moonbeams,
On windless ocean shaken by sweet dreams!

Yet her delight is mingled with fear lest the source of
this bliss be an evil spirit, and she begs the Divine Lover for a sign by which she may know that the spiritual consolation which floods her soul is really the work of the Holy Spirit:

How know I that my Love is what he seems?
Give me a sign
That, in the pitchy night,
Comes to my pillow an immortal Spouse,
And not a fiend, hiding with happy boughs
Of palm and asphodel
The pits of hell!

0, turmoil of content! 0, unperturb'd desire,
0, touch of airy fire;

The answer follows.
I'll not call ill what, since 'tis thing, is good,
Nor second best or third;
I make the childless to keep joyful house.
Below your bosom, mortal Mistress mine,
Immortal by my kiss,
Leaps what sweet pain?
A fiend, my Psyche, comes with barren bliss.
A God's embraces never are in vain.

In these last lines Patmore has given the criterion by which according to spiritual writers, true graces may be distinguished from seeming ones. True spiritual consolations bring peace to the soul, while those due to the machinations of the evil spirit disquiet it.

Freed from her doubts by this explanation Psyche exclaims in ecstasy,

'Tis this:
I make the childless to keep joyful house.
Below your bosom, mortal Mistress mine,
Immortal by my kiss,
Leaps what sweet pain?
A fiend, my Psyche, comes with barren bliss.
A God's embraces never are in vain.

This echoes St. Paul's, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me."
The dialogue continues, showing the different stages through which the soul passes in its progress to final union with God. Bewildered by the graces showered upon her, the soul marvels at the condescension of God toward His unworthy creature. Finally, overcome by the sweetness of Divine love, the soul begs leave to suffer for this Lover to whom she owes so much:

0, too much joy! 0, touch of airy fire;
0, turmoil of content; 0, unperturb'd desire.
From founts of spirit impell'd through brain and blood:
I'll not call ill what, since 'tis thine, is good,
Nor best what is but second best or third;
Still my heart fails;
And, unaccustom'd and astonish'd, quails,
And blames me, though I think I have not err'd.
'Tis hard for fly, in such a honied flood,
To use her eyes, far more her wings or feet.
Bitter by thy behests!
Lie like a bunch of myrrh between my aching breasts.
Some greatly pangful penance would I brave.
Sharpness me save
From being slain by sweet!

The answer to Psyche's petition for suffering is an increase of joy so that she may be strengthened for still greater favors which will follow these espousals:

Suffer your soul's delight,
Lest that which is to come wither you quite:
For these are only your espousals; yes,
More intimate and fruitfuller far
Than aptest mortal nuptials are;
But nuptials wait you such as now you dare not guess.

This elicits an act of perfect submission on the part of Psyche whose joy henceforth consists in fulfilling the behests of her Beloved. She avows that the mere
remembrance of this blissful hour will sustain her in future trials.
In all I thee obey! And thus I know
That all is well;
Should'st thou me tell
Out of thy warm caress to go
And roll my body in the biting snow;
My very body's joy were but increased;

Let Earth, Heav'n, Hell
'Gainst my content combine;
What could make nought the touch that made thee mine?
Ah, say not yet, farewell!

Psyche is now permitted the suffering she desired, for when she begs Eros not to leave her, he answers:

Nay that's the Blackbird's note, the sweet night's knell.
Behold, Beloved, the penance you would brave!

Desponding at first, Psyche exclaims:

Curs'd when it comes, the bitter thing we crave!
Thou leav' st me now, like to the moon at dawn,
A little vacuous world in air.

Her despondency is almost immediately replaced by hope.

I will not care!
When dark comes back my dark shall be withdrawn!

From the time Eros leaves her until his next visit
Psyche will be sustained by reflecting on the uniqueness of his love for her:

'Tis all to know there's not in air or land
Another for thy Darling quite like me!

The soul that really loves God seeks ways and means to
please Him: come no more,
Or come but twice.

Whilst thou art gone, I'll search the weary meads
To deck my bed with lilies of fair deeds!

When the soul has once been favored with the caresses
of the Holy Spirit, the mere remembrance of the bliss
enjoyed consoles and strengthens it. When Eros is
about to leave, Psyche avers:

Be my dull days:
Music, at least, with thy remember'd praise!

In departing Eros counsels Psyche to keep secret the
knowledge of the favors that have been accorded her,
and thus the poem closes with our Lord's injunction to
His apostles:

Tell the vision to no man.

The second of the three Psyche odes is entitled
"De Natura Deorum" and represents the state of the soul
after it has been favored with spiritual consolations.
In this ode the dialogue is carried on by Psyche and
Pythoness to whom she goes for counsel. When left to
itself after having experienced a divine illumination
or grace of some kind, the soul endeavors to live over
again the blissful experience, and longs for the re-
currence of it. This is illustrated in Psyche who
fears that
He'll come no more,
Or come but twice,
Or thrice,
Or only thrice ten thousand times thrice o'er!

The Pythoness answers sagely:

For want of wishing thou mean'st not to miss.

Psyche now confides to the oracle her fear lest she prove false to her Divine Lover:

If long he stay away, O frightful dream, wise Mother what keeps me but that I, gone crazy, kiss some other!

The Pythoness by whom the poet obviously means the teaching body of the Church, calms Psyche's fear by reminding her that God is ever present in the soul, and that the least good act or pious sentiment is due to this holy presence. Amazed at this condescension on the part of God, Psyche inquires:

when shall mine own eyes mark
My beauty, which this victory did achieve?

The Pythoness answers:

When thou, like Gods and owls, canst see by dark
when the soul has ceased to judge of things in the light of this world and, forsaking its own will, abandons itself entirely into the hands of God. Psyche now bewails her frequent relapse into faults:

In vain I cleanse me from all blurring error --

The oracle reminds her that perfection is the work of
a life time:

Tis the last rub that polishes the mirror.

Psyche:

It takes fresh blurr each breath which I respire.

Pythoness:

Poor child, don't cry so! Hold it to the fire.

Rather than fret over petty faults the soul would do well to make an act of love of God instead. By this means it would be quickly cleansed of its blemishes.

Psyche still contends:

Ah, nought these dints can e'er do out again!

The Pythoness answers:

Love is not love which does not sweeter live
For having something dreadful to forgive.

It is the very faults and weaknesses of the soul which excite God's love and compassion for it. Psyche now mourns the fact that she has not always loved this infinite God:

though my blissful fate
Be for a billion years,
How shall I stop my tears
That life was once so low and Love arrived so late!

The oracle points out that this sorrow for a misspent past heightens the joy of the soul when it finds God. When Psyche asks "what oblation vast" she should bring to God, the Pythoness advises that she make an offer-
ing of herself. Psyche is incredulous. So great a
God, love has prompted her to add self-inflicted pain to
the self-imposed penance and asks, 

And the oracle:

The bashful meeting of strange Depth and Height
Breeds the forever new-born babe, Delight;

This idea is well brought out by Abbot Marmion in his
work Union with God when he counsels: "Despite our
miseries, or rather because of our miseries, we ought
to lean fearlessly upon Him . . . . The abyss of our
miseries calls upon the abyss of His mercy."19

Although the soul's misery attracts God's mercy,
He expects in return a fidelity commensurate on her part
with the graces received. Psyche testifies to this:

He loves me dearly, but he shakes a whip
Of deathless scorpions at my slightest slip.

Roughly it smote me like a blow!

Yet, oh, I love him, as none surely e'er could love
Our People's pompous but good-natured Jove.

The Pythoness explains that suffering is the badge of
those who would serve God. Yet the Divine Lover mingles
sweetness with His chastisements and thus renders them
not only bearable but sweet:

Ah, Child, the sweet
Content, when we're both Kiss'd and beat!

19. Dom Marmion, Union with God, 142.
Psyche has already learned the value of suffering and
yet all this does not teach the fable scene. Her love has prompted her to add self-inflicted pain to the ordinary trials of everyday life. When the oracle questions her on this self-imposed penance and asks, 

What Demon thee enjoins
To scourge thy shoulders white
And tender loins?

Psyche replies:

'Tis nothing, Mother. Happiness at play,
And speech of tenderness no speech can say!

In other words, the soul that is unwilling to suffer for God cannot be said to love Him. The Pythoness compliments Psyche on her wisdom in regard to this point and intimates that this knowledge is not of earth:

How learn'd thou art!
Twelve honeymoons profane had taught thy docile heart
Less than thine Eros, in a summer night!

Psyche again returns to the subject of her unworthiness and her interlocutor reminds her that God loves to debase Himself and fit Himself to our lowliness:

Gods, in the abstract, are, no doubt, most wise; But, in the concrete, Girl, they're mysteries! He's not with thee, At all less wise nor more Than human Lover is with her he deigns to adore. He finds a fair capacity, And fills it with himself, and glad would die For that sole She.

At this new proof of the goodness of God Psyche is at a loss:

'Thou of the Jewels art the dainty box; This is the stone which, any time, unlocks; And this, it seem, thou hast at upon last night.
Ah, me, I do not dream,
Yet all this does some heathen fable seem!

The Pythoness suggests that perhaps Psyche regards too much the high station of her Lover, and this puts an unnatural restraint on her conduct and bearing. She therefore reminds her young charge that God desires rather to be loved than feared, and counsels her not to adopt a puritanical attitude toward this loving Father:

'Respectful to the Gods and meek,
According to one's lights, I grant
'Twere well to be;
But, on my word,
Child, any one, to hear you speak,
Would take you for a Protestant,
(Such fish I do foresee of thy breath,
When the charm'd fume comes strong on me,)
Or powder'd lackey, by some great man's board,
A deal more solemn than his Lord's birth.
Know'st thou not, Girl, thine Eros loves to laugh?
And shall a God do anything by half?
He foreknew and predestinated all
The Great must pay for kissing things so small,
And ever loves his little Maid the more
The more she makes him laugh.

This is almost too much for Psyche and it elicits a timorous, O, Mother, are you sure?

Once more reassured, Psyche humbly thanks her teacher and begs "one boon more:"

Could I at will but summon my Delight —
And the final answer is the most consoling of all:

'Thou of thy Jewel art the dainty box;
Thine is the charm which, any time, unlocks;
And this, it seems, thou hitt'st upon last night.
The soul at will can retire into herself where God abides. Once having attained the knowledge of this great secret she can at any time enter the presence of her Lord and God.

The last poem in the Psyche trilogy is entitled "Psyche's Discontent". This ode illustrates a more advanced stage of the soul's progress. The earlier doubts and fears have vanished now, but the soul still in this mortal body lacks strength to sustain the vehemence of its love for God:

The closing lines of this ode represent the soul's longing to show its love in deeds:

The soul longs to show its love in deeds;
is aided and shielded by God.

Leave me to pluck the incomparable flower
Of frailty lion-like fighting in thy name and power;
To make thee laugh, in thy safe heaven, to see
With what grip fell
I'll cling to hope when life draws hard to hell
Yea, cleave to thee when me thou seem'st to slay,
Haply, at close of some most cruel day,
To find myself in thy reveal'd arms clasp'd,
Just when I say,
My feet have slipped at last!

To the writer, these lines are Patmore's version of St. Paul's saying that he glories in his infirmities that the power of Christ may dwell in him.

The closing lines of this ode represent the soul when it has reached that stage of union exemplified by the apostle of the Gentiles: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Sleep, Centre to the tempest of my love,
And dream thereof,
And keep the smile which sleeps within thy face
Like sunny eve in some forgotten place!

Before closing Book XI Patmore includes "The Child's Purchase." The author of The Catholic Literary Revival rightly styles this ode "one of the finest Marian poems in the English language." Placed almost at the end of these selections, this poem which is replete with the praises of the Blessed Virgin, presents

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her as the one creature who exemplifies the principles
Patmore has enunciated in The Unknown Eros.

The final poem of Book II is entitled "Dead
Language." The poet explains that Truth has a double
voice: with one she preaches a "doctrine hard" — the
doctrine of fear for the hard of heart; another is
tender-soft as seem
The embraces of a dead Love in a dream.

and this is the doctrine of love for the meek and well
disposed. In this poem Patmore wishes to vindicate
himself. He intimates that if his language, his treat­
ment of his topics in The Unknown Eros is a source of
doubt and misgiving to some, it is because the world
has, for so long, turned its back on the subject matter
of his works that the message of his poems is like a
message in a "language dead."

In his review of The Angel in the House, B. Biorkman wrote:

No thoroughly good thing can be praised or
felt at once. You must be under no apprehen­
sion as to the ultimate success of your poem.

Coventry Patmore was the contemporary and intimate associate of many of the outstanding literary men and women of his time. The estimate of these writers, therefore, cannot but prove both valuable and interesting to Patmore's readers.

Among the more noteworthy of his critics was John Ruskin, a correspondent of Patmore's for more than thirty years and a frequent visitor at his home. Ruskin was interested in Patmore's early poems and especially admired the beauty of their versification. He recognized the poet's high power, so brilliantly manifested in The Angel in the House, and predicted its popularity for "doing good wherever read." As the criticism of The Angel in the House by the press had not been any too favorable, Ruskin wrote Patmore:

No thoroughly good thing can be praised or felt at once. You need be under no apprehension as to the ultimate success of your poem.

It has purpose and plain meaning in every line, it is fit for its age and for all ages, and it will get its place. Its only retarding element is the strong resemblance to the handling of Tennyson, but this will not tell against it ultimately.\(^2\)

Later Ruskin writes:

> I am more and more pleased with "The Angel*. You have neither the lusciousness nor the sublimity of Tennyson, but you have clearer and finer habitual expressions and more accurate thought.\(^3\)

In writing his *Sesame and Lilies*, Ruskin thought it worth while to borrow a passage from *The Angel*, and adds: "You cannot read him, Patmore, too often or too carefully; as far as I know, he is the only living poet who always strengthens and purifies."\(^4\)

When an attack upon *The Victories of Love*, the fourth part of *The Angel in the House*, appeared in *The Critic*, Ruskin wrote in defense of it:

> The poem is, to the best of my perception and belief a singularly perfect piece of art: containing as all good art does, many very curious short-comings (to appearances) and places of rest, or of dead color; or of intended harshness, which, if they are seen or quoted without the parts of the piece to which they relate, are of course absurd enough, precisely as the dis-

\(^2\) Ibid., II, 278.

\(^3\) Ibid., II, 279.

\(^4\) Ibid., I, 168.
cords in a fine piece of music would be, if you played them without their resolutions. You have quoted separately Mr. Patmore's discords; you might by the same system of examination have made Mozart or Mendelssohn appear to be no musicians, as you have probably convinced your quick readers that Mr. Patmore is no Poet.5

Ruskin maintained that Patmore had not erred in using simple diction: he was using diction and metre calculated to be the best vehicle for the thought and ideals he wanted to bring home to his readers. Ruskin considered Patmore one of the "severest models and tutors in the use of English."

From the pen of a comrade and literary genius, Thomas Carlyle, comes a dynamic criticism of The Angel in the House. Carlyle had carefully perused the poem and writes thus:

Certainly it is a beautiful Piece, this "Espousals"; nearly perfect in its kind; the execution and conception full of delicacy, truth, and graceful simplicity; high, ingenious, fine, — pure and wholesome as these breezes now blowing around me from the eternal sea. The delineation of the thing is managed with great art, thrift and success, by that light sketching of parts; of which, both in the choice of what is to be delineated, and in the fresh, airy, easy way of doing it, I much admire the genial felicity, the real skill. A charming simplicity attracts me everywhere: this is a great merit which I am used to

5. Ibid., II, 281.
Occasionally you get into an antique Cowlesian vein, what Johnson would call the "Metaphysical," a little; but this too, if well done, as it here is, I like to see. . . . Few books are written with so much conscientious fidelity now-a-days, or indeed at any day; and very few with anything like the amount of general capability displayed here.  

A few years later Carlyle read Victories of Love and found it to have been executed admirably. In it was "refinement of feeling, purity, tenderness, mild magnanimity, season with a dash of fine humor, discernment, acuteness, picturesqueness." He thought the style was exalted especially for that age, and commanded the respect of every literary associate. In this work Carlyle saw the budding talent of the young poet admirably expressed in noble sentiments and elevating doctrines. Viewed by him its execution was almost perfect.  

One of Patmore's most critical advisers and intimate friends, Aubrey de Vere, minutely reviewed each poem and conscientiously submitted his decision. De Vere considered The Angel in the House one of the most beautiful of modern poems. Its four distinguishing features 

6. Ibid., II, 312.
7. Ibid., II, 315.
qualities were "soundness and geniality as well as elevation of sentiment; descriptive power; power of reasoning in verse, and its singular beauty both of diction and of metre." 3

De Vere thought that Victories of Love fittingly completed Faithful Forever, the third part of The Angel in the House. The sadness and loftiness of it gave dignity to the whole. He did not think that Domestic Love would lend itself to a theme unless 'Love in Shadow' as well as 'Love in Sunshine' be brought out. Nor did he think a poet did his best when using an easy metre; then his subject is of such a homely nature, that the writer, due to over familiarity is apt to become incorrect; also, too much attention may be given to details and then the work becomes drawn out. De Vere admitted that Patmore was guilty of the above faults in his first edition.

Aubrey de Vere found The Unknown Eros most interesting. He predicted that this volume would increase the circulation of Patmore's writings. But de Vere insisted that the poet omit from his later work some even not sufficiently clear, thus leaving too much

8. Ibid., II, 332.
9. Ibid., II, 337.
the three Psyche poems namely, Eros and Psyche, Psyche's Discontent, and De Nature Deorum, simply because the greater number of readers would not understand these poems. Because of this, the general estimation of the public would turn against him and thus impair the sale of his poetry. 10

As Richard Garnett was the second important critic to whom Patmore submitted his works for a critical review, naturally the reader expects him to observe the minutest details in criticising "Faithful Forever," the third part of The Angel in the House. Garnett finds one or two long, flat passages, but the greater part is exceptionally interesting, characterized by "vigour, vividness, and sustained energy." The idea of Power -- a quality lacking in contemporary poetry, dominates the earlier cantos. In "subtlety of thought, precision of observation and depth of feeling, it equals" if not surpasses the first two parts of The Angel in the House. He admits there are faulty passages some even not sufficiently clear, thus leaving too much

10. Ibid., II, 341.
for the imagination, which is poor psychology. Patmore in this third part has changed his characters but did not change the scene, which again is confusing. He has put in too many details which add nothing to the progress of the story. In general Garnett regards the poem as a most powerful and remarkable work, still requiring "elaboration" in one part and "pruning" in another. Accordingly, it will appeal to the serious minded, like de Vere, Hutton and Brett, who are interested in the "rights and wrongs of ethical questions".

Alice Meynell classes the more essential passages of *The Angel in the House* as very high classic poetry. She thinks Patmore is displaying great poetic art when he uses "brief metre, the symmetrical stanza and the colloquial phrase" to bring out the spiritual in the every day things of life. While many literary writers find fault with these colloquialisms, to Miss Meynell they are perfectly correct in the able hands of an artist like Patmore. To her he has violated no rhetorical rules in putting into modern English writing

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11. Ibid., II, 340.
brilliant stanzas tingling with "life, sense and spirit".

Later Alice Meynell gauges Patmore's poetic art by the loveliness and the splendor which she finds in his odes. Their charm lies in their "splendid thought in great images". In studying The Unknown Eros one finds love mingled with sorrow and endurance beautifully expressed in his simple versification. She admits there is an obscurity in these Odes, but it is "the obscurity of profound clear waters." 

No one was more intensely interested in Coventry Patmore's poetic welfare than his friend, Father Gerard Hopkins, S.J. He liked the "Psyche Odes" to which de Vere objected, and wrote thus of them to Patmore: "These are such a new thing and belong to such a new atmosphere that I feel it is as dangerous to criticise them almost as the 'Canticles'." 

Patmore sent a copy of The Angel in the House to Hopkins. In thanking him for it he writes thus to the poet; "to dip into it was like opening a basket of violets. To have criticised it looks now like meddling

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with the altar-vessels; yet they too are burnished with washleather."

Hopkins looked upon Patmore's poems as a "good deed done for the Catholic Church, also for England—the British Empire, which now trembles in the balance." Hopkins considered literature as one of the excellent ways to make England attractive and contended that Patmore in dealing with high matter was a great power in the world.

Mr. Monteith, a literary friend, prophesied that Patmore's mission was to educate the Catholic mind of England and since he had the ability to write on divine things, this power should not be left sterile. To Monteith The Odes were quite satisfactory. He begged Patmore for God's sake to write and told him that he was distinctly called to do so, adding, "offer your gifts to God, and then every day pour out". He was anxious to have Patmore make some religious theme his life work, and felt certain that the poet would not fall short of his vocation.

15. Ibid., II, 350.
16. Ibid., II, 376.
In a letter to William Ralston, a colleague of Patmore's at the British Museum, Cardinal Henry Manning, a recent convert to Catholicism (1859) gives his reasons for his high estimate of "The Betrothal," the first part of The Angel. He praised Patmore's use of "pure, simple, monosyllabic English which was a relief" after the fantastic diction of modern writers. In the poem imagination dominates fancy and intelligence guides the imagination. There is a "pure and noble sentiment" pervading all by which he has redeemed and elevated a subject, which we "seldom see treated without wishing that it had been left alone." Manning regards The Betrothal" as a Christian and chivalrous book which must purify the thoughts of many.  

Gabriel Rossetti, who held Patmore in high regard, wrote thus of him to the editor of the "Critic":

You asked me how I liked The Angel in the House. Of course it is very good indeed, yet will one ever want to read it again? The best passages I can recollect now are the one about 'coming where women are' and the part concerning the 'brute of a husband', and 'for the smile of the frozen ship'. From what I hear, I should judge that, in spite of idiots in the Athenaeum and elsewhere, the book will be of use to the author's

17. Ibid., II, 375.
Having reviewed the opinions of Patmore's contemporaries, it will be interesting to take note of the estimate of present-day writers in his regard. As late as the year 1919, Osbert Burdett wrote: "No more curious problem is offered to criticism than the disregard in which Coventry Patmore continues to be held." The present renewal of interest in literary ideals similar to those of Patmore promises a better appreciation of this poet in the future.

The late Gilbert K. Chesterton, an outstanding writer of our time, declares that the suggestion of Newman lingers on in the exquisite Elizabethan perversity of Coventry Patmore. According to Chesterton, Patmore was one of the greater of the minor poets. Without hesitation he eulogizes this minor poet:

As eccentric and florid and Elizabethan as Browning; and often in moods and metres that even Browning was never wild enough to think of. But the very fact that Patmore was, as it were, the Catholic Browning, keeps him out

18. Ibid., I, 168.
of the Victorian atmosphere as such. The Victorian English simply thought him an indecent sentimentalist, as they did all the hot and humble diarists of Italy or Spain.20

Theodore Maynard thinks The Angel in the House, read only superficially will be more appreciated if The Unknown Eros is thoroughly studied; for Patmore as well as Wordsworth, has the power of changing "the shape of his reader's mind." Although Patmore is not read by vast numbers in our day, Maynard believes interest in him will grow until he may even become the greatest poet of the Victorian age. "Patmore cannot be confined to any age, and therefore will wear well."21

Brother Leo esteems Patmore for his "intricacy of thought, copiousness of artistically restrained emotion and his splendid and varied word music." Therefore, this litterateur designates Patmore as "his own best and sternest critic." He attributes the unpopularity of Patmore's poetry to its exaltedness and purity which few readers readily recognize. Brother Leo paints Patmore as a "thoroughgoing man of the world", one who was deeply interested in life and its experi-

ences, hence Edmund Gosse, Patmore's friend and biographer, could in all sincerity bestow upon him his outstanding mark of distinction the title of "The Laureate of Wedded Love."  

George Shuster ascribes the popularity of The Angel in the House "to the result of the high and novel light with which the poet illuminated his theme." In this poem Patmore admirably "defends the noblest and oldest of human institutions", matrimony; his success is probably due to his subtleness in treating this commonplace subject. The Angel in the House was the criterion of its author's career. To understand effectively the achievements of Patmore, Shuster thinks his character must constantly be kept in mind, for to him the strange moods and ecstasies of a hermit explained at least in part, the riddle of his work. The Unknown Eros holds no appeal for the world at large because the generality of men do not grasp its deep intellectuality; however, there will always be some literary devotees to whom the work will mean Beauty, and to them the key-note of idealized love will appeal.

22. Brother Leo, English Literature, 486.

23. George N. Shuster, Catholic Spirit in Modern English Literature, 93.
In Victorian Poetry, John Drinkwater asserts that Patmore was neither understood nor seemingly appreciated. While The Angel in the House had many beautiful spots, there were points to censure which Drinkwater believed rendered it a failure. This critic maintained, however, that The Unknown Eros elevated Patmore to the highest poetic position of his time. This later work shows a wide range of variety, and is the masterpiece of an original, inventive mind. Drinkwater forcefully declares that if a choice were to be made of a single poet representing "the genius of the Victorian poetry in its many aspects," he would unhesitatingly select Patmore.

George Saintsbury regards Coventry Patmore as a writer "neither absolutely unknown nor very common," presenting two distinct phases of poetry. He finds The Angel in the House to be the outcome of personal experience, written in an extremely fluent and easy style. The Unknown Eros shows the maturity of years and is quite a contrast to the poet's first work. It is "severe in versification, almost rugged in diction now and then, and ambitiously aimed in sense." However, Saints-

bury considers *The Angel in the House* as Patmore's best work. Emile Legouis and Louis Cazamian in their *History of English Literature* tell their readers that Patmore in the lofty flights of his imagination laboriously transfigures the realities of the home in *The Angel in the House*. He skillfully adapts his diction and verse to this domestic theme; but in portraying the aspects of the middle class life, he "does not always avoid a false elegance of style, a prosaic form of expression and the abuse of broken cadences." *The Unknown Eros* "shows a wonderful wealth of rhythmic devices, and continues the traditions of the great English visionaries." 26

R. L. McGroz in *Modern English Poetry* maintains that Patmore in *The Angel in the House* not only betrays Pre-Raphaelite influence but even goes beyond the Pre-Raphaelite standards of naturalism, returning into their sympathetic qualities in his *Unknown Eros*. Patmore appears to him to be the least romantic and the most original after Rossetti who contributed to the poetry of the

Pre-Raphaelite period. In the Unknown Eros, Patmore "took the liturgical eroticism of Rossetti's House of Life from a blind-alley of passion and linked it to the wisdom of religion", using an art of his own which in no way follows the trend of Romanticism.  

Edmund Clarence Stedman acknowledges that while a few of the passages of The Angel in the House were "lovely and attractive, the simplicity is affected, and the realism too bald." He calls Patmore a "carpet-knight in poetry, photographing life in its poor and commonplace forms." Stedman thinks that Patmore's later poetry shows more poetical art; The Unknown Eros betrays the fine reserved power of a genius.

Ernest Rhys in Lyric Poetry comments upon Patmore as "a typical poet", who in The Angel in the House has "succeeded by brilliant fancy and metre, in giving to the lyric a new domestication." The triviality of the verse of this poem does not appeal to Rhys but he acknowledges there are passages in it of genuine emotion and fantasy. He even says that Patmore added "a

faint accent of his own to the lyric vocabulary," which the reader is apt to undervalue.

To J. R. Elliott and Norman Foerster, The Angel in the House was a work of trivial import; and the style though poetical "was often no better than doggerel." It was especially pleasing to women, who "admired its worst features and found in it an analysis of their own sentimental feelings." These critics cannot conceive how Patmore, an arrogant, volatile, original person could "become the idol of Victorian insipidity, the laureate of croquet, and tea-parties." They explain why Tennyson, Browning and Carlyle liked the poem; it was because of Patmore's "extraordinary understanding of the psychology of sex, and a combined boldness and purity in its handling." According to these critics The Unknown Eros, with its exaltation of human love into Divine love, differs in style from the sentimental Angel in the House. Certain literary and religious circles have praised Patmore's Unknown Eros, but Cardinal Newman does not favor their viewpoint.

Hugh Walker in *Literature of the Victorian Era*, regards Patmore as a nineteenth century poet holding an insecure position in literature. *The Angel in the House* was supposed to place Patmore among the "greater poets," but Walker asserts it failed to do this for the great theme, love, on which Patmore was writing, was not a fit theme for poetry on the great scale," hence the simplicity with which Patmore treats the subject. One would think a different pen had written *The Angel in the House* and *The Unknown Eros*. "Stateliness of style and complex metrical forms" give the second work a loftiness not to be found in *The Angel in the House.*

Thomas Marc Parrott declares that *The Angel in the House*, while only a "story of true love running smoothly to the end in marriage," as a deeper significance. This love is but the prelude of a higher mystical love, fully expressed in *The Unknown Eros*. Earthly love becomes love Divine, Cupid and Psyche are now God united to the human soul. Patmore by using the simplest English words attained at times remarkable effects. His free, mystical verse filled with intensely human emotion, claimed for him a high rank among the lyrical

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poets of England. Parrott thinks the attainments of this "lonely, proud and conscious artist" are best expressed in Patmore's own words: "I have written little, but it is all my best, I have never spoken when I had nothing to say, nor spared time or labor to make my words true." 32

Virginia Crawford writing in the Fortnightly Review classes The Angel in the House as a "domestic narrative in rhymed verse", lofty in intention, but passing through many cantos into a tiresome garrulity." In comparison with the sublimity of The Unknown Eros, the poet's first work appears to her childish triviality. Miss Crawford fails to understand how great litterateurs like Tennyson, Ruskin and Carlyle could have considered Patmore's work an asset to English poetry. Yet she praises his greatest achievement, The Unknown Eros for its "flowing, stately rhythm." She conceives his best poems to have been written when the poet descended from his prophetic mission pulpit to the realm of ordinary humanity. Miss Crawford finds Patmore quite out of date with our modern times but she misses the beauty of The

Sister M. Eleanor finds that in The Angel in the House, Patmore is singing not only the "praises of Emily Patmore, but the classic praise of married love." This critic maintains that this poem became immensely popular, but she doubts whether the admirers saw the hidden beauty of it. Commenting on the Odes where Patmore carried human love into Divine love, she remarks that the public did not like "Patmore's transcendental theme", nor even the free verse in which they were written. She calls The Unknown Eros "a superb and challenging volume, pregnantly human and persistently mystical." To her Patmore was always a "prophet and a seer as well as an artist" whose work is worthy of study.

Eleanor Downing, in analyzing Patmore's philosophy of love, finds a striking similarity in the two poems. In The Angel in the House she sees Patmore spiritualizing human love, while in The Unknown Eros Divine Love is humanized. There is an inherent relationship which differentiation of form and structure cannot


sever. To her The Unknown Eros "rests its fragile glory on the solid basis of human testimony." It is a completion of the prophecies of The Angel in the House, exalting pain and finding in it the secret of joy and wisdom.

John Freeman writing in the Living Age in 1908 hails Patmore as a writer of poetry with a "singular characteristic — a unique spiritual intimacy." He finds his Angel in the House treating of woman, the "sacredness of love" and the deeper and holier things of life in a significant and unusual way. Freeman acknowledges that while there is a vast difference between this early poem and The Unknown Eros, it is the same ardent spirit that sings the marriage hymn and the "Sponsa Dei." He goes so far as to remark that certain of Patmore's poems mightly fitly follow a chapter of Thomas a Kempis or St. Francis of Sales. He considers these poems to be "poetry for poets."


CONCLUSION

This investigation has proved, at least for the writer, that there is a basis for assuming that Coventry Patmore's mission was consciously to raise men's moral standards of matrimony. The actual joys of home life informed by marital love, echo throughout The Angel in the House. The doctrines contained in this poem are wholly in accord with the teachings of the Catholic Church. In this work Patmore has made an unique contribution to English love poetry. Love exerts a strong influence on him, but it is a love free from all slavish adherence to creatures, a love which spiritualized him and led him to the throne of God.

Since love is the keynote of Catholic doctrine, Patmore made this alluring power the theme of his Unknown Eros. With his entrance into the Church, shadows became realities, and as he increased in spirituality his work more and more reflected the sincerity of his deep convictions. His odes tinged with symbolic mystery, betray the masterful influence of Catholic teaching.

If men and women today would return to the practice of the Catholic doctrine so forcefully enunci-
ated in *The Angel in the House*, the family and society would flower into new life. Finally, if more Christians would hearken to the beautiful message in *The Unknown Eros*, the Church on earth would reap a rich harvest of souls.
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