

Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

SCORE/GRADE:

POETRY: "Easter Wings"

In a single page, evaluate the thematic significance of this poem's form and/or prominent literary devices – that is, explain how the author uses these structural elements to emphasize the poem's main themes. Refer to specific lines of the poem in your answer. If using a separate sheet, submit this form with your completed assignment.

Easter Wings

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more
Till he became
Most poor:
With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did begin:
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sin,
That I became
Most thin.
With thee
Let me combine,
And feel this day thy victory;
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

-Gerard Manley Hopkins

Poet Gerard Manley Hopkins images the Fall of Man and his subsequent redemption with his concrete poem, "Easter Wings." In the first of two stanzas, he depicts man in his original condition, created by God "in wealth and store," with a poetic line which is as full as man's pre-fallen self. The Fall he images with a depleting line form, man's strength and provision diminished by foolish disobedience. With the diminishment, however, comes new awareness of his need and a cry for divine rescue: "With thee / O let me rise / As larks, harmoniously / And sing this day thy victories." The poet magnifies God for his resurrection work, amplifying his lines by degrees to recall the hope of restoration. This experience of divine condescension will augment the persona's appreciation of God's provision: "Then shall the Fall further the flight in me." Thus, Hopkins intones the theology of the Fortunate Fall.

In the second stanza, Hopkins reprises his subject and form with a more personal history of fall and redemption: "My tender age in sorrow did begin: / And still with sicknesses and shame / Thou didst so punish sin, / That I became/ Most thin." These lines, dependent upon those of the first stanza for their subject matter, demonstrate the result of the Fall in this man. Even from his youth, he experiences the diminishing effects of sin in his life. Made gaunt and thin by God's efficacious punishment, the persona begs to be combined with Christ, one with Him in His death and resurrection. "With Thee / Let me combine / And feel this day Thy victory..." Hopkins depicts this combination concretely with a successive lengthening of lines through the poem's conclusion: "For, if I imp my wing on thine, / Affliction shall advance the flight in me." As a falcon's broken wing is healed by a graft of feathers from another fowl, so broken man is mended by the substitutionary death and resurrection of the Son of Man. According to Hopkins, the Fall ironically serves to strengthen impoverished humanity with divine affection, redemption, and joy. Viewed together, these two stanzas create an image of the figurative, ethereal wings with which the persona and his fellow man may rise "like larks" from death to praise God for His providential work of salvation. With borrowed, Easter feathers from the risen Lord, broken man is redeemed for glorious flight.