

ABSTRACT

G. M. Hopkins's work is analysed in the context of a suffering interpreted from a spiritual perspective, the 'dark sonnets' being the works which represent the climax of that suffering. The poet's attitude, credo and personal struggles are discussed as contributors to his pain and these, simultaneously, prepare him for a deeper understanding of his vocation. An outline of each chapter follows.

In Chapter I the poet's stance is explored; it is shown to be the attitude that shaped his direction towards the ultimate in suffering as shown in the 'dark sonnets'. This stance or attitude is like Juggernaut in that it contained the ingredients of suffering that propelled the poet along a fixed path to his inevitable fate.

Chapter I, Part I, is concerned with the peculiar quality of faith; it is a continuous testing and it is love with all its implications of suffering. The importance of faith in seeing the christian meanings in the 'dark sonnets' is also discussed. Part II centres on one of the results of faith, namely, religious commitment; this is interpreted as an espousal, or a gnosis that brings suffering because such intimate knowledge demands a response to divine commands.

In Chapter III the deeper meaning behind suffering is explored and various aspects of Hopkins's suffering examined.

Parallels are drawn in Chapter IV between the pain in the 'dark sonnets' and that suffering described by John of the Cross, sixteenth century mystic, as the 'dark night of the soul'.

In Chapter V the 'dark sonnets' are analysed with the intention of eliciting their spiritual meanings, thus to emphasise that Hopkins's suffering was a decisive contributor to his greatness as a poet and was the major factor in his growth towards spiritual maturity.