

foolish. There is poetry, and good poetry, too, which has no scintilla of religious element in it. There is poetry, and good poetry, too, which is saturated with religion. Almost every collection of poetry gives us some of Ben Jonson's songs, or Gay's Fables, or one of Gray's Odes in which hardly a religious strain is touched. But the same collection will give us lines of Milton, Cowper or Wordsworth which are deeply and radically religious. The question, however, is not a shallow one, which can be answered by citing specimens of poetry on one side or the other. It really deals with the relation between religion and poetry. It asks whether the relation between them is deep, real, and necessary, or only superficial and accidental. Religion, like art, history or love, may become the subject of poetry; but this is a connection of circumstance, not of necessity. Religion may be wedded to verse, but not necessarily related to it. Every human interest and affection belongs to the poet's sphere. He has an eye for every living thing—the flower, the stream, the star, and not less the art, the life and the spirit of man. He, therefore, must feel profoundly interested in the destiny of man, and we may expect to find the religious element in poetry just as we may expect to find the love of nature, and the joy in beauty. There is as real a link between poetry and religion as there is between poetry and beauty, poetry and human life, poetry and nature. But this, it may be said, is only a link of accident. It does not help us towards understanding the nature of the bond between religion and poetry. We must ask still, what is the nature of this link?

The first thought which occurs to us is to look to the past. In doing so we find that the bond between

religion and poetry is very ancient. Religion is a power as old as the world, and forces now at work among men are the offspring of the religious idea. The science of religion, says Dr. Caird, is one of the earliest and one of the latest of sciences. It is one of the earliest; for philosophy, which is the parent of the sciences, is the child of religion. Philosophy is the child of religion—would it be too much to say that poetry, which is a more philosophical thing than philosophy itself, is also the child of religion? Is it not the sense of the mystery surrounding life which provokes the imaginative faculty no less than the spirit of inquiry? Is it too bold to say that out of the same cradle spring science and song, twin children of the religious consciousness? It appears certainly true that the highest form of poetic art was the direct outcome of religious emotion. What has been called the ballad dance is said to be the beginning of literature. The emotions of the soul expressed themselves in movement, in music and in speech. Not one of these alone were sufficient to give adequate expression to the tumult of feeling awakened by great events. The intolerable burden of joy must utter itself. It summons others to join it. It is the emotion to which Wordsworth gives utterance when, after tracing the hints of the undying life of aspiration in man, he invites all round him to share his joy:

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young Lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!

So in early times human emotion summoned all who were near to give rhythmical expression in movement