

LAMPMAN AND RELIGION

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THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS and religious position of Lampman, as Desmond Pacey points out in *Ten Canadian Poets*, have been almost entirely ignored or taken for granted by previous critics with the exception of Pacey himself and Roy Daniells. In the *Literary History of Canada* Daniells writes that Lampman's "connection with the Christian tradition is of the most exiguous and awkward kind."¹ Desmond Pacey is concerned "to document the case for believing that he (Lampman) had severe religious doubts."² The present essay is an attempt to enlarge upon the insights and intuitions of these two critics.

Lampman — like Emerson, Thoreau, and many of the English Romantics — was not irreligious but did experience a growing revulsion against orthodox religion. It is convenient to deal with Lampman's religious experience in three stages; his rejection of institutional religion, his perplexity and doubt, and the nature of his religious beliefs. At the same time, it is important not to forget that such an order is artificial in that it fails to reflect the fluctuations between rejection, belief, doubt, and affirmation.

In context, it is useful to remember Lampman's background. For the first twenty-one years of his life Lampman lived in a staunchly Anglican environment. Is it not significant, therefore, that there is no evidence which shows that Lampman considered following in his father's footsteps? At the same time, the fact that Lampman did not enter the ministry is representative in the sense that it can be duplicated in the experience of many literary men in the nineteenth century throughout Canada, America, and England. Charles G. D. Roberts was born in the rectory at Douglas, and D. C. Scott in a Methodist parsonage in Ottawa. W. W. Campbell, born in the Anglican Mission at Berlin, eventually entered the ministry but like Emerson publicly renounced it. The nineteenth century was a time when many sensitive men and women found it difficult to accept an orthodox religion increasingly undermined by the findings of science, anthropology, and the Higher Criticism. Having established that Lampman's distrust

of institutional religion was broadly representative and not unique, it is necessary now to detail his disagreement. Such details also imply, because of negative emphasis, the religious ideas which he affirmed.

In his essay on Shelley, "The Revolt of Islam",³ written whilst he was still at Trinity College, Lampman is shocked by what he calls the "atheistic opinions and daring blasphemy"⁴ of Shelley's poem. But the essay does not reflect a straightforward, orthodox reaction. Lampman clearly admires Shelley and we have an example here of something which was to become characteristic of Lampman's writing, the transference of religious terms to nature. Shelley is a "pure worshipper of nature" and "one of her peculiar priests".⁵ The essay seems to me to foreshadow Lampman's own quest, which is best described by the words he uses to portray Shelley's search for "some natural code of faith which to his mind conformed more closely to the workings of his only instructress, nature's self."⁶

Like Emerson and Thoreau, and the Deists and Unitarians before them, Lampman rejected many aspects and beliefs of institutional Christianity. His own time he described as "a philosophic age when people are beginning to realize with a sort of poetic clearness their true relations with nature and life."⁷ Elsewhere, whilst protesting against contemporary translations of the Bible, he has a further comment upon the changing temper: "The men of the sixteenth century knew how to translate the Bible, because they believed it in a sense which is not intelligible even to the devout people of our day, and because they were saturated with its spirit."⁸ Both these comments imply that for the sensitive, thoughtful and informed man, subscription to orthodox beliefs with the passionate intensity of earlier eras was no longer possible.

At the same time, Lampman realized that the majority of people clung to a moribund Church and regarded with suspicion any attempts to establish a personal belief which provided an intensity and meaning lacking in institutional religion.

Lampman hated anything which followed blind custom both in religion and in other aspects of life. Throughout his work, Lampman clearly and without histrionics established his own point of view which was always in reaction to the deadening quality of the experience of the mass of mankind. W. W. Campbell, his flamboyant contemporary, during the first three weeks of the column in *The Globe*, in which he and Lampman collaborated, used the findings of anthropology to show that much of the Old Testament and the Story of the Crucifixion were mythic and condemned as "poor and tottering" a religion "bolstered up by

ignorance".⁹ Emerson had done much the same thing fifty years earlier as a prelude to a statement of his own belief, but clearly the religious attitudes in Canada were still rigid, for Campbell's article brought a shocked rebuke in the Monday editorial, which expressed "strongest disapproval" and condemned and repudiated "most emphatically his religious ideas".¹⁰

W. W. Campbell had begun his *Globe* column with some reflections on the growing class distinctions, the increasing disparity between the rich and the poor in Canada, and had castigated the churches for their indifference to the "destitution, degradation and misery both within the shadow of the same church spire, or within the sound of the same Sabbath bell". He ended: "Religionists may cry out about the hopelessness of mere humanity as a religion, but it would be better did they put a little more hope into the anguish of the world by putting more of the humanities into their religion."¹¹

There have been many who have felt that institutional religion has often been conservative and reactionary. Thoreau, for example, believed the Church to be a very timid organization and a tool of materialism. A criticism of this kind of collusion is implicit in Lampman's "The Story of an Affinity" which emphasizes the richness of the church, the "grandeur", the "silken ceremonies", and the "velvet stalls". The pastor preaches on love and the brotherhood of man, but to a congregation composed of the "rich and the proud", who remain indifferent. The Church thus continues to announce the radical doctrines of Christ but has made them largely ceremonial. It is no wonder that Lampman in the *Globe* column for May 1892, like Emerson in "The Divinity School Address", calls for "genuine and effective" sermons to be delivered only by the most gifted preachers moving from parish to parish.

In the same column for September 1892 where he is attacking excessive wealth, there occurs the clause, "if it be true that there is a life beyond the grave". An orthodox Christian would not have expressed qualifications or doubt. Lampman seems not to have shared the belief in an afterlife, or rather he was concerned with the possibilities of the present life and this is where he wished to place his emphasis. In the column for November 1892 he incidentally dissociates himself from the popular belief in the afterlife. The tone of the language, which has a touch of Thoreauvian mockery, disapproves of the devaluation of the present life for something illusory: "Whether we accept with the mass of mankind the belief in a happy immortality of the soul, or whether we refuse to busy our thoughts with that great after-blank into which we cannot see how we shall penetrate with profit, in neither case will the sound-hearted man and the true

lover of humanity and life look upon death as in anywise a hideous and desperate thing."

Lampman did not endorse the doctrine of Original Sin. As early as his essay, "The Revolt of Islam", he approves Shelley's "magnificent dream", when men freed from the corrupting social institutions are able "to follow the instincts of natural goodness and virtue which should gradually lead them to perfection, to pure, glorious, unselfish happiness, without the further aid of laws and systems of morals."¹² Lampman continuously played down the other world of orthodox religion in order to assert the infinite possibilities of the present life and the innate capacities of human beings. Man needs neither Divine Grace, the Church, priests, nor theology and dogma. With Emerson, Lampman regarded the belief in a "system of post-mortem rewards and punishments", to use his words from the *Globe* column for April 1893, as false and degrading.

His poem, "Virtue", is an explicit rejection of external control and fear. Men cannot be bribed or frightened into virtuous behaviour. The only authority for the virtuous life comes from the "inward light", which produces "the God-like habit". Only when he thought of the Hon. John Staggart did Lampman regret "that the old theological fable of hell fire is not true."¹³ In the poem the reaction to orthodox religion is openly contemptuous. Religion is a "grudged control", producing not virtue, but something peevish, crabbed and rancid, a "sour product". Religion has become petrified and reactionary, a "custom" maintained by the "sharp-eyed", and relying heavily on the enforcement of crude conceptions of a "painted paradise" or a "pictured hell". By contrast the reader familiar with Lampman's work realizes how personal and characteristic at times are the religious insights found here. By this I mean the emphasis on clarity, light, flowing movement, and self-fulfillment, whilst the line "Bathed in the noon-tide of an inward light" is more informative of one aspect of that most typical of his poems, "Heat", than many pages of critical commentary.

An untitled poem, left in his manuscript book for 1889 to 1892, is significant in showing how radically Lampman's religious ideas had changed in the ten years since he had left Trinity College:

How dealt the world, Oh Christ, with thee,
 Who shrank not from the common rod,
 Whose secret was humility?
 They mocked and scourged; then hailed thee god.

 And built out of thine earnest speech,
 Who gifts had for the simplest needs,

Whose meaning was in all men's reach,
The strangest of phantastic creeds.¹⁴

Like the New England Transcendentalists, Lampman no longer believed in the supernatural origin of Christ. He considered, as Emerson did, that Christ was a great ethical and moral teacher but nevertheless a man whose meaning could be understood and attained by all men. The moral precepts of Christ had been corrupted and perverted by orthodox religion and made into an elaborate mystery.

Lampman's impatience with sectarian theology may be partly explained from two points of view. He had been influenced by the findings of anthropology and archeology and was very much aware of the rise and fall of religions. In the poem, "In October", the sound of the falling leaves resembles the "failing murmur of some conquered creed". Later it will emerge that Lampman did not believe that the truth was confined to any particular religion but that many religions testified to truth.

Because of his view of Christ, Lampman maintained that there were central and constant truths in original Christianity. The variety of dogma had confused and distorted their simplicity and beauty. Such attitudes motivate "To An Ultra Protestant". The poem is an explicit rejection of institutional religion, and, with it, all the impediments which Emerson and Thoreau saw as "crutches", propping up a frigid and lifeless creed.

A letter from Lampman to E. W. Thomson, dated November 2, 1897, is an important document in this context. It provides a summary of Lampman's quarrel with orthodoxy and further details of the nature of his rejection. For these reasons, I quote the letter in full and restore a meaningful passage which is missing from it as quoted by A. S. Bourinot in his edition of Lampman's letters:

Yesterday was a holiday and the day before was Sunday and I went to Church, a thing I do about three times a year. It always depresses me to go to Church. In those prayers and terrible hymns of our service we are in the presence of all the suffering in the world since the beginning of time. We have entered the temple of sorrow and are prostrate at the feet of the very God of Affliction.

"Lead kindly light

Amid the encircling gloom"

Newman hit it exactly. It is the secret of the success of Christianity. As long as there is sorrow on earth, the pathetic figure of Christ will [next three words mutilated] days when men were children, they were worshippers of light and joy. Apollo, and Aphrodite and Dionysias were enough for them, but the world is

grown old now. It has gone through so much. It is sad and moody and full of despair and it cleaves to Christ its natural refuge. I must say, however, that Sunday is a day that drives me almost to madness. The prim black and stiff collars, the artificial dress of the women, the slow trouping to the church, the silence, the dreariness, the occasional knots of sallow and unhealthy zealots whom one may meet at street corners whining over some awful point in theology,— all that gradually presses me down till by Sunday night I am in despair and would fain issue forth with paint and brush and colour the town crimson.¹⁵

LAMPMAN CONTINUED to go to church infrequently until the end of his life, but it is clear that orthodox religion was not only unsatisfying but also profoundly distasteful to him. The original insights of Christ are no longer in evidence. Orthodox Christianity is prim and restrictive, a dreary ceremonial maintained largely by people who are themselves sick and whose interest is chiefly aroused by sterile casuistry. Most important, there is expressed here a conflict between Paganism and Christianity. Lampman valued the experience of the Greeks because he felt that in their vision of the world the emphasis was placed upon an easy correspondence between the world of man, gods, and nature. What Lampman sought was a belief which would give man a sense of "light and joy" and in which there was room for the spontaneity, total absorption, and imaginative play of childhood. In other words, he could not be content with a religion which appeared to encourage men to remain in a crippled state, dependent upon "the very God of Affliction", or with a ceremony which was an expression of gloom and despair.

Thus eventually, for Lampman, Christianity became synonymous with human distress, and was unacceptable because it failed to give men a greater sense of their own potential. Further evidence for this statement is provided by "Storm Voices". This poem is not, as many other poems of Lampman are not, simple description. The besieged house is the contemporary individual, and his condition is critical. Inside the house, the poet is aware of the tremendous forces for dissolution, and the darkness and rain blot out any kind of perception from a window already "narrow". Only if the poem is read in this way do such phrases as the "surging horror" in the night become meaningful. The storm stands for all of the contemporary conditions which Lampman felt diminished man. The poem is especially relevant because the storm is explicitly identified with a religious crisis. The fury of the storm is the "thunder" of organs and the "burst" of

hymns, and the darkness is the "gloom" of a cathedral. Once more orthodox Christianity is experienced as a religion of desperation and despair, contributing to the sadness and vexation of men who have lost the capacity for wonder and the ability to respond to the infinite which is at the centre of religious feeling.

It is understandable, therefore, that in "The Land of Pallas", expressive both of Lampman's ideals and criticisms of contemporary society, the "robes" and "sacred books" of "many a vanished creed" are kept only as a reminder and a warning. In this land worship is "priestless", but of course Pallas is a religious state. Religion here, freed from its institutional aspects, has taken on a new intensity. The men and women of the land do in fact appear to be divine, and the worlds of man, nature, and the spirit are in continuous intercourse and harmony. Nevertheless it is men and women that Lampman is describing. He is indeed setting forth the ideal, but the ideal for Lampman is synonymous with the potential and the attainable. The religious faith and beliefs of the people are clearly not orthodox or traditional. Later I shall attempt to set forth the characteristics of Lampman's beliefs which are close to those found in the land of Pallas. For the moment it is enough to point out the close connection here between religion and nature, the sense of the immanence of spirit in the world, and the divinity of the human. Such characteristics are hardly compatible with orthodox Christianity.

The question of Lampman's religious doubts, using the word religious here to describe not only Christianity but other beliefs as well, may be dealt with briefly. Lampman's feeling that the Church had become moribund and oppressive can be found in many writers and intellectuals of the nineteenth century and is part of the general cultural dislocation of the century. As long as Lampman was deprived of a tradition, and until he was able to replace it with beliefs forged out of personal knowledge, there were bound to be evidences of despondency and nihilism. At the same time, his personal convictions, always elusive and hard won, sometimes failed him and brought further moments of deprivation. However, when observed in the context of his work as a whole, uncertainty and disbelief are not dominant. Moreover, these feelings must not be confused with the anguish often evinced in his work, which was the result of Lampman's awareness that the mass of mankind were ignorant of, or indifferent to, knowledge and powers which the poet believed could transform the quality of man and his existence. Desmond Pacey has pointed to some of these moments of doubt in "Despondency" and "Winter Evening". The poem "To Chaucer" is very important here as it charts the historical decline in orthodox faith from the Middle

Ages, down to the "doubt" and "restless care" of the contemporary situation.

In the introduction to his book, *The Disappearance of God*, J. Hillis Miller portrays the nineteenth century as a time when poets came to feel that either the lines of communication between man and God had been dislocated or God had fled from the world. One consequence of this feeling is the evocation of a Golden Age when God dwelt on earth and a close affinity existed between the divine and the human. Miller goes on to write that the Romantic poets,

still believe in God, and they find his absence intolerable. At all costs they must attempt to re-establish communication. They too begin in destitution, abandoned by God. All the traditional means of mediation have broken down, and romanticism therefore defines the artist as the creator or discoverer of hitherto unapprehended symbols, symbols which establish a new relation, across the gap between man and God. The artist is the man who goes out into the empty spaces between man and God attempting to create in that vacancy a new fabric of connections between man and the divine power . . . The central assumption of romanticism is the idea that the isolated individual, through poetry, can accomplish the "unheard of work", that is create through his own efforts a marvellous harmony of words which will integrate man, nature, and God.¹⁶

"To Chaucer", and several other poems by Lampman, belong to the category which Miller is describing. The Middle Ages is seen as a Golden Age and is significantly described in seasonal and youthful imagery. By contrast the present is felt to be a fallen world, a Paradise lost, or a Heaven which must be laboriously sought. But the present is not totally unredeemed, and this fact accounts for the paradoxes which become apparent in the poetry about to be examined and for the sense of struggle alternating between joy and hope which accompanies the attempt at "a new fabric of connections between man and the divine power".

Underlying many of Lampman's poems on the seasons is the theme of death and resurrection. By this I mean that the seasonal movement arouses in the poet a religious emotion similar to what the Christian has towards the death and resurrection of Christ. Furthermore the poet is so closely identified with the seasonal pattern that he too undergoes a death and rebirth which is felt to be physical, emotional, and spiritual. This theme viewed from a slightly different angle may also be interpreted in terms of separation and re-union. It is the theme of the Prodigal Son, of the child who has lost its mother, of the sense of being cut off from the natural sources of grace as in "The Ancient Mariner".

The tone of "In October" is defined by religious imagery — the "tall slim priests of storm" and the leaves which utter "low soft masses" for the death of

the year. For the poet, too, it is a time of penance, and his heart goes out to "the ashen lands".

In "Ballads of Summer's Sleep", the alternation of the seasons becomes a religious struggle in which victory will be obtained only when "the slayer be slain". This image is very close to that of Christ's victory over death. It is also similar to the battle of the priest-kings at the beginning of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, a battle which Frazer later identifies with vegetation rituals of death and revival. The same emphasis is there in "Winter Hues Recalled" where February is "the month of the great struggle twixt Sun and Frost". In "The Coming of Winter", the seasons are personified throughout. Summer is a god dying in the shadow of the mighty "slayer" winter whilst the earth prays and mourns in black. The earth is now a widow who will be forced into marriage with winter.

Several other poems, such as "Autumn Waste", "The Ruin of the Year", and "The March of Winter", marked by the same theme and similar structure and imagery, serve to underline that such a preoccupation is not merely fortuitous. Moreover, the two Greek myths most pertinent here, Adonis — Persephone and Demeter — Persephone, are explicitly referred to in Lampman's poem "Chione", which is another poem of death and descent into the underworld.

In "Sirius", Lampman provides variation by drawing on Egyptian mythology, but the concern is the same as in the poems already mentioned. Isis or Hathor was the wife of the fertility god, Osiris, also identified with the sun. The great star of Isis was Sirius, which betokened the rising of the Nile and the resurrection of Osiris. In Lampman's poem the waning of the "old night" and the rising of the star cause the poet to cry aloud to Hathor for he is "smitten by her star".

Clearly for Lampman, Spring, Autumn and Winter are the equivalent emotionally of Easter, Lent and the Passion, and it is interesting to read in Frazer something which Lampman may have intuited or thought out:

When we reflect how often the church has skilfully contrived to plant the seeds of the faith on the old stock of Paganism, we may surmise that the Easter celebration of the dead and risen Christ was grafted upon a similar celebration of the dead and risen Adonis¹⁷

It is worth speculating, too, that when Lampman expressed his disgust with orthodox religion in the letter to Thomson which I quoted earlier, and opposed the pale figure which institutional religion had made of Christ with Apollo, Aphrodite, and Dionysus, he might have been setting up his own Trinity. The choice is significant, for Apollo is associated with the sun and light and his return was celebrated by festivals in the spring. Likewise Aphrodite is associated with

the fertility of the spring and Dionysus is a vegetation god who underwent the pattern of death and rebirth.

In the general context, the poet tends to dramatize himself in two significant and interrelated ways. He is both a dead god awaiting the moment of rebirth and a man divided from the divine source within himself and the world of nature. The possibility of re-entry into a divine harmony still exists, but the occasions are limited in the contemporary situation as opposed to a past when union between man, nature, and god was continuous and characteristic. Christianity, especially in its institutionalized form, is for the poet one of the factors which has contributed to this fragmentation.

In "Favourites of Pan", the god flees before the "new strains" of "hostile hymns" and "conquering faiths". The synthesis caught in "A Vision of Twilight":

When the spirit flowed unbroken
Through the flesh, and the sublime
Made the eyes of men far seeing,

is no more. However, "the infinite dream" may be attainable "for them that heed". In the "Return of the Year", characterized as the title suggests by imagery of conflict and rebirth:

This life's old mood and cult of care
Falls smitten by an older truth
And the gray world wins back to her
The rapture of her vanished youth.

At such times, the poet knows, "The Gods are vanished but not dead". Hence, like the loons, in the poem of the same title, the poet will search for the exiled Glooscap, or in "The Lake in the Forest" will experience in the wilderness the spirit of Manitou.

Contemporary man has been left only with the fragments of the medieval symbols of faith and correspondence with the Divine. Lampman puts it thus in "Voices of Earth":

We have not heard the music of the spheres,
The song of star to star . . .

But in this poem there is not that sense of poignancy and horror as, for example, in Arnold's "Dover Beach", because earth does have voices, signs and symbols, which awaken in man organic knowledge, "bedded" in his heart.

In Lampman's poetry, nature is nearly always called "Mother" or "Great

Mother", terms synonymous with Rhea or Cybele, the "Mother of the Gods" of the Ancients. In "Freedom" the poet leaves the city and is re-united in the arms of his mother. Cast out of Paradise or Heaven the poet's heart in "Among the Timothy", which was a "heaven", is dead like the white leaves that hang through winter. But the poet lies in the earth as if buried, and his spirit passes into "the pale green ever-swaying grass" to return re-invigorated. In "The Meadow", as the earth burgeoned with April so the poet's spirit "sprang to life anew". Finally, in "Storm", the dead poet buried in his grave, "his narrow girth of need and sense", experiences divinity in moments of "demonic birth".

THE DISCUSSION of Lampman's dissatisfaction with orthodox religion has led logically to the world of nature which gave the poet an outlet for, and an image of, his religious sentiments.

"Life and Nature" provides a transition from the rejection of orthodoxy to Lampman's later religious position as it emerges through rather than in nature. To put it simply at the outset, nature is felt to be an intermediary, a means whereby the religious experience is expressed and realized. The title is misleading because it compresses too drastically the ideas behind the poem. Essentially the poem contrasts life or nature with orthodox religion, which the imagery indicates to be synonymous with death. Once again the poem is an example of Lampman's ability to find correlatives for a state of mind, for a spiritual struggle. The poet enters the city which is still and deserted and is overcome by the desolation which the inhabitants offer as worship to their God. Tormented by a lack of purpose and direction, driven to the point of distraction and madness he finds his attempts to assert life perverted into their opposite. He leaves, goes into the depths of nature where he lies down and undergoes a metamorphosis, a dying into life achieved by the loss of self in the procreative sound and movement.

Lampman, then, found "a natural code of faith". The several influences which moulded the correspondence between matter, mind, and the Divinity appear to be diverse, but all contributed to the essentially eclectic religious position arrived at by Transcendentalism; they include Plato and Greek philosophy, Shelley, Emerson, Coleridge, Eastern mysticism, Amiel, Arnold, and W. W. Campbell.

The parts of "A Story of an Affinity", which tell of Richard's quest for knowledge are a likely guide to Lampman's own reading. Richard meditates on "Plato's vast and Golden dream": Lampman's writing shows that he had ab-

sorbed Plato's belief in another world beyond the material, a world of immutable essences, Forms or Ideas, especially beauty, truth, and harmony. Later Richard learns from Coleridge the "heavenly likeness of the things of earth". Coleridge, of course, is central to any discussion of Transcendentalism. He had absorbed the ideas of the German idealists, especially those of Kant, and was a major formative influence upon Emerson. What is most relevant here is Coleridge's preoccupation with spiritual unity and the belief that the Platonic Ideas, manifested in the material world, may be perceived by the imagination, which is essentially the faculty that reconciles opposites in a new harmony.

The poem "Earth — The Stoic" reveals other Classical influences apart from Plato which help to build up our picture of Lampman's cosmology. In the poem, Lampman speaks of the "fiery birth" of the universe and the "sheer will" which earth communicates to the heart of man. The original meaning of spirit was the conception of the Stoics of a fire-like principle, animating and energizing the Cosmos. The earth is the Stoic and is imbued with the spiritual principle, especially as it manifests itself in the force of heat. With all the images of light and heat in Lampman's poetry, and one central poem entitled "Heat", there is surely little need to emphasize how important the Stoic conception of the universe is to our understanding of Lampman's poetry.

Carl F. Klinck, tracing the spiritual difficulties of W. W. Campbell, Lampman's friend and, as we have seen, his collaborator in the *Globe* column in 1892 and 1893, writes: "Until the end of his life, he [Campbell] was Canada's chief popularizer of what he called idealism, and what the historian will call transcendentalism."¹⁸ It is at least probable that Campbell was able to provide Lampman with opportunities for discussion of the ideas and major documents of transcendentalism, especially those of Emerson, with whose work Campbell was very familiar.

Indeed Emerson was probably the most congenial and important influence upon Lampman in the particular area under discussion. There are striking similarities between both men's work, and I propose to allow Lampman's religious position to emerge in conjunction with references to the ideas and writings of Emerson. Lampman considered Emerson to be a nature poet "in the fullest sense". His "sympathy with nature" is a "sympathy of force" which draws him to nature because "in the energies of his own soul he is aware of a kinship to the forces of nature, and feels with an elemental joy as if it were a part of himself, the eternal movement of nature."¹⁹ In his essay on Keats, Lampman stated that

the concern of poetry was with "essences" which accorded with "That divine and universal harmony". He also writes in the same essay:

Whatever creation of the human imagination is genuinely beautiful is produced by an impulse derived from, and allied to the power of the Divine Creator himself, and it has the right to exist. There is an energy in the spirit of the true poet which realizes what he creates . . . ²⁰

An unpublished essay, "The Modern School of Poetry in England", also asserts that "all true art must rest upon a sense of wonder — a sense of the invisible that is around everything."²¹

In these various statements, it seems to me, are to be found the aesthetic and moral sentiments usually associated with the Transcendental vision of experience, and since the beautiful is "allied to the power of the Divine Creator", the experience is essentially religious. Nature in "Earth — the Stoic" is conceived of as being imbued with an animating principle known interchangeably as force, energy, or spirit. Emerson is a true nature poet because he is aware within himself of an energy akin to that of nature which partakes of universal movement. The central essence is harmony, and this is universal and divine. The imagination, or the poetic faculty, is concerned with the perception of invisible harmony and so "realizes", that is, creates, a reality which is both divine impulse and a divine achievement. Thus nature, art, the imagination of the poet, and the divine mind are one. The religious experience is synonymous with a sense of unity between the individual, nature, and what Emerson called the Oversoul, or is a correspondence between the spirit or energy in nature, the spirit or energy in man, and Divine Spirit or Energy. These last two terms are both Lampman's and Emerson's favourite expressions for their God. Man at such mystical moments is divine, and Deity, Spirit, Force, or Energy is both immanent within man and nature and transcendent or beyond the creation. Thus to describe Lampman as a pantheist is not exact. The more accurate term would be pantheist for God is more than the spiritual presence permeating the universe. Furthermore, the idea of a Christian dualism has no place in Lampman's belief, since he envisages no division between spirit and matter. Here we are close to the insights which make up Lampman's religious position.

Man, then, looking at nature with his imagination, would see analogies between mind and matter and understand them as diverse manifestations of the universal harmony which is the divine unity. For Lampman "true art" rested upon a "sense of wonder" because of the "invisible that is around everything".

Likewise for Emerson the visible creation was “the terminus or circumference of the invisible” and the “invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common”. It is clear why Emerson felt that the task of the teacher was “to acquaint man with himself” and why with Lampman he was saddened by contemporary man, “a god in ruins”, “the dwarf of himself”.

There exists a close similarity between Lampman’s and Emerson’s attitude towards science and its effect upon the religious view of experience. Broadly speaking one of the effects of scientific findings in the nineteenth century was to make orthodox religious beliefs less tenable, but science could apparently provide sanctions for orthodox beliefs because, as Douglas Bush writes, “much of what crumbled under the pressure of science was rather the adventitious accretions of religion, such as the scientific validity of Genesis, than religion itself.”²² If we consult “The Story of An Affinity”, we see that Lampman meant by science primarily astronomy, geology, and biology, those branches which most directly challenged orthodox religious beliefs. The protagonist of the poem, Richard,

explored the round
 Of glittering space, the heavenly chart, and saw
 The giant order of immense worlds,
 The wheeling planets and our galaxy;
 And far beyond them in the outer void
 Cluster succeeding cluster of strange suns
 Through spaces awful and immeasurable,
 Dark systems and mysterious energies
 And nebulous creations without end —
 The people of the hollow round of heaven
 In trackless myriads dwelling beyond search
 Or count of man — beneath his feet this earth
 A dust mote spinning round a little star
 Not known, nor named in the immensity.
 He probed the secrets of the rocks, and learned
 The texture of our planet’s outer rind,
 And the strange tale of her tremendous youth.
 He touched the endless lore of living things,
 Of plant, of beast, of bird, and not alone
 In the mere greed of knowledge, but as one
 Whom beauty kindled with a poet’s fire.

The last three lines are particularly important, for though Lampman and Emerson did not object to science itself, they were opposed to the scientific fact uninformed by the poetic imagination as an end in itself.

For Lampman and Emerson, scientific discovery was a welcome ally in changing moribund beliefs, but only as a prelude to newer and essentially religious convictions about the meaning of life. This is one of the themes of a lecture, "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England", given by Emerson in 1880.

The essay is close in idea and phrasing to Lampman's essay in his *Globe* column for April 1893.²³ He begins with a pessimistic view of human nature, human history, and the worst tendencies of his own age, but "in a time when these things are becoming most apparent" he offers a new hope, "a new conception of the higher life". This new conception he identifies as "the child of science" but is careful to emphasize that it is "reinforced by the poetry inherent in the facts of the universe and all existence". Viewed in this way the conception "is not a materialistic one, although at first it may seem so". Instead it is "poetic and intrinsically religious". Men armed with "the new knowledge" can achieve "a breadth and majesty of vision" and this "new spiritual force" will enable men to live "in the very presence of eternity".

Emerson's religious beliefs were influenced by his reading of oriental religions and mysticism. There is evidence that Lampman, too, had read and thought about Eastern philosophy and religion. A knowledge of this aspect of Lampman's reading is useful because it affected all levels of his work, from his thought to the structure and imagery of his poetry. The preponderance of the image of the circle, for example, in his work, as in Emerson's, may well have derived from an acquaintance with Hinduism. In a manuscript book of poems and notes, for 1894 to 1899, there is the following jotting:

Mir-han-oya — final complete self-consciousness

Manvantara — the great process of expansion and contraction — the day of
Brahma

Pralaya — the period of concentration, the night of Brahma²⁴

These rather cryptic notes are in fact a condensation of many aspects of Hindu religious beliefs and cosmology. Hinduism postulates a universe immense in size and duration, passing through a continuous process of decline and development. The fundamental cosmic cycle is the day of Brahma which is equal to 4,320,000,000 years and known as a kalpa. The god sleeps for a further kalpa known as the night of Brahma and then repetition takes place. Brahma is in the infinite, the unchangeable, the eternal, absolute pure Being on which all that exists depends and from which it derives its reality. The world is an immense series of repetitive cycles and is thought of as being periodically absorbed into,

and emanating from, the Divine Being. Brahma is the inmost essence of all things animate and inanimate, and the ultimate is the impersonal world spirit with which the soul of the individual is mystically identical. The true self is universal consciousness and exists both in itself and for itself or, as Lampman writes, in "the very presence of Eternity". Other attributes of the Divine Being as it appears in Lampman's poetry, such as divine light and energy emanating to the individual soul and the immanence of God in man and the universe, clearly derive from Lampman's acquaintance with Eastern religions.

PERHAPS BY NOW Lampman's religious position and beliefs are clearer, and this essay may be concluded by an examination of how these ideas operated in, and shaped, a number of poems apart from those already scrutinized.

The impulse behind these poems is religious in the sense that Lampman sought to recreate, as he said, the knowledge that "with the fullest intensity of sympathy we are of one birth with everything about us"²⁵ and to make known the "heavenly likeness of the things of earth". The poems fall into two categories, the alternate sides of the same theme. Man is a god in ruins because in his increasingly mechanized and urbanized society he has lost contact with the vital forces of the natural world. These forces are varied manifestations of the central essence of nature, the spiritual unity of the One, the World Spirit. To recover himself man must die to the material world and resurrect the god within, his true identity. The religious experience occurs when the real self experiences itself simultaneously through nature in the presence of the World Soul. Then all opposites are reconciled, and the feeling is characterized by a sense of clarity and harmony which accompanies the unbroken flow of spirit.

In "Freedom" men have lost their relationship with nature. Though their souls originally "were sprung from the earth" they are now here "degenerate children". "A Prayer" uses the recurring image of modern man physically handicapped and spiritually maimed, "weak", "halt", and "blind". The poet, in a way which recalls the work of D. H. Lawrence, asks nature to recover the men, "Born of thy strength", from the partial, mechanical existence of industrialized society and restore them to integrated, organic wholeness by endowing them with some of her energy and creativity. "Sight" is a series of detailed contrasts. The irony of life is that beauty, harmony, and infinite possibilities surround men, but, shut in by walls and the perpetual winter of the spirit, men cannot attune their inmost selves to the wonders outside and thus remain unconscious to both.

"An Athenian Reverie" is another poem in which man is depicted as a being unaware and unfulfilled. Man ought to be in a state of metamorphosis. Instead he is unable to free himself from the chrysalis. This theme is developed in the image of the tree. Man sits beneath it, half-asleep, enjoying its shade, but is unable to go beyond the simply sensual and immediately apparent to the majestic formal harmony of the source. By contrast, the poet, alert and receptive, struggles with "watchful dreams" to add a little to the "wrought sculpture" and "never-finished frieze" of life. The exact choice of image to convey the fullest meaning is impressive here. The frieze is the middle portion of an entablature linked by the architrave to the column below and by the cornice to the roof above. Life is a magnificent structure, like a Greek temple, and the poet occupies a mediating position between earth and heaven.

"Peccavi Domine" was written as "an act of self-relief".²⁶ It is an important poem because it displays many characteristics of Lampman's belief, and its paradoxes, abrupt oppositions, and contrasts are akin to the technique, as well as the theme, of Emerson's "Brahma". Emerson's poem is about the absolute unity underlying Maya, or the Hindu principle of Illusion and variety.

Lampman's poem is a study in dejection, a lament in which the poet chastises himself for ignoring his deep perceptions of the unity of the universe and the intuitions of his real self and its relationship with the World Spirit. God has many names and many attributes, "Power", "Poet-Heart", "Maker", "Riddle", and "Energy". The World Spirit is like a sphere composed of interpenetrating circles and is present throughout the universe:

Within whose glowing rings are bound,
Out of whose sleepless heart had birth
The cloudy blue, the starry round,
And this small miracle of earth.

Because the Divine Being "livest in everything", and since "all things are thy script and chart", the task of the poet is to remain alert and interpret the manifold signs of the world. Thus he is constantly moving from the border of illusion to the centre of reality. The Divine Being — "protean", "ever-old" and "ever-new" — is also the central reality of the poetic self. But here the poet feels that he has betrayed the promptings of the "God within" and consequently is separated and alienated from the emblems of spirit in the natural world. Instead of being led beyond the forms of nature to an awesome awareness of unity, as in "Heat", for example, the poet here experiences no expansion of self but rather a

spiritual rebuttal which leads to the sorry spectacle of his "broken soul". His torment is made more unendurable by the evidences of spirit with which the earth shines and glows, evidences which no longer beckon to him but mock and enhance his self-division.

Elsewhere Lampman turns from self-division and the spectacle of fallen man to affirm the correspondence between universal spirit, the spirit of nature, and the soul of man. On these occasions, man is rejuvenated, resurrected from his sensual grave, aware of the infinite in the finite, and of the poetic soul, the imagination, intensely sympathetic to the emblematic quality of nature, and becomes the "expositor of the divine mind".²⁷

A characteristic quality of Lampman's poems at such times is that the landscape seems to glow as if lit from within. The natural world, in other words, becomes luminous and transparent as spirit shines through. This experience, accompanied by its characteristic terminology, is a leading motif of Emerson's essay "Nature" because the main concern is to show "how the universe becomes transparent, and the light of higher laws than its own shines through it."²⁸ Lampman, of course, was not writing an essay, but that the experience I have attempted to define, and which Emerson's essay describes in part at least is there, can be demonstrated in several poems. The poem, significantly titled, "Cloud-break", concretely realizes the experience:

The islands are kindled with gold
And russet and emerald dye;
And the interval waters outrolled
Are more blue than the sky.
From my feet to the heart of the hills
The spirits of May intervene,
And a vapour of azure distills
Like a breath on the opaline green.

There is a sudden intensification of colour and the landscape "distills" its essence, becoming "opaline" or translucent with spirit. The experience is momentary and then,

The chill and the shadow decline
On the eyes of rejuvenate men
That were wide and divine.

In "The Bird and the Hour", diverse visual and auditory experiences coalesce to manifest the underlying spiritual essence. At sunset the valley and sky dissolve in molten gold. The song of the hermit bird, the "golden music", is part of the

unifying aspects of the landscape and prolongs the vision which appears to emerge:

from the closing door
Of another world.

The frogs in the poem of the same name, are the expositors chosen by nature of "her spirit's inmost dream". "Distance" expresses simply the transcendental vision which is looking beyond the surface of natural phenomena:

Till this earth is lost in heaven
And thou feel'st the whole.

In "Peace", "Nature" and "Eternity" are interchangeable since the earth is a "daedal spectacle", an "open radiance", and a "script sublime". The fulfilled man is he whose reality is found "only in the flawless mind". Finally, the source of "The Largest Life" is the recognition of universal spirit, the knowledge that salvation is self-salvation. This salvation enlarges, so to speak, in a universe which is felt to be dynamic, the area of spirit. The "Great Light" becomes "clearer for our light", and the "great soul the stronger for our soul".

Both Emerson and Lampman entitled one of their poems "Xenophanes", and a passage from Emerson's essay "Nature" makes clear why both were fascinated by the ideas and experience of this early Greek philosopher and rhapsodist. Emerson writes:

Herein is especially apprehended the unity of nature, — the unity in variety which meets us everywhere. All the endless variety of things make an identical impression. Xenophanes complained in his old age, that, look where he would, all things hastened back to unity. He was weary of seeing the same entity in the tedious variety of forms.²⁹

Xenophanes asserted a divinity who is true existence as opposed to appearance, the One and the All, undivided and eternal and underlying the universe. Lampman portrays Xenophanes as a wanderer and a searcher after truth, weary in extreme old age of the world of appearance and longing for the reality which he has seen. It is the same "hunger" of Xenophanes which occupies the poetic imagination.

The esemplastic nature (to use a work coined by Coleridge to explain the synthesizing power of the poetic imagination) of universal spirit is the theme of "The Passing of the Spirit". Characteristically the theme is worked out through images of nature and music. The wind is one aspect of the World Spirit, an invisible cause with clearly visible effects. It is also called "the world-old rhapso-

dist" or, in other words, a professional reciter of Homeric poems, an expositor of the elemental and universal. The movement of the wind of universal spirit finds its response in a world which is intensely sympathetic and attuned to the universal cause. Tree after tree begins to sway and sing, blending into a chorus composed of strophe and antistrophe, an "infinite note" which is both initiated by, and a paean to, the universal presence of spirit. Likewise the finite life of individual man, "at sacred intervals", is transformed and completed in the presence of spirit. It is at such moments that "we dream ourselves immortal and are still". Without perplexity or doubt we are awesomely aware of universal harmony which is completed by the soul of man. This, for the poet, is the essential religious experience.

Much has already been said about "Heat", but by way of a conclusion it ought to be added that this is a fine transcendental poem. The landscape liquefies and dissolves and all contraries are unified in the presence of the manifestation of spiritual force. This explains why the poet believes that he has been brought to the experience by "some blessed power". The god within the poet is resurrected and lives in the eternal presence of the divine as it shines through nature. God, who through the centuries became more and more remote, has returned to earth in his original guise, man, and the poet need no longer envy the men of old, for he has vindicated their myth, and re-entered "The glittering world" of that "Immortal", "divine" and "Gay-smiling multitude".

NOTES

- ¹ *Literary History of Canada*, gen. ed. Carl F. Klinck, University of Toronto Press (Toronto, 1965), p. 394.
- ² *Ten Canadian Poets*, p. 127.
- ³ Archibald Lampman, "The Revolt of Islam", *Rouge et Noir*, I, no. 4 (December 1880).
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ⁷ Archibald Lampman, "At the Mermaid Inn", the *Toronto Globe*, Saturday, November 26, 1892.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, Saturday, August 20, 1892.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, Saturday, February 27, 1892.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Monday, February 29, 1892.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, Saturday, February 6, 1892.
- ¹² Archibald Lampman, "The Revolt of Islam", *Rouge et Noir*, I, no. 4 (December 1880), p. 6.

LAMPMAN AND RELIGION

- ¹³ Letters from Lampman to E. W. Thomson, MS Group 29940, Vol. I, 10 February, 1883, Public Archives, Ottawa.
- ¹⁴ MS book, 1889-1892, Trinity College Library, Toronto.
- ¹⁵ Letters from Lampman to E. W. Thomson, MS Group 29940, Vol. I, Public Archives, Ottawa.
- ¹⁶ J. Hillis Miller, *The Disappearance of God* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 13-14.
- ¹⁷ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Macmillan Co. Ltd., (London, 1957), p. 455.
- ¹⁸ Carl F. Klinck, *Wilfred Campbell: A Study in Late Provincial Victorianism*, Ryerson Press (Toronto, 1942), pp. 56-57.
- ¹⁹ Archibald Lampman, "At the Mermaid Inn", *The Toronto Globe*, Saturday, April 22, 1893.
- ²⁰ Archibald Lampman, "The Character and Poetry of Keats", pref. note by E. K. Brown, *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, 15 (July 1946) p. 357.
- ²¹ Archibald Lampman, "The Modern School of Poetry in England", MS Group 29940, Vol. I, Public Archives, Ottawa.
- ²² Douglas Bush, *Science and English Poetry*, O.U.P. (New York, 1950), p. 136.
- ²³ Archibald Lampman, "At the Mermaid Inn", *the Toronto Globe*, Saturday, April 8, 1893.
- ²⁴ Archibald Lampman, MS Group 29940, Vols. 3 and 4, Public Archives, Ottawa.
- ²⁵ Archibald Lampman, "At the Mermaid Inn", *the Toronto Globe*, Saturday, July 2, 1892.
- ²⁶ Letters from Lampman to E. W. Thomson, MS Group 29940, March 5, 1894, Public Archives, Ottawa.
- ²⁷ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature", *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Stephen Whicher, Riverside Editions, Houghton Mifflin Co., (Boston, 1960), p. 50.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.