Keble, *Christian Year*, “Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity”

*The heart knoweth his own bitterness: and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy. Proverbs xiv. 10.*

**Why should we faint and fear to live alone,**

**Since all alone, so Heaven has willed, we die,**

**Nor e’en the tenderest heart, and next our own,**

**Knows half the reasons why we smile and sigh?**

**Each in his hidden sphere of joy or woe**

**Our hermit spirits dwell, and range apart,**

**Our eyes see all around in gloom or glow—**

**Hues of their own, fresh borrowed from the**

**heart.**

**And well it is for us our God should feel**

**Alone our secret throbbings: so our prayer**

**May readier spring to Heaven, nor spend its zeal**

**On cloud-born idols of this lower air.**

For if one heart in perfect sympathy

Beat with another, answering love for love,

Weak mortals, all entranced, on earth would lie,

Nor listen for those purer strains above.

Or what if Heaven for once its searching light

Lent to some partial eye, disclosing all

The rude bad thoughts, that in our bosom’s night

Wander at large, nor heed Love’s gentle thrall?

Who would not shun the dreary uncouth place?

As if, fond leaning where her infant slept,

A mother’s arm a serpent should embrace:

So might we friendless live, and die unwept.

**Then keep the softening veil in mercy drawn,**

**Thou who canst love us, tho’ Thou read us true;**

**As on the bosom of th’ aërial lawn**

**Melts in dim haze each coarse ungentle hue.**

So too may soothing Hope Thy leave enjoy

Sweet visions of long-severed hearts to frame:

Though absence may impair, or cares annoy,

Some constant mind may draw us still the same.

We in dark dreams are tossing to and fro,

Pine with regret, or sicken with despair,

The while she bathes us in her own chaste glow,

And with our memory wings her own fond prayer.

O bliss of child-like innocence, and love

Tried to old age! creative power to win,

And raise new worlds, where happy fancies rove,

Forgetting quite this grosser world of sin.

Bright are their dreams, because their thoughts are clear,

Their memory cheering: but th’ earth-stained spright,

Whose wakeful musings are of guilt and fear,

Must hover nearer earth, and less in light.

Farewell, for her, th’ ideal scenes so fair—

Yet not farewell her hope, since thou hast deigned,

Creator of all hearts! to own and share

The woe of what Thou mad’st, and we have stained.

Thou knowst our bitterness—our joys are Thine—

No stranger Thou to all our wanderings wild:

Nor could we bear to think, how every line

Of us, Thy darkened likeness and defiled,

Stands in full sunshine of Thy piercing eye,

But that Thou call’st us Brethren: sweet repose

Is in that word—the Lord who dwells on high

Knows all, yet loves us better than He knows.

Keble, *Letters of Spiritual Counsel and Guidance*, “Letter LIV: To a Relapsed Penitent”

You may judge what a grief and disappointment to me was your report of yourself, though I was so far prepared for it as to have great misgivings in consequence of not hearing from you: still I own it is more distressing than I had hoped, and I am not sure, that, had I been at hand, I should have recommended so early an approach to the most holy things: perhaps I might, but it would have depended on tokens of which it is impossible to judge at a distance. But do not understand me as blaming you in the least, my dear young friend. I dares say you did it for the best, and I trust that He has blessed and will continue to bless it. I think you will do well to set yourself this rule, should you fall in the same way again, at once to confess, and suspend yourself from Communion, until you have my answer; not giving way to false shame, nor running the chance of further relapses. And in any case might it not be well to send me a report of yourself weekly; though ever so summary, it might be better than nothing. Also, if I had seen you, I should have asked you a little about the “near occasions” (as they are called) of your relapses, -- in the way of place, company, books, enticing objects, whether in the street or at home, and the best ways of avoiding them.

**We are sad children, and must deal cunningly with ourselves; and sometimes a very simple precaution, undertaken and kept in the fear of God, and prayer, and as in the Presence of Christ, will baffle a very deep and dangerous snare of the enemy.**

As you are often hindered from the Church prayers, it seems the more needful for you to practise repeating Psalms and saying short prayers to yourself. Sisters of Mercy do so in the streets, and why should no Brothers of Penitence?

Also, would it not do well to have something to amuse your mind in walks and vacant hours, and keep it out of mischief. Especially let me beg of your to be punctual in your self-examination, and if you could meditate every morning for a short time on Eternity and something connected with it, on the Divine Presence, or on 1 Cor. vi. 19, and other such texts, until you found yourself in a way to offer earnestly such a resolution as I will enclose herewith, I trust you would find yourself gradually released from the sad chain which has wound itself round you. This is all that occurs to me at present. Let me hear very soon; and believe me,

Now as ever,

Your very affecte and anxious,

J.K.

Elizabeth Dickinson Dowden, Selections from Her Letters to Edward Dowden

***December 1872***

[Newman] is characteristically Roman, and his lectures on "Social Morality" where he views the "Unit" from which his theory starts is the Family & not the individual. With the Greek Society (the Family, the Nation) exists for the individual human beings of whom it is composed, but with Maurice (like a Roman of the old Republic) the individual exists only for the social order - & conscience signifies only the recognition of that fact as Duty. The development of the individual life, & the impulses which are the phenomenal laws of growth, meet with no recognition from Maurice.(Browning because he makes his ethical unit the individual, views impulse as one of the guides of Conscience ... **-- I had an idea once of writing a comparison of Newman, Faber, and Keble, as religious poets. I do value Keble still though I haven’t cared to open the "Christian Year" for a good while back.**

*[18--]*

I didn't really think you would say anything polite about the sonnets I sent for your disapproval. - Certainly a friendship would be little worth the having if after a continuance of five years it could be in any matter encumbered still with politenesses-- . I sent the bad little rhymes- because if one has trust in the discernment of a critic, one does not ever like to merely show ones best and keep back ones worst -- And one would extend this of course into larger matters than verse-writing------ **This puts me in mind of a talk my brother J. & I had one day this Summer. arising out of a sermon, of Dr. Temples-** which asserted as a probability the theory that in human beings recognition of each other in a future life there will be entire revealment of each soul to other human souls, **J. said that Dr T’s view wasn’t at all desirable. & that it would be more comfortable if God would always "Keep the softening veil in mercy drawn” (Keble)** between soul and soul. I said I thought it would be far more desirable to have absolute revealment between any souls that had trusted each other on the faith of the incomplete revealments of personality in the earthly slate.

Edward Dowden, Selections from His Letters to Elizabeth Dickenson Dowden.

***29 November 1872***

Your brother lately lent me Faber, and I think a very interesting comparative study might be made of the religious poetry of Newman-Keble-Faber ... These seem to me the most characteristic & therefore the most valuable things in Faber's poems. Dread, naked spirituality, Puritanism are at the opposite pole, (& there seems to me much of the Puritan in Newman). **Keble is Anglican of the Anglicans; & in spite of your valuing him, (which I do too as a representative writer) I cannot think him a poet by nature; while, if he were, his position as an Anglican would have put him, as a poet at a disadvantage (Anglicanism being poetical only through infinite refinement & delicacy--not through greatness and audacity)**. I am writing so quickly that I am sure I am writing some nonsense with some sense. Faber's type of piety is very alien to my natural feeling. He was fat I think, and a favourite confessor with ladies. His religion is a kind of love-making with the several members of the Catholic mythology.

*17 December 1873*

**This desire to which [Dean Gwynn] gave expression for the "softening veil in mercy drawn” is very rarely absent from men I think. They have seldom had experience of a justice which ennobles. (But Browning has none of this feeling…)**. One is tempted to ask the persecuting question: **"How much unworthiness or baseness of past character could be forgiven, although consequences, at least losses, must always remain from such unworthiness".** The escape is to remember (as I do) that this question of more or less is altogether wrong. That human as well as Divine goodness condemns & forgives without measure, & certainly no punishment is needed by one who knows how his vision has been dimmed & his foot made feeble for climbing by former evil, so that he would always be in clearer air, & under a wider sky, - able to apprehend nobler spiritual fact more justly but for his past desertion of the right. **Thus my feeling has come to be that of Browning, not that of Keble: That seeing wholly through & through & being seen through, potential or actual, in [is?] the condition of entire fellowship and helpfulness.**

*03 February 1871*

I lit upon unhappy adjectives in speaking of Mr. Dickenson. I remember having an undefined apprehension that people would think me doing the generous & superior – (heaping coals of fire etc ---) towards Mr. Owen, & so being tempted to say something harsh --- although most truly I did not feel the slightest irritation. **“We are sad children”, as Keble says, “and must deal cunningly with ourselves” --- which I failed to do.**

*12 July 1872*

You must not wait like an amateur until some subject so possesses you that it compels you to write-- chose one likely to interest you, work uphill a few days, & it will interest you, & so you will get your hands into a steady working habit … **This is a cold-blooded proceeding but it need not be done only with a view to Review articles; & to quote my favorite sentence from Keble "We are sad children & must deal cunningly with ourselves.”**

*15 November 1873*

Yesterday I ”orated” viva voce on Milton, with five spacious, questionable theories about the types of character produced by Anglicanism, Puritanism & Catholocism. In two ways (definitely, & many ways indirectly) you were lecturing them. **I learned from you to do more justice than I used to do, to the beautiful, bounded harmoniousness of such an Anglican type as Keble represents**.

*27 October 1869*

I had the unsatisfactory feeling that I was seeming insensible to the beauty of **the feminine (so to speak) & also to the ascetic types of Christian character--say, Keble or St Francis of Assisi**-- It all comes from having been a convert from asceticism & converts are apt to be over-zealous for their second creed.