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Topic- 1. The Man of Life Upright (Study Notes)

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The Man of Life Upright – Thomas Campion

The man of life upright,
Whose guiltless heart is free
From all dishonest deeds,
Or thought of vanity;
The man whose silent days
In harmless joys are spent,
Whom hopes cannot delude,
Nor sorrow discontent,

That man needs neither towers
Nor armour for defence,
Nor secret vaults to fly
From thunder's violence:

He only can behold
With affrighted eyes
The horrors of the deep
And terrors of the skies.

Thus scorning all the cares
That fate or fortune brings,
He makes the heaven his book,
His wisdom heavenly things;

Good thoughts his surest friends,
His wealth a well-spent age,
The earth his sober Inn
And quiet pilgrimage.

Thomas Campion was a prominent scholar, poet, and musician of his time. Man of Life Upright is simple in expression but it contains depth of thought and feeling. The poem presents the concept of an ideal personality, leading a highly disciplined and controlled life. He is the master of himself.

“The Man of Life Upright” is all about an honest man whose mind is always cheerful. It is free from impiety and vanity. His silent days are spent in joys that do not harm others. The man of life upright never loses hope nor the sorrows can make him discontent. He does not need towers or armor for protection. Not even vaults to shroud his guilt from God’s thunder. With unafraid eyes, he beholds the horrific depths of the sea and the tremulous sky. He scorns comfort. The sky’s the sole book for him and he seeks inspiration from heavenly things. His friends are good thoughts and his wealth is a well-spent life. Additionally, the earth is a sober inn and quiet pilgrimage for an upright man.

‘The Man of Life Upright’ offers the concept of an ideal personality, leading a highly disciplined and controlled life. He is a master of himself. An upright man’s pure and true heart is free from wrong thoughts and intentions. He leads his life in great happiness. He has total control over his whims and wishes. As a result, material loss and problems fail to disturb him. He is self-reliant, confident, and courageous. He does not count on power or material resources. In a battle, he depends upon God and seeks help from him. He does not have strong forts, weapons of war, or secret cellars for his safety. This man faces the natural calamities such as stormy winds, heavy rains, and tempests calmly and courageously. His faith in God remains firm and unshaken. The poet says that this man shows complete indifference to Life’s happy and unhappy events. He is aware that all worldly things and events are temporary and worthless. He seeks knowledge from the heavenly books and study of Nature’s objects, which adds to his wisdom and refines his intellect. The poet says that the man of upright life considers the world a place for a short while. It is no more than a temporary abode, without any glamour or charm. He believes that his good deeds are

his only wealth and earnings. When called upon by God, he will have to start the journey to the next eternal life.

The central idea of “The Man of Life Upright” revolves around the virtue of uprightness. It deals with the mindset of a person who practices honesty, modesty, and spirituality throughout his life. This poem also taps on the themes of courage, truthfulness, and asceticism. Campion describes an ideal life, free from impious deeds and thralldom of vanity. For an honest person, life is a vacation to be well-spent and a spiritual journey for self-fulfilments. If a person is virtuous, he never becomes hopeless about life. He does not even fear or care about fate’s ruling. What God sends; he accepts wholeheartedly.

Questions & Answers:

How “The Man of Life Upright” is free from thoughts of hypocrisy?

Thomas Campion’s “The Man of Life Upright” features a person who is free from both impiety and vanity. One who is cheerful with what he has never felt dissatisfied. An upright man is free from hypocrisy as he is already satisfied with life. He has no stains of impiety or vainglory to hide from others as well as from God.

What is the message of the poem “The Man of Life Upright”?

In this poem, the poet talks about an upright person. He describes his guiltless soul from different perspectives. Firstly, he is mentally free and spiritually happy. On the other hand, he is unafraid of anything. He neither seeks friends or wealth as he has good thoughts as his true companions and his life as a source of wealth. Through this piece, Campion tries to convey the importance of being upright and ethical in life.

What makes the Campion’s man bold and courageous?

Campion’s man is bold and courageous as his soul is guiltless. If one has nothing to be ashamed of, it naturally makes the person powerful. His mind never yields in any situation.

Who is an upright person?

An upright person is one who remains honest throughout his life and strictly adheres to ethical and moral values.

What are the qualities of “The Man of Life Upright”? Highlight at least three qualities.

Firstly, an upright man is not enslaved by impiety and vanity. Secondly, his mind is peaceful and happy. Lastly, he is bold and courageous.

How do hope and sorrow affect an upright man?

Hopes cannot delude an upright man and sorrows cannot make him discontent with life.

What are the thoughts of an upright man?

The thoughts of an upright man are good and virtuous. They are like his true friends.

What does an upright man not need for himself?

The man does not need towers or armor as his defense. His guiltless soul does not require any protection against criticism or God’s wrath.

What can the eyes of a righteous man see without any fear?

He can see the horrors of the deep and the terrors of the skies without any fear.

Explain briefly the main features of the poem?

The main features of an upright man are that he is an honourable man. His heart is free from all kinds of guilt. He is not vain or proud. He is honest and lives a simple life. He does not desire wealth or property. His wealth is his good deeds. He desires to go on a pilgrimage.

What does an upright man do, when he faces the “cares” of the world?

When an upright man faces the cares (problem) of his world, he reads his holy book and hopes for God’s mercy. He gains knowledge of life after death.

What does the poet mean when he says, “whose silent days in harmless goes are spent?”

An upright man lives a simple and peaceful life. His joys are simple. He feels good by doing good deeds.

Why only an upright man, “behold with unfrightened eyes, the horrors of the deep and terrors of the skies.”

It means, that only an upright man has the courage to face bravely the dangers while traveling by sea or the danger (natural disasters) of the skies such as earthquakes etc. Because he does not fear death.

Why doesn't an upright man need, "any armor for defense"?

Because an upright man is honorable and honest. He has full faith in God; therefore, he needs no weapons for his defense.

Why does the poet call "the earth his sober inn"?

The poet calls the earth his sober inn because he knows that his stay in this world is very short, just like a traveler who stays briefly in an inn (rest house) and then on his onward journey.

What is the main objective of an upright man?

The main objective of an upright man is to live an honest and simple life and perform a pilgrimage.

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