

Biblical Element in the Religious Poem, “Heaven-Haven”, written by Gerard Manley Hopkins

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Abstract—This research paper aims at investigating the Biblical Elements in the Poem “Heaven-Haven,” one of the Oxford Religious Early poems, showing Anglican fervour. Even the early poetry of Hopkins has the themes springing from his intensely held beliefs. It is one of the yielding delights of new interest in the aspect of Hopkinsian criticism. The thematic study of the poem shows that there abound theological themes, based on the Holy Writ, in the poem. The Bible has a notion of Heaven, where Christ, seated at the right of the heavenly Father Pleading for believers. God is a feeder and leader. The imagery refers to the notion that uniting with God will offer refuge from the harsh realities of life. Ps.23.4 informs the idea in the Bible.

Keywords—Biblical Elements, Poem, Heaven-Haven, Religious, Early, Poems, Criticism, Bible, God.

I. INTRODUCTION

Gerard Manley Hopkins was one of the greatest Victorians poets. He was the poet of religion, anguish, and nature. He was a priest-poet, a Roman Catholic convert. He was born and bred in a Moderate High- Anglican family of the Victorian Era. Moreover, he was an avid reader of the New Testament. It can be argued that he was a passionate lover of Divinity. Every poet is the product of his age. It appears that there was a conflict between religious belief and new evolutionary theories in the Victorian Age. Some evidence suggests that there are some threads of Biblical references here or there in his poetry. That Hopkins’ greatness is primarily because of his intensely held belief and its reflection in his religious poems, is the task of examining those aspects in the present sacred piece, other than his masterpieces, is one yielding delight of new interest in this aspect of Hopkinsian Criticism. As a first and general point of interest, we may note that Hopkins’ life was full of thinking on religious and theological questions based on the Holy Writ, in which his profound knowledge of the Bible was his guide and bulwark. The Bible has an idea of Heaven as a beautiful place where Jesus Christ lives. It is the hope of every believer to be with Jesus to see Him in Heaven. The journey of this life is full of sorrows, pangs, pains, and miseries, sadness, agonies, and touches of melancholy. The life of humankind on the face of the earth

is not a bed of roses. Nevertheless, believers do not fear in the darkness of the wilderness, since the Holy Spirit is with them. There are no miseries and sorrows in Heaven. It is a peaceful place to live in. However, the end of this earth is the entry to another world. It may be argued that, on the doomsday, living and dead will go to Heaven with Jesus. There are, probably, several believers in the world who are losing their faith in the Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ and promulgating themselves unaffiliated to the organized faith system that had taught them many a meritorious aspect of life on which their culture is based. In the present scenario, the poem is conducive to enkindle the flame of faith in the burning heart.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE

The first draft of the poem, Gerard Manley Hopkins penned the first draft of “Heaven- Haven” in July 1864, while Hopkins was an undergraduate student in Oxford. The dash in the title is suggestive of separation as much as linkage. The title refers to the line of the early seventeenth-century Anglican religious poet George Herbert’s “Size “: “ These seas are tears, and Heaven the haven” (The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, 4th edn., ed. W.H. Gardner and N.H. Mackenzie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967, p.248). Catherine Philips compares this line with Tennyson’s description of Avilion in “Morte d” of Arthur” (1842); „Where falls not hail, or rain or any snow/Nor ever

wind blows loudly; but it lies/Deep-meadowed; happy, fair with summer-lawns/ And bowery hollows crowned with summer seas. (Catherine Philips, P.311). Besides, Hopkins uses lilies as an image of purity and beauty. The image of the haven or harbour is conventional as a metaphor for contemplative life. There is a contrast between the terrestrial abode and the celestial one.

II. BIBLICAL ELEMENTS DEALING WITH DIVINITY

The nun in this poem wishes to take a vow of a religious order to live the religious life. It guarantees the citizenship of Heaven. It is a theological notion. That is the very theme of Biblical Eschatology deals with the Second Coming of Jesus, The Resurrection of the Dead, the Last Judgement, the Destiny of the Wicked and The Reward of the Righteous. Moreover, in Heaven-Haven, there seems to be an allusion to the well-known green pastures" and „still waters" of the Shepherd Psalm, i.e. Psalm 23:2, which signifies the kind of leading and feeding on the Good Shepard. A nun who is taking the veil, which is the mouthpiece of Hopkins for preaching his Divine thought of Eschatology. The nun takes veil refers to initial vows, the beginning of the religious life in the religious order. The imagery refers to the hope that this uniting to God will offer refuge from the harsh realities of life. Heaven is a shelter of safety. The first stanza of this short poem describes Heaven. The Bible says in Psalm 103:11, "For as the heaven is high above the earth; so great is his mercy toward them that fear him „(KJV), and in Psalm 115: 16, "The heaven, even the heaven, are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men." (op cit.) Heaven declares the glory of God (Psalm19:1). All religious workers have a heavenly calling (Heb.3:1). Every believer has a house eternal in Heaven (2 Cor.5:1).

I have desired to go

Where springs not fail,

To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
and few lilies blow. (Lines 1-4)

The poet has a heartfelt desire to go to Heaven. He wants to behold Jesus Christ face to face beyond the starry sky with all his glory. Now he sees him only faintly (1 Cor.13:12) The down of Heaven will break and he will get the summer morns for which he has sighed. God's mercy's ocean expands there in Heaven. When all his labours and trials are over, he will be safe on those beautiful shores, just to be near the dear Lord. By the gift of His infinite grace, he is accorded in Heaven, a place where he will experience joy like a river (1 John3:2) Hopkins is a just a

poor, wayfaring stranger, travelling through this world of woe, but there is no sickness, no toil or danger in the bright world to which he is going.

And I have asked to be

Where no storms come

Where the green swell is in the havens dumb,

And out of the swing of the sea. (Lines 5-8)

This earthly life is like a sea where the waves of joy and sorrow rise and fall. The wind roars in the sea. There are some battle chaos and order. However, the poet is out of theswings of the sea. This life is full of tension and emotional stress.

III. CONCLUSION

There are many Theological and Biblical thoughts embedded in the lines of this short poem. The poet wants to preach Christian Theology naturally, and it evokes the thought of our after-life. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Woes of human miseries only end after death.

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