

GEORGE HERBERT'S VIEW OF
THE GOD / MAN RELATIONSHIP;
THE LIGHT IMAGERY IN
THE TEMPLE

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GEORGE HERBERT'S VIEW OF THE GOD/MAN
RELATIONSHIP: THE LIGHT IMAGERY IN THE TEMPLE

An Abstract
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ABSTRACT

George Herbert, a seventeenth century Anglican priest, wrote one volume of English poetry, The Temple. This volume is a poetic record of man's spiritual existence. Permeating much of the poetry in The Temple is Herbert's concern with man's relationship to God. The poet is often explaining, showing, questioning, or exploring this relationship.

At least part of Herbert's concept of this God/man relationship can be discovered by studying the poems in which light and light imagery are paramount. For Herbert light, perhaps more than any other metaphor, points up the nature of God. And, in contrast, man is seen as a creature without light, a creature completely dependent on God as a source of all that light implies.

In discussing poems from The Temple the critic must always be aware that although each poem is complete in itself, it also functions as a part of the whole work. He must, therefore, be conscious of pattern and have a deliberate order by which he proceeds. Three categories of poems have been chosen for this discussion, and within these categories discussion proceeds in the order in which the poems appear in The Temple. The separate groupings of the poems have been termed festival, spiritual, and temporal.

The festival poems are concerned with the structured celebrations of the church as well as surrounding these celebrations. Man is seen regarding the light of God as it leads him through the church year. Among these poems are such titles as "Good Friday," "Easter," "Whitsunday,"

and "Sunday." In these poems the speaker, if not all mankind, is seen as aware of God's light and as trying to live in accordance with that awareness.

The spiritual poems present man's response to his possibility of a religious experience, his response to the gifts of God; they are concerned with spiritual attitudes of faith. Among the spiritual poems are such titles as "Faith," "Grace," "Submission," and "Miserie." These are either names of spiritual qualities or adjectives describing a state of mental existence. In these poems, Herbert presents man in his worst spiritual failures. In his own attitudes about this God who sent a second new Light unto the world, man then sees his response as totally inadequate.

The temporal poems are also concerned with the religious experience but in a somewhat different way than are either the festival or spiritual poems. With such titles as "The Starre," "The Flower," "The Call," and "The Forerunners," these poems are attached to more concrete metaphors and are often expressed in terms of the things man sees around him. The nature of the poems is not temporal in the sense that man is now seen in worldly activity, concerned with either practical living or the things of this world. He is, however, seeking spiritual development in a different vein, contemplating the nature of God in terms of temporal metaphors. For man there is less despair in these poems; Herbert presents him as more comforted by God's forgiveness than smitten by his own unworthiness.

In all these poems light is an important element; light is connected with God and the way Herbert sees His nature; and man is

without light except when he is a part of God. In Herbert's view of the God/man relationship, man then is dependent on God as a source of all light and life. And for Herbert, when man becomes aware of light and all its possibility, he has the potential for reaching the zenith on the Chain of Being; he may become truly a son of God.

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by
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Nancy Sue Van Sant Palmer entitled "George Herbert's View of the God/Man Relationship: The Light Imagery in The Temple." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Joe A. Sulz
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the seventeenth century in England religious poetry was not an exception to the rule. In no age before or since has religion been more easily associated with poetry. This century saw the religious poetry of John Donne as well as that of Crashaw, Vaughan and Traherne, poets who were influenced to some degree by Donne. This too was the age of Milton and Paradise Lost. George Herbert, then, in writing religious poetry was a part of a tradition. But religion is not just a vehicle for this poet's art; it is the subject, meaning, and purpose. In Herbert's poetry the reader can find either reference to or discussion of many orthodox religious beliefs such as the idea of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the "fortunate fall." There are also present considerations of the forms, acts, and features of conventional religious services. But permeating much of the poetry in The Temple is Herbert's concern with man's relationship to God. The poet seems, much of the time, to be explaining, showing, questioning, or exploring this relationship.

In the poetry of The Temple light and light imagery appear very often. For Herbert light, perhaps more than any other metaphor, points up the nature of God. This study is concerned with the poems in which such imagery is paramount, particularly focusing upon understanding the many ways in which "God is Light" for George Herbert. With such a restriction the reader of Herbert's poetry discovers something of the nature of man; that he is a creature without light, a creature completely

dependent on God as a source of all that light implies. Much poetry in The Temple portrays man in the act and posture of worship, discovering this nature of light and shows man's many different ways of being aware of this light. Thus the reader can see, at least in part, Herbert's concept of the God/man relationship.

Before going directly to Herbert's poetry, it is necessary to point to some of the Biblical precedents for the idea that "God is Light" and also to show the many facets of that idea. In Genesis 1:3 God is seen as the source of light: "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." This giving of light was the first step toward making a meaningful creation of earth. In Exodus 13:21 God is "a pillar of fire, to give them light"--providing a direction and a way to move through the wilderness. Job (29:3) speaks of God whose "candle shined upon my head, and . . . by his light I walked through darkness." This has some of the same sense of providing direction for the Children of Israel, and also implies something about meaning to life. In Psalm 27:1 David says, "The Lord is my light and my salvation . . . of whom shall I be afraid?" There is the element of protection and an element of salvation here; the same element that is implied but not stated in the "pillar of fire," leading the Children of Israel to the Promised Land. In Isaiah 49:6 God is seen as giving Christ as "a light to the Gentiles," a new truth, a new possibility of salvation. John 1:4 says of Christ, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men." Here again is the suggestion that the light lends the total possibility of meaning to the lives of men. John 8:12 speaks of the life-giving power and the forgiving nature of Christ, and the redemption from darkness that his followers have. In

I John 1:5 the declaration is made that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." And in verse seven of the same chapter, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." In this last example the very important idea of man's response to this light can be seen. In all the senses of the term God is the way toward the only possibility of meaning and light; and man, the recipient of this beneficence, is always seen as the protected child or beloved servant or disobedient, unappreciative yielder to the power of evil. There is never any question of man's own worth outside the light, life-giving power of God.

In addition to looking at the Biblical tradition of God as light, it is also helpful to look at seventeenth century attitudes about man's place in the universe and what God has to do with that position. Though man was near the center of the universe, there is no implication that his importance was thus of great magnitude; rather, the closer he got to the center of the earth, the closer he was to hell. And he certainly was sublunary and thus in no praiseworthy realm. He was cast in the image of God but judged finally a poor replica. But man did have a very special place in the Chain of Being. He was the link between the physical and spiritual parts of the universe, a part of all the qualities that made up the other links in the Chain. Thus, it was conceivable that if he wished, he could, by reason, completely subjugate all of the lower desires and become god-like. He had the potential of God. But complicating this possibility was his inheritance of Adam's sin. Since the Fall man had

been unable to conquer his "infected will." "The soul's instruments had been impaired."¹

But though the soul dwelt in darkness, God wanted to provide light. And though in Herbert's poetry the reader finds the idea of the depravity of man, the total unworthiness of his acts, and the emptiness of his aspiration when his actions are ruled by his passions, he also learns that Herbert's theology includes the idea that "God so loved the world." This idea amazes Herbert because he has seen so much evidence of the depravity of man. Assuming the Old Testament conception of God, it seems much beyond possibility that God could be so much Love and Light. But the fact of God's redemptive nature remains and pervades The Temple. The Old Testament God is a part of Herbert's conception, but the New Testament God, the God of grace and love and light, is there too, perhaps even more strongly than the other. God infuses the universe and man with meaning if he is allowed to do so. And Herbert seems constantly awed by the fact that God is concerned about humanity, that he wants to provide light for man.

¹E.M.W. Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture (New York, 1942), p. 66.

CHAPTER II

THREE PLANES OF THOUGHT

In discussing poems from The Temple the critic must always be aware that, though each poem is complete in itself, it also functions as a part of the whole work. Much has been said about the order and structure of The Temple and, certainly, even the casual reader can detect some parts of the deliberate pattern. Several studies of the patterns have been done fairly recently. Fredson Bowers in an article entitled "Herbert's Sequential Imagery: 'The Temper'" discusses the order generally and then the particular poem, "The Temper," within the context of the other poems in The Temple.¹ Sara Hanley's article "Temples in The Temple: George Herbert's Study of the Church" presents the temple as the basic metaphor running throughout the volume of poetry.² John David Walker in his "Architectonics of George Herbert's The Temple" discusses both the likeness of this temple to the Hebrew temples and the implications of this likeness.³

¹Fredson Bowers, "Herbert's Sequential Imagery: 'The Temper,'" Modern Philology, Vol. 59 (1962), pp. 202-13.

²Sara William Hanley, "Temples in The Temple: George Herbert's Study of the Church," Studies in English Literature, Vol. 8 (1968), pp. 121-35.

³John David Walker, "The Architectonics of George Herbert's The Temple," English Literary History, Vol. 29 (1962), pp. 289-305. Cf. also Mary Ellen Rickey, "Herbert's Technical Development," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, Vol. 62 (1963), pp. 745-60; Stanley Stewart, "Time and The Temple," Studies in English Literature, Vol. 6 (1966), pp. 97-110; Joseph Holmes Summers, George Herbert, His Religion and Art (Cambridge, 1954); and Rosemond Tuve, A Reading of George Herbert (Chicago, 1952).

Patterns of images within The Temple are best discussed if the writer has a deliberate order by which he proceeds. Three categories of poems have been chosen for discussion, and within these categories discussion proceeds in the order that the poems appear in The Temple. Thus, while a pattern has been imposed, there is less likelihood that Herbert is distorted and also an opportunity for discovering patterns, at least of continuity, within these categories. The separate groupings of the poems are termed festival, spiritual, and temporal. The basis of these categories will be explained as each one is dealt with.

Festival Poems

Several poems in The Temple seem to be occasioned by a particular day in the church year, a particular celebration within the church community. These are here considered festival poems. The festival is the most formal part of man's relationship to God. It is the ordered part of his religious life which he shares with others of his faith. It perhaps takes him farther away from himself and his everyday living than any other part of his worship. It is, then, the part of his religious life that sustains and makes possible the other postures of religion.

"Good Friday" is the first of these festival poems. The spirit of this poem is appropriately one of sadness and contrition on the part of the speaker because his sin made the death of Christ necessary. Even though he realizes the impossibility of measuring or counting the trials that Christ has borne, he proposes ways of showing Christ's suffering that bear the spirit of infinitude.

Or shall each leaf,
Which falls in Autumne, score a grief?⁴

Even though the sorrows that Christ has borne have been numberless, the speaker wishes to be in some part a comfort to Christ, in some way a service to this God who has shed immeasurable blood. The sharing of Christ's distress may provide spiritual light for all the hours of the speaker's life, just as the "sunne" provides physical light. It is interesting that distress is to provide light. This seems to be a paradox, but closer examination resolves the question. This is the essence of Good Friday: God's distress in sending his son as a sacrifice for man reaches its height in the death of Christ on Good Friday. Because God undertook this distress, spiritual light is provided for the world. Also suggested is the tradition in Christianity that suffering leads to spiritual depth and joy. Man, in this way, participates in the distress. In the final stanza of the poem, the speaker asks again to share the experience, to have his whole being pervaded with Christ.

Sinne being gone, oh fill the place,
And keep possession with thy grace;
(ll. 29-30)

Christ will be in possession of the heart, life, and soul of the speaker and infuse his being with his holy grace and light.

"Easter" appropriately follows "Good Friday" in this discussion. The mood of this poem is one of joy, and the light is no longer in distress. The speaker addresses his heart to rise as his Lord has risen.

⁴F.E. Hutchinson, ed., The Works of George Herbert (London, 1967), ll. 9-10. All citations to Herbert's poetry are taken from this work, and all italics and pointing are those of the author or editor. References hereafter will be cited by line at the conclusion of each passage.

The heart has been in a state of despondence since Holy Thursday, but now it can "Sing his praise/ Without delays" (ll. 1-2). The first stanza concludes with an alchemical metaphor:

That, as his death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.
(ll. 5-6)

First there is the grinding, the suffering, the destruction; but from this destruction comes newness. Christ's life, his rising from the destruction, "make thee gold." Of course, changing base metal into gold had been the object of alchemy for centuries. Gold also has all the connotations of riches and power but, even more, it implies purity, the king of metals, perfection, reaching a zenith on the Chain of Being. Herbert captures the reader then because with all these connotations in mind for gold, the reader then learns that Christ does even more for the heart: he makes it "just." The reader then must find parallel superlatives to attach to "just" to make it "much more" than gold: just in the sense of purity, truth, godliness.

The second stanza contains a metaphor of music, appropriate to Herbert's theme and to his previous command to his heart to "Sing his /God's/ praise." His lute must join, in the struggle for its part, with the wood of the cross and the strings of Christ's sinews "to celebrate this most high day" (l. 12). Again, as in "Good Friday," the speaker wishes to be a part of what has been done for him.

The third stanza continues the music metaphor, making use of the parallel of three parts in music and three parts of the Trinity. Being addressed now is Christ or God:

Or, since all musick is but three parts vied
And multiplied,
O let thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with his sweet art.
(ll. 15-18)

This passage not only continues the wish for the speaker to be a part of the Easter celebration, but also introduces the conscious realization that man has defects. But the special meaning of Easter is that God is providing a way, a light, to "make up our defects."

The poem changes in verse form, interestingly enough, dividing into three parts for each half. And there is something of an alteration in tone as well. The first part is joyous, bounding celebration, and in the second part this joy is tempered by reflection. Also, the speaker shifts to a first person narrative, addressing God:

I got me flowers to straw thy way;
I got me boughs off many a tree:
But thou wast up by break of day,
And brought'st thy sweets along with thee.
(ll. 19-22)

Man wants to participate but is anticipated by God; his efforts are nothing compared to what God has done this day. Christ has risen and no longer needs "the sweets" brought by man to the tomb nor the spices of death because he has triumphed over death.

Then begins the paramount symbol of Easter, the rising of man's supreme light as the "Sunne arising in the East." Christ, however, is far superior to both the "Sunne," "Though he give light," and to the "East," who gives "perfume" (l. 24).

If they should offer to contest
With thy arising, they presume.
(ll. 25-26)

Christ has greater light than the sun and brings something far greater than flowers or the perfumes of the East--salvation for mankind.

No day in all the year can compare with this, though the sun arises every day. There are many risings, and thus many suns:

We count three hundred, but we misse:
There is but one, and that one ever.

(ll. 29-30)

For the life of man there is but one "sonne" (sunne) in whose light man will never want for any other. Christ is indeed the light of the world.

As in the church year, so in Herbert's The Temple. Though Easter is supreme, there are other days and in these days the church continues from Easter to Easter. The next special day of the year in which light is important in The Temple is "Whitsunday." The speaker begins, "Listen sweet Dove" (l. 1). The dove occurs several times in Biblical tradition but this reference is a symbol of the Holy Ghost (Mark 1:10) since the occasion for the poem is Pentecost. The metaphor for the stanza then makes use of the actual dove's qualities: singing, having wings and flying, and hatching eggs. The speaker is in a posture of prayer, asking to be taken up by the Holy Spirit and "flie away with thee" (l. 4). The mood is hopeful and child-like, fitting the birth image, "Hatching my tender heart so long" (l. 3).

In the second stanza the mood changes. The Holy Spirit is still being addressed but it is from the point of view of discouraged man, many centuries after the first Pentecost:

Where is that fire which once descended
On thy Apostles?

(ll. 5-6)

The speaker seems not to feel the "cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts

2:3). Then he begins a description of the first Pentecost.

. . . thou didst then
Keep open house, richly attended,
Feasting all comers by twelve chosen men.
(ll. 6-8)

All men who came then were feasted by words heard in their own language, though they were from many different countries.

The third and fourth stanzas continue this description of the first Pentecost. God bestowed such great riches (the gift of tongues, his Holy Spirit) "That th'earth did like a heav'n appeare" (l. 10). So glorious was the firmament that the stars wished to work on the earth instead of in the heavens. Even the sun, the king of stars, who had once alone supplied light to man, "Hung down his head" (l. 14), realizing the much greater light given by the "twelve sonnes" who were "Going about the world, and giving light" (l. 16). Through Christ and his Holy Spirit, these Galilaeans were transformed into sons of God, carrying out Christ's Commission and bringing light unto the darkness of the world.

The fifth and sixth stanzas come back to the question of the location of the fire, and the speaker attempts an answer. These "twelve sunnes" and the men like them, "pipes of gold" (l. 17), who brought the "cordiall water" (l. 18) were killed and in turn the killers were punished by not having this channel to God. The assassins wounded themselves as much as the same kind of men had wounded Christ's side. Man was still suffering from Adam's sin, in spite of this new light. As a result, then, God's light and presence (the Dove, the tongues of fire) cannot be seen as much in the world. Just as after the Fall of Adam God did not walk in the Garden and speak with Adam in the evening, so God does not now show himself directly as he did to the Apostles and the early church.

Herbert uses the metaphor of the prison and man enchained by sin. There would be no hope, no joy to creep "Through the chink" (l. 22) if "conqu'ring sinne/ Did not excite thee" (ll. 23-24). Here, even in discouragement, the speaker still recognizes the continuing altruistic concern of God.

The final stanza is a recognition of man's ever recurring yielding to temptation. But like the first stanza, it is in the posture of prayer and the mood is one of assurance of the goodness of God, even throughout man's sinking into darkness:

Lord, though we change, thou art the same;
The same sweet God of love and light.
(ll. 25-26)

Here Herbert shows the Renaissance man's love for order and a recognition that man's problem arises from his lack of order. But God is the God of grace and love, the eternal provider of light, and there is a quiet peace as the speaker asks God to

Restore this day, for thy great name,
Unto his ancient and miraculous right.
(ll. 27-28)

The poems "Easter," "Good Friday," and "Whitsunday" celebrate three particular days occurring once each year. Herbert also wrote a poem concerned with a regularly recurring celebration, "Sunday." Using several different metaphors, this poem recounts both the story of Christ and the amazing effect of his incarnation as man. It is entirely appropriate that this 'day of the sun' should be concerned with light.

The speaker begins in the spirit of eulogy, "O Day most calm, most bright" (l. 1). In a metaphor of growth he next describes this day as the best fruit of this world, only a beginning bud of what the next

world is. This is Christ's day, gladly endorsed for man with his blood, and providing a haven, a day of rest, as well as light for guidance through the dark of the week.

Following this are several stanzas, each developed with a different metaphor to explain the meaning of this day of light. First, all the days of the week are a man, with Sunday as the face and head. This is most appropriate for a Renaissance metaphor because in the 'little world' of man the head is the king of the body and thus nearest to God, "Knocking at heaven with thy brow" (l. 10). Christ is also head of the church and this day is Christ's day. "The worky-daies are the back-part;/ The burden of the week lies there" (ll. 11-12). But Christ's day reappears and man is released from his burden.

Sunday is next seen as a spiritual savior. Just as man is rescued from his burden by the return of the day of light, so he is here seen as rescued from "endlesse death" (l. 16). Sunday reminds man to look "on one" (Christ) but man is very "dull" (l. 18) and does not often choose to look to God. For this reason he continues to be alone. Herbert's use of "dull" has several reverberating meanings. Man is dull, not intelligent, not ruled by reason; dull, without spark of light, without liveliness; and dull, earth-bound, with an excess of heaviness rather than a balance. When man is dull, he is alone without God, cast into darkness without light.

Stanza five employs the metaphor of the church as the Bride of Christ. Sundays are bracelets to adorn this "wife/ Of the eternall glorious King" (ll. 31-32). It is in the Song of Solomon that we become so aware of the church as the Bride of Christ and the idea of adornment

fits well within the context of the rich Temple of Solomon. It is also fitting that this day should be rich. This day is also the 'day of days' because Christ rose on Easter Sunday and made it his, "And did inclose this light for his" (l. 37). The stable metaphor used next recalls Christ's birth and suggests that man will not "his fodder misse" (l. 39) because he will know the enclosed light of Christ, just as the beast knows his manger.

Christ has made this day his and made it a day of great light in the same upheaval of the earth as "at his passion" (l. 45). Christ has shifted the importance from the Sabbath to Sunday with his New Covenant in which he "wrought our salvation" (l. 48). Continuing in the same metaphor, the next stanza speaks of man's failure under the Old Covenant, casting away the robe of Jacob and Israel. Thus Christ had to make possible a new Israel with his blood and make man, instead of dull, "gay,/ And fit for Paradise" (ll. 55-56).

In the final stanza the speaker calls this day of light "a day of mirth" (l. 57), and returns the reader to the idea of the Dove, which makes "Thy flight . . . higher, as thy birth" (l. 59). Man wishes to leap "from sev'n to sev'n" (l. 61) until he reaches heaven.

Throughout the poem there is a sense of amazement and great thankfulness that God has provided this light for man. Of course, for the speaker, Sunday is much more than a day for religious observance; it is the embodiment of the whole Christian celebration. There is also joy for man at the end of the poem, joy in the gift of this day of light, joy that is greatest because man was unable to do anything to merit this Second Covenant.

Part of the internal structure of The Temple is provided by this movement of church celebrations. Beginning with Good Friday, followed by Easter, Whitsunday, and Sunday, Herbert then moves to the celebration of "Christmas." This poem is divided into two parts with a different verse form for each. The first part employs a metaphor of a traveler who seeks lodging when he is very tired. Although the traveler is an unidentified speaker, the idea of the weary traveler stopping at an inn, combined with the title "Christmas," at once brings to mind the nativity. This traveler has become completely tired of "bodie and minde" (l. 2) through the pursuit of pleasures. At the inn he finds his Lord, waiting "till the grief/ Of pleasures brought me to him" (ll. 6-7). The contrast of grief and pleasure brings into sharp focus the idea that when man's passions rule, he is brought to sin and separation from his Lord. The speaker then addresses his Lord:

O Thou, whose glorious, yet contracted light,
Wrapt in nights mantle, stole into a manger;
(ll. 9-10)

This is part of the fulfillment of the title with its picture of the birth of Christ. The very bright light of Christ was contracted then into the sign of a single star and He slipped into being "wrapt in nights mantle." The speaker prays to this Lord of light not to be a stranger to man (of all the beasts confronted at his birth), acknowledges that his soul is dark, but makes his request in the face of all this.

Furnish and deck my soul, that thou mayst have
A better lodging then a rack or grave.
(ll. 13-14)

These lines at the end of the first part make use of the idea that man is made in the image of God and that no matter how corrupt he is, his soul

is the dwelling place of God. So the speaker calls on Christ to "furnish and deck" his soul instead of lodging in the sin-laden soul that is his without the light of Christ. The last two lines also parallel the image of the traveler looking for lodging; in this case it is Christ seeking lodging in the soul. Christmas, with the light it brings, presents the possibility of God dwelling in suitable and befitting quarters.

Implied in the first part of the poem is the metaphor of Christ the shepherd waiting for and caring for his lost and weary sheep. The second part of the poem makes use of this metaphor with a significant difference. The speaker begins with reference to the shepherds at the birth of Christ, talks of the shepherds singing instead of angels, and asks if he shall be silent in the midst of that, observing that he too is a shepherd and thus a singer. He and his flock "Of thoughts, and words, and deeds" shall "out-sing the day-light houres" (ll. 18, 22). In all this joy, still of course within the context of the birth of Christ, the singers will be impatient with "the sunne for letting night/ Take up his place and right" (ll. 23-24). Herbert is beginning to play again on the son-sun idea. These singers have no need of a sun which is not eternal and so the speaker "will go searching, till I finde a sunne/ Shall stay, till we have done" (ll. 27-28). This sun, he says will shine gladly. The "we" then seems to change to include the speaker-shepherd, the flock of words, deeds, and thoughts, as well as the sun, "Then we will sing, and shine all our own day" (l. 31). The sun (son) and the speaker become a part of a mutual relationship; the speaker becomes one with the sun, as the Son is one with the Father and

His beams shall cheer my breast, and both so twine
Till ev'n his beams sing, and my musick shine.
(ll. 33-34)

The mixing of the image brings attention to the relationship, and the reader sees again, as at the end of the first part, man supplying a dwelling place in his soul for Christ, at the same time that Christ is furnishing and decking the soul. With Christmas there is the possibility that all men can be sons of the Father, in the light of this Son.

Spiritual Poems

Moving from the festival celebration poems, the next group of poems in which light is important is that called spiritual. It is concerned with man's attitudes of faith, as the festival poems are concerned with the church year. These poems are concerned with God's action and man's response in worship, both public and private. There is less formality here and, it would seem, a more direct relationship with God, rather than a relationship interpreted and transmitted through the festival's ritual.

The first of these poems, "Faith," begins with a speaker addressing God, asking Him how He could forget man's sin and bring "by Faith all things to him" (l. 4). In His love God could provide for man when his "sight was dimme/ And could see little" (ll. 2-3). This blindness, this condition without light, is man's usual condition without God. But in providing faith God has given man everything that he can believe.

The next seven stanzas list conditions of poverty or of great lack and then show the poverty removed. In each case the speaker in his human condition lacks something, but because of the faith that God has given him, his need is supplied. Though the words fit earthly situations,

these conditions are really part of the God/man situation, and the whole poem is concerned with the spiritual gifts that God can give man if man makes use of that first gift of faith.

In the first situation, the speaker says he was hungry but when he "did conceit a most delicious feast" (l. 6), he was able to eat. The feast was a spiritual one, supplying spiritual food; it is perhaps a version of the Communion feast. Next, he speaks of needing a "rare outlandish root" (l. 9) and because he believed it there, his foot was healed, and he "can walk to heav'n well neare" (l. 12). By believing in God's ability to supply his needs, he is made able to walk toward the only place worth reaching, the only place his whole life is directed toward--heaven. In the following situation the speaker owes a great debt which he is forgiven by his creditor because he believes himself to be forgiven. There is a parallel here to the debt owed to God by man, for his salvation. But God has forgiven the debt because man believes that he has.

In the next stanza the speaker says in triumph:

Faith makes me any thing, or all
That I beleeeve is in the sacred storie:
And where sinne placeth me in Adams fall,
Faith sets me higher in his glory.
(ll. 17-20)

The "sacred storie" is, of course, the one which the speaker has just been telling: that which God has done for man, including preparing a feast, providing a way to heaven, and forgiving man's great debt. Here Herbert is making interesting use of the Chain of Being idea as well as continuing the description of Christian "Faith." Because of Adam's fall, man is the least successful part of the Chain and is falling; but with

faith he is capable of reaching the highest to which he can aspire. The next situation concerns the speaker's fall, which because of faith can be no lower than the "common manger" (l. 22). The reference here to the book refers back to the use of the story above. Faith places man in the story of God, in the manger with Christ "who sweetly took/ Our flesh and frailtie, death and danger" (ll. 23-24). This is indeed noble company.

The next stanzas change in perspective from the first person of the speaker to the general point of view of man. He says that if "blisse" were attained by those who can earn it with "art or strength" (l. 25), few would reach it. Faith, however, makes all men equal before God by negating all the differences in skill and earthly condition. The next stanza illustrates this idea with a specific situation:

A peasant may beleeve as much
As a great Clerk, and reach the highest stature.
(ll. 29-30)

"Proud knowledge" and the "uneven nature" are made equal. This is indeed a revolutionary idea in the seventeenth century, for just as every part of the macrocosm had a place in the Chain of Being, so in microcosm all men had a particular place in the social structure. The King was to this as God is to the microcosm and so on down the line. God's actions and man's faith in these actions can even transcend a basic part in the philosophy of the Renaissance. The speaker has shown what he stated in the first stanza: that in all of this God has provided for man when his "sight was dimme." And the Faith given to man by God provides all the light that man needs; God indeed brings "by Faith all things to him."

In the next stanza, the speaker returns to the metaphor of light that he began in the first stanza.

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.

(ll. 33-36)

Here again is the parallel between the sun's providing the earthly light necessary to man's physical existence and Christ, the son, providing the light necessary for man's spiritual existence. The next stanza continues the sight metaphor. Before faith, everything was "darkned clean"; the "bushie groves" were preventing man from seeing, even "pricking the lookers eie" (ll. 37-38). But all this disappeared with the coming of faith and man could see a "glorious skie" (l. 40). The last stanza gives a final tribute to faith. Even though man's body becomes dust in death,

Faith cleaves unto it, counting evr'y grain
With an exact and most particular trust,
Reserving all for flesh again.

(ll. 42-44)

The next poem in this group, "Grace," begins with an agrarian image. The speaker is in a woeful condition and prays for God's grace to "Drop from above" (l. 4). There is the implied parallel between God's grace dropping from above and rain which the husbandman needs. The next stanza begins the light imagery. If the sun does not shine, God's house, earth, would be a dungeon and his "works nights captives" (l. 7). Again there is the parallel between the earth's need of the sun for cultivation, and man's need of God's light for growth. Continuing the physical earth/spiritual man parallel of needs, the next stanza compares the need of the grass for dew which "doth ev'ry morning fall" to the Dove which man

needs (l. 9). The speaker asks, ". . . shall the dew out-strip thy Dove?" (l. 10), as if to shame God into giving the Dove to man who does call out for it.

The next two stanzas deal with death and sin and their effects on man. Death is "like a mole" (l. 13). It is dark, loves the dark, and operates in the dark, digging the grave of man. The speaker asks that grace should work as hard on his soul as death is working, in darkness, on his grave. Sin is making his heart hard and without love, and he asks for grace "to crosse his art" (l. 19).

In the final stanza the speaker again prays that God will give him grace, or if he does not wish to move toward man:

Remove me, where I need not say,
Drop from above.
(ll. 23-24)

He wishes to go, of course, into God's presence, full of light, where he no longer needs to worry about the absence of the sun or the darkness of the mole-like death.

Faith and grace, spiritual attitudes, are both gifts from God. Man responds to God's gifts in several ways, with several different attitudes. The poem "Ungratefulnesse" shows part of man's response. In four of the five stanzas the speaker is in an attitude of wonder and praise to God for his gifts to man. In the first stanza he says that with great "bountie and rare clemencie" (l. 1), God has redeemed man from eternal death. If man had gone his own way, he would have worshipped the physical giver of light, the sun, rather than realizing the much greater source of light, God, and realizing that this God would make men "better gods" than the sun (l. 6).

The second stanza describes God's gifts in particular. God has "Two rare cabinets full of treasure/ The Trinitie, and Incarnation" (ll. 7-8). God has unlocked both of these treasures in order to bring man unto himself. Here the poet uses the metaphor of a lover presenting jewels to the beloved as a betrothal. Man is the beloved, "The work of thy creation" (l. 11). The third stanza speaks particularly of the Trinity. This is the "statelier cabinet" (l. 13), and man knows it only partially, not through a deficiency in the jewel but through man's inability to see. The speaker describes the situation:

Whose sparkling light accesse denies:
Therefore thou dost not show
This fully to us, till death blow
The dust into our eyes:
For by that powder thou wilt make us see.
(ll. 14-18)

Here Herbert uses a beautiful and complicated image. The Trinity is so great and full of light that man is blinded by it, much as the Children of Israel were blinded by the light and glory of God on the face of Moses when he came off the mountain after receiving the Ten Commandments from God. But death, which takes man's body to dust, provides understanding and ability to see because, as in Paul's comment, man will then see face to face. Man is released from his inabilities in death. Death provides a dust powder and thus man can look more directly at great light without being harmed.

From the description of the "statelier cabinet" the speaker moves next to the other cabinet, the Incarnation. It is here that all God's "sweets are packt up" and his mercies "thither flock and flow" (ll. 19, 20). Just as the first cabinet frightens man into a great state

of awe, this one "may allure us" (l. 22). This is more familiar to man because the Incarnate God came in the form of man, so as to be understood. Thus this cabinet does not blind man as the light of the Trinity does.

After this description of God's gifts and blessings, the speaker turns to man's response. "But man is close, reserv'd, and dark to thee" (l. 25). It seems almost incomprehensible that man should offer darkness to God in return for the great light God has provided in the Trinity and the Incarnation. In man's body there is corruption:

In his poore cabinet of bone
Sinnes have their box apart,
Defrauding thee, who gavest two for one.
(ll. 28-30)

Man has rejected God and the meaning of the title is complete. Man does not acknowledge the great giver of "sparkling light."

The poem immediately following "Ungratefulnesse" in The Temple is "Sighs and Groans," and this is an appropriate attitude for man, whose ungratefulness has just been acknowledged. The poem begins in a mood of contrition. The speaker begs, throughout the poem, that God not treat him as he deserves. In the first stanza he asks that God, instead of looking on his "desert" (l. 2), will look on his own "glorie" (l. 3). God is a "mightie God" but man is just a "sillie worm" (l. 5). And the stanza ends in the refrain-like line, "O do not bruise me" (l. 6). This line of course echoes God's words to the serpent in Genesis 3:15: "it [the enmity between the serpent and the woman] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his [the son of woman] heel." Christ's head was bruised with a crown of thorns and his body was bruised on the cross, so that God would not bruise man. The petition is the same in the second

stanza but cast in a different metaphor. Man is an "ill steward" (l. 8), who has abused God's gifts, just as has been acknowledged in "Ungratefulness." The stanza ends with the plea, "O do not scourge me!" Man does not wish to bear the terrible suffering and he does not have to, finally, because Christ has already borne it.

The third stanza picks up the image of light implied in God's "glorie" of the first stanza. The speaker begins, "O do not blinde me!" (l. 13). He acknowledges that he deserves "that an Egyptian night/ Should thicken all my powers" (ll. 14-15). The night is Egyptian perhaps because the darkest period in the history of the Children of Israel was during the time of bondage in Egypt and this is equated with darkness and being cut off from God. But the Egyptian bondage was what the Children of Israel had to suffer, for the God of Law. Addressing the merciful God of Love, the supplier of light even to the undeserving man, the speaker continues to acknowledge his guilt:

. . . because my lust
Hath still sow'd fig-leaves to exclude thy light:
(ll. 15-16)

This is again a reference to Genesis and the situation surrounding the Fall of Man. After he knew of Good and Evil, man became aware of his nakedness and made clothes of fig leaves. This action separated him from God, and the speaker is Adam's descendant and guilty of the same exclusion of God's great light, his only source of hope. But he does not base his plea on deserts, as he has asked God not to do in the first stanza. Instead he says:

But I am frailtie, and already dust;
O do not grinde me!
(ll. 17-18)

The fourth stanza continues the tone of the previous prayer. He asks God not to fill him with His bitter wrath because Christ, the Savior, has already taken into Himself the wrath of God and emptied His blood for the sake of man. "O do not kill me!"

Throughout the poem, the speaker has primarily begged God not to take certain actions. In the final stanza he presents the positive side.

But O reprieve me!
For thou hast life and death at thy command;
Thou art both Judge and Saviour, feast and rod,
Cordiall and Corrosive; put not thy hand
Into the bitter box; but O my God,
My God, relieve me!
(ll. 25-30)

God is the God of spiritual light and darkness. The italicized words are significant; they are a series of opposites which all go to make up the nature of God: Judge and Saviour present both the Old Testament God of the Law and the New Testament God of Love; feast and rod present both the supplying of man's needs and the chastisement of man's sinful nature; the Cordiall holds the sweet spices, the love, the gifts like the Incarnation, and the Corrosive gives destruction. The last lines link back to "Ungratefulnesse" when the speaker is asking God to avoid the "bitter box" and choose from the sweet in order to bestow blessings on man. This request could not have been made, before the God of love and light and mercy was made known to man.

After seeing the ungratefulness of man, even when God has given him faith and grace, and then seeing man in the 'sack cloth and ashes' attitude of "Sighs and Grones," it is appropriate that the next attitude in which we see man is in the poem "Submission." In this poem man's eyes and his ability to see with his physical eyes are the point

of the submission. And submission is not an easy attitude for man to assume. The first stanza begins with the speaker in the attitude of submission but chafing a little under the yoke:

But that thou art my wisdom, Lord,
And both mine eyes are thine,
My mind would be extremely stirr'd
For missing my designe.

(ll. 1-4)

The second stanza continues even more strongly the idea that man might be better if his eyes were a little his own, independent from God. The speaker even suggests to God that if he had "Some place and power" then God's praises would grow with him and God could "share in my degree" (ll. 6, 8).

The tone shifts in the third stanza to humility. The speaker realizes that when he feels this way he does "resume my sight" (l. 10). This is taking back what he has already submitted to God and what is God's by right. The fourth stanza continues in this attitude. He retracts what he said about wishing to have "some place and power" because it is doubtful that he would "then raise" God.

Perhaps great places and thy praise
Do not so well agree.

(ll. 15-16)

The attitude of the last stanza is that of final and complete submission. He is going to stand with the gift he has given God, his eyes, and not advise God anymore. And then, in the depth of submission he asks God to provide the ultimate light that he needs:

Onely do thou lend me a hand
Since thou has both mine eyes.

(ll. 19-20)

He has realized that when man persists in having his own eyes and in doing his own will, he is not of God. It is only when he gives up his

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will and follows the light provided by God with His guidance that he is an obedient Son of God.

Although man tries to be submissive and to make use of the gifts of faith and grace, he must continually fight the part of him that carries him down, away from his highest possibility as a Son of God. When he is aware of his failings, he is plunged into despair. This attitude can be seen in the poem "Miserie." The speaker, in a very customary posture, is addressing God, but in a tone more distant than usual in The Temple. He talks about mankind rather than about himself specifically. There is a general confession of man's worthlessness. "Man is a foolish thing" (l. 2), and "Man is but grasse" (l. 5). The speaker wonders how God can "brook his foolishnesse" (l. 7). It is man's nature not to give up anything for God not even "a cup of drink" (l. 8). He does not even "temper his excesse" (l. 9), a very great sin in the view of the Renaissance. At the same time and even in conjunction with these attitudes, man will swear to serve God. Thus not only are his actions lowly in the first place, but he is an inconsistent, changing, undependable follower, as impermanent as the grass. This too would be a great sin during the Renaissance, a sin against order. The third stanza talks of the "strange pollutions /he/ doth . . . wed" (l. 13). Man thinks he can do this with impunity, that no one sees when, of course, God "within his curtains drawn canst see" (l. 16). Man is helpless, the speaker suggests in the fourth stanza, and without God, he will "stumble at a pinne" (l. 20). But he does not wish to be seen; he especially does not wish his heart to be seen. He does not even wish to see his sin himself, though the sorrow that would show him the sin is in no measure as great as the sin deserves.

In the eighth stanza God is advised to give up the idea of a relationship with man. Man is better suited to "serve the swine," and to have "dirt to wallow in all night" (ll. 44, 46). He is hard pressed even to listen to the preachers who make "His head to shoot and ake" (l. 48). The swine, in Biblical tradition, are of course the lowest of animals, forbidden in the diet of the Jews. To be a servant of the swine, as was the Prodigal Son, is the lowest form of livelihood. This choice as man's natural station shows him to be completely a creature of dirt and darkness, a creature so lowly that he cannot even appreciate the light that God would offer him.

The ninth stanza shifts to an address to man. The speaker berates "foolish man," asking him "where are thine eyes" (l. 49)? He wonders that man has no ability to see the wonder of God. Again the idea is repeated that man, even in the face of God's great gifts, will not do anything special for God nor will he do anything to accept God's gifts to him:

Thou pull'st the rug, and wilt not rise,
No, not to purchase the whole pack of starres:
There let them shine,
Thou must go sleep, or dine.
(ll. 51-54)

Man does not appreciate God's nature of light. He is insensible to God, whether in sleep, or with the help of wine. The physical pleasures outweigh, by far, the spiritual pleasures that God offers.

Man's response is then compared to that of nature, in the form of a bird, which though it does not know of God's power, still sings. But man, who "doth know/ The spring, whence all things flow" (ll. 59-60), is a creature capable of reason, has apprehended with his reason part of

the creative nature of God, and has the advantageous position in the Chain of Being so that he can partially comprehend God. But he acts "as though he knew it not" (l. 61), closes out this knowledge, "and lets his humours reigne" (l. 62), and so shows himself to be a creature of Adam's fall, looking downward on the Chain rather than aspiring toward the Sonship of God. His humors rule him rather than his reason, and he responds primarily to his animal nature, which makes "his life a constant blot" (l. 63). When he does this, he makes Christ's sacrifice a vain one, because the whole new covenant assumes man's acceptance and his keeping his part of the covenant before the grace of salvation can work for him.

Having drawn this picture of man's dark nature, the speaker then reviews man's condition before the Fall. In that state he was "a treasure," "A box of jewels," recalling God's other treasures, the Trinity and the Incarnation in "Ungratefulnesse" (ll. 67, 68). Man was then a creature of light:

Glorie and grace
Did crown his heart and face.
(ll. 71-72)

The speaker does not dwell on this picture for long but returns to the tone of misery because man is in his fallen state. Man is now "A lump of flesh, without a foot or wing" (l. 74). The heaviness of man ties him to earth and reinforces the idea of his humors ruling him. He has no "foot or wing/ To raise him to a glimpse of blisse" (ll. 74-75).

Then as the poem ends, the point of view completely changes. The speaker has been talking to God about mankind and addressing mankind but in the last line, he turns inward and says:

My God, I mean my self. (l. 78)

The misery is complete as he realizes that all this condemnation of man has been really and, perhaps most of all, a reference to himself. He can no longer escape into talking of mankind. He, too, is this creature of humors, this creature of physical passions, this creature dwelling in darkness. He has condemned himself.

But Herbert never leaves man in complete dejection and misery. His God is continually the God of love and light. And so, even in this self-condemnation, man can find hope, as seen in the poem "Self-condemnation." In this poem the speaker is berating man for not being able to do what the speaker in "Miserie" has done: that is, include himself, even see himself first, in the condemnation of mankind. He says to him who "condemnest Jewish hate,/ For choosing Barrabas a murderer/ Before the Lord of glorie" (ll. 1-3), that he should call his eye unto himself and he may discover "That choice may be thy storie" (l. 6). This, of course, recalls Christ's advice: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5).

In the next two stanzas the speaker shows how the people of his day make "a Jewish choice" (l. 9). The man who loves the things of this world more than the things of the spiritual world is making this same choice. And "He that hath made a sorrie wedding/ Between his soul and gold" has also made this choice, both having done what they have condemned. Man's worldliness keeps him from God's light and he is even farther from God when he does not realize his own sin. But there is hope when man can see his own state of existence! He can comprehend the light of God and be affected by it. The poem ends with a recognition of the redemptive

power of God's light:

. . . That light, which sin and passion
Did before dimme and choke,
When once those snuffes are ta'ne away,
Shines bright and cleare, ev'n unto condemnation,
Without excuse or cloke.

(ll. 20-24)

This, then, is the possibility of light, of God, if man will respond.

Temporal Poems

In the festival poems Herbert wrote about man and his celebrations of the feasts of the church. Man, in these poems, is in a somewhat corporate experience because the structure of these festivals is directed from the church and these experiences of faith are shared by all of the same faith at the same time and in much the same way. The titles of the poems indicate something of their nature. The festival poems are obviously titled: "Good Friday," "Easter," and "Whitsunday." In the poems of spiritual attitude Herbert seems much more concerned with man's response to the gifts of God. Herbert is exploring man's spiritual state of mind in the face of God's grace and salvation. Among the spiritual poems are titles such as "Faith," "Grace," "Submission," and "Miserie." These are either names of spiritual qualities or adjectives describing a state of mental existence.

The temporal poems, as they are called here, are also concerned with the religious experience but in a somewhat different way than are either the festival or spiritual attitude poems. The metaphor used is temporal, cast in the terms of man. The temporal poems have such titles as "The Starre," "The Flower," "The Call," and "The Forerunners." These poems are attached to more concrete metaphors and are often expressed in

terms of the things man sees around him. The nature of the poems is not temporal in the sense that man is now seen in worldly activity, concerned with either practical living or the things of this world. Man is still contemplating the nature of God, he is still making observations about God and man, and he is still receiving spiritual aid. Man is, as always, in The Temple after leaving "The Church-porch," spiritually concerned. He is, however, seeking spiritual development in a different vein, contemplating the nature of God in terms of temporal metaphors. In these poems, as in the preceding ones, light is an important element within the poem; light is connected with God and the way Herbert sees His nature; and man is without light except when he is a part of God.

The first of these temporal poems is "The Starre," and the reader is not surprised that this poem is concerned with light. The speaker begins, addressing a physical star, by describing the origin of the star. It comes from a "brighter place,/ Where beams surround my Saviours face" (ll. 1-2). Christ is immediately connected with the star, and it is his nature to be surrounded by light. The speaker seems surprised that the star would leave such a place where Christ is. But, since the star has left its original place, he hopes that it will "Take a bad lodging in my heart" (l. 6). He would then feel a debt and his heart would be made better if light from Christ were brought into it. This again is the idea that God dwells in man's heart and that he brings light to it. This star can make his heart better, he says, by burning the folly and lust. After these sins are gone and the darkness removed, the star can

Then with thy light refine,
And make it shine: (ll. 11-12)

After the light has removed "Sinne and sicknesse" (l. 13), the speaker asks the star to give him the qualities of its own "quickness." The star is spiritually quick or alive. Afterwards he says:

. . . with our trinitie of light,
Motion, and heat, let's take our flight.
(ll. 17-18)

When he becomes like the star he wishes to go to the presence of God. It is entirely appropriate that this star, whose source of being is Christ, has within it a trinity that can help man to God, and that one of the qualities of the trinity is light. The speaker wishes to become a part of the light which surrounds his Lord "who dy'd to part/ Sinne and my heart" (ll. 23-24). In this way he can adore Christ as he stands among the other beams of light. In the last stanza he likens the star to a bee which has gone from the hive to gather honey and return with his prize to the hive. This then is what the light of God is like; it not only exists for man but also can search him out and bring him into the holiness of God. Although he has a sin-laden heart, man in this poem is able to recognize the light of God and desire to be a part of it.

In the poem "The Holdfast" Christ and God are not addressed at all, an omission fairly unusual in Herbert's poetry. Instead there seem to be three speakers involved: a first person speaker, with whose spiritual development the reader is concerned; an adviser; and a friend. The adviser may be an actual person or may be just a voice or part of the speaker, and the friend's words may be only reported rather than spoken within the time of the poem. Both the adviser and the friend are secondary forces, helping the speaker in his religious understanding.

The speaker begins by saying he "threatned" (l. 1) to obey the law of God. The use of "threatned" gives a negative connotation in a

situation which the reader first expects to be positive, and this reversal prepares him for the rhetoric of the rest of the poem. Man cannot obey the law by himself, the adviser says, but he can "trust in God to be his . . . light" (l. 4). The speaker replies that he will trust God then, but the adviser again gives a negative answer. "Nay, ev'n to trust in him, was also his" (l. 6). And he advises the speaker that man must confess that he has nothing. Again the speaker accepts what the adviser says and would "confesse that he God my succour is" (l. 8). But then he learns from the adviser:

But to have nought is ours, not to confesse
That we have nought.

(ll. 9-10)

The speaker is confused until he hears (or recalls) an answer made by a friend:

That all things were more ours by being his
What Adam had, and forfeited for all
Christ keepeth now, who cannot fail or fall.

(ll. 12-14)

By giving everything to God, everything that man has becomes even more his. Adam was first entrusted with all that was of value to man but he fell. Christ will not fall or fail. Man can trust in Christ; with Christ and the New Covenant, he can have help in keeping the law and can then truly "trust in God to be his light." Here, as in the previous temporal poem, man seems able to appreciate what God has done for him; he is at least struggling to do so.

The next temporal poem in which light is important is the aptly titled work "The Call." It seems to be addressed to God, but not in the usual tone of an address; it is indeed a call. There are three stanzas, each consisting of an initial apostrophe followed by three lines of

comment. The first call, "Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life" (l. 1), echoes Christ's words in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The poet, of course, appreciates the latter part of the verse and knows the spiritual meaning of the Way, Truth, and Life. He says in the following lines that this way gives man breath. This is a reversal because we usually think of a way making man tired, as in a journey. The Truth from Christ ends strife and the Life "killeth death." This paradoxical phrase is resolved within the Christian tradition because Christ conquered death by being killed.

The second call, "Come, my Light, my Feast, my Strength" (l. 5), also contains terms synonymous with Christ. Christ is the Light of the World; with his sacrifice he has given the world a Feast; and the Feast has made men whole. In the poet's comment he says that the Light shows the Feast, the Feast continues to become greater than before, and the Strength makes the guests able to endure.

The final call is "Come, my Joy, my Love, my Heart" (l. 9). The Joy and Love brought by Christ are eternal; and the Heart is full with Joy and Love. All of the poem is on a jubilant note. When man responds to God, he opens himself to the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Light of the world which can bring him Joy.

Following this note of joy in "The Call" the poet again presents man as appreciating the gifts of God in "The Flower." Appropriately for a poem with such a title, the poem opens in a mood reminiscent of some of the Psalms:

How fresh, O Lord, how sweet and clean
Are thy returns! ev'n as the flowers in spring;
(ll. 1-2)

Even the frost of winter brings tribute to the flowers and grief is gone like the snow. The cold is no longer imaginable. After describing the flowers in these terms, the speaker comes back to the "return" of the Lord: his own soul. This soul was lost, gone under the ground, but it has become green again with the new life of God precisely as the flowers become new again with the spring.

These instances have paved the way for the speaker to begin an exuberant praise of God for his powers. This God can end life or bring life; He has power over both heaven and hell. Death has no eternal sway over Him. He can even make "a chiming of a passing-bell" (l. 18).

Continuing the flower metaphor in the fourth stanza, the speaker wishes the cycles would stop while he is in God's light or that he would at least be able to get out of the cycles so that he would never again run the risk of being overpowered by sin. In the past he, like the flower, has grown toward heaven and has thought he was almost there, but God's anger has come, worse than frost, burning him down.

In the sixth stanza the speaker says that in his old age he has become a bud again, perhaps reminiscent of the man becoming a child again before entering God's kingdom. He seems amazed that he can live and write and "once more smell the dew and rain" (l. 38) after dying so many times. And then he addresses God in a tone that carries some sense of bewilderment:

. . . O my onely light
It cannot be
That I am he
On whom thy tempests fell all night.
(ll. 39-42)

A God who turns his anger on man at every turn does not seem to be a God who is man's "onely light," but the poet resolves the dilemma in the last stanza describing again a God of love and light.

These are thy wonders, Lord of love,
To make us see we are but flowers that glide
Which when we once can find and prove,
Thou hast a garden for us, where to bide.
(ll. 43-46)

God has provided for man. But the garden cannot be given on man's terms, when man thinks he is doing it by himself. He then takes a chance on feeling pride.

Who would be more,
Swelling through store,
Forfeit their Paradise by their pride.
(ll. 47-49)

The speaker has invited God's wrath then because he took pride in his own ability in reaching toward heaven. But God did not destroy him; he only sent him under ground to begin again, in innocence, as a bud. At the end of the poem the speaker has realized this and can therefore see God again as his "onely light." And the reader is reminded once more that God is a source of light only when man finally allows him to be.

The poem "The Sonne" begins by talking about the poet's own language, which he prefers to any foreign language. Those who think it plain lack wit, and the fault lies with them rather than in the language. This is only an introduction, though, to his real subject, the praise of the Son of God. And his wit allows him to maneuver so well into his subject:

How neatly doe we give one onely name
To parents issue and the sunnes bright starre!
(ll. 5-6)

There follows a description of a son which is also an appropriate description for the sun. Both son and sun are "light and fruit" and "fruitful flame" (l. 7). The next lines force the reader to think not just of any son but of the Son of God as well as the sun.

Chasing the fathers dimmesse, carri'd farre
From the first man in th' East, to fresh and new
Western discov'ries of posteritie.

(ll. 8-10)

This passage tracing the sun's daily path as it removes the darkness of night is also the history of Christ who chased the darkness of the Old Testament Law from man, first coming to the east and then finding new believers as Christianity moved westward. Christ took the form of man in humility, even calling Himself the Son of Man, and now man calls Him that in all glory, meaning not only that He came as man but that He became man's light, his entire hope of salvation, and his guiding force.

We him in glorie call The Sonne of Man.
(l. 14)

The next poem "The Glance" speaks of the effect of the light from the Son (sun) of Man. The first stanza describes an almost mystic experience from one look by Christ while the speaker "did lie/ Weltering in sinne" (ll. 3-4).

I felt a sugred strange delight,
Passing all cordials made by any art,
Bedew, embalme, and overrunne my heart,
And take it in.

(ll. 5-8)

This mystic experience was not continuous for the speaker; he only felt Christ's glance once. And he has since been through many storms which might have destroyed his soul.

But still thy sweet originall joy,
Sprung from thine eye, did work within my soul,
(ll. 13-14)

The speaker then makes the next logical step in thought and wonders what an eternity in the presence of this light will be like if one glance is so powerful. "What wonders shall we feel, when we shall see/ Thy full-ey'd love" (ll. 19-20)! What rejoicing there will be when the full light of love is upon man. The poet has almost no words to express the full wonder of God's light; finally he comes back to the most superlative description he knows, the magnification of the great giver of physical light:

When thou shalt look us out of pain,
And one aspect of thine spend in delight
More then a thousand sunnes disburse in light,
In heav'n above.
(ll. 21-24)

Man and poet are indeed in awe of God.

The last poem "The Forerunners" is located appropriately near the end of The Temple and suggests that the poet or speaker feels old. In the poem, a part of Herbert's statement of his artistic concerns and aspirations, he is concerned with the inspirational light of worldly poetry and the true light of God that inspires man. The beginning of the poem describes the coming of the harbingers and these seem to forewarn of coming death, at least the death of creativity in the poet. His head is white, but he does not wish to lose the effectiveness of his brain or its "sparkling notions" (l. 4). He does not wish to be turned "to a clod" (l. 5) by dullness. But even if the harbingers take his brain and his "sparkling notions," he still has consolation: "Thou art still my God" (l. 10).

He will be pleased with that dittie;
And if I please him, I write fine and wittie.
(ll. 11-12)

Even in his humility, the poet has not forgotten the importance of being witty, a great concern in the seventeenth century.

But it is still not without reluctance that he gives up all the "sparkling notions." They too create a certain light.

Farewell sweet phrases, lovely metaphors.
But will ye leave me thus?

(ll. 13-14)

He has brought these devices of language out of the low places of life and cleaned them up, fit for God, and taken them to church, to his Temple. Herbert did use the language of earthly lovers in praise of God, just as some of his contemporaries did, most notably John Donne. He wishes to offer God the zenith of what he has, the best of human love without its taint. But this "lovely enchanting language" (l. 19) is leaving him and the service of the church. It seems that the "sweet phrases" are loving "a stie" (l. 22) as did the Prodigal Son. Or that:

Fie, thou wilt soil thy broider'd coat,
And hurt thy self, and him that sings the note.

(ll. 23-24)

The "broider'd coat" is a kind of symbol for Israel and the Judeo-Christian heritage.

In the fifth stanza he seems to be making his last try to persuade the beautiful words to choose the Lord's side. He says that foolish lovers should "clothe their shame" with "canvas," not with "arras" (l. 26). The rich tapestry of poetic language is not appropriate to the dung in which they live.

True beautie dwells on high: ours is a flame
But borrow'd thence to light us thither.
Beautie and beauteous words should go together.

(ll. 28-30)

The poet wishes to unite the beauty of earth with the beauty of God and he believes that the only real permanent beauty is with God, to which he will be guided by God's flame.

And so, if the "sparkling notions" will not choose the side of the Lord, he will let them go.

For, Thou art still my God, is all that ye
Perhaps with more embellishment can say.
(ll. 32-33)

The last lines recall the metaphor of "The Flower," but this time it is used in a different way.

Go birds of spring: let winter have his fee;
Let a bleak palenesse chalk the doore,
So all within be livelier then before.
(ll. 34-36)

And thus he has returned to the image of the harbingers and the title is given full meaning. The spring of this poet must be allowed to leave though it may promise much, and he must let himself be marked for other occupants than the sweet birds of spring. Though it is at first a pang that winter must come, this experience will bring a depth to the poet and he learns from his experience of "bleak palenesse" the words that will truly serve his art. This poet is committed, not to pretty but empty phrases, but rather to praising his God, in the highest level of diction his art can offer. He has committed himself to a religious experience, to the "sugred strange delight" of Christ's glance, to the inspiration of the light of God which will lead him to true beauty.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

George Herbert, the man and the poet, wrote The Temple and gave to men as complete a poetic account as they have of the religious experience. He was well within the traditions of his time, both religiously and philosophically. His orthodoxy does not mean that he had nothing to add to the traditions of which he was a part. He is not a "childish" poet as some have called him nor is his faith completely simple. His faith was dominated by the single fact of the Incarnation. He was, all of his life, astounded by the grace and love of a God who would sacrifice himself for man, who, though he had ultimately beautiful possibilities, most often settled into the mire of his world instead of rising to its heights.

The Temple is a record of the God/man experience and the reader can discover much of the nature of this relationship by following the progression of poems in which light imagery is found. It is a part of the organic and religious unity of The Temple that this should be so because both traditionally, and for Herbert, "God is Light." That the reader should discover something of the nature of God when Herbert talks about light is a part of the order of things, God's order and the order of the Renaissance. A part of Herbert's order is that the reader cannot search out the nature of God without becoming aware of the nature of man. This is true because God is only seen through the perceptions of man; it is also true because Herbert was ultimately concerned about the nature

of the God/man relationship. It was for man that Christ came, and it is to man that God has offered his light. Man's response then becomes important as he either ignores, accepts, or rejects God's offer. The relationship, the dialogue is then set up. It is the nature of this dialogue that Herbert explores as he searches for both the qualities of the Light and the effect of the Light on man.

There is unity and order throughout The Temple. Much has been said about this order, and every writer concerned with Herbert must be aware of it in some way. Though I have not followed a previously established pattern in my look at Herbert's poetry, I have been aware of pattern and order. After finding the poems in which light is important, I discovered that most of them fell into three groups; I have discussed the poems within each group in the sequence in which they appear in The Temple.

The three groups I have called festival, spiritual, and temporal. This is not to say that they are concerned exclusively with festival, spiritual, and temporal activity. It is rather to say that all are concerned with the interaction between God and man and are organized around different kinds of metaphors. The festival poems are concerned with the structured celebrations of the church or the ideas surrounding these celebrations. In these poems man is seen regarding the light of God as it leads him through the church year, from Easter to Easter. Herbert contemplates the idea of the Light of God coming to earth on these occasions, and is in awe at such a wonderful God. In all these poems, the speaker at least, if not all mankind, is seen as aware of God's light and as trying to live in accordance with that awareness.

It is logical to proceed from the festival poems of the church into man's spiritual attitudes, his response to the ideas surrounding the celebrations. The spiritual poems are concerned with attitudes of faith. It is in this section that the reader sees man in his worst failures. In contemplating God's gifts and in being aware of his own attitudes about this God who sent a second new Light unto the world, man then sees his response as totally inadequate. He is indeed cast into "Miserie" and "Self-condemnation." When man sees most clearly the nature of God's goodness and the quality of his own response, he feels cast into outer darkness. But man also contemplates the nature of God in terms of temporal metaphors. In these poems he does not see God as less great; the light is not at all tarnished. But there is less despair here; man is more comforted by God's forgiveness than before. He believes and puts his hope in the Sonne of Man. And finally he is aware of his own commitment to be inspired by the Light of true beauty. Though at times he regrets the sometime loss of earthly beauty to the service of spiritual beauty, he is faithful to his commitment and to his Light.

Thus the God of glory lent his Light to the inspiration of George Herbert. George Herbert gave The Temple to both the traditions of which he was a part: the religious tradition and the seventeenth century artistic tradition. And the legacy is both God's and ours.

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