

and read for himself what the Solitary there says of the two great brother mountain-peaks which overhung the glen.

For Wordsworth, indeed, natural religion meant far more than to serve as natural theology, that is, a set of proofs of the divine existence, divine power and wisdom. It meant, to use the common phrase, religious experience—a direct calling out of the worship of the soul—and even more, a direct impression on the soul of moral teachings. The Fourth Book of “*The Excursion*” will show how profoundly he felt this as the mission to his soul of the divine life in nature. It would be easy to dwell on this theme, for Wordsworth is full of it. It marks him as the great high-priest of natural religion, and gives him his unique and glorious place in our poetry. Rather, however, let me refer the reader to the excellent volume of Mr. Stopford Brooke on “*Theology in the English Poets*,” and to Mr. Hudson’s kindred volume “*Studies in Wordsworth*.” Wordsworth was profoundly Christian in his beliefs. He never for a moment catered to the sentimental and wicked nonsense which would supersede church-going by walks or drives into the country on Sundays. He was a devout worshiper all his life in the parish church, and was the more earnest worshiper in the temples of the outer world, “not made with hands,” simply because he was so profound a believer in Christ and His church. The religion of Christ and the religion of nature are not two, but one—as the divine Word and the divine works find their unity in the Word made flesh. “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made.” With poetry thus inspired no minister can afford to be unfamiliar. It will give him help, imparting devotion to his work. No poet is more prized by some of our profoundest Christian thinkers, and it will refresh many a timid worker in the ministry to spend some of his vacation hours with Wordsworth among the lovely scenery so abundant in our land.

Wordsworth is the poet of man even more than he is the poet of nature. He has been misjudged by many and deemed a cold nature, dwelling apart from the great world, self-absorbed and having no large and living sympathies with human life. Carlyle’s judgment of him is utterly mistaken. Probably Wordsworth was as strongly repelled from Carlyle as Carlyle seems to have been from Wordsworth. Carlyle was the worshiper of the strong and the great. Wordsworth’s soul went out to the weak and the lowly. In fact, in all those aspects of human life which appeal most powerfully to the Christian ministry, it is Wordsworth among all the English poets who finds most and sings sweetliest. Cowper, indeed, had begun the strain. It echoes all through “*The Task*.” Burns caught the same note and sent it forth loud and clear. But Wordsworth’s poetry of man is far more complete, far deeper, and far richer. There are three strains of this poetry, Wordsworth is in all their notes.