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GEORGE HERBERT'S POETRY: THE SOUL
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GEORGE HERBERT'S POETRY: THE SOUL IN PARAPHRASE

by

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PREFACE

In the study that follows I shall try to provide a definition of the personal and yet highly complex way in which George Herbert imagines his relationship to God, to analyze certain effects that this conception leads to in his poetry, and behind and unifying these, to measure some portion of the vast influence on the poet of the writings of St. Augustine. During the time that I have thought and written about these problems I have been greatly aided by a number of scholars whose intellectual generosity and human patience I should here like to record, though this acknowledgement cannot begin to indicate the extent of my debt and gratitude.

Professor Helaine Newstend has been a continuous source of encouragement and incentive since I began as a graduate student at the City University. The standard of excellence with which she has endowed the program of studies in English literature is one that I can only hope not to betray in the pages that follow.

To Professors John Hollander and Samuel I. Mintz, who will see in this study much that is theirs, go my thanks, not only for the helpful and creative criticism they gave to this work, but also for the readiness with which they accepted and read successive chapters, never objecting that perhaps I might have allowed them more time for their labors.

To Professor David L. Stevenson, whose seminar in Donne and Herbert marked the genesis of many of the ideas in this study, and who remained with these ideas from first to last as advisor and guide, I feel an obligation that is truly immeasurable. I shudder to think how many weekends in the last year he gave over to reading, pruning, and discussing my various formulations. What the final product would be without his intelligence, attention, and care, I cannot say, but it would be other than this, surely, and much less.

Finally, my wife, Anya, tireless champion of comprehensible prose, has been helpful in so many ways that it would be senseless to mention only a few. Her just reward is that the man who came to dinner, George Herbert, may now depart from our home.

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INTRODUCTION

When Rosemond Tuve corrected William Empson's analysis of Herbert's "Sacrifice"--largely by pointing to his ignorance of Herbert's creative use of church liturgy--she furnished a valuable lesson for all modern readers of seventeenth-century poetry, and especially of devotional poetry.¹ Simply, we cannot expect fully to understand a poem, whatever incidental illumination we may be able to shed upon it, if we treat it as a hermetically sealed object, in Miss Tuve's words, "as if it had no past."² When treating of devotional poetry in particular, a secular age seems somehow to feel that the Christian experience must be reduced to one arbitrary piece of subject matter among many, and thus made as peripheral as possible, if the universality and artistry of the poem are to go undiminished. It may be that T. S. Eliot's restoration of the metaphysical poets to the "direct current of English poetry" renders the minor disservice of blurring a very real distinction between much divine verse and a main current that is essentially secular.³

The point is, as I shall be arguing throughout this essay, that we cannot read the poetry of George Herbert, the most thoroughly devotional of the seventeenth-century devotional poets, wholly within the tradition of secular poetry, as if his poems differ from secular

lyrics only in their subject matter, because Herbert operates on assumptions that are fundamentally different from those of a secular poet like Ben Jonson or the Herrick of Hesperides. The basis of Herbert's assumptions is apparent in a single line from "The Flower," one of his best poems: "Thy word is all, if we could spell." I do not think that too much can be made of the implications of this line, addressed, of course, to God. Unlike the secular poet, who naturally identifies his muse with his own inventiveness, Herbert, whose every effort goes to spell the redeeming Word of God, sees his poetic power itself as a spelling, however imperfect, of the Word, since the Word is all. Not only does he write about God, he writes with words, imagination, and vision that are his only because God has bestowed them upon him. The Christian experience is not a mere "topic" for argument or amplification, but, for Herbert, the nexus of all that is, design and substance, form and content, achievement and being. A secular poet, like so many of Herbert's predecessors during the 1590s, decides to write a sonnet; Herbert writes a sonnet but does not regard the decision as his own. Or conversely, he does not write a poem at all: a poem is written through him, and his ability to have it written through him is an unmistakable sign of grace.

All the poems in The Temple can be viewed as Herbert's attempts to make his own words approach the Word of God. When the attempt seems successful, Herbert's tone is gentle and his manner

relaxed ("The Flower"); when it does not, the gentleness gives way to stridency, the relaxation to urgency ("The Storm"). These modulations in tone and manner (both of which are evident in "The Collar") show that Herbert's sense of divinity participates in more than the subject of his poetry.

In the pages that follow I shall be dealing specifically with three different ways in which The Temple demonstrates Herbert's total poetic and linguistic involvement in the Christian experience. Chapter I will discuss the theory of poetry implicit in Herbert's work, and will show that it is a theory of words, deriving from a sense of the inability of traditional scholastic rhetoric or the language of secular poetry to express the truth. Chapter 2 will explore the way in which verse can enable the poet to transcend the limitations of temporal mortality and enter into eternity, a movement that Herbert represents metaphorically as the subservience of the human words of poetic composition to the poem's God-given truth. This relationship is diagrammatically evident in Herbert's so-called hieroglyphics, where instantaneous and eternal meaning arises from mutable and ephemeral words. Finally, the third and last chapter, a study of Herbert's synaesthetic imagery, will show that, as God is both the Word and the Light, so can human words reflect the revealed light in which they have their origin; there is a sense in which visual and verbal transmission and perception are one. Unifying all these ideas are Herbert's general Christian experience and his specific reading of St. Augustine.

Miss Tuve has not been the only student of Herbert's theological groundings. In Poetry and Dogma Malcolm Ross offers a helpful view of Herbert's use of the eucharist, a study supplemented by William McGill.⁴ Richard Hughes writes of Herbert and the mystery of the Incarnation.⁵ Herbert is considered as a distinctively religious poet by Bernard Kneiger, and throughout his fine book, George Herbert: His Religion and Art, by Joseph Summers.⁶ Louis Martz places Herbert in the meditative tradition, and Rosalie Colie's chapter on him in Paradoxia Epidemica is perhaps closest of all to the view that will emerge in this paper.⁷ And of course there have been many brief notes on Herbert's typology and the occurrence of eucharistic symbols in individual poems. What has been neglected, however, is a sustained study of the relation of Herbert's thought to St. Augustine's, a relation that provides the intellectual context of this essay.⁸ In George Herbert's Lyrics, the most recent full-length study of the poet, Arnold Stein devotes a full chapter to Herbert's "art of plainness," but does not pay adequate attention to the background of theological ideas.⁹ I shall be arguing throughout for Herbert's imaginative use of certain Augustinian concepts; without these concepts, Herbert's poetry would not be quite what it is, and our sense of Augustine's influence should yield a fuller understanding of Herbert's accomplishment.

* * *

In A Priest to the Temple, or, The Country Parson, his humble manual of instruction for preachers, and again in his will, George Herbert acknowledges an explicit acquaintance with the writings of

St. Augustine, the fifth-century Bishop of Hippo. In Chapter 5 of *A Priest to the Temple*, "The Parsons Accessary Knowledges" (accessory to the Scriptures, which he had been discussing), Herbert notes that "The Country Parson hath read the Fathers also, and the Schoolmen, and the later Writers, or a good proportion of all, out of which he hath compiled a book, and body of Divinity, which is the storehouse of his Sermons, and which he preacheth all his Life: but diversely clothed, illustrated, and enlarged."¹⁰ That Herbert accorded Augustine a position of some prominence among the Fathers can be inferred from the only bibliophilic bequests that he makes in his will: "Then I bequeath to Mr. ~~William~~ Hays the Comment of Lucas Brugensis vpon the Scripture and his halfe yeares wages aforehand, then I bequeath to Mr. ~~Nathaniel~~ Bostocke St. Augustines workes and his halfe yeares wages aforehand...."¹¹ What else was in Herbert's personal library we do not know, but since he paid special attention to the disposition of Augustine's works, we can fairly assume that they commanded a special place in his affections.

That Augustine occupied a position of great prominence in the thought of the seventeenth century can be deduced from his influence on the sermons of John Donne. In volumes 3, 6, and 9 of the Simpson and Potter edition of the Sermons, for instance, no fewer than 226 references to Augustine have been identified, a figure that may be compared with 76 references to Jerome, 58 to Chrysostom, 50 to Tertullian, and 37 each to Ambrose and Basil, the five Latin fathers quoted most often after Augustine. On the other hand, in only five of the 160

sermons have references not been identified, and even then, as Mrs. Simpson writes, "It is possible that there may be some unidentified allusion to Augustine in one or another of these."¹²

Mrs. Simpson argues persuasively for Donne's recognition of significant biographical parallels between himself and Augustine, "a parallel between the sins and failures of his own youth and those of Augustine as narrated by the Saint himself in his Confessions,"¹³ and of course the subsequent parallel between the pious and dedicated lives in the service of God that both men led in their maturity. What I should like to suggest here is that George Herbert, too, no less than Donne, despite his apparent lack of Augustine's dissolute youth, could have seen in Augustine a model of his own spiritual ascendancy, leading him away from secular affairs. Whether he in fact saw this model or not, he was led to adopt those Augustinian ideas that will be the subject of this essay, (and perhaps because of a similar dissatisfaction with what he had been).

Both Augustine and Herbert were, as young men, professional, highly skilled orators and teachers of rhetoric, in the most formal academic sense. After leaving his native North Africa, Augustine became, years before his conversion to Christianity, first a tutor in rhetoric in Rome and then professor of rhetoric in Milan. In 1618 Herbert became the Barnaby Reader in Rhetoric at Cambridge, and in 1620 Public Orator to the University, a post he held for some seven years. (According to Harris Fletcher, incidentally, Augustine was

regarded as one of the chief models for instruction in sermons and other forms of public discourse at Cambridge during Milton's [and thus the end of Herbert's] time there.)¹⁴ As successful as both men were at the profession of rhetoric, neither would remain there; both would turn from servants of the words of men to servants of the Word of God. In 387, at the age of 32, Augustine converted to Christianity, which meant a renunciation of academic rhetoric; in 1625 or 1626, and thus at approximately the same age as Augustine at the time of his conversion, Herbert was ordained a deacon of the Church of England.

What is vitally significant, however, is not the mere fact of a mutual change of calling; all churchmen were, after all, once laymen. Augustine and Herbert moved not simply to different professions but to professions that they acknowledged as altogether antithetical to their early training; the early activities of both, judged by their later standards, were less irrelevant than repugnant. From beginning to end, the Confessions documents Augustine's sense of the opposition of pagan rhetoric to Christian revelation; much of the evidence of these feelings will be cited in the first chapter of this essay, in a slightly different connection. But it will be helpful to recognize the parallel in Herbert's life.

Izaak Walton asserts strongly that Herbert regarded his oratorship as a stepping-stone, not to a life in the church, but to a life

of courtly preferment, and that his entrance into the church (after two years, scarcely mentioned by Walton, as a Member of Parliament from Montgomery) was not occasioned directly by a more spiritual vision but by his loss of secular power attendant on the deaths in 1624 and 1625 of Lodowick, Duke of Richmond, James, Marquis of Hamilton, and finally King James himself.¹⁵ Walton is never totally reliable as a biographer; Marchette Chute, who objects generally to his desire to canonize Herbert, denies that Herbert ever had real political aspirations, citing the fact that Herbert read divinity at Cambridge and his remark in a letter of 18 March 1617 to Sir John Danvers, his stepfather, that "I am now setting foot into divinity."¹⁶ Helen White agrees, writing that "never is there any suggestion of doubt about his ultimate destination being holy orders."¹⁷ Her evidence is Herbert's reassuring Danvers, in a letter of 6 October 1619, that Cambridge will not "divert me too much from Divinity." Now, there is no denying that Herbert probably always considered the church as one of the options that lay open to him, but that he had so often to assure Danvers of his objective is suspect. It is, I think, not particularly cynical to observe that the two letters mentioned above and all his other extant letters to Danvers, except one of 19 January 1619 expressing concern for a sick sister, are requests, thinly veiled at times, for money or thanks for it. There was apparently no better way of loosening Danvers' purse strings than to mention

unbought books of theology. That Danvers needed reassurance is itself a suggestion of Herbert's doubt.

Miss Chute argues further that the divisions of temperament in Herbert's poetry reflect his fear that, for all his effort, he is unable to serve God well, but not that he considers serving someone or something else. She is undoubtedly right about such poems as "Deniall," where Herbert is pleading to a God who, it appears at first, will not hear. But if the poems be allowed as biographical evidence--and within certain limits, of psychology rather than of fact, such an allowance is justified--then "The Collar" surely shows the spiritual and secular lives tugging at each other within the poet.

In whatever directions Herbert may have been tempted, the fact remains that the poems in The Temple, with their collective realization that "Thy word is all, if we could spell," are simply incompatible with the kind of praise that the younger George Herbert had lavished on King James in his Cambridge orations. If the Parson of Bemerton remembered these orations at all, he must have done so with acute embarrassment. Miss White states fairly both the charge against Herbert and his extenuation:

The letters he wrote for the university and the orations he delivered on certain occasions of high ceremony have come in for some harsh criticism of adulation, and his general conduct of his office has exposed him to the charge of gross servility and self-seeking. It is no defense to say that Donne was guilty of much

worse, but neither should we forget, first, that the custom of the time in formal greeting and in dedication and in other species of compliment was normally florid and extravagant, and, second, that King James and other "noble" recipients of these compliments bulked very much larger in the eyes of their contemporaries than they do in ours.¹⁸

We may then be somewhat tolerant of such statements as "James is the protecting Saint vnto vs both i.e., Britain and Spain"; that ye may well conceiue, your Excellencies to bee more cleare vnto vs, in that you are of the same order and habit, of which wee all in this Kingdome glorie to be"; or "Quare, vt miraculis vestris nostra occurant, oratio nostra est silentium, atque eloquentia, stupor"

"We can only emulate your Majesty's remarkable qualities by being ourselves remarkable for the brevity of our oration; our eloquence is our dumbfoundedness", realizing that Herbert was only doing his job conscientiously.¹⁹ But it may still be questioned whether Herbert felt the same tolerance. For the Herbert of The Temple, like the converted Augustine, regarded words as counters provided by God for man that were to be moved about only in expressing the highest truths; and so their use in the traditional rhetoric that both men had practiced was an ephemeral misapplication.

In the interest of biographical tidiness one more parallel between Augustine and Herbert may be mentioned, though its value is perhaps questionable. The greatest influence on each man was his mother; as Monica was responsible for Augustine's conversion, so was

Magdalen the final impetus behind Herbert's taking orders, whatever his own predilections might have led him to do in her absence.

Though Patricius did not die until Augustine was 16, the Confessions, while it records Patricius' conversion a year before his death, indicates no strong attachment of son to father. It was Monica, a Christian from the beginning of her life, who prayed, persuaded, and cajoled, supported by a vision from God,²⁰ and who a few months before her own death finally saw her son converted.

Richard Herbert died in 1596 when his son was only three; both before and after Magdalen's marriage to Danvers in 1608, she provided a sustaining model of piety and strength for her children. Consequently, when Herbert did opt finally for divinity, he was consciously satisfying his mother's hopes. Walton so reports, and other biographers have not quibbled with him here.²¹

These biographical parallels are interesting but are immaterial to the argument that follows, which will assume only that Herbert had a fairly sound grasp of Augustine's thought, and that this thought furnishes a pertinent annotation to Herbert's poetry. I have subtitled this study "The soul in paraphrase,"²² a line from Herbert's sonnet "Prayer" (I), because it seems to me that the various problems I shall be discussing, both in Augustine and Herbert, are unified by an attempt to put into words the ineffable moment of the mortal's union with God.

⁶"The Religious Verse of George Herbert," CLAJ, 4 (1960), pp. 138-47; (Cambridge, Mass., 1954); respectively.

⁷The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, 1954) and Paradoxia Epidemica (Princeton, 1966). Miss Colie's chapter takes up one of the notions that I shall be much concerned with throughout, that of poetry as a vehicle for silence. My own view, which relies heavily on the Augustinian background, was conceived independently of Miss Colie's, and though our conclusions largely support each other, the methods and even the poems adduced as evidence differ for the most part. Therefore my references to her argument will be of only the most marginal sort.

⁸I do not mean to suggest that no previous scholar or critic has coupled the names Augustine and Herbert. Summers (op. cit., pp. 76-8) in fact says that most of Herbert's ideas exist in Augustine, and many other studies mention the influence in passing, but none pretends to consider its pervasiveness in Herbert's work.

(Baltimore, 1968).

¹⁰The Works of George Herbert, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford, 1941; corrected, 1945; reprinted, 1964), pp. 229-30. All citations to Herbert in this essay will be quoted from this edition, hereafter cited as Works.

¹¹Ibid., p. 382. Bostock, a witness to Herbert's will, later became Vicar of Heston, Middlesex.

¹²The Sermons of John Donne, ed. Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953-61), vol. 10, p. 347. The statistics on Augustine were compiled by Mrs. Simpson and Mrs. Mary Holtby.

¹³Ibid., p. 348.

¹⁴The Intellectual Development of John Milton (Urbana, 1961), vol. 2, pp. 225-7.

¹⁵Izaak Walton's Lives, Nelson Classics ed. (London, n. d.), p. 246.

¹⁶See Two Gentle Men (New York, 1959), pp. 279-82. For a view of Walton's poor handling of the facts of John Donne's life, see J. B. Leishman, The Monarch of Wit (London, 1951; reprinted, New York, 1966), pp. 29-30.

¹⁷The Metaphysical Poets (New York, 1936; reprinted, 1962, 1966), p. 149.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 149-50.

¹⁹Works, pp. 442, 444. The translation is Hutchinson's, p. 601. Cf. Ben Jonson's epigram "To King James": How, best of Kings, do'st thou a scepter beare! How, best of Poets, do'st thou laurell weare!"

²⁰See Book 3 of the Confessions.

²¹Op. cit. On Magdalen's piety see Donne's well-known "Autumnal" elegy and his sermon at her funeral, Sermons, vol. 8, pp. 61-93.

²²I had been impressed by the suitability of this phrase for the title of my essay before I came upon an article, irrelevant to my purposes, by Annabel M. Endicott, "'The Soul in Paraphrase': George Herbert's 'Librarie,'" RN, 19 (1966), pp. 14-16.

Chapter I

POETRY AND SILENCE: HERBERT'S ART OF POETRY

Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together; that at length they may emerge, full-formed and majestic, into the daylight of Life, which they are thenceforth to rule.

Sartor Resartus

i.

No part of George Herbert's inheritance from St. Augustine is more important in its implications for his poetry than the view that all reality is fundamentally divine, that experiences are disparate not in kind but in the degree of their participation in divinity. Augustine's own greatest problem in accepting orthodox Christianity, he writes in his Confessions, was his inability during several years of tortured speculation, to dismiss the Manichean idea of evil as a noumenal, substantive essence opposed to good. His conversion was made possible only by his reading in Plato and the neo-Platonists the view that evil had no material existence of its own but represented an absence of good, or a distancing from it.¹

This understanding led as much to Augustine's theory of aesthetics as it did to his theory of metaphysics. The divine was the one source of beauty as well as of goodness; or more accurately, the beautiful and the good were an indivisible one in God. Man's capacity for creating beautiful objects derived from his vision of the supreme beauty that these objects reflected. Augustine allowed and encouraged, as Plato had not, fine as well as useful arts, imitations of imitations, so long as the artist never failed to recognize the divine source of his power. To forget God's share in human accomplishment, to assert that man creates rather than images reality, instances the worst kind of pride.

Herbert implicitly accepts Augustine's view of the nature of beauty and reality, and narrows his general theory of aesthetics into a specific theory of poetry, which this chapter will examine in detail. Although the primary subject of The Temple is Herbert's relation to God, it is not odd that the secondary subject, overtly stated in more than one quarter of the poems, should be the art of poetry itself; for Herbert felt, with extreme self-consciousness, that the role of the poet was quietly and self-effacingly to mediate between his heart-felt Christian experience and his audience, to serve as a subjectively silent channel through which this experience could pass unchanged to the reader. Since this process required all the technical skill, ingenuity, and inventiveness at his command, it was urgent for Herbert

humbly to remind his reader that credit for the performance belonged not to him but to God.

Herbert saw his poetry, quite literally then, as a spelling of the Word, whose incarnation in flesh had manifested once for all the transcendent reality that the poet could now try to copy. All phenomena reflected this reality--"Thy word is all"--but the worthiest poetry would be about the reality itself, not a distant reflection. In a sense, this poetry would not be about the reality so much as it would be the reality. Consequently, Herbert chose divinity for his subject; given his premises, no poet could do otherwise.

Since the poet had his gift of language from God, he was bound to use this gift in God's service, without adding artificial embellishments that would obscure the reality being presented. Poetic praise of God not only enlightened the reader about His nature, it pleased God as well, a sign of whose pleasure, paradoxically, was the poet's very ability to write in praise of Him. In other words, poetic perfection results from God's delight with the poet and is measured by His delight with the verse. The act of writing divine poetry and the existence of the completed poetic artifact are metaphors for the one knowable reality and also for the state of grace, which, for Herbert, denoted a flowing of love from man to God and from God to man. Poetry was the human image of the Word, as human love for God was the human image for God's own love.

spring. The nature of reality, as Herbert understood it, gave all statements a typological validity. In Crashaw, on the other hand, the effect is of the poet superimposing his own imagination on reality, rather than making the two identical. And lines like

Iesu, no more, it is full tide
 From thy hands and from thy feet,
 From thy head, and from thy side,
 All thy Purple Rivers meet.
 ("On the bleeding wounds of our crucified Lord," 1-4)²

or the poem "On our crucified Lord Naked, and bloody" or any stanza from "Sainte Mary Magdalene or The Weeper" show how the method can obscure the subject.

The acknowledged discipleship of Henry Vaughan and the child-like ingenuousness of Thomas Traherne may suggest stronger elements of kinship with Herbert than exist in either Donne or Crashaw. But again, their experiences are less personal, and thus their modes of expression are less a part of the experiences. In very different ways, both Vaughan and Traherne begin by standing apart from the oneness of God, and then try to approach him from the outside. Their techniques may lead to the fulfillment of their visions, but the techniques are not themselves conceived as integral parts of the visions. The ways in which Vaughan most obviously differs from Herbert--in his immense but unorthodox and often diffuse erudition, with its reliance on such arcana as "the terrestrial, celestial, and intellectual spheres...in the threefold world of the Hermetists"³; and in the flat exposition with

which he sometimes lames his brilliantly explosive opening images (e.g., "The Passion")--bespeak a need to buttress internal vision with external support. Even Vaughan's deservedly best-known lines-- "They are all gone into the world of light!" for example, or "My Soul, there is a Countrie Far beyond the stars."--indicate the great distance at which the poet perceives divinity.

Traherne, an ordained clergyman like Herbert but unlike Vaughan, posits an ideal state of felicity outside the normal post-lapsarian world.

Of all the Play-mates which I knew
That here I do the Image view
In other Selvs; what can it mean?
But that below the purling Stream
 Som unknown Joys there be
 Laid up in Store for me;
To which I shall, when that thin Skin
Is broken, be admitted in.

("Shadows in the Water," 73-80)⁴

This world is for Traherne one of reminiscence, intimation, and promise; it is that for Herbert, too, but it is at the same time a perfected sign of grace.

The palpable sincerity and gentleness in most of Herbert's poems derive from a unique notion of intimacy with God. While this intimacy imposes itself as poetic subject, it is simultaneously the source of poetic technique. We shall now examine in detail Herbert's major comments on the nature and function of poetry, the adherence of his own poems to the theory that arises from these comments, and behind the theory, the authority of Augustine.

ii.

Four poems of Herbert's deal more directly and more exclusively with the art and the subject matter of poetry than any others, and thus provide an obvious point of departure for our investigation. The poems are the two early sonnets he sent his mother from Cambridge in 1609, included in Walton's Lives but not a part of The Temple, and the two "Jordan" poems in The Temple.

The two sonnets, straightforward and difficult to misread, may be treated fairly briefly. In a spirit of youthful intolerance and self-righteousness, Herbert investigates the abdication of poets from divine poetry. Why, he asks, do they not show the martyrs' devotion to God with words when the language and imagery of secular love poetry are so easily convertible to the service of God, and when such a conversion will turn the poems' mortality to immortality? "My God, where is that ancient heat towards thee," the first sonnet begins, "Wherewith whole showls of martyrs once did burn, Besides their other flames?"⁵ The flames of passion still rise in poetry, but no longer toward God. "Why are not sonnets made of thee? and layes upon thine Altar burnt," instead of upon the profane altar of romantic love? The love of God deserves as much praise as the love of a woman and more: cannot the Christian Dove "Out-strip...in flight" the Ovidian Cupid? Herbert's question assumes his answer: the same words that are grossest hyperbole in love poetry become plainest

statement of fact in divine poetry.⁶ Therefore, why should the poet select as subject matter for his creative fire his mistress' body, fuel "which one day Worms may chance refuse," when he has the option of choosing a God who can never be consumed?

Where the first sonnet questions, the second asserts. The grace and love of God are, as poetic subjects, inexhaustible, and the fact that even nature is a kind of continuous tribute to God-- "Each cloud distills thy praise"--should make man know better than to praise anything else. Herbert is much less disposed here than in the first sonnet to live and let live; yet he does suggest that the standard epithets of romantic love poetry are equally valid for divine poetry: "Roses and Lilies speak thee; and to make A pair of Cheeks of them is thy abuse." Not only do the roses and lilies, like the clouds, remind us of their Creator, they also symbolically represent His life on earth, as we know from "Dulnesse," a later "sacred parody of love poetry":⁷

Thy bloody death and undeserv'd, makes thee
Pure red and white,
(11-2)

where red represents Christ's blood and white his innocence.

The fire of the secular poet, Herbert concludes, is "wild" and uncontrolled, whereas the fire of the divine poet rises upward in praise of the Lord. The final opposition is not of less fitting and more fitting subject matter, or even of falsity and truth, though these

last are implicit, but of ugliness and beauty;

Open the bones, and you shall nothing find
In the best face but filth, when, Lord, in thee
The beauty lies in the discovery.

In establishing Herbert's art of poetry, it is important to remember one central implication of this poem: that the phrase "Roses and Lilies," for example, or perhaps any other image, has for Herbert the capacity for describing what is essentially ugly or essentially beautiful. The creator of The Temple cannot be held responsible for his every youthful utterance, but in one way or another, either more or less subtle, Herbert is always aware that words are only signs, and that beauty and truth, or their lack, do not inhere in them but in that object, concept, or feeling for which they stand. This is but another way of saying that among Herbert's aesthetic criteria the nature of content takes priority over the specific form. But the applications of the word "content," as we shall see shortly, go beyond mere subject matter.

The two "Jordan" poems, though they are presumably among the earlier poems composed for The Temple, since they appear in the W manuscript, where the second is called "Invention,"⁸ are the products of a more tolerant maturity than the sonnets from Walton's Lives. In the "Jordan" poems Herbert presents a brief for the kind of poetry he writes, and for the way he writes it, but he does not continue to relegate all other poetry to the realm of the ugly or transitory.

He is operating on different assumptions now, which allow a place, but not the same place, for all the words of men, secular and divine.

"Jordan" (I) is really about the disparity between these kinds of words:

Who sayes that fictions onely and false hair
 Become a verse: Is there in truth no beautie?
 Is all good structure in a winding stair?
 May no lines passe, except they do their dutie
 Not to a true, but painted chair?

Is it no verse, except enchanted groves
 And sudden arbours shadow course-spunne lines?
 Must purling streams refresh a lovers loves?
 Must all be vail'd, while he that reades, divines,
 Catching the sense at two removes?

Shepherds are honest people; let them sing:
 Riddle who list, for me, and pull for Prime:
 I envie no mans nightingale or spring;
 Nor let them punish me with losse of rime,
 Who plainly say, My God, My King.

This poem has probably elicited as much critical annotation as any other by Herbert, and since it seems to me that most of this annotation leads us away from ideas central to the poem, I should like to begin my reading by discussing a central critical premise. Specifically, I should like to assert as strongly and unequivocally as I can that, many commentators on the poem to the contrary, Herbert is not, here or anywhere else, either eschewing or pretending to eschew the wit, conceits, and other metaphysical complexities of John Donne and the rest of the so-called school of Donne, or showing any special awareness of them as complexities.

Despite the metaphysical conceits manifest in such poems as "The Collar," "The Windows," and "Church-monuments" ("Thou mayst know, That flesh is but the glass, which holds the dust That measures all our time; which also shall Be crumbled into dust."), there is a strong critical tradition that advances the "Jordan" poems as evidence that Herbert was consciously anti-metaphysical in his views of poetic style and was a devotee of Puritan plainness. I select a few fairly random but unidentical examples to illustrate this tradition. "The winding course of the Jordan River symbolizes to Herbert the intricate 'metaphysical' style,"⁹ is a typical annotation attached to the poem in anthologies. In Four Metaphysical Poems, Joan Bennett, making the inevitable unfavorable comparison with Donne, writes, "Herbert will not have pastoral affectations, neither will he have the intellectual curiosities of Donne."¹⁰ And in The Donne Tradition, a book that renders a vast disservice to the disciples of that tradition and at least a minor one to its founder, George Williamson suggests that Herbert superimposed Donne's complex manner on his native simplicity, consciously but not always gracefully and that although the "metaphysical method" was in one sense "congenial" to Herbert, it was distinctly imitative and in another sense cut very much against the grain.

Speaking specifically of the first six lines of "Jordan" (II) but generally of Herbert's cross-purposes everywhere, Williamson writes,

"Although this early adoption of the metaphysical method complicates his native talent, we may trust our general impression and his hint that it was nearer 'a plain intention' than it was to the subtlety of Donne," thus implying that Herbert somehow felt unnatural about being as "subtle" as his master.¹¹ Finally, even F. E. Hutchinson (and who should know Herbert's difficulties better than he?) can write that "In ll. 9-10 of this poem ['Jordan' (1)] and still more in the second 'Jordan,' Herbert may be expressing his attraction, for his own use at any rate, to a simpler matter of expression than the intellectual subtleties affected by Donne."¹² Lines 3-5 of "Jordan" (1) are generally used to corroborate the views of such critics.

Before trying to offer a satisfactory reading of the poem, and without begging the question of its real concerns except momentarily, I should like to suggest several reasons why Herbert tends to be misread as illustrated above. The first is the consequence of a particularly flagrant critical impressionism, the idea that Donne's metaphysical style seemed wildly excessive to the tastes of his age, and that his contemporaries, themselves often poets, read the circulated Songs and Sonnets with much bewilderment. Now it can probably not be denied that there were always those to whom metaphysical invention was a kind of excess. As Robert Lathrop Sharp observes, in an examination of the critical writings of Thomas Wilson, Puttenham, and others, continuing all the way to Davenant and Hobbes, "From the first there was

a critical element which was antithetic to the later born Donne tradition. The critics demanded qualities which generally center in plainness, naturalness, or clarity..."¹³ And we may make what we will of Ben Jonson's remark to Drummond "That Done himself, for not being understood, would perish."¹⁴ But many of Donne's admirers obviously did not share such a view.

For one thing, many of Donne's contemporaries saw him, in a special way, as the very embodiment of naturalness and simplicity. In what may still be the most trenchant appreciation of Donne, together with being one of the great elegies in the language, Thomas Carew (1594-1640; almost exactly contemporaneous with Herbert) emphasizes this naturalness:

The Muses garden with Pedantique weedes
O'erspred, was purg'd by thee...
(25-6)

Thou hast redeem'd, and open'd Us a Mine
Of rich and pregnant phansie, drawne a line
Of masculine expression...
(37-9)

With Donne's death, the Ovidian weeds will grow back:

But thou art gone, and thy strict lawes will be
Too hard for Libertines in Poetrie;
They will repeale the goodly exil'd traine
Of gods and goddesses, which in thy just reign
Was banish'd nobler Poems, now with these,
The silenc'd tales o' th' Metamorphoses
Shall stuff their lines, and swell the windy Page,
Till Verse refin'd by thee, in this last Age,
Turn ballad rime, Or those old Idolls bee
Ador'd againe, with new apostasie.
(61-70)¹⁵

Donne's contribution to verse was strength and refinement, not artificiality and concealment.

The lines from Carew are, however, additionally instructive. They remind us that there may be two conceptions of plainness since the word can have two antitheses: romantic (or Spenserian or Ovidian) ornamentation and metaphysical complexity. Though the two antitheses need not occur separately (in Chapman, for example, they are often simultaneous), they will call forth in the reader, if they are excessive, correspondingly different kinds of surfeit, one appetitive and the other intellectual. I strongly suspect that the idea of intellectual surfeit waited, by and large, for statement by Dr. Johnson, and that most of the authorities whom Sharp marshalls against the Donne tradition, particularly before there was such a tradition and again when it was at its height--that is, before Hobbes¹⁶--are writing against decorative rather than intellectual excess. It will be remembered that even Dryden objected to Donne, not for the general difficulties that he presented, but because, "affect [*ing*] the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign," he "perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love,"¹⁷ Dryden thus confused, or pretended to confuse, art and life, reading the Songs and Sonets as if they were really intended to seduce.

Sharp summarizes the views of Puttenham: "Poetry should not be the product of an extravagant imagination; it should avoid the supernatural,

the chimerical, the unreal. By limiting itself to probabilities and dealing with the material world, it would have a practical use and value."¹⁸ The criticism reads like a prophetic disagreement, not with the method of John Donne, but with that of Phineas Fletcher.

Herbert, as his poetic theory reveals, is indeed as central a figure as Donne in the "metaphysical" tradition. Much of "Jordan" (I), particularly lines 1 and 6-8, obviously is intended to contrast Herbert's poetry (in the same way that Carew contrasts that of Donne) with the loose Renaissance idea of Ovidian love poetry. Sir Herbert Grierson wrote that the poem is "A protest...against love poems, but also, I think, against the pastoral allegory of the Cambridge Spenserians,"¹⁹ very likely thinking of such verse as Fletcher's Piscatorie Eclogues (published in 1633 but written earlier), a poem by a Cambridge Spenserian that is at once pastoral and allegorical. I think it can be demonstrated that the kinds of poetry Grierson cites are the only kinds against which Herbert's poem is a "protest," the metaphysical mode not really entering into consideration, and that the nature of the "protest" is highly conditional.

First, however, there are two more reasons that help to explain the predilection for misreading, Herbert and for seeing phrases in the "Jordan" poems as proof of his anti-metaphysical intentions. The traditional if often unconscious view of Herbert, somewhat reversed but still not obliterated in the last decade or so by the incisive work of

Rosemond Tuve, Joseph Summers, and others, is of an essentially simple, comparatively child-like and unlettered (except in Scripture) mind, a man good, devout, and totally without sophistication, Chaucer's Parson compounded with the Plowman, but untouched by the learned Clerk. We know that Herbert--fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; Reader in Rhetoric; Public Orator of the University; friend of the most learned men in England, Andrewes, Greville, Donne, and particularly Bacon among them--must have been himself exceedingly learned. But in reading his poetry, critics are too often reluctant to acknowledge the fact. "Herbert's poetry," writes Joan Bennett, "despite his aristocratic birth and breeding and his considerable learning, leaves the impression of an unsophisticated mind. In certain ways the appeal of his verse is similar to the appeal of John Bunyan's prose...."²⁰

This kind of impression persists, paradoxically, in the face of the very great obstacles that present themselves to the reader trying fully to analyze one of Herbert's poems, and despite the self-evident fact that, in Rosalie Colie's words, his poems "have the distinction of being among the hardest poems in the English language to paraphrase."²¹ Herbert's intellect is not in any significant respect inferior to Donne's but unlike Donne's, it does not call attention to itself so repeatedly. Most of us come to Herbert for the first time after having been stunned by the effects of Donne, and see him as a restful interlude

before we pass on to the rigors and challenges of the true intellectual giant of the century, John Milton. But as I intend to demonstrate, we should not underestimate Herbert and assume that he has been able to return us to some golden age of protean simplicity or that his subtlety makes qualitatively different intellectual demands from Donne's. There are obviously great differences between the two poets, to be sure; Mary Ellen Rickey summarizes them well in her monograph on Herbert. "Chief among such grounds [i.e., those that will account for the differences between Donne's verse and Herbert's], surely, is Herbert's manner of subordinating to the skeleton of his overtly stated argument the very images which Donne uses for startlingly dramatic effect, with the result that many tissues of metaphor in The Temple go unnoticed."²² It is not that one poet is "metaphysical" and the other is not, that one has a "unified sensibility" and the other does not, but that each emphasizes different metaphysical qualities; if we miss this shift in emphasis, we easily risk dismissing Herbert too lightly.

The final source of resistance to Herbert as metaphysical returns us to the "Jordan" poems. It is a curious anachronism that many of the words and images in the poems are very close to the sentiments we use today for describing metaphysical complexity. Somehow, it is like "good structure in a winding stair," a suggestion that we work toward a poem's solid core of argument through a highly tortuous labyrinth. Often a poem's meaning does seem "vail'd" to us, we

catch it "at two removes," as when we puzzle over the figure of a pair of compasses, always together yet often apart, representing lovers in an analogous situation. Herbert has provided a helpful set of phrases for a discussion of metaphysical poetry, but that does not necessarily mean that he uses these phrases in such a discussion himself.

The implications of Herbert's logic in lines 4-5 of "Jordan" (I) furnish a clue that will unify the whole poem's attitude toward the relation of secular and divine poetry:

May no lines passe, except they do their dutie
Not to a true, but painted chair?

The unmistakable source, directly or indirectly, of Herbert's figure is Book 10 of the Republic, where Plato condemns art as the imitation of what is itself only an imitation, thus serving to remove the perceiver from reality rather than helping him to approach it.²³ Miss Tuve has suggested, very tentatively, that "the neo-Platonic character of Herbert's ideas of Heavenly Love may justify us in relating this i.e., the figure in lines 4-5⁷ to Plato's discussion of the artist's mere 'imitation' of the true in a painted table or bed, etc., in Republic 10,"²⁴ but she does not pursue the fact that an imitation of an imitation still bears a resemblance, however faint, to the original idea and not to something else.

Herbert's thought, here, is reducible to a fairly simple equation:

divine poetry is to secular love poetry as a true chair is to a painted chair. Therefore, in the original Platonic terms, secular love poetry is somehow an imitation of divine poetry, or the subject of secular love poetry is somehow an imitation of God, and not an entity of a different order entirely. Herbert would surely have felt that the objects of adoration in the Petrarchan tradition were a temptation to idolatry, but on a broader view he could see that they, too, bespoke divinity.

The equation points in the direction of another highly influential Platonic dialogue, the Symposium, in which the character of a single beautiful form is seen implicitly as an imitation of absolute beauty, and in which the apprehension of the single beautiful form begins a progression, spiraling upwards, toward the apprehension of absolute beauty. This Platonic conception of love and beauty, it need hardly be said, is one of the great commonplaces of Renaissance thought. It is thus unnecessary to argue that Herbert's ideas spring directly from the Symposium, which he could well have read in Greek at Cambridge or elsewhere; he could have had many sources²⁵ for his knowledge of Platonic love, but among them, surely, is Augustine's account in Book 10 of the Confessions. His unsystematic reiteration of Plato, and Plato himself, will help us see exactly what Herbert is doing in "Jordan" (I).

The Symposium moves from an explanation of the stages through

which one moves to apprehend absolute beauty to an emphasis on the superiority of absolute beauty to any imitative form. Initially, a man should be instructed "to love one [beautiful] form only--out of that he should create fair thoughts" (Socrates is repeating to Phaedrus the words of the lady Diotima); in the Renaissance the one beautiful form was invariably taken to be a lover's mistress. Next, the lover will recognize that "the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another," and then, his passionate love of the single form diminishing, he "will become a lover of all beautiful form." Fourth, he will understand that the beauty of the mind, which has been able to perceive all these correspondences, "is more honorable than the beauty of the outward form." This sense of the intemalness of beauty, without (or abstracted from) form, leads finally to the knowledge of "the essence of beauty," to the "contemplation of beauty absolute."²⁶

When he has achieved the contemplation of absolute beauty, the man can see how pale and imitative were the outward forms. "But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty," Socrates concludes, "the divine beauty, I mean, pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollution of mortality and all the colors and vanities of human life--thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality),

and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may."²⁷

Augustine, too, believes that no man would choose to contemplate an imitation when real beauty can be his; and he criticizes those who wish to forget the ultimate source of their own creation:

By every kind of art and skill of their hands men make innumerable things--clothes, shoes, pottery, and other useful objects, besides pictures and various works which are the fruit of their imagination. They make them on a far more lavish scale than is required to satisfy their own modest needs or to express their devotion, and all these things are additional temptations to the eye, made by men who love the worldly things they make themselves but forget their own Maker and destroy what he made in them. But, O my God, my Glory, for these things too I offer you a hymn of thanksgiving. I make a sacrifice of praise to him who sanctifies me, for the beauty which flows through men's minds into their skilful hands comes from that Beauty which is above their soul and for which my soul sighs all day and night. And it is from this same supreme Beauty that men who make things of beauty and love it in its outward forms derive the principle by which they judge it: but they do not accept the same principle to guide them in the use they make of it. Yet it is there, and they do not see it. If only they could see it, they would not depart from it. They would preserve their strength for you, not squander it on luxuries that make them weary.²⁸

The grace of God has made the sight of beauty possible.

Bearing Plato and Augustine in mind, we can see that those lines in "Jordan" (I) that are not directly challenging the diction and conventions of secular love poetry are emphasizing the inferiority of this

poetry--inferiority, not utter absence of value, because all beauty being one, even love poetry is imitative of the divine, though remotely. In other words, "Jordan" (I) works in two ways: on the one hand, with such phrases as "sudden arbors" and "purling streams," it suggests the materials of love poetry; on the other, it argues the inferior quality of these materials, and of the effects they produce.

Incidentally, the lines "Is it no verse except enchanted groves
And sudden arbours shadow coarse-spun lines?" are highly illuminating of the intricate effects that Herbert's poetry so often provides. On the one hand, he is asking if one must use such words as "enchanted groves" and "sudden arbours," which put the truth in figurative shadows, to make poetry appealing. On the other, he is directing us to the literal fact that groves and arbors in poetry and in life so often conceal human love-making, and conceal the light from the lovers. (See the episodes of Priscilla and Aladine and of Serena and Calpene in The Faerie Queene, 6, 2.3).

When Herbert asks, "Is there *in* truth no beautie?" he is recognizing the capacity of the Christian, through grace, "to bring forth," in Plato's words, "not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality)."²⁹ There is also an implicit pun: "Is the substance of truth not beautiful itself?" and "Is there really no beauty?"--romantic love poetry reveals none. And so how foolish, we are to infer, for man to toy with images when

realities are at hand. Why should his strength be squandered on luxuries?

It is tempting to read in the poems' next rhetorical question-- "Is all good structure in a winding stair?"--the direct influence of Castiglione, though it is not necessary to insist upon it. Where Plato refers to the lover as "ascending" by "steps" to his view of absolute beauty, Bembo, in Hoby's translation of the Book of the Courtier, refers again and again to the whole progression as a stair, and states explicitly that all the intermediate steps, though directed toward perfection, are themselves imperfect:

This stayre of love, though it be very noble and such as few arive at, yet it is not in this sorte to be called perfect, forsomuch as where the imagination is of force to make conveyance, and hath no knowledge, but through these beginnings that y^e senses helped her withall, she is not cleane purged from grosse darknesse: and therefore though she do consider that universall beautie in sunder and in it self alone, yet doth she not well and clearly discern it, nor without some doubtfulnessse, by reason of the agreement that the fancies have with the bodie.³⁰

As Miss Tuve has said, Herbert is voicing, "not a protest against love poetry but against its usurpation of the whole field and very title of poetry"³¹; in line 3, specifically, the protest is directed against the kind of poetic theory that holds the Platonic stair, with its sensual early steps, more worthy of poetic representation than the ultimate apprehension itself. Herbert is insisting that being is more important

than becoming. Castiglione, also, sees that the recognition of absolute beauty tends to render unimportant the process by which this recognition has been attained: "Let us climbe up the staires," he writes, "which at the lowermost steppe have the shadow of sensuall beautie, to the high mansion place where the heavenly, amiable and right beautie dwelleth, which lyeth hidden in the innermost secretes of God, lest unhalowed eyes should come to the sight of it: and there shall wee finde a most happie end for our desires...."³²

Herbert has not denied the capacity of the Platonic stair to lead to the divine vision, but since grace may allow man a direct vision, there is no reason for all poetry to be about the early questings. It is perhaps significant that Herbert sees more of the divine in secular love than any contemporary writing in the Ovidian tradition would have admitted (Marlowe in Hero and Leander, for instance); to the Ovidians "love was bodily passion unhampered by reason--where both deliberated, the love was slight. True love, in their view, was the irrational and satisfying experience of mere lust."³³

If the foregoing argument is tenable, it should be evident that lines 9-10 of "Jordan" (I),

Must all be vail'd, while he that reades, divines,
Catching the sense at two removes?

have nothing whatever to do with a carping against "metaphysical" wit. Herbert's word "sense" does not refer to the "meaning," "content," or "argument" of "Jordan," (i.e., to that element of a

poem that today we often try to divorce by paraphrase from "form," or "structure"). It is, rather, the true chair that Herbert refers to, the divine beauty at the top of the winding stair, which can be apprehended in its own essence as well as from a removal several steps below. When sense is "vail'd," it is not clothed in "intellectual subtleties"--Hutchinson's words--but is approached by indirection, through an imitated thing instead of being seen in its own splendor.

Herbert's mature view of Petrarchan (or perhaps Ovidian) love poetry as a distant reflection of the divine (a view, of course that he may have adopted to gain a wider acceptance for his own poetry) explains why he can afford, in the final stanza of "Jordan" (I), a tolerance not shown in the poems from Walton's Lives. All poetry that says anything about God, at whatever remove, is of some use, and all poetry does say something about God. "Shepherds are honest people"; whether they know it or not, the singers of Spenserian pastoral allegories and secular love lyrics are, finally, praising the same subject as Herbert himself, and for this praise, shadowy though it be, they should not be condemned. But neither should he be condemned and punished with "losse of rime," denied the stature and title of poet, for approaching that subject as he wishes and plainly saying, "My God, My King." The argument the poem has followed until now gives "plain saying" the force of direct, non-allegorical representation, the idea of saying "God," instead of "my mistress" or some other beautiful outward form, when one means "God." The poem contrasts possible

objects of poetic imitation; it is not really concerned with choosing among styles for setting forth these imitations, though the style will naturally follow the subject.

The subject of "Jordan" (I) is the concept that God rather than an imitation of God may be presented in a poem; the subject of "Jordan" (II) is an argument for the kind of method appropriate to such a poetic presentation. Herbert moves from what to how; in the modern sense he indeed moves from content to form, though as we shall see, by form he suggests, more than style. Rosemary Freeman has written that the two poems are "obviously companion pieces, the one being concerned with the external aspects of poetic composition, the other with the internal creative process by which a poem comes to be written."³⁴ I should say, rather, that both are concerned with how the poet externalizes certain features of a poem the central concept of which has been conceived or grasped internally. "Jordan" (II):

When first my lines of heav'nly joyes made mention,
Such was their lustre, they did so excell,
That I sought out quaint words, and trim invention;
My thoughts began to burnish, sprout, and swell,
Curling with metaphors a plain intention,
Decking the sense, as if it were to sell.

Thousands of notions in my brain did runne,
Off'ring their service, if I were not sped:
I often blotted what I had begunne;
This was not quick enough, and that was dead.
Nothing could seem too rich to clothe the sunne,
Much lesse those joyes which trample on his head.

As flames do work and winde, when they ascend,
So did I weave my self into the sense.
But while I bustled, I might heare a friend

Whisper, How wide is all this long pretence!
There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd:
Copie out onely that, and save expense.

Herbert is not at all interested, here, in justifying his divine subject matter, with insisting on the fact that it is more "real" than the subject of secular love poetry. His problem, rather, is to determine and then to use the kind of expression that is proper for speaking of the divine. He seems to solve this problem by rejecting the ornate for the plain, but in fact neither the problem nor the solution is quite so simple.

The problem in "Jordan" (II) is not simple because the poet's vision of God overwhelms him. Initially, at least, the truth and the love of God do not present themselves plainly to the poet. If the syntax of the first stanza is to make sense, the pronouns in line 2--"Such was their lustre, they did so excell"--must refer to the antecedent "heav'nly joyes," not to "my lines." The lustre and excellence of the "heav'nly joyes" are so great that the poet feels, quite naturally, that no amount of verbal extravagance can be sufficient to them, let alone overstate them. Thus, since "Nothing could seem too rich to clothe the sunne"--the play on "son" is obvious--the poet proceeded very deliberately to employ all the pyrotechnics at his command.

Several points, which may or may not be apparent, should be made about the first two stanzas of "Jordan" (II). In the first place, the words, "a plain intention" refer, not to the poet's vision of God, or

God's manifestation to the poet, which we already know to be lustrous rather than plain, but to his simple, straightforward desire to speak, or write, of God. That is, "plain" describes what the poet wants to do, not what he has to work with. It is not in apposition with "sense" in the next line, which carries the same force as in line 10 of "Jordan" (I), discussed above. We may infer, therefore, that there is something self-defeating about the poet's initial method of praise and therefore about his objective.

Second, Herbert is not castigating himself for being too "meta-physical," though Hutchinson thinks that the poem furnishes even more evidence than "Jordan" (I) of Herbert's rejection of Donnean paradox. The kind of writing described in the first two stanzas is not overly subtle or intellectual. We do not have any of Herbert's poems that exemplify the faults he is discussing (if, indeed, there ever were any), but to find these faults in abundance we need go no further than Herbert's younger contemporary Richard Crashaw, whose work Herbert never knew. Herbert's words correspond perfectly to those moments of devotional rapture, all too frequent for comfort in Crashaw's religious verse, when his details, not his arguments become excessively developed, those moments when, in A. Alvarez's fine figure, "he is like a painter working in two styles at once: the dominant structural design is a large impressionist sketch, but the details are picked out with the minute perverse ingenuity of Hieronimus Bosch."³⁵ Herbert

surely realized, whether or not he ever wrote Crashavian verse, the dangers of ornamental multiplicity that lurked in wait for the poet overwhelmed by the radiance of God's image, a multiplicity in which the grand design would become utterly lost.

There is no real reason to read the words "Curling with metaphors" in line 5 as "complicating with metaphysical conceits," though there seems a tendency to do just that. The metaphorical mechanism did not seem so obscure in the Renaissance. In The Art of Rhetorique (1560), Thomas Wilson writes, "A Metaphore is an alteration of a worde, from the proper and naturall meaning, to that which is not proper, and yet agreeth thereunto by some likenesse, that appeareth to be in it. An Oration is wonderfully enriched, when apte Metaphores are got, and applied to the matter."³⁶ For Wilson, the metaphor's likeness is readily perceived, and such other rhetoricians as Abraham Fraunce agree. Herbert is objecting that metaphors may disguise by description, by their mere presence, but not by complexity. And we should read the phrase "Decking the sense" in the following line in the same way. The O. E. D. defines "deck" as "to cover or clothe with what beautifies; to array, attire, adorn." Nowhere does it mean "to complicate."

The last point that should be made here is that Hutchinson's note to "invention" (1.3)--originally, in W, the title of the poem--is perilously misleading. Hutchinson writes of the word, "Almost

a technical term in rhetoric: e.g. Obadiah Walker, Oratory (1659), p. 1: 'The Parts of Oratory are Invention, taking care for the Matter; and Elocution, for the Words and Style.'"³⁷ The reason this note is misleading is that, whereas Herbert seems to mean by "invention" something stylistic, Walker seems to mean content. I think it can be argued, however, that "taking care for the Matter" differs from the matter itself, or from the choice of the matter. Again Thomas Wilson is helpful; he writes, "The finding out of apt matter, called otherwise Inuention, is a searching out of things true, or things likely, the which may reasonable set forth a matter, and make it appeare probable."³⁸ Therefore, "invention," though it is not the same as diction or style (neither for Walker nor for Wilson), pertains somehow to the setting forth of matter in a reasonable and probable way, and therefore it is not the same as "content" in the modern sense, either. Since it had originally been Herbert's title, we may fairly assume that "invention" represents more than simply another thing he had been doing wrong.

The words "invention" and "intention" are linked in the poem by more than rhyme; both have in common a concern with the method whereby the poet can properly set forth God. Both, further, recognize that one sign of the wrong method, though not the wrong method itself, is an overabundance of artifice and decoration. The wrong method arises from the poet's competing in splendid language with the

natural splendors of God, and this is a mistaking of the poet's function, here signalled by style, but not identical with it. The first two stanzas are as much concerned with cause as with effect; it is the poet's "thoughts" and the "notions in my brain" that, acting as unnecessary intermediary, have produced the rich clothing that burnishes God, and interferes with the perceiver's apprehension of His own glory. Stanza 3 summarizes the interference most succinctly: "So did I weave myself into the sense."

Miss Tuve writes of the "Jordan" poems that Herbert "here criticizes...his own intellectual pride, in his earlier writing."³⁹ But it is the martyr's intolerance of any views but his own, not the intellectual's pride, that is in evidence in the sonnets from Walton's Lives; and besides, as quibbles with romantic diction these early poems have much in common stylistically with such later poems as "Dulnesse." In fact, as "Jordan" (I) defines the object to be imitated, so "Jordan" (II), through a process of authorial self-effacement, refines the process of imitation so that the object, absolute beauty, God, may appear as itself, and be apprehended by the reader in the same way that the poet himself apprehended it. The feelings occasioned by the reading of a poem should be a kind of direct "imitation" of God, rather than an "imitation" of the poet's feelings on perceiving God. Thus, the poet and his artifact do not become just more steps on the Platonic stair.

The poet should be mirror, not lamp. But this does not mean that God will then be seen plainly and not lustrously. If God's image exists in the poet's heart, it is this image, in its pure state, that the poet should present. In "The Parson preaching" in A Priest to the Temple, Herbert writes of the necessity of "dipping, and seasoning all our words and sentences in our hearts, before they come into our mouths, truly affecting, and cordially expressing all that we say; so that the auditors may plainly perceive that every word is hart-deep."⁴⁰

There is, of course, a very elementary paradox in all this, and consequently a sense in which "Jordan" (II) must remain merely rhetorical. The poet's words are first and always the poet's words. Nevertheless, we shall see that many significant implications arise from this emphasis on personal silence, on an intention not to use his own words to express the Word.

Before leaving these poems a word should be said about the title "Jordan," a perennial problem in Herbert criticism. Grosart was the first to suggest that the river Jordan stands to the divine poet in the same relation as the Helicon to the secular poet, and though Hutchinson demurs,⁴¹ this still seems to me the most likely explanation of why the title appealed to Herbert initially. Rosemary Freeman writes, "The muse to whom any serious poet of the Renaissance must appeal lives by the springs of Helicon; but Herbert has placed his by the river Jordan."⁴² There are a number of places where Herbert shows an explicit awareness of just this dichotomy. When he says, in "Jordan" (I), "I envie no

mans nightingale or spring," he is clearly contrasting the inspirational source of secular poetry with the source of his own, hence the Helicon with the Jordan. Also, in a letter quoted by Walton that Herbert sent his mother from Cambridge along with the two early sonnets, he writes,

But I fear the heat of my late Ague hath
dried up those springs, by which Scholars
say, the Muses use to take up their habi-
tations. However, I need not their help
to reprove the vanity of those many Love-
poems, that are daily writ and consecrated
to Venus; nor to bewail that so few are
writ, that look towards God and Heaven.
For my own part...my poor abilities in
Poetry shall be all and ever consecrated
to Gods glory,⁴³

again implying that he has found other, more inviting, springs to take his habitation by.

The title is thus another kind of "sacred parody," which sums up the body of contrasts contained in the poems. Having chosen it for this reason, Herbert would no doubt have seen it as apt for just the reasons that Miss Tuve advances: "It is quite clear that Jordan, Christian symbol of redemptive purification and of entrance into union with Christ as Heavenly Love incarnate, was Herbert's own symbol for this complex of ideas, and that he thought of poetry as both the means and the fruit of such a union."⁴⁴ The "Jordan" may appear cosmetically inferior to the Helicon, but it is curatively perfect, whereas the Helicon is not curative at all. Thus, divine poetry itself redeems.

In addition, Herbert is probably drawing on the seventeenth-century tradition of representing eloquence by a clear, smoothly flowing stream. Robert Burton compares his style to a river that "runs, sometimes precipitate and swift, then dull and slow; now direct, then winding; now deep, then shallow; now muddy, then clear,"⁴⁵ etc., and in Cooper's Hill (1665), Denham writes,

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream
 My great example, as it is my theme!
 Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,
 Strong without rage, without ore-flowing full.⁴⁶
 (189-92)

But for Herbert the stream of real eloquence is not Denham's Thames or everyone's Helicon but the paradoxically muddied Jordan. The style, like the matter, is not ornament but truth.

iii.

From a discussion of the two early sonnets and of the "Jordan" poems several distinct and yet interrelated parts of Herbert's poetic credo can be summarized (though they will have still to be tested, later in this chapter, against the rest of The Temple). First, the elegance and authority of words are dependent on, or conditioned by, the things they represent. The more directly words confront or represent truth, the more beautiful they become, beauty being a function of context. Next, whereas truth is not the exclusive property of divine poetry, only divine poetry is a direct expression, an immediate

imitation, of truth; the truth of secular poetry is more distant and oblique. Third, elaborate ornamentation is unnecessary in poetry since it can only interfere with the apprehension of truth and the splendors of God. This is not, however, the same thing as an insistence on simplicity or Puritan plainness. "There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd": the sweetness should be natural and divine, not a coating supplied by the poet, who maintains a kind of subjective silence. In this way alone may human words imitate the words or Word of God. Finally, and somewhat inferentially (though it is quite explicit in Plato and Castiglione, and elsewhere in Herbert in "The Foreunners" and "A true Hymne"), divine poetry, like prayer--the identification is significant--can lead to the poet's immortality, giving us a "sacred parody" of the eternizing sonnets of the 1590s. Allowing God to work through him, the poet, like the good Christian generally, but in the manner of the preacher specifically, can himself work toward God.

These points have been related above to the writings of Plato and the neo-Platonist Augustine on beauty. There is, however, much more in two works of Augustine's, the Confessions (397-8) and On Christian Doctrine (396-427) than a definition of beauty that Herbert would have found congenial to his own theory of poetry.

In the Confessions Augustine traces his development from a pagan teacher of rhetoric, who found only eloquence and outward forms

significant, to a devout Christian, who realized that real beauty of form can exist only where there is truth of content. He describes the interest with which he first listened, in Milan, to the preaching of St. Ambrose:

So while I paid the closest attention to the words he used, I was quite uninterested in the subject-matter and was even contemptuous of it. I was delighted with his charming delivery, but although he was a more learned speaker than Faustus [a Manichean whom Augustine had listened to earlier], he had not the same soothing and gratifying manner.⁴⁷

His verdict is all for Faustus; it is only later, he continues, that he came to realize that while "Faustus had lost his ways among the fallacies of Manicheism...Ambrose most surely taught the doctrine of salvation."⁴⁸ This realization will reverse the relative worth assigned to each discourse. Augustine will see that discourse can "cover sins with smooth names."⁴⁹

One of Augustine's great formative experiences came on the day he learned from his friend Simplicianus of the public profession of Christian conversion by an earlier teacher of rhetoric, Victorinus. To make such a profession in public was incredibly daring, and still, reasons Augustine, "There was no salvation in the rhetoric which he taught, and yet he professed it in public. If he was not afraid of uttering his own words before a crowd of madmen, why should he be frightened to name your Word before the meek flock?"⁵⁰ This

observation has two implications. On the one hand, man can be the medium for the Word of God, which he can deliver free of human artifice. On the other, the truth of this Word, plainly delivered, will have as captivating an effect on the audience to whom it is addressed as any false subject clothed in all the decoration that rhetoric can furnish. As we shall see in On Christian Doctrine, Augustine feels that ideally the preacher should mold his style to the composition of his audience, but he is quite clear that the right matter, left to itself, can also move. He would have agreed with Herbert that "There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd."

"Under the emperor Julian"--Augustine continues to relate what Simplicianus had told him--"a law had been passed to prohibit Christians from teaching literature and rhetoric. Victorinus had obeyed the law, preferring to give up his own school of words rather than desert your Word, by which you make the lips of infants vocal with praise."⁵¹ Augustine here recognizes an opposition of human silence, through which the Word can be heard, and pagan rhetoric, which obscures the Word, thus establishing the theological metaphor of the preacher's "silence," which Herbert would translate into a poetic metaphor. Earlier in the Confessions, Augustine had been astonished by Ambrose's reading in silence, an uncommon practice in the Middle Ages. In "St. Augustine's Rhetoric of Silence" Joseph Mazzeo describes the importance of Augustine's conclusion: "St. Augustine

had finally learned the meaning of silence and that St. Ambrose's 'good reason' for silence was nothing else than listening to the instructions of the inner teacher.... For St. Augustine all dialectic, true rhetoric, and thought itself were but attempts to reascend to that silence from which the world fell in the perpetual clamor of life as fallen men know it."⁵² Silence, then, is the proper end of all words, and in their silence God will be heard.

Listening to the instruction of his inner teacher is incompatible for Augustine with the practice of rhetoric or the continued dissemination of its rules. "Beautiful" speech has nothing to do with truth; in a Platonic sense it is not necessarily "beautiful" at all:

But in your wonderful secret way, my God you had already taught me that a statement is not necessarily true because it is wrapped in fine language [the phrase recalls Herbert] or false because it is awkwardly expressed. I believe that it was you who taught me this, because it is the truth, and there is no other teacher of the truth besides yourself, no matter how or where it comes to light. You had already taught me this lesson and the converse truth, that an assertion is not necessarily true because it is badly expressed or false because it is finely spoken.⁵³

The rhetoric of silence is an essential consequence of Augustine's recognition that God is the only teacher of truth. His freedom from rhetoric (in the Confessions the word implies falsity; in On Christian Doctrine, however, there is a true rhetoric in the service

of God) is now complete: "The day came when my release from the profession of rhetoric was to become a reality, just as, in my mind, I was free from it already. The deed was done, and you rescued my tongue, as you had already rescued my heart."⁵⁴

It should be observed that there is a sense in which the emancipated Augustine is, or could be, as much a product of St. Paul's teachings as of his own inner vision. Paul's epistles are filled with just the kind of strictures against false or prideful rhetoric that Augustine struggles to obey. In the first epistle to the Corinthians, for example, Paul writes, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1. 17);⁵⁵ the Word is to be transmitted but not transformed. In II Corinthians Paul elaborates his position: "Doe ye looke on things after the outward appearance? if any man trust to himself that he is Christs, let him of himselfe thinke this againe, that as he is Christs, even so are we Christs....For his letters [i.e., the words of Christ, which men may pass on], say they, are waighty and powerfull, but his [i.e., man's, not Christ's] bodily presence is weake, and his speach contemptible" (10.7,10); and "But though I be rude in speach, yet not in knowledge; but we have been throughly made manifest among you in all things" (11.6). Most students of Paul would think his professed rudeness of speech an overmodest judgment,⁵⁶ but of his convictions on the wickedness of the false

use of rhetoric there can be no doubt: "For such are false Apostles, of Christ. And no marveile, for Sathan himself is transformed into an Angel of light" (11.13-14). Man is to manifest the inner message that Christ has revealed, but to this message he must add nothing of himself.

Biblical exegesis and Christian rhetoric are the subjects of Augustine's On Christian Doctrine. An early De Arte Rhetorica, once ascribed to Augustine, is now generally considered spurious, and it may well be significant that the one-time pagan rhetorician left us nothing in which words are considered apart from matter. Although the first three books of On Christian Doctrine, in the words of Sister Thérèse Sullivan, an astute commentator on the work, "deal with the understanding of the proper meaning of the Scriptures, and make up . . . historically the first general treatise of exegesis," and only the fourth explains "how the Scriptures should be unfolded,"⁵⁷ there is throughout much that is pertinent to Herbert's poetic theory and imagination. Herbert's idea, expressed in the sonnets from Walton's Lives and elsewhere, that the validity or truth of any word derives from its context rests, ultimately, on Augustine's distinction between signs and things. "All doctrine concerns either things or signs," writes Augustine, "but things are learned by signs.... For no one uses words except for the purpose of signifying something. From this may be understood what we call 'signs'; they are things used to signify something."⁵⁸

But words are not themselves what is signified; they only correspond to it, more or less accurately. The linguistic importance of Augustine's distinction, as Mazzeo shows, lies in the fact that "The nature and uses of signs become strictly related to the realities to be sought (discovery) and to their formulation (statement), so that the use of the arts of language is utterly dependent on the structure of reality, a relationship with which no classical rhetorician other than Plato [particularly in the Phaedrus] had been concerned."⁵⁹

The whole philosophical basis of Herbert's "sacred parodies" springs from just this dichotomy between reality and its expression. A word may be misused, but it cannot be held responsible for such misuse; the same word may be switched to another context (e.g., "red" and "white" from a mistress' complexion to Christ's blood and purity) and all is set right. And so with other rhetorical rules than those governing diction.

In the second book of On Christian Doctrine Augustine writes, "There are, moreover, certain precepts for a more copious discourse which make up what are called the rules of eloquence, and these are very true, even though they may be used to make falsehoods persuasive. Since they can be used in connection with true principles, as well as with false, they are not themselves culpable, but the perversity of ill using them is culpable."⁶⁰ An obvious corollary of the observation that words may be used well or ill is the principle

that the truth of any utterance will be relative to the degree of truth represented by the subject of the utterance; thus, in the argument of the "Jordan" poems, the words of secular poetry are allowed a kind of truth, but those of divine poetry are truer still.

Augustine, like Herbert, ponders the nature of the act of praising God: what does the speaker do? what can he contribute to the revelation of God's glory? All praise of God is firmly rooted in the paradox that God is ineffable, whereas we know experientially that praise of Him can be voiced--but He is not the less ineffable for that. "This contradiction is to be passed over in silence"--a telling emphasis at this point--"rather than resolved verbally. For God, although nothing worthy may be spoken of Him, has accepted the tribute of the human voice and wished us to take joy in praising Him with our words. In this way he is called Deus. Although He is not recognized in the noise of these two syllables, all those who know the Latin language, when this sound reaches their ears, are moved to think of a certain most excellent immortal nature."⁶¹ The sign "Deus" is not God (any more than "God" is God), but, as a sign, it is proper to God in that it precipitates thoughts about Him. This notion of the propriety of religious language is important, for not only does it provide a check to blasphemy, it hints at a solution to Augustine's and Herbert's paradox of speaking of God in silence. The right words to use in praising the divine are neither plain nor ornate, except

accidentally, but are those from which the observer may infer an essential and meaningful correspondence.

Augustine says as much when he recognizes that human speech operates on the same principle as the incarnation of the Word made flesh among men:

In order [he writes] that what we are thinking may reach the mind of the listener through the fleshly ears, that which we have in mind is expressed in words and is called speech. But our thought is not transformed into sounds; it remains entire in itself and assumes the form of words by means of which it may reach the ears without suffering any deterioration in itself. In the same way the Word of God was made flesh without change that He might dwell among us.⁶²

It would be implicitly false, then--another kind of deterioration--for speech to go beyond the thought that it is transmitting.

The analogy of the Word of God made flesh for human words about God should remind us of a number of poems early in The Temple in which the new dispensation of Christ is seen as giving authority to the poet's words. "The Altar" is an altar of words, reflecting the Word, that has superseded altars of stone. In "Sepulchre" Herbert writes,

And as of old the Law by heav'nly art
Was writ in stone; so thou, which also art
The letter of the word, find'st no fit heart
To hold thee.
(17-20)

and he concludes "Nature,"

derives from revelation; rhetoric is not something separate, to be learned without reference to divine truth."⁶⁴ Truth, then, may be uttered either plainly or eloquently; but if it is uttered eloquently, that eloquence must be understood as a formal perfection that arises wholly from the truth it surrounds, not as a stylistic superimposition. When form and content so coincide, the form can be no other than it is.

What the speaker or writer should wish to do is present the truth revealed to him to his audience, as nearly as possible in the same form that he has grasped it himself. "In books...and in conversations," writes Augustine, "the duty should not be neglected of bringing the truth which we have perceived, no matter how difficult it may be to comprehend or how much labor may be involved, to the understanding of others, provided that the listener or disputant wishes to learn and has the capacity to do so no matter how the material is presented. The speaker should not consider the eloquence of his teaching but the clarity of it."⁶⁵ Clarity, again, seems a function of this same kind of subjective non-interference that Augustine has been concerned with before.

For Augustine, as for such Renaissance Aristotelians as Cinthio, Minturno, and Scaliger,⁶⁶ the ultimate purpose of words was teaching by delight, but delight, for Augustine, would always follow the apprehension of what was true. "The matter itself is pleasing when

it is true," he writes.⁶⁷ "In his speech itself [the teacher] should prefer to please more with the things said than with the words used to speak them; nor should he think that anything may be said better than that which is said truthfully; nor should the teacher serve the words, but the words the teacher."⁶⁸ He goes on to quote St. Paul's words, 1 Corinthians 1.17, cited above. The end of discourse is truth, and since truth is independent of discourse, discourse ought not give the appearance of determining what it only conveys.

The same dictum emerges virtually unamended from Herbert's "Jordan" poems and also, as we shall see, from a large number of other lyrics in The Temple. Form, or eloquence, is an organic ally of the truth; it is not to be suppressed in the interest of a presumptively "plain" style, but neither is it an element that the poet simply decides to add to make the truth more than itself. In his study of metaphysical poetry Robert Ellrodt reaches an untenable but nevertheless instructive conclusion apropos of Herbert's poetic theory. He writes:

Lorsque le choix s'impose entre la jouissance poétique et la pureté du sentiment religieux, c'est évidemment la première qu'il faut sacrifier. Mais il n'est pas souhaitable que ce divorce s'accomplisse ("Beauty and beauteous words should go together") et si l'art n'ajoute rien à la vérité même qu'il exprime, du moins est-il susceptible d'en "embellir" l'expression.⁶⁹

[When the choice lies between poetic delight and purity of religious feeling, it is clear

radiance with the poet's devices. Quite simply, there is a long tradition in which "art," "artifice," and the like are bad words-- in which art of any kind is not merely unnecessary and unnatural but is closely allied with sin; in this tradition, art does not decorate so much as it lies. This view recurs frequently in The Temple.

C. S. Lewis's qualitative distinction between the Bower of Bliss and the Garden of Adonis in The Faerie Queene, both so wondrous at first sight, has become a commonplace of Spenser criticism.⁷⁰ For all the apparent similarities of the two places, the Bower of Bliss, with its "painted flowres" and spread over all "of purest gold... A trayle of yvie in his native hew: For the rich metall was so coloured, That wight, who did not well avis'd it vew, Would surely deeme it to bee yvie trew,"⁷¹ is a pastoral fraud, a grotto whose decorative splendors are as unnatural, offensive, and cheap as the voyeuristic and narcissistic acts of "love" practiced there, and that is why Guyon must destroy it and the deluded reader's transitory enchantment along with it.

The same damaging view of art informs much of Paradise Lost, particularly the ninth book. Of the many illustrations we are given of ways in which Eve's comprehension of the nature and purpose of Eden falls short of Adam's, none, ultimately, is more fatal than her insistence that the cultivation of their garden demands that she and Adam work apart. Since their being apart allows her transgression,

the implication is clearly that any attempt to impose "art" on what God has created forms a condition for sin, if it be not sin itself. Furthermore, when Satan--"the artificer of fraud," Milton calls him--does tempt Eve, he does so with all the art of pagan sophistic, an art pointedly played off against the truth of God. Milton's Eve provides a case study for what Augustine found treacherous about the pursuit of rhetoric as an end in itself.

Again and again, Herbert reiterates the point that art is a tool of sin, and man must struggle not to be misled by it. (Herbert surely knew St. Paul's words on Satan's transformation into "an angel of light.") The sacrament of communion is an arming of the Christian against sin's pervasive art:

But by the way of nourishment and strength
 Thou creep'st into my breast;
 Making thy way my rest,
 And thy small quantities my length;
 Which spread their forces into every part,
 Meeting sinnes force and art.
 ("The H. Communion," 7-12)

For Herbert, man's natural condition is a participation in divine grace and love; to lure him from this condition, therefore, sin must tempt with artifice and duplicity:

Sinne is still hammering my heart
 Unto a hardnesse, void of love:
 Let suppling grace, to crosse his art,
 Drop from above.
 ("Grace," 17-20)

Another poem suggests, metaphorically, that sin, the artisan, changes-- makes less appealing--the physical appearance of the church itself:

Hither sometimes Sinne steals, and stains
The marbles neat and curious veins...
("The Church-floore," 13-4)

(It is interesting to observe that Herbert is able to give the word "stains" both purely descriptive and pejorative connotations in a single context; compare Pope's famous syllepsis, "Or stain her honour, or her new brocade.")

Sin and Satan triumph, if at all, because they have misrepresented the nature of truth to man, as Satan misrepresented it to Eve:

But now thou dost thy self immure and close
In some one corner of a feeble heart:
Where yet both Sinne and Satan, thy old foes,
Do pinch and straiten thee, and use much art
To gain thy thirds and little part.
("Decay," 11-15)

By using all its art, sin may capture the only part of the mortal that still retains some spark of divinity.

Herbert's terminology for disparaging art as a weapon of sin is easily adaptable to a criticism of human rhetoric. According to "Constancie,"¹⁰⁰ a Character in verse but otherwise typical of the Overburyian tradition, the honest man is as much concerned with forthrightness of discourse as with the other characteristics of the via media: he is a man

Whom none can work or woove
To use in any thing a trick or sleight;

For above all things he abhorres deceit:
 His words and works and fashion too
 All of a piece, and all are cleare and straight.
 (16-20)

All words that are not "cleare and straight" are tainted with deceit;
 traditional rhetoric is essentially dishonest.

When Herbert uses the word "art," he does not always invest it with connotations of sinfulness and hypocrisy as in the passage above; sometimes "art" signifies a condition equatable with the truest praise that can be poured out to God. Significantly, however, this favorable use of the word shows, not that Herbert was careless or inconsistent about his diction, but that he distinguished between art that was true and good, which was a gift of God to whom it could be returned as praise, and art that was false and wicked, which sinful man would use only to claim his own priority. Thus, the word "art" reinforces all that we have suggested above about Herbert's conception of the proper method for presenting and praising God, by letting Him reveal Himself through His creature.

"Praise" (II) is a poem about itself; Herbert praises God while discussing his ability to do so. The beginning is instructive:

King of Glorie, King of Peace,
 I will love thee:
 And that love may never cease,
 I will move thee.

Thou hast granted my request,
 Thou hast heard me:
 Thou didst note my working breast,
 Thou hast spar'd me.

Wherefore with my utmost art
 I will sing thee,
 And the cream of all my heart
 I will bring thee.
 (1-12)

In stanza 1 Herbert acknowledges implicitly that his love for God is not innate but is a sign of grace, a gift from God, which God can presumably withdraw at will. So that God will not withdraw it, he must convert it to His praise. The second stanza shows that God has accepted Herbert's praise, and that His acceptance is yet another sign of love, which is then reversible to the poet's love of Him, producing more praise and so on. Consequently, "my utmost art" in stanza 3, at once the subject and method of the whole poem, is a manifestation of the poet's love for God, which is itself a manifestation of God's love for him. God is the one true artist, and so long as a mortal's art reflects God's, and does not pretend selfish subjectivity, it is all for the good.

Presumably Herbert would not use the word "utmost" to describe anything except a property of God. Defining "utmost" as "of the greatest or highest degree," the O.E.D. cites Satan's first speech in Paradise Lost, where he tells the other fallen angels how he God's "utmost power with adverse power oppos'd In dubious Battel on the Plains of Heaven" (I, 103-4). Like power, art of the highest degree is God's alone.

"A true Hymne" demonstrates yet more clearly the dependence of true art on the grace and favor of God.

My joy, my life, my crown!
 My heart was meaning all the day,
 Somewhat it fain would say:
 And still it runneth mutt'ring up and down
 With onely this, My joy, my life, my crown.

Yet slight not these few words:
 If truly said, they may take part
 Among the best in art.
 The finenesse which a hymne or psalme affords,
 Is, when the soul unto the lines accords.

He who craves all the minde,
 And all the soul, and strength, and time,
 If the words onely ryme,
 Justly complains, that somewhat is behinde
 To make his verse, or write a hymne in kinde.

Whereas if th' heart be moved,
 Although the verse be somewhat scant,
 God doth supplie the want.
 As when th' heart sayes (sighing to be approved)
O, could I love! and stops: God writeth, Loved.

As simply as it is stated, Herbert's point here is utterly invaluable for an understanding of his ideas on the relation of the divine poet to God. If the poet's love for God be genuine, the poetry praising this love will take care of itself. Art consists in truth and in sincerity, not in technique or rhetorical flourishes. The would-be poet in stanza 3, who is concerned only with technique, will always find something lacking in his verse; he will not produce words that "may take part Among the best in art." But the poet who directs the attention of his heart to God can trust God to take care of the technique; as in "Jordan" (II),

the poet is well advised to eschew notions of personal ornamentation if he wishes to produce true rather than false art. If the poet wishes only to love God, he will, and he will be loved in return--a gift that will give his verse the necessary rhyme.

v.

The purpose of this chapter has been to show with as much clarity and refinement as possible what Herbert's ideas about poetry were-- what poetry is, what it does, why one kind is truer than another. It has not been my intention to provide an annotation for each and every usage by Herbert in The Temple of a word drawn from or relatable to the terminology of poetic theory. As varied as they are to a degree, his ideas about poetry are limitless in neither number nor complexity, and so not every reference of his to poetry or writing adds something new to the composite theory. Nevertheless, the early sonnets from Walton's Lives and the two "Jordan" poems are by no means sufficient as an expression of his total credo, though what they say is always compatible with what we find elsewhere, and so a number of further points may be made.

In the first place Herbert feels that the gift of poetry, like the gift of language in general, comes from God, and that its bestowal on man obliges him to use it in the service of God. This reciprocity is a kind of metaphor for the redeeming bond of grace, in which sentience

moves continuously in both directions between God and man. God's gifts to man are signs of His favor; not to use these gifts in His service amounts almost to sacrilege. The beginning of "The Temper" (I) shows that the poet's praise of God is commensurate with his sense of God's presence:

How should I praise thee, Lord! how should my rymes
 Gladly engrave thy love in steel,
 If what my soul doth feel sometimes,
 My soul might ever feel!
 (1-4)

His praise, hence his poetry, is conditioned by his capacity for apprehending God; when sin tempts him away from God, the power of poetry, since it is always God's, deserts him. We find a comparable statement at the beginning of "Praise" (I):

To write a verse or two is all the praise,
 That I can raise:
 Mend my estate in any wayes,
 Thou shalt have more.
 (1-4)

If his estate can be mended, if he can become with God's help a more sincere servant of God, his ability to praise Him will increase.

"Deniall" shows God actually giving Herbert the power to praise Him. The many complexities of this poem will be examined in some detail at the end of the next chapter, but it should be mentioned here that the first five quintains of the poem, during which time the poet feels himself separated from God are technically incomplete since the fifth line of each rhymes with no other. Only when God has heard

him in the last stanza is he able to write that God's favors

...and my minde may chime,
 And mend my ryme.
 (29-30)

The rhyme is completed: God's favor is transformed into Herbert's totally rhyming poetry.

In "Submission" Herbert asks God for more worldly power and position; since he is dedicated to God, he reasons that the larger his position in the world, the larger will be the effects of his dedication. But then he realizes that, in fact, greater power might draw him from God--"Perhaps great places and thy praise Do not so well agree"--and that his vision of God is enough, particularly if God will give him the power to write of this vision.

Wherefore unto my gift I stand:
 I will no more advise:
 Onely do thou lend me a hand,
 Since thou hast both mine eyes.
 (17-20)

The power to write, like any other power, comes from God.

The recognition that poetry comes from God entails a responsibility of using it for God. In the first four stanzas of "Providence" Herbert shows that man must do what nature cannot:

O Sacred Providence, who from end to end
 Strongly and sweetly movest, shall I write,
 And not of thee, through whom my fingers bend
 To hold my quill? shall they not do thee right?

Of all the creatures both in sea and land
 Onely to Man thou hast made known thy wayes,
 And put the penne alone into his hand,
 And made him Secretarie of thy praise.

Beasts fain would sing; birds dittie to their notes;
 Trees would be tuning on their native lute
 To thy renown: but all their hands and throats
 Are brought to Man, while they are lame and mute.

Man is the worlds high Priest: he doth present
 The sacrifice for all; while they below
 Unto the service mutter an assent,
 Such as springs use that fall, and windes that blow.
 (1-20)

God's design is implicit in all the operations of nature--the falling of a spring, the blowing of the wind; man's duty is to use the gift of language, which is uniquely his, to assert Providence in the way that natural creatures use their lesser gifts. That the poet should write religious lyrics is less a matter of his individual choice than it is, inevitably, a part of God's own plan to manifest Himself. God is not hidden from the world.

In "Obedience" Herbert signs a "speciall Deed" with God, a formal contract insuring that his every word will be one of divine praise, that he will not try to thwart God's naturally working through him.

O let thy sacred will
 All thy delight in me fulfill!
 Let me not think an action mine own way,
 But as thy love shall sway,
 Resigning up the rudder to thy skill.
 (16-20)

By letting God write through him, Herbert allows the reader to enter into a similar contract.

He that will passe his land,
 As I have mine, may set his hand
 And heart unto this Deed, when he hath read;
 And make the purchase spread
 To both our goods, if he to it will stand.
 (36-40)

If poetry is God's will rather than the poet's arbitrary discourse, it is possible for it to stand in the same relation to the reader as to the poet himself--the theoretical goal of all poetic experience, but here given a theological basis.

The same obligation to dedicate poetry to the praise of God arises in part from the very awe that God inspires, from the feeling that it would be absurd, given knowledge of God's transcendence, to use verse for any other purpose. "Let the wonder of his pitie Be my dittie," Herbert declares at the end of "The Banquet"; how trivial any other subject must be by comparison.

This notion of the world's essential triviality (it is always a sign of God, but a lesser one than scriptural revelation), in the light of man's knowledge, probably underlies most of Herbert's parodies of the language of Ovidian and Petrarchan verse. These parodies occasionally suggest a lyric adaptation of the de contemptu mundi tradition of such documents in Renaissance Christian skepticism as Davies' Nosce Teipsum and Donne's Second Anniversarie: Of the Progresse of the Soule, a tradition that Herbert, to whom God's handiwork was everywhere evident, could not have taken too seriously. But he uses

it. "Vanitie" (II), for example, argues through a tightly syllogistic structure against the assigning of much worth to the things of this world. The poem begins on an anti-Petrarchan note:

Poore silly soul, whose hope and head lies low;
Whose flat delights on earth do creep and grow;
To whom the starres shine not so fair, as eyes;
Nor solid work, as false embroyderies...

(1-4)

The poem then begins its syllogism. If man's nature is in fact of the earth, then his attention should be directed to the things of the earth: "If souls be made of earthly mold, Let them love gold" (11-12). But, the minor premise implies, they are not so made: "If born on high, Let them unto their kindred flie" (13-14). He concludes by stating what should now be obvious:

Then silly soul take heed; for earthly joy
Is but a bubble, and makes thee a boy.

(17-18)

Herbert's logic cannot be faulted, as reluctant as he would normally have been to accept its implications.

"Frailtie" and "Dulnesse" also make rhetoric emblematic of the vanity of human strivings. In the first of these Herbert compares the worldly and the divine kingdoms and finds the former transitory and wanting.

But when I view abroad both Regiment's;
The worlds, and thine:
Thine with simpleness, and sad events;
The other fine,
Full of glorie and gay weeds,
Brave language, braver deeds:
That which was dust before, doth quickly rise,
And prick mine eyes.

(9-16)

As elsewhere, the divine Word is best heard through human silence.

"Dulnesse" mounts an even more frontal attack on Petrarchan or Ovidian elegance:

The wanton lover in a curious strain
 Can praise his fairest fair;
 And with quaint metaphors her curled hair
 Curl o're again.

Thou art my lovelinesse, my life, my light,
 Beautie alone to me:
 Thy bloody death and undeserv'd, makes thee
 Pure red and white.

(5-12)

All perfections, all beauty, can be understood, Platonically, as emanations of the divine; it is folly to pretend that they have a noumenal existence elsewhere.

We have seen that poetry was, for Herbert, a gift from God, which the poet was obligated to return as praise of God. An axiomatic corollary of this attitude is the idea that the praise pleases God, and the very fact of his pleasure, as we saw in "A true Hymne," makes of the praise poetry. In a number of other places as well, Herbert shows explicitly this dual act of creation. The final lines of "An Offering" demonstrate the transformation of human words into redeeming beauty:

 Yet thy favour
 May give savour
 To this poore oblation;
 And it raise
 To be thy praise,
 And be my salvation.

(37-42)

In "The Forerunners" Herbert makes God's pleasure the sole aesthetic

criterion for judging his work: "And if I please him, I write fine and wittie" (12).

"Grief" and "The Flower," though they are separated in The Temple by "The Crosse," are complementary pieces. In "Grief" Herbert writes that his sorrow, presumably occasioned by a sense of God's absence (in the previous poem, "The Search," he is looking for God), has rendered him incapable of writing poetry: "Verses, ye are too fine a thing, too wise For my rough sorrows" (13-14). This incapacity becomes reflected in the poem's rhyme scheme; the first 16 lines rhyme ababcdcd, etc.; lines 17 and 18 form a couplet; and the nineteenth and last line rhymes with nothing. Ironically, however, this last line--"Alas, my God!"--is a quintessentially poetic recognition, and one of mortal silence, which points toward the redemption, two poems later, of the poet's verse and spirit; the utterance of the word "God!" precipitates anew the achievement of completed art. Consequently, in "The Flower" Herbert can hardly believe his former state:

And now in age I bud again,
 After so many deaths I live and write;
 I once more smell the dew and rain,
 And relish versing: O my onely light,
 It cannot be
 That I am he
 On whom thy tempests fell all night.
 (36-42)

The end of God's glad acceptance of the poet's praises is their union in heavenly love. Though the poet has not quite attained to

It cannot vault, or dance, or play;
 It never was in France or Spain;
 Nor can it entertain the day
 With my great stable or demain;

It is no office, art, or news,
 Nor the Exchange, or busie Hall;
 But it is that which while I use
 I am with thee, and most take all.

Poetry--and Herbert is writing specifically of his own divine verse (be it noticed that the Catholic muse of France or Spain provides no inspiration)--is the one phenomenon that allows the mortal to be near God and enjoy a kind of fundamental experience that various superficial appurtenances cannot approach. J. Middleton Murray writes of the final line, "The titles to esteem which verse is not are first detailed; then it is declared that verse nevertheless is the quiddity of them all, in the very real sense that Herbert in his poetry comes nearest to God and most partakes of the creative power that sustains all these excellences."⁷² Possibly, except that not all the details in the poem would very likely have been regarded by Herbert as excellences. Rather, he is providing a catalogue of more ("a lute") and less ("France or Spain") true imitations of divinity, and saying that verse, by virtue of being the truest imitation of them all, assumes an ascendancy over them. Verse is not the quiddity of all the details in the poem but--praise be to God!--of the religious experience.

vi.

Herbert regarded poetry as a major instrument whereby man may communicate with and about God; the use of this instrument for other purposes is ill-advised, occasionally verging on the idolatrous, though not necessarily sinful; and, properly, divine poetry will efface itself as the message of a mortal and allow the reader to share with the poet one apprehension of God's radiance, which is not quite the same thing as saying that divine poetry should be written in a "plain" style. In addition to the poems we have examined so far, there are in The Temple certain clusters of poems that are not about writing poetry, but that do employ, as central metaphors or images at least two figures that are elsewhere closely allied with Herbert's thoughts on the poetic process. In other words, certain non-poetic subjects are invested with values inherent in Herbert's literary criticism, infusing The Temple with a certain unity of idea.

Three poems--"Sion," "The British Church," and "Dotage"--contrast various kinds of deceptive elegance of worship with truth in the way that the "Jordan" poems contrast the ornamentation of romantic love poetry with true imitation. In "Sion" Herbert shows the typological progression from the house that Solomon built for the Lord (2 Samuel 7.13) to the New Testament recognition that this house is internal, signalled by Paul's admonition, "Know ye not that ye are

the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3.16). It is noteworthy that Solomon's temple, for all its extravagant beauty--"Where most things were of purest gold; The wood was all embellished With flowers and carvings, mysticall and rare: All show'd the builders crav'd the seeers care" (3-6)-- never really sufficed, perhaps because the architects were showing themselves in it rather than God (the kind of pride Herbert denounces for his verse):

Yet all this glorie, all this pomp and state
Did not affect thee much, was not thy aim...
(7-8)

Better than the temple of Solomon is any simple and sincere utterance of man. "All Solomons sea of brasse and world of stone Is not so deare to thee as one good grone" (17-8). For the mortal groan, like the mortal poem (we infer), contains the divine presence and works its way to its source.

And truly brasse and stones are heavie things,
Tombes for the dead, not temples fit for thee:
 But grones are quick, and full of wings,
 And all thir motions upward be;
And ever as they mount, like larks they sing;
The note is sad, yet musick for a King.
(19-24)

Herbert is not speaking of poetry, possibly not thinking of it, and yet everything he says here is applicable to his poetic theory.

The truth and perfection of the British Church, in the poem of that title, lie in its avoidance of the extremes on either side of it. On

one side is Rome,

She on the hills, which wantonly
 Allureth all in hope to be
 By her preferr'd,
 Hath kiss'd so long her painted shrines,
 That ev'n her face by kissing shines,
 For her reward,
 (13-8)

whose splendors are subjective and idolatrous. On the other is
 Calvin's Geneva,

She in the valley is so shie
 Of dressing, that her hair doth lie
 About her eares:
 While she avoids her neighbours pride,
 She wholly goes on th' other side,
 And nothing wears,
 (19-24)

whose spareness fails to do God justice. But in the middle is the
 British Church, which manifests radiance but an admittedly borrowed
 radiance: "Beautie in thee takes up her place" (4); this church alone
 reflects its creator.

"Dotage" is a more commonplace comparison of earthly pleasure
 and sorrow with the true delights of heaven. What is interesting here
 is that the pursuit, not only of pleasure with its concomitant "caske
 of happiness" and "gilded emptiness," but as well of "earnest sorrows,
 rooted miseries" is condemned. Neither is a just representation of the
 essence of immortal life. The poem concludes,

But oh the folly of distracted men,
 Who grieves in earnest, joyes in jest pursue;
 Preferring, like brute beasts, a lothsome den
 Before a court, ev'n that above so cleare,
 Where are no sorrows, but delights more true
 Then miseries are here.
 (13-8)

The griefs and the joys are equally "a lothsome den," which none with a vision of the clear delights above--a vision revelation has made available--would choose. Herbert is answering at once advocates of Rome and Geneva, the ornate and the plain styles in poetry.

The other figure that I wish to examine involves the values implicit in Herbert's consistent use of the single word "grove." It will be recalled that one of the images in "Jordan" (I) for the romantic love lyric is that of "enchanted groves," a term of reproach that conveys the capacity of artifice for deluding, for covering rather than revealing the immortal truth. The reader becomes misdirected in a grove of rhetoric, losing his sight of the divine in the archetypal wood of error, in the same way that lovers in a grove literally lose sight of the light. Herbert uses this idea of the grove not only for the error of words but for the kind of temptation that seeks everywhere to lure the Christian from his contemplation of God. In "H. Baptisme" (I) the grove is an analogue for mortal sins:

As he that sees a dark and shadie grove,
 Stayes not, but looks beyond it on the skie;
 So when I view my sinnes, mine eyes remove
 More backward still, and to that water flie,
 Which is above the heav'ns, whose spring and vent
 Is in my dear Redeemers side.

Recalling the immortalizing power of his infant baptism, the Christian is able to see his sins in their proper perspective, to see that they have already been redeemed; in the same way, a man may always look for and at the light beyond a "shadie grove."

Faith, in Herbert's poem of that name, is the lightlike power that directs man out of the darkened groves of deception.

When creatures had no reall light
 Inherent in them, thou didst make the sunne
 Impute a lustre, and allow them bright;
 And in this shew, what Christ hath done.

That which before was darkened clean
 With bushie groves, pricking the lookers eie,
 Vanisht away, when Faith did change the scene:
 And then appear'd a glorious skie.

(33-40)

Christ's presence served to lead man from these groves.

The nature of the grove is more ambiguous in "Evensong" than in the poems above, for there Herbert sees a kind of pantheistic goodness in all material reality; nevertheless, the first, third, fifth, and seventh terms in the series below seem to be played off against the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth--obvious metaphors for God's love as against veiled ones.

I muse, which shows more love,
 The day or night: that is the gale, this th' harbour;
 That is the walk, this th' arbour;
 Or that the garden, this the grove.
 My God, thou art all love.
 Not one poore minute scrapes thy breast,
 But brings a favour from above;
 And in this love, more than in bed, I rest.
 (25-32)

"Arbour," we remember, occurs with the same unfavorable connotations in "Jordan" (I) that "grove" does; the even-numbered images in the lines above suffer from the same sort of imitative remoteness as their

rhetorical counterparts in the "Jordan" poems; they still reflect God's presence but not in the most desired way.

The first three stanzas of "The Pearl. Matth. 13.45" catalogue the ways of learning, honor, and pleasure, each of which is insufficient to prevent Herbert's repeating to God, "Yet I love thee." The fourth and final stanza begins with a conscious choice of the good that is reminiscent of Milton's famous preference, in Areopagitica, for the teaching of Spenser over that of Duns Scotus and Aquinas:

I know all these, and have them in my hand:
Therefore not sealed, but with open eyes
I flie to thee, and fully understand
Both the main sale, and the commodities...
(31-4)

The stanza continues:

And at what rate and price I have thy love;
With all the circumstances that may move:
Yet through these labyrinths, not my groveling wit,
But thy silk twist let down from heav'n to me,
Did both conduct and teach me, how by it
To climbe to thee.
(35-40)

Herbert credits God's sustaining revelation of Himself rather than his own mortal intelligence with giving him the power to remain aloof from mundane temptations. What I wish to suggest, however, is that in the "groveling wit" of line 37 Herbert is consciously punning on the same sense of "grove" that intrigues him elsewhere, and that such a denigration of his wit reflects the same effacement of subjectivity that we found in the poems on rhetoric.

There are two reasons, admittedly conjectural and inconclusive, for arguing for Herbert's consciousness of the relation of "groveling" to "grove." The first is the presence earlier in the line of the word "labyrinth" and the recognition that it was its labyrinthine quality that determined the choice of "grove" in all the poems discussed above, that a grove or a labyrinth bewilders the traveller (or, in "Jordan," the reader) and obscures from him the divine truth. Second, Herbert, often shows a playful interest in the homographic, homophonic, or quasi-homophonic resemblances of words, most frequently in puns on sun-Son⁷³ and in "Grace," line 11, on grass-grace. Since his attitude towards its obscurant effects seems so often to condition his choice of "grove," it is unlikely that he would not have noticed similar properties in "groveling" and been pleased by the correspondence. Man's wit, if it will not admit of divine guidance, obscures in the same way that man's words can, if they do not offer a direct imitation of God.

In his Devotions (1623) John Donne writes, "We attribute but one privilege and advantage to man's body above other moving creatures, that he is not, as others, grovelling, but of an erect, of an upright, form naturally built and disposed to the contemplation of heaven."⁷⁴ It is man's stature, significantly described by the observation that he is not "grovelling," that separates him from the other animals and allows him to emerge from himself and contemplate the divine.

We see, then, how Herbert's various critical precepts provide a basis, not only for writing poems, but for determining those postures of man that will allow him apprehension of God. Or, conversely, we see that Herbert's poetic credo is not artificial, nor even a simplistic acknowledgment of Platonic and Augustinian authority, but is an organic part of the relation of man to God through grace, under which all phenomena, rhetorical and otherwise, are subsumed.

NOTES

¹See the Confessions, Bks. 5 and 7.

²Quoted from The Poems of Richard Crashaw, ed. L. C. Martin (Oxford, 1927).

³Elizabeth Holmes, Henry Vaughan and the Hermetic Philosophy (Oxford, 1932), p. 38.

⁴Quoted from Thomas Traherne, Centuries, Poems, and Thanksgiving, ed. H. M. Margoliouth (Oxford, 1958).

⁵Apart from minor changes of punctuation Hutchinson does not emend Walton's version of the sonnets as they appear in the Nelson Classics edition of Izaak Walton's Lives.

⁶See Summers, op.cit., p. 105. Summers also writes (p. 104) that "The audience for the prayer or the meditative lyric may be compared with that of the Elizabethan love poem, addressed to a mistress but circulated in manuscript or published by the poet." The comparison is accurate in part, but I suspect that while God was always the primary audience for the prayer or devotional lyric, the mistress' reaction to the love lyric was usually less important to the poet than that of the audience through whom it was circulated.

⁷The title of an article on Herbert by Rosemond Tuve, S Ren, 8 (1961), 249-90.

⁸There are two mss. of The Temple, neither in Herbert's hand: MS. Jones B 62 in Dr. Williams' Library, Gordan Square, London, or W, incomplete and often with obviously earlier versions of the poems that it does include; and the later, more complete, MS. Tanner 307 in the Bodleian, or B. See Works, pp. 1-1vi, for a fuller description.

⁹English Poetry of the XVII Century, ed. Roberta Florence Brinkley (New York, 1942), p. 256.

¹⁰2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1957), p. 59.

¹¹(Cambridge, Mass., 1930; reissued New York, 1958), pp. 99-100.

¹²Works, p. 495

¹³From Donne to Dryden: The Revolt against Metaphysical Poetry, (Chapel Hill, 1940), p. 66.

¹⁴Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden, ed. R. F. Patterson (London, 1923), p. 18.

¹⁵"An Elegie upon the death of the Deane of Pauls, Dr. Iohn Donne" in The Poems of Thomas Carew, ed. Rhodes Dunlap (Oxford, 1949).

¹⁶See Sharp, op. cit., p. 136.

¹⁷A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire in Essays of John Dryden, ed. W. P. Ker (Oxford, 1927), vol. II, p. 19.

¹⁸Op. cit., p. 72.

¹⁹Quoted by Hutchinson, Works, p. 495.

²⁰Op. cit., p. 63.

²¹Op. cit., p. 190.

²²Op. cit., pp. 153-4.

²³See The Republic of Plato, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (New York, 1957), pp. 321-33.

²⁴Op. cit., p. 187 n.

²⁵E.g., Bembo's disquisition on love in Book 4 of Castiglione's Book of the Courtier (available since 1561 in Sir Thomas Hoby's English translation); Bembo's own Gli Asolani; Spenser's Fowre Hymnes; and John Donne. See Josephine Waters Bennett, "The Theme of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes," SP, 28 (1931), pp. 18-57. See also Clay Hunt's analysis of Donne's Elegy 19: "To His Mistress Going to Bed" in Donne's Poetry: Essays in Literary Analysis (New Haven, 1954), pp. 16-31.

²⁶The Symposium, trans. Benjamin Jowett, Library of Liberal Arts ed. (New York, 1956), pp. 51-2.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 52-3.

²⁸Confessions, trans. R. S. Pine - Coffin (Baltimore, 1966), 10, 34, pp. 240-1. This passage is partially quoted, in a different connection, by Summers, op. cit., p. 77.

²⁹ On the compatibility of Christianity and the Platonic vision see Sears Jayne, "The Subject of Milton's Ludlow Mask," PMLA, 74 (1959), pp. 533-43, reprinted with revisions in Milton: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Arthur E. Barker (New York, 1965) pp. 88-111: "The seventeenth-century reader distinguished Platonism from the other formal philosophies, such as Stoicism, Cynicism, and Aristotelianism, by two distinctive characteristics: first, it was more mythological than the others, and second it was more Christian." (p. 91)

³⁰ Baldassare Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby, 2nd ed., 1588, reprinted with int. by W. H. D. Rouse (London and New York, 1959), p. 318.

³¹ Op. cit., p. 187.

³² Op. cit., pp. 320-1.

³³ Clay Hunt, op. cit., p. 19.

³⁴ "Parody as a Literary Form: George Herbert and Wilfred Owen," EIC, 13 (1963), p. 310.

³⁵ The School of Donne (New York, 1967), p. 77.

³⁶ In English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance, ed. O. B. Hardison, Jr. (New York 1963), p. 43.

³⁷ Works, p. 513.

³⁸ Op. cit., p. 33.

³⁹ Op. cit., p. 190.

⁴⁰ Works, p. 233.

⁴¹ Grosart is cited by Hutchinson, Works, p. 495. Hutchinson objects merely that "Fuller remarked of Sternhold and Hopkins that their 'piety was better than their poetry: and they had drank more of Jordan than of Helicon," a flimsy argument, I think, for rejecting Grosart's contention.

⁴² Op. cit., p. 310.

⁴³ Works, p. 363.

⁴⁴ Op. cit., p. 197.

⁴⁵ The Anatomy of Melancholy, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (New York, 1941), p. 25.

⁴⁶ Quoted from The Poetical Works of John Denham, ed. T. H. Banks, Jr. (New Haven, 1928).

⁴⁷ Op. cit., 5, 13, p. 107.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 5, 10, p. 103. Quoted from Psalms 141.4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8, 2, p. 161.

⁵¹ Ibid., 8, 4, p. 164. Wisdom 10.21 quoted in italics.

⁵² In Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Studies (New York, 1964), pp. 22-3. On silence in the Middle Ages generally, Mazzeo writes, "It was only in the late Empire that silent reading began to come into existence, and it seems to have remained an exceptional practice throughout the Middle Ages. There is abundant evidence that medieval scriptoria were noisy places filled with the sounds of the copyists reciting their texts." (19-20)

⁵³ Confessions, 5, 6, p. 97. The reason that this passage precedes the lessons learned from Victorinus is that throughout the book Augustine is contrasting his present knowledge with his former ignorance.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 9, 4, p. 185.

⁵⁵ The biblical text cited throughout this study is the so-called "Great He Bible" issue of the King James version of 1611, collated with the Oxford reprint of 1833 (London, 1903; reprinted, New York, 1967 [AMS Press, Inc.]).

⁵⁶ See, e.g., G. Wilson Knight in The Christian Renaissance (New York, 1962), p. 141. Paul "is not aiming primarily at poetic power. He has a resplendent gift of phrase, but he does not set out to write poetry."

⁵⁷ S. Avreli Avgvstini Hipponiensis Episcopi de Doctrina Christiana, Liber Quartus; A Commentary, with a Revised Text, Introduction, and Translation. (Washington, D. C., 1930), p. 5; on De Arte Rhetorica, p. iii.

⁵⁸ On Christian Doctrine, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (Indianapolis and New York, 1958), 1, 2, 2, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁹Op. cit., p. 3.

⁶⁰Op. cit., 2, 36, 54, p. 71.

⁶¹Ibid., 1, 6, 6, pp. 10-11.

⁶²Ibid., 1, 13, 12, p. 14.

⁶³Ibid., 4, 5, 7, p. 121.

⁶⁴(New York, 1959), p. 9.

⁶⁵On Christian Doctrine, 4, 9, 23, p. 133.

⁶⁶See Leah Jonas, The Divine Science: The Aesthetic of Some Representative Seventeenth-Century English Poets (New York, 1940), pp. 5-6. Also, Joel E. Spingarn, Literary Criticism in the Renaissance (New York, 1899; 2nd ed., 1908, reprinted, 1963), pp. 16-37.

⁶⁷On Christian Doctrine, 4, 12, 28, p. 137.

⁶⁸Ibid., 4, 28, 61, p. 165.

⁶⁹L'Inspiration Personelle et l'Esprit du Temps Chez Les Poètes Metaphysiques Anglais (Paris, 1960), vol. 3, p. 121 n.

⁷⁰The Allegory of Love (New York, 1936; reprinted, 1958), pp. 324-6.

⁷¹Cited from The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser, ed. R. E. Neil Dodge (Cambridge, Mass., n.d.), 2.12.58, 61.

⁷²Quoted by Hutchinson, Works, p. 500.

⁷³See Chapter 3, below.

⁷⁴(Ann Arbor, 1959), Third Meditation, p. 17.

Chapter 2

POETRY AND TIME: HERBERT'S IMAGE OF ETERNITY

God's own eternity is the hand which leadeth Angels in the course of their perpetuity; their perpetuity the hand that draweth out celestial motion, the line of which motion and the thread of time are spun together. Now as nature bringeth forth time with motion, so we by motion have learned how to divide time, and by the smaller parts of time both to measure the greater and to know how long all things else endure. For time considered in itself is but the flux of that very instant wherein the motion of the heaven began....

Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity

i.

Herbert's idea, examined in the last chapter, that divine poetry is the human image of the all-encompassing Word of God is indeed a flattering view of his own craft. It is at the same time an implicit declaration of the potential awesomeness of all human language, and yet an insistence that the words of poetry are not just a typical application of language. Herbert, however, was too conscious of his own limitations and also too generous, in spite of his family, education, and creative talents, to feel that the true apprehension

of God was reserved for the poet alone, or that effective praise of God--effective in that it reached and pleased Him--had necessarily to be in any way poetic. It is unmistakably clear from a reading of Herbert's poetry that he had no belief in the elect, still less an inclination to number only divine poets among it.

Nevertheless, it is equally clear on the evidence of what Herbert wrote in The Temple, from "A true Hymne" and from the many other poems in which God assists man in the creation of verse, that he regarded the poem as something special, as the "Quidditie." It was not just another form of pleasing speech. If a poem did what all language was ideally capable of doing, it did so in a special way, which would then enlarge the achievement of what in fact had been done. Since it was not necessary to write a poem to praise God sufficiently, it may be supposed that a poem had qualities in excess of those demanded for sufficient praise.

For Herbert, as this chapter will try to demonstrate, a poem in the service of God was the visible point at which the eternal, heavenly province of God and the transitory, earthly province of man merged. It reflected the partnership of man and God in its creation. Like grace and in a sense like dualistic man himself, a divine poem was a bond between heaven and earth, always both, never ceasing to be either. In this respect, a poem was not like the ordinary words of man, which, whatever their strength for effecting individual salvation, would

die as soon as they were uttered. Ordinary speech is a private medium; poetry is a private medium and also a public monument. It passes, and yet it endures. Behind this conception of poetry stands not only the commonplace dichotomy of man into body and soul, but as well the vast implications of Augustine's distinction between time and eternity.¹

And behind Augustine, as is so often the case, stands Plato. In the Timaeus, a dialogue concerned with the origins of the cosmos and the human soul, Plato maintains that the difference between the universe and its creator is the difference between that which has come into being, and is thus subject to change, and that which simply is, and can be spoken of in no other tense than the infinite present. The world, writes Plato, "must have been constructed on the pattern of what is apprehensible by reason and understanding [but not by perception] and eternally unchanging; from which again it follows that the world is a likeness of something else."² But it is an imperfect likeness in that "The nature of the Living Being was eternal, and it was not possible to bestow this attribute fully on the created universe; but he determined to make a moving image of eternity, and so when he ordered the heavens he made in that which we call time an eternal moving image of the eternity which remains for ever at one."³ Since this moving image, the universe, is by its motion the measure of time, so is its creation coterminous

with the creation of time. "So time came into being with the heavens in order that, having come into being together, they should also be dissolved together if ever they are dissolved; and it was made as like as possible to eternity, which was its model. For the model exists eternally and the copy correspondingly has been and is and will be throughout the whole extent of time."⁴

Augustine's immensely influential discussion of time and eternity, in the famous eleventh book of the Confessions, is essentially a Christian refinement of Plato's thesis. According to the Augustinian view (broached as early as Book 7 where he writes, "For it is only that which remains in being without change that truly is"⁵), man conceives of himself as existing in and bounded by time because time, with its divisions into future, present, and past, is a subjective function of the imperfect human mind's attributes of expectation, attention, and memory, though it has no noumenal existence outside the mind.⁶ Omniscient and omnipotent God, on the other hand, cannot be subject to expectation or the kind of loss that occurs when anything recedes into the past, and so He exists in, and is identified with, eternity, an eternal present that is as limitless as the Creator. Therefore, the events of history and human experience appear to man as consecutive and moving; to God they are simultaneous and still. As Augustine writes, "In eternity nothing moves into the past: all is present. Time, on the other hand, is never present all at once. The

past is always driven on by the future, the future always follows on the heels of the past, and both the past and the future have their beginning and their end in the eternal present. If only men's minds could be seized and held still! They would see how eternity, in which there is neither past nor future, determines both past and future time."⁷ Then he addresses God:

Although you are before time [since you created it], it is not in time that you precede it. If this were so, you would not be before all time. It is in eternity, which is supreme over time because it is a never-ending present, that you are at once before all past time and after all future time. For what is now the future, once it comes, will become the past, whereas you are unchanging, your years can never fail. Your years neither go nor come, but our years pass and others come after them, so that they all may come in their turn. Your years are completely present to you all at once, because they are at a permanent standstill.⁸

In effect, then, Augustine has presented his distinction between time and eternity on the analogy of two other distinctions-- those between motion and stillness, and mutability and permanence. Two further analogies complement these. The more elaborate and important, so far as Herbert's poetry is concerned, begins as a consideration of the relation of the words of God, as actually heard by human beings, to His timeless Word, and develops into a consideration of the linguistic nature of any sentence, of the relations of its words to its meaning. Taking as his text Matthew 3.17, "And loe a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved sonne, in whom I am

well pleased," Augustine writes, "At that time your voice sounded and then ceased. It was speech with a beginning and an end. Each syllable could be heard and then died away, the second following after the first and the third after the second, and so on in sequence until the last syllable followed all the rest and then gave place to silence. From this it is abundantly clear that your speech was expressed through the motion of some created thing, because it was motion subject to the laws of time, although it served your eternal will."⁹ In this sense, then, God's words are finite and bounded by time, not unlike the words of men.

There is another sense, though, in which His Word is an eternal meaning that does not vanish like ordinary discourse. Considering specifically the "words" God speaks to create the universe (e.g., "And God said, Let there be light"), Augustine reasons, "If ...in order that heaven and earth should come into being, you spoke in words which sounded and then died away, and if this was the way in which you created heaven and earth, then there must have been some material thing created before heaven and earth, something which, by its motion in time, could lend itself as a mouthpiece through which those words could be spoken in time. But there was no material thing created before heaven and earth...."¹⁰ Thus the Word whence all creation stems is an eternal and indivisible essence, and the notion of God's "saying" in the "beginning" is a kind of metaphor

for His willing in eternity that has no beginning. Augustine might have argued equally that a statement like "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" cannot possibly be taken at face value, for the very fact of God's omnipotence would then be gainsaid by the frustration of his purpose until the conclusion of a four-word utterance. If He wills light, He need not wait for the time it takes Him to state His desire.

A sentence, then, is on one view an analogue for time, on another, an analogue for eternity, depending on whether the brevity of its auditory existence or the duration of its meaning be emphasized. In his analysis of the Confessions Kenneth Burke expresses it this way: "The syllables of the words are 'born' and 'die.' But the meaning of those syllables 'transcends' their sheer nature as temporal motions. It is an essence, not reducible to any part of the sentence, or even to the whole of it."¹¹ And this "essence" exists apart from the mortal syllables whether the words be divine or human.

It will be observed that this temporal-eternal relationship of a sentence's words to its meaning can be reducible (though it is not necessarily so reduced) to a figure separating literal from allegorical or even symbolic meaning. In On Christian Doctrine Augustine quotes 2 Corinthians 3.6, "For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," and then cautions his reader, "Nor can anything more appropriately be called the death of the soul than that condition in which the thing

which distinguishes us from beasts, which is the understanding, is subjected to the flesh in the pursuit of the letter. He who follows the letter takes figurative expressions as though they were literal and does not refer the things signified to anything else."¹² There is thus a Christian obligation not to be satisfied with evanescent words but to seek beneath them for the eternal meaning that they represent. Even though Augustine insists in The City of God and elsewhere on the literal truth of much of the Bible--opposed to the Seleucians, he asserts the one-time existence of a visible Paradise--he never neglects the greater allegory implicit in the literal, the correspondence, for example, of the four rivers of Paradise to the four gospels.¹³

Closely related to this linguistic analogy for eternity and time is the more traditional dichotomy of soul and flesh. "Whatever you feel through the sense of the flesh you only feel in part," writes Augustine, and part succeeds part much as the syllables of a sentence succeed one another; it is only when the soul refuses to "follow the lead of the flesh" that it can become still and grasp in all its parts the truth that is eternal.¹⁴ Therefore, the soul exists, or at least has the capacity of existing, in eternity, while the flesh exists in time.

Motion against rest; mutability against permanence; the words of a sentence, apprehended sequentially, against the meaning of a sentence,

apprehended instantaneously; and flesh against spirit: all are representations of the peculiar confrontation of time and eternity in the mortal being, who was born of spirit into flesh and caused to exist in time, but who retains through grace the ability to emphasize his spirit and to return to eternal rest in his Creator. And it should be pointed out here that the very nature of Christianity furnishes yet another analogy for the duality of time and eternity, albeit one that Augustine does not mention. On the one hand, the great events of Christianity--birth, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension--are temporal entities, individual historical episodes with beginnings and ends. The peculiarity of Christianity, it has been said, is that it is historical, not cosmic. On the other hand, the Christian sacraments and holidays, the events of the Christian calendar, to the extent that they are thought to re-enact and not merely to commemorate, attribute an eternal dimension of duration to these same events, so that in the rite of communion, for example, Christ dies perpetually for mankind. In the same way, the word "Christmas," as we shall see in the next chapter in a discussion of Herbert's poem of that name, can refer both to the historic, finite birth of Christ and to the infinitely numerous acceptances of him by Christians.

George Herbert's general sense of time and eternity has been examined by Stanley Stewart in an incisive analysis of "The Flower": "Despair is a quality imposed on man's experience because of his

existence in time. He cannot see what time will unfold; at one moment it seems that the flower is dead, at another, not. But from yet another point of view, nothing has changed. There is a sense in which time is an illusion. For the same reason, there is a sense in which death also is illusory."¹⁵ The flower, which apparently dies and yet always revives itself in the new year, is of course a highly useful analogue for the human being, who also apparently dies and yet in fact has the capacity for eternal life.

What I shall try to show in the rest of this chapter is the extent to which Augustine's, hence Plato's, distinction between time and eternity informs Herbert's poetry, and the myriad complexities with which this distinction may manifest itself. Herbert's use of the concept is often simply a cognitive part of the argument or "content" of the poem, readily susceptible of paraphrase, as it is in "The Flower." At times, however, it enters subtly and inseparably into the whole fabric of the poem, so that everything about the poem that we might describe as structure or technique--rhyme, meter, grammar, syntax, and so forth--corroborates, through a kind of counterpointing of internal elements, the more easily analyzable argument in which time and eternity are opposed.

ii.

Though my principal intent here is one of explication rather than of critical judgment, I should like to begin by showing how an understanding of the philosophic roots of a poem's structure can itself

merge with an esthetic realization of the poem's integrity. This kind of demonstration is, I gather, related to the third consideration that W. K. Wimsatt makes in his analysis of explication as criticism, the problem of "value and neutrality, or the difficulty of merging value with what we commonly speak of as the neutral facts."¹⁶ If, in other words, the very recognition of the proliferation of the parts of a poem, and their holistic contribution to the whole, gives us a greater sense of this whole, then the basic task of the critic--"to place the poem in its historical context and to elucidate, to compare and analyze"--¹⁷ becomes inseparable from a rehearsal of objective value.

I select a comparatively seldom-discussed poem from The Temple, "Coloss. 3.3. Our Life is Hid with Christ in God," which, in addition to being perhaps the most consciously Augustinian of all Herbert's poems in its handling of time, appears on a narrow view to suffer from the "quaintness" that the Nineteenth Century so objected to in Herbert,¹⁸ a charge from which it may perhaps be rescued.

My words & thoughts do both expresse this notion,
 That Life hath with the sun a double motion.
 The first Is straight, and our diurnall friend,
 The other Hid and doth obliquely bend.
 One life is wrapt In flesh, and tends to earth:
 The other winds toward Him, whose happie birth
 Taught me to live here so, That still one eye
 Should aim and shoot at that which Is on high:
 Quitting with daily labour all My pleasure,
 To gain at harvest an eternall Treasure.

We have here the standard Augustinian analogies for time and eternity and then some. In the first four lines Herbert tells us that

he has grasped a parallel between life and the sun, in that both have "a double motion"; for the moment he withholds his explanation of life's double motion, but he does distinguish between the sun's daily or "diurnall" movement--what we would call rotation--and its annual or "oblique" movement--what we would call revolution.¹⁹ He tells us, then, that the sun has two motions, one obvious and one concealed. What is important, however, is that though the two motions occur simultaneously, one within the other, only the smaller and more frequent is susceptible of human perception. In other words, we witness the sun's (apparent) rotation with our eyes, but though we are caught up in and affected by its revolution as well, much as the lesser rotation is itself a part of this revolution, the physical design of the revolution is something that we do not see. Thus we have an implicit parallel to time, the passage of which is measured by our mind's attributes of expectation, attention, and memory, and eternity, of which time is a part but which the limitations of our human perceptions prevent us from seeing.

In "A Digression of the wisdom of God in the site and motion of the Sun" in Pseudodoxia Epidemica (1646), where he considers the benefits that accrue to human life from the sun's daily movement and the "obliquity in his annual motion,"²⁰ Sir Thomas Browne makes explicit this attribution of the sun's imperceptible movement to the unknowable wisdom of God:

Now whether we adhere unto the hypothesis of Copernicus, affirming the earth to move, and the Sun to stand still; or whether we hold, as some of late have concluded, from the spots in the Sun, which appear and disappear again; that besides the revolution, it maketh with its Orbs, it hath also a diurnal²¹ motion, and rowls upon its Poles, whether I saw we affirm these or no, the illations before mentioned [i.e., the effects on the earth⁷] are not thereby infringed.... It may be literally said of the wisdom of God...that if the wonders thereof were duly described, the whole world, that is, all within the last circumference, would not contain them. For as his Wisdom is infinite, so cannot the due expressions thereof be finite, and if the world comprise him not, neither can it comprehend the story of him.²²

The great motions of the earth, or of the sun, which are beyond its circumference, begin to describe, or at least to approach, as the finite world cannot, the infinity of God.

The next four lines of Herbert's poem extend the doubleness of motion to life through the traditional dichotomy of flesh and spirit. Life, too, has a small motion and a great one; the former is the life of the flesh, which is earthbound and inevitably as finite, so to say, as the life of a day; the latter is the life of the spirit, instructed by the revealed Word of God and thus able to "shoot" (the figure recalls "Artillerie") beyond finitude to the infinity, thus eternity, on high. The specific reference to Christ should suggest to us, retrospectively, that the poem's beginning subtly incorporates Herbert's favorite pun (see Chapter 3, below)--that the distinction between sun's two motions is tantamount to a distinction between the physical sun and the triune God as Son.

The double motions of both the sun and life contrast not only finiteness and infinity, but also motion with a paradoxical kind of motionless motion, or rest, giving us another of Augustine's analogies. The sun's revolution is as much a motion as its rotation, but since one cannot perceive it, it does not appear to be motion at all, and that appearance is enough to meet the demands of the metaphor. On the more important level of life, the flesh moves toward the earth, and the spirit moves toward stillness; the spirit, that is, obtains rest only through motion (faith, works, prayer, etc.) and not through a spiritually lethargic absence of motion.

The closing couplet didactically applies what has gone before to the attainment of eternity. By working hard each day and sacrificing worldly "pleasure," man can hope ultimately to harvest the fruits of his work in the treasure of eternal reward. It is noteworthy that Herbert speak of "daily labour," showing how the flux of measurable activity is meaningfully caught up in the immeasurable stillness toward which it may lead, much as rotation is caught up in revolution, flesh in spirit, time in eternity.

The poem is typographically interesting (and thus seemingly "quaint") in that the verse from Paul's epistle to the Colossians, from which the poem derives its title and which the poem as a whole seeks to annotate or expand, slightly rephrased by Herbert forms an acrostic of italicized words deployed diagonally down the page.

This structure of artifact-within-commentary offers, I submit, a duplication of yet another of Augustine's analogies for time and eternity, that of the words of a sentence and its meaning. Herbert's use of this analogy is considerably less direct than his use of the others, but if we think of the contrastive method of the poem as a whole, then we may take a clue from the beginning of line 1 and suspect that "words and thoughts" are not quite the same things but are contrastive in the way that rotation and revolution or flesh and spirit are. All the words of the poem, 85 of them, which like any words, sound, are heard, and die, are devoted to demonstrating an eternal (for Herbert) verity, the "thought" that is a ten-word cipher hidden among them. The cipher, of course, when extracted from its environment becomes a sentence, another series of words, that more-or-less repeats the title (which in certain respects gives the game away), but if we view the poem as an indivisible entity and except the title, then it becomes clear that Herbert has chosen to make the "thought" of his poem approximate a non-finite essence that appears, or tries, to be not a verbal construct at all. In most simplistic terms the point of the poem, which is the measure of Herbert's technical accomplishment, could be put this way: just as "Our life is Hid with Christ in God," so is that very statement from Colossians hidden in the poem. What the verse means, however, is that our real life, our immortal life, is dependent on Christ, and anything else that we may care to call life is really death; real life--reality,

even--is what is hidden in God. Similarly, what is real, essential, unchanging, and eternal is what is hidden in the poem, and not the poem that embodies this essence. Herbert's poem is mutable flesh that clothes the immutable spirit, "My Life Is Hid In Him That Is My Treasure." It is inevitable that we put the words together in this way, finally, but we must see that Herbert has divided them--on the average, $8 \frac{1}{3}$ words separate each two words of the cipher--to emphasize their non-grammatical, non-syntactical character as a meaning that transcends the rules of life and death governing an organic sentence.

An understanding of this complex linear-spatial mechanism provides, finally, a basis for measuring fully Herbert's achievement in his most apparent hieroglyphs, "Easter-wings" and "The Altar." The stanzaic movement from expansion to contraction, to expansion, in "Easter-wings" duplicates the soul's progress from sin to salvation, from spiritual sickness to health, and it also charts this progress on a kind of allegorical graph, one whose meaning can be instantaneously grasped, and which theoretically does not fade with the poem's words from the perceivers consciousness. "The Altar," which argues for the Christian supplantation of altars of stone with altars of the human heart, is itself an altar of words, corresponding to the revelation in flesh of the Word.

iii.

Of the several analogies for time and eternity, the one that appears to have the greatest thematic interest for Herbert is the opposition of motion and rest. This opposition, unlike that between a sentence's words and its meaning, does not particularly lend itself to complex structural expression, but it is nevertheless frequently made a paradigm of the variable relationship between man and God that Herbert is always trying to set forth.

Herbert knew that the Bible emphasizes again and again the significance of rest as both a quality and dispensation of God, and thus its equivalence to eternity. Cruden's Concordance lists hundreds of occurrences of the word "rest" (both substantives and verbs) meaning "a ceasing from labor or works"²³ or to cease from labor or works. A discussion of three, however, should be sufficient to indicate the possibilities of the concept as Herbert would have apprehended it. The most important, of course, is in Genesis 2.2-3, where God takes rest as His own reward for the creation: "And on the seventh day God ended his worke, which hee had made; And he rested on the seventh day from all his worke, which hee had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his worke, which God created and made." Appropriately, Augustine concludes the labors of his Confessions by

annotating the paradoxes of this passage:

But the seventh day is without evening and the sun shall not set upon it, for you have sanctified it and willed that it shall last for ever. Although your eternal repose was unbroken by the act of creation, nevertheless, after all your works were done and you had seen that they were very good, you rested on the seventh day. And in your Book we read this as a presage that when our work in this life is done, we too shall rest in you in the Sabbath of eternal life, though our works are very good only because you have given us the grace to perform them. In that eternal Sabbath you will rest in us, just as now you work in us. The rest that we shall enjoy will be yours, just as the work that we now do is your work done through us. But you, O Lord, are eternally at work and eternally at rest. It is not in time that you see or in time that you rest: yet you make what we see in time; you make time itself and the repose which comes when time ceases.²⁴

Since God, existing as one with eternity, created time along with the physical universe, his "eternal repose was unbroken by the act of creation": the labor of time existed outside the rest of eternity. But man, on the other hand, working and existing in time, can hope only to have his works accepted and to find rest in God "in the Sabbath of eternal life."

This escape into timelessness is in fact among the promises of Revelations: "And the Angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.

But in the dayes of the voice of the seventh Angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mysterie of God should be finished, as hee hath declared to his servants the Prophets" (10.5-7). Numerologically, the conclusion of time, denoted by the sounding of the voice of the seventh angel, coincides most helpfully with the conclusion of God's labors in Genesis on the seventh day. The number seven, as Augustine explains, combines the number four, which represents the four seasons as well as the four times of the day (morning, noon, evening, and night), with the number three, standing for the trinity and also for the separable elements in the admonition to "love God with all our hearts, with all our souls, and with all our minds."²⁵ It thus symbolizes, we may infer, the point at which the natural and supernatural, the visible and the invisible, intersect, the point at which time passes into eternity.²⁶ In his Essayes in Divinity, Donne writes, "Seven is ever used to express infinite."²⁷

God does not distribute rest equally or undeservedly, however, as the other two pertinent passages from the Bible show. In Psalm 95 he denies it altogether: "Forty yeeres long was I grieved with this generation: and sayd, It is a people that doe erre in their heart: and they have not knowen my wayes: Unto whom I sware in my wrath: That they should not enter into my rest" (10-11). But as Paul explains in his epistle to the Hebrews, the covenant of grace changes all this:

For we which have beleevd do enter into rest,
 as hee said, As I have sworne in my wrath, If
 they shall enter into my rest, although the works
 were finished from the foundation of the world.
 For he spake in a certaine place of the seventh
 day on this wise: And God did rest the seventh
 day from all his works. And in this place againe:
 If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore
 it remaineth that some must enter therein, and
 they to whom it was first preached entered not in
 because of unbeleef: againe, hee limiteth a cer-
 taine day, saying in David, Today, after so long
 a time; as it is said, Today if ye will heare his
 voice, Harden not your hearts. For if Iesus had
 given them rest, then would he not afterward have
 spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore
 a rest to the people of God. (3.9)

Between them, typologically, these passages show that only with the favor of God may man escape from his finitude into the rest that is eternal life.

Augustine discusses rest in one other relevant connection. Trying to recall his infancy in the first book of the Confessions, he writes, "In those days all I knew was how to suck, and how to lie still when my body sensed comfort or cry when it felt pain. Later on I began to smile as well, first in my sleep, and then when I was awake."²⁸ To sucking, crying, and smiling, then, Augustine adds lying still, resting, as the fourth instinctive response with which infants are born; as Kenneth Burke points out, "This addition is very important in Augustine's case, because of its relation to his great theological stress upon hopes of an ultimate rest in God."²⁹ In other words, one's infancy reflects the divinity that he can hope to approach at the end of his life, an

idea that figures so importantly in Vaughan's "Retreate" and Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality."

The sources of "The Pulley," one of Herbert's best-known poems, have elicited a considerable amount of critical conjecture. Hutchinson observes that "Herbert refashioned a later version of the story of Pandora,"³⁰ and in her monograph on Herbert, Mary Ellen Rickey suggests that the central implied figure, that of the pulley itself, derives from Nashe's Praise of the Red Herring.³¹ But surely it should be equally obvious that the theological core of the poem derives from just this idea of rest as the equivalent of eternity that we have been discussing, particularly as it is illustrated by the passage above from Psalms.

When God at first made man,
Having a glasse of blessings standing by;
Let us (said he) poure on him all we can:
Let the worlds riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way;
Then beautie flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure
Rest in the bottome lay.

For if I should (said he)
Bestow this jewell also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts in stead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness:
Let him be rich and wearie, that at least,
If goodnesse leade him not, yet wearinesse
May tosse him to my breast.

Of all the blessings that God can bestow, rest is the last, in the sense that it is the final one (which "in the bottome lay") that He considers giving, and in the sense that it is the one that would make men self-sufficient, needing no further blessings. By withholding it, God in effect distinguishes between the Nature that He has created and Himself, causing the former to exist in time, out of which its creatures can escape only by adoring God. "The Pulley" presents an oddly heterodox and faintly Platonic story of creation in which God reasons that it is necessary to make the earth not a precise counterpart of His own existence if man is to apprehend his need of God and the Glory of His creation. What makes Nature different from the God of Nature, and what thus makes the God of Nature more desirable, is the "repining restlessness," a kind of time-bound and time-caused agitation, the end of which man perceives to be outside himself and in God, the way that eternity is outside time and in God.

Therefore the rest of God's blessings (some critics think Herbert's pun unfortunate, as basic as it is to the poem's opposition) are not enough; man will become weary with them, weary with the agitation of human life, perhaps, by implication, weary with the good works that gain God's favor, and throw himself beyond these other blessings and into the eternal rest in God that has been denied him in Nature. Just as in psalm 95, God realizes that man will understand his dependence only through a sense of his incompleteness.

The same coupling of the two meanings of the word "rest" in a single usage informs two other poems in The Temple, though perhaps not so dramatically as it does "The Pulley." In "The Starre" Herbert asks a "Bright spark, shot from a brighter place, Where beams surround my Saviours face" to move into his heart, and with fire burn away his heart's folly and lust, with radiance cause it to shine, and with heavenly motion cause it to ascend. Then having projected himself among the beams of light that encircle Christ, Herbert writes, in the seventh quatrain,

That so among the rest I may
 Glitter, and curle, and winde as they:
 That winding is their fashion
 Of adoration.

Here "rest" implies both the other beams that now form the heart's, or the soul's, environment, and also, despite the paradoxical winding, the attainment of everlasting motionlessness that the star's "celestial quicknesse" has led him to.

In "The Bag" Herbert recovers from a temporary seizure of despair by reminding himself of Christ's having left the glories of Heaven and descended to earth to die so that man might be saved. In the fourth stanza,

When he was come, as travellers are wont,
 He did repair unto an inne.
 Both then, and after, many a brunt
 He did endure to cancell sinne:
 And having giv'n the rest before,
 Here he gave up his life to pay our score,

"rest" refers directly to the celestial raiment of light, clouds, fire, and the sky that is described in an earlier stanza. Also, however, it suggests the general freedom from labor and motion that Christ had foregone by coming to an earth that, as the poem "Giddinesse" tells us, is "farre from power, From settled peace and rest!" And the context of his "having giv'n the rest before" may lead to yet a third sense, that Christ's descent and death are simply the fulfillment of an earlier promise to man of eternity.

Several poems in The Temple typologically complement "The Pulley" in the way that the verses from Paul's epistle to the Hebrews complement those in Psalms. Man may now have through Christ the rest that it had once been necessary for God to deny him. "Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me," begins the third of three triplets in "Trinitie Sunday," "With faith, with hope, with charitie; That I may runne, rise, rest with thee." Running, rising, and resting are, incidentally, standard names for solar motions, so Herbert may be applying them to motions of the redeemed soul in order to unite Sunday with the Son.

The rest is a very real possibility, now, as it is in "Artillerie" where it is the precise gift that the shooting star offers to Herbert:

Do as thou usest, disobey,
Expell good motions from thy breast,
Which have the face of fire, but end in rest.

Good motions end in rest: prayer and the acceptance of Christ as the

revealed Word of God end in the etemity of God. And so the poem itself ends with a paradoxically compressed statement of the way in which time is caught up in etemity: "I am but finite, yet thine infinitely."

The movement from the old dispensation to the new, and thus from restlessness to rest, is shown most explicitly in "Aaron":

Holinesse on the head,
 Light and perfections on the breast,
 Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
 To leade them unto life and rest:
 Thus are true Aarons drest.

Profanenesse in my head,
 Defects and darknesse in my breast,
 A noise of passions ringing me for dead
 Unto a place where is no rest:
 Poore priest thus am I drest.

Onely another head
 I have, another heart and breast,
 Another musick, making live not dead,
 Without whom I could have no rest:
 In him I am well drest.

Christ is my onely head,
 My alone onely heart and breast,
 My onely musick, striking me ev'n dead;
 That to the old man I may rest,
 And be in him new drest.

So holy in my head,
 Perfect and light in my deare breast,
 My doctrine tun'd by Christ, (who is not dead
 But lives in me while I do rest)
 Come people; Aaron's drest.

In the first stanza of this remarkably straightforward poem, Herbert reiterates the mission of Aaron as God had set it forth to Moses in Exodus. "And thou shalt put on the breastplate of iudgement, the

Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aarons heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall beare the iudgement of the children of Israel upon his heart, before the Lord continually.... And it shall be upon Aarons forehead, that Aaron may beare the iniquitie of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord" (28.30, 38). Contrasted with the ability of "true Aarons" to raise the dead and lead them to eternal rest is the sinner's sense of his own defects, confusion, and restlessness. But since Aaron is an obvious type for Christ, the sinner is not alone and unassisted; weak though he may be in his own mind and heart, he has also the head, heart, and breast of Christ, whose primacy will allow him, struck dead, to arise and find rest. Finally, by accepting Christ as the Word of God, the sinner may now, does now, find rest in him.

"Aaron" thus conflates typologically the passages from Psalms and Hebrews. God's original dispensation through Aaron no longer proves to be enough, but by supplementing it with the new dispensation through Christ, man may escape from time and death into the rest of eternity.³²

iv.

Without relying on the analogy of rest, a number of Herbert's poems come to terms directly with man's condition of being bound in time, equate this condition with physical life (spiritual death), the

flesh, and the present, and contrast it with the promised physical death (spiritual life), the spirit, and the future. "H. Baptisme" (II), for example, which is a consideration of the divinity that God imparts to the child (we recall Augustine's emphasis on infant rest as a reflection of the child's divine condition), ends

Although by stealth
My flesh get on, yet let her sister
My soul bid nothing, but preserve her wealth:
The growth of flesh is but a blister;
Childhood is health.

Quite literally, the poem tells us, as the human body grows, increases in size, it is emphasizing more and more the part of the man that is not divine. There is a sort of theological paradox here: as man matures towards his ultimate union with God, he appears progressively less worthy of this union.

So, too, in the grim "Church-monuments," while "my soul repairs to her devotion,"

Here I intombe my flesh, that it betimes
May take acquaintance of this heap of dust;
To which the blast of deaths incessant motion,
Fed with the exhalation of our crimes,
Drives all at last,

and finally,

...thou mayst know,
That flesh is but the glasse, which holds the dust
That measures all our time; which also shall
Be crumbled into dust.

Disturbed, miserable, and short is the life of the body; only by willing to ^{escape} it can the soul achieve its own immortality.

"Time," "Mans medley," and "The Discharge" stress the consciousness and security with which man may live for the future. In the first of these, an oddly whimsical little dialogue that in some ways recalls Donne's sonnet "Death be not proud," Herbert categorically demonstrates the substantive difference between time and eternity, the idea that eternity is outside time, and that time, no matter how drawn out, cannot approach it.

Meeting with Time, Slack thing, said I,
 Thy sithe is dull; whet it for shame.
 No marvell Sir, he did replie,
 If it at length deserve some blame:
 But where one man would have me grinde it
 Twentie for one too sharp do finde it.

Perhaps some such of old did passe,
 Who above all things lov'd this life;
 To whom thy sithe a hatchet was,
 Which now is but a pruning-knife.
 Christs coming hath made man thy debter,
 Since by thy cutting he grows better.

And in his blessing thou art blest:
 For where thou onely wert before
 An executioner at best;
 Thou art a gard'ner now, and more,
 An usher to convey our souls
 Beyond the utmost starres and poles.

And this is that makes life so long,
 While it detains us from our God.
 Ev'n pleasures here increase the wrong,
 And length of dayes lengthen the rod.
 Who wants the place, where God doth dwell,
 Partakes already half of hell.

Of what strange length must that needs be,
 Which ev'n eternitie excludes!
 Thus farre Time heard me patiently:
 Then chafing said, This man deludes:
 What do I here before his doore?
 He doth not crave lesse time, but more.³³

The formerly dismal spectre of time, a personified reminder of death and the brevity of human life, is a welcomed sight to Herbert, for time can now only lead man to life, not away from it. Time, the character in the poem, does not immediately realize the direction of his guidance, and points out that for every man who would delight in his appearance there are twenty who would shudder at it. Once, perhaps, responds Herbert; but given the new dispensation of Christ, there is no longer a reason to love this life above the next. And time, as well as man, profits from this dispensation, for he is changed from an executioner to a gardener or an usher--an agent to lead man to eternity "Beyond the utmost starres and poles."

The figure of a gardener suggests the biblical and medieval tradition of the hortus conclusus, derived ultimately from the Song of Songs 4.12, "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." Stanley Stewart writes, "In the literature and art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the garden wall referred to the protection of the Church through the dispensation of Grace.... By representing the division between nature and Grace, the wall pointed up the distinction between the timebound and the timeless. The mystery of the Christian experience was that, though in time, man existed outside of time, for he was born of the spirit as well as of the flesh."³⁴ Participating in the Christian experience, then, and pressed into the service of God and the Church, time as gardener becomes the very

medium through which man escapes from time.

After Herbert has dwelt on the strange (hence unpleasant) length of earthly time, which is itself excluded from eternity and excludes everything that remains within it from eternity, time finally gets the point, though his own limitations prevent him from stating it with much acuteness:

What do I here before his doore?
He doth not crave lesse time, but more.

The limitations of the temporal view, not instructed by grace, are implicit in time's last words. To the time-bound view, eternity appears only an extension of time, "not...lesse time, but more." In fact, however, as the Christian should be able to see, eternity is not simply more time, but is a dimension or condition altogether outside time, though only time, the measure of man's days on earth, can bring him to it.

One unique capacity of man is his ability to exist simultaneously in both time and eternity, making him, like the seventh angel of Revelations, the precise juncture of time and eternity. This dual existence, and its attendant problems, is the subject of "Mans medley":

Heark, how the birds do sing,
And woods do ring.
All creatures have their joy: and man hath his.
Yet if we rightly measure,
Mans joy and pleasure
Rather hereafter, then in present, is.

To this life things of sense
 Make their pretence:
 In th' other Angels have a right by birth:
 Man ties them both alone,
 And makes them one,
 With th' one hand touching heav'n, with th' other earth.

In soul he mounts and flies,
 In flesh he dies.
 He wears a stuffe whose thread is course and round,
 But trimm'd with curious lace,
 And should take place
 After the trimming, not the stuffe and ground.

Not that he may not here
 Taste of the cheer,
 But as birds drink, and straight lift up their head,
 So he must sip and think
 Of better drink
 He may attain to, after he is dead.

But as his joyes are double;
 So is his trouble.
 He hath two winters, other things but one:
 Both frosts and thoughts do nip,
 And bite his lip;
 And he of all things fears two deaths alone.

Yet ev'n the greatest griefs
 May be reliefs,
 Could he but take them right, and in their ways.
 Happie is he, whose heart
 Hath found the art
 To turn his double pains to double praise.

Man alone has it both ways: "In soul he mounts and flies, In flesh he dies"; he is the one link between the physical, mutable creatures of the earth and the immaterial, immutable angels: "Man ties them both alone, And makes them one, With th' one hand touching heav'n, with th' other earth." Herbert is, of course, adapting to his purposes

one of the commonplaces of Renaissance thought: the view of man as occupying a mediate position in the Chain of Being between animals and angels, enabled by his tripartite soul (bestial appetite, human emotion, and divine reason--thus Plato in the Republic, 13, and the Timaeus, 38) either to descend or ascend.³⁵ But as the poem states the problem, man's choice lies less between this world and the next than between having both and having neither.³⁶

As man has the power to reap the joys that exist in time and those that exist in eternity, so does he run the risk of losing both, one through death, the other through judgment. Since only he can have two lives, "he of all things fears two deaths alone": the natural death of the body and "the condemnation of the lost soul after the judgment."³⁷

Nothing need be lost, however, as the final stanza tells us, for man may choose to place his mortal life in time in the service of his immortal life in eternity. He may "turn his double pains," his fear of two deaths, to "double praise," praise of God in the present that will insure his ability to praise God in the future. The poem is thus a didactic guide to the life of divine service and recognition that promises eternal reward. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment," we read in Matthew 25. 46, "but the righteous into life eternal." Herbert does not balk at defining the qualities of the righteous.

In "The Discharge" Herbert differentiates between time and eternity on the analogy of a distinction between the present and the future.

Busie enquiring heart, what wouldst thou know?
 Why dost thou prie,
 And turn, and leer, and with a licorous eye
 Look high and low;
 And in thy lookings stretch and grow?

Hast thou not made thy counts, and summ'd up all?
 Did not thy heart
 Give up the whole, and with the whole depart?
 Let what will fall:
 That which is past who can recall?

Thy life is Gods, thy time to come is gone,
 And is his right.
 He is thy night at noon: he is at night
 Thy noon alone.
 The crop is his, for he hath sown.

And well it was for thee, when this befell,
 That God did make
 Thy businesse his, and in thy life partake:
 For thou canst tell,
 If it be his once, all is well.

Onely the present is thy part and fee.
 And happy thou,
 If, though thou ~~didst~~ not beat thy future brow,
 Thou couldst well see
 What present things requir'd of thee..

They ask enough; why shouldst thou further go?
 Raise not the mudde
 Of future depths, but drink the cleare and good.
 Did not for wo
 In times to come; for it will grow.

Man and the present fit: if he provide,
 He breaks the square.
 This hour is mine: if for the next I care,
 I grow too wide,
 And do encroach upon death's side.

For death each hour environs and surrounds.
 He that would know
 And care for future chances, cannot go
 Unto those grounds,
 But through a Church-yard which them bounds.

Things present shrink and die: but they that spend
 Their thoughts and sense
 On future grief, do not remove it thence,
 But it extend,
 And draw the bottom out an end.

God chains the dog till night: wilt loose the chain,
 And wake thy sorrow?
 Wilt thou forestall it, and now grieve to morrow,
 And then again
 Grief over freshly all thy pain?

Either grief will not come: or if it must,
 Do not forecast.
 And while it cometh, it is almost past.
 Away distrust:
 My God hath promis'd; he is just.

Until the turn in the last stanza, "The Discharge" seems to present a curiously pessimistic reversal of what we have learned in "Mans medley." Man is limited to the mortal life of the present, and an attempt to see beyond this limit is an encroaching on God and his designs, an invitation to sorrow and grief. Be well content, man, with what is; "Find the mortal world enough."³⁸ "Let what will fall: That which is past who can recall? Thy life is Gods, thy

time to come is gone , And is his right.... Onely the present is thy part and fee..... Man and the present fit." The present will end, but to dwell on the grief of the future is simply to experience this grief before it is necessary, to "draw the bottome out an end."

The poem so far has been an expression of doubt, a clinging to refuge in the world of time because of the problematic uncertainty of one's entrance into the world of eternity. But there is another, altogether more appealing reason why man need not speculate about the future: "My God hath promis'd; he is just." This cancelling of doubt with sudden affirmation is a favorite trick of Herbert's; "Deniall" (which we shall examine shortly) and "The Collar" end with even more dramatic reversals. In "The Discharge" it serves as an assurance that the eternal wisdom of God is a basis for trust that transcends temporal perturbation and doubt.

v.

Apart from "Coloss. 3.3. Our Life is Hid with Christ in God," all the poems considered thus far in this chapter have incorporated the Augustinian time-eternity distinction into their arguments alone, their conceptual contents, and not into their structures. In other words, such features as rhyme, meter, length of lines, and the forms of words (whether a verb be in the past or present tense, for example, or in the indicative or subjunctive mood) are apparently

incidental and do not arise from the exigencies of certain philosophical demands. There are, however, in The Temple poems whose structures either establish or support a double-time scheme, or a variation of such a scheme, that approximates the relationship of time to eternity, even if that relationship be not explicitly mentioned. The recognition of these structural subtleties, it seems to me, is one of the ways in which explication becomes, or functions as, criticism or esthetic judgment; to the extent we realize that the form a poem assumes, whether or not the precise mechanism of this form is obvious, is not arbitrary but is serving some larger, intellectual design, then to the same extent do we apprehend the integrity of the poem, the subservience of its parts to the whole, and in the case of Herbert at least, possibly redeem it from the charges mentioned earlier of "quaintness and oddity."

A fairly simple example of this structural reinforcement occurs in the beautiful sonnet "Prayer" (I),

Prayer the Churches banquet, Angels age,
 Gods breath in man returning to his birth,
 The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,
 The Christian plummet sounding heav'n and earth;
 Engine against th' Almighty, sinners towre,
 Reversed thunder, Christ-side piercing spear,
 The six-daies world transposing in an houre,
 A kinde of tune, which all things heare and fear;
 Softnesse, and peace, and joy, and love, and blisse,
 Exalted Manna, gladnesse of the best,
 Heaven in ordinarie, man well drest,
 The milkie way, the bird of Paradise,
 Church-bels beyond the starres heard, the souls bloud,
 The land of spices; something understood,

where the utter absence of a finite verb implies the power of prayer for infinite transcendence. It suggests that prayer, unlike other human speech, does not sound and then die--since its essence is not mere verbalization--but achieves, and enables its maker to achieve, an eternal union with God. Prayer, like poetry in that it "aspires to the condition of muteness,"³⁹ is a unique kind of discourse in that it pretends to offer the eternity of meaning without the temporality of syntax, and even where a particular prayer may have a fully articulated syntax, this syntax is accidental rather than essential as it is for other forms of discourse. Seen thus, the absence of finite verbs in "Prayer" is not by any means quaint or even arbitrary, but is as sound a metaphor for prayer as any of the poem's several images.⁴⁰

Of far greater complexity than "Prayer," and thus of potentially greater instructive value in reading Herbert, is the poem "Deniall," an examination of which prompts the use of different critical tools from those employed heretofore.

When my devotions could not pierce
 Thy silent eares;
 Then was my heart broken, as was my verse;
 My breast was full of fears
 And disorder:

My bent thoughts, like a brittle bow,
 Did flie asunder:
 Each took his way; some would to pleasures go,
 Some to the warres and thunder
 Of alarms.

As good go any where, they say,
 As to benumme
 Both knees and heart, in crying night and day,
Come, come, my God, O come,
 But no hearing.

O that thou shouldst give dust a tongue
 To crie to thee,
 And then not heare it crying! all day long
 My heart was in my knee,
 But no hearing.

Therefore my soul lay out of sight,
 Untun'd, unstrung:
 My feeble spirit, unable to look right,
 Like a nipt blossome, hung
 Discontented.

O cheer and tune my heartlesse breast,
 Deferre no time;
 That so thy favours granting my request,
 They and my minde may chime,
 And mend my ryme.

This poem is at least superficially satisfactory because of a basic three-fold correspondence. First, the poem moves from a position of apparent disorder and separation from God to one of harmony and union with God; this movement forms the plot of the poem, dramatically described. Second, the poem presents this movement in terms of a dual metaphor, a bow that is both the musician's instrument ("silent," "Untun'd") and the archer's bow ("pierce," "flie asunder," "unstrung"). As the poem progresses, the instrument becomes tuned, and the bow is enabled to shoot straight. Finally, we see that this metaphor mediates ingeniously between the sinner's progress and the most obvious element of the poem's structure, since only after the prayer

is heard, the instrument tuned, and the archer's bow adjusted is the poem itself tuned. Only then does the fifth line of the quintain figure into the rhyme scheme and the prayer as missile pierce God's ears. As Joseph Summers writes of this feature, "The stanza which had been the symbol of the flying asunder of a 'brittle bow' has become a symbol for the achievement of order. The form of the final prayer indicates that its request has already been answered. The individual and the poem have moved from fear through open rebellion and 'unstrung' discontent,"⁴¹ more or less expanding F. E. Hutchinson's comment that, "The imperfect harmony between the soul and God is figured by the unrhymed final line of each stanza until the last, where the restored harmony will mend my ryme."⁴²

As neatly as this pattern seems to resolve itself, however, objections can still be made to the significance of the poem's accomplishment. In his recent study of Herbert, Arnold Stein writes, "The last line of the poem fulfills the form by rhyming and saying so--'And mend my ryme'--but that completion does little more than offer a token solution to the problems of the poem. A direct prayer simply requests the gift that will reorder what has been a moving disorder. By the standards of Herbert's best poems the conclusion is a piece of arbitrary wit,"⁴³ thus reducing the poem to a clever and well-executed trick.

I shall shortly be trying to show that Stein's judgment is not quite accurate here, but first there is a more serious objection to the

poem (one heretofore not noted in Herbert criticism) that must be confronted. As a logical, and not merely theological, justification of the paradoxical coincidence of desire and fulfillment in the final line, an understanding of the poem's plot and its metaphors of music and archery is insufficient. In the last stanza Herbert is making for the first time in the poem a specific request, and the request is granted in its own statement; therefore the prayer becomes pleonastic, and, ironically, the logic of the poem seems to fall apart at the very place where the rhyme is brought under control. Though he has pleaded that God "Deferre no time," and though Herbert's God is always lief to grant so sincere a plea, how can the conditions of the conditional "may chime And mend" be removed at the moment that the syntax in which they are expressed is articulated? In other words: does the final word "ryme" in line 30 render meaningless the sentence that it concludes, and consequently the whole poem?

What Herbert is doing in stanza 6 of "Deniall" can be understood only if the functions of time and being, as they are expressed in the varying moods and tenses of the five preceding stanzas, and as they reflect the Augustinian distinction between time and eternity, are first understood. Stanza 1 defines the limits of the same temporal paradox that is troublesome in stanza 6. The four verbs--"could [~~not~~] pierce," "was broken," "was," and "was"--all point to an absolute past, to a time that is no longer. The adverb "When" reinforces this sense of past-ness, of a situation we know through

memory rather than through attention, as in line 3 does "Then," whether we read it so point to time ("At that time was my heart broken") or to consequence ("And so was my heart broken"). Until pulled up short by the unrhymed word "disorder" ending line 5, the dissonance of which is augmented by its being metrically askew, we feel, in fact, that the lines point to a spiritual crisis in the past. But suddenly a completed action is made to manifest itself in the present, memory apparently yields to attention, and we see that Herbert must be doing one of two things (or both): either he is consciously shaping his verse into a shapeless form that God no longer forces it into, the more dramatically to convey his one-time loss, or he is describing some state in which the past is contained in the present, without being the present, much as time is not eternity but is contained in it. The fact of the past is emphasized, but we see its effects in the verse of the present. Both times are here, and we should be reluctant to conclude that one must cancel out the other.

The verbs of the first half of stanza 2 again project the pastness of remembered action: "did flie," not "does flie," "took his way," not "takes his way." There is only one verb, "would...go," in the second half of the stanza, though it is elliptically implied a second time. Herbert might intend this verb, as one would today, as a modal auxiliary expressing the subjunctive, or he might intend it, as almost no one would today, as a simple indicative past:

"did will to go." It makes no practical difference which he means; in either event the verb has moved us into a third kind of time in the poem, a time of desire that is not explicitly fulfilled. Either his thoughts wished to seek pleasures and could not (the subjunctive), or they willed pleasures, which he did not go to (the past indicative). Both possibilities denote frustrated desire of an entirely different dimension from the inefficacy of his devotion (ll. 1-2) and the breaking of his heart (l. 3). In the first stanza something has happened, if only negatively; reality is described. In the second half of the second stanza nothing has happened; a subjunctive state of affairs (whether or no the mood be technically subjunctive) circumscribes a position of loss that for a Christian is outside immutable fact because inside mutable time. The only reality is outside time.⁴⁴

The introduction of a second mood, in which action is suspended (and thus need not be punished or judged), supports the past-ness of most of the verbs so far, which tell us that the crisis is over, and works against the unrhymed fifth and tenth lines, which tell us that the speaker is still being denied. And in each of the poem's first five stanzas four lines do rhyme; the verse is never totally broken. Consequently, although the remembered past does intrude into the attended present, it seems on balance to exist not now and perhaps not at all.

In the third stanza probability substitutes itself altogether for

actuality. The stanza is without movement, without predication. It shows us a world that God will not recognize, but it is not a real world bounded by time or circumstances. Herbert is essentially reflective here, and the reflections are directed into two opposed infinitive constructions. The first, "As good go any where," is linked to the subjunctive situation of stanza 2 and is, by definition, unable to bring it into indicative focus, to make it finite, to invest it with reality. Similarly, the second infinitive, "to benumme," by its grammatical nature (which is intensified by the participial "crying") undercuts the force of the imperative "Come, come, my God, O come," which is subordinated to it. The effect of the two infinitives is obvious: Herbert has apparently presented two aspects of the loss of grace--man's pleasure and God's neglect--but both exist as unrealized potentials; neither is a part of theological reality.

Stanza 4 summarizes all the verb inflexions that have occurred so far. Corresponding to the absolute past-ness of lines 1-4 and 6-8 is the terminative aspect of the verb of line 19, "My heart was in my knee":to the subjunctive mood or situation of lines 8-10, line 16, "O that thou shouldst give dust a tongue," and elliptically, line 18, "And then ∟thou shouldst not heare it crying"; and to the infinitive-participle of lines 11-13, line 17, "To crie to thee." By this time the total absence of verbs in the present indicative should make the final line of the stanza, and of the other stanzas,

look suspect. The loss of rhyme, as powerfully as we do feel it in every present-tense reading of the poem, is so overshadowed by the contradictory verbs that it seems less a feature of the poem "Deniall's" structure than an element of a hypothetical other poem that echoes only to remind us of what was or what could be, but not what is. In other words, the effect of loss of rhyme, though we cannot but feel it in the poem we have, is the residue of a condition that had ended before this poem's composition.

The fifth stanza glosses and expands the last three lines of stanza 1; it elaborates the consequences of the failure of the poet's devotions. The two verbs, "lay" and "hung," are both in the past indicative and function to project the poet's discontented spirit even farther into the completed past.

We are thus in a position to judge the relation of stanza 6 to what has preceded it and to understand the mended rhyme as more than simply a clever trick of Herbert's. The first two lines are an imperative prayer addressed to God. They are not, like the imperative prayer of line 14, conditioned by a supra-ordinate infinitive and hence removed from time and fact. The words exist, are uttered, in the moment that we read them, and they are relevant to the moment that we read them, as nothing before them was. Furthermore, they are, palpably, a devotion that can "pierce Thy silent eares," since they do, and therefore they do not belong to the category of devotions

described in the poem's opening line. Consequently, the rhyme in line 30 is not to be explained by saying that God, forgiving the poet, anticipated his demand and made its statement unnecessary. Rather, in dealing for the first time with materials that are real and present (in the eternal sense that God is always real and present) instead of problematical and past, Herbert must acknowledge that Now--whenever Now may be--he is with God and God is with him. Herbert can play with the possibility of God's absence (cf., most notably, "The Collar"), but he cannot posit it as an operative phenomenon. The rhyme is mended at the end of the poem, not because Herbert has been readmitted to the fold, but because he speaks of his relationship to God indicatively (though the formal mood is imperative)--as it is--and not subjunctively--as it is not and never was. The rhyme is mended because in fact (though not in the poem) it was never broken. The past is in the present, but it does not really exist there or anywhere.

There is yet another characteristics of the poem that contradicts the sense of disharmony in the first five stanzas. Surely it is odd that Herbert, in describing a state of disorder, should choose to make line 20 repeat line 15, since recurrence of any sort is at the very heart of order. Beyond this unexpected pattern in the center of the poem, the repetition of "But no hearing" tends to reverse the direction of the poem's second half, forming a kind of structural

chiasmus that leads us back to where we began. In a much more subtle way, "Deniall" is operating on the mirroring principle of "Easter-wings," except that in the middle of "Deniall" there is a smaller sense of real poverty. Since the poem ends on so clear a note of union with God, we may conjecture that a state of equal harmony surrounded its beginning. It thus seems hardly too much to suspect that the poem's title refers not only to God's apparent denial of man's pleas, but also to Herbert's denial that such an appearance can be real.

The environment within which man relates to God is eternity; to the extent that man exists in time he is perishable and is not relating to God at all. And the only grammatical representation of unchanging eternity is the present tense, almost by definition, however obscure and inferential our apprehension of that tense may be. If sin, temptation, or disorder is to be presented, it cannot be so with any suggestion of lasting attention paid to it.

Rosalie Colie has written of the concept, implicit in Herbert, that all verse, even the most profane, must be religious verse: the poet's words, since they spring from the divine logos that in the beginning was, are perforce the words of God. Herbert "never forgot that the Creator's power was unlimited--however huge the total universe, however tiny the least created thing, God is always present in it."⁴⁵ And so the idea of God's deserting man--tantalizing,

frightening though it may be--is only an idea, never a reality.

We may conclude by noting a poem that exactly reverses the method of "Deniall" but on the basis of the very same logic. "Home" is one of Herbert's most impassioned pleas to God to come and rescue him from his mortal condition, to "loose this frame," to untie "this knot of man." The plea is repeated with varying degrees of intensity through twelve six-line stanzas, rhyming ababcc, most of which ask in one way or another why God "stayest still" away. In the thirteenth and final stanza Herbert consciously and pointedly destroys, or pretends to destroy, the rhyme scheme that he has adhered to throughout:

Come dearest Lord, passe not this holy season,
 My flesh and bones and joynts do pray:
 And ev'n my verse, when by the ryme and reason
 The word is, Stay, sayes ever, Come,
 O show thyself to me,
 Or take me up to thee!

It is not quite right to say, as Arnold Stein does, that "The last stanza of 'Home' violates form in order to assert a truth of the feelings,"⁴⁶ because in fact the poem is now completing a larger, antecedent form: though "Come" does not rhyme with "pray," as "stay" would, it does rhyme with the title of the poem, "Home," and thus stresses an eternal harmony of the whole that is grander than the finite harmony of a single stanza could be.⁴⁷

It is important to observe that the title "Home," occurring at the beginning of the poem or even before the poem proper, is implicit

throughout; consequently, we may infer that there is never any real doubt about Herbert's returning, or coming, to his home in God (finding rest in God), just as there is never any doubt about the resolution of "Deniall," and the twelve stanzas of pleas^{ure} are vitiated by their correspondence to a purely temporary and mutable state, if indeed that. It would thus be singularly inappropriate--in fact, a falsification--for the poem to end with the word "stay," indicating the permanence of God's removal from man. The eternal union of man and God is alone what is real for Herbert, and he nearly always signals a return to this union before he conjectures, hypothetically, what life would be without it.

NOTES

¹In Paradoxia Epidemica, pp. 169-189, Rosalie Colie shows that the paradox of man's free will and God's foreknowledge in Paradise Lost is related to man's situation in time and God's in eternity. These respective situations explain much about the poem: "Compared with the quick speeches of God in Book III, where human history is so compressed as to appear almost immediate in God's mind, the length of Books XI and XII makes the long human experience more real, more actual, both to Adam and to the reader. In further contrast to Book III, a book peculiarly of eternity, Books XI and XII express the long, continuing process of history, the succession of event upon event that is the lot of fallen mankind." (p. 178)

²Timaeus, trans. H.D.P. Lee (Baltimore, 1965), 3, p. 41.

³Ibid., 7, pp. 50-1.

⁴Ibid., 7, p. 51.

⁵Confessions, 7, 11, p. 147.

⁶Ibid., 11, 27-8, pp. 276-7.

⁷Ibid., 11, 11, pp. 261-2.

⁸Ibid., 11, 13, p. 263.

⁹Ibid., 11, 6, p. 258.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology (Boston, 1961), p. 142.

¹²Op. cit., 3, 5, 9, p. 84.

¹³The City of God, trans. Marcus Dods (New York, 1950), 13, 21, pp. 431-2 and 432n.

¹⁴Confessions, 4, 11, p. 81.

¹⁵"Time and The Temple," SEL, 6 (1966), p. 101.

¹⁶"Explication as Criticism" in The Verbal Icon (Lexington, 1967), p. 236.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 246.

¹⁸See Works, pp. xlviiii-xlix.

¹⁹I am aware that the words "rotation" and "revolution," which I use here and afterwards for convenience, are misleading and anachronistic since they form no part of the terminology of Ptolmaic astronomy, on which Herbert is purportedly drawing. But since all we are really concerned with is Herbert's distinction between the sun's lesser, daily motion and its greater, annual motion, it would seem pointless to obfuscate the argument with a length discussion of epicycles and eccentrics. So far as the effectiveness of the figure is concerned, it matters not to what extent Herbert accepted the modern cosmography of Copernicus, Kepler, and Brahe. Irrespective of personal belief, Herbert, as will be shown, is much better served by the sun than he could be by the earth. For a discussion of the triumph of the Copernican Revolution, see George Sarton, Six Wings: Men of Science in the Renaissance (Cleveland and New York, 1966), pp. 54-96.

²⁰Pseudodoxia Epidemica, Bk. 6, Ch. 5, in The Works of Sir Thomas Browne, ed. Charles Sayle (Edinburgh, 1912), II, p. 316.

²¹I. e., "Of or belonging to rotation; rotatory"--so the O.E.D., which cites this passage.

²²Op. cit., II, pp. 318-9.

²³Alexander Cruden, A Complete Concordance to the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament (New York, Chicago, and Toronto, n. d.), pp. 486-7.

²⁴Confessions, 13, 36-7, p. 346.

²⁵Matthew 22. 37. Cf. Deut. 6.5: "...with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

²⁶I do not wish to place undue emphasis on this Christian numerology, much less to suggest that it has any real relevance to Herbert, though Augustine does assign three and four the indicated values (On Christian Doctrine, 2, 16, 26, p. 52, in explaining Christ's fasting for forty days), and the typological

recurrence of seven seems too important to neglect. But it should be noted that the values of three and four differ here from those assigned to them by Pythagorean number theory, where three represents harmony, four, friendship and concord. See Alastair Fowler, Spenser and the Numbers of Time (London, 1964), ch. 3 and 4.

²⁷ (London, 1651), p. 129. quoted by Louis L. Martz, The Poetry of Meditation (New Haven, 1962), p. 247.

²⁸ Confessions, 1, 6, p. 25.

²⁹ Op. cit., p. 130.

³⁰ Works, p. 533. Milton tells us that Eve is "More lovely than Pandora, whom the Gods Endow'd with all thir gifts" (Paradise Lost, 4, 714-5).

³¹ Op. cit., pp. 98-9.

³² For further illustrations of this thematic use of rest in Herbert's poetry, see "The Church Porch," ll. 109-10, 174, 297; "Content," l. 4; "Love unknown," l. 53; "Joseph's coat," l. 2; "The H. Communion," l. 9.

³³ There is an echo in l. 19, "And this is that makes life so long," of Hamlet's "There's the respect that makes calamity of so long life." (3. 1. 68-9)

³⁴ Op. cit., p. 103.

³⁵ This idea of man's tripartite soul explains ll. 25-6 of Donne's "A Valediction: Of My Name, in the Window," "Then, as all my souls be Emparadised in you," and is one of the philosophical bases for the differences among the three stanzas of Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress."

³⁶ Man's ability to go up to the angels or down to the beasts provides the central choice in Ben Jonson's Volpone, and figures to a lesser degree in both King Lear and The Tempest.

³⁷ Hutchinson's note to "Businessse," Works, p. 517.

³⁸ W. H. Auden, "Lay Your Sleeping Head, My Love."

³⁹ Winifred Nowotny, The Language Poets Use (London, 1968), p. 156.

⁴⁰For a brilliant analysis of this poem, together with a demonstration of the tools of modern explication, see E. B. Greenwood, "George Herbert's Sonnet 'Prayer': A Stylistic Study," *ELC*, 15 (1965), pp. 27-45.

Compare the first stanza of Keats's "To Autumn," where the season is apostrophized in long descriptive phrases lacking finite verbs, giving the impression, soon to be dissipated, that this time of abundance and increase is infinite:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease;
 For summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

Though "has o'er-brimmed" in line 11 is finite, it is syntactically separate from lines 1-10. It is interesting to note the effect that traditional poetry, which relies so heavily on fully articulated syntax, can achieve by an occasional departure from this syntax.

⁴¹Op. cit., p. 136.

⁴²Works, p. 504.

⁴³Op. cit., p. 16.

⁴⁴For an excellent examination of the value of analyses of tense and mood to poetic explication, see Francis Berry, Poets' Grammar (London, 1958).

⁴⁵Op. cit., p. 210.

⁴⁶Op. cit., p. 16.

⁴⁷Rosalie Colie (op. cit., pp. 200-1) also notes that "Come" rhymes with the poem's title.

Chapter 3

POETRY AND LIGHT: HERBERT'S SYNAESTHETIC IMAGERY

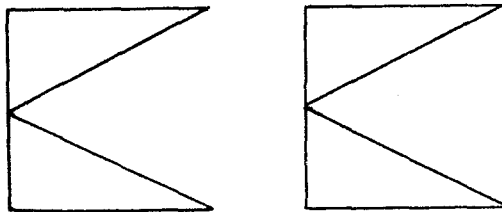
O! the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance every where--

"The Eolian Harp"

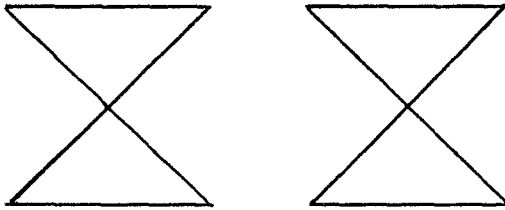
i .

For Herbert, as we saw in the last chapter, a divine poem shares simultaneously two modes of existence: the temporal, which corresponds to our immediate but transitory reception of a poem as a series of words; and the eternal, which corresponds to our enlightening apprehension of the poem as an immutable hieroglyph or truth, transcending the words in which it is stated. Further, Herbert's concept of a poem's double existence, deriving from Augustine's distinction between time and eternity, serves him as a metaphor illustrating both the bond of grace stretching between finite man and eternal God, and the peculiar interdependence of the worlds of the flesh and the spirit.

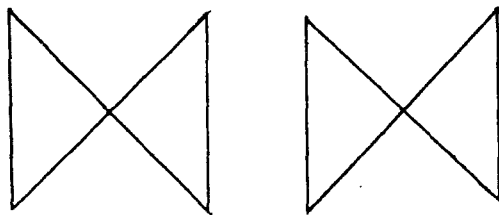
Herbert's poetry, however, involves us with another kind of simultaneity as well, that of two modes of sensory perception. We know that any poem on the printed page can be at once both an auditory mechanism and a visual one, although it is difficult (and sometimes impossible) to respond fully to both mechanisms at the same time. With Herbert, however, the duality of modes of perception is an integral part of his verse. If, for example, we read "Easter-wings" aloud from a properly printed text, we are forced to an awareness of how the poem's sound and shape reinforce each other. If we have never seen the poem printed, on the other hand, if we do not know its title (which fuses the poem's shape with the argued fact that Christ's death redeems sinful man and makes possible his own ascent), and if it is then read to us, no matter how often we hear it and how attentively we listen to its meter and rhyme, we will probably never move beyond "seeing" it in the pattern of



We would not see the shape it has on the page when the book is turned on its side



which pictorially charts, through contractions and expansions, man's spiritual transformation from poverty to wealth and sickness to health. Nor would we see the poem's emblematic value, as we do when the book is held normally,



the Easter-wings themselves, which emphasize the fact that ascent follows descent, for Christ and for man.¹

And in "Easter-wings" the relation of shape to argument is apparent. In "Coloss. 3.3. Our Life is Hid with Christ in God," on the other hand, where the hieroglyph is within rather than around the words, it is probably impossible to be aware of the hieroglyph while we are listening--whether we are doing the reading or someone else is--to all the poem's words. Without Herbert's title and italics, and without careful spacing by the compositor, most readers would very likely never get the whole point.

There is a sense, then, in which many of Herbert's poems operate by counterpointing an aural stimulus with a visual one, and

depend for their success on the reader's imaginatively uniting the two. The word "visual" may in some cases be misleading, however, for as our analysis of "Deniall" showed, Herbert's hieroglyphs do not always manifest themselves to the eye. Nevertheless, a tension exists between the words we hear and a more fundamental substance embodied within these words. So we may say that we "see" this substance, finally, in the same way that sight is always invoked, literally or figuratively, as a kind of verbal equivalent for the grasping of truth. The recognition of a truth--which may have been told to one--is always accompanied by the exclamation, "I see it!" not, "I hear it!"

In Herbert's poetry, the relation of auditory to visual meaning operates not only on the level of structure and hieroglyph but also on the physically less obvious but equally important level of synaesthetic imagery. What I wish to demonstrate in this chapter is that Herbert's synaesthesia is not simply a technical or descriptive device, where one kind of imagery is quantitatively equal to other kinds, as it is in the more sensuous work of such diverse poets as Crashaw, Keats, Dowson, and Hopkins.² Rather it is an attempt at a poetic duplication of one of the primary thematic identities of Christianity, that of God as Light with God as Word. It thus provides another way for Herbert to build, or at least to image, revealed truth in his poetry, since the synaesthesia serves a higher end than craftsmanship. I shall show that Herbert's authorities for his conceptual--as opposed to stylistic--

synaesthesia are the Bible, parts of Augustine's scriptural hermeneutics, and beyond even these, a fundamental linguistic identity of words for seeing and words for saying that is embedded in human consciousness.

First, however, it will be helpful to consider some general notions about the nature of synaesthesia, or intersensorial transfer, which will furnish a partial context for measuring Herbert's ingenuity and achievement. In this context I should like to borrow from Stephen Ullmann's Principles of Semantics, which includes an important analysis of synaesthesia in the work of a dozen poets (including Keats and Dowson). Ullmann reaches three major conclusions.

First, in the vast majority of cases, intersensorial transfers "tend to mount from the lower to the higher reaches of the sensorium, from the less differentiated sensations to the more differentiated ones, and not vice versa."³ In other words, a synaesthetic image will invariably use a relatively undifferentiated sense, such as taste, scent, or touch, to make a statement about a relatively differentiated sense, such as sight or sound. That is, the sense of taste, for example, will provide terms for saying something about sight, or about an object seen, much more frequently than the sense of sight will be invoked to provide terms for saying something about taste. In even a faded metaphor like "her sweet smile," it is the smile that is important, not an abstract quality identified with the taste of sweetness. Ullmann uses the terms "destination" and "source" to signify, respectively,

the sense characterized and the sense used to characterize it, and finds that in four out of five images the given destination is higher in the sensorium than its attendant source.

Although many images in The Temple correspond to the conventional pattern traced by Ullmann elsewhere, statistically fewer than four out of five of Herbert's synaesthetic images move from a low source to an unequivocally higher destination. It is just as common to find such intersensorial transfers as these in "The Odour"--"With these [words] all day I do perfume my minde" and "A speaking sweet" (describing a pomander)--which contain sources higher than their destinations and thus run contrary to Ullmann's norm.

Usually, however, the extremes⁴ of Herbert's synaesthetic images--source and destination alike--will be drawn from the terminologies of sight and sound. More characteristic of Herbert's metaphors than the illustrations from "The Odour" are such lines as "Till ev'n his beams sing, and my musick shine" ("Christmas") and "Without a knock it never shone" ("Content"). Although sight theoretically exists higher in the sensorium than sound, the two are more nearly equivalent in value, in ability to differentiate, than any other two senses. And Herbert's actual construction of his image, as the metaphoric chiasmus in the line from "Christmas" shows particularly, rarely tends to emphasize the difference in sensory level.

Ullmann's other two conclusions derive from the first: the predominant source of intersensorial transfer is touch,⁵ and the

predominant destination is sound.⁶ Though sight is more differentiated than sound, Ullmann points out that "Visual terminology is incomparably richer than its additional counterpart, and has also far more similes and images at its command. Of the two sensory domains at the top end of the scale, sound stands more in need of external support than light, form or color; hence the greater frequency of the intrusion of outside elements into the description of acoustic phenomena."⁷

The failure of Herbert's images to conform to the general pattern that Ullman detects in intersensorial transfer can obviously be no certain basis for conclusions about his art. No poet, especially a great one, will fail to deviate in many ways, some purely arbitrary, from any set of norms that arise from a broad study of poetry. An element of unlikeliness is always part of greatness. At the same time, however, since Ullmann's conclusions point to the poet's need for reinforcing one sense with another--sounds needs help from touch--it can be reasonably inferred that Herbert did not feel this kind of technical necessity, and molded his synaesthetic metaphors for ideational rather than stylistic reasons. Synaesthesia was an end rather than a means.

Synaesthesia, as Herbert seems to have recognized, contains one property that it does not share with other forms of metaphor. Whereas the extremes of most metaphors are drawn from dissimilar modes of being, these modes are not so logically alien to each other,

so totally dissociated and self-cancelling, as they are in a syn-aesthetic figure. The tenor and vehicle of a conventional metaphor exist independently until the metaphor fuses them together, the success of which fusion usually forces us to overlook the original independence; the source and destination of an intersensorial transfer, on the other hand, are not simply independent but are conceptually opposed, and we can never really overlook this opposition. Some illustrations from Herbert may clarify this point.

Pilate, a stranger, holdeth off; but they,
 Mine owne deare people, cry, Away, away,
 With noises confused fighting the day:
 Was ever grief like mine?
 ("The Sacrifice," 101-4)

Compared with the non-committal disinterest of Pilate, the confused (and treacherous) clamor of Christ's own people is so great, says Herbert, that it frightens the "day." Now, there is obviously no dictionary sense in which a "day" is susceptible of fright, and thus we know that Herbert is employing a kind of metaphoric transfer. In fact, he is using a metonymy in which the word "day" is substituted for all the normal commerce and behavior that generally occur during a day, which on this particular day have been aborted by the cries for crucifixion. The advantage of the metonymy is that the possible associations of the word "day" are infinite, whereas any list of daily activities, however, long, would be finite; consequently, we gain the sense that the confusion, too, is infinite. If, ignoring meter

and rhyme, Herbert had written "With noises confused frightening all women and children and making the day unfit for business transactions," we could ask, "But what about dogs and cats and old men? Weren't they frightened as well? And though you speak of business, what about relaxation and love?" The word "day" poses no such problem of limitation; its contents are as limitless as our own imaginations, subject to the one condition that they logically have something to do with the day. The very imprecision of the phrase "something to do with" demonstrates the openness, the centrifugal movement, of the metonymy.

A second illustration occurs a bit earlier in the same poem:

I answer nothing, but with patience prove
 If stonie hearts will melt with gentle love.
 (ll. 89-90)

The phrase "stonie hearts" is a metaphor, if a faded and not particularly interesting one. We are invited to think of the hearts of Christ's persecutors as endowed with certain of the properties of stone. The subjunctive verb "melt" conditions this invitation, leading us to think of coldness rather than warmth (stones being capable of either property) as well as hardness and perhaps massive immovableness. Again one could expand the list infinitely, though not justifiably in all directions; a "stonie heart" cannot be a "light heart."

In these metaphors Herbert has spoken of X instead of Y so that we would take the properties of X and transfer them to Y; once we have done so, we will probably not notice if these properties

cannot really obtain for Y, as it is nonsense, literally, to speak of a heart as being "hard" or "soft," "cold" or "warm." The understanding of these metaphors does not make them cease to exist as metaphors but rather shows that our own modes of apprehension are in some measure metaphoric.

The extremes of a synaesthetic image do not logically have "something to do with" each other in even the tentative way that hardness and coldness have something to do, however metaphorically, with certain possibilities of the human heart. And the terminology of sight, for example, cannot make a statement about sound in the same easily grasped sense that the word "day" offers a statement about any and all of the multifarious activities that exist every day or on a given day. We may illustrate with lines 16-20 of "A Parodie":

Ah Lord! do not withdraw,
 Lest want of aw
 Make Sinne appeare;
 And when thou dost but shine lesse cleare,
 Say, that thou art not here.

There is a syntactical ambiguity in the last two of these lines, which makes it possible for the verb "Say" to take as its subject either sin or the fact of God's shining less clearly. We could read them, "And when sin sees you shining less clearly, he will say you are absent," or "As I have asked you not to withdraw, so I recognize that your shining less clearly says something about your absence." Though I think both these readings are legitimate, it is the second,

in which shining is an intersensorially transferred source for the destination saying, that interests me here.

Shining, in its negative aspect, is presented as a way for us to understand saying, in its negative aspect. "Not shining" is equal to "saying not." But we do not understand "saying not" by transferring to it properties of "not shining" that it does not already possess; sound is as capable as sight of negative representation, and there is no quality of sight that lends itself to a description of sound with anything like the logic that "hardness" lends itself to a description of the heart. Although our failure to perceive an object by one sense may accompany our failure to perceive it by another, we know empirically that these failures do not reinforce each other. If we see a silent piano, we are not hearing it; if we then shut our eyes, we are not hearing it any less.

We shall be viewing Herbert's synaesthesia principally in two ways: as a concrete image of the identity of the Word of God with the Light of God (specifically in "The Windows"), and as a reproduction of the bond of grace that draws man and God to each other (specifically in "Christmas" and a number of poems whose central figure is a star). Beyond these, there is a further function that links Herbert's use of synaesthesia with the other observations on his poetry that have been the subject of their study. By the failure of the extremes of a synaesthetic image to make a statement about

one phenomenon about another, reinforces our sense of the silence that the poet is asserting. To say "My silence arises from your light," by its division into different modes of being, makes the silence believable, as the statement "My silence arises from awe at your presence," where the silence is too logically talked about, would not. Any speech that claims to be wordless presents a contradiction, but a synaesthetic linking enables Herbert, as nearly as possible, to refute this contradiction and, as everywhere else, make us believe that his poem in praise of God is without his own words.

ii.

Light is one of the most profusely deployed images of the Bible, as it is of the sacred texts of many of the world's religions.⁹ Rather than simply tracing its successive scriptural occurrences, I propose to sketch four distinct and yet interrelated situations, or models, that the presence of light helps to define, and then cursorily to examine the expansion of the image into the modes of reflecting and seeing. In establishing the four models, I shall be treating the Bible as a simultaneous whole, rather than as an unfolding statement: I shall not, that is, assume that any greater degree of complexity or sophistication informs a light image developed in, say, Isaiah than in the earlier Genesis. The chronology and fragmentary composition of the Bible are not material to this argument.

These models, then, will hopefully relate analogously to the parallel development of the image of the Word and at the same time provide the basis for a partial understanding of Herbert's use of light imagery. (Writing less than a century after Herbert, Emanuel Swedenborg characterized light as "the divine truth of the Word, also the truth of faith"¹⁰-- thus suggesting the visual contents of a verbal structure that we shall be pursuing.) Since Herbert's reliance on the Bible so often becomes a kind of typological exegesis, as the examination of "Aaron" in Chapter 2 shows, it will be desirable to show that each of these models of light rests on Old Testament and New Testament authentication.

The first situation more or less abstractly equates light with truth and goodness, sharply distinguishes it from darkness, hence from error and evil, and acknowledges and condemns the human preference for darkness. The loci classici of this distinction are Isaiah 5.20, "Woe unto them that call evill good, and good evill, that put darkenes for light, and light for darkenesse, that put bitter for sweete, and sweete for bitter," and in the New Testament, the admonition of Jesus to Nicodemus, John 3.19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darknesse rather than light, because their deedes were evill." Both of these passages invest light with a consciously metaphorical character: not given an independent existence, it functions as an explicit vehicle to make good comprehensible.

A second model emphasizes the inability of light, as a promised sign of salvation, to be contained, its capacity to flood the world, implicitly to obliterate darkness, to shine on the Gentiles and the children of Israel alike. Again the Old Testament text is in Isaiah, where the Lord tells his prophet, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Iacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my ~~sal~~vation, unto the end of the earth" (49.6). Light, like God defined by negative theology, is limitless. This same note sounds frequently in the New Testament. Simeon calls the infant Jesus, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the Glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2.32). Similarly, Paul and Barnabas report of themselves, "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to bee a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Acts 13.47), a charge that Paul passes on to the Philippians: "That yee may be blamelesse and harmlesse, the sonnes of God, without rebuke, in the middes of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2.15). Thus, light progresses from a metaphor for goodness to the matrix of salvation.

For our third model we may regard typologically the theophany to Moses on the mountain as a prefiguration of the conversion of Paul, as Saul of Tarsus, on the road to Damascus. "The Angel of

the Lord appeared unto him [Moses], in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush" (Exodus 3.2): the bush does not burn, which emphasizes, here as elsewhere in the Bible, the luminous rather than the thermal qualities of the fire. In the same way Jesus appears to Paul as, or associated with, light: "And as he journeyed he came neere Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fel to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord: And the Lord said, I am Iesus whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9.3-5). "And the men which journeyed with him, stood speechlesse, hearing a voice, but seeing no man" (9.7): that is, the light is the voice, the light seen equals the words heard. Quite literally, for both Moses and Paul, the light dawns to adopt one of Ian Ramsey's figures for the distinctively religious experience, for the discernment of divinity.¹¹

We may conclude this account of light-governed situations by going to the beginning. "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good" (Genesis 1.3-4). In Chapter 2 we examined the nature of this first "speech" of God's as St. Augustine understood it; it should now be added that by acknowledging the goodness of His first "spoken" creation, God is at least partially (and perhaps pantheistically) identifying the light with Himself. I am trying to suggest that the movement from the third

model to the fourth represents a movement from God and light as coincident to God and light as tautological. The first verses of the Johannine Gospel make this tautology evident enough, but its epitomizing statement occurs in the first epistle of John 1.5: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darknesse at all."

Though I have tried to divide part of the light imagery of the Bible into certain distinct patterns--light as a figure for good, explicitly contrasted with darkness as a figure for evil; light as the signal of a promised salvation; light as an indication of God's presence; and light as God Himself--it will be seen that these situations are not really separate one from another, and that the statement "God is light" could really be deduced from any of them, and not only from the model that I have used it to illustrate. Nevertheless, the value of examining the statement from four sides, as if it were applicable to four altogether different contexts, will be apparent when we come to see the various ways in which light imagery manifests itself in Herbert's poetry.

To say that God is light is to say that, for the believer, for the receiver of revelation, God is both the object seen and the illumination by which the object is seen. (This identity of being and doing also obtains in the statement that God is the Word: God is God as well as what tells us of God.) Vision depends on light, but a

vision of God obviously does not depend on any light other than what is intrinsic to Himself, even if there were any other such light. But beyond this fact that God permits us to see Him, what does the Bible say about the act of seeing Him? In his epistles to the Corinthians Paul makes two important statements that relate the vision of faith to the vision of revelation. Having developed the analogy of a man's turning from childish things as he matures, of gaining a greater understanding, Paul writes, in one of his best-known verses, "For now we see through a glasse, darkely i.e., in a riddle, or enigma⁷: but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am knowen" (I Cor. 13.12). One progresses from seeing an image, inevitably distorted, to seeing Truth, Light, God, directly, as it is. Paul's words, writes Augustine, are more literal than they at first seem: in a glass man sees himself, or an image of himself, and man's self is the image of "Him by whom we are made."¹² Thus, to see oneself is to see an image of God, however imperfect the image. Moreover, the glass through which we see functions as both window and mirror for Augustine: we see ourselves reflected by the glass, but through ourselves we see God, or a suggestion of Him.

In his next epistle Paul writes that this enigmatic view of God transforms the observer: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glasse the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glorie to glorie, even as by the spirit of the Lord"

(II Cor. 3.18). Glossing this later passage, Augustine says that we ourselves "pass from a form that is obscure to a form that is bright,"¹³ as if it is the vision of God that allows us to complete our own natures. The light that is God, then, denotes a reciprocal relationship: God as object is revealed to the believer by His own light, and in turn, the believer both mirrors this light and becomes a secondary source of it. The essential point here is that we come to know God by His brightness, and knowing Him, we ourselves then manifest this brightness. As the Word is made flesh, so is the Light made a luminousness outside itself.

And so we come to the notion of God as the Word, and thus of the equivalence of a visual image with an aural image, each of which furnishes terms for expressing the other. (The term logos does, of course, embrace visual, or graphic, and phenomenological possibilities as well as those of speech, and is consequently not entirely differentiated from light; but it will be clear that both Augustine and Herbert conceive of it, first, as related to modes of discourse.) The biblical texts identifying God with the Word demand less categorization than those identifying Him with Light; two will serve us here. First, of course, is the Gospel of John 1.1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The following few verses show that the life of this Word--the Word, that is, as active, as revealed; the consubstantial Son when manifest in the world--was the light of men, which shineth in darkness. Thus the

Word is as much to be seen as heard. Second is the appearance to St. John the Divine of God in Heaven: "And hee was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood, and his name is called, The Word of God" (Revelations 19.13). In other words, the word "God" itself implies all that can be said (hence, known) about God; the rest is merely commentary. Or as John Macquarrie puts it in an ontological-existential discussion of the word, "As the key-name in the theological vocabulary, the word God supplies the clue for understanding the significance of the other items in the vocabulary."¹⁴ In "Love" (I) Herbert writes that "thy glorious name Wrought our delivrance from th' infermall pit...."

An observation of Father Ong's is highly pertinent here: "As is the case in no other religion [than Christianity], the word is here the proper name of a Person, the Son of God, himself God--eo verbum quo filius, runs the classic theological logion: 'He is Word by fact that he is Son.' The designation Word thus belongs to the Son directly and immediately, just as the designation Son itself does. It is his divine name. The visually grounded titles such as the 'Light of Light' of the Nicene Creed are applicable to him, but they are second-level designations less meaningful than 'Word' or 'Son.'"¹⁵ The Son is the Light, but before and after that he is the Word, and his name is the Word of God.

If all knowledge of God arises from the word "God," then the Word of God must not be taken as a purely verbal phenomenon.

Specifically, of course, the Word is imaged--given tangible reality--in the flesh (as also the light is imaged--reflected): "And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isaiah 40.5); "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the onely begotten of the Father) full of grace and trueth" (John 1.14); "Concerning his sonne Iesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Romans 1.3); and finally, "And without controversies, great is the mysterie of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, iustified in the Spirit, seene of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, beleaved on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3.16). Made flesh, then, the Word is to be seen.

We are to understand that the Logos, the Word as it has been used in this discussion, denotes the very concept of Godhead or Being, and not only the articulatory process by which the concept is manifested or can be made known. Paradoxically, the Logos is both the timeless, uncreated source of all things and the historical, created product of itself, made flesh, entering history at the beginning of the Christian epoch.¹⁶ In On the Trinity, Augustine, considering the passage in Luke 5.21-22 where Jesus perceived the inward thoughts of the scribes and Pharisees, that is, where he saw what they were saying to themselves, brilliantly distinguishes between the inner word and the outer discourse, and shows that sight (hence light) stands in the same relation to the inner word that discourse does. Speech and sight are

outwardly different, he writes, but inwardly--since both express thoughts existing in the mind--the same.¹⁷ Later he makes his semantic discrimination even more explicit: "The word that sounds outwardly is the sign of the word that gives light inwardly; which latter has the greater claim to be called a word. For that which is uttered with the mouth of the flesh is the articulate sound of a word, and is itself also called a word, on account of that to make which outwardly apparent it is itself assumed."¹⁸ The Word is immutable and indivisible, but it is signalled by both outward speech and inward light. St. Augustine then sets up an analogy: man's word (his inward thought) is to man's speech (verbal articulation) as the Word of God is to the Word of God made flesh. The silent word of man offers a better parallel to the Word of God than does man's spoken word.¹⁹ The Word, then, as a concept is itself silent, but it can be understood through and as speech and light. Conceptually, this is not very far from the statement in On Christian Doctrine, cited in Chapter 1, above, that

In order that what we are thinking may reach the mind of the listener through the fleshly ears, that which we have in mind is expressed in words and is called speech. But our thought is not transformed into sounds; it remains entire in itself and assumes the form of words by means of which it may reach the ears without suffering any deterioration in itself. In the same way the Word of God was made flesh without change that He might dwell among us.²⁰

We are back to the idea of poetic silence with which we began; poetry is mute so as to allow man's apprehension of the inner light--the Word.

Augustine's recognition of the unity of light and words is mentioned repeatedly in the Confessions as well. The earth, which was without form and void, would have remained so "unless that same Word which created it had turned it towards its Creator and made it light by casting his own brightness upon it, not in equal degree with yourself, but allowing it to take form in your likeness."²¹ And later he quotes from Psalms 119.105: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."²²

The foregoing discussion establishes the theological basis for a synaesthetic confluence of light and sound, and theologically justifies the representation of what is seen by an aural effect, what is heard by a visual one, as in Herbert's "Till ev'n his beams sing, and my musick shine." The same justification can be made if the etymological relationship of words for seeing, showing, shining, etc., to words for saying, telling, etc., be investigated. A penetrating discussion of John Macquarrie's in God-Talk: An Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology, is very much to the point here and may therefore be quoted at some length:

One can hardly fail to be impressed on noticing how many verbs of saying can be traced back to roots signifying "light," so that to "say" something seems originally to have meant to "bring it into the light." The English word "say" is a causative form cognate with "see," and was thus originally "cause to see" or "let see." The Greek phemi, "say," is connected with phaino, "show, bring to light," and so with phos, "light." The Latin dicere, "say," is cognate with Greek deiknūmi and with German zeigen, both meaning

"show"; while all three words probably go back to an old Indo-European root, di, signifying "bright" or "shining." These connections with light are not confined to Indo-European verbs of saying. When we turn to the Semitic languages, we are told that the common Hebrew verb 'āmar, "say," is likewise connected with the idea of "showing," and eventually with such simple notions as "prominent," "bright," "visible."²³

To this analysis I should like to add two specific observations, which will be particularly meaningful when we consider Herbert's poetry. First, we generally, if not always, think of the word "preach" as meaning "say" or "proclaim"; thus a preacher is one who says or who proclaims. The dyslogistic associations of the word make this meaning clearest of all: we say, for instance, that a poem (or a short story, or a man) preaches, or that a poem is preachy, if it too overtly tells us something rather than showing it to us or doing it for us. "A poem should not mean But be": by not meaning but being, a poem does, not says. "Preach," however, derives from the Latin prae, "before," plus dicare, "to make known"; since, as Macquarrie demonstrates, the di- form is cognate with the Greek deiknūmi, "show," and the Indo-European *di, "shining," a preacher shows before he says, or he puts light upon a matter; in the Augustinian sense, he shows inwardly by saying outwardly.

Second, the word "speech" itself, what is said, what emanates from one's organs of articulation [OE specan] is cognate with the word "spectacle," what is seen, what appears before one's eyes [L specere], a relationship partially preserved in the word "speculate,"

which describes the act of trying to see something inwardly, often through silent words. Thus, a study of etymologies corroborates the biblical-Augustinian authority that "seeing" and "saying" are not descriptive of essentially different acts. We may now investigate more specifically manifestations of synaesthetic imagery in the poetry of George Herbert.

iii.

"Christmas" is a good poem to begin with, for the relation of the Word of God to the Light of God, so dramatic in the final line, is implicit throughout.

All after pleasures as I rid one day,
 My horse and I, both tir'd, bodie and minde,
 With full crie of affections, quite astray,
 I took up in the next inne I could finde.
 There when I came, whom found I but my deare,
 My dearest Lord, expecting till the grief
 Of pleasures brought me to him, readie there
 To be all passengers most sweet relief?
 O Thou, whose glorious, yet contracted light,
 Wrapt in nights mantle, stole into a manger;
 Since my dark soul and brutish is thy right,
 To Man of all beasts be not thou a stranger:
 Furnish & deck my soul, that thou mayst have
 A better lodging then a rack or grave.

The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?
 My God, no hymne for thee?
 My soul's a shepherd too, a flock it feeds
 Of thoughts, and words, and deeds.
 The pasture is thy word: the streams, thy grace
 Enriching all the place.
 Shepherd and flock shall sing, and all my powers
 Out-sing the day-light houres.

Then we will chide the sunne for letting night
 Take up his place and right:
 We sing one common Lord; wherefore he should
 Himself the candle hold.
 I will go searching, till I finde a sunne
 Shall stay, till we have done;
 A willing shiner, that shall shine as gladly,
 As frost-nipt sunnes look sadly,
 Then we will sing, and shine all our own day,
 And one another pay:
 His beams shall cheer my breast, and both so twine,
 Till ev'n his beams sing, and my musick shine.

Two points should be noted at once. First, though many poems in The Temple describe or allude to Christ's Passion and dying for mankind (e.g., "The Sacrifice," "Redemption," "Easter," "Easter-Wings," "Good Friday"), only "Christmas" takes as its subject his birth; the volume thus maintains a proportion relative to Herbert's assertion in the second stanza of "Good Friday" of the greater importance of the death. Second, since only the sonnet ending "A better lodging than a rack or grave" is included in the early manuscript of The Temple in Dr. Williams' library, or W, all evidence points toward the second part of the complete poem having been written at a much later date. Whereas critical tradition takes the two parts as a single poem, it is no certainty that Herbert viewed them that way. In any event, the different times of composition may account for the radically different form and tone of the two parts, though I shall suggest that we may still see them combining in an essential unity.

Though the rhyme scheme of the sonnet, three quatrains and a couplet, is technically Shakespearean, the switch from a narrative

in the past tense to a vocative in the present, at line 9, and the syntactical fact that the last six lines are punctuated as a single sentence, suggest that the lines also divide formally into an octave and a sestet. The dramatic situation so plainly expressed in the octave is one familiar in Herbert (see, for example, "The Collar"): the speaker, a sinner seeking only more of the indulgence that has exhausted him in body and mind, is led willy-nilly to Christ, who has patiently awaited him. The episode of a tired man reining into an inn is presented in such a commonplace, homely way that the first four lines give no indication of the religious subject that will follow; nevertheless, the speaker immediately recognizes "My deare, My dearest Lord," and so there is none of the resistance to salvation that is found in "The Collar." Thy oxymoron "grief Of pleasures," as Hutchinson points out in his commentary,²⁴ draws on the same concept as that found in "The Pulley," where God holds rest alone in His Pandora's box of pleasures so that "If goodnesse leade him not, yet wearinesse May tosse him to my breast" (ll. 19-20), an idea already examined in Chapter 2, above.

The sestet specifically views Christ as a light that has come to brighten the dark soul of man: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation, unto the end of the earth" (Isaiah 49.6). The Word is made flesh and Light, Christ's "glorious, yet contracted light" should be understood in two ways. On the one hand, the light is contracted in that its intensity is

concentrated into the figure in the manger (and, implicitly, in the single star over Bethlehem, which figures so prominently in such other of Herbert's poems as "The Starre"). On the other hand, Herbert is playing on the legal sense of the word: the light is contracted in that it has been promised to man.²⁵ The wonderful eleventh line, "Since my dark soul and brutish is thy right" (the kind of line that one wishes Coleridge had annotated), completes the terms of the contract: the light has been promised to man, and conversely the dark soul of man belongs to this light. A contract binds both parties to it, and is thus a convenient symbol for bi-directional energy. As Father Ong writes, "The Word of God, moreover, is reciprocating. If the Word who became man in God's communication to man, he is also man's response to God."²⁶ Christmas looks both ways at once.

Finally, the animal imagery in the sestet justifies the apparently random inclusion of the speaker's horse in line 2. Christ's association with cattle in the stable has made him no stranger to other beasts²⁷; therefore, let him accept man, too, whose brutish soul places him among the beasts, so that--and here again we find the reciprocal relationship--man may receive Christ into his soul, which is "A better lodging than a rack or grave." The logic goes something like this: as a beast, man has the same right to Christ's light that other beasts have; but, as more than a beast, as set apart by his soul, man is the

only being truly fit to receive Christ. The speaker's objective is at least theoretically incomplete at the end of the sonnet; Christ's light is still wrapped in night's mantle, not yet having been received into the human soul.

As the second, and for our purposes more important, part of "Christmas" indicates, Christ is to be made manifest in man not only as light but also as words and ultimately as the Word. Although the unity of the two parts of the poem is not immediately recognizable, one should observe that the speaker's desire for salvation, which concludes part 1 with the request that Christ's light shine in him, is reiterated at the beginning of part 2 in his wondering whether he can sing of the works of God. (The very first words of part 2, "The shepherds sing," presumably draw on Luke 2.17-18, wherein the shepherds describe the babe whom they have seen lying in the manger; together with line 10, these words form the only real points of contact between Herbert's poem and the biblical Christmas story.) Herbert thus delineates the reciprocal nature of the man-God relationship: God shines in and through man's otherwise dark soul, and man speaks words about and in praise of the Word of God made flesh. Consequently, the bond of grace connecting man and God actively extends in each direction, and can be represented, literally and metaphorically at the same time, as either visual or verbal energy.

The speaker is not to be without his hymn for God. For if the

implicit radiance, since it "outsings"--that is, out-does, out-performs--daylight itself. But daylight is not only daylight. The word "sunne," in line 23 and again in line 27, incorporates the pun on sun-Son that occasions Herbert's awe at the expressiveness of the English language in "The Sonne," later in The Temple.²⁸ (Herbert should, however, have known that the Bible itself offers something very like this correspondence without having to rely on the idiosyncracies of English homophones; I Kings 2.3 and 2 Chronicles 21.7 equate light with the son who preserves his family's lineage.) Therefore, the sun that let night take up his place and right is the Son, the contracted light of line 9, that came "wrapt in nights mantle" to free the soul, which is its right, from the darkness that had "take[n] up his place"--presumably after the Fall. Herbert's chiding the sun is really his marveling at the miracle of Christmas, at the way the Light of the Word made flesh frees the soul from darkness, and invests it with a luminousness that allows it in turn to sing of the Word.

The identification of images of light with images of sound continues. "We sing one common Lord": the poet, the shepherd and the flock (or his soul and its thoughts), and the sun (but not, here, the Son) join together in verbally praising God. In the previous lines his voice was shining; now the sun is singing. But God should hold Himself as a candle, as a light in constant view, and so the poet will search for this constant sun that will shine until the song

is finished. He has, of course, in part 1 of the poem and again in the pastoral figure of lines 17-20, already found this light in the Son, and outlasting the daylight, his song will never end. Lines 29-30 contrast the Son, the permanent Light of God, for which he claims to be searching, but which he has in fact already found, with the ephemeral sun that can be eclipsed by other natural processes such as frost.

"Then we will sing, and shine all our own day And one another pay": the soul's union with God allows the voice of the shepherd to shine and the light of the Son to sing, a reciprocity also denoted by the mutual paying of line 32, another legal-financial figure to go along with "contracted" and "right."

We may now see how the apparent illogic of the poem's final line--"Till ev'n his beams sing, and my musick shine"--is in fact a summation, through the specific fusion of word and light, of the poem's theme: that the Christian sings in praise of Christ's revealed light and thus attains to such a unity with God, through grace, that the singing can transmit itself visually and the light, aurally. The synaesthetic imagery is reinforced by a kind of metrical hieroglyph, since Herbert, who has alternated iambic trimeter with iambic pentameter lines throughout the second part of "Christmas," always rhyming lines of unequal length, gives the final line two extra feet, suggesting through the line's physical expansion a corresponding multiplication of the means of perception.

It should also be noted, from the details in the poem (for example, in the first four lines), that do not appear in the biblical narrative of Christ's birth, that the poem celebrates simultaneously the first Christmas, the birth of Christ, and the successive acceptances of Christ by and into individuals, the awakening in man of the Christian response. The poem develops this double-time scheme through a progressive futurity of tenses: lines 1-8, the sinner's finding Christ instead of the pleasure he seeks, are in the past; lines 9-14, his desire to receive Christ and Christ's birth are in the present; lines 15-26 (with the exception of "we will chide," which is cancelled out by "We sing one common Lord") are also in the present, but here the tense denotes fulfillment rather than frustration, hence a later stage toward salvation; and lines 27-34 are in the future, which is really used to indicate the eternal continuance of the state reached in lines 15-26. As we saw in our discussion of "Deniall" (Chapter 2, above), where the Augustinian distinction between time and eternity was explored, Herbert invariably places darkness and error, be they of the culture or the individual, in the completed past, and salvation in a present that is conterminous with a limitless future, world without end. "Christmas" describes the sinner's acceptance of Christ followed by his praise of Christ, a praise that God's grace returns, but the structure of the poem's tenses makes the process of salvation as inevitable as the historic (for the Christian, anyway) birth of Christ.

The fusion of speech and light is an implicit concept in "The Windows," or more specifically, human speech functions as the vehicle, by which the divine light is transmitted.²⁹

Lord, how can man preach thy eternall word?
 He is a brittle crazie glasse:
 Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
 This glorious and transcendent place,
 To be a window, through thy grace.

But when thou dost anneal in glasse thy storie,
 Making thy life to shine within
 The holy Preachers; then the light and glorie
 More rev'rend grows, & more doth win:
 Which else shows watrish, bleak, & thin.

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
 When they combine and mingle, bring
 A strong regard and aw: but speech alone
 Doth vanish like a flaring thing,
 And in the eare, not conscience ring.

The whole poem answers the question posed by the first line, "Lord, how can man ~~preach~~ preach thy eternall word?" in which the apparently unbridgeable gulf separating mere transitory, uncertain man from the unchanging Word of God is presented with marvelous understatement. The first stanza continues to emphasize the unreliability of man, and his proneness to error, "He is a brittle crazie glass" ("crazie" connoting both "fissured" and "distorting," like a fun house mirror), and then metaphorically asserts, nevertheless, that God has allowed man to preach His Word, through His Grace. Herbert's management of syntax in order to stress the difference between man and God and yet to aver that man can come very close to God, but only because God wills so, is rarely more spectacular than here. The interrogative

form of line 1, intensified by its forcible opening, eliminates the necessity of modifying "man" to show how far short of the "eternal word" he falls. Line 2, while introducing the poem's central figure, shows this disjunction more strongly--by its conceptual meaning, by its simplicity of statement, and by the crisp tentativeness of the assonantal i's. Line 2's explicit statement of what had been so modestly conveyed by line 1 gives way so abruptly to a picture of the prominent place man occupies in God's temple that we are inclined, for a moment, to forget his brittleness; then the final phrase of the quintain, "through thy grace," coming in its all-important terminal position, catches us up, and we see that man does not make it on his own, that the grace of God (which is in cognitive if not grammatical apposition to His Word in line 1) allows all. Man's "glorious and transcendent place" is very real, but it is more a function of God than of himself.

Stanza 2, while narrowing man generally to a preacher specifically, explains how this can be so; just as the story of God is emblematically fixed in the stained glass windows of a church (we should note that, in the 1633 edition of The Temple, the poem is entitled "Church-windows," and that there and in the B manuscript, the poem not appearing at all in W,³⁰ it concludes a series of poems named after physical parts of the church or phenomena associated with it: "Church-monuments," "Church-musick," "Church-lock and key," and "The Church-floore"), so the Word of God is fixed in the preacher--annealed in the glass identified with him, transforming the "watrish, bleak, & thin"

qualities that are all that man, denied grace, has. Herbert is attributing to glass the same quasi-mystical properties that we find in "The Elixir," lines 9-12. The third stanza, finally, reiterates the difference between the speech of man that the Word of God inspires, which brings "A strong regard and aw," and speech alone, or discourse, which is impermanent, which vanishes and leaves nothing after it.

The most remarkable fact about "The Windows" is that, whereas the implicit concern of the whole poem is an effort to understand the transcendent mystery that enables man to speak, say, utter, verbally manifest, the Word of God, only lines 1 and 13-15 (and possibly the single word "Preachers" in line 8) suggested to us any verbal process at all; the balance of the poem describes the preacher as a show-er, as a bringer of the Light of God into the light seen by men (dicare, "to make known") as one who visually manifests God, either by being as a church window, on which His story is engraved, or a clear window through which we see Him. Line 1 asks what analogies exist between words and the Word, between human speech and the truth of God, and the poem tells us that God's light, "shin/ing/" within the Holy Preachers," allows words to approximate the Word, and not disappear like substanceless rhetoric, the whole purpose of divine poetry as we saw in Chapter 1. The words of the Johannine Gospel are instructive here: "That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (1.9). Again we have Herbert's reciprocal man-God relationship, wherein the light that God has given

man enables man to return praise to his creator. The fact that the Word has been made visible flesh allows its visual transmission.

Assuming Herbert's general knowledge of Augustine, we can still not hold that any particular poem need have been influenced by any particular passage in the Bishop's works. Nevertheless, we may profitably recall St. Augustine's statement in On the Trinity that "The word that sounds outwardly is the sign of the word that gives light inwardly; which latter has the greater claim to be called a word,"³¹ and see that a very similar thought informs Herbert's poem. Also, we can see that Augustine's annotation to II Corinthians 3.18 ("Beholding as in a glasse the glory of the Lord we are changed into the same image") --we "Pass from a form that is obscure to a form that is bright"³²-- equally describes the process by which God's light and glory inspire reverence in that which is else obscure, "which else shows watrish, bleak, & thin."

The third stanza, then, asserts that the preacher's words, devoted to the divine purposes that God has revealed, are, because of their content, coeternal with the Word itself, with the regard and awe that are strong, that endure; but speech alone (it is interesting to note that Herbert discriminates between words, as signs of things, and speech, as simple articulation), on the other hand, is as finite as man without God (for Herbert, a purely hypothetical state). I believe that her failure to grasp Herbert's distinction, here, between divine words and human speech leads Rosalie Colie to err in writing of the last

stanza, "Even if by chance his sermons should prove effective, the preacher can never know whether or not he has been a proper window, has let the light of truth shine through upon his hearers."³³ The poem itself is evidence that he can know. Even this speech, however has a visual vehicle: it vanishes "like a flaring thing," B shows that "flaring" corrects the original "flaming," presumably indicating Herbert's realization that "flaring" connotes a light of an instant's duration, while "flaming" says nothing whatever of duration, and could thus be confused with the light of God's glory. We may note with satisfaction that "speech alone" and the spectacle of a "flaring thing" coalesce into a kind of profitless "speculation," in contradistinction to the permanent, unspeculative words that express the Word and the Light of God.

iv.

As a particular, concrete source of that divine light that is identified with the divine Word, the star assumes a central, symbolic importance in Herbert's work. Hutchinson observes that Herbert, like Vaughan, "affect[s] the notion of affinities existing between the lowly inanimate things of earth and the stars"³⁴ but as the beginning of "Good Friday" shows, his interest in stars goes well beyond these affinities:

O my chief good,
How shall I measure out thy bloud?
How shall I count what thee befell,
And each grief tell?

Shall I thy woes
 Number according to thy foes?
 Or, since one starre show'd thy first breath,
 Shall all thy death?

Searching for a physical fact equal to the magnitude of Christ's death, an objective correlative, and remembering that a single star signalled to the wise men the fact of his birth (Matthew 2.9-10), Herbert asks if all the stars will not somehow unite to indicate his death to the world. What I wish to emphasize, however, is a collateral inference in line 7, "since one starre show'd thy first breath": because of the natural association of breath with speech, the star shows not only that the man Jesus of Nazareth has been born, but more important, that the breath or the Word of God has been made flesh among men. The light of the star that God caused to move through the heavens is not itself the incarnation of His Word, but it does coincide with this incarnation. The two events, as Herbert describes them, parallel our third model, above, of the theophanies to Moses and Paul. Holding "Good Friday" in mind, as explicit documentation for the interest Herbert shows in stars, we may examine some uses of the figure that are considerably more complex.

Herbert wrote two sonnets lauding and apostrophizing the Bible, "The H. Scriptures," I and II. Thus far we have been concerned with the Bible, largely, because it demonstrates, time and again, the identity of God with light and the Word; equally, however, as the revelation of God's purposes and commands, the Bible is, and frequently

regards itself as being, also the Word. We read in Psalms, "I have refrained my feet from every evill way: That I may keepe thy word" (119.101), and in the epistle of James, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your owne selves" (1.22), where the words recorded in scriptures are clearly intended.³⁵ That the Anglican Herbert regarded the Bible and not any latter-day miracle as the primary manifestation of the Word available to him is evident from A Priest to the Temple, or, The Country Parson, chapter 4, "The Parsons Knowledg": "But the chief and top of [the parson's] knowledge consists in the book of books, the storehouse and magazene of life and comfort, the holy Scriptures. There he sucks, and lives. In the scriptures hee findes four things; Precepts for life, Doctrine for knowledge, Examples for illustration, and Promises for comfort: These he hath digested severally."³⁶

"The H. Scriptures," I, which does not centrally concern us here, echoes many of these concepts with little alteration.

Oh Book" infinite sweetnesse! let my heart
 Suck ev'ry letter, and a hony gain,
 Precious for any grief in any part;
 To cleare the breast, to mollifie all pain.
 Thou art all health, health thriving till it make
 A full eternitie: thou art a masse
 Of strange delights, where we may wish & take.
 Ladies, look here; this is the thankfull glasse,
 That mends the lookers eyes: this is the well
 That washes what it shows. Who can indeare
 Thy praise too much? thou art heav'ns Lidger here,
 Working against the states of death and hell.
 Thou art joyes handsell: heav'n lies flat in thee,
 Subject to ev'ry mounsters bended knee.

We find here the same notion of a physical ingestion of the nourishment of the Bible, which sweetly gives life and health, certitude, peace, and help for pain, to him whom sucks in its words. In line 11, "heav'ns Lidger" (printed as "lieger" in 1633 and "Leiger" in 1634) contains an interesting play on words. Because of its capitalization and because of the word "states" in the following line, as Hutchinson points out, "Lidger" is mainly designating "one appointed to 'lie' or reside at a foreign court, a resident ambassador,"³⁷ hence a personified spokesman of God's word. At the same time, however, we think of a ledger, of a kind of account book, faithfully producing the Word in written words. Also, although "The Windows" was probably written later than this poem, it adds a certain impact to "the thankful glasse, That mends the lookers eyes," if we remember the preacher as the glass through which man "sees" the Word.

Light, and specifically the light of the stars, is Herbert's metaphor for the Bible, thus for the Word, in "The H, Scriptures," II:

Oh that I knew how all thy lights combine,
 And the configurations of their glorie!
 Seeing not onely how each verse doth shine,
 But all the constellations of the storie,
 This verse marks that, and both do make a motion
 Unto a third, that ten leaves off doth lie:
 Then as dispersed herbs do watch a potion,
 These three make up some Christians destinie:
 Such are thy secrets, which my life makes good,
 And comments on thee: for in ev'ry thing
 Thy words do finde me out, & parallels bring,
 And in another make me understood.
 Starres are poore books, & oftentimes do misse:
 This book of starres lights to etemall blisse.

The first eight lines of this sonnet discuss the anguish of biblical exegesis, the difficulty of reading any single text without ignoring its implications elsewhere--in Herbert's metaphor, the difficulty of seeing the constellation for the stars. That the large view is necessary Herbert shows in A Priest to the Temple, where he stresses the importance of "a diligent Collation of Scripture with Scripture. For all Truth being consonant to it self, and all being penn'd by one and the self-same Spirit, it cannot be, but that an industrious, and judicious comparing of place with place must be a singular help for the right understanding of the Scriptures."³⁸ Herbert ultimately owes his emphasis on "a diligent Collation" to St.-Augustine's handbook of hermeneutic postulates, On Christian Doctrine, where the Bishop allows the reader of the Bible to interpret a passage in a way probably not intended by "the author through whom the Holy Spirit created the Scripture," if the interpretation is commensurate with "right faith" and if the reader "has evidence from some other place in the divine book"; for "certainly the Spirit of God, who worked through that author, undoubtedly foresaw that this meaning would occur to the reader or listener."³⁹ In other words, a collation is necessary if one is to go beyond the author's intention to God's design.

But as the sonnet's beginning makes clear, this whole process of collation is not easy in a work where one passage points invariably to another, and the two to a third some distance away, though the three

"make up some Christians destinie": they provide "precepts for life."

The figure of stars and constellations with which Herbert began provides a way out of his exegetical dilemma. The sonnet's final six lines stress the good Christian's intuitive grasp of the truths of the Bible, whether the "configurations of their glory" be exactly worked out or not. An approximate paraphrase of lines 9-12 would be this: "Your teaching, though much of it must remain beyond empirical, intellectual apprehension, is nevertheless borne out by my life; I accept your words, which force my life to parallel their goodness; finally, by manifesting your words in my life, I can be understood by, and helpful to, others." As Miss Colie writes of this passage, "Because the created world is the Book of God's Works and Scripture the Book of His Word, they must be parallel texts, simply two languages to express the same thing, which was God's providence."⁴⁰

Without being too fanciful, one may perhaps infer, biographically, that Herbert is here prompted by the same hope that his exemplary life could be instructive to others, both through poetry and through preaching, that he shows elsewhere. As Helen C. White writes, "For though he was too humble to deem that his experience would swell the mighty witness of the glory of God, he was, as his sending of the manuscript of The Temple to Ferrar on his deathbed shows, charitably sensible of the encouragement his struggles might afford some other bemired wayfarer."⁴¹

Lines 13-14 are very difficult, but I think what Herbert is doing is casting doubt on the effectiveness of his own rhetoric earlier in the sonnet. Having begun by posing an astronomical metaphor for the puzzle of biblical exegesis, and then showing that one can live his life according to the Bible without the Bible's losing all its mystery for him, Herbert now teases his initial image, as if he had meant it literally: why even consider the stars of a constellation as a substitute for the verses of the Bible since stars are an unreliable guide and often tell us nothing (a poke at astrological lore)? Much better, he says, to see that the Scriptures are in their own right an arrangement of stars, which illuminate our way to salvation. ("I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be my salvation unto the ends of the earth," Acts 13.47) There is thus a great fluidity of movement given to the poem's central image, and a transference^e of its mode of existence from figurative to literal meaning and back again. In lines 1-4 Herbert tries to understand the Bible as an astronomer would try to understand the pattern of the heavens; in line 13, he chides himself for having used that figure since literal stars have very little to do with the truth of the Word; and then, in line 14, he again sees that this Word is itself a heavenly light, one more real and lasting than the one dismissed in line 13.

One of the main conclusions so far of this study of Herbert's synaesthetic structure has been the understanding that intersensorial

transfers enable the poet to depict the state of grace, the total reciprocity of commitment between man and God, by uniting the subject with the object of an action (see page 18). A line like "Till ev'n his beams sing, and my musick shine" shows this essential sympathy by implying that the nature of God's giving supplies a terminology for comprehending what man receives, and vice versa. Speaking of the enriching power of metaphor generally, Winifred Nowotny writes, "Since metaphor uses terms in a transferred sense...a poet who wants to write about object X but finds its terminology defective or resistant to manipulation, can simply mover over into the terminology of Y. By using Y-terminology to describe X, he opens to himself the linguistic resources available in connection with Y."⁴² Herbert renders God's acceptance of man to Himself by using a source-term, "sing," drawn from the vocabulary descriptive (in the poem) of human action, to modify God's light; and conversely, to render man's acceptance of God, he uses a source-term, "shine," drawn from the vocabulary descriptive of divine action, to modify man's praise. The result is union.

This process, incidentally, is a perfect illustration of the way in which the context of a poem delimits the potential meanings or associations of its diction, and then capitalizes on this delimiting in a way not possible in prose. Of the myriad senses of "sing" and "shine," we are given to understand that the first denotes man's praise of God, and the second God's revelation of Himself to man; so when,

after establishing these values, Herbert suddenly and dramatically reverses them, God and man become linguistically and poetically bound together.

It should not be surprising, therefore, to find that the figure of stars is as applicable to human words, when they are directed toward God, as it is to the divine Word. Consequently, by transferring the same visual qualities to words and the Word, Herbert is again able to signal the union, through grace, of man and God. "Artillerie" most notably demonstrates this effect.

As I one ev'ning sat before my cell,
 Me thoughts a starre did shoot into my lap.
 I rose, and shook my clothes, as knowing well,
 That from small firs comes oft no small mishap.
 When suddenly I heard one say,
 Do as thou usest, disobey,
 Expell good motions from thy breast,
Which have the face of fire, but end in rest.

I, who had heard of musick in the spheres,
 But not of speech in starres, began to muse:
 But turning to my God, whose ministers
 The starres and all things are; If I refuse,
 Dread Lord, said I, so oft my good;
 Then I refuse not ev'n with bloud
 To wash away my stubborn thought:
 For I will do or suffer what I ought.

But I have also starres and shooters too,
 Born where thy servants both artilleries use.
 My tears and prayers night and day do wooe,
 And work up to thee; yet thou dost refuse.
 Not but I am (I must say still)
 Much more oblig'd to do thy will,
 Then thou to grant mine: but because
 Thy promise hath ev'n set thee thy laws.

Then we are shooters both, and thou dost deigne
 To enter combate with us, and contest
 With thine own clay. But I would parley fain:
 Shunne not my arrows, and behold my breast.
 Yet if thou shunnest, I am thine:
 I must be so, if I am mine.
 There is no articing with thee:
 I am but finite, yet thine infinitely.

The epiphanic violence of the poem's first few lines produces one of Herbert's most spectacular openings, perhaps comparable to the famous beginning of "The Collar." Without meaning to diminish this excitement, I should like to conjecture that the shooting star was probably intended as a figure for the Word of the Bible, "The book of starres," though the beginning does not make the figure explicit, and the rest of the poem largely abandons it. Nevertheless, Herbert's speaker, despite his failure immediately to recognize the truth of revelation, is almost certainly a cleric: he is sitting before his "cell," a word Herbert would not have used unaware of its monastic associations. In addition, since "Artillerie" does not appear in W, we know that Herbert, who is never entirely separate from his speakers, had himself probably taken orders by the time of its composition. The fact that the star "did shoot into my lap," rather than fall at his feet or land on his shoulder or anywhere else, strikes me as significant, for a cleric sitting before his cell in the evening would very likely be holding a Bible in his lap. And we do have, finally, passages from other poems, for example "The H. Scriptures," II, that equate the light of the Bible with the light of the stars. Although the initial situation, once established, is largely immaterial to the poem's

subsequent movement, I feel we are violating Herbert's theological principles if we view this situation as a literal miracle rather than as an allegory for the supreme enlightenment that ultimately rewards the student's "diligent Collation of Scripture with Scripture."

We have already investigated, in Chapter 2, the star's message, its paradoxical assertion that motion ends in rest. What is important for our present purposes is the poem's use of stars, or light, to represent both voices in the dialogue of God and man. The speaker apprehends the strangeness of the voice in a consciously synaesthetic way,

I, who had heard of musick in the spheres,
But not of speech in starres, began to muse,

joining one of the most commonplace intersensorial transfers (and one of the few to be widely employed in the non-sensual climate of the Middle Ages⁴³) with his own variation of it. Wishing to respond to the words of his "Dread Lord," the speaker sees that he can do so in kind:

But, I have also starres and shooters too,
Born where thy servants both artilleries use.
My tears and prayers night and do do woee,
And work up to thee; yet thou dost refuse.

As God's words have come to him in the light of stars, so can his own prayers work their way up to God as stars, a concept related to the "Reversed thunder" of "Prayer" (I). And as he was startled and made fearful by the violence of God's revelation, so will his prayers

mount a violent upward assault, approximating the "Artillerie" of the title. We have, then, two sets of words, those of God, which are italicized in lines 6-8, and those of the speaker, which are unspecified in content though their form is prayer, and both are represented as shooting stars, signifying both illumination, synaesthetically, and warfare. The fourth stanza shows that this warfare with God is not divisive but uniting, and that the revelation and prayer, descending and ascending stars, simply confirm what is already known, that man is a part of God.

Comparable motions of the stars occur elsewhere in Herbert's poetry. "Whitsunday," appropriately commemorating the descent of the Holy Spirit onto the nascent Christian Church, has them moving in one direction only,

Such glorious gifts thou didst bestow,
That th' earth did like a heav'n appeare;
The starres were coming down to know
If they might mend their wages, and serve here.
(11. 9-12)

but, "The Storm," an excellent poem that is generally neglected by Herbert's critics and anthologists, implies both directions.

If as the windes and waters here below
Do flie and flow,
My sighs and tears as busie were above;
Sure they would move
And much affect thee, as tempestuous times
Amaze poore mortals, and object their crimes.

Starres have their storms, ev'n in a high degree,
As well as we.

A throbbing conscience spurred by remorse
Hath a strange force:

It quits the earth, and mounting more and more
Dares to assault thee, and besiege thy doore.

There it stands knocking, to thy musicks wrong,
And drowns the song.

Glorie and honour are set by, till it
An answer get.

Poets have wrong'd poore storms: such dayes are best;
They purge the aire without, within the breast.

Herbert's "The Flower" seems in some ways close to Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode," but I suspect that if Coleridge had Herbert in mind at all during the composition of his ode, he was thinking of "The Storm," whose opening stanza much more closely parallels the intricate syntax of Coleridge's wonderful first sentence than does anything in "The Flower."⁴⁴ All three poems belong to a tradition emphasizing the disparity between the capacities of man and nature for renewal, a tradition to which Surrey's "How Each Thing Save the Lover in Spring Reviveth to Pleasure," Donne's "Twick'nam Garden," and Eliot's Waste Land also belong.

Be that as it may, Herbert begins by saying that if his "sighs and tears" had as great an impact on Heaven as storms, the products of celestial forces, have on earth, then God would be as moved (presumably to accept the pleas for which the sighs and tears stand) as men are, to remorse, by the storms. He is wishing, in other words, that man could talk to God as God talks to man.

Herbert's simile in stanza 2 shows him that man can talk to God so. Just as the usually placid sky is still capable of producing meteoric storms,⁴⁵ so can "A throbbing conscience spurred by remorse" produce its own storm, which "by a strange force" moves upward to assault God and Heaven. Man's condition has here progressed from stanza 1 in that a simple awareness of sin has yielded to a statement to God of regret for the sin; literally, realization becomes prayer. Implicitly we have the same representation of prayer as a shooting star, an instrument of assault, that we find in "Prayer" (I) and "Artillerie," though here the representation, equally synaesthetic, is as simile rather than metaphor.

In stanza 3 the prayer, already likened to a shooting star, "stands knocking to thy musicks wrong, And drowns the song": the verbal-visual dualism is intensified as the prayer-star knocks, and cancels out the celestial music, the heavenly perturbation that reminds man of his "crimes." A star had replaced man's words; now music and song replace a literal storm. Thus, the poem concludes, a poet should not denounce storms, for storms remind man of his own deficiencies, and once reminded, he may simultaneously remove by prayer the causes of outer and inner turmoil.

NOTES

¹So the poem is printed in the 1633 edition of The Temple, although Hutchinson does not follow it.

²E.g., Crashaw's "Then to his music, and his song Tastes of this breakfast all day long"; Keats's "Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan Upon the midnight hours"; Dowson's "The sweet star of your queen is never overcast"; and Hopkins' titles "The Leaden Echo" and "The Golden Echo."

³Glasgow University Publications, 84, 2nd ed. (Glasgow, 1957), p. 280.

⁴"Extremes" is Winifred Nowotny's term for the two elements of a metaphor (op.cit., p. 54). For this discussion it is preferable to the conventional "tenor" and "vehicle" since it does not differentiate qualitatively between the two elements.

⁵Op.cit., p. 282.

⁶Ibid., p. 283.

⁷Ibid.,

⁸Op.cit., p. 202.

⁹For an account of the prominence of light in Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism, neo-Platonism, the writings of Philo and Hermes Trismegistus, etc., see Edwyn Bevan, Symbolism and Belief (London, 1938), pp. 125 ff. All these systems are, however, largely irrelevant to a study of Herbert; a study of Henry Vaughan, it should go without saying, would be quite another matter.

¹⁰A Dictionary of Correspondences, Representatives, and Significatives, Derived from the Word of the Lord (New York, 1955), p. 218.

¹¹Religious Language (New York, 1963), p. 123 and elsewhere.

¹²On the Trinity, trans. A. W. Haddan, revised W.G.T. Shedd, in Basic Writings of Saint Augustine, ed. Whitney J. Oates, II (New York, 1948), p. 842.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴ God-Talk: An Examination of the Language and Logic of Theology (New York, 1967), p. 101.

¹⁵ Walter J. Ong, S. J., The Presence of the Word (New Haven, 1967), p. 13.

¹⁶ See Rosalie Colie, op.cit., p. 194. See also Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament, 4 vol. (New York, 1911), especially vol. 2 on John.

¹⁷ Op. cit., pp. 845-6.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 847.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 848.

²⁰ Op. cit., 1, 13, 12, p. 14.

²¹ Op. cit., 13, 2, p. 312.

²² Ibid., 13, 14, p. 321.

²³ Op. cit., pp. 63-4.

²⁴ Works, p. 504.

²⁵ See, e. g., "Redemption" for an abundance of Herbert's legal imagery.

²⁶ Op. cit.

²⁷ See Hutchinson's note in Works, p. 504.

²⁸ The pun is, of course, frequent in Shakespeare as well. Cf. Hamlet's "Not so, my Lord; I am too much in the sun" (1.2.67), and Prince Hal's "Yet herein will I imitate the sun," etc. (1 Hen 4, 1.2.190 ff).

²⁹ In I Kings 7.4-5, the windows in Solomon's house are exactly equivalent to the light that shines through them.

³⁰ See Works, p. 67.

³¹ On the Trinity, p. 847.

³² Ibid., p. 842.

- ³³ Op. cit., p. 198.
- ³⁴ Works, p. 496.
- ³⁵ See Cruden, op.cit. and Vincent, op.cit.
- ³⁶ Works, p. 228.
- ³⁷ Ibid., p. 496.
- ³⁸ Ibid., ch. 4, p. 229.
- ³⁹ Op. cit., 3, 27, 38, p. 102.
- ⁴⁰ Colie, op. cit., pp. 196-7.
- ⁴¹ Op. cit., p. 145. The sending of the manuscript is recorded by Walton; see the Lives, op.cit., pp. 280-1.
- ⁴² The Language Poets Use (London, 1968), p. 67.
- ⁴³ Ullmann, op.cit., p. 269.
- ⁴⁴ See Donald Davie's analysis of Coleridge's sentence in Articulate Energy (London, 1955), p. 69.
- ⁴⁵ See Hutchinson's note in Works, p. 523.

CONCLUSION

Words move, music moves
Only in time; but that which is only living
Can only die. Words, after speech, reach
Into the silence. Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness.....

Burnt Norton

It has been the purpose of this study to suggest that an understanding of certain theological ideas underlying George Herbert's poetry provides not only a set of pertinent, historical annotations to individual lines and images, but also a point of departure for an examination of structure and rhetorical technique. It is obviously true, in a general way, that the verse of any poet, content and form alike, is determined by his view of the nature of reality; it is equally true that the greater the poet, the more complex and varied will be the poetic implications of his view of reality. A great poet may not have more profound ideas than a lesser poet, but his verse will manifest them more fully--with respect less to elaboration of statement than to total subservience of form. One reason that so many men at the end of any poetic era produce so much second-rate verse (Constable, Percy, Tofte, and the other minor sonneteers

of the 1590s, for instance) is that they are writing in a tradition that has ceased to circumscribe reality, and so their verse strives in vain to be more than rhymed exposition.

A full recognition of Herbert's achievement arises from the reader's apprehension that a poem in The Temple is never simply a commentary on a theological idea, though everything about the poem may be somehow relevant to that idea. The Christian experience was Herbert's only experience; he saw no other context for reality. His one creative problem, therefore, was to make his poetry a genuine part of this Christian experience, and not only a record of it. He called his poetry a "picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul,"¹ a description we may accept if we understand the word "picture" as a total analogue, a concrete image, not an autobiographical moral abstracted from feeling.

In theory, anyway, no verse could be less artificial than Herbert's, despite his meticulous attention to technique, because none tries more fully to be what it is describing. The facts, as he saw them to be, of God's revelation and love and grace never ceased to inspire wonder in Herbert, and the achievement of his verse is its re-creation, not only of the facts, but also of the wonder. Very seldom does Herbert argue his beliefs, for argument implies a process of static abstraction, the ability to extract certain assumptions from a position that is without growth and change. Rather, his poems present, in subject and in form, a living microcosm of his experience, a

continuous re-affirmation of God's grace. Herbert's poems focus past and future in a limitless present.

So it is that his poetry abounds with comments on itself. His language, we are to understand, is not a consequence of arbitrary choice, but is the inevitable human representation of the timeless Word that illuminates his heart. Since the Christian experience is ultimately attributable to God, so will be the verbal expression that manifests it. The poem is not about the experience, it is the experience, and thus it is an act of return to the divine source, "Gods breath in man returning to his birth." God demands only man's humble admission that his every power is a part of divine immanence, that man seek to rest not in Nature but in the God of Nature.

The form of a poem, too, is a divine gift. The notion of the incarnation, of the fleshly revelation of the Word, is in fact a promise of eternity, a signal that man will transcend the temporal limitations of mortality. Therefore, a poem about this transcendence, through its emphasis on a "hieroglyphic" meaning that endures beyond the finite words in which it is couched, gains a life beyond itself. By willing himself wholly to God, the poet is rewarded in this life with a document imaging the next. The poem, then, cannot be simply a record of a past event, since its true frame of reference lies in the future, or after time has had its stop.

Herbert's poetry works on this principle of interaction of finite content and infinite form, in which each continuously breathes life

into the other. The conjunction of the two, which face each other as do man and God, is Herbert's final metaphor for grace. His poetry is a paraphrase for the soul, and beyond that, for the soul's union with God.

NOTES

¹Walton, op. cit., p. 281.

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Mark Taylor was born 13 March 1939 in White Plains, New York. He grew up in North Tarrytown, New York, and attended the public schools there. He received his undergraduate education at Yale University (A.B., 1961) where he was an editor of the Yale Literary Magazine and 77, an undergraduate magazine of fiction to which he also contributed.

After graduation from college, Mr. Taylor lived for several months in Europe and then served in the United States Army. In 1963, he began graduate school at the City University of New York, taking his M.A. in 1965. Since 1964 he has been teaching English at colleges in New York City.

In 1963, Mr. Taylor married Anya Bozeman. They have one jolly son, Andrew.