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STUDIES IN THE METAPHYSICAL
POETS OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH
IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

by

A. J. M. SMITH, M.A.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

I. Metaphysical Poetry.

I

The term "metaphysical" as applied to poetry has not yet become an exact definition, and the various senses in which it has been used have given rise to a good deal of confusion. Too often the adjective is only a vague frown of disapproval, implying that the poetry which it condemns but does not describe is a sort of heterogeneous hodge-podge of semi-intellectual conceits, far-fetched images and distorted comparisons. Dr Johnson's condemnatory words are remembered, while the judicious praise with which he tempered them is forgotten. Sometimes the word is a charge of didacticism; sometimes it simply means "philosophical". The elasticity of the term becomes apparent when we consider the variety of poems to which it has been applied, poems of all lengths and of the most diverse poetic quality: "The Flea", "De Rerum Natura", "The Botanic Garden", "Donna Mi Pregha", "To his Coy Mistress", "The Divine Comedy" - the list might be expanded, almost indefinitely, to include works of every age and in all European tongues. In England, the poetry written during the seventeenth century by John Donne and certain of his contemporaries and immediate followers has been more particularly recognized as "metaphysical",

and "poetry like Donne's" has sometimes served as a convenient, if indefinite, description of the genre. Apart from its convenience, however, there is little to recommend so unscientific a generalization. Indeed, the whole conception has not gone unchallenged. "In reality", Mr Herbert Read has declared, "very few of the metaphysical school were metaphysical in any sense, and the name only adds confusion to literary criticism".¹

Whether we agree or disagree with such a sweeping statement, it is necessary to examine the "confusion" which the term "metaphysical" has added to criticism. The history of its application to the poetry of Donne and his school is well known. Dryden was the first to make use of it, when he said that Donne "affects the metaphysics" and condemned the introduction of "speculations of philosophy" into poetry dedicated to the "softness of love". Dr Johnson elaborated this criticism in a famous passage in the Life of Cowley, and furnished us with the first full and accurate description of one aspect of the poetry of which Donne's is the best example. The great apostle of common sense and correctness saw such poetry as a discordia concors, a combination of dissimilar images, the revelation of hidden resemblances in things apparently unlike. The metaphysical poet submits his world to the dissector's knife, he reduces substance to its elements, and these to their stonies. To seek original

1. Reason and Romanticism, p.40.

correspondence, to collect and assemble strangely related ideas, to make a minute examination of the inner similarity of things: this, according to Johnson, is the purpose of the metaphysical poet. Analysis is his characteristic method. He is essentially an anatomist, no more able to present a true picture of things as a whole "than he who dissects a sunbeam with a prism can exhibit the wide effulgence of a summer noon". But while Dr Johnson's tone was deprecatory, his condemnation was neither un-intelligent nor unqualified. He recognized that if many of the conceits of this poetry are far-fetched, they are often worth the carriage, and that learning, thought and wit have been expended - not always in vain.

The Life of Cowley definitely established the term "metaphysical" in its application to the poetry of Donne and his followers. Johnson's balanced and discriminating judgement is still the orthodox criticism. So far as it goes, it has not been excelled. Professor Courthope in a chapter on "The School of Metaphysical Wit" in his History of English Poetry¹ has analysed in much greater detail the characteristic features of poetic wit, and has traced with admirable clearness the origins of the metaphysical school, but his final judgement offers no important modification to that of the eighteenth century critic. He reiterates the charge that Donne is an analyst, carrying on what is, after

1. Vol. iii, cap.8.

all, one of the lesser tasks of the artist, and interesting chiefly from the point of view of the historian who seeks to understand a complex age.

But Dr Johnson and Professor Courthope have told us only half the truth. As far as it goes, their criticism is accurate and discriminating, but by limiting themselves solely to the intellectual aspect of this poetry they have tended to miss one of its most characteristic qualities. With hardly a single misstatement, and with no lack of intelligence, they have yet failed to account for the peculiar appeal of metaphysical poetry, simply as poetry. They have considered the metaphysics as something apart from the poetry, as an arbitrary imposition or a rather inferior intrusion. Yet if metaphysical poetry is something better than the writing of metaphysics in verse or the compilation of rhymed reflections on philosophical subjects, there must be a balance struck, a harmony achieved, between the poetic expression and the metaphysical thought expressed. One must rise from the other. They are interdependent, and will react mutually. To disregard the capacity for intense feeling which the metaphysical poet shares with every poet is to be concerned with poetic metaphysics, not with metaphysical poetry.

The metaphysical poet, insofar as he is a poet and not a versifier, is a man of tense and passionate emotion. But he differs from the romantic poet in this, that his emotion is limited, not in intensity, but in its application. It is

more sternly disciplined than the expansive rhapsody of the romantic in that its source and goal alike are definite. It is not scattered indiscriminately, or even generously, and as a result of its restricted field its energies are not dissipated. That is why the metaphysical poet can bring such an intensity of emotion to the contemplation of complex ideas and feel passionately concerning things for which the debilitated romantic has no passion left.

But the most significant difference between metaphysical and non-metaphysical poetry lies neither in the intensity of the feeling which inspires it nor in the nature of that feeling, but in its different source. The lyrical or non-metaphysical poet expresses a pure emotion aroused by the direct contact of his consciousness with the outer world. The points of contact are his physical senses. The metaphysical poet, on the other hand, deals with the world of ideas. The emotion in which his poetry is kindled does not result directly from sensation, but is the product of cerebral activity. "A metaphysical poet in the full sense of the word", says Professor Grierson, "is a poet who finds his inspiration in learning; not in the world as his own and common sense reveal it, but in the world as science and philosophy report of it".¹ He is one who prefers a life of thought to a life of sensation.

Metaphysical poetry, thus, is more abstract than lyrical poetry. It deals with concepts, not with direct perceptions.

1. The Poems of John Donne, ed. H.J.C.Grierson, ii, Commentary, p.1.

But if it is to be poetry, it must also be inspired and animated by feeling. "Passionate thought" is the quality which discerning critics have named as characteristic of the best work of the poets of the metaphysical school. To these, however, it is not - as it is to the metaphysician - the concept itself which is of prime importance, but the emotion which it creates and illustrates. The metaphysical poet uses abstract concepts as the romantic uses poetic figures of speech: to recognize likenesses, to emphasize differences, to discriminate, to heighten an effect. Thus, concepts might be called poetic "figures of thought".

Metaphysical poetry is at once more rigorous in its limitations than non-metaphysical poetry, and more free. It implies learning on the part of both poet and reader. Each is acquainted with another world besides that directly apparent to the senses, and finds on the intellectual plane many new points of contact. For purposes of contrast and comparison the metaphysical poet has a vastly wider range of images, metaphors and similes than the purely lyrical poet. The latter is able to express every shade of feeling except that which results from intellectual activity, but the metaphysical poet has not this limitation. He has at once enlarged his universe and reduced it to a unity in which the apparently most dissimilar things are seen to be curiously related. He can become increasingly subtle, and even difficult, because he is writing for a learned audience.

The learning at the command of the poets of the seventeenth century came from several sources. The Fathers and Schoolmen

had found in Neo-Platonism a system in which divinity, philosophy and science were fused into one. The Reformation, emphasizing the supreme authority of the Scriptures, tended to effect a separation between religion and philosophy, while science, in its denial of geocentricity, flouted both. Donne was deeply read in patristic and scholastic philosophy, in the Bible and the Commentators. He was conscious of the disruptive force of the new science, without feeling its essential harmony, though this did not prevent him from thinking passionately about it and turning its concepts to poetry. Herbert and Vaughan found their learning in the Bible and the creeds of the Anglican Church, supplemented in the case of Vaughan by medicine and alchemy. Crashaw was a scholar in the paradoxes of Catholic dogma.

But it is not learning that makes a metaphysical poet; it is the use to which he puts it. Greater knowledge enlarges the poet's world, gives him a richer store of imagery and metaphor, admits him, as it were, into a body of catholic tradition, and makes him free of another kingdom than that of sensation. Yet this is of no avail unless he use his prerogative wisely. Learning can only become the source of poetry when it kindles or sustains emotion. The subtlest analogy drawn by the metaphysical poet is the fundamental one between knowledge and feeling. It is in this union that the coyness of the Jews becomes one with the coyness of Marvell's mistress, and the structure of a pair of compasses a sovereign antidote against loneliness.

·II

Before drawing for particular illustrations upon any of the poets who are discussed more fully in later chapters it will be useful and interesting to examine the metaphysical element in some passages from the work of a poet whose affinity to Donne has not yet been adequately demonstrated - the dramatist, George Chapman.

The poetry of Chapman's plays is the continual fruit of a constant and bitter struggle. The translator of Homer was, as Dr Johnson said of the "metaphysicals", a learned poet. He was an intellectual aristocrat, and it was at the bidding of an austere morality and an artistic code of honour that he strove in all his verse to subject emotion to the discipline of thought. The result was sometimes a failure, and there is much in Chapman that deserves the harsh strictures of Dryden on the verse of Bussy d'Ambois. "Repetition in abundance, looseness of expression, gross hyperbole" - these are the charges - "dwarfish thought dressed up in gigantic words" - and the whole summed up as "a scantling of wit beneath a heap of rubbish". This is the worst that can be said of the worst in Chapman, and yet in all his plays there are passages which defy this verdict. Sometimes it is not such a dwarfish thought that is dressed in mighty words, sometimes there is more than a scantling of wit beneath what is, after all, no heap of rubbish.

When Chapman fails, - as a writer of metaphysical poetry - it is in one of three ways: (1) a too heavy emphasis upon the intellectual element entirely crushes the emotion: (2) an attempt is made to compel an inadequate concept or

thought to generate a profound emotion; or (3) the emotional appeal of the verse is not due to the thought it expresses, but to the dramatic situation in which it occurs. The dying speech of Bussy d'Ambois is an example of this last failure.

"My sun is turned to blood, in whose red beams
Pindus and Ossa hid in drifts of snow,
Laid on my heart and liver; from their veins
Melt like two hungry torrents, eating rocks
Into the ocean of all humane life,
And make it bitter, only with my blood."¹

Occasionally, too, as the exigencies of dramatic emphasis demand, Chapman gives the reins entirely into the hands of emotion, and we have a purely lyrical interlude. There is no lack of harmony between thought and feeling in the following lines, because they contain nothing but pure emotion. The appeal is not to the intellect at all.

"Never more
Shall any hope of my revival see me.
Such is the endless exile of dead men.
Summer succeeds the spring; autumn the summer;
The frosts of winter, the fall'n leaves of autumn:
All these and all fruits in them yearly fade,
And every year return: but cursed man
Shall never more renew his vanish'd face."²

These passages have an almost identical dramatic significance; but in poetical quality they differ greatly: the first is metaphysical rhetoric, the second is lyrical poetry. In the speech of Bussy the thought and feeling do not fuse; in that of Byron - the second quotation - there is only feeling, and we have what amounts to a beautiful and compact lyrical poem.

1. Bussy d'Ambois, V, 1.
2. The Tragedy of Byron, V, 1.

The effect is gained by the simplest means: the arrangement and repetition of a few familiar words that have gained in the course of time an emotional significance which they did not originally possess. We are given the circle of the seasons and their attributes, beginning and ending with a "never more", and in eight lines the poet has epitomized the life of man.

It is not often, however, that Chapman surrenders himself so luxuriously to pure emotion, nor is it always, as one might gather from Dryden, that he sacrifices feeling on the altar of too trivial or too complex a thought. Not infrequently he obtains a perfect balance between these two essential elements in metaphysical poetry, and affords us some typical examples of this kind of poetry. Consider, for a moment, this description of a mortal combat.

"Like forms of life and death, each took from other;
 And so were life and death mix'd at their heights,
 That you could see no fear of death, for life,
 Nor love of life, for death; but in their brows
 Pyrrho's opinion in great letters shone:
 That life and death in all respects are one."¹

This is poetry which could only have been written by a metaphysician. It is based upon learning, but the learning is used for a legitimate poetic purpose - to heighten the comparison and make the image more vivid. It is philosophical in the sense that the concrete object and the particular instance are viewed, as it were, in eternity, as an abstraction and a generality. We have a vision not so much of certain individuals engaged in a life and death struggle, as of life

1. Bussy d'Ambois, II, 1.

in the abstract going down and mixing itself and becoming one with the quality death, not only here and now, but everywhere and for all time.

It is interesting to observe, even in a short passage, the fluctuation in emphasis between thought and emotion. Now the appeal is to the feelings, then for a few lines we have an equilibrium, and now it is the intellectual element which predominates. It is only where this harmony is achieved that true metaphysical poetry is produced. Chapman sometimes swings from the lyrical to the didactic without passing through the intermediate stage.

"Man is a torch borne in the wind; a dream
But of a shadow."

Such is one lyrical flash, but the feeling is soon submerged under a heavy and long drawn out metaphor, and evaporates weakly in a moral tag:

"We must to Virtue for her guide resort
Or we shall shipwreck in our safest port."¹

More often, however, the focus between the emotional and intellectual elements is shifted gradually, so that there is, for a time at least, a perfect fusion. Observe in the following lines how the emphasis which at first is on the intellectual element moves slowly in the direction of feeling until there is an even balance, and finally, over-shooting the mark, concludes with a slight lyricism, of which the rhyme is the natural flower:

1. Bussy d'Ambois, I, 1.

"Is my body, then,
 But penetrable flesh? And must my mind
 Follow my blood? Can my divine part add
 No aid to th'earthly in extremity?
 Then these divines are but for form, not fact:
 Man is of two sweet courtly friends compact,
 A mistress and a servant; let my death
 Define life nothing but a courtier's breath.
 Nothing is made of nought, of all things made,
 Their abstract being a dream but of a shade."¹

The first part of this passage is an intellectual probing of the relationship between the divine and earthly faculties in man, and it presupposes a knowledge of the medieval quasi-scientific physiology whose teachings on this subject were elsewhere rough-hewn into verse by Chapman:

"The garment or the cover of the mind
 The humane soul is; of the soul, the spirit
 The proper robe is; of the spirit, the blood;
 And of the blood, the body is the shroud."²

But with "Man is of two sweet courtly friends compact" feeling comes flowing in, reviving the dry bones of didacticism, and breathing life and poetry into the verse.

"In Chapman", writes a modern critic, ". . . there is a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a re-creation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne".³ This a quality common to much good metaphysical poetry, a quality which the same writer has described elsewhere as "a quality of sensuous thought, or of thinking through the senses".⁴ We find it in lines like these of Donne:

1. Bussy d'Ambois, V, 1.

2. The Revenge of Bussy, V, 1.

3. T.S.Eliot, Homage to John Dryden, p.29.

4. The Sacred Wood, p.20.

"Let me powre forth
 My teares before thy face, whils't I stay here,
 For thy face coines them, and thy stampe they beare,
 And by this Mintage they are something worth,
 For thus they bee
 Pregnant of thee;
 Fruits of much grieffe they are, emblemes of more,
 When a teare falls, that thou falst which it bore,
 So thou and I are nothing then, when on a divers shore. . .

"O more then Moone,
 Draw not up seas to drowne me in thy spheare,
 Weep me not dead, in thine armes . . ." ¹

in George Herbert's,

"Death, thou wast once an uncouth hideous thing,
 Nothing but bones,
 The sad effect of sadder grones:
 Thy mouth was open, but thou couldst not sing . . .

"But since our Saviours death did put some bloud
 Into thy face;
 Thou art grown fair and full of grace . . ." ²

and in a poem like Bishop King's beautiful "Exequy":

"But heark! My pulse like a soft Drum
 Beats my approach, tells Thee I come;
 And slow howere my marches be,
 I shall at lest sit down by Thee." ³

It is this intensely emotional apprehension of thought that distinguishes the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century from contemplative poets like Tennyson and Browning and Matthew Arnold. To the former, thought was an experience that combined and harmonized with sensation and sensibility; to the latter it was an arbitrary and isolated act.

It cannot be denied, of course, that the perfect welding

1. "A Valediction: of weeping". Grierson, ii, 38.
2. "Death".
3. The Poems of Bishop Henry King, ed. Sparrow, London, 1925. p. 41.

of thought and emotion is the crest of the wave. The metaphysical poets only attain it at their most successful moments. Coleridge pointed out that a long poem cannot be all poetry. Similarly, a metaphysical poem is not all metaphysical poetry - it is not always at the same time both poetical and metaphysical. The balance shifts, as we have seen in the lines quoted from Chapman. Indeed, many of the poems of the "school of Donne" are really lyrical poems containing a metaphysical insertion; none was able to embody a complete or wholly consistent philosophy. The English poets of the seventeenth century, unlike Lucretius and Dante, were unable to express a unified philosophical system, and they have sometimes for this reason been thought less metaphysical. Would it not, however, be less confusing to reserve the term "philosophical poetry" for such completely integrated works as "De Rerum Natura" and "The Divine Comedy", and the term "metaphysical poetry" for such analytical fragments as "The Progresse of the Soule" or "An Anatomie of the World"? The criticism of Dr Johnson and Professor Courthope would seem to sanction such a distinction. They both consider that metaphysical wit is an analytical instrument, the use of which makes a complete and ordered system of philosophy an impossibility. Poetry, indeed, is metaphysical in small particulars, and philosophical in complete design. It is true that metaphysical poetry has a place in the design of a large philosophical poem, but it cannot be the material of the whole structure.

III

The reason why none of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century was able to express a single coherent philosophy does not, however, lie in the nature of the instrument they used, in the limitations of metaphysical wit, but in the intellectual temper of the age in which they found themselves. Donne's position was different from that of Lucretius or Dante. A philosophy can be given a permanent expression in poetry only after the philosophers have perfected it, and it has been assimilated by the consciousness of the age. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the revival of interest in the Classic philosophers and poets, and the new impetus of science were shattering the stable structure of mediaeval scholastic philosophy. Dante could give poetic form to the consistent world-view of St Thomas Aquinas, but, by the time Donne wrote, this had been strangely disrupted. The Renaissance, the Reformation, the geographical discoveries, the transmutation of alchemy into chemistry and medicine, and the new astronomy of Galileo and Copernicus were all destroying the compact intellectual entity which was the universe of the Schoolmen.

But the break-up of the old philosophical and intellectual system was by no means complete. The leaders of the Anglican Church still deferred to the authority of the Fathers. Greek philosophy as it influenced Donne and the "metaphysicals" was Neo-Platonic in character and came to them chiefly through pseudo-Dionysius and St Augustine. Alchemy was still practised - by men of science as well as by mystics; even so late a comer as Robert Boyle gave it credence. The new

philosophy had called all in doubt, but as yet it had provided no basis firm enough to support a wide and consistent world-view. The old order was changing, but the new was not yet ripe. Mediaevalism was swiftly breaking up, and the confusion resulting from the disintegration of an order, that might or might not be founded on ultimate truth, but that had worked as well as if it were, made it impossible for the poet to become anything but sceptical in his philosophy and subtle in his faith. The overthrow of the old Ptolemaic astronomy affected the minds of thoughtful men in much the same way as the theories of Darwin were to do in the nineteenth century and those of Einstein in the twentieth. The invention of the telescope by Galileo opened new vistas to the imagination of man, and the mathematics of Copernicus shifted the centre of gravity of his heavens. The earth was no longer the constant fixed point of reference, around which all the stars hovered in humble ministration. The old universe that Milton is the last to describe had suffered a severe and perplexing disruption. The exact, Scholastic knowledge of the functions and positions of the spheres, of the earth and the stars, heaven and hell and purgatory, was invalidated. Donne's reaction is well known. Half accepting and half rejecting the new, he is only able to retain a poor part of the old comfortable orthodoxies. His universe has become a multi-verse. Its essence, unity, has been fractured into innumerable atoms. Proportion itself is now disproportion -

"the worlds beauty is decai'd, or gone,
Beauty, that's colour, and proportion." 1

1. Grierson, i, 239.

The whole scheme of the world, he feels, has been reduced to chaos,

"'Tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:"¹

The same thought struck Chapman, and the uneasiness which the new astronomy created in his sturdy but sensitive mind is responsible for some curiously Donne-like lines in Bussy d'Ambois. When Montsurry discovers that it is the Friar, a holy man of God, who has been pandar to Tamyra's sin, he draws upon the philosophical confusion produced by science for his images of confusion and destruction. Now, indeed, he can believe the Copernican heresy:

"What new frame breaks out of the firmament,
That turns up counsels never known before?
Now is it true, earth moves, and heaven stands still:
Even heaven itself must see and suffer ill;
The too huge bias of the world has swayed
Her back part upwards, and with that she braves
This hemisphere, that long her mouth hath mock'd;
The gravity of her religious face
(Now grown too weighty with her sacrilege,
And here discern'd sophisticate enough)
Turns to th' antipodes; and all the forms
That her illusions have imprest in her,
Have eaten through her back; and now all see
How she is riveted with hypocrisy."²

These are the thoughts and accents of Donne. To both poets it seemed that the Copernican hypothesis had destroyed the harmony and, therefore, the beauty of the world.

"We thinke the heavens enjoy their Sphericall,
Their round proportion embracing all.
Put yet their various and perplexed course,
Observ'd in divers ages, doth enforce
Men to finde out so many Eccentrique parts,

1. Grierson, i, 237.
2. Bussy d'Ambois, V.1.

Such divers downe-right lines, such overthwarts,
As disproportion that pure forme . . ." ¹

"The Sun is lost, and th'earth, and no man's wit
Can well direct him where to looke for it . . ." ²

The "perfect", God-like, circular motion of the sun and the planets has been called in doubt:

" . . . nor can the Sunne
Perfit a Circle, or maintaine his way
One inch direct; but where he rose to-day
He comes no more, but with a couzening line
Steales by that point, and so is Serpentine:" ³

"So, of the Starres which ^abest that they doe runne
In Circle still, none ends where he begun.
All their proportion's lame, it sinkes, it swels." ⁴

All was confusion - in the heavens and in the minds of philosophers. "To avoid these paradoxes of the Earth's motion (which the Church of Rome hath lately condemned as heretical . . .)", wrote Robert Burton, "our latter Mathematicians have rolled all the stones that may be stirred: and, to solve all appearances and objections, have invented new hypotheses, and fabricated new systems of the World, out of their own Daedalean heads . . . In the mean time the World is tossed in a blanket amongst them, they hoise the Earth up and down like a ball, make it stand and go at their pleasures. One saith the Sun stands, another he moves. . ." ⁵

The moment, indeed, was not one for the appearance of poetry that could crystallize a complete and unified philosophy.

Dante's had done this in the Middle Age, but the first

1. Grierson, i, 239. 2. Grierson, i, 237. 3. Grierson, i, 239.
4. Grierson, i, 239. 5. The Anatomy of Melancholy, Part II,
Sect. II, Mem. III.

half of the seventeenth century was a period of transition. It was too soon to base a philosophical poem on the discoveries of the new learning. The time was one of disruption and change; and variety and disorder are the qualities that poetry reflects from it. The paradoxes, the seeming inconsistencies, "the most heterogeneous ideas . . . yoked by violence together", ¹ the intellectual conceits, indeed all the peculiar characteristics of the metaphysical poetry of Donne and his followers were due to the intellectual temper of the age. The physical exuberance of the Elizabethan period was dying down. The immense intellectual upheavals of the Italian renaissance and the German reformation had produced in England their corresponding disturbances, and action and reaction had played their parts in prolonging the long disturbing swell. Men felt deeply concerning intellectual things. Religion itself, in the established Church of Hooker and Laud, sought to bring faith into harmony with reason and law, and to trace the continuity of this true faith back through the Fathers to the primitive Church. At the same time, attacking the religious world-view, came the new sciences of astronomy, anatomy and chemistry. Out of the resulting clash it was inevitable that the poetry of passionate thought should be born, and the characteristics it took on in the work of Donne and his followers were as certainly defined by the state of theology, philosophy and science as were those of "The Divine Comedy" by the stability of the mediaeval world. In the Middle Age, science, philosophy and theology had been

1. Dr Johnson, Life of Cowley.

welded into one coherent system in the Summa of St Thomas Aquinas, and, as a result, a long coherent philosophical poem was possible. In the seventeenth century this trinity was disintegrating, and its components struggling among themselves for the position of first importance. The poet was posed with inconsistencies, and bewildered with conflicting reports. It was no wonder that he should strive in his verse to yoke dissimilar images and find likenesses in nearly impossible places. Short poems, varied moods, curious ideas: these are what we must expect from the writers of an age that resembles the narrow turbulent place where water flows from a wide calm inlet into the open sea. But the very turbulence, uncertainty, and speed make for passion, strength, and beauty. And though the reader accustomed to the erotic passion, physical strength, and sensuous beauty of the poetry of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries may find it an effort to feel the passion, strength and beauty in poetry that requires him to think first and feel afterwards, nevertheless they are there. It is the greatest glory of the "metaphysical" poets that they sometimes succeeded in harmonizing passion, strength and beauty as a pure, intellectual essence. Donne's "The second Anniversarie", Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress", Vaughan's "The Night", Lord Herbert of Cherbury's "Ode upon a Question moved" may be cited as examples of this success.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

II. The Anglican Church.

I

To understand the religious and metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century it is needful to know something of the theological doctrines its writers believed, and of the Church to which most of them adhered. Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne were born and grew up in the communion of the Anglican Church. Two of them were priests. Donne belonged to a family that had endured martyrdom, studied himself out of the Catholic faith, took orders, was made a dean, and became the greatest preacher that the English Church has known. Crashaw was the son of an anti-Catholic controversialist. He made the opposite change to that of Donne, and went over to Rome by way of Anglo-Catholicism, dying at Loretto, a canon of the Roman Catholic Church. But whether they came to it, left it, or were always its members, these poets were profoundly influenced by the spiritual and intellectual characteristics of the Anglican Church.

Like that Church, they were English, Royalist and patrician; and, though they dealt with themes that were of universal application and experiences common to all mankind, they were not of the people. None was moved by popular ideas or vulgar emotions. Each was an individualist, each a man of intellect

and learning, and because of - not in spite of - his scholarship, taste and wit, each was intensely religious - religious in the best sense, that which implies a union of the spiritual, intellectual and moral virtues. And further, each was anxious to express his religion through the medium afforded by the rites of an authorized Church. The emotional intensity, intellectual strength and spiritual ardour of the poetry these men produced indicate the maturity to which the conceptions of the English Reformation had attained in the reigns of the first two Stuarts.

It is clear, too, that there was ample room within the established Church for a wide variety of individual experience and a good deal of intellectual freedom. Fixed though the creeds and policy of the Church had become, its members were not discouraged from cultivating the gardens of their own souls. Herbert is its most typical poet, and we see in him how harmoniously the love of symbol and sacrament may exist as the supplement to an intensely personal spiritual adventure. The Church made no such appeal to the more complex nature of Donne, and yet Donne is as characteristic of its sombre passion, its majesty, rhetoric and intellectual subtlety as the younger poet is of its churches, ceremonies, music and art. The poetry of Vaughan, unlike that of either of his predecessors, illustrates the heights of mysticism to which the Church's sons could sometimes attain, while we see in the prose and verse of Traherne the harmonious blending of humanity, philosophy and spiritual exaltation, a union that had been attained by none of the

reformed churches but the Anglican.

II

At the close of the sixteenth century and during the first half of the seventeenth, the English Church was intellectually and emotionally on a higher plane than any Church in Europe. It was the only one which had broken away from the authority of the Pope that could claim to be both national and catholic. The Anglican Church at the death of Queen Elizabeth was no mere protesting faction. It claimed a share in the tradition of the great Catholic Christian Church, and it was the contention of its leaders that, although a late growth of abuses had been pruned away, the main stem of authority planted in Apostolic times was as flourishing in England as in Rome. In the minds of its adherents, the English Church was still a part of the Catholic Church, though a part which had been purged of the corruptions of Rome. "I make no doubt", wrote Bramhall, "that the Church of England before the Reformation and the Church of England after the Reformation are as much the same Church, as a garden before it is weeded and after it is weeded is the same garden."¹

This is a point which deserves some emphasis. To realize what a weighty significance was placed by Anglican churchmen in the seventeenth century on the belief in the continuity of the Catholic Church is to understand how much closer the Anglican poets were to the old religion than to Puritanism.

1. Works, 1, 113, (A.C.L.)

To the Catholic, the spheres of sense and spirit are different aspects of one great reality: hence the invariable presence of some physical element in the Catholic form of worship. Its rites are a manipular invocation of God. The Puritan, on the other hand, views the realm of sense as separated by a deep gulf from the realm of spirit. The natural and the spiritual are in irreconcilable contradiction, all approach or contact is denied, and each may exist only by the extinction of the other.

There is no doubt which of these two temperamental attitudes is that of the Anglican poets. Herbert's delight in the form of a ritualistic worship through which, he felt, lay the true way to God, makes him a Catholic poet in the wide sense of the term. Vaughan and Traherne, in their apprehension of a spiritual essence in nature, are no less far removed from the Puritan standpoint.

It was, however, in a narrower way that the leaders of the reformed church thought of it as a part of the true Catholic Church. One of the important events of the English Reformation was the preaching of John Jewel's famous "Challenge Sermon", preached three times¹ in 1559 and 1560. Jewel contended that wherever the Church of England differed from that of Rome, she had Christian antiquity on her side. In its amplified form, the Sermon laid down twenty-seven propositions chiefly concerned with the Eucharist and Catholic uses in the celebration of the Mass, and declared that they could not be defended by any sentence out of the Fathers, Councils or Scriptures. Its appeal to

1. On November 26, 1559, at Paul's Cross, and, somewhat amplified, at Court, March 17, 1560. It was repeated a fortnight later at Paul's Cross.

the authority of the historical Church is as significantly Catholic as its appeal to the Scriptures is fundamentally Protestant. The whole of the first part of Jewel's Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae (1562) is devoted to making good the claim that the Anglican Church had returned to the faith of the Apostles and the primitive Fathers, and not, as the Catholics claimed, lapsed into heresy.

Hooker is emphatic on this subject. He has his answer ready for those who ask "where our Church did lurk, in what cave of the earth it slept for so many hundreds of years together before the birth of Martin Luther?"

"As if," he replies in scorn, "we were of opinion that Luther did erect a new Church of Christ. No, the Church of Christ which was from the beginning is and continueth unto the end: of which Church all parts have not been always equally sincere and sound We hope therefore that to reform ourselves if at any time we have done amiss, is not to sever ourselves from the Church we were of before. In the Church we were, and we are so still. Other difference between our estate before and now we know none but only such as we see in Judah; which having sometime been idolatrous became afterwards more soundly religious by renouncing idolatry and superstition." ¹ At the very beginning of the Ecclesiastical Polity we see the conservative, catholic spirit that inspires it in its entirety, and feel that the continuity of the Church is one of its underlying assumptions. Hooker is no apologist for a dissenting sect. He is among those who "maintain things

1. Ecclesiastical Polity, III, 1, 10.

that are established".¹ He speaks in defence of the "Laws of the Church, whereby for so many ages together we have been guided in the exercise of Christian religion and the service of the true God".² Hooker's object was to defend the English Church from the charge brought against it by the Puritans of leaning too close to the Roman rites and doctrines, and though he never for a moment loses sight of the essential points of difference between the two great Churches, he is not blind to what they have in common. "To say that in nothing they may be followed which are of the church of Rome", he wrote, "were violent and extreme. Some things they do in that they are men, in that they are wise men and Christian men in some things, some things in that they are men misled and blinded with error. As far as they follow reason and truth, we fear not to tread the selfsame steps wherein they have gone . . . Where Rome keepeth that which is ancients and better, others whom we much more affect leaving it for newer and changing it for worse; we had rather follow the perfections of them whom we like not, than in defects resemble them whom we love."³

To Donne, likewise, there was but one Christian Church - of which the Anglican claimed to be a part - continuous from the moment it was founded by Christ to the moment when he himself uttered these words from the pulpit of St Paul's on Christmas

1. Ecclesiastical Polity, I, i, 1.

2. Ibid, I, i, 3.

3. Ibid, V, xxviii, 1. Cf. also Ibid, IV, ix, 1. ". . . the ceremonies which we have taken from such as were before us, are not things that belong to this or that sect; but they are the ancient rites and customs of the Church of Christ, whereof ourselves being a part, we have the selfsame interest in them which our fathers before us had, from whom the same are descended unto us."

Day, 1629: "There is copiosa lux, a great and a powerfull light exhibited to us, that we might see, and lay hold of this life, in the Ordinances of the Church, in the Confessions, and Absolutions, and Services, and Sermons, and Sacraments of the Church".¹ He cites the "consent and unanimity of the Christian Church ever since" as a demonstration of the inspiration of the Bible, and in a passage recalling the tolerant wisdom of Hooker he speaks of Papists and Puritans as men with whose religions he can agree in some particulars: "Beloved, there are some things in which all Religions agree; The worship of God, The holinesse of life . . . Men and brethren, I am a Papist, that is, I will fast and pray as much as any Papist, and enable my selfe for the service of my God, as seriously, as sedulously, as laboriously as any Papist."²

The leaders of the Anglican Church, it is seen, were anxious to claim that the traditional thread binding them to the primitive Church had not been severed at the Reformation, but that it had been wound on a new skein. The whole purpose of Hooker's great work was, however, to demonstrate to Puritan objectors that this re-winding had placed a wide gulf between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. What it had succeeded in doing, indeed, was to afford a reasonable and authoritative compromise between the two widely divergent temperaments, the Catholic and the Puritan. Limiting without destroying the sensuous appeal of the Roman Catholic services, it recognized that man's approach to God is helped by forms

1. LXXX Sermons, 1640, pp.70-71.

2. Ibid., p.493.

and symbols. But while there was still an important physical element in its worship, this never degenerated to the veneration of winking pictures and the bones of saints. Recognizing the holiness of beauty as well as the beauty of holiness, the English Church did not strip its services of all imagery, though the pure and austere and entirely English conception of beauty which we may find well illustrated in the poetry of Herbert presents a very definite contrast to the brightly-coloured, ardent, Italianate beauty that Crashaw may be allowed to demonstrate as characteristically Catholic.

The Anglican Church, on the other hand, leaned towards Puritanism on the fundamental question of the individual's right to immediate and private access to God,¹ though it held, as John Donne has phrased it, that "A Church is a Company, Religion is Religation, a binding of men together in one manner of Worship; and Worship is an exterior service; and that exterior service is the Venite exultemus, to come and rejoice in the presence of God."² The English Church was also Puritan in its insistence upon the fundamental authority it placed in the Scriptures.

Another marked cleavage was due to the political circumstances out of which the reformed Church arose, and to its acceptance of the doctrine of the divine right of kings. It was this which as much as any other factor had made the Anglican Church truly a national Church vitally concerned in the preservation of the state - a binding of English men together in one form of worship, and a bulwark against Spain and the Pope.

1. Many of the devotional poems of Vaughan and a few of Herbert's are illustrative of this aspect of Anglicanism.
 2. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.469.

But while the stable form of the Church was largely a result of the policies of Elizabeth, the seeds of the Reformation out of which the Church was to grow had been sown at least as early as the Lollard uprisings.

It cannot be too much emphasized, indeed, that the English Reformation was not solely a religious change, nor a political one, nor a social one, but a combination of all. Its causes were many and complex, and the more immediate and obvious ones are only the visible peaks of an iceberg that stretches down to a vast depth below the surface of the apparent. Long before Henry VIII English kings had protested against the authority of the Pope. The ceremonies of the Church were not more superstitious, nor the practices of the priests more corrupt than they had been for centuries. Catholic doctrine had been questioned as early as the days of Wyclif and Huss. How did it come about, then, that within the comparatively brief period between Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy and the defeat of the Armada the country roused itself to a repudiation of Roman Catholicism, and saw in the reign of Queen Elizabeth the establishment of a Church that aimed to be both national and Christian, humanistic and authoritative?

To answer fully this question is outside the scope of the present study, but a few of the many complex factors that were brought into play must, at least be indicated, for to recognize their multiplicity and variety is essential to an understanding of the via media along which the Church of England was able for a time to travel, and of the appeal which her doctrines and discipline could make to temperaments so widely different as

those of Donne and Traherne.

A curious mixture of noble and base motives, a mingling of ecclesiastical and secular interests, and the co-operation of strangely assorted groups and individuals working towards the same thing, but for different reasons: this is the tangle which confronts the student of the origins of the Anglican Church. The theological speculation of intellectual churchmen, the desire of the monarch for a united nation, the greed of those who hoped to benefit by the redistribution of monastic wealth, all of these played a part. The humanism of Cranmer and Ridley, the wisdom and rapacity of Henry VIII, the rise of a new anti-Catholic aristocracy, and above all, the growth of an English national spirit which was slowly but surely forced to identify Catholicism with Spain and the Inquisition, all these pushed in a wedge that widened the breach with Rome and at last made it irreparable, and made, too, the establishment of a national church not only possible, but inevitable.

But it was the identification of church with state that contributed more than anything else to the triumph of Anglicanism. The development of a robust national feeling had been undermining the power of the Papacy for some time, and with the rise of the strong Tudor monarchy the necessary discipline, which, during the Middle Age had been imposed by the Church, passed into the hands of the state. At the same time, the New Learning still further weakened the bonds by which the individual was bound to an authoritarianism which denied him the right either to interpret the Scriptures or to question nature. The discovery of the

New World and the opening up of the East widened men's minds by stimulating speculation, and strengthened in Englishmen the conception of a national spirit as something directly opposed to the Roman Church, by unfolding a prospect of England as an imperial power whose immediate rival was Spain, the champion of the old religion. The tactics of Philip II and the Pope contributed a great deal towards the triumph of the reformed Church, and when in 1570 Pius V published his Bull, Regnans in excelsis, deposing Queen Elizabeth and commanding her subjects to disregard her laws, the Anglican Church may be said to have become the "Church of England", established more firmly than it ever could be by law alone. Monarch and Church were bound together under the common anathema of their enemies, and the claim which Henry had put forward as Defender of the Faith became an unimpeachable reality.

The Elizabethan settlement was largely made possible by the identification in the popular mind of Church with nation that had been the inevitable result of Spain's attack upon the reformed Church, but at the same time the new Church was weakened by the undue emphasis which the political situation forced upon the doctrine of the divine right of Kings, a doctrine which was perhaps an inevitable development from the royal supremacy, and which in the next century was to bring disaster. From the time of Henry VIII the Crown had allied itself either with Parliament or with the Convocations, according to which was favorable to the royal interests in the question at issue at the moment. While the Tudors reigned,

it was with the help of Parliament and frequently against the wishes of the Convocations that the sovereign reformed the Church, and the result, as far as politics were concerned, was to subordinate the Church to the State. In theory at least, however, the State's was a royal, not a parliamentary, supremacy, though there was much confusion as to the exact distribution of rights and powers. The Stuarts were determined to make this supremacy a royal one in actual practice; further, they would act through the Convocations, not through Parliament. The growing Puritan element in the Commons was just as determined to wield itself the controlling power in ecclesiastical affairs, and the resulting dissension was one of the most significant causes of the Civil War.

In the question at issue, the Anglican poets were wholeheartedly with the King and the Bishops, and in their enthusiasm for anything that seemed to make for the preservation of the doctrine and discipline of the Church they embraced the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings. In the writings and sermons of Laud and Andrewes - and even of Donne - the implications in the theory are sometimes carried to astonishing extremes. There is very little, for example, to disguise the parallel which the Bishop of Winchester was intending when, in a sermon preached before King James, he spoke of Christ and His kingdom in these terms:

"Yet a Prince He is, and so He is styled; 'born' and 'given' to establish a 'government,' that none imagine they

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 shall live like libertines under Him, every man believe and live as he list. It is Christ, not Belial, that is born to-day, He bringeth a Government with Him; they that be His must live in subjection under a government . . .

"And this 'government' is by name a principality, wherein neither the popular confusion of many, nor the factious ambition of a few, bear all the sway, but where One is Sovereign. Such is the government of Heaven, such is Christ's 'government' . . .

"Belike, governments have their weight - be heavy; and so they be; they need not only a good head, but good shoulders, that sustain them. But that not so much while they be in good tune and temper, . . . but when they grow unwieldy, be it weakness or waywardness of the governed, in that case they need; and in that case, there is no governor but, at one time or other, he bears his government upon his shoulders."¹

These words were uttered on Christmas Day, 1606. The King could hardly miss the compliment, or the advice; so put, it was his plain duty as a Christian prince and the Church's "supreme governor" to overrule "the popular confusion of the many" and "the factious ambition of a few", to compel, in fact, his people to live "in submission" under him. The reference to the condition of the times is unmistakable. Hardly two years before, the disappointment of the Puritan party at the Hampton Court Conference and the enforcement by the Court of High Commission of the penalties attached to the various canons which

1. Lancelot Andrewes, Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity, p.24.

comprised the code of a hundred and forty-one Canons led to the suspension of three hundred clergymen of Puritan tendencies and the deprivation of some fifty others. Thus had occurred what Mr G.M.Trevelyan describes as "the first of the great ejections for conscience' sake that mark the history of the reformed English Church, . . . which, after weeding out in turn the more scrupulous champions of Puritanism and of Anglicanism, at the end of a hundred years left the Vicar of Bray as the type of an English clergyman in the eighteenth century".¹ A little over a year and a month before, the Gunpowder Plot had threatened, as Donne put it in a dramatic paragraph, to make the whole House of Commons "one Murdring peece" charged "with Peers, with People, with Princes, with the King, and . . . to discharge it upward at the face of heaven, to shoot God at the face of God, Him, of whom God hath said, Dii estis, You are Gods, at the face of God that had said so, as though they would have reproached the God of heaven, and not have been beholden to him for such a King, but shoot him up to him, and bid him take his King again, with a nolumus hunc regnare, we will not have this King to reign over us."²

There was an obvious enough suggestion in the words of Bishop Andrewes, but in Donne's the doctrine of the divine right of kings has come curiously close to that of the divinity of kings. "To shoot God at the face of God"! References of this nature are not uncommon in Donne's sermons. In "A Sermon Preached at White-hall, Novemb. 2. 1617" he said, "Though as

1. England under the Stuarts, p.81.

2. Fifty Sermons, 1649, pp.402-403.

Princes are Gods, so their well-govern'd Courts, are Copies, and Representations of Heaven".¹ In another, however, he made an important distinction. "Princes are Gods Trumpet," he said, "and the Church is Gods Organ, but Christ Jesus is his voyce. When he speaks in the Prince, when he speaks in the Church, there we are bound to heare, and happy if we doe hear."² Hence, it follows, as Donne declared elsewhere, that "The rituall and ceremoniall, the outward worship of God, the places, the times, the manner of meetings, are in the disposition of Christian Princes, and by their favours of those Churches, which are in their government: and not to rejoyce in the peacefull exercise of those spirituall helps, not to be glad of them, is a transgression."³

The comparison of God and King, of Court and Heaven, was a common one among the Royalist High Church Party. Herbert, like Donne, had sought first for preferment at the royal, rather than the heavenly court, and he also sometimes assumes the doctrine expounded in the sentences quoted above. In one poem, at least, he addresses the Deity almost as if God were a Christian Prince. Contemplating his own unruly inclinations, he prays,

"Scatter, or binde them all to bend to thee:
 Though elements change, and heaven move,
 Let not thy higher Court remove,
 But keep a standing Majestie in me."⁴

"My God, My King!" is his frequent ejaculation.

And yet, though the doctrine of the divine right of kings became an important doctrine of the English Church, it did so

1. XXVI Sermons, 1660, pp.89-90.

2. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p.465.

3. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.470.

4. "The Temper": "It cannot be. Where is that mightie joy".

only by reason of practical necessity and the accidents of circumstance. The moderate Anglican statement of the ideal relationship between King and Church - as it appeared, however, to a churchman in Tudor times - is that given by Hooker in the eighth book of the Ecclesiastical Polity.

With his customary thoroughness and fairness, Hooker begins by examining the origins of legislative power, and asserts in round terms that the consent of the governed is the authority upon which all government is based, though the form of government having once been established, those who rule do so by divine right. This does not, however, absolve the ruler from all responsibility except to God, for, by right of our early institutions, the sovereign may do nothing contrary to the established law. The power of legislation in matters spiritual as well as temporal, Hooker maintained, resides in Parliament - "a court not so merely temporal as if it might meddle with nothing but only leather and wool".¹ The King and the Bishops are able to act in an advisory capacity, but it is counsel, not laws, that they give. "Howbeit, when all which the wisdom of all sorts can do is done for ~~the~~ devising of laws in the Church, it is the general consent of all that giveth them the form and vigour of laws . . . Well might they seem as wholesome admonitions and instructions, but laws could they never be without consent of the whole Church."² And again: "Laws being made amongst us, are not by any of us so taken or interpreted, as if they did receive their force from power which the prince doth communicate unto the parliament, or to any other court under him, but from power which the whole

1. Ecclesiastical Polity, VIII,vi, .

2. Idem.

body of this realm being naturally possessed with, hath by free and deliberate assent derived unto him that ruleth over them, so far forth as hath been declared."¹

We see here, in the question of Parliament's right to legislate in spiritual affairs, how widely opposed were the views of Hooker and of Laud. It was fresh in the mind of the Tudor churchman that it was by Act of Parliament that the Papal authority had been replaced by the Royal Supremacy in the Church, that Parliament had passed the Six Articles Act of 1539, that the first and second Prayer-Books of Edward VI and the Elizabethan Prayer-Book of 1559 had all been authorized by a parliamentary Act of Uniformity, and, finally, that it was the Commons in face of much opposition from the Convocations and the spiritual peers that enabled Elizabeth to bring about her Reformation Settlement. These facts were outweighed in the minds of Laud and the Stuart bishops by the fact that the Puritan majority in the Commons would, if Parliament were authorized to meddle in ecclesiastical matters, strive to change doctrine and practice in the general direction of Puritanism. It is Hooker, however, not Laud, who is representative of the Anglican Church at its highest peak and before its youthful vigour had begun to be sapped by factious dispute and open schism.

III

We have seen something of the political factors involved in the rise and development of the Church of England. It must, however, be borne in mind that, important as these were, they were

1. Ecclesiastical Polity, VIII,vi,11.

inextricably bound up with still more significant factors. The essential qualities of the English Reformation were spiritual and intellectual. In a broad sense, it was the cause of intellectual freedom that the reformers were upholding - even while they quibbled over the minute and subtle distinctions of Patristic theology. The Church of England stood for humanism, liberalism, and the appeal to reason. The whole structure of the Church, as seen at its best in the exposition of Hooker, was regarded as a manifestation of the orderly, reasonable operation of the Divine Will. Though clearly recognizing the limitations that have been placed upon reason, Hooker regards it as the divine quality in the possession of which man becomes God-like. It is reason that permits him to distinguish between good and evil, and to exert his freedom of will in choosing between them.¹ The great significance which Donne and even such mystical thinkers as Traherne and the Vaughans placed upon reason will be noticed in later chapters. For Hooker, writes one of his best critics, "the ultimate tests of moral and religious truths are conscience and reason. They are to be applied to all subjects," - and especially those connected with church government - "using for their instruction all other available knowledge, especially the experience of the past", though in no "spirit of servility

1. Cf. Eccelesiastical Polity, I,vii,2.

to a tradition, but of free enquiry applied to a profoundly interesting piece of knowledge, a difficult problem in the art of government."¹

This spirit of free enquiry manifested itself in the somewhat subterranean realm of doctrinal speculation some time before the question of church government became acute. To the early reformers questions of dogma were of more importance than questions of practice, and to perpetuate a creed was better than to denounce a ceremony. The secular reasons which had prompted Parliament to repudiate the authoritarian claims of the Papacy were paralleled in the minds of men like Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer by a growing conviction that the doctrines of Rome were not the doctrines that had been delivered to the primitive Church. The reformers were scholars of distinction who, though they had come under the invigorating influence of the New Learning; were deeply versed in the teachings of the Schools. "It is a mistake begotten of ignorance", says Bishop Dowden, "to suppose that in their theological pronouncements they dealt merely, or even chiefly, with popular misconceptions and popular superstitions. They had full in view the authoritative teaching of the recognized doctors of the then prevailing mediaeval theology."²

The first great controversy between the Reformers and the leaders of the Roman Church was on the purely doctrinal question

1. Stephen, Horae Sabbaticae, 1892. ii, 153.
2. John Dowden, Theological Literature of the Church of England, 1897. pp. 8-9.

of the Real Presence.

The representative doctrine of the Anglican Church as it was expressed in the writings of Cranmer and Ridley has been digested into the following seven propositions by Bishop Dowden:¹

"1. The substance of the bread and wine remain (sic) after consecration.

"2. The consecrated bread and wine are called the Body and Blood of Christ because they are the appointed signs, or sacraments, of that Body and Blood.

"3. They are not 'bare signs'; they are 'effectual signs' (efficacia signa); for, through the almighty power of God, on their due reception the worthy receiver is verily and indeed made the partaker of the Body and Blood of Christ.

"4. The Body and Blood of Christ is (sic) to be sought not in the bread and wine, but in the worthy receiver of them.

"5. When it is said that the Body and Blood of Christ are in the worthy receiver, what is meant is that 'the force, the grace, the virtue and benefit of Christ's Body that was crucified for us, and His Blood that was shed for us, be really and effectually present' in him.

"6. The wicked do not eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ in any other sense than that they eat and drink the signs, or sacraments, which are called by their names.

"7. The sacrament of the Eucharist is called a sacrifice, primarily because it is a representation, commemoration, memorial of the sacrifice of Calvary; and, also, in a secondary sense, as being an offering of our praise and thanksgiving,

1. Dowden, op.cit., pp.16-17.

including the offering unto God of ourselves and all we have."

The early statement of the Anglican position by Cramer and Ridley still remains an authoritative one. The views of Hooker on this subject, embodied in section lxvii of the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical Polity, are in close accord with those of his predecessors, though after stating his own opinion he shows a complete tolerance for the views of others, since, as he believes, the Catholic and Lutheran interpretations of the Eucharist differ from the Anglican only by being more definite in regard to the non-essential question of how the communion takes place, all three being agreed as to the nature of the benefit obtained. It is better, he believes, "to meditate with silence what we have by the sacrament, and less to dispute of the manner how".¹ His own opinion is stated clearly, briefly, and boldly. "Is there anything more expedite, clear, and easy," he asks, "than that as Christ is termed our life because through him we obtain life, so the parts of this sacrament are his body and blood for that they are so to us who receiving them receive that by them which they are termed? The bread and cup are his body and blood because they are causes instrumental upon the receipt whereof the participation of his body and blood ensueth. For that which produceth any certain effect is not vainly nor improperly said to be that very effect whereunto it tendeth. Every cause is in the effect which groweth from it.

1. V, lxvii, 3.

Our souls and bodies quickened to eternal life are effects the cause whereof is the Person of Christ, his body and blood are the true wellspring out of which this life floweth. So that his body and blood are in that very subject whereunto they minister life not only by effect or operation, even as the influence of the heavens is in plants, beasts, men, and in every thing which they quicken, but also by a far more divine and mystical kind of union, which maketh us one with him even as he and the Father are one.

"The real presence of Christ's most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought for in the sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament."¹

As to the fierce doctrinal controversies which raged on this subject Hooker seeks ever to take a middle path, and, basing his beliefs on the authority of Scripture, to point out that the Anglican doctrine contains nothing to which all parties do not agree and neglects nothing which is essential. A manuscript-note by Hooker on page 33 of A Christian Letter² puts the matter concisely: "Whereas popish doctrine doth hold that priests by wordes of consecration make the reall, my whole discourse is to shew that God by the Sacrament maketh the mysticall bodie of Christ: and that seing in this point as well Lutherans as Papists agree with us, which only point conteineth the benefit

1. V, lxxvii, 5, 6.

2. A Christian Letter of certain English Protestants, unfained favourers of the present state of religion, authorised and professed in England: unto that reverend and learned man, Mr. R. Ho. requiring resolution in certain matters of doctrine (which seem to overthrow the foundation of Christian religion, and of the Church among us) expressly contained in his five books of "Ecclesiastical Polity". 1599.

wee have of the Sacrament, it is but needles and unprofitable for them to stand, the one upon consubstantiation, and upon transubstantiation the other, which doctrines they neither can prove nor are forced by any necessity to maintein, but might very well surcease to urge them, if they did hartily effect peace, and seeke the quietnes' of the Church."¹

At the conclusion of his treatment of this subject Hooker sets about to answer the very pertinent and practical question: ". . . how should that mind which loving truth and seeking comfort out of holy mysteries hath not perhaps the leisure, perhaps not the wit nor capacity to tread out so endless mazes, as the intricate disputes of this cause have led men into, how should a virtuously disposed mind better resolve with itself than thus?" - and Hooker advises such to reserve judgement with respect to those obscure matters in which differences of opinion exist, and to accept as "matter of infallible certainty" that which, having been thoroughly examined, is doubted or denied by no one. He then states very clearly the Lutheran and Roman Catholic interpretations of the Eucharist, and finally the Anglican interpretation of Christ's words at the Last Supper is given as follows: "this hallowed food, through concurrence of divine power, is in verity and truth, unto faithful receivers, instrumentally a cause of that mystical participation, whereby as I make myself wholly theirs, so I give them in hand an actual possession of all such saving grace as my sacrificed body can yield, and as their souls do presently need, this is to them

1. Cf. also V, lxvii, 6, of the Ecclesiastical Polity.

and in them my body". Of the three interpretations Hooker declares that "the last hath in it nothing but what the rest do all approve and acknowledge to be most true, nothing but that which the words of Christ are on all sides confessed to enforce, nothing but that which the Church of God hath always thought necessary, nothing but that which alone is sufficient for every Christian man to believe concerning the use and force of this sacrament, finally nothing but that wherewith the writings of all antiquity are consonant and all Christian confessions agreeable."¹ The conclusion of the whole matter was, for Hooker, an abandonment of too curious an intellectual probing into what was not essential, and a surrender to an authentic mystical rapture: "What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not, it is enough that to me which take them they are the body and blood of Christ, his promise in witness hereof sufficeth, his word he knoweth which way to accomplish; why should any cogitation possess the mind of a faithful communicant but this, O my God thou art true, O my soul thou art happy!"¹

The tolerant and non-controversial temper of Hooker is shared by George Herbert, and Hooker's typically Anglican conception of the Eucharist has formed the background of some of Herbert's most characteristic poems. We must note at the same time, however, an important Catholic element in the thought of the Anglican poet. Herbert's reverence for authority and his love of religious symbolism indicate what a deep appeal certain aspects of the old faith might have made

1. Eccelesiastical Polity, V, lxvii, 12.

of bread and wine for this purpose. The appeal of the Sacrament is to the spirit, but its spiritual function is symbolized by the satisfaction of physical needs. The furniture and fine array with which God's beauty is symbolized within the church are not so suitable for this high purpose,-

"For so thou should'st without me still have been,
Leaving within me sinne:".

The actual partaking of bodily "nourishment and strength", which can be felt stealing into the breast, is the perfect symbol of God's grace stealing into the soul. The act of consuming the Elements is a physical similitude of the reception of spiritual grace - but it is nothing more:

"Yet can these not get over to my soul,
Leaping the wall that parts
Our souls and fleshly hearts; . . .

"Onely thy grace, which with these elements comes,
Knoweth the ready way,
And hath the privie key,
Op'ning the souls most subtile rooms;".

It is, as Cranmer contended, "the grace, the virtue and benefit of Christ's Body" that are "really and effectually present" with him - not that Body itself. /

Herbert is not always careful, however, to make this Protestant distinction. In the poem "Conscience", for example, he speaks of an elixir to wash away his sense of guilt, -

certainly had, but they were aspects he could find in his own Church. The explanation of the passages just quoted lies in the fact that Herbert did not feel it necessary to express on every occasion the distinctions it was safe to assume would be understood. The best and most complete account of Herbert's beliefs on this subject leaves no room for a misunderstanding of his position. This is the poem entitled "The Holy Communion" in Lilies of the Temple. Here he deals first with the warmly debated question as to whether the bread after consecration changes its material nature.

"O gracious Lord, how shall I know
 Whether in these gifts Thou bee so
 As Thou art everywhere?
 Or rather so, as Thou alone
 Tak'st all ye Lodging, leaving none
 For Thy poore creature there.

"First, I am sure, whether bread stay,
 Or whether Bred doe fly away,
 Concerneth Bread, not mee."

This is the same conclusion as that to which Hooker's learning and judicious consideration had led him. Perhaps, as some say, the poem continues, God "two stations makest - In Bread and mee". In that case, the wonder is the greater, but yet the end is "mee" not Bread; the worthy receiver, not the Elements.

"Then of this also I am sure,
 That Thou didst all these pains endure
 T'abolish Sinn, not wheat;
 Creatures are good, and have their place;
 Sinn onely, wch did all deface,
 Thou drivest from his seat.

"I could beleeeve an Impanation
 At the rate of an Incarnation
 If Thou hadst died for Bread . . ."

In the last three stanzas of the poem. Herbert comes to grips with the essential generalities involved. and states the fundamental Anglican thesis that no material object can be more than a sign of spiritual grace. If the Elements, he argues, become the actual flesh of Christ, this must be discernible by the senses, and yet:

"That flesh is there mine eyes deny:
 And what shold flesh but sence discry -
 The noblest sence of five?
 If glorious bodies pass the sight,
 Shall they be food and strength and might
 Euen there where they deceiue?"

The Catholic insistence on transubstantiation, Herbert believes, emphasizes the lower, ineffectual aspect of the Sacrament. But, granting for the sake of argument the contention of the Romanists, the Body, even of Christ, would not suffice to fulfil the high purpose of the Sacrament:

"Into my soule this cannot pass;
 Flesh (though exalted) keeps his grass,
 And cannot turn to soule.
 Bodyes and minds are different spheres;
 Nor can they change their bounds and meres,
 But keep a constant Pole."

Not God's flesh, but the spirit, essence, all, is what the Anglican desires, and to attain this in any other way than

through the mystic efficacy of outward symbol and inward grace he believes impossible.

The Roman Catholic point of view, as opposed to this statement of the Anglican doctrine, is expressed by Crashaw in his translation of "Lauda Sion Salvatorem, The Hymn for the Bl. Sacrament". The Elements, the Catholic holds, do undergo a physical change as a result of consecration. They are "Transsum'd, & taught to turn diuine".

"The Heaun-instructed house of FAITH
Here a holy Dictate hath
That they but lend their Form & face,
Themselues with reuerence leaue their place
Nature, & name, to be made good
By'a nobler Bread, more needfull BLOOD.

"Where nature's lawes no leaue will giue,
Bold FAITH takes heart, & dares beleieue.
In different species, names not things
Himself to me my SAVIOVR brings,
As meat in That, as Drink in this;
But still in Both one Christ he is."¹

The Catholic did not feel that the insistence upon the physical reality of the Sacrament was, in any sense, to limit or divide Christ:

"The Receiuing Mouth here makes
Nor wound nor breach in what he takes.
Let one, or one THOVSAND be
Here Diuiders, single he
Peares home no lesse, all they no more,²
Nor leaue they both lesse then before."

1. The Poems, English, Latin and Greek, of Richard Crashaw, ed. L.C.Martin, (Oxford, 1927), p.295. 2. Ibid., pp.295-6.

He, also, could say as Herbert does in the last stanza of "The Holy Communion"¹, "Thy flesh the least y^t I request, Or give me that so I have more, My God, give mee all Thee", but for him there was no separation between "Thy flesh" and the "more" that Herbert desired, and this prayer was completely answered in the Sacrament.

"When the blest signes thou broke shall see,
Hold but thy Faith intire as he
Who, howsoe're clad, cannot come
Lesse then whole CHRIST in euey crumme."²

The Catholic point of view was, to a temperament such as Crashaw's, the reasonable and natural one. It was unable to regard the reception of Christ's Body as more miraculous than that of his Spirit. Surely, the Catholic would argue, since man is a creature of flesh and sense as well as a spiritual being, it is reasonable to suppose that God will act in accordance with the law of his creature's nature, and enter into complete communion with him, satisfying the body as well as the soul.

This is not the place for the discussion of doctrine. Indeed, to quibble over the "possibility" of transubstantiation as so much Protestant and Catholic controversy has tended to do is really to obscure the point at issue. The essential difference between the two Churches was a difference in the means of approaching the same thing. The Catholic sought a spiritual communion with God as the result of an actual physical communion, while the

1. In Lilies of the Temple. 2. Crashaw, ed. Marston, op.cit., p.296.



Anglican sought it through the medium of symbols. The difference, nevertheless, was a real one, and a wide one: it was based on temperament. We need only compare the poetry of Crashaw with that of Herbert or Donne to appreciate the difference between the ardent sensuous Catholic and the sweetly reasonable or intellectual Anglican.

IV

Let us turn our attention now to the aspect of seventeenth century religious poetry which demonstrates most vividly this essential difference - namely, its metaphysical element. What is the nature of the conceits with which it is packed? How - to take the most useful examples - do those of the Catholic Crashaw differ from those of the Anglican Donne? In a very marked and significant way.

If we examine two characteristic passages representing a corresponding poetic level we shall see this very clearly. I will choose for this purpose some lines from Crashaw's Hymn "To the Name above every Name, The Name of JESVS" and a stanza of "Loves growth". These are from Crashaw:

"O come away
 And kill the DEATH of This Delay.
 O see, so many WORLDS of barren yeares
 Melted & measur'd out in Seas of TEARES.
 O see, The WEARY liddes of wakefull Hope
 (LOVE'S Eastern windowes) All wide ope
 With Curtains drawn,
 To catch The Day-break of Thy DAWN.
 O dawn, at last, long look't for Day!
 Take thine own wings, & come away.

Lo, where Aloft it comes! It comes, Among
The Conduct of Adoring SPIRITS, that throng
Like diligent Bees, And swarm about it.

O they are wise;

And know what SWEETES are suck't from out it.

It is the Hiue,

By which they thriue,

Where All their Hoard of Hony lyes.

Lo where it comes, vpon The snowy DOVE'S
Soft Back; And brings a Bosom big with Loues.
WELCOME to our dark world, Thou

Womb of Day!

Unfold thy fair Conceptions; And display
The Birth of our Bright Ioyes.

O thou compacted

Body of Blessings: spirit of Soules extracted!

O dissipate thy spicy Powres

(Clowd of condensed sweets) & break vpon vs

In balmy showsr;

O fill our senses, And take from vs
All force of so Frophane a Fallacy
To think ought sweet but that which smells of Thee.
Fair, flowry Name; In none but Thee
And Thy Nectareall Fragrancy,

Hourly there meetes

An vniuersall SYNOD of All sweets;

By whom it is defined Thus

That no Perfume

For euer shall presume

To passe for Odoriferous,

But such alone whose sacred Pedigree

Can proue it Self some kin (sweet name) to Thee."¹

The following stanza is Donne's.

"And yet no greater, but more eminent,

Love by the spring is growne;

As, in the firmament,

Starres by the Sunne are not inlarg'd, but showne.

Gentle love deeds, as blossomes on a bough,

From loves awakened root do bud out now.

If, as in water stir'd more circles bee

Produc'd by one, love such additions take,

Those like so many spheares, but one heaven make,

For, they are all concentrique unto thee.

1. Crashaw, ed. Martin, op.cit., pp.243-4.

And though each spring doe adde to love new heate,
 As princes doe in times of action get
 New taxes, and remit them not in peace,
 No winter shall abate the springs encrease." 1

Each of these passages is characteristic of its author; not of his highest achievement, indeed, but they are not far below it. Each is as good an example of the peculiar qualities of Crashaw and Donne as can be obtained within the compass of a short consecutive paragraph. The fundamental difference is apparent at once. Crashaw's is the poetry of sensation, Donne's of the intellect. The writer of each has a different object in view. Crashaw is attempting to communicate an emotion of joy and rapture produced in the believer by the contemplation of the Name of Jesus; Donne to illustrate an idea with the aid of intellectual analogies. The method, therefore, differs in each case, and both object and method are rooted in the temperament of the writer.

The stanza from "Loves growth" is a piece of consecutive thinking. It begins with the enunciation of a thesis to be proved, namely, That "yet no greater, but more eminent, Love by the spring is growne", and continues by supplying five separate analogies in support of it. It ends with the triumphant statement of its happy consequences. All is intellectual - unless the beautiful lines,

"Gentle love deeds, as blossomes on a bough,
 From loves awakened root do bud out now."

1. Donne, ed. Grierson, op.cit., i, 33-34.

derive some of their intensity from the sensory images evoked. There is, however, close and accurate observation. This is particularly evident in the lines describing the effect of the sun's rising upon the appearance of the stars.¹ The comparisons brought forward to illustrate the thesis are scientific in nature, and the whole demonstration is reasonable and unsensational. The flow of thought is continuous from the beginning of the stanza to its end, one idea begetting another with the ease and inevitableness with which "in water stir'd more circles bee Produc'd by one".

But, though sensation is replaced by observation and thought, emotion is not stifled. The relevance of the general argument to Donne's love for a particular woman is kept constantly in mind, and it is with a periodic beat, as though at the crest of a wave, that the feeling breaks through. This occurs in the sentence beginning "Gentle love deeds . . ."; in the line "For, they are all concentrique unto thee"; and at the end, where the poet cries, "No winter shall abate the springs encrease". This cry is more moving than Shelley's famous "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?" because it expresses a passionate determination to conquer the coldest fate rather than a hopeful reliance on a kindly providence. Donne looks forward to a victory through struggle, not by a melting away of the snows and frosts of opposition.

When we turn from these lines to those of Crashaw we are confronted by a stream of associations joined by only the most

1. Cf. Grierson's note: ii, 31.

tenuous logical connection. Here the orderly sequence depends upon a free association of words which, though they are frequently abstract, are connected by similarities or contrasts chiefly apparent to the senses. There is scarcely a thought in the whole passage: it is the expression of emotion resulting from sense impressions. The prayer of Crashaw, and of those who, like him, found in the counter-Reformation a refuge from the image-breaking blasphemies into which the Puritan tendencies of the time were degenerating, was one that could be answered in a way that would appeal first to the senses:

"O dissipate thy spicy Powres
 (Clowd of condensed sweets) & break vpon vs
 In balmy showers;
 O fill our senses, . . . "

Observe the association sequence in the lines quoted: it consists of some such series of words as this: DEATH; TEARES, WEARY, Hope, DAWN, wings, SPIRITS, Bees, SWEETES, Hony, snowy DOVE'S Soft Back, Bosom big with Loues, Womb, Conceptions, Birth, Bright Ioyes, Body, spirit of Soules extracted, - and so on to the end of the passage, or the poem. The only intellectual conceit is that at the end, the "vniuersall SYNOD of All sweets", but even that depends for its effectiveness upon the sensory appeal which the subject matter makes. Crashaw's characteristic conceits, it is clear, are a playing with sense impressions; Donne's are a playing with thoughts. The Catholic emphasizes the physical and sensational, and makes them prerequisite to the spiritual; the Anglican subordinates them, and compels them to submit to a rigorous discipline. The poetic method of each of these writers throws a significant

light upon the Church in which he came to find his natural affinity.

A comparison of Crashaw and Donne is valuable because the contrast between the sensational bias of the one and the intellectual bias of the other is so marked. Yet, while Crashaw will always be a characteristic poet of the Roman Catholic Church, Donne is too intellectual to be the perfect representative of the Anglican Church. In many respects, indeed, he has more in common with the deep but narrow learning of the Schoolmen than with the judicious wisdom of Hooker. For the best, because the most temperate, expression of the Anglican spirit we must turn to the poetry of The Temple.

Herbert has neither Donne's intellectual avidity nor Crashaw's sensuous ardour, but he has qualities which, in moderation, partake of both. He is not intellectual, but he is thoughtful; and he is ardent without being sensuous. No other poet interprets so well the peculiar beauty of the Anglican via media. To him, the "British" Church was an Alma Mater:

"I Joy, deare Mother, when I view
Thy perfect lineaments, and hue
Both sweet and bright.

"Beautie in thee takes up her place,
And dates her letters from thy face,
When she doth write." ¹

He contrasts her with the Roman Church:

1. "The British Church".

"Outlandish looks may not compare:
For all they either painted are,
Or else undrest."

The last clause refers to the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches - "She in the valley" as erring in one respect as "She on the hills" is in her overapparelled pride:

"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."

The poem "Lent" affords another interesting example of Herbert's Anglican spirit. Temperance and Authority are evoked in the one breath. Doctrinal hair-splitting is declared irrelevant:

"The humble soul compos'd of love and fear
Begins at home, and layes the burden there,
When doctrines disagree."¹

The appeal of the Anglican Church to Herbert, as well as to many of its sincerest adherents, was personal and aesthetic. We have seen how he considered her the very embodiment of spiritual beauty. It was her moderation and sweet reasonableness, her avoidance of all excess, that attracted him by its clean and

1. This is a Puritan stanza. Here Herbert is characteristic of the rank and file of Anglicans rather than of the leaders. Laud, King James, Andrewes, Donne were no more averse than the early Reformers to theological controversy. But cp. the opening sentences of Ecclesiastical Polity, V, lxxvii, 12, quoted above p.44.

peculiar radiance. In dogma and ritual alike she had recognized the "cleanness of sweet abstinence" as among the highest virtues, and hers had been the reward -

"Quick thoughts and motions at a small expense,
A face not fearing light:"¹

To Herbert, it was those who believed in her doctrines and made use of her ceremonies that followed most faithfully in the path of Christ, and to go that way, he believed, with the Church, was to make sure of coming home:

"Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
Is much more sure to meet with him, then one
That travelleth by-wayes:
Perhaps my God, though he be farre before,
May turn, and take me by the hand, and more
May strengthen my decayes."²

The wonderful kindling touch of these last three lines is among the greatest things in all the poetry of the seventeenth century. It is the quintessence of Herbert, quite different from the arduous lavishness of Crashaw's great moments, or the subtle intensity of Donne's. An abstract idea is suddenly clothed in the most human and appealing image; the sincerity is personal, with an appeal that is directly to the heart. When all is said, it is the presence in Herbert of a spirit that shows itself like this, in the

1. "Lent".

2. Idem.

tenderest evocation of faith and love, not abstract and remote, but homely, close and personal, that makes him alone of all the Anglican poets of the seventeenth century completely characteristic of his Church.

CHAPTER II

JOHN DONNE

For several reasons the poetry and prose of John Donne deserve to be ranked with the most interesting and significant writings of the seventeenth century, but both their importance and their appeal rise out of the fact that their roots are firmly embedded in an extraordinary personality. Subtle and intellectual as Donne's poetry is, it is the expression of passionate feeling, the outcome of life lived intensely, and remembered, not in tranquility, but in the rekindled glow of a creative act. By temperament, Donne was a man not only able to think accurately, subtly and intensely, but one to whom thought was as vivid as a physical experience, and as capable of being the source of deep emotion. The intellectual element in his writing - in the sermons as in the poems - is in no sense an external or arbitrary imposition. The metaphysical conceits, the subtle and erudite comparisons, the fine and witty distinctions, these are the clear and faithful reflection of his vigorous and delicate mind. With him, to feel was to analyse, and analysis in turn begot emotion. The writing of poetry, or rather, the writing of the special kind of poetry that was peculiarly his, was at once the result of experience and the source of new experience, and it is this that makes his work so vivid and dramatic, giving it as it were the freshness of experience itself. To no one can the dictum that style is the man be more truly applied.

This is the secret of his influence. Donne is remarkable for more things than for being the best and most characteristic of the metaphysical poets, and for nothing more so than that he introduced a new sincerity into a poetry that was beginning to make artifice an end as well as a means. He, more than all the satirists and realists, such as Marston and Hall, is responsible for destroying the force of the old Petrarchian convention. The sardonic realism of his Satyres and Elegies dealt a direct blow against the fragile prettiness into which the late-Elizabethan love lyric was hardening. One quick, coarse return to earth - and the brittle thing was shattered:

"Who ever loves, if he do not propose
The right true end of love, he's one that goes
To sea for nothing but to make him sick:". 1

Or else, more deftly, as in the playful, half-scornful fancy of the lyrics and verse-letters to Lady Bedford and Magdalen Herbert, he carries the courtly assumptions of the Petrarchian school to the uttermost limits that logical ingenuity can discover. It has the effect of reducing them to an absurdity long before the end of his reasoning is reached. But these poems are more than mock-heroics. There is in them, as the subtle and beautiful "Nocturnall upon S. Lucies day" amply proves, an intensity of concentration upon what is important and a determination to follow it with ardour and intelligence into whatever byway it may lead that give to even the most artificial poem of Donne a force that could hardly be lost upon

1. The Poems of John Donne, ed. H.J.C.Grierson, 1912. i, 116.
Unless otherwise stated all further references to Donne's poems are to this edition.

the young poets and wits among whom his manuscripts circulated.

It is easy, of course, as Professor Grierson has pointed out, to exaggerate the influence of Donne. It was not a wide influence, but it was well-focussed, and it was the stronger for its limitation. It was not the subject-matter of Donne's poems that made them influential, but the respect they won for it by their emotional and intellectual intensity, and by their amazing technical qualities. Donne is more important than Marston simply because he brings a deeper passion to animate his realism, and because he is a more skilful poet.

Another point is this. It is difficult to say whether Donne set the prevailing fashion of metaphysical wit, or whether he merely submitted to it. The change from the Elizabethan to the Jacobean period was marked in literature by a very wide and complex disturbance, which was felt to a different degree in different writers. The first third of the seventeenth century, indeed, was neither Elizabethan nor Jacobean in character - or rather, it was both. The period was essentially one of transition. Old forms and old ideas were dying, and new ones were taking their place, but much of the old still remained and the new came to birth among surroundings that were strange and incongruous. Romance and sentiment and artifice flourished by the side of realism, cynicism and wit. Shakespeare's great tragedies were followed by the "romantic comedies" of his "serene" period. The sombre shadows and quick flashes of Webster's plays are characteristic of one aspect; Fletcher's tender, mournful, slightly decadent poetry, of another. Jonson produced realistic comedies of "humour", Classical tragedies, and delicate, artificial masques. The song writers were finding their inspiration at second hand in the Latin and Greek

poets, and the fine, hard glaze of Jonson and Herrick shone as brilliantly as the intellectual fireworks of the metaphysicians. As the century progressed, tragedy degenerated, and the comedy of Massinger and Shirley sought its material in "manners" and began already to foreshadow the Restoration. The influence of Chapman was due to the emphasis he placed upon philosophy and learning. His best tragedies are philosophical dramas. They deal with the eternal conflict between man and his universe; now it is the stoical attitude, as in The Revenge of Bussy, that is scrutinized, and now the epicurean, as in The Tragedy of Byron, but in each case, the whole design of the play is philosophical; and often the poetry, as we saw in the last chapter, is metaphysical.

Donne is very much of his time. His temper is sceptical, his mind is not made up. All sorts of cross-currents, eddies, backwaters, whirlpools trouble his intellectual stream. The most diverse experiences and the most varied moods are the sources of his poetry. One mood alone he does not know - he is never sentimental. He never unconsciously reads romance into a situation, or places a false emphasis upon an emotion. When, for purposes of irony or satire, he finds it suits him to submit to the romantic fashion, he does so boldly, openly and unblushingly - but there is always the hint, some preposterous comparison or too bold claim, revealing the sincerity behind the mask. It is in the "early evaporations of his cynical wit" that Donne strikes an attitude and declaims his fine similes in praise of romantic love. But romantic love in

his case is not that of Astrophel, or even of Daniel. To be romantic is to see things in lights and shadows that they do not have of themselves, and to see some parts more distinctly than others. In regard to love, the Platonists among the Elizabethans were tending to praise the soul and to ignore the body. Donne, in his youthful reaction from what he must have felt as the worst insincerity, went to the other extreme:

"When with my browne, my gray haïres equall bee;
Till then, Love, let my body raigne, . . ." ¹

But these early poems, boasting of his own inconstancy, railing on the frailty of woman and praising the pleasures of physical love, contain, as do the courtly letters to the great ladies, clear enough evidence that all is not to be taken too seriously. It is fine play-acting. Donne accepts the tradition. He sighs, weeps, is cold, is burning. All the emotions proper to the lover are his. And yet there are differences between him and the type he so subtly satirizes. He does not swear eternal devotion to the abstract virtues embodied in his mistress, nor obtain his highest reward should she deign occasionally to cast a glance or a smile upon her humble servant. The realistic and unromantic pleasures of physical union, and to-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new - these are the aims of his youthful, real, but otherwise worthless love. There can be no doubt of its sincerity, and of the impatience displayed with the artifice and punctilio of the conventional love poetry. Yet in these poems Donne can spare

1. "Loves Vsury", i, 13.

some irony for his own protested passion.

"Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love?
 What merchants ships have my sighs drown'd?
 Who saies my teares have overflow'd his ground?
 When did my colds a forward spring remove?
 When did the heats which my veines fill
 Adde one more to the plague Bill?" 1

or, else, with a sort of cynical and ferocious honesty he reduces his passion to its lowest terms:

"I am two fooles, I know,
 For loving, and for saying so
 In whining Poëtry;
 But where's that wiseman, that would not be I,
 If she would not deny?" 2

Far different from this is the spirit of the poetry inspired by his wife. There is the same subtlety and directness, but instead of serving scorn and arrogance, emotion is now allowed to enter the service of love. The result is an added fervour and a closer union of thought and emotion. Donne discovers truths that are at once the result of intellectual analysis and the fullest expression of his innermost feelings. Thus, at the conclusion of the long simile that makes up "A Lecture upon the Shadow" he strikes upon the profound truth of one of the most mysterious properties of love:

"Love is a growing, or full constant light;
 And his first minute, after noone, is night." 3

1. "The Canonization", i, 14.
2. "The triple Foole", i, 16.
3. i, 72.

And again, he concludes "The Anniversarie" with this magnificent cry:

"Who is so safe as wee? where none can doe
Treason to us, except one of us two.
True and false feares let us refraine,
Let us love nobly, and live, and adde againe
Yeares and yeares unto yeares, till we attaine
To write threescore: this is the second of our raigne." 1

This is a long way from the thought of

"When with my browne, my gray haire equal bee;
Till then, Love, let my body raigne,".

No longer does he rail at woman's coldness and inconstancy. The body has admitted a consort to share its throne, - the soul.

Donne's metaphysic of love is an elaborate statement of the complementary parts played by the body and the soul. In the early cynical poems nothing whatever is allowed the soul. There Donne writes of a purely physical love, temporal and variable. Discrimination, constancy, faith are not among its virtues. "I can love her," ^{and her,} he cries, "and you and you, I can love any, so she be not true." 2 But in his love for his young wife, he found a new philosophy. After his meeting with Anne More an eternity of no-change became his desire. He wished for complete union, and, when necessity demanded his absence, for some means by which he could still enjoy a communion with her. And so the mingling of souls was admitted among his desires,

1. i, 25.

2. "The Indifferent", i, 12.

and he writes of love in a new vein:

"Dull sublunary lovers love
 (Whose soule is sense) cannot admit
 Absence, because it doth remove
 Those things which elemented it.

"But we by a love, so much refin'd,
 That our selves know not what it is,
 Inter-assured of the mind,
 Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse."

or, as an earlier stanza has it:

"So let us melt, and make no noise,
 No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,
 T'were prophanation of our joyes
 To tell the layetie our love." ¹

Such a union as this, of souls, is described in "The Extasie",² one of the finest and most characteristic of metaphysical poems. It is witty, subtle, learned, even recondite, but it is everywhere animated by a deeply passionate emotion. The ideas it expresses, indeed, cannot be separated from the feeling it communicates, for the latter is conditioned, shaped, and made to vary in intensity, as the thought itself is developed. The poem is concerned with the functions of the soul and body in pure, unchanging love. The **ecstasy** it describes is the Neo-Platonic **ecstasy**, "the state of mind in which the soul, escaping from the body, attained to the vision of God, the One, the Absolute",³ and Professor Grierson has pointed out how closely the poem agrees with the sequence of events

1. "A Valediction: forbidding mourning", i, 50.

2. i, 51.

3. Grierson, ii, 42.

as described by Plotinus. To the Neo-Platonics, love is essentially a mingling of souls, an escape from the body. Donne follows their teaching closely in the first part of the poem.

"This Extasie doth unperplex
 (We said) and tell us what we love,
 Wee see by this, it was not sexe, . . . "

It is, indeed, a forgetfulness of bodies, an interpenetration of souls, and after the ecstatic union,

"Love, these mixt soules, doth mixe againe,
 And makes both one, each this and that." -

so they are forever armed against absences:

"When love, with one another so
 Interinanimates two soules,
 That abler soule, which thence doth flow,
 Defects of lonelinesse controules.",

or, as the same idea is expressed in "A Valediction: forbidding mourning",

"Our two soules therefore, which are one,
 Though I must goe, endure not yet
 A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to avery thinnesse beate."

At this point, Donne suddenly breaks off. Is not the body also, he wonders, essential to complete union?

"But O alas, so long, so farre
 Our bodies why doe wee forbeare?"

He sketches in the following lines the mediaeval physiology of the interconnection between body and soul -

" . . . soule into the soule may flow,
 Though it to body first repaire.
 As our blood labours to beget
 Spirits, as like soules as it can,
 Because such fingers need to knit
 That subtile knot, which makes us man:".

In commenting on this passage, Professor Grierson quotes two interesting parallels, one from the Anatomy of Melancholy (1638) and one from Donne's Sermons. Another, even closer, is found in the lines from Chapman's Revenge of Bussy quoted in the last chapter:¹

"The garment or the cover of the mind
 The humane soul is; of the soul, the spirit
 The proper robe is; of the spirit, the blood;
 And of the blood, the body is the shroud."

Chapman, Burton and Donne were all conversant with the anatomical and physiological theories of Paracelsus, Melancthon and Aristotle, and all made literature of them. Chapman's lines afford the clearest and most concise statement of the theory Donne here assumes.

The body, it is made clear in the conclusion of "The Extasie", plays an essential role in the communion of souls. It is the symbol, the visible sign, the instrument through which the soul must work:

"So must pure lovers soules descend
 T'affections, and to faculties,

1. Cf. above, p.12.

Which sense may reach and apprehend,
 Else a great Prince in prison lies.
 To'our bodies turn wee then, that so
 Weake men on love reveal'd may looke;
 Loves mysteries in soules doe grow,
 But yet the body is his booke."

There is no essential difference, Donne holds, between the soul and the body. The mediaeval insistence upon the humiliation of the flesh, the Patristic belief in asceticism and maceration, he thinks a mistaken doctrine. The body is neither to be exalted nor debased. The perfect life and the perfect love imply complete harmony of soul and body. One is the agent, and one the reagent; one the controlling force, and one the instrument. The souls of ecstatic lovers may well affirm, as they do in the last line of the poem, that one shall see

"Small change, when we'are to bodies gone."

Donne, it is clear from all his writings, was a man to whom thought and sensation presented themselves as experiences of equal and intense force. He undoubtedly was a sensual man, and after the first ebullience of youth, when lust began to be rewarded with satiety, he turned to find in philosophy a justification for the claims of the body. The conviction, forced upon him by bitter experience, of the emptiness and dreariness of purely physical passion, led him to search the soul. And then, disillusioned and satiated, it seems he

experienced, in his newly discovered love for Anne More, something positive at last - an affirmation rather than a denial, a revelation of the full nature of love. The soul by itself was incomplete, nor was the body the only gainer by the alliance.

The emphasis Donne places in the Sermons and the religious poems upon the resurrection of the body is due more than anything else to his final conviction of the essential part played by the body in spiritual love. The soul after death is incomplete, he believes, until it rejoins its transfigured body. When, during the serious illness that brought him near to death in 1623, he heard the passing bell toll for a neighbour his prayer was "That . . . this soule, now newly departed to thy Kingdome, may quickly returne to a joifull reunion to that body which it hath left, and that wee with it, may soone enjoy the full consummation of all, in body and soule, . . . That that blessed Sonne of thine, may have the consummation of of his dignitie, by entring into his last office, the office of a Judge, and may have societie of humane bodies in heaven, as well as he hath had ever of soules;"¹ In a sense, the soul as well as the body is dead, and does not enter into the fullness of eternal life until God utter His command -

"At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
From death, you numberlesse infinities
Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,"²

1. Devotions vpon Emergent Occasions, and seuerall steps in my Sicknes. 1624. Edited by John Sparrow. Cambridge. 1925. p.110.
2. 1,325.

In death, the glory is not altogether departed from the body. In a sermon "Preached at the funeral of Sir William Cokayne, December 12, 1626", Donne declared that the time of the Resurrection is as definitely fixed and as natural as the time of birth. "God will returne to us in the Grave, according to the time of life; that is, in such time, as he, by his gracious Decree, hath fixed for the Resurrection. And in the meane time, no more than the God-head departed from the dead body of our Saviour, in the grave, doth his power, and his presence depart from our dead bodies in that darknesse;".¹

The mystery of the Resurrection appealed to Donne's imagination and satisfied his most vital instincts, but to believe in it was an act of faith. "There are so many evidences", he affirms, "of the immortality of the soule, even to a naturall mans reason, that it required not an Article of the Creed, to fix this notion of the Immortality of the soule. But the Resurrection of the Body is discernible by no other light, but that of Faith, nor could be fixed by any lesse assurance than an Article of the Creed. Where be all the splinters of that Bone, which a shot hath shivered and scattered in the Ayre? Where be all the Atoms² of that flesh, which a Corrasive hath eat away, or a Consumption hath breath'd, and exhal'd away from our arms, and other Limbs? In what wrinkle, in what furrow, in what bowel of the earth, ly all the graines of the ashes of a body burnt a thousand years since? In what corner, in what ventricle of the sea, lies all the jelly of a Body drowned in the generall flood? What cohaerance, what sympathy, what dependence maintaines any relation,

1. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p.826. 2. Cp. "Obsequies to the Lord Harrington", ll.53-56, 1,272-3.

any correspondence, between that arm that was lost in Europe, and that legge that was lost in Afrique or Asia, scores of yeers between?"¹ This is fine rhetoric, but it was that and more to Donne and those who were of his congregation: it was the description of a mystery that was one of the most precious of their faith. At the great, last Day the miracle will come to pass, and Donne conjures it up before the eyes of his hearers with the art of a great poet: ". . . God knows in what Cabinet every seed-Pearle lies, in what part of the world every graine of every mans dust lies; and . . . he whispers, he hisses, he beckens for the bodies of his Saints, and in the twinkling of an eye, that body that was scattered over all the elements, is sate down at the right hand of God, in a glorious resurrection."¹

Donne dwelt upon the resurrection of the body more often and more lovingly than upon the immortality of the soul. This was due, in a great measure, to the temperamental reverence for the body which made him first exalt it as the instrument of physical love and then loathe it for its weaknesses. The body at its best, as he describes it in the concluding lines of "The Extasie", is the soul's helper² - and as such he saw the necessity of its preservation; but as lust, sickness and age in successive stages convinced him of the body's contaminating influence upon the soul, it was on the resurrection of a transfigured body that he fixed his hope. The ideal relationship between soul and body was not one that Donne was able for long to find in himself.

1. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.3.

2. "Perception is the function (the δύναμις, power or force) of soul. . . But the body has its function also, without which the soul could not fulfil its; and that function is 'sense'." - Grierson, note on "The Extasie", 1.55. vol.ii, pp.43-4.

For a time, during his early married years he did so, and in some of the finest of the Songs and Sonets and in one or two of the Elegies he has given it a permanent expression. But as old age approached, and his body, shaken by sickness and decay, began to wither, he contemplates in the Sermons the inescapable contrast between the present rottenness of the flesh, its more violent corruption in the grave, and its final glorious perfection. Even as early as 1611-12, before his entry into the ministry or the epochal date of his wife's death, we find, in the "Anniversaries", a vivid description of the body's frailty, the shortness of its ecstasies, its aptitude for sin, and all that may make it a poor consort of the soul.

"Thinke further on thy selfe, my Soule, and thinke
 How thou at first wast made but in a sinke; . . .
 Thinke but how poore thou wast, how obnoxious;
 Whom a small lumpe of flesh could poyson thus.
 This curded milke, this poore unlittered whelpe
 My body, could, beyond escape or helpe,
 Infect thee with Originall sinne, and thou
 Couldst neither then refuse, nor leave it now.
 Thinke that no stubborne sullen Anchorit,
 Which fixt to a pillar, or a grave, doth sit
 Bedded, and bath'd in all his ordures, dwels
 So fowly as our Soules in their first-built Cels.
 Thinke in how poore a prison thou didst lie
 After, enabled but to suck and crie.
 Thinke, when 'twas growne to most, 'twas a poore Inne,
 A Province pack'd up in two yards of skinne,
 And that usurp'd or threatned with the rage
 Of sicknesses, or their true mother, Age!"¹

There is no denying the bitter sincerity of this. An almost fanatical hatred of the body shrieks in these vehement lines.

1. "Of the Progresse of the Soule, The second Anniversarie",
 i, 255-6.

But in the grave all this impurity would be purged away, and the earthiness and dross of the body dissolved out by decay. Sin and the capacity to sin and the propensity to sin would all be shed. "To cure the sharpe accidents of diseases", Donne wrote, "is a great worke; to cure the disease it selfe is a greater; but to cure the body, the root, the occasion of diseases, is a worke reserved for the great Phisitian, which he doth never any other way, but by glorifying these bodies in the next world."¹ And again, he cries on behalf of the dead to God, "that as thou hatest sinne it selfe, thy hate to sinne may bee expressed in the abolishing of all instruments of sin, The allurements of this world, and the world it selfe; and all the temporarie revenges of sinne, the stings of sicknesse and of death; and all the castles, and prisons, and monuments of sinne, in the grave."²

An interesting aspect of Donne's thought in this connection is his recognition of a physical distinction between the blessed and the wicked at the Resurrection. "Then", he writes, "wee shall all bee invested, reapparellled in our owne bodies; but they who have made just use of their former dayes, be superinvested with glorie, wheras the others, condemned to their olde clothes, their sinfull bodies, shall have nothing added, but immortalitie to torment."³ Flesh he had come to regard as Hell. The reunion of the soul to a transfigured body was the consummation of a Christian's hopes, and its reunion to a corrupt and unchanged body the disaster he must fear. It was to a deliverance from this fear

1. Devotions, ed. Sparrow, p.136.

2. Ibid., p.110.

3. Ibid., p.85.

and the satisfaction of this hope that Donne was looking when, in the sixth of the La Corona group of Holy Sonnets, he wrote:

" . . . nor shall to mee
Feare of first or last death, bring miserie,
If in thy little booke my name thou enroule,
Flesh in that long sleep is not putrifid,
But made that there, of which, and for which 'twas;
Nor can by other meanes be glorified."¹

Death, or rather the many deaths that man must undergo, was, to Donne, a progression through life and into life. In Death's Duell, he speaks of birth as "an issue from the first death,"² from the wombe," and of the "manifold deaths of this world". Then there is the deliverance from these - our natural death, the withdrawal of the soul from the body: but this is by no means all. "Is that dissolution of body and soule, the last death that the body shall suffer? (for of spirituall death wee speake not now) It is not. Though this be exitus à morte, It is introitus in mortem; though it bee an issue from the manifold deaths of this world, yet it is an entrance into the death of corruption and putrefaction and vermiculation and incineration, and dispersion in and from the grave, in which every dead man dies over againe."³

Then after this death, at the Resurrection, the purged and purified body of the righteous man will be transfigured and reunited to the soul: ". . . Hee shall in a blessed and glorious resurrection give mee such an issue from this death, as shal

1. i,321.

2. Not, of course, the "first death" of the lines immediately above.

3. Donne, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose, ed. Hayward, The Nonesuch Press, 1929, p.745.

never passe into any other death, but establish me into a life that shall last as long as the Lord of life himself." ¹

Donne saw a type of this final universal Resurrection in the Resurrection of Christ, and recognized in the body of the risen Christ a type of the purified, recompacted, reanimated body with which the Blessed should enter into Salvation. Christ alone of those who have died, he says in Death's Duell, escaped this death of corruption; and the reason, he argues, is not to be found in the virtue of Joseph's embalming spices, nor in Christ's freedom from original sin, nor in the hypostatical union in him of God and man, but in God's will - "Wee looke no further for causes or reasons in the mysterries of religion, but to the will and pleasure of God:". ²

"Now this", Donne declares, "which is so singularly peculiar to him, (Christ) that his flesh should not see corruption, at his second coming, his coming to Judgement, shall extend to all that are then alive, their flesh shall not see corruption, because as th'Apostle sayes, and sayes as a secret, as a mystery; Behold I shew you a mistery, we shall not all sleepe, (that is, not continue in the state of the dead in the grave,) but wee shall all be changed in an instant, we shall have a dissolution, and in the same instant a redintegration, a recompacting of body and soule, and that shall be truely a death and truely a resurrection, but no sleeping in corruption; . . . " ³ Thus, these pass in an instant through the changes which the body undergoes from the time of its separation from the soul at death to the time of

1. Donne, ed. J. Hayward. p.750.

2. Ibid., p.747.

3. Ibid., p.748.

its reunion with the soul at the day of judgement, while, as the sermon continues, ". . . for us that die now and sleepe in the state of the dead, we must al passe this posthume death . . ." ¹ The changes that the dead must undergo, according to Donne, are: (1) a purification by corruption, (2) a dispersion, (3) a recompacting of the scattered atoms of the body, (4) a reanimation and (5) a transfiguration, when, at the Resurrection, body and soul are joined so completely as to be one and indistinguishable. Of this, the body of the risen Christ is the tincture and the type, for as Donne wrote concerning Christ's rising in the lines entitled "Resurrection, imperfect,"

"Had one of those, whose credulous pietie
Thought, that a Soule one might discerne and see
Goe from a body, 'at this sepulcher been,
And, issuing from the sheet, this body seen,
He would have justly thought this body a soule,
If not of any man, yet of the whole." ²

Donne's conception of a bodily resurrection is connected with his conviction of the important part the body plays in spiritual love; his realization of the body's corrupting influence is connected with another doctrine - that mentioned in the lines quoted from "The second Anniversarie" - the doctrine of original sin. "Miserable man!" he exclaims in a sermon ³ preached in 1618, "a Toad is a bag of Poyson, and a Spider is a blister of Poyson, and yet a Toad and a Spider cannot poyson themselves; Man hath a dram of poyson, originall-

1. Donne, ed. Hayward: p.748.
3. XXVI Sermons, 1660. p.183.

2. i,334.

Sin, in an invisible corner, we know not where, and he cannot choose but poyson himself and all his actions with that."

Donne, however, does not hold that the body is naturally corrupt in itself. Used rightly, it is a partner, of equal dignity with the soul. In its own nature the soul is not more immortal than the body. Each is preserved by the grace of God, and each is thus equally precious. The body, nevertheless, when weakened and debased by sin, - and into this, original sin inevitably betrays it - corrupts not only itself, but injures the soul as well.

"What hate could hurt our bodies like our love?"

the poet asks in the subtle and complex verse-letter to the Countess of Bedford, the main argument of which deals with the corrupting of the soul by an overemphasis on physical love. This question is the key to all Donne's denials of the body's worthiness. Poisoned by original sin, flesh is the instrument to contaminate mind and soul alike:

"Let the minds thoughts be but transplanted so,
 Into the body, and bastardly they grow. . .
 As men to our prisons, new soules to us are sent,
 Which learne vice there, and come in innocent."¹

If a just balance between body and soul can lead to the highest good, the overemphasis upon the flesh leads to the greatest evil. Yet neither body nor soul is sinful in itself. "We

may wel consider", Donne declares, "the body, before the soule came, before inanimation, to bee without sinne; and the soule, before it come to the body, before that infection, to be without sinne; sinne is the root, and the fuell of all sicknesses, and yet that which destrois^e body and soule is in neither, but in both together; It is in the union of the body and soule . . . " ¹

The doctrine of original sin, like that of the Resurrection, was one that appealed to Donne both intellectually and emotionally. Its theological aspect attracted his mind, while his own early wantonness convinced him of its inescapable power. "Scatter thy thoughts no farther then", he cried from the pulpit at Whitehall, and the cry was to his own soul as much as to any of his listeners, "Scatter thy thoughts no farther then; contract them in thy self, and consider Gods speedy execution upon thy soul, and upon thy body, and upon thy soul and body together. Was not Gods judgement executed speedily enough upon thy soul, when in the same instant that it was created, and conceiv'd, and infus'd, it was put to a necessity of contracting Original sin . . . ? Was not Gods judgement speedily enough executed upon thy body, if before it had any temporal life, it had a spiritual death; a sinful conception, before any inanimation?"² And again, in an undated sermon "Preached at Lincolns Inne" Donne considers the inevitability and force of original sin: "The heaviest sinne seises us, when wee are weakest; as soon as wee are any thing, we are sinners, and there, where there can be no more tentations ministred to us, then was to the Angels that fell in heaven,

1. Devotions, ed. John Sparrow, p.136.

2. XXVI Sermons, 1660, p.83.

that is, in our mothers womb." ¹ In the Devotions Donne prays, "Looke therefore upon me, O Lord, in this distresse, and that will recall mee from the borders of this bodily death; Look upon me, and that wil raise me again from that spirituall death, in which my parents buried me when they begot mee in sinne, and in which I have pierced even to the jawes of hell, by multiplying such heaps of actuall sins, upon that foundation, that root of originall sinn." ² Were it possible, Donne declares, to be relieved either of original sin or of all our "actual and habituall sins", he would choose to be free of the former, "because, though I be delivered from the imputation thereof, by Baptism, so that I shall not fall under a condemnation for Originall sin onely, yet it still remains in me, and practices upon me, and occasions all the other sins, that I commit . . ." ³

This is the modern conception of original sin as the "stimulus carnis, that provocation of the flesh". Donne, one cannot doubt, felt this all his life. In youth he had given it full play, even to the injury of his health, and when he had forsaken all his profane mistresses for religion and philosophy its stings and torments still pursued him. Sickness and the disintegration that comes with age intensifies the irritant. "Though I wash my selfe with Soap, and Nitre, and Snow-water", he cries out to his congregation, "mine own cloathes will defile me again, though I have washed my selfe in the tears of Repentance, and in the blood of my Saviour, though I have no guiltinesse of any former sins upon me at that present, yet I

1. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.187.

2. Devotions, ed. Sparrow, p.53.

3. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.187.

have a sense of a root of sin, that is not grub'd up, of Originall sinne, that will cast me back again."¹

Passages such as these, it soon becomes clear, are no mere reflection of a dry and disinterested study of divinity. Every one of them is the fruit of experience. It is impossible to read through the sermons without discovering how much they derive from the force of the reaction with which Dr Donne recoiled from Jack Donne, and it is difficult to note the numerous impassioned references to the physical consequences of lust without being convinced that the licentiousness of Donne's early life contributed largely to the many illnesses which later harassed him. This is the reason for his morbid dwelling upon disintegration and mortification, as well as for his insistence upon the regeneration of the flesh at the Resurrection and on the corrupting influence of the body. Many of the earlier poems, and Elegies such as "Going to Bed", "The Comparison", "Loves Progress", "Loves Warr", represent on its positive side the intense, corroding lust that Donne confessed, and repented of, in the pulpit. Donne knew how insidiously and quietly the thought of sin slips into the mind, and how easily from thence the weakness of the body affords it an outlet into action. "Sinful thoughts produc'd into actions, are speaking sins; sinful actions continued into habits, are crying sins. There is a sin before these; a speechless sin, a whispering sin, which no body hears, but our own conscience . . ." ² Donne knew only too well what

1. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.187.

2. Quoted in L.P.Smith's Donne's Sermons, Selected Passages, p.173.

an adoration of the Magi there is in the mind "when a sinful thought or purpose is born in our hearts". He describes it with a subtlety and verⁱsimilitude worthy of William James. So far he has proceeded, Donne tells us, to the limits where "the Schools, or the Casuists do ordinarily trace sin But besides these, Here is a farther degree, beyond speaking sins, and crying sins; beyond actual sins and habitual sins; . . . we will reason, we will debate, we will dispute it out with God Men grow asham'd of all holy shamefac'dness, and tenderness towards sin; they grow asham'd to be put off, or frighted from their sinful pleasure, with the ordinary terror of Gods imaginary judgements."¹

This was an experience which Donne knew well. It was often his own in the days when he carried casuistry into his love making, and reasoned himself into the sins for which court and camp and custom gave the opportunity and the sanction.

✓ What was the attitude of Donne the preacher towards the young Donne of the Elegies and profane love poems? In seeking to understand it, we must bear in mind the fact that through the circulation of manuscript poems and by general report the scandal of his secular life was common property, and he undoubtedly felt it his duty to make frequent and public protestations of his changed life. And yet, the passionate sincerity with which those protestations were made forbids us thinking of them as anything but the expression of Donne's deepest feelings. He stands in the pulpit addressing the multitude with all the art that a dramatic rhetoric can command,

1. Smith, op.cit., pp.173-4.

and yet at the same time he is alone with God, and to Him alone pours out his anguished confession: "Forgive me O Lord", he cries, "forgive me my sinnes, the sinnes of my youth, and my present sinnes, the sinne that my Parents cast upon me, Originall sinne, and the sinnes that I cast upon my children, in an ill example; Actuall sinnes, sinnes which are manifest to all the world, and sinnes which I have so laboured to hide from the world, as that now they are hid from mine own conscience, and mine own memory; Forgive me my crying sins, and my whispering sins, sins of uncharitable hate, and sinnes of unchaste love."¹

The weakness that original sin had admitted to his fortress left him exposed to temptation everywhere. He had known the perplexity of uttering "prayers unworthy to come up to God, because thou liftest up to him an eye, which is but now withdrawne from a licentious glancing, and hands which are guilty yet of unrepented uncleannesses."² Even marriage "which God afforded thee for remedy, and physique" he had turned "to voluptuosnesse and licenciousnesse",³ and there are denunciations in the sermons of even darker sins. "Consider", he begs his hearers, "that when thou preparest any unclean action, in any sinfull nakednesse, God is not onely present with thee in that roome then, but then tels thee, That at the day of Judgement thou must stand in his presence, and in the presence of all the World, not onely naked, but in that foule, and sinfull, and uncleane action of nakednesse, which thou committedst then."⁴

1. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.224.
2. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p.370.
3. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.88.
4. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p.691.

Here we should utter a warning. It must not be forgotten that passages such as these, though they are important for the purpose of understanding Donne's inner history, are not more characteristic of his sermons than many others which could be quoted and which would reveal him in an altogether different light. Donne was a subtle thinker and a wise and tolerant Churchman. Among the splendid horrors of Death's Duell we come upon sentences like the following, and we must remember that it is in such sober statements rather than in the passages of great poetic rhetoric that Donne's real message lies: "Our criticall day is not the very day of our death: but the whole course of our life. I thanke him that prayes for me when the Bell tolles, but I thank him much more that Catechises mee, or preaches to mee, or instructs mee how to live. . . . But God never mentions, never seems to consider that death, the bodily, the naturall death. God doth not say, live well and thou shalt die well, that is, an easie, a quiet death; But live well here, and thou shalt live well forever."¹

Again, in the same sermon, Donne's charity and wisdom become apparent when, in describing what makes a worthy receiver of the Sacrament, he says, "In thy preparation to the holy and blessed Sacrament, hast thou with a sincere humility sought a reconciliation with all the world, even with those that have beene averse from it, and refused that reconciliation from thee? . . . Hast thou considered that a worthy receaving of the Sacrament consists in a continuation of holinesse after,

1. Donne, ed. Hayward, p.752.

as well as in a preparation before?"¹

The same qualities are apparent in the passage quoted in the last chapter² where Donne declares the unanimity of all religions in some things - "The worship of God, The holinesse of life" - and testifies how far he is a Papist and how far a Puritan. As a final example of Donne's fundamental wisdom and sanity we may quote a paragraph such as this on miracles:

"There is nothing that God hath established in a constant course of nature, and which therefore is done every day, but would seeme a Miracle, and exercise our admiration, if it were done but once; Nay, the ordinary things in Nature, would be greater miracles, than the extraordinary, which we admire most, if they were done but once; The standing still of the Sun, for Josuahs use, was not, in it selfe, so wonderfull a thing, as that so vast and immense a body as the Sun, should run so many miles, in a minute; The motion of the Sun were a greater wonder then the standing still, if all were to begin againe; And onely the daily doing takes off the admiration. But then God having, as it were, concluded himself in a course of nature, and written downe in the booke of Creatures, Thus and thus all things shall be carried, though he glorifie himselfe sometimes, in doing a miracle, yet there is in every miracle, a silent chiding of the world, and a tacite reprehension of them, who require, or who need miracles."³

We must not lose sight of the fact that paragraphs so full of a wise and witty common-sense are met with continually in

1. Donne, ed. Hayward, p.757.

2. cf. above, p. 27.

3. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p.215.

Donne's sermons, and in making a final estimate of his character we must not be biased by the sensational element in some of the more sombre and morbid of the sermons.

Donne - and this partly explains it - was not one of those who believe the cause of virtue is served by shutting one's eyes to evil. "Ignorance of vice", he wrote to the Countess of Bedford, "makes **vertue** lesse."¹ And so, in his sermons he returns again and again to the sins and follies of his youth, crying out his repentance in accents that have the ring of the sincerest anguish. He knows well the fate of the sensual man: "Thou pursuest the works of the flesh, and hast none, for thy flesh is but dust held together by plaisters; Dissolution and putrefaction is gone over thee alive; Thou hast over liv'd thine own death, and art become thine own ghost, and thine own hell".²

The vivid imagery and deep intensity of sentences like these give Donne's best sermons the air of strange, melancholy, retrospective soliloquies. It is the ghost of his own youth he chides, and the decrepitude of himself he mourns. "I sinned", he declares, "upon the strength of my youth, and God devised a meanes to reclaime me, an enfeebling sicknesse. I relapsed after my recovery, and God devised a meanes, an irrecoverable, a helpless Consumption to reclaime me; That affliction grew heavy upon me, and weighed me down even to a diffidence in Gods

1. i, 198.

2. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.169.

mercy, and God devised a meanes, the comfort of the Angel of his Church, his Minister, The comfort of the Angel of the great Counsell, the body and blood of his Son Christ Jesus, at my transmigration."¹

As this passage indicates, the conviction of the vanity of carnal passion forced upon him by satiety and sickness was combined with a deepening interest in the ultimate truth of religious doctrine. Indeed, a variety of reasons must be assigned as the cause of Donne's rejection of the Catholic faith. The most important, as Walton rightly stresses, were intellectual, but it cannot be denied that there was also some outside compulsion. Advancement in any walk of life was closed to the Catholic. He had to pay dearly for his non-concurrence in the established communion, and was heavily fined if he did not attend the parish church. Further, he was watched by pursuivants and spies, and was in constant danger of being arrested for high treason.

Such conditions would have provoked Donne to resistance rather than to conformity had he been convinced that the English Church had no claim to share in the authority which the Roman Catholic Church derived from Apostolic times. But, as we have seen, this claim could be, and was, made. The Anglican Church, indeed, was that part of the Christian Church established by law in England. Salvation, no doubt, might be found elsewhere: this was Donne's early attitude, but for him, an Englishman, it was natural to seek it in the English Church - but not, as

1. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p.311.

we shall see in a moment, thoughtlessly, or basely from motives of convenience.¹

The third Satyre² makes this clear, and in doing so gives us a valuable account of Donne's preliminary indecisions. In it we observe him hovering with an open mind between the opposing claims of the Roman, Calvinistic and Anglican Churches. The poem is intensely personal, and here again it is clear that it was with the realization of the emptiness of lust that he turned in no coldly intellectual way to religion. It was his conscience that must be satisfied.

He recognizes three foes, the Devil, the World, and the Flesh:

"Flesh (it selfes death) and joyes which flesh can taste,
Thou lovest; and thy faire goodly soule, which doth
Give this flesh power to taste joy, thou dost loath."

What is the remedy? The answer comes quickly: "Seeke true religion." And then another question: "O where?"

The confusion of those who make this search is rapidly and vividly sketched. One -

"Seekes her at Rome; there, because hee doth know
That shee was there a thousand yeares agoe,"

Another, with plainer tastes goes to Geneva to find "Religion, plaine, simple, sullen, yong, Contemptuous, yet unhansome".

1. Cf. Grierson's note on "Holy Sonnets", XVIII, ii, 235-6.
2. i, 154-8.

The unthinking Anglican is satirized as well, and we should bear this in mind before too casually attributing Donne's conversion to the English Church to mere convenience. Donne did nothing unthinkingly, and he did not, like Graius in this Satyre, - remain at home,

"and because
Some Preachers, vile ambitious bauds, and lawes
Still new like fashions, bid him thinke that shee
Which dwels with us, is onely perfect, hee
Imbraceth her, whom his Godfathers will
Tender to him, being tender,".

Nor did he, as once he may have, like Phrygius, "abhorre All", nor like Graccus, love "all as one".

✓ True religion was to be his quest. He set out upon it conscious of its difficulties, and yet confident that -

"though truth and falshood bee
Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is;".

"Be busie to seeke her" is the injunction laid upon him, and it was in the spirit of these fine lines that he obeyed:

"Be busie to seeke her, beleve mee this,
Hee's not of none, nor worst, that seekes the best.
To adore, or scorne an image, or protest,
May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way
To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;
To sleepe, or runne wrong, is. On a huge hill,
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reech her, about must, and about must goe;
And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so;
Yet strive so, that before age, deaths twilight,
Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night. . .

Keepe the truth which thou hast found; men do not stand
 In so ill case here, that God hath with his hand
 Sign'd Kings blanck-charters to kill whom they hate,
 Nor are they Vicars, but hangmen to Fate.
 Foole and wretch, wilt thou let thy Soule be tyed
 To mens lawes, by which she shall not be tryed
 At the last day? Oh, will it then boot thee
 To say a Philip, or a Gregory,
 A Harry, or a Martin taught thee this?"

Donne was here, we see, equally far from the English as from
 the Roman or German Churches, and when he finally came to
 complete accord with the Anglican he had no hesitation in
 avowing where his new allegiance lay. It seems hardly likely
 that the writer of the above lines would have feared persecution,
 or even martyrdom, had he seen truth enthroned in Rome and wronged
 in England. How complete was Donne's accord with the Established
 Church when he finally made his choice and after he had entered
 into the ministry¹ is shown by the following Expostulation in the
 Devotions: "That for thy great Helpe, thy Word, I may seeke that,
 not from corners, nor Conventicles, nor schismatical singularities,
 but from the assotiation, and communion of thy Catholique Church,
 and those persons, whom thou hast alwayes furnished that Church
 withall: And that I may associate thy Word, with thy Sacrament,
 thy Seale, with thy Patent; and in that Sacrament associate the
signe with the thing signified, the Bread with the Body of thy
Sonne, so, as I may be sure to have received both, and to bee
 made thereby, (as thy blessed servant Augustine sayes) the Arke,
 and the Monument, and the Tombe of thy most blessed Sonne, that
hee, and all the merits of his death, may, by that receiving, bee

1. This does not imply that Donne considered the Anglican Church
 as the only division of Christianity in which salvation might
 be found, but that it might be found there as well as in Rome,
 or even in Geneva. Cf. Holy Sonnets, XVIII, and Grierson's note,
 ii, 235-6.

buried in me, to my quickning in this world, and my immortal establishing in the next."¹ Donne, like Hooker, considered the English Church to be no schismatical sect, but a true part of the Catholic Church.

Both the readiness with which the Anglican was content to admit a kind of kinship with Rome and the nature of the wide gulf that separated the two Churches may be seen in these sentences from a sermon preached before King Charles in 1625. Donne is speaking of "the uncharitableness of the Church of Rome towards us all", and he upbraids the Catholics because they "will not allowe possibilitie of Salvation to the whole Arke, the whole Christian Church, but to one Cabin in that Arke, the Church of Rome; and then denie us this Salvation, not for any Positive Errour, that ever they charged us to affirme; not because we affirme any thing, that they denie, but because wee denie some things, which they in their afternoone are come to affirme."² That represents concisely and faithfully Donne's later attitude towards Rome. He sets his face sternly against dogmas which he believed were unknown to the primitive Church, and yet, like Hooker, he was ready to follow Rome in whatever she kept of original Christianity.

The appeal which Catholicism made to Donne has been stressed by most recent critics, and, indeed, it is one which can hardly be over-emphasized. He came of a Catholic family. "During four generations," says Dr Jessop, "at least five blood relations of Donne had suffered cruelly in their persons

1. Ed. Sparrow, p. 40.

2. Donne's first sermon before King Charles, 1625. Quoted in L.P. Smith's Donne's Sermons, Selected Passages, 1920, p. 133.

or their estates for what they believed to be the true faith of a Christian."¹ In the preface to Biathanatos Donne mentions that "I had my first breeding and conversation with men of suppressed and afflicted Religion, accustomed to the despite of death, and hungry of an imagin'd Martyrdom^e". "No family", he declares in the preface to the Pseudo-Martyr, "(which is not of far larger extent and greater branches) hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes for obeying the teachers of Roman doctrine." According to Walton, on Donne's admission to Lincoln's Inn as a law student, "His mother, and those to whose care he was committed, were watchful to improve his knowledge, and to that end appointed him tutors, both in the mathematics, and in all the other liberal sciences, to attend him. But, with these, they were advised to instil into him particular principles of the Romish Church, of which those tutors professed, though secretly, themselves to be members." It is probable that Donne's education was for a time in the hands of the Jesuits, and the researches of Miss Ramsay², though their accuracy in some details has been challenged by Catholic critics,³ have shown conclusively how thoroughly Donne had assimilated the teachings of mediaeval Catholic philosophy. The austere intellectual beauty of the Summa of St Thomas appealed strongly to his quick, logical, avid mind. Aquinas's was a system built upon the most scrupulous and patient analysis, and to discover the subtle relationship existing between each thing and thought in the universe was the task of the Thomist

1. John Donne, p.5.

2. Cf. Ramsay, Les Doctrines Médiévales chez Donne, 1917.

3. Cf. Luke Walker, O.P. In Defence of Donne, Blackfriars, vi, 710.

philosopher. To warm the dry bones of logical philosophy with the fervour of emotion was the task of the metaphysical poet. In Donne there was a mind and temperament ideally suited to such a purpose. The attempts of St Augustine and St Thomas Aquinas to assimilate the teachings of the Neo-Platonists into the body of Catholic thought appealed to his instinct for perceiving the hidden correspondences in the realms of philosophy and divinity. In this he was a true son of the Renaissance, even though his natural sympathies were with the past, with the logical, complete, perfect system of the Schoolmen, and against the boldly speculative theories which the new science was rearing upon the foundation of a direct appeal to nature. These, instead of clarifying and making for order, appeared to him chaotic and perplexing. The perfect order of the universe seemed to be disintegrating, and doubt and instability to be replacing the perfection of the Scholastic philosophy. The ideas of Copernicus and Galileo furnished Donne with a text to illustrate the impermanence of the world, but those of the Schoolmen are indelibly written into the substance of his most characteristic poems.

√ St Thomas and St Augustine are the names that most frequently occur in his citations, and he mentions them always with the greatest respect and veneration. The philosophy of Aquinas was no debatable theory to Donne, and his repudiation of Catholicism did not imply a repudiation of Thomism. He never argues either for or against the propositions it puts forward: he assumes them. The point of many of Donne's most significant analogies

can only be appreciated when we understand the tacitly assumed theories of Augustine or Aquinas. Thus in the Letter to the Countess of Bedford, referred to above,¹ it is to Augustine's City of God that we must turn for the source of Donne's defence of the body; and for the explanation of the sentence in "The Ecstasie" -

"Wee are
The intelligences, they the spheare" -

to the Summa of St Thomas.

Donne, writes Mrs Simpson, "was reared in the philosophical and theological system of St Thomas Aquinas and his followers, so that he was fully in sympathy with scholastic methods of argument. However strongly in later life he might repudiate certain Roman dogmas, his mind never lost the impress of those early years of training."² This is a point which has been much insisted on of late. It is true, and it is important, but it is even more important to understand how Donne was able to reconcile his Mediaevalism with his later staunch Anglicanism. The reason why no one before Coleridge complained of the "Patristic leaven" in Donne is, of course, that this leaven was one that all the leaders of the Anglican Church in the seventeenth century were anxious to obtain. Hooker, Andrewes, Laud, Taylor, all defer to the Fathers. It was only the occasional errors in the Fathers, not the main body of truth, that they opposed. The opinion common to all the leaders of

1. p. 88.

2. A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne, 1924, p. 88.

the English Church is well expressed in these words of Donne: "We protest, that we accept that evidence, the testimony of the Fathers, and refuse nothing, which the Fathers unanimously delivered, for matter of faith." Some of the early reformers he states "were a little ombrageous, and startling at the name of the Fathers, yet since the Fathers have been well studied, for more than three score yeares, we have behaved our selves with more reverence towards the Fathers, and more confidence in the Fathers, then they of the Romane perswasion have done, and been lesse apt to suspect or quarrell their Books, or to reprove their Doctrines, then our Adversaries have been."¹

The ambition of Laud and the High Church party was to secure the dignity of their Church as a part of the great Catholic Church, and to do so, they had perforce to go back to pre-Reformation times and to claim as theirs as much of the old faith as they possibly could. For such a task, Donne was the ideal man. His learning in Catholic theology was immense, his sympathies were enlisted in the undertaking, and his penetrating, subtle intellect enabled him to tread wisely in the tortuous maze of theoretical divinity into which he was bound to enter.

"As a theologian," writes Dr Jessopp, "Donne occupied a middle position between the two extreme parties among the clergy, whose differences were becoming daily more pronounced, and their attitude more hostile towards each other. On the

1. LXXX Sermons, 1640, pp.556-7.

burning questions of the ceremonies and the sacraments, he was emphatically a High Churchman, outspoken, uncompromising, definite, though gentle, sympathetic, and animated by a large-hearted tolerance."¹

Along with a natural sympathy for Catholic tradition there went in Donne a lack of sympathy for Puritanism. He was a Puritan only in the verbal sense: "I am a Puritan, that is, I will endeavour to be pure, as my Father in heaven is pure, as far as any Puritan."² Sometimes within the space of a few sentences we may observe how immoderately he can lean to the Catholic side, and how wisely avoid the Puritan. "Consider", he begs his auditors, "He that beleeveth not every Article of the Christian faith, and with so stedfast a belief, as that he would dye for it, Damnabitur, (no modification, no mollification, no going lesse) He shal be damned." And then, almost immediately come these wise words directed against the Calvinistic doctrines which were still widely held in the Anglican Church: "Consider how dangerously an abuse of that great doctrine of Predestination may bring thee to thinke, that God is bound to thee, and thou not bound to him, That thou maiest renounce him, and he must embrace thee, and so make thee too familiar with God, and too homely with Religion, upon presumption of a Decree."³

Though not, as Dr Jessopp points out, narrow or intolerant, Donne disliked new doctrines and Puritan innovations. He holds

1. John Donne, p.143.
2. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p.493.
3. Ibid., pp.691-2.

that "new terms in Divinity were ever suspicious in the Church of God, that new Doctrines were hid under them. Resistibility, and Irresistibility of grace, which is every Artificers wearing now, was a stuff that our Fathers wore not".¹ The leaders of the Anglican Church wished to have no dealings with "stuff that our Fathers wore not". Theirs was to be a Church in which "Orthodoxall and fundamentall truths, are established against clamorous, and vociferous innovations".² "Keepe me back, O Lord," Donne prayed, "from them who mis-professe artes of healing the Soule, . . . by meanes not imprinted by thee in the Church, for the soule . . ."³

Donne and all the Anglican teachers were in agreement with the Puritans on one important point - the divine inspiration and unimpeachable authority of the Scriptures. Even more significant than their direct statement of the respect and trust to be given the Bible as the testament of God's word is the method of preachers like Andrewes, (and Donne to a less extent) who split a text into phrases and words and deduce the most subtle distinctions from the actual verbal form. Herbert, too, would approve of this method. "O Book! infinite sweetnesse," he cries in the poem entitled "The H. Scriptures", "let my heart! Suck ev'ry letter . . . Thou art all health . . . a masse Of strange delights." It was a "book of starres" lighting the traveller to "eternall blisse". To Vaughan, the Bible was the book that "overcam'st my sinful strength,

1. XXVI Sermons, 1660, p.4.
2. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.230.
3. Devotions, Ed. Sparrow, pp.20-21.

And having brought me home, didst there
 Shew me the pearl I sought elsewhere.
 Gladness, and peace, and hope, and love,
 The secret favors of the Dove . . .
 Thou didst lead to, and still all strife."¹

Donne never speaks of the Bible in these accents of love and tenderness. His appreciation is intellectual, - an admiration for "the style of the Holy Ghost",² and, in a peculiarly Anglican and essentially un-Puritan way, he regarded the Scriptures as possessing a symbolical as well as a literal truth. He speaks of God as being not only "a direct God . . . a literall God, a God that wouldst bee understood literally, and according to the plaine sense of all that thou saiest", but as "a figurative, a metaphoricall God too:" and then, after referring to the "height of figures", "remote and precious metaphors", "Curtaines of Allegories" and "third Heavens of Hyperboles" with which the word of God abounds, he adds: "O, what words but thine, can expresse the inexpressible texture, and composition of thy word; in which, to one man, that argument that binds his faith to beleve that to bee the Word of God, is the reverent simplicity of the Word, and to another, the majesty of the Word; and in which two men, equally pious, may meet, and one wonder, that all should not understand it, and the other, as much, that any men should."³

In spite of his high veneration for it as the written record of God's will, Donne did not consider the Bible to be the only testimony. The divine will was made manifest to

1. The Works of Henry Vaughan, ed. L.C.Martin, ii, 541.

2. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p. 812.

3. Devotions, Ed. Sparrow, p. 113.

man in the book of nature, and in the constitution of His holy Church, as well as in the Bible. The three aids by which man could become acquainted with the will of God were reason - to be used in the interpretation of nature; faith - in which the Scriptures were to be read; and grace - obtainable through the mediation of the established Church.

✓ It was here that Donne differed most markedly from the Puritans. They believed that access to God was free and open to every individual, and that symbols, ritual and the sacraments of the Church were not essential to salvation. Donne emphatically denied this. The Anglican Church was a part of the true Church of Christ, and that soul which did not seek to come to God by the lawful and orderly means that He had ordained in His Church might travel in vain. "As Waspes make combs", he declared, "but empty ones, so do Heretiques Churches, but frivolous ones, ineffectuall ones. And, as we told you before, That errors and disorders are as well in wayes, as in ends, so may we deprive our selves of the benefit of this judgement, The Church, as well in circumstances, as in substances, as well in opposing discipline, as doctrine. The holy Ghost reproves thee, convinces thee, of judgement, that is, offers thee the knowledge that such a Church there is; A Jordan to wash thine originall leprosie in Baptisme; A City upon a mountaine, to enlighten thee in the works of darknesse; a continuall application of all that Christ Jesus said, and did, and suffered, to thee."¹

1. LXXX Sermons, 1640, p.369.

This is Donne's conception of the nature and function of the Anglican Church. His attitude towards the fundamental Puritan contention is made clear in the next sentence. "Let no soule say, she can have all this at Gods hands immediatly, and never trouble the Church; That she can passe her pardon between God and her, without all these formalities, by a secret repentance." And then, lest he should be misunderstood: "It is true, beloved, a true repentance is never frustrate: But yet, if thou wilt think thy selfe a little Church, a Church to thy selfe, because thou hast heard it said, That thou art a little world, a world in thy selfe, that figurative, that metaphoricall representation shall not save thee. Though thou beest a world to thy self, yet if thou have no more corn, nor oyle, nor milk, then growes in thy self, or flowes from thy self, thou wilt starve; Though thou be a Church in thy fancy, if thou have no more seales of grace, no more absolution of sin, then thou canst give thy self, thou wilt perish . . . Only the Church hath the nature of a surety; Howsoever God may take thine own word at home, yet he accepts the Church in thy behalfe, as better security. Joyne therefore ever with the Communion of Saints . . . Whilst thou art a member of that Congregation, that speaks to God with a thousand tongues, beleve that thou speakest to God with all those tongues."¹

In this important passage we have the clearest statement of Donne's conception of the part played by the Church as an intermediary between God and man. Without wholly denying

1. LXXX Sermons, 1640, pp.369-370.

the efficacy of personal communion, it is clear he did not regard that alone as adequate. These passages afford an example of Donne's thought at a much more mature stage than it appears in the third Satyre. There, Donne had travelled a long way from the profane and cynical licentiousness of his earliest lyrics. He had become conscious of the eternal death that awaits the servant of the world and the flesh. But the solution to the problem of finding salvation presented itself in no clear and unambiguous form. That it should finally have been found in the Anglican Church is not so surprising as many writers have been inclined to think.

It is true that he was unable to enter so wholeheartedly into an emotional sympathy with every aspect of its worship as Herbert was able to do. Even Vaughan's mystical, quietist devotion is more characteristic of what we have come to regard as the Anglican tradition. Yet this is something of a misconception. To hold it, is to look at the Church of England of Stuart times in the light of later events: Keble and the Oxford Movement - in spite of the veneration its adherents had for Laud - tend somewhat to add a false colour to our picture of the seventeenth century Church. It was more conspicuous for its intellectual giants than for its saints, though it was not without these, too, as the community at Little Gidding amply proves. But the real leaders of Anglicanism - Hooker, Andrewes, Laud, - were thinkers and philosophers. They saw in the Christian Church the divinely created embodiment of the law and order of the universe, the instrument of God's

grace, and the token of Christ's mercy. In a philosophical, as well as in a theological sense it was the link between the human and divine aspects of reality, and it presented them in a way that sought to satisfy the intellectual as well as the spiritual needs of a thinking and feeling creature. This it is that makes the subtle merging of thought and emotion in the metaphysical poetry of Donne as typical of the Anglican Church in one of its aspects as Herbert's faith and love, or Vaughan's mystical thought, is typical of it in another. The Anglican Church in the seventeenth century will always be remembered with gratitude, if for no other reason than that she sponsored the union of divinity and humanism which bore fruit in those widely different, but closely related masterpieces - the Ecclesiastical Polity of Hooker and the divine poems and sermons of John Donne.

CHAPTER III

GEORGE HERBERT

I

George Herbert was born on the third of April, 1593, in the castle of Montgomery in North Wales. His life is of more than ordinary interest because it helps us to understand the peculiar nature of the mental and spiritual struggle which is the constant theme of his poetry, while it gives us as a sort of useful by-product the opportunity to observe a curious cross-section of life at the university, at Court and in the Church at a critical period of English History. Like the lives of a number of men of the seventeenth century, Herbert's seems to be a bundle of contradictions. He united in his character qualities so diverse, and lingered for so long between opposite extremes, that the resulting conflict and the compromise which settled it would be worth looking into for their own sakes, had we not also the wish to understand the poetry in the light of the character and events which brought it into being.

The castle in which Herbert was born had been for a long time in the possession of his family. It was one of a line of fortresses built along the eastern boundary of Wales to defend the Marches. It stood on an elevation known as Primrose Hill, commemorated by Donne in "The Primrose", in the centre of a well-wooded, pleasant, hilly, agricultural country on the borders of Montgomeryshire and Shropshire. The castle, according to

Walton, at the time of the poet's birth was a place of state and strength. In 1644, however, it was surrendered by Lord Edward Herbert to the Roundheads, and five years later it was levelled to "that earth" which, as Walton adds, "was too good to bury those wretches that were the cause of it".

By birth George Herbert was an aristocrat. His family was one of the oldest, and was connected with one of the stateliest, in England, a Herbert having come over with the Conqueror. In the thirteenth century a descendant of this follower of William was granted a lordship in Wales, and for several generations the family position was consolidated by marriages with Welsh heiresses. In the fifteenth century a division occurred; the elder brother being made first Earl of Pembroke, from whom sprang one of the most powerful of the noble families; while from the younger, Sir Richard ^{Herbert of} H.J. Colebrook, who like his brother was killed at Hedgecote Field, came the poet's family. George Herbert's great-grandfather was appointed by Henry VIII to the stewardship of the Lordships and Marches of North Wales, of East Wales, and of Cardiganshire. According to Lord Herbert of Cherbury he was, as were also the poet's grandfather and father, "a great suppressor of rebels, thieves, and outlaws". Lord Herbert remembered his father "to have been black-haired and bearded, as all my ancestors of his side are said to have been, of a manly or somewhat stern look, but withal very handsome and well compact in his limbs, and of a great courage".¹ Indeed, it was as a race of soldiers rather than men of intellect

1. Herbert of Cherbury: Autobiography.

that the Herberts had been noted, yet Lord Herbert does not fail to close the account of his father with a reference to his education, which "was not vulgar". He understood well the Latin tongue and was well-versed in history.

It was probably, however, from his mother that Herbert received his intellectual gifts. All accounts of her - those of Donne, of Lord Herbert, of Walton, of George Herbert himself - agree in presenting a picture of a woman learned, virtuous, elegant. She was a lady of wide culture. She superintended with care the education of her sons, and was the patron of poets. She had wit and charm. She was skilful in music. She possessed literary and artistic taste, business ability, intellect, piety, - and, what is only too apparent, though not specifically mentioned by any of those who have written of her, a strong, almost imperious will. She dominated, by means of the love and awe she could command in him, over the youth, and, indeed, over the whole life of her son George Herbert. It was from her lips that the call to give himself completely to God continually rang; and in the tones, though there was much of tenderness, there was also something that commanded respect and fear.

Mrs Magdalen Herbert was the daughter of Sir Richard Newport, the owner of one of the largest estates in Shropshire. There was almost as much in her lineage that Lord Herbert of Cherbury could find to be proud of as in that of her husband. Her grandfather had been Chief Justice and executor of Henry VIII, and, as the Autobiography proudly boasts, "By these ancestors, I am descended of Talbot, Devereux, Gray, Corbet, and many other

noble families, as may be seen in their matches, extant in the many fair coats the Newports bear". Lord Herbert goes on then to speak of her virtuous life and loving wifehood, of her tender regard for her husband's memory, and of her careful supervision of her children's education. "Briefly", he concludes, she "was that woman Dr Donne hath described in his funeral sermon of her printed". It is significant, perhaps, that no mention is made of her second marriage. Lord Edward is an adept at remaining silent concerning whatever he feels is not in every way to the credit of himself or of his family. It is a habit which compels us to check carefully the facts that he does think fit to record. But with regard to his mother, he is amply corroborated. Walton devotes several pages to a digression concerning her virtues. He mentions "her great and harmless wit, her cheerful gravity, and her obliging behaviour", and especially remarks "her great prudence and piety", and her solicitude for her children. She accompanied her eldest son Edward to Oxford, "and still kept him under a moderate awe of herself, and so much under her own eye, as to see and converse with him daily".¹ It was one of her frequent sayings "That ignorance of vice was the best preservation of virtue; and that the very knowledge of wickedness was as tinder to inflame and kindle sin, and to keep it burning".²

Donne, whose friend and patron she had been, preached her funeral sermon. In it he spoke of her "extraction and birth", her love of hospitality, and of "the naturall endowments of her person". "God gave her such a comelinesse, as, though shee were

1. Walton: Life of Herbert.

2. Idem.

not proud of it, yet she was so content with it, as not to goe about to mend it, with any Art . . ." The sermon contained a brief and just summary of her life: "But in that ground, her Fathers family, shee grew not many yeeres. Transplanted young from thence, by marriage into another family of Honour, . . . she multiplied into ten Children, Job's number; and Job's distribution, (as shee, her selfe would very often remember) seven sonnes, and three daughters. And, in this ground, shee grew not many yeeres more, then were necessary, for the producing of so many plants. And being then left to chuse her own ground in her Widowhood . . . proposing to her selfe, as her principall care, the education of her children, . . . shee came with them, and dwelt with them in the Universitie, . . . where shee contracted a friendship, with divers reverend persons, of eminency, and estimation there".¹

She remained a widow for twelve years, and then in 1609 was married to Sir John Danvers. Danvers was the younger brother of the Earl of Danby. He was little more than twenty, and notoriously handsome. A man of taste and culture, Aubrey speaks of his "very fine fancy, which lay chiefly for gardens and architecture", while Donne notes his "sober staidnesse" as something conformable to Lady Herbert's "more yeeres". Indeed, she was twice his age, and the mother of ten children, but the match was a happy and successful one. It was based upon mutual esteem. She had apparently retained the beauty and sprightliness of youth; he was gifted beyond his years.

1. Donne: A Sermon of Commemoration of the Lady Dauers, late Wife of Sr. John Dauers, 1627.

This is the explanation given in the funeral sermon, and it is probably the true one. For a portrait of Magdalen Herbert as she was at this time¹ we may consider the ninth of Donne's Elegies, the famous "Autumnall". It portrays the calm beauty of a distinguished woman "past the meridian of man's life", whose still unwithered charms are united to the virtues of a strong and agile mind. It presents a picture one can easily understand having many attractions for an elegant and cultured young man like Danvers. Mrs Herbert possessed beauties of person ripe, mature, and unfaded; she could "trade in courtesies and wit"; her mind was the superior - but not too much the superior - of his own, and she had a practical ability that he could fall back upon with the happy and confident irresponsibility which was another trait of his character. Such were the attractions she possessed for him. Granting them, and knowing the conventions of the time, there seems little remarkable in the marriage. In any case, Danvers proved a kind and congenial step-father to George Herbert, by whom he was regarded with esteem and respect, and whose appeals for books and money while at the university he did not fail to answer.

In his twelfth year, George Herbert, "being at that time well-instructed in the rules of grammar",² was sent to Westminster School. During the four years spent there, he attracted the attention of his masters by his aptitude for the classics, and became known to others, - including Lancelot Andrewes, who was

1. There is considerable doubt as to the date at which "The Autumnall" was written. I am accepting Professor Grierson's arguments in favour of an early date - 1607-9. For a full discussion of the question cf. Grierson, ii, 62-3.
2. Walton.

Dean of Westminster from 1601 to 1605,—for the witty and orthodox Latin epigrams in which he attacked Andrew Melville, the leader of the Presbyterian party. These were passed from hand to hand in ecclesiastical and scholastic circles, and their fame preceded Herbert to the university when in 1609 he was elected a King's Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge.

From his earliest years, Herbert's mother had determined to prepare him for the ministry. His love for her and his taste for classical learning and for the beauties of religious ceremony all united to bring his wishes in accord with hers. He never lost sight of the fact—though sometimes it was obscured by other aims—that he had been destined from early youth to the service of God. The ministry was his ultimate, inevitable, though distant goal.

Yet during his university years he gradually came to recognize that the attainment of such a goal, the means by which one side of his nature was to be satisfied, meant the rejection of all that was most attractive and necessary to another side of it. To devote himself to the service of God was to forsake the world. It meant that his unusual mental powers were not to be used in the acquisition of those things that would gratify the tastes inherited from his father's family—his pride, his love of finery and pomp. The desire to shine, as so many of his relatives were doing, at court, in diplomacy, on the field of honour, perhaps in the council chamber—all this must be set aside. All this, spoke the voice of love and religion, must be offered up, a willing sacrifice.

Yet, for a long time he would not hear. He temporized, hesitated, and looked elsewhere. He would dedicate his verse to God, but it was hard to give his life. He was conscious of his intellectual powers. It might be sin to neglect using them in some high worldly office suited to their promise. He could glorify God best, perhaps, in some secular employment,—so he seems to have reasoned. His poetry, however, should contain no profane element; of this much he was certain.

In the first English poems we possess—the two sonnets sent as a New Year's gift to his mother during his first year at Cambridge—he announces his determination to forsake the secular muse. His love poetry, he declares, is to be quite different from the profane wit of the Court. Not Venus and her Cupid, but Christ and the holy Dove shall be the object of his adoration; and not the love of woman, which is temporal and deceitful, but the love of God, which is eternal, shall be his constant theme.

This, however, was very far from a complete dedication of his whole life to the service of God, nor did it imply the undivided preparation for such a service. Cambridge knew him in a different light from that which afterwards surrounded him at Bemerton. The blood that coursed so swiftly through the veins of his eldest brother was not to be tamed in his without a struggle. He, too, was proud and haughty, and though ambition came to him as a temptation, it was a temptation he did not reject completely until after he became a priest, and

which made his later university years a period of divided aims. If he had any error, Walton quotes Dr Nevil as saying of him, "it was that he kept himself too much retired, and at too great a distance from all his inferiors, and his clothes seemed to prove that he put too great a value on his parts and parentage". He had a riding horse, and, possibly, a small country house in the neighbourhood of Newmarket. He lived the life of an elegant young man of fashion as well as that of a student, though not, certainly, to the detriment of his academic work. In that his progress was a series of successes.

In 161 $\frac{2}{3}$ he obtained his Bachelor's degree, and two years later was made a minor fellow of his College. He took his M.A. degree and was appointed major fellow in 161 $\frac{5}{6}$. The following year he was appointed Sublector Quartae Classis at Trinity, and in 1618 Praelelector in Rhetoric. At the same time he plunged into more advanced and specialized study. Entry into the priesthood was the goal that during his earlier Cambridge years was never entirely absent from his mind. But gradually this came to be obscured by other ambitions. Society attracted him. His progress seemed slow, and he was impatient. The game of town versus gown would appear to be going in favour of the world. Then some academic praise or triumph would come to satisfy his vanity, and he would return with renewed vigour to his study of the Commentators. In the longest of the poems entitled "Affliction"¹ he speaks of a wish to give up his theological studies:

1. "When first thou didst entice".

"Whereas my birth and spirit rather took
 The way that takes the town;
 Thou didst betray me to a lingring book,
 And wrap me in a gown. . .

"Yet, for I threatned oft the siege to raise,
 Not simpring all mine age,
 Thou often didst with Academick praise
 Melt and dissolve my rage."

Besides the distractions of conflicting ambitions and tastes, Herbert had to face the consequences of ill health and of restricted means. In 1617⁷ he wrote two letters to Sir John Danvers giving some account of his studies and of his need for more money to defray the extra cost of books and of a recent illness. "You know, Sir," he writes in the first, "how I am now setting foot into Divinity, to lay the platform of my future life; and shall I then be fain always to borrow books, and build on another's foundation?" Herbert was receiving at this time an annuity of £30 from his eldest brother Edward and also had the income from his fellowship; but this, he protested, was inadequate: "Sir, if there be any truth in me, I find it little enough to keep me in health. You know I was sick last vacation, neither am I yet recovered so that I am fain ever and anon to buy somewhat tending towards my health; for infirmities are both painful and costly". He had been forbidden by the physicians to eat fish, and during Lent when there was nothing on the College tables but fish and white meat he was "fain to dyet in my chamber at mine own cost". Out of Lent he was compelled to do the same on Fridays and Saturdays, though on those days, for the sake of economy,

he sometimes fasted. "I protest and vow", the letter continues, "I even study thrift, and yet I am scarce able with much ado to make one half year's allowance shake hands with the other. And yet if a book of four or five shillings come in my way, I buy it though I fast for it; yea, sometimes of ten shillings. But, alas, Sir, what is that to those infinite volumes of Divinity which yet every day swell and grow bigger?"

The result was that, through the generosity of Sir John Danvers, Herbert's brother Henry obtained a parcel of books for him in France; but this still was inadequate, and he wrote again to his step-father. He declared "that if any course could be taken of doubling my annuity now upon condition that I should surcease from all title to it after I enter'd into a benefice, I should be most glad to entertain it, and both pay for the surplusage of these books and for ever after cease my clamorous and greedy bookish requests".

In 161 $\frac{2}{3}$ the Oratorship of Cambridge University fell vacant on the resignation of Sir Francis Nethersole, and Herbert decided, if possible, to succeed him.¹ The advantages of the position were tempting. "The Orator's place", he wrote to Sir John Danvers, "is the finest place in the University, though not the gainfullest; yet that will be about 30 l. per an. But the commodiousness is beyond the revenue; for the Orator writes all the University letters, makes all the orations, be it to King, Prince, or whatever comes to the University; to requite these pains, he takes place next the doctors, is at

1. On 21 Oct. 1618 Herbert was appointed deputy orator, though the official position was still Nethersole's. Herbert was formally installed as Nethersole's successor 18 Jan. 161 $\frac{2}{3}$.

all their assemblies and meetings, and sits above the proctors, is regent or non-regent at his pleasure, and such like gaynesses which will please a young man well". All Herbert's pride and ambition were awakened.

Sir John consulted Sir Francis Nethersole, who replied expressing some doubt as to whether the pomp and display, and the secular nature of the position were in keeping with Herbert's religious purpose. Its onerous duties and stately rewards might, it was felt, distract him from the Scriptures and the Fathers. Herbert wrote again, in haste, to Sir Francis, and to Sir John. "I understand", he assures the latter, "by Sir Francis Nethersole's letter, that he fears I have not fully resolved of the matter, since this place being civil may divert me too much from Divinity, at which, not without cause, he thinks I aim. But I have wrote him back that this dignity hath no such earthliness in it but it may very well be joined with heaven; or if it had to others, yet to me it should not".

Herbert was appointed to the post, and for eight years occupied it "with as becoming and grave a gaiety as any had ever before or since his time".¹ The new honour was responsible for Herbert's becoming during this period a courtier rather than a serious student of theology. The Church was no longer his first aim. In spite of the assurance he had given Sir Francis Nethersole, it became increasingly clear that he did not intend to neglect the opportunities afforded by his new office. The position of University Orator, indeed, had twice

1. Walton.

already been the stepping stone to high secular advancement. Nethersole, shortly after relinquishing it, had been appointed Secretary to the popular Princess Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia, while his predecessor, Sir Robert Naunton, had since become Secretary of State. Herbert himself aspired to some such important secular position. His relative, the Earl of Pembroke, was in high favour at Court. His brother Edward was appointed in 1619 English Ambassador to France, and in 1623 his brother Henry became Master of the Revels to King James. Herbert's feelings at this time concerning his chances of success were somewhat akin to those which a few years earlier he had entertained on behalf of this very brother. In a letter "To my dear Brother, Mr Henry Herbert, at Paris", he wrote as follows: "Let there be no kind of excellency which it is possible for you to attain to, which you seek not. And have a good conceit of your wit, mark what I say, have a good conceit of your wit; that is, be proud not with a foolish vaunting of yourself when there is no cause, but by setting a just price of your qualities. And it is the part of a poor spirit to undervalue himself and blush".

Herbert himself did neither. Nor was there any excellency possible of attainment which he refrained from seeking. First, he set out to gain the king's favour, and to this end while still attempting to secure the Oratorship, he read with his Rhetoric students an oration by King James instead of one by Cicero or Demosthenes. He analysed it and gave high praise to

its formal concinnity. Of its power to kindle emotion and of its style, he declared such was "utterly unknown to the Ancients, who could not conceive what kingly eloquence was; in respect of which those noted demagogi were but hirelings and tribolary rhetoricians".¹

In 1620 he had his first opportunity of coming to the notice of the King, when he was required to write on behalf of the University a letter acknowledging James's gift of his book, Basilicon Doron. "This letter", writes Walton, "was writ in such excellent Latin, was so full of conceits, and all the expressions, that he enquired the orator's name, and then asked William, Earl of Pembroke, if he knew him; whose answer was, 'That he knew him very well and that he was his kinsman; but he loved him more for his learning and virtue, ^{then} for that he was of his name and family'. At which answer the king smiled, and asked the earl leave 'That he might love him too; for he took him to be the jewel of that university'".

Herbert's assiduous courtship of the King and his open secular ambition is not concealed by Walton. Indeed, it would have been impossible to conceal it. Everyone knew of it, and in later years many were struck by the apparent discrepancy between Herbert's earlier life and his humble ministry at Bemerton. As late as January 167²/₃ Charles Cotton addressed some lines to Walton in which he refers to Herbert as:

" . . . he whose education,
Manners, and parts, by high applauses blown,
Was deeply tainted with ambition;

"And fitted for a court, made that his sin".²

1. Hackett, Life of Archbishop Williams, i, 175, quoted by Palmer, i, 29.
2. Poems of Charles Cotton, 1630-1687, ed. John Beresford, N.Y., p. 116.

The king at that time did a good deal of hunting in the neighbourhood of Newmarket and Royston, and was usually entertained afterwards at the University. Herbert on these occasions exercised his office with such distinction as to bring his merits very much to the attention of the king. He was commanded to attend James at Royston, and in the discourse they had at that time, his learning, wisdom and wit made an exceedingly good impression upon his royal master. The following year when the king ended his progress at Cambridge, Herbert was able to impress Lord Verulam and Lancelot Andrewes with the same qualities.

While he occupied the position of orator Herbert seems to have neglected his theological studies, for he undertook to learn "the Italian, Spanish, and French tongues very perfectly, hoping that as his predecessors so he might in time attain the place of a Secretary of State, he being at that time very high in the king's favour, and not meanly valued and loved by the most eminent and most powerful of the Court nobility". Walton here is very frank. "This, and the love of a Court conversation, mixed with a laudable ambition to be something more than he then was, drew him often from Cambridge to attend the king wheresoever the Court was, who then gave him a sinecure¹ . . . valued to be worth £120 per annum. With this and his annuity, and the advantage of his college, and of his oratorship, he enjoyed his genteel humour for clothes and Court-like company, and seldom looked towards Cambridge unless the king were there, but then he never failed".

1. the lay Rectory of Whitford, Flintshire.

He was seized at times with the wish, partly prompted by ill health - it is probable that Herbert was already suffering from consumption - and partly by his desire to travel, to leave Cambridge and give up all study. But Mrs Herbert would by no means allow such an abandonment of the course she had early mapped out for her delicate and studious child; while he, on his part, would not satisfy his own wishes "at so dear a rate as to prove an undutiful son to so affectionate a mother, but did always submit to her wisdom".

And so he remained at the University, but still looking towards the Court, whence he hoped for preferment. His prospects were bright. Besides the favour of the King, of Bacon, of Bishop Andrewes, he could rely upon the aid of his relative, the Earl of Pembroke, while the Duke of Lenox, the Duke of Richmond and the Marquis of Hamilton had become his patrons. But he was quickly to learn the vanity of putting trust in mortality. Richmond died in 1623, Lenox in 1624, the Marquis of Hamilton in 1625. Most disastrous of all, in the same year King James died, and Herbert's long courtship had been in vain.

His worldly ambition frustrated, as it were by the hand of God, Herbert retired into the country, "to a friend in Kent", where, as Walton states and the poems confirm, "he had many conflicts with himself whether he should return to the painted pleasures of a Court life or betake himself to a study of divinity, and enter into sacred Orders".

II

These conflicts and those which, as we shall see, Herbert was to undergo in a second period of retirement and ill health which followed the death of his mother and resulted in his determination to become a priest must be observed in the poems in which Herbert has recorded them. Only in this way can we hope to understand the transmutation that so many have wondered at. The few years of ministry, during which as Rector of Bemerton he gained the epithet "Holy Mr Herbert", were, on the surface, happy, tranquil and pious, enriched by kindness and made fruitful by practical wisdom. They were full of those little acts of charity that Walton loves to dwell upon, and were sweetened by the relaxations of country walks, of playing upon the viol or of listening to the organ in Salisbury Cathedral. But in the depths of Herbert's being it is possible that there was no such abrupt transmutation as has so generally been thought to have altered his whole character. It may not be true, as Professor Palmer believes, that Herbert's last years were clouded with disappointment and disillusion, but it is certainly true that they were years of great spiritual activity rather than of placid and pious contentment.

Herbert's was a complex character. Pride and ambition were natural to him. During his university years he gave them a free rein, and found himself plunging in a morass of indecision.

He knew that humility was one of the fundamental Christian virtues and when, on the disappointment of all his worldly hopes, he imagined a rebuke from God, his sense of sin was heavy. A sonnet entitled "The Sinner" expresses what must have been his state of mind in the first bitterness of his retirement. He addresses God directly in agonized supplication. He is "all ague" when he contemplates the thoughts that are locked in his memory. When he looks into his soul,

"I finde there quarries of pil'd vanities,
 But shreds of holinesse, that dare not venture
 To shew their face, since crosse to thy decrees:
 There the circumference earth is, heav'n the centre.
 In so much dregs the quintessence is small:".

Nevertheless, he is not without hope. He knows that sincere repentance, adequate confession and true humility can never fail to move a compassionate God, one to whom all things are possible. "And though", he concludes,

"my hard heart scarce to thee can grone,
 Remember that thou once didst write in stone."

The account Herbert gives here of his divided heart is descriptive of his state during the years when he came seldom to Cambridge unless the king was there, but in later years it would be more just to shift the scales, so that a biographer, thinking of the Bemerton period, might write:

"I finde there quarries of pil'd virtues,
 But shreds of vanities, that dare not venture
 To shew their face"

—except, indeed, to be registered in poems, and rebuked. Yet even after the decision had been reached and Herbert had listened to the persuasions of Laud and a tailor had been sent for post-haste to measure him for canonical clothing, it is not impossible that there may have been these "shreds of vanities" which compelled him in his study at Bemerton to go over again the struggle begun in real earnest when he resigned the Oratorship. Pride and ambition, when they come as the inheritance of an ancient house, are not easily stifled. The mind cannot at once put aside thoughts that have become habitual. After the ecstatic happiness of the first months following his ordination,—Professor Palmer thinks,—doubts, fears and temptations, came stealing back to make Herbert's Paradise a battleground, and the gentle holiness with which he performed the duties of a country parson was won from a life as spiritually intense as it had ever been.

* * * * *

Walton relates that when he was dying Herbert asked that the manuscript book of his poems should be delivered to his friend, Nicholas Ferrar. "Tell him", he said, "he shall find in it a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed betwixt God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus my Master, in whose service I have now found perfect freedom. . . "

This need not be interpreted to mean that all spiritual conflict ended when Herbert was ordained a minister. Most of the poems were written at Bemerton, and many of them deal with problems of sin and doubt which may have been met with after his entry into the Church. Certainly, however, it was with a sick heart and troubled mind that the young poet left the University and set about the subjection of his will to that of his Master. The conflict that then ensued has been recorded in a group of passionately subjective poems. These poems - one of which, "The Sinner", has already been noticed - are dated definitely as belonging to the period before Herbert's ordination to the priesthood by their inclusion in the early Williams manuscript.¹ The most important of them are "Affliction", the lines beginning "When first thou didst entice to thee my heart"; "Frailtie"; "Nature"; "Miserie"; the two poems entitled "The Temper"; "Content"; "Faith"; "Deniall"; and "The Pearl". In these we have an intense and full record of the heart and mind of Herbert at the most critical period of his life. We see, in the first place, the nature and intensity of the attraction that worldly eminence could exert upon him. We watch the gradual rise of the conviction that such an appeal can come to him only in the nature of a temptation, that pride is a vice and humility a cardinal virtue, that the service of God is the employment in which he must find a task and a reward worthy of his talents. The victory obtained is no easy one. It is only with the aid of God - and God is

1. See Appendix to Chapter III.

sometimes very far away - that Herbert's natural instability can be conquered. He knows what he ought to do, but lacks for a long time the strength to do it. At last he finds peace from fear and hope alike in perfect resignation and submission to God's will.

The lines entitled "Affliction", beginning "When first thou didst entice to thee my heart", give a brief outline of the events leading up to the crisis. In early youth Herbert regarded himself as dedicated to God. It had been his own wish and that of his mother. He thought the service brave. All the beauties of the world, appealing to his youthful imagination, drew him to God. "Such starres I counted mine", he writes, in a thought that anticipates Traherne, "both heav'n and earth Payd me my wages in a world of mirth". To the childish enthusiasm of those years it seemed that no pleasure could be absent from the heart of one who served the king of all:

"Thus argu'd into hopes, my thoughts reserved
 No place for grief or fear.
 Therefore my sudden soul caught at the place,
 And made her youth and fiercenesse seek thy face."

It was a time of singular happiness. Division had not yet marred the unity of his purpose. God seemed to feed him with milk and sweetness. His days were strewn with flowers. There was no month but May.

And then the shades of the prison house began to descend. At the university the attractions of wit and fashion made themselves felt. Pride of place, the love of applause, the

attendance upon an earthly king, and the melancholy that comes with the growth of the intellect - all these began to work a subtle change. Herbert concisely describes what happened:

"But with my yeares sorrow did twist and grow,
And made a partie unawares for wo."

Then came sickness, the illnesses mentioned in the letters to Sir John Danvers, the beginnings of consumption, and when at last his health improved, he received the new blow occasioned by the deaths of his friends and patrons.

In the succeeding verses the divided aims of his later university years are freely confessed. Herbert's position was one of extreme perplexity - "I was entangled in the world of strife," - and his reaction was characteristic - indecision: "I could not go away, nor persevere."

This important poem was probably written during Herbert's retirement "to a friend in Kent" after the death of the king had blasted his hopes of court preferment.¹ The lines

"thou took'st away my life,
And more; for my friends die:"

refer to the series of deaths beginning with that of the Duke of Richmond in 162 $\frac{3}{4}$ which destroyed Herbert's court hopes. Their meaning is: "You destroy my career, but even worse than this, you do so by killing my friends." If this poem were

1. Palmer thinks this poem was written "as late as 1628." For a summary of the arguments in favour of an earlier date see Appendix.

entering. Ill-health and disappointment had made him see clearly that his early dedication to God could not be allowed to lapse or give place to a more worldly employment. He was tormented for the time being by a sense of futility, he was wasting his talents, was not even as useful as a tree. He knew only that his strength must be in humility, that resignation to the will of God was the way along which his triumph must lie.

He was not ready, as this early group of poems makes quite clear, to give his heart completely where it had long been betrothed. The promptings of his blood, the examples of relatives and friends, the chances that were so nearly within his grasp, the consciousness of his intellectual gifts, all made the surrender of the world and of the prominent position in it which he must have felt was his due an act of renunciation to which he could not easily rise.

"Full of rebellion, I would die,
Or fight, or travell, or denie
That thou hast ought to do with me."

he writes in the verses entitled "Nature".¹ His resistance to the destiny that was drawing him to God was obstinate and intense, and all the more devastating because it was a civil war. Herbert's heart was a city divided against itself. One side of his nature was attracted to the court and the world, another to a life of devotion and study; and the struggle between them resolved into

1. Of this poem Palmer writes that it may "refer to one of those many occasions when Herbert inclined to abandon his plans for the priesthood and become an elegant man of the world." ii, 302.

the old battle between the flesh and the spirit. Herbert's poetry, in keeping with his early resolution, is consistently on the side of the angels. God as a lover is its single theme. Yet the discouragement, remorse, agony, with which so much of it is filled, indicate how fickle Herbert felt himself to be. To love God, he was convinced, he must root out of his heart the love of the world. There was an insuperable gulf between the real eternal joys of God's service and the ephemeral pleasures of courtliness, fashion, and worldly success. In the solitude of his study, he knew well enough which was to be valued:

"Lord, in my silence how do I despise
 What upon trust
 Is styled honour, riches, or fair eyes;
 But is fair dust!"

Yet when he ventures into the busy ways of men this confidence is sadly shaken:

"But when I view abroad both Regiments;
 The worlds, and thine:
 Thine clad with simplenesse, 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."¹

In these poems it is as though Herbert were immured in a Pagan city, his own heart. Striving to batter an entrance are the forces of the Lord. Within, Herbert seeks to admit them. Yet he knows that it is only by God's help he can succeed. All

1. "Frailltie".

zation is narrowed. Herbert brings home its personal application to his own case. He is conscious of his unworthiness, of his inability to remain constant to the promptings of his noblest nature. Sometimes it seems he can reach to the highest pinnacle of heaven, sometimes barely half way, "Sometimes to hell I fall". He begins to think of the Church not as a challenge which must be met, but as a haven of rest, a bosom in which he can find peace, and escape from the twin torments of fear and hope:

"O let me, when thy roof my soul hath hid,
 O let me roost and nestle there:
 Then of a sinner thou art rid,
 And I of hope and fear."

This was another and more subtle temptation that came to Herbert during this period of conflict. The world, it seemed, would have nothing of him; very well, then, he would have nothing of the world. Instead of fighting out his battle to the bitter end, there was an alternative. He might fail to meet the issues. He could surrender at once, and seek only for ease and rest in pleasant solitude, congenial study, and unthinking allegiance. Yet such an issue can hardly have presented itself very forcibly to Herbert. His was not a mind that could find peace in any easy way, in compromise, or a denial of his will. Resignation was the state on which he knew he must set his aim, but resignation was not to be attained by seeking the line of least resistance. And so, in this poem, putting aside the lesser good, Herbert attains at its close to the realization that the ebbs and flows of feeling are not in his control, and, indeed, that they are not the real criterion of his spiritual life. "Yet take thy way", he cries, "for sure

thy way is best: Stretch or contract me thy poore debter: . . .

Whether I flie with angels, fall with dust,
 Thy hands made both, and I am there:
 Thy power and love, my love and trust
 Make one place ev'ry where."¹

God's love, he realizes, is with him whether his mood is one of confidence or doubt. This was the frame of mind in which Herbert succeeded in bringing his disordered thoughts under discipline. Confidence taught them obedience when in the poem "Content" he commanded

"Peace mutt'ring thoughts, and do not grudge to keep
 Within the walls of your own breast: . . .

"Gad not abroad at ev'ry quest and call
 Of an untrained hope or passion.
 To court each place or fortune that doth fall,
 Is wantonnesse in contemplation."

But contentment, passivity, resignation are not ends in themselves; they are but stages on the way to active use, and Herbert was impatient lest he should squander his talents in futile hesitation or in a useless or too mean employment. In the two poems called "Em^oplyment" he implores God to send him a task in which he may serve as adequately and harmoniously, as naturally and inevitably, as a flower or a tree:

"Oh that I were an Orange-tree,
 That busie plant!
 Then should I ever laden be,
 And never want
 Some fruit for him that dressed me."

1. "The Temper": "How should I praise thee, Lord!"

And again:

"All things are busie; onely I
Neither bring hony with the bees,
Nor flowres to make that, nor the husbandrie
To water these.

"I am no link of thy great chain,
But all my companie is a weed.
Lord place me in thy consort; give one strain
To my poore reed."

Before that prayer could be answered Herbert had to experience the anguish of confession and sincere repentance. His road was attended by hardships and humility and bitter grief. Though not consistently a mystic, he knew something of the roughness of the Mystic Way, of the hope and despair that alternately fill the hearts of those who journey along it. The Lord is sometimes a cruel lover. Herbert cries out in anguish:

"Come, come, my God, O come",

And then a pause . . . silence . . . and the broken line:

"But no hearing."

This poem, "Deniall", deals with the despair of God's disapproval and absence.¹ The thought

"that thou shouldst give dust a tongue . . .
And then not heare it crying!"

is full of bitterness and grief. Herbert knew, in these days, the fearful loneliness of unanswered prayer:

1. Cp. The similar mood expressed in "Longing", "Home", "The Cross"; the second "Justice", written, according to Palmer, at Bemerton.

"When my devotions could not pierce
 Thy silent eares;
 Then was my heart broken, . . .

"all day long
 My heart was in my knee,
 But no hearing."

At last it was by humility and faith that the delay-loving soul was able to find its peace and happiness, ending its perplexities and accepting its reward. Faith was the key to open all doors, and make all treasures his:

"Hungrie I was, and had no meat:
 I did conceit a most delicious feast;
 I had it straight, . . .

"Faith makes me any thing, . . ." ¹

To faith, all pride and ambition are vain, all differences of rank are overcome: "A peasant may believe as much As a great Clerk, and reach the highest stature". ² Herbert's indecision is smoothed away. Suddenly, he sees clearly.

"That which before was darkned clean
 With bushie groves, pricking the lookers eie,
 Vanisht away, when Faith did change the scene:
 And then appear'd a glorious skie." ³

His duty was clear, his mind made up. The promptings of his mother and of his own youthful heart had spoken with the voice of God. He would put ambition aside. If the ministry had been condemned as too mean an employment, he would exalt it. But that was no longer the thought he entertained. The priesthood was a calling so sacred in its service and awe-inspiring in its responsibility that his feeling now was of his own unworthiness.

1. "Faith".

2. Idem.

3. Idem.

* * * * *

The outward events of which these poems are the spiritual reflection must now be briefly considered. Walton is the chief authority; but the account which he gives of Herbert's movements during this period is in some parts only conjectural. The death of King James in 1625 is rightly given as the final blow to his young favourite's schemes of advancement. Walton states that "presently" (i.e. at once) Herbert retired to the estate of a friend in Kent where he lived in such solitary retirement that his health, as we have noted when discussing the poem "Affliction", was seriously impaired. According to Walton it was at this time that Herbert "had many conflicts with himself" after which he decided to forsake "the painted pleasures of a court life", and returned to London determined to serve God "at His altar". This was in 1626—certainly too early a date for the final settlement of Herbert's indecision. Walton has chosen to consider Herbert's appointment in that year as lay Prebendary of the parish of Leighton as marking his definite embarkation upon an ecclesiastical career. This, however, seems hardly justifiable. The position was apparently intended, as G. H. Palmer suggests,¹ "like the previous one at Whitford, to yield a stipend without duties", and though Herbert accepted it in a spirit indicating his new seriousness of intention he certainly did not regard himself as irrevocably committed to the ministry. He set about

1. Palmer, i, 35.

rebuilding the parish church of Leighton, but it is probable that he did not visit the place. He tried to persuade his friend, the pious Nicholas Ferrar, to relieve him of the position of Prebendary, and when he was unsuccessful in this he induced Ferrar to undertake the supervision of the work on the church, while he himself remained in London, using his influence to obtain the necessary funds. Walton describes how this work of raising subscriptions was first commenced against the wishes of Mrs Herbert and how the eloquent persuasions of her son so moved her that "she presently subscribed to be one of his benefactors, and undertook to solicit William, Earl of Pembroke, to become another."

During the year 1626, it would appear, Herbert was undecided as to his future course of action, and was attempting to find a settlement in compromise.

The enthusiasm^s with which he set about the raising of subscriptions for the re-building of Leighton Church and the pious care with which he superintended the planning and decorating of the sacred edifice attest how far he was ready to immerse himself in the holy life. His art had been consecrated early and his poetry was dedicated completely to God, but his life was still only partially and not irrevocably committed to the service of his Master. He still retained the Oratorship.

In June 1627 Mrs Herbert died, and before the close of the year Herbert resigned the Oratorship. Her wish had

been to see her son a priest, and his slackness and hesitation had frustrated it. Herbert's love and respect for his mother was great. He had never consciously done anything contrary to her wishes. It was hers more than any other outside influence that had moulded his life. Now she was dead, her hopes unsatisfied. Her death, it seems certain, and his remorse were among the most powerful factors deepening the serious current of his thought, making his decision inevitable and hastening its conclusion. The bitter thoughts we have noticed in some of the poems already discussed were passing through his mind during the years of solitude, ill-health and self-examination which followed. He retired to Woodford, in Essex, "to enjoy the company of his beloved brother, Sir Henry Herbert", and to cure himself of "a sharp quotidian ague". He did so by rigorous dieting and contrived at the same time to aggravate his consumption. He removed into the healthier air of Wiltshire and became the guest of the Earl of Danby at Dauntsey. It was here that his great decision was made. Here, says Walton, "he declared his resolution both to marry and to enter into the Sacred Orders of priesthood".

The romantic story¹ of Herbert's three days' courtship of Jane Danvers should be read in Walton's exquisite pages— "This haste might in others be thought a love-frenzie, or worse; but it was not, for they had wooed so like princes, as to have select proxies. . . The suddenness was justifiable

1. Grosart doubts the authenticity of Walton's account; Palmer seems to accept it, and there is certainly no definite reason to reject it. Until one is forthcoming, it is better to accept it, and be thankful.

by the strictest rules of prudence, and the more because it proved so happy to both parties; for the Eternal Lover of Mankind made them happy in each other's mutual and equal affections. . . And though this begot, and continued in them, such a mutual love and joy and content as was no way defective; yet this mutual content and love and joy did receive a daily augmentation by such daily obligingness to each other, as still added such new affluences to the former fulness of these divine souls as was only improvable in Heaven, where they now enjoy it."

The marriage was celebrated on March 5, 162⁸, at Edingdon Church. In 1630, at the instigation of the Earl of Pembroke, King Charles offered Herbert the vacant living of Bemerton. It was not immediately accepted. Herbert had overcome the feeling that the ministry was too mean an occupation; now it was the fear that he himself was unworthy of so great a task which caused him still to hold back. "But though Mr Herbert had formerly put on a resolution for the clergy", writes Walton, "yet at receiving this presentation, the apprehension of the last great account that he was to make for the cure of so many souls made him fast and pray often, and consider for not less than a month: in which time he had some resolutions to decline both the priesthood and that living". The feeling of awe and dread, the humility and the sense of unworthiness with which Herbert approached the thought of the final consecration are well illustrated in the poem "The Priesthood". Reverence, holy fear, resignation, it was in the spirit of these virtues that

he prepared himself for an office charged with the most awful responsibility;

"Blest Order, which in power dost so excell,
That with th'one hand thou liftest to the sky,
And with the other throwest down to hell
In thy just censures; fain would I draw nigh,
Fain put thee on, exchanging my lay-sword
For that of th' holy word.

"But thou art fire, sacred and hallow'd fire;
And I but earth and clay: should I presume
To wear thy habit, the severe attire
My slender compositions might consume.
I am both foul and brittle; much unfit
To deal in holy Writ."

Herbert knew that his own peculiar virtue must be henceforth the very opposite of all that had made his past life vain, that his strength must lie in humility and in resignation, its attendant state of mind. He did not dare, he felt, put forth his hand to hold the sacred Ark. His only hope was in the knowledge that God sometimes uses the meanest vessels. In perfect resignation he prostrates himself at his Lord's feet:

"There will I lie, untill my Maker seek
For some mean stuffe whereon to show his skill:
Then is my time."

Herbert told the Earl of Pembroke of his doubts and hesitations, and the Earl spoke to Laud, then Bishop of London. "And the Bishop did the next day so convince Mr Herbert that the refusal of it was a sin, that a tailor was sent for to come speedily from Salisbury to Wilton to take measure and make him canonical

clothes against next day; which the tailor did."¹

On the 26th of April, 1630, Herbert was instituted to the rectory of Fulston St Peter's with Bemerton, and on September the 19th he was ordained priest.

III.

The ceremony of his ordination was for Herbert the solemn climax of his life. He was a lover of symbolism and ritual, and the awe-inspiring nature of the avowal filled him with the sense of his own unworthiness and the loving-kindness of God by whose help alone he could accomplish the task he was undertaking. When he was left to himself in accordance with a custom that recalls the ceremonies at the initiation of a knight, locked in the church at Bemerton to toll the bell and pray, he felt that a new, difficult life was opening before him. He knelt down at the altar. Time passed; and those who were waiting outside the door began to grow anxious or impatient. "He staid so much longer than an ordinarie time", writes Walton, "that his friend Mr Woodnot looked in at the Church window and saw him lie prostrate on the ground before the Altar".

The humility, sanctity and majesty which he was called to put on filled him with forebodings. He knew well the robes that the true priest must don:

1. Walton.

"Holinesse on the head,
Light and perfections on the breast,
Thus are true Aarons drest."

He felt himself to be arrayed quite otherwise. He brought a heart that was stained with the sins of division and indecision, and in the tolling of the bell he could hear "A noise of passions ringing me for dead":

"Profanenesse in my head,
Defects and darknesse in my breast,
Poore priest thus am I drest."

Only by resignation, the sacrifice of all desire, and perfect trust in Christ could he put on the robes of holiness and be in every sense of the word, ordained:

"Christ is my onely head,
My alone onely heart and breast,"

"So holy in my head,
Perfect and light in my deare breast,
Come people; Aaron's drest."

* * * * *

The first few months of Herbert's life at Bemerton were happily spent. The doubts and divisions of his heart had been settled at last, and he had found in the life and service he describes in The Country Parson relief from the vanities and ambitions of the past. He cultivated the virtues he lists as

1. "Aaron".

characteristic of his calling, - holiness, justice, prudence, temperance, boldness, gravity. Patience and mortification, "the two highest points of Life, wherein a Christian is most seen",¹ were fulfilling the purposes of monastic discipline and setting his soul free to experience the highest joys of devotion.

The root of Herbert's Anglicanism, - his love of ritual and church furnishings and his regard for form in poetry, - lies in a kind of sweet Platonism that can be felt in all his best work, and which had its simple and practical side as well. His "apparrell" was "plaine", as he describes it in the chapter on "The Parson's Life", "without spots, or dust, or smell; the purity of his mind breaking out, and dilating it selfe even to his body, cloaths, and habitation". In the poem "The Odour" he writes of the sweet and happy perfume which now filled his days. The simplicity and lowly nature of his service has left him alone with Christ, his lover and master:

"How sweetly doth My Master sound! My Master!
 As Amber-greese leaves a rich sent
 Unto the taster:
 So do these words a sweet content,
 An orientall fragrancie, My Master."

Herbert conceived of God as a lover. Now he was in a position to serve, to busy himself all day in a ritual of service, to express his love in continual actions. The sweetness of this new relationship filled his heart with joy. But, like that of the lover, his happiness was made up of fear and hope. Though simply to serve the beloved is much, there is the desire to push forward to an even greater felicity which adds the tang of "travelling hopefully"

1. The Country Parson, cap. III.

and changes what might become static and monotonous into a vivid, dynamic progress. Herbert needed God; he felt the joy of serving God; but there was a further goal to be won - the knowledge that love was reciprocal, that God took an equal delight in his service, that God needed him.

"My Master, shall I speak? O that to thee
My servant were a little so,
 As flesh may be;
 That these two words might creep & grow
 To some degree of spicinesse to thee!"¹

Now Herbert found in the performance of his duties as a country parson the opportunity to live continually and completely in the sight of his Master. He had been confronted with a momentous choice. He had hesitated long. He had lived in the world, at the university, at court, had tried all things, and now, making a sober and free choice, was holding fast to that which was good. "I know the wayes of learning", he writes in "The Pearl", ". . . Yet I love Thee".

"I know the wayes of honour, what maintains
 The quick returns of courtesie and wit: . . .
 Yet I love thee.

"I know the wayes of pleasure, the sweet strains,
 The lullings and the relishes of it; J
 The propositions of hot bloud and brains; . . .
 My stuffe is flesh, not brasse; my senses live, . . .
 Yet I love thee."

1. "The Odour".

"I know all these, and have them in my hand:
Therefore not sealed, but with open eyes
I flie to thee . . ."

This was the spirit in which Herbert made his final decision and which sweetened and hallowed some of his finest poems, but whether the happiness which it kindled was a permanent one cannot definitely be known. Professor Palmer thinks that the satisfaction Herbert found at Bemerton was gradually disturbed by new doubts, temptations and despairs. "We have seen", he writes, "how on entering the priesthood" Herbert "anticipated that in this divine love there could be no satiety. He did not find it so. The conflicts of the Crisis were renewed".¹ In an interpretation of the poem "Love unknown", Palmer summarizes the poet's life from this point of view. Herbert, he declares, "Though he knew himself destined for the priesthood" first fixed his heart "on Academic and royal honours . . . But his heart needed to be detached from these things and cleansed. Then came the deaths of his friends and mother . . . the resignation of his Oratorship, and his severe illness . . . Becoming supple through affliction and through a taste of God's forgiving love, he turned to that priesthood and home where he had always expected rest. But even in Bemerton he finds dull conditions and goading thoughts".²

1. iii, p. 173.

2. iii, p. 175.

In "Submission", according to Palmer, "we hear of the painful contrast between the empty life at Bemerton and that to which he had aspired", and in "The Crosse" "we learn how partly through illness, and partly through a restless heart, the priesthood is proving a disappointment".¹ In a note on line 19 of "The Pilgrimage", Palmer declares the "gladsome hill" of that poem to be "the priesthood at Bemerton, which he found disappointing,"² and cites in corroboration "Love unknown" ll.50-53 and "The Crosse" ll.19-31. He interprets line 23 of "The Pilgrimage" to mean that Herbert's "parish life was stagnant and tasteless".³ In some of the poems which he considers to be products of the Bemerton period Palmer has heard "notes of disappointment over the priesthood, despondency, rebellion, dulness, self-reproach, penitence, mental perplexity, bodily pain, fear of God's alienation, and the bitterness of lifelong purposes coming to an end".⁴ He remarks, however, on the "comparatively slight. . . place in these laments" given "to regrets for the broken priesthood",⁵ and explains this as due to Herbert's individualistic conception of religion.

Certainly, if the poems absent from the Williams MS. were written, as Palmer convincingly argues, after Herbert's entry into the priesthood a good case can be made for such an interpretation of the poet's life at Bemerton. Yet whether, when all things are taken into account, the evidence justifies so definite and circumstantial an account as Palmer's may be doubted and, though I think his main thesis is sound, it has

1. iii,p.176

2. iii,p.238

3. iii,p.238

4. iii,p.245

5. iii,p.245

by no means satisfied everyone, even in its general outline. This does not alter the fact, however, that the real significance of these poems lies in the testimony they bear to the intensity of Herbert's individualistic religious experience rather than to such light as they throw on his biography. It is more important to know that Herbert had a spiritual experience of a certain definite nature than to conjecture when he had it. We shall study the poems written or perfected at Bemerton from the point of view of Herbert's individual spiritual life and for the purpose of understanding his conception of God as a friend, a lover and master and to discover the mixture of humility and pride which made him sometimes impugn the worth of his own capacity for faith, love and service.

We see in "The Quip" how the claims of worldly pleasure and success were at last dismissed. "The merrie world did on a day" meet together to jeer at the man who had turned from all it had to offer. Beauty crept into a rose to taunt him. Chinking Money reproached him for his poverty. "Then came brave Glorie puffing by In silks that whistled"—a touch of felicitous realism this, such as Herbert frequently surprises us with—and then, lastly, came Wit and Conversation,—all in fact that Herbert's acceptance of a country parsonage had denied him. He makes no answer to their mockery, and as each comes forward, defers in humility to his Master: "But Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me".

With all Herbert's pride, however, there went a curious lack of confidence, and at times his piety took the form of restless doubt as to the value of his service. "Is this enough?" he seems to have wondered. "Am I serving God to the fullest of my capacities?" Perhaps his felicity was only self-deception. Could he be sure of God's love? Was God satisfied with the purity of his service? At these thoughts Herbert's heart was filled with doubt and anguish:

"O Spitefull bitter thought!
Bitterly spitefull thought! Couldst thou invent
So high a torture? Is such poyson bought? . . .

"Thou said'st but even now,
That all was not so fair, as I conceiv'd,
Betwixt my God and me; that I allow
And coin large hopes; but, that I was deceiv'd:
Either the league was broke, or neare it;
And, that I had great cause to fear it."¹

He knows only too well the consequences of such doubt: "Wouldst thou unlock the doore To cold despairs, and gnawing pensiveness?" he cries, "Wouldst thou raise devils?"

As in "The Quip" he turns to God for justification. As long as God exists, His truth, an objective reality, will remain to confound such treacherous doubts.

At times he wondered whether he might not serve God to greater advantage if his state and power were greater. He took the thought to God

1. "Assurance".

"Were it not better to bestow
 Some place and power on me?
 Then should thy praises with me grow,
 And share in my degree.

"But when I thus dispute and grieve,
 I do resume my*fight,
 And pilfiring what I once did give,
 Disseize thee of thy right.

"How know I, if thou shouldst me raise,
 That I should then raise thee?
 Perhaps great places and thy praise
 Do not so well agree."¹

And once more Herbert finds a refuge from doubt and the answer to temptation in humility and resignation. God he can trust, but not himself.

The same problem is dealt with in "The Size", and though the poem closes again on a note of acceptance, the vehemence with which it answers the complainings of pride and dissatisfaction shows how strong those emotions had become. "Content thee, greedie heart" - the first line has something of the immediacy of a cry. Then the poet reasons with his discontent. "Modest and moderate joyes" are sufficient for those who expect greater hereafter. Small joys combine the pleasures of possession and of hope; "Great joyes are all at once". Christ in the flesh condemned joy - "At least in lump". A Christians state and case", Herbert continues in a stanza that limns the likeness of his own features, "Is not a corpulent,

1. "Submission".

but a thinne and spare, Yet active strength:

whose long and bonie face
Content and care
Do seem to equally divide,
Like a pretender, not a bride."

The poem concludes in the tone of a wise though sorrowful counsellor, ". . . , sit down, good heart; Crasp not at much, for fear thou losest all . . . do not spread thy robe In hope of great things," The world, indeed, is a sea of tears, but Heaven is the haven. Resignation is tempered by hope.

The nature of the temptation which Herbert constantly had to face is clearly recognized in the third stanza of "The Size". It was no other than that which has confronted so many churchmen and mystics - the desire to make the best of both worlds. But for Herbert, as for Vaughan, this would have been the deepest sin. The acceptance of Heaven and the life to come implied the condemnation of the world and life in the world. Traherne's joyous acceptance of the senses and of a way to God through an appreciation of His creation was outside and above the earlier poet's conception:

"To be in both worlds full
Is more then God was, who was hungrie here."

Another aspect of this poem which is deserving of attention is its very definite enunciation of Herbert's conception of

joy as an evil. The appeal which ideas of this kind had for him was due in a great measure to the frustration of his instincts and natural desires, in a wish to rationalize the sacrifice of so much that was essential to the development of his complete nature, and in an identification of joy with callousness and grossness. Herbert knew the beauty of holiness and had experienced the happiness of communion with God, but he was unable to find this pure beauty and happiness even in such an innocent and refined worldliness as that of Milton's "L'Allegro". Such an attitude was not uncommon. It was a fairly logical inference from the duty to condemn the world, and it was often drawn. Donne fished it up from even deeper wells of frustration than Herbert. Vaughan derived it from The Temple, and assimilated it so well that he could write of dancing -

"Vain sinful Art! who first did fit
Thy lewd loath'd Motions unto sounds,"¹

Crashaw, because he was a Catholic, I suspect, was free of it; so was Marvell, though he was a Puritan. Traherne, with the same data of belief as Donne, Herbert and Vaughan, came to an entirely different conclusion, and like Blake and Whitman is modern and timeless, while they have, with its peculiar virtues, the peculiar vices of the seventeenth century.

Herbert felt that grief was a duty, a debt that must be

1. Henry Vaughan, "The Daughter of Herodias", Martin, ii, 503.

paid to God in thanksgiving for his Passion, or to requite a pity that can be

"Griev'd for a worm, which when I tread,
I passe away and leave it dead".¹

He will teach his eyes only to weep. Should he take his lute, it will be to "tune it to a strain, Which may with thee All day complain".² "When sawcie mirth shall knock" he must turn her out of doors.

But then in "Conscience", for example, comes the realization that this harsh attack is out of proportion to the crimes it is directed against and is in danger of blasting actions and thoughts that are sweet and innocent. Herbert turns on this accuser in his heart, and bids it be silent:

"Peace pratler, do not lowre:
Not a fair look, but thou dost call it foul:
Not a sweet dish, but thou dost call it sowre:
Musick to thee doth howl."³

His conscience, he feels, has been shielding its tenderness from non-essentials. But even the worst sins that conscience can recognize may be cancelled by confession and "My Saviours bloud: when ever at his board I do but taste it".

Herbert's denunciations of worldly joy were in the nature

1. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit".
2. Idem.
3. "Conscience".

of a reaction to the appeal which it had made in his Cambridge years, and sometimes he gave them full rein. Such an attitude did, however, help him to resignation; and when it tended to carry him too far, it was rejected. His real preoccupation, indeed, was with the essential problem of devotion: the relation of the individual soul to God. The temptations of vanity and pride had already made themselves felt, but sometimes the suspicion, which in "Assurance" is angrily dismissed, returns with renewed vigour.

It may have been, as Professor Palmer believes, because Herbert felt he was failing in his duties as a minister that certain of the poems absent from the Williams MS. bear witness to a grief that is close to despair, or it may be that the poems simply reflect a purely spiritual sense of God's absence that might have been experienced at almost any period of the poet's life. Whenever he met with it, the feeling that God had withdrawn his approving presence unlocked "the doore To cold despairs, and gnawing pensiveness".¹ The poet cries out in his agony, "Come Lord, my head doth burn, my heart is sick". "Thy long deferrings", he complains, wound like a knife. "How canst thou stay," he cries, ". . . After all this canst thou be strange?"² Sickness is again added to his trials, so that

"My flesh and bones and joynts do pray"³

and the continual chorus of his lityeny is,

1. "Assurance".
2. "Home".
3. Idem.

"O show thy self to me,¹
Or take me up to thee!"

"The Crosse" is one of the most intensely felt of Herbert's poems. It recapitulates the story of his early conflicts, describes his sickness and his feeling of wasted effort, but ends, like so many of these poems, on the note he knows is his only tuneful one - resignation:

"What is this strange and uncouth thing?
To make me sigh, and seek, and faint, and die,
Untill I had some place, where I might sing,
And serve thee; . . .

"And then when after much delay,
Much wrastling, many a combate, this deare end,
So much desir'd, is giv'n, to take away
My power to serve thee; to unbend
All my abilities, my designes confound,
And lay my threatnings bleeding on the ground.

"One ague dwelleth in my bones,
Another in my soul . . .

"Besides, things sort not to my will,
Ev'n when my will doth studie thy renown:
Thou turnest th'edge of all things on me still,
Taking me up to throw me down: . . .

"To have my aim, and yet to be
Farther from it then when I bent my bow;
To make my hopes my torture, and the fee
Of all my woes another wof,
Is in the midst of delicates to need,
And ev'n in Paradise to be a weed."

The end is a sharp climax of grief -

"Ah my deare Father, ease my smart!
The contrarieties crush me: these crosse actions
Doe winde a rope about, and cut my heart:" -

and a dying fall into "Thy will be done."

The uttermost depths of despair are plumbed in another of Herbert's most vivid and intense poems, the verses called "Longing". This poem - like the similarly-conceived lines entitled "Home" - is so physical in its imagery, so full of an emotion of bodily pain that it seems likely to have been written during the last months at Bemerton when Herbert's consumption was hastening to its mortal end. These lines have the immediacy of a cry of pain:

"With sick and famisht eyes,
With doubling knees and weary bones,
 To thee my cries,
 To thee my grones,
To thee my sighs, my tears ascend:
 No end?"

In bitter, accurate verse Herbert describes the symptoms of his illness, and calls upon God to pity his sufferings. Stanzas one, two and five give a vivid account of his physical pangs - he was feverish, giddy, suffered from sore throat, weak eyes, and rheumatism in his bones and joints - and worse than all this, his heart was "wither'd like a ground Which thou dost curse." The absence of God was the greatest torment of all. "Bowels of pitie, heare!" he cries, "Lord of my soul, love of my minde, Bow down thine eare!"

"Thou tarriest, while I die,
And fall to nothing: . . .

"Lord, didst thou leave thy throne,
Not to relieve? . . .

"Lord JESU, heare my heart,
Which hath been broken now so long,
That ev'ry part
Hath got a tongue!"

The only remedy, it seemed, lay beyond the not-far-distant gate of Death, and in the poem "Home" he boldly looks forward to it there. If God will not come to him, he will go to God:

"Yet if thou stayest still, why must I stay?
My God, what is this world to me?
This world of wo? hence all ye clouds, away,
Away, I must get up and see. . . .

"What is this weary world; this meat and drink,
That chains us by the teeth so fast?
What is this woman-kinde, which I can wink
Into a blacknesse and distaste? . . ."

He prays for death as for a great release: "Oh loose this frame,
this knot of man untie . . ."

Yet before that dissolution Herbert was to win his victory over fear and weakness, and to be able to say at last that he had subjected his will to that of Jesus, his Master, for as the end drew near the vain questionings and useless doubts which had threatened to overcome his fortitude were faced boldly and in "The Discharge" dismissed for ever:

"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, . . .

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

Stern necessity rules all. "Things present shrink and die",
 and yet - "Thy life is Gods" -

"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."

There is hope, and to grieve and fear for the future is unwise.
 "God chains the dog till night" - why loose the chain? Courage
 and faith are the virtues with which Herbert conjures his last
 regrets:

"Away distrust:
 My God hath promis'd, he is just."

And it was with grace and humility he died. His dying speeches,
 retouched by the tender care of Welton, breathe the spirit of

calm resignation that animates the best poetry of his happiest days: "I now look back upon the pleasures of my life past, and see the content I have taken in beauty, in wit, and music, and pleasant conversation, are now all past me like a dream, or as a shadow that returns not, and are now all become dead to me, or I to them; and I see that as my father and generation hath done before me, so I also shall now suddenly (with Job) make my bed also in the dark, and I praise God I am prepared for it; and I praise Him that I am not to learn patience now I stand in such need of it; and that I have practised mortification, and endeavoured to die daily that I might not die eternally, and my hope is I shall shortly leave this valley of tears, and be free from all fevers and pains; and, which will be a more happy condition, I shall be free from sin, and all the temptations and anxieties that attend it . . . "

A few hours before he died, his wife observed him to undergo a sudden agony. She asked him how he did. He replied, "That he had passed a conflict with his last enemy, and had overcome him by the merits of his Master Jesus".

The exact day on which he died is unknown, but on March the third, 163 $\frac{2}{3}$, he was buried in Bemerton church. The Temple, or Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations was published the same year at Cambridge, and Herbert's immortality was assured.

IV

The poetry of George Herbert is significant not only because it reflects with a singular faithfulness the risings and fallings and shiftings, the hesitations, denials and protestations of a proud and devoted soul, but because it represents a deliberate and consistent attempt to make the form and structure of verse not merely harmonious but identical with its subject-matter. To Herbert the task of recording a personal spiritual experience presented itself as an artistic as well as a religious problem. His mind found its highest freedom in the bonds of exact form and subtle technique, just as his soul found its in the creeds and services of the Anglican Church. His delight, indeed, in the decent ritual of that Church, in its special feast-days, in the actual objects connected with its worship, - its altars, chancels, windows, - and in the very form of its buildings, arises from his natural love of symbolism, his intense conviction of the necessary harmony between the outward show and the inner reality which has a curious affinity with Platonism. It made him always a careful and conscious artist, and in certain of his poems a deliberate symbolist.

It would be an error, however, to separate the formal elements in Herbert's poetry from their content, for by perfection of form we must understand, as he did, the absolute union of manner and matter. In his most beautiful and endur-

ing poems, in "The Pulley", for example, or "The Collar" or "Love"¹ or "Discipline", we have an exhibition of art that conceals art and of virtuosity that exercises itself in self-effacement.

But it is only in his greatest successes that Herbert has been able to achieve an exact balance between form and thought. Sometimes, as in the didactic "Providence", he is unable to transmute the tough train of argument into an ordered poem and contents himself with occasional flashes, striking fire here and there in a single stanza or a single line. Occasionally, also, his conceits and quaint devices, the swellings and fallings away of his cadences, are expressive of no corresponding fluctuations of thought, and the result is scarcely better than in the few poems definitely marred by more obvious forms of bad taste. These latter, it may be said in defense of Herbert, are fewer than the notice taken of them by critics would lead one to suppose. Christ's cerements our handkerchief, the humourless "one good grone", "Anagram" and the like, in spite of Professor Palmer's mild attempt² to say a word for them, are indefensible enough. But they are of little importance save as an indication of what might have happened had Herbert succumbed more intensely to the prevailing fashion of metaphysical wit. Unlike Crashaw, he kept his head so far as rarely to ruin an otherwise beautiful poem by the introduction of inappropriate conceits.

1. "Love bade me welcome".

2. i, pp. 147-8.

Yet there was undoubtedly a danger - which in these cases overcame him - that Herbert might allow his naturally tidy mind to entangle itself disastrously in the meshes of fantastic speculation. He had not an intellect as complex and intense as Donne's. He lacked Donne's penetrative power, the ability to wind and twist and push right in to the heart of an idea, which before its final capture seeks to force an escape through every byway and alley of association, and is dragged to the light at last with a whole glittering host of attendant ideas. This was something Herbert could not emulate, and though the influence of Donne was in most ways beneficial to him, he was himself aware of the pitfalls into which an imitation of the older poet's metaphysical conceits would precipitate him.

"When first my lines of heav'nly joyes made mention,
Such wa's 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:"¹

"Quaint words, and trim invention," burnished and sprouting thoughts, thousands of notions in the brain, metaphors entwining a plain intention - these were the characteristics of the new "metaphysical" poetry of the school of Donne, and their presence in his own early work is remarked by Herbert as a defect.

There was also another danger which in the same poem Herbert proceeds to take account of. It was this: that in hymning

1. "Jordan": "When first my lines".

the praises of divine love he should fall into the heresies of the Elizabethan sonneteers and love poets, expending more care on the turning of his verse than on the object of his adoration, and in the concern for its form neglect its religious subject-matter.

"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,".

And yet - "How wide is all this long pretence!" Simplicity and sincerity are to be his cardinal virtues:

"There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd:
Copie out onely that."

"Shepherds", he writes elsewhere,¹ "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 ryme,
Who plainly say, My God, my King."

Herbert was fully aware, it would seem, of the two main tendencies of contemporary poetry, its growing intellectuality due to the influence of Donne and its increasing formalism due to that of Ben Jonson, and though he succumbed in a great measure to both, he as consciously sought to turn away from them as he did from the secular subject-matter of the Elizabethan fashion.

1. "Jordan": "Who sayes that fictions onely and false hair".

Herbert's break with the past was neither so fundamental nor of such far-reaching consequences as Donne's, but it was more explicit. Its cause was religious rather than literary. It resulted not so much from a distrust of the artifice and unreality of the Petrarchian tradition as from a dislike of the mean and profane objects it adored.

"Doth Poetry
Wear Venus' livery, only serve her turn?" -

he writes in a sonnet sent from Cambridge in his seventeenth year as a New Year's gift to his mother -¹

"My God where is that antient heat towards thee . . .
Why are not Sonnets made of thee, and layes
Upon thine Altar burnt? Cannot thy love
Heighten a spirit to sound out thy praise
As well as any she? Cannot thy Dove
Outstrip their Cupid easily in flight?"

In the first of the "Jordan" pair, the thought reappears in an even more interesting form.

"Who says 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?"

The reference here is probably more to the "alembicated metaphysicalities" of Donne than to the artifices of the late Elizabethan Petrarchian poets, but in the next stanza it is

1. Palmer, ii, 79.

undoubtedly to the conventional pastorals of the school of Spenser:

"Is it no verse, except enchanted groves
And sudden arbours shadow coarse-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?"

In many poems Herbert returns to this theme: in the first of the two sonnets entitled "Love" -

"Wit fancies beautie, beautie raiseth wit:
The world is theirs; they two play out the game,
Thou standing by: . . .

"Who sings thy praise? onely a skarf or glove
Doth warm our hands, and make them write of love."

in "Dulnèsse" -

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

and, with an even more directly autobiographical application than in the "Jordan" pieces, in "The Forerunners".

In this poem, absent from the early Williams Ms. and from internal evidence pretty certainly one of his latest poems, Herbert looks back upon his work in relation to the poetry of the age, and reiterates the religious and artistic faith expressed in his earliest verses to be preserved - the Cambridge sonnets -

and repeats, though with an interesting variation, his attack upon the fictions and "false hair" of the love poets. These had been tempting to his youthful muse, but with the advent of the harbingers of age he is ready to cry,

"Farewell sweet phrases, lovely metaphors."

Yet the parting is not an easy one. Herbert knows that beauty of phrase and diction is as appropriate to the divine love that inspires his verse as to the painted fire of the profaner poets. "But will ye leave me thus?" he cannot refrain from adding, and the echo of the first of the modern English writers to reflect the Italian spirit is perhaps not entirely unintentional:

"But will ye leave me thus? . . .

"Louely enchanting language, sugar-cane,
Hony of roses, whither wilt thou flie?
Hath some fond lover tic'd thee to thy bane?
And wilt thou leave the Church, and love a stie? . . .

"Let foolish lovers, if they will love dung,
With canvas, not with arras clothe their shame:
Let follie speak in her own native tongue.
True beautie dwells on high: ours is a flame
But borrow'd thence . . ."

Herbert's attack, it is clear, upon the ornate niceness of the Italianate love lyrists, the concealing beauties of the Spenserian allegorists, and the "quaint words, and trim invention" of the metaphysicals was not directed against these formal qualities as such, but against the lack of harmony between a beautiful or complex form and an ugly or simple subject. In one line in

this poem he states his artistic creed:

"Beautie and beauteous words should go together" -

and again, in the verses entitled "A true Hymne",

"The finenesse which a hymne or psalme affords ^{of such T. S. kind.}
Is, when the soul unto the lines accord's".

The whole story of Herbert as a poet is in his attempt to put these simple and self-evident truths into practice.

The task that he set before himself was simple in essence, but its practice was complicated and difficult. He wished to write good religious poetry. This meant, first of all, a complete break, as far as subject-matter was concerned, with the secular poetry of the past, and an attempt on the formal side to discover how, best to unite the devices of art to the varied emotions of religious experience. In the undertaking he came under the influence both of the metaphysical conceits of John Donne, and of the rather hard and brittle artificiality which the technical skill of Ben Jonson was imposing upon nearly all the poetry not influenced by Donne, and which is seen at its best in Herrick, Carew and Waller.

How far Herbert's vivid perception of the hollowness and insincerity of much of the later Petrarchian love poetry was due to the influence of Donne is difficult to say: but that it was so to some extent is certain. Donne's part is well known.

"The poet who challenged and broke the supremacy of the Petrarchian tradition", says Professor Grierson in The Cambridge History of English Literature, "was John Donne".¹ The realism, wit and cynicism of his Songs and Sonnets and his Elegies - and above all their emotional intensity and sincerity - put to shame the conventional, artificial, now decadent and insincere residue of a once healthy tradition. In them fire and life and wit were brought back to common occasions. The young men at the universities and about the court were not slow to appreciate the change. Donne's poems circulated widely in manuscript, and among those who read them most diligently, it is safe to conjecture, would be the son of the Lady Magdalen Herbert, Donne's friend and the inspirer of his "Autumnal". In the two Cambridge sonnets of 1610, announcing the dedication of his youthful muse to "our Mistresse faire Religion", Herbert explicitly denounces the Petrarchian love poetry, and in lines that show unmistakably the influence of Donne.

"Open the bones, and you shall nothing find
In the best face but filth;"² -

this has the same sombre intensity and the very special atmosphere of thought as something felt in the blood which is characteristic of Donne's more serious mood, while lines like

"Why should I Women's eyes for Chrystal take?
Such poor invention burns in their low mind
Whose fire is wild, and doth not upward go
To praise," . . .²

1. Vol. iv, p. 197.
2. Palmer, ii, 81.

are not very far removed in spirit from the early "evaporations" of his more or less cynical wit.

Wherever the influence of Donne was confined to bringing about a synthesis between thought and emotion in the poetry of Herbert it was an excellent one. We notice its effect, for example, in the macabre verses entitled "Death", in lines and phrases such as

"The shells of fledge souls left behinde,
Dry dust, which sheds no tears, but may extort."

"And all thy bones with beautie shall be clad."

"Making our pillows either down, or dust."

and, vividly personifying Death,

"But since our Saviours death did put some bloud
 Into thy face;
Thou art grown fair" .

Herbert, indeed, has a large share of that power of thinking through the senses which is peculiar to certain Elizabethan and seventeenth century poets. We find it in Marlowe, Shakespeare, Chapman and Tourneur, and frequently enough to be called characteristic in Webster, Donne and Marvell. None of the so-called metaphysicals, with the exception of Donne and Marvell, is as sensuous in this particular way as Herbert is. Crashaw, who is more sensuous than any, is so in an altogether different way. With the Catholic poet the senses are organs of feeling - never instru-

ments of thought. Herbert, on the other hand, again and again unites a concrete sense impression to an abstract idea, and so perfectly that they become one thing.

He feels, for example, the icy breath of mortality, and with it experiences the abstract idea of the vanity of earthly life:

"So we freeze on,
Untill the grave increase our cold."¹

Or reversing the process, he makes a characteristic transition from abstract to concrete:

"Death is still working like a mole,
And digs my grave at each remove:"²

or, as in this stanza from the first of the two poems called "The Temper", - though here the emphasis is slightly overbalanced on the intellectual side:

"Yet take thy way; for sure thy way is best:
Stretch or contract me, thy poore debter:
This is but tuning of my breast,
To make the musick better".

Here in the characteristic metaphysical manner the abstract stretching or contracting, (explained by the second stanza of the poem as the poet's approach to God or his absence from God), is given an intensely concrete, personal, and, indeed, physical application: the lengthening or shortening of the sinews in his

1. "Employment": "He that is weary, let him sit."
2. "Grace".

breast, the stretching of the strings of a lute into harmony or allowing them to fall slack.

Two defects which frequently mar this union of abstract thought and concrete feeling must be noted in Herbert: in the first place downright bad taste, and secondly an overemphasis upon the intellectual aspect of a conceit. An example of the first defect is seen in a stanza such as this from the poem "Content":

"The brags of life are but a nine dayes wonder;
 And after death the fumes that spring
 From private bodies, make as big a thunder,
 As those which rise from a huge King".

and again in the following thought from the early lines entitled "The Thanks-giving",

"Shall I weep bloud? why thou hast wept^t such store
 That all thy body was one doore".

In the same poem occurs an example of the purely verbal conceit, perilously close to the pun:

"Shall thy strokes be my stroking?"

Again Herbert plays upon the opposite meaning of the words "raise" and "raze". In "The Sacrifice" he writes,

"Some said, that I the Temple to the floore
 In three dayes raz'd, and raised as before."

and in the second of the poems called "The Temper",

"The grosser world stands to thy word and art;
 But thy diviner world of grace
 Thou suddenly dost raise and race,
 And ev'ry day a new Creatour art."

This is simply word-play, there is practically no connection between the formal conceit of the two similar sounding words and the juxtaposition of the idea of the "grosser world" as something firm and stable and the idea of the variability and impermanence of "thy diviner world". All of these poems, it should be noted, are almost certainly early poems.

These are perhaps the worst form of the second defect which blurs the union of feeling and thought in many of Herbert's less successful poems; but it is hardly a characteristic one. The sacrifice of emotion to the purely verbal conceit is rare;¹ feeling is more usually slain on the altar of a too attenuated idea, as, for example, in the following stanza from "Sunday",

"The rest of our Creation
 Our great Redeemer did remove
 With the same shake, which at his passion
 Did th'earth and all things with it move.
 As Samson bore the doores away,
 Christs hands, though nail'd, wrought our salvation,
 And did unhinge that day."

That this is metaphysical no one would deny; but that it is metaphysical poetry I doubt if anyone would affirm. The difference between this and

1. "Jesu", "Anagram", "Heaven" are exceptions. In these the verbal conceit becomes the whole poem: yet even in these there is a thought, though a thin one, behind the words.

"Death is still working like a mole"

or

"Open the bones, and you shall nothing finde"

is all the difference that matters; and yet even here there is a sense of Samson-like struggle, of wrestling with an intense and complex thought, that is as reminiscent of Donne as are the two more successful lines.

It is from Donne more than from any other source outside himself that Herbert derived his sombre and sensuous imagination, the union he was able to achieve between sensation and thought; but it was from Donne also that he learned to reason in his poetry, to indulge in intellectual conceits, and to spoil some of his poems by a harsh straining after mental ingenuity.¹

Donne, as certainly as he destroyed the old, Petrarchian influence, exerted, himself, a new and powerful one. His brilliant demonstration of the poetic value of intellectual wit not only created what for want of a better term we call the "metaphysical lyric" but was chiefly responsible for the intellectual bias that English poetry with a surprising suddenness exhibited, and which directed the main stream of our poetry into channels that were to deepen and become straighter during the course of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The poetry of Donne is of the same kind as that of Dryden and Pope: it makes

1. e.g. "Artⁱllerie"; "Whitsunday"; "Obedience"; "Humilitie" - a poem similar in its basic idea to Donne's "The Will".

up in boldness what it lacks in correctness, but its boldness is an intellectual quality and is given an intellectual expression. Dryden, especially, owes a debt that if acknowledged would do much to substantiate Mr T.S.Eliot's contention¹ that the "metaphysical" poets are not in some "quaint", "curious" or "fantastic" backwater of English literature, but that its main stream flows through them.

It would be absurd, of course, to claim in this connection that an intellectual element had ever been entirely absent from the English lyric tradition - the Platonic musings of Spenser's Fowre Hymnes and the tormented self-searchings of Shakespeare's Sonnets, to give but two instances, prove the contrary, - but such an element had never been more than a subordinate one. Donne was the herald of a change. He originated the lyric as a mental gymnasium, and he made his thoughts parade up and down in it in a definite formation and for a definite end. He took logical thought, the instrument of the Schoolmen and the scientists, and made it the plaything of the poet. His poetry became a complete system of ideas, based often enough upon a faulty premise, but within its own convention logical, accurate, and provable. In this sense it is classical, with a classicism of content that is as real as the purely formal classicism which Ben Jonson was imposing on the Elizabethan love song and handing on to Herrick and the Cavalier lyrists.

But Herbert lacked the scholastic mind of Donne. His temper is not controversial. He is a poet of faith and feeling rather than of the intellect and wit, and though no one, - save

1. T.S.Eliot, Homage to John Dryden, p.33.

Donne in his Divine Poems, - succeeded better than Herbert in kindling emotional fire with the spark of intellectual wit, yet the distance between pupil and master is great. Herbert's triumphs come always when he has succeeded in disciplining his tendency towards "conceited" writing and becomes in consequence most surely himself - sincere and, in his own special and rather artificial way, simple.

It was not that Herbert was incapable of subtle and just conceits - his poetry can show many - but that in spite of his careful formal artistry he does not know when to stop. He is, as Professor Saintsbury has put it, "sometimes fantastic to frigidity".¹ Not content, in the poem "Whitsunday", with inviting the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove to nestle within his breast, he goes on to elaborate the conceit and would have the bird hatch his tender heart,

"Till it get wing, and flie away with thee".

In themselves, some of Herbert's conceits are exceedingly brilliant. He has a rare power of twisting the abstract into the concrete, and he performs the operation time and again with the ease of a virtuoso. Among the ineptitudes of "Providence" we come upon a subtle and just conceit such as the following stanza shows:

"How finely dost thou times and seasons spin,
And make a twist checker'd with night and day!
Which as it lengthens windes, and windes us in,
As bouls go on, but turning all the way."

¹. A Short History of English Literature, p.416.

This is scarcely distinguishable from Donne in a similar mood. Or again in the following lines, how vividly is an abstract idea turned not merely into a concrete image, but vitalized into a living physical perception. The subject is the subtle penetration of God's afflictions into the heart of man.

"We are the earth; and they,
Like moles within us, heave, and cast about:
And till they foot and clutch their prey,
They never cool, much lesse give out".¹

Observe how cleverly, too, the choice of words in the last line adds a new suggestion, that of the torments of fire.

In "Providence", to take another example from that long and uneven poem, we have a good instance of Herbert's gift for concise and witty definition:

"Light without winde is glasse: warm without weight
Is wooll and fures: cool without closenesse, shade:
Speed without pains, a horse: tall without height,
A servile hawk: low without losse, a spade."

The second, third and fourth of these definitions are commonplace enough, but the others are startlingly just. Herbert is very fond of the anthology of conceits, the method derived from Quarles² of illustrating - not as here a number of related ideas -

1. "Confession".
2. Professor Courthope declares that Quarles "was perhaps the first writer of the theological school to introduce those multiplied images in illustration of a single thought which are so freely used in the poetry of George Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan". (History of English Poetry, iii, 207.) He then quotes a passage from Quarles' earliest work, The Feast of Worms, (1620) which remarkably anticipates one of Herbert's favourite devices. None of the other poets mentioned is as skilful as Herbert in the manipulation of multiple images.

but one single idea by a multiplicity of definitions and conceits. "Dotage" and the sonnet "Prayer" offer the best examples of this. But in these two poems, as, indeed, in the stanza quoted above, the related conceits are by no means of equal value, and the effect of the whole is weakened by the weakness of many of the parts. In "Dotage", the object of the poet is to illustrate the vanity and emptiness of the pleasures, and the realities of the sorrows and miseries of this world. The first stanza is a series of witty definitions, summed up at its close with "These are the pleasures here". Vivid original conceits come in abundance: "womens and childrens wishes", "Chases in Arras", "dreams in a career", "nothing between two dishes". The next stanza, a summing up of "the sorrows here", lacks most of the wit of these, save in one line where the imagery is derived from husbandry:

"Anguish in grain, vexations ripe and blown".

"Anguish in grain" is a good instance of Herbert's witty condensation and his bold transmutation of simile to metaphor that sometimes leads to obscurity.

The sonnet "Prayer" is interesting because it represents a repudiation of the metaphysical conceit. In thirteen and a half lines Herbert uses it almost to exhaustion, ransacking Heaven and earth, the Scriptures and science, the intellect and the emotions, in an endeavour to circumscribe within its concise and clever limits the essential meaning of 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'Almightie, 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;" -

then, after all this, with the suddenness and surprise of a collapse, "Farewell sweet phrases, lovely metaphors", and the utter simplicity of truth comes sweeping in on the final and perfect definition of prayer as -

"something understood"

This is certainly one of the early poems referred to in "Jordan". Right down to the triumphant climax of the simple conclusion the poet has curled with metaphors his plain intention; but the harmony of plain intention and plain conclusion demonstrates as definitely as any of Herbert's explicit statements the fact of his realization that his artistic road must turn away from the conceit in the direction of simplicity.

The deliberate relinquishing of ornate diction and subtle conceit was, for Herbert the artist, a sacrifice not unlike the sacrifices of worldly ambition which in his religious life he

a person of fastidious taste, Herbert fought a continuous battle with worldly ²pride. He loved finery, and he had a natural leaning ^{towards} ~~to~~ what was artificial. It was by the inclination of personal taste that he was led to lavish so much care upon the outward form of his verse, and it was not until he had written a good deal that the events of his religious life led him to seek in simplicity the true harmony between thought and its expression.

Herbert's love of the artificial is evident everywhere, and in nothing so impressively as in his conception of nature. He is never able, as Vaughan sometimes is, to see things as they are, and to appreciate them for their own sake. Not content with nature in her native state, he refines, improves, adds a glaze of permanency, and with a simile or metaphor changes the natural into the artificial. Night becomes an ebony box,¹ spring a "box where sweets compacted lie".² Nature is either useful or pretty, "our cupboard of food, Or cabinet of pleasure."³ Man is a priest, and the priest is annealed ⁱⁿ to glass and becomes an allegory in a church window,⁴ or at the communion service -

"th'holy men of God such vessels are,
As serve him up, who all the world commends".⁵

Here we see the artificial thought finding expression not so much in an artificial form as in a conceit, - though it must in justice be stated, Herbert often mingles wit and artifice more

1. "Evensong".
2. "Vertue".
3. "Man".
4. "The Windows".
5. "The Priesthood".

aptly than here. There is a certain glowing strength, for example, in the concluding lines of "Church-monuments" where man's body is congealed to an hour-glass holding the dust that measures his duration.

It was to be expected that Herbert's mental bias towards the artificial should have had a great influence upon his technique. Herbert was conscious that this influence might lead him astray and, as some of the verses already quoted make quite clear, deliberately set out to check it. This tendency, even at its worst when it produced such purely formal efforts as "The Altar", was reinforced by the fact that it was based upon a good intention: namely, the simple desire to express thought and feeling in an appropriate form. Herbert's thought, indeed, was often artificial, but his feeling was never anything but simple and genuine, and his poetic progress was the gradual dawning of the conviction that it is to the feeling of poetry that the framework must conform; that, in short,

"There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd"¹

and that it is best to "save expense" and "copie out onely that".

Herbert's experiments in form are interesting. One of the most obvious and least successful is "The Altar", in which there is very little connection (beyond the obvious and wholly artificial one depending on the actual appearance of the printed lines) between the structure and subject-matter of the poem.

"Easter wings", another similar experiment, is much more

1. "Jordan", - "When first my lines".

successful. In this Herbert does actually achieve a very definite harmony between the form and subject-matter of his poem. By form is meant here the actual look of the verses upon the printed page, as well as what is usually understood by the term. The stanzas are in appearance each a pair of wings; but further than that, note how the lines increase or diminish as the soul rises or sinks, as the influence of God is imparted or withdrawn: note how in the first part of the first stanza man's decline from his happy garden state to his present misery is symbolized in the successive shortenings of the lines, and how the second part rises "as larks, harmoniously":-

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

The second verse rises from the last word of the first, and continues the application of the general rule to the individual, to Herbert himself:

"Thou didst so punish sinne,
 That I became
 Most thinne.
 With thee
 Let me combine,
 And feel this day thy victorie:".

The parallel between the two pairs of wings is a very close one:

in each there is a fall, during the first half of the stanza, followed by an upward soaring that does not end with the poem, but is regarded as continuing on and on throughout the spiritual life of the poet, and the last line of the second stanza reiterates the aspiration of the concluding line of the first -

"Affliction shall advance the flight in me."

Another example of Herbert's attempts to bring artificial form and subject-matter into harmony - though the harmony aimed at is not this time so definitely visual - is afforded by the lines on "Trinitie Sunday". The poem consists of three stanzas of three lines each, with one rhyme to each verse. The first two stanzas have each three clauses, but in the third the permutations and combinations of three become more complex:

"Enrich my heart, mouth, hands in me,
 With faith, with hope, with charitie;
 That I may runne, rise, rest with thee."

Somewhat similar to this in their arbitrary attempts to make structure the reflection of an idea are the poems, "Sinnes round", and "Deniall". The former undertakes to illustrate the inevitable interconnections of cause and effect, of sin and remorse, of sin in thought and sin in act. The fundamental idea is symbolized in the way the three stanzas are connected, the last line of the first becoming the first of the second, and the concluding line of the whole poem the same as the opening one. The method is

that used by Donne in "La Corona". Herbert makes use of the device here with a singularly happy effect. The coördination between thought and verse structure is close, and the device does much to stamp the idea upon the mind and memory. Briefly the thought and the chain effect in which it is expressed is as follows:

Stanza one: I am sorry that my sins should be an endless ring. My thoughts begin the sin, my words take fire from my inflamed thoughts. Stanza two: my words take fire from my inflamed thoughts, my hands join in to complete the sin. Stanza three: my hands join in to complete the sin; their ill deeds "supplie New thoughts of sinning", and hence - I am sorry that my sins should be an endless ring. We are back at the beginning again.

The sense of anguish and repentance and despair, the feeling of being in a treadmill, lost in a vicious circle from which there is no escape, is admirably rendered in this poem, and its particular effect is obtained entirely by means of the artificial formal device that Herbert uses with a success that completely justifies the method.

Herbert was, indeed, right in his main theory that there is an added effect to be given to thought and feeling by the use of complex technical devices, but the danger was in letting the device be too arbitrary an imposition. He became conscious, too, as his religious experience deepened, that the emotions of his spirit were too intense and too troubled to be fitted into the arbitrary mould of however mobile a frame. In the lines entitled

"Grief", as - less explicitly - in the sonnet "Prayer", we catch him in the very discovery of this important truth. The subject he has set himself is "Grief". He knows how the traditional poet treats such a theme: grief, tears, rivers, fountains, conduits, spouts - the list of conceits is conventional and tedious - Herbert is no Crashaw - and after a dozen lines in this style:-

"Let ev'ry vein
Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
My weary weeping eyes too drie for me,
Unlesse they get new conduits, new supplies . . .
What are two shallow foords, two little spouts . . . ?" -

he suddenly breaks off. It is as though the conviction of the worthlessness of this artificiality was borne home to him in a flash as he sat at his desk. He dips his quill once more in the ink, and with a sad and witty irony writes on:-

"Verses, ye are too fine a thing, too wise
For my rough sorrows: cease, be dumbe and mute,
Give up your feet and running to mine eyes,
And keep your measures for some lovers lute,
Whose grief allows him musick and a ryme:
For mine excludes both measure, tune, and time.
Alas, my God!"

It was, in fact, his sense of form that led Herbert to discard the more obvious formal devices that are certainly found in greater quantity and poorer quality in his earlier poems than in his later. It was his fastidiousness that was fully aware of the discrepancy between fine trappings and a humble spirit, and which

1. Even here, however, Herbert is unable to resist a verbal conceit.

He was a lover of order and ceremony and cleanliness. He delighted in music and in the ritual of the Anglican Church. In his youth he had loved fine clothes, study, and witty conversation. His academic career had been brilliant. His family was patrician. He was slowly dying of consumption. All these things have left their mark upon the individual character of his best poetry, imparting to it sweetness, wit, directness, music, refinement, melancholy, and that curiously natural artificiality which is to be tasted in its happiest quintessence in the exquisite "Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright" and the no less beautiful "Love".

If Herbert lacked the ardour of Crashaw, the white glow of Vaughan, and the intense and sombre ingenuity of Donne, he had qualities of his own more fragrant than theirs. The handful of perfect lyrics he has bequeathed to the English anthology are unique in their delicate mingling of nature and artifice, of warmth and austerity, of pride and simplicity; and in their harmonious fusing of so many diverse qualities they are a faithful expression of the true spirit of the Church that Herbert served and loved.

CHAPTER IV

HENRY VAUGHAN

I

The seventeenth century is remarkable as an age when all the resources of the intellect and the imagination, of wit and poetry, were brought to the service of faith. The men of that century were scholars in devotion, the students of a living Word reborn of the Renaissance. While they accepted both the spirit and letter of Bible and creed, they yet felt that enough had been left dark and mysterious to warrant the most daring speculation and the most exacting use of reason. And when speculation became fruitless, there remained to the poet and mystic the exercise of an imaginative apprehension which afforded him an entrance to regions where philosophy was helpless. The religious poetry of Henry Vaughan is the record of a refined and sensitive spirit moving in such a medium along a certain, well-defined path. Many mystics had preceded him, but no mystic poet;¹ and if Blake and Wordsworth were to follow his lead, it was to confirm the account that the pioneer brought back.

For Vaughan was, undoubtedly, a pioneer. Even among

1. Richard Rolle, it is true, was a mystic and a poet, but he wrote before the language had hardened into modern English.

his contemporaries there was none so completely a mystic, Traherne alone excepted.

In Herbert, Vaughan's acknowledged master, there is a solidity of thought, a kind of materialism of fancy which keeps him close to the earth and forbids him the highest flights of the imagination. He is the more careful artist, but he is too careful ever to lose himself in that white rapture which sometimes hides Vaughan like a cloud. Yet it is not—though he is spiritual enough—as the poet of divine rapture that Vaughan is chiefly remarkable. The Way is too steep and affliction too bitter; ecstasy is attained only as the long-deferred reward of faith and suffering. It is for this reason that Vaughan is more nearly a true mystic than Crashaw, though for ardour and exaltation he must yield to the Catholic poet.

Crashaw was singularly fortunate. He experienced all the delights of which the mystic temperament is capable—without any of the pains. Faith and love were the two poles of his universe, and he dwelt between them in constant rapture. In his brightly-coloured conceits, which have been compared to a fountain and to fireworks, he was able to express perfectly the fervours of a soul immersed in joy and love. Yet we feel that this felicity has been gained too easily. Once safe in the fold of Rome there was no place in the heart of Crashaw for the loss and agony with which the mystic must pay for his rapture.

In Vaughan, on the other hand, the mystic experience

was fuller and more nearly complete. The Anglican poet knew the mystic's despair as well as his joy, and that doubt of himself which is often the complement of faith in God. Indeed all the stages of what Miss Evelyn Underhill has described in her authoritative study¹ of the subject as the mystic way are traceable in the poetry of Vaughan, for in the two parts of Silex Scintillans are poems expressing all the varying moods of religious experience--the longing that seizes the unsatisfied soul, its abrupt joyful sense of awakening, the bitter consciousness of past sin which at times daunts it, the happy states of illumination when it can commune with God, the agonizing night of despair, and the final ecstasy of union. We cannot know, of course, if Vaughan underwent these spiritual changes in the definite order of the Mystic Way; it seems more likely, indeed, that they were varying moods, traced and re-traced in a maze-like path. They were real spiritual experiences, however, and of an intensity that entitles Vaughan to be numbered with the few genuine mystics among the English poets.

* * * * *

Mysticism, according to Miss Underhill², owes the intensity of its appeal to the satisfaction which it provides for three fundamental cravings of the Self: first, the craving that makes of man a wanderer seeking to return by whatever road he can find to a loved and long lost home;

1. Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism, 1912.
2. Ibid., pp. 149 et seq.

second, the craving of heart for heart, of the soul for its mate, the desire to be made one with the universe, to be absorbed in God; and lastly, the wish for inward purity. These are, of course, three ways of solving the same equation, for to satisfy one is to satisfy all. Vaughan has made use of the symbolism of each, but the desire which has most often found expression in his verse is the first. It was in the image of the wanderer being received at last into his sought-for home that he liked best to conceive of the highest happiness. He was, indeed, essentially a poet of homesickness. His soul is an exile, seeking everywhere for news of its lost home, longing for the day when it can return. "When shal that traveller come home?" he asks, in the poem entitled "The Resolve",¹ and announces his intention of setting out upon the journey:

"I have consider'd it; and find
 A longer stay
 Is but excus'd neglect."

The pilgrimage is from the world of flesh to the world of spirit. Faith is his lamp, and love the key to admit him at his journey's end. "Faith brings us home" he writes in one poem²: "Love only can with quick accesse Unlock the way", in another.³ He is in an agony of impatience to be gone, for to do so is to obey the dictates of his nature;

1. Works of Henry Vaughan, (ed. Martin, Oxford) ii, p. 434. All further references to Vaughan's poems are to this edition.
2. "Faith", ii, 450.
3. "The Showre", ii, 412.

not to do so would be monstrous. He knows that "Celestial natures still Aspire for home".¹ It is night with him until he can begin the journey, and he spends it in "tossings too and fro", like a traveller whose urgent business makes him impatient to depart from a cold and uncomfortable inn. "The businesse of a Pilgrim is to seek his Country".² "So for this night I linger here", he writes in the poem entitled "The Pilgrimage",

"And full of tossings too and fro,
Expect stil when thou wilt appear
That I may get me up, and go."³

He turns his back upon the world: but only because that way lies his home. He forsakes the flesh: because it is a distraction. "So shew me home", he prays,

"That all this fome
And frothie noise which up and down doth flie
May find no lodging in my Eie, or Eare,
O seal them up!"⁴

Sometimes the symbol of the pilgrim returning to his ancient home is laid aside, and Vaughan lets us see that the other cravings which Miss Underhill has noted as characteristic of mysticism in general are the motives of his in particular. The imagery of the soul seeking its home

1. "The Palm-tree", ii, 490.
2. "Man in Darkness", i, 169.
3. ii, 464.
4. "The Mutiny", ii, 468.

gives place to that of being absorbed and made one with God. Diversity and dis-union are felt like pain or foulness. "O that I were all Soul!" he exclaims, "that thou

Wouldst make each part
Of this poor, sinfull frame pure heart!
Then would I drown
My single one . . ."¹

Vaughan, in the mystical sense, as the title of one of his poems has it, is "Love-sick". "Jesus, my life! how shall I truly love thee?"², that also is the problem which confronts him, and its solution involves the attainment of an ideal purity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Vaughan cries for a refining fire. He would be made all love, his flesh a star. He would have every impurity burned out of heart and soul. Contemplating a storm, he prays for a "spirit-wind" to purge his foulness, and asks that "wind, and water" may "Both wash, and wine" his impure, heavy soul.³

His particular case, Vaughan knows, so far as the sin is concerned though not in the repentance, is general enough. What does this imply? It implies foulness in man, and inconstancy. Man has strayed from his ancient home. He has turned away from God. But Vaughan, bewildered and hurt, seeks to return as best he may.

1. "Cheerfulness", ii, 428.
2. "Love-sick", ii, 493.
3. "The Storm", ii, 423.

"Man hath stil either toyes, or Care,
 He hath no root, nor to one place is ty'd,
 But ever restless and Irregular
 About this Earth doth run and ride,
 He knows he hath a home, but scarce knows where,
 He sayes it is so far,
 That he hath quite forgot how to go there."¹

The distractions of the world, the vanities of wealth and state, the delusions of science: these are the snares that hamper poor man. Called by every wind, he does not know which way to turn.

"The world
 Is full of voices; Man is call'd, and hurl'd
 By each; he answers all,
 Knows ev'ry note, and call,
 Hence, still
 Fresh dotage tempts, or old usurps his will."²

What a contrast is this doubt and distraction to the steadfastness and singleness of purpose exhibited by the rest of nature! Which way to turn? Here every answer comes quick and clear. Turn to God.

Vaughan is never tired of pointing out the superiority of nature to man in its constancy and unswerving loyalty. He contrasts his own state with that of the herbs and stones, the birds and the water-courses, with all the various minutiae of the country among which he loved to spend his time. "I would I were a stone, or tree", he writes, taking for text the nineteenth verse of the eighth

1. "Man", ii, 477.

2. "Distraction", ii, 413.

chapter of Romans, which tells how all created things await in expectancy the revelation of the Son:

"I would I were a stone, or tree,
 Or flowre by pedigree,
 Or some poor high-way herb, or Spring
 To flow, or bird to sing!
 Then should I (tyed to one sure state,)
 All day expect my date;
 But I am sadly loose, and stray,
 A giddy blast each way;
 O let me not thus range:
 Thou canst not change.

"Sometimes I sit with thee, and tarry
 An hour, or so, then vary.
 Thy other Creatures in this Scene
 Thee only aym, and mean;
 Some rise to seek thee, and with heads
 Erect peep from their beds;"¹

"Herbs sleep unto the East", he notes in another poem,²
 "and some fowles thence Watch the Returns of light; But
 hearts", he adds, "are not so kind". At midnight, looking
 up to the stars, he cannot help wishing that a like ardour
 shone in his soul.

"What Emanations,
 Quick vibrations,
 And bright stirs are there?
 What thin Ejections,
 Cold Affections,
 And slow motions here?"³

Sometimes it is not so high as the stars that he looks for
 a pattern of perfection, but to "the meanest things" --

1. "Rom. Cap. 8. ver. 19", ii, 432.
2. "Sure, there's a tye", ii, 429.
3. "Midnight", ii, 421.

a blossom in one poem, a feather or a shell in another, a stick or rod in a third.

But Vaughan's philosophy of nature is something more than an awareness of the submission of component parts to an ordered whole. He speaks, it is true, of "the great Chime And Symphony of nature", but by this is meant no figurative choiring of the spheres. It is a choral symphony. Nature is alive and has a voice: "the quick world Awakes, and sings!"¹ In the phenomena of instinct and of magnetic attractions the curious physician has discerned

"That busie commerce kept between
God and his Creatures, though unseen.

"They hear, see, speak,
And into loud discoveries break,
As loud as blood."²

All things, he realizes, praise God, "and had Their lesson taught them, when first made."³ Not only birds, but hills and valleys break into singing. "Active winds and streams both run and speak, Yet stones are deep in admiration."⁴ The cock crowing at dawn, the flower turning to the sun, the compass pointing to the north are all examples of a heavenly magnetism that is wanting only in man. He it is who

"hath not so much wit as some stones have
Which in the darkest nights point to their homes,
By some hid sense their Maker gave".⁵

1. "The Morning-watch", ii, 424.
2. "The Stone", ii, 515.
3. "The Bird", ii, 496.
4. Idem.
5. "Man", ii, 477.

Nature is thus a teacher and a living example. All natural objects, all natural phenomena are laden with instruction. Flowers "spread and heave" to the sun as true hearts must to God. Waters that fall fly up again in foam. The sun draws water from the sea. Trees and herbs strive upward: all point out to man the direction of his home. The whole of creation, Vaughan declares in the poem entitled "The Tempest",¹ when reduced to meaning, is but a lecture for our eye and ear. Among the "Rules and Lessons" set down in the verses of that name are the following:

"When Seasons change, then lay before thine Eys
His wondrous Method; mark the various Scenes
In heav'n; Hail, Thunder, Rain-bows, Snow, and Ice,
Calmes, Tempests, Light, and darknes by his means;
Thou canst not misse his Praise; each tree, herb, flowre
Are shadows of his wisedome, and his Pow'r."²

Even the weather is not empty of instruction. "This late, long heat", he notes, may have its meaning--"And tempests have more in them than a showr".

The lesson to be drawn from every aspect of nature is that of constancy. Man belongs to God, and the business of his life is to glorify God by praise, good works, and faith. If he is to be worthy of returning to God from whom he came he must avoid the pitfalls and distractions of worldly life, and set himself as single-heartedly as a tree or stream to follow the course which has been ordained for him.

1. ii, 460.
2. ii, 436.

If we can believe the testimony of certain poems, Vaughan examined nature with some thoroughness. He possessed, certainly, a good deal of that curious scientific spirit which animated Sir Thomas Browne, and it was not until after a searching trial that he rejected reason in favour of faith. His brother, by whom, as we shall see, he was much influenced, was learned in alchemy, and it is not unlikely that Henry also dabbled in the philosophical science. An experiment has been defined as a question put to nature, and Vaughan asked many. He "gron'd to know

Who gave the Clouds so brave a bow,
Who bent the spheres, and circled in
Corruption with this glorious Ring".¹

Vaughan's scientific studies, apparently, were not a mere occupation of his leisure hours. He undertook them seriously. Not only did he master the body of scientific thought of his day, but he carried on original research:

"I summon'd nature: peirc'd through all her store,
Broke up some seales, which none had touch'd before,".²

He compares his interrogation of nature to a dissection, telling how he "rifled quite--

Her wombe, her bosome, and her head
Where all her secrets lay a bed".²

1. "Vanity of Spirit", ii, 418.
2. Idem.

Then at last, "having past Through all the Creatures", he came to search himself. It was here that science and reason proved inadequate. He found "Traces, and sounds of a strange kind", and heard echoes of the mighty spring that flows from "th' eternall hills", and realized that the answer to the riddles of this mystery was not to be come upon so easily. In the past he had studied the mere surface of things; now he was to approach a more difficult task - a task, indeed, for which the methods by which he had before broke up some seals were utterly useless. "Leave, leave, thy gadding thoughts", he writes in the conclusion to "The Search".¹ Science deals with mere externals, "the skinne, and shell of things". That way is but a blind alley.

"Search well another world; who studies this,
Travels in Clouds, seeks Manna, where none is."

Vaughan's conviction of the futility of scientific method seems to have increased with time. Under the title "The World", among the poems of Pious Thoughts and Ejaculations, are placed these significant lines:

"Can any tell me what it is? can you,
That wind your thoughts into a Clue
To guide out others, while your selves stay in,
And hug the Sin?"²

The world is both false and foul; and unknown. Vaughan renounced it, and the study of it, completely. Henceforth

1. ii,407.
2. ii,649.

his probing was to be of a far more subtle, difficult, and precious world - one which became to him a world of reality compared to which this world of sensation was but a cloud.

II

"Search well another world": that is the task assigned to every mystic; for all sincere mysticism is based upon the conviction that there is another world of which this is but the shadow, and another life of which this is a feeble copy. Yet Vaughan, though he rejected the sensational world as a snare and a delusion, was not unconscious of its beauty. He has called it a foul world, but the portrait of it which his poetry furnishes is far from unattractive. His many exquisite descriptions of nature testify to Vaughan's love of the earth; and though the actions of man are a vanity, the machinery of sun and cloud, hill and stream, forest and meadow among which they have their setting, is worthy of the fairest deeds. Had man the wisdom to be guided by nature, Vaughan often repeats, all might be well. Yet when the poet laid aside "the world's lov'd wisdom", it was not so much because it was false, as because it was inadequate. He had become impatient for one more true. Worldliness might have claimed him, he says in effect, had not other-worldliness proved the stronger attraction:

"Mans favorite sins, those tainting appetites
Which nature breeds, and some fine clay invites,
With all their sift, kinde arts and easie strains

Which strongly operate, though without pains,
 Did not a greater beauty rule mine eyes,
 None would more dote on, nor so soon entice".¹

This is a frank and honest confession which the early poems of the 1646 volume amply corroborate. It frees Vaughan at once from the suspicion that he despised that which he had rejected, and there is evidence in it that his rejection of the world, his awakening or conversion, was the outcome of a real and difficult struggle. One has to love life before its sacrifice has any value.

The date when this struggle took place, and the resulting rebirth into a new, more intense, spiritual life, is not known exactly. It seems fairly certain, however, to have been during the period between December 1647, the date of the dedication of the secular Olor Iscanus, and the publication in 1650 of the first part of Silex Scintillans. After the change in question Vaughan would have liked to suppress his early poems, and when they were printed in 1651, it was without his knowledge, probably against his known desires. It would seem, indeed, from a sentence in Thomas Vaughan's address to the Reader, that the early poems were in some danger of being destroyed by their author. "I have not the Author's approbation", wrote Thomas, "but I have Law on my side . . . I hold it no man's prerogative to fire his own house." The spiritual change in Vaughan certainly occurred after the 1647 dedication, for even the mild worldliness of the verses that make up this volume was such as

1. "The Hidden Treasure", ii, 520.

Vaughan was later to lament as a killing sin. It must have been experienced a considerable time before the appearance of Silex Scintillans, Part I, for the poems there printed are the ripe fruits as well as the first flowers of the poet's new state of grace. The preface to Silex Scintillans, though written in 1654 and published with the second part, gives us a hint of two events which had contributed to Vaughan's deeper realization of his spiritual life; the poems themselves reveal a third. Vaughan had suffered a long and serious illness which was for a time expected to be fatal. It is not unnatural to surmise that the solitude and suffering which this entailed should have been largely responsible for the new and deeply-felt religious ideas that took possession of his mind. The vanity of worldly activity, the importance of eternal life, the inevitable consequences of sin and the necessity of repentance, all must have been forced upon his attention with the urgency of a divine awakening. "I was nigh unto death", he writes, "and am still at no great distance from it . . . But the God of the spirits of all flesh, hath granted me a further use of mine, then I did look for in the body; and when I expected, and had (by his assistance) prepared for a message of death, then did he answer me with life."¹ And not merely with a renewed life of the body, we can add, but with a new, intenser spiritual life.

The other cause of Vaughan's awakening mentioned in

1. Silex Scintillans: "The Author's Preface To the following Hymns." ii, 392.

this preface is the deep impression made upon him by the poems of George Herbert, "whose holy life and verse gained many pious Converts, (of whom I am the least)."¹ The third of the causes to which we can ascribe Vaughan's increased spirituality is the loss of friends, and especially of one particularly dear friend, whose death left him with a sense of the emptiness of earthly life that has been reflected in a number of beautiful elegiac poems.

But whatever may have been its causes or its date, the change which made itself felt in the life and thought of the poet was a definite and a fundamental one. He was thenceforward to turn aside from this "dark contest of waves and winde" that he recognizes in the poem, "Quickness",² as a foil and a deception, and to enter that eternal life, the ultimate reality of which he perfectly describes in the fine concluding line:

"A quickness, which my God hath kist".

The progress from the world of appearance to the world of reality, from the dross to the essence, from the quickness of this life to the quickness kindled of God's kiss, is the pilgrimage which the mystic endeavours to make. There is, to some minds, something almost impious in the attempt. It is as though one tried to take the Kingdom of Heaven by storm, to surprise God, and to snatch at an ecstasy forbidden this side of Paradise. By shutting the gates of sense, the contemplative opens unknown doors, and

1. Silex Scintillans. "The Author's Preface To the following Hymns", ii, 391.

2. ii, 538.

peers into worlds where he believes his soul shall dwell after it has finally shaken off the chains of the body. "Lord, . . . On me one breath", prays Vaughan, "And let me dye before my death!".¹ He is asking here for the very highest reward that mysticism can bestow upon its votary, the final dying into an ecstasy of God-filled life which is the goal of what Evelyn Underhill² has called the Mystic Way.

The Mystic Way is simply a convenient and perhaps slightly sensational label, but it does serve to designate a definite psychological experience more or less common to all mystics. It falls into five stages, each of which has been carefully described by Miss Underhill. Briefly, they are as follows:

- (1) Awakening, or Conversion. This is usually sudden, and is accompanied by a strong emotion of joy.
- (2) Self-knowledge, or Purgation. The consciousness of past sin and present unworthiness fills the pilgrim with forebodings and sorrow. The next two stages,
- (3) Illumination, and
- (4) Surrender, or The Dark Night, are not unlike repetitions of the first two stages, but more intensely felt. Illumination, whose accompanying emotion is joy, is as it were a preview of the final goal, a moment of insight when a glimpse of God is vouchsafed the happy soul. The transience of this

1. "Regeneration", ii, 399.

2. Op. cit., Part ii, cap. 1.

happiness, however, is the cause of the bitterness and despair of the fourth stage, when God seems to absent himself completely, and the soul is cast out into a cold and darkness that has been called the Mystic Death. This is the necessary prelude to the last stage,

(5) Union, the achievement of the goal. The soul, returning to its longed for home, is made one with God in a pure and ecstatic union.

It would be an error in tracing the spiritual life of any mystic to consider these stages as hard and fast, clearly-bounded divisions through which the mystic makes a continuous and direct progress, and in fairness to Miss Underhill it must be stated that she qualifies her account of the Mystic Way by the recognition of wide differences in the experiences of different individuals. The truth is, most likely, that what Miss Underhill considers as definitely successive stages are moods which many sincerely religious people experience without traversing the path in one clearly definable order or direction. Thus the first three stages, at least, may be dwelt in many times, the happiness of Illumination fading before a renewed consciousness of sin which has more in common with the second than with the fourth stage. It was in these earlier stages that most of Vaughan's spiritual life was passed, and though it is probable that he knew something of the terrible anguish of the Dark Night of the Soul his knowledge has been reflected in comparatively few poems—though these few are among his greatest.

It is a useful simplification, however, in dealing with Vaughan as a mystic to separate his poems into five groups corresponding to the conventional stages of the Mystic Way and, though some in the later stages were almost certainly written before some in the earlier stages, to treat his wandering and circuitous path as a straight line along which the mystic sometimes went forward and sometimes retraced his steps, but progressing gradually ever closer to the desired union with the Godhead.

Vaughan did, however, regard his spiritual adventure as a pilgrimage, and his religious poems show that it falls roughly into the five conventional stages. Temperamental differences make the journey of each wayfarer who sets out upon the same road a unique and individual experience, and no two accounts will exactly tally, yet with all due allowance for personality and circumstance, and remembering that this arbitrary arrangement is in every case only a useful simplification, we cannot fail to remark how closely Vaughan followed the Mystic Way.

Although the awakening that preceded his entry upon the first stage was, as his poetry makes clear, the outcome of a protracted mental and spiritual disturbance there seems to have been a moment when the decision was made and the boundary crossed, and in that decisive instant he turned his back for ever upon the light sins of his youth.

They seem light enough, indeed, to a more worldly mind, but to Vaughan, who, after all, was responsible for

them, they were sufficiently dreadful. He speaks in the accents of bitter loathing of his "youthfull, sinfull age", when, attended by error, he rode full cry after pleasure. He played with fire, he confesses, in the poem entitled "The Garland":¹ "But never thought that fire would burn". He was deluded by all the bitter sweets of the world, and succumbed to the

"Glorious deceptions, gilded mists,
False joyes, phantastick flights"

characteristic of the age. He confesses, where others might have boasted:

"I sought choice bowres, haunted the spring,
Cull'd flowres and made me posies:
Gave my fond humours their full wing,
And crown'd my head with Roses."

It was a mild enough sort of Epicureanism, but to the retrospective Vaughan, convinced that not to do good works was the same as to do active evil, it was little better than damnation.

The succeeding period of philosophic enquiry and scientific research was only less futile, because his intentions at least were worthy, though the result was as barren. The awakening, however, came as the result of Vaughan's gradually-increasing conviction of the folly of seeking anything but an eternal good. The pale worldliness of a wit and town-gallant that is displayed in Poems,

1. ii, 492.

with the tenth Satyre of Juvenal, 1646, is very far removed in its spirit of tolerance for the vices of tavern and town from the religious fervour of the world-condemning poems of 1650. The change was sharp and sudden. It is announced in the lines immediately following those last quoted:

"But at the height of this Careire
I met with a dead man,"—

and the message which he brought was one of the vanity of worldly ambition--"Desist fond fool, be not undone,"— and as a result of this experience,¹ whatever its exact nature may have been, Vaughan determined to seek

"A Garland, where comes neither rain, nor wind."

1. The interpretation of the line "I met with a dead man" affords some interesting speculations. It has been suggested that Vaughan is here doing no more than giving a dramatic representation of the feelings aroused in him by the chance sight of a corpse. I feel, however, that the conventional and unemotional treatment of a similar theme in "The Charnel-house" is a strong argument against such a theory. We are dealing with a definite and epoch-making experience. The "dead man", it seems more likely, is the friend whose death is mourned in a number of Vaughan's most beautiful poems. For the effect of this death upon Vaughan's spiritual life, see the poem beginning "Fair and yong light!"—ii, 513, and that beginning "Thou that know'st for whom I mourne,"—ii, 416, especially ll. 9-12. Another possibility is that the "dead man" is Vaughan himself and the poem records the sudden and intense realization of his own physical mortality and of his former spiritual deadness; while "The Obsequies"—ii, 536, and "Death"—ii, 533, lend some support to the view that the "dead man" is Christ and that the spiritual experience recorded in the lines under discussion had its rise in a contemplation of the Passion.

The introductory poem in which Vaughan dedicates Silex Scintillans to Jesus Christ gives us a further account of this revivifying experience. "Some drops of thy all-quickning blood", he writes,

"Fell on my heart; those made it bud
 And put forth thus, though Lord, before
 The ground was curst, and void of store.
 Indeed I had some here to hire
 Which long resisted thy desire,
 That ston'd thy servants, and did move
 To have the murthred for thy love;
 But Lord, I have expell'd them . . ."1

There had been a struggle, and a bitter one, but when it was over and the night of "tossings too and fro" had ended, the pilgrim was ready to begin his journey.

The emotion of joy, which in most mystics accompanies the awakening, was in Vaughan an intense one, but of short duration. There are comparatively few poems which it has inspired, and it quickly gives place to the unhappy sense of unworthiness which consciousness of past sin induces in the contemplative entering upon the second stage of the Way. The verses on Christ's Nativity,² beginning, "Awake, glad heart! get up, and Sing; It is the Birth-day of thy King," are perhaps an expression of this early, happy mood of thanksgiving--the first stanzas only: presently, the feeling of unworthiness becomes too heavy to be borne, and the poem changes from a song of joy to a penitential psalm. "The Morning-Watch" and the "Mount of Olives" are the only poems that reflect one unclouded mood of joy. It is the bright morning of the soul,

1. ii, 394.
 2. ii, 442.

its spring and vigorous youth. "O Joyes! Infinite sweetnes!"
cries Vaughan, "with what flowres,

And shoots of glory, my soul breakes, and buds!
All the long houres
Of night, and Rest
Through the still shrouds
Of sleep, and Clouds,
This Dew fell on my Breast;
O how it Blouds,
And Spirits all my Earth! heark! In what Rings,
And Hymning Circulations the quick world
Awakes, and sings;"¹

In "Mount of Olives"² this happy and ecstatic emotion is specifically referred to the first stage of spiritual awakening, and described with a wealth of detail and abandon of spirit which amply testify to the reality and vividness of the experience:

"When first I saw true beauty, and thy Joys
Active as light, and calm without all noise
Shin'd on my soul, I felt through all my powr's
Such a rich air of sweets, as Evening shows
Fand by a gentle gale Convey and breath
On some parch'd bank . . ."

It seemed as though odours and myrrh comforted his senses and "spirited" his blood. He was vouchsafed a glimpse of reality, and saw the world as a painted counterfeit. In the past he had "wander'd under tempests all the year", gone "bleak and bare in body as in mind"; but now God had glanced upon him, and in happy gratitude he writes:

1. "The Morning-watch", ii,424.
2. ii,476..

"I am so warm'd now by this glance on me,
 That, midst all storms I feel a Ray of thee;
 So have I known some beauteous Paisage rise
 In suddain flowres and arbours to my Eies,
 And in the depth and dead of winter bring
 To my cold thoughts a lively sense of spring."¹

But Vaughan possessed too sensitive a heart, too enquiring a mind, to remain long in the possession of so spontaneous and early a joy. The cry of happy awakening changes on his lips to a question, and presently to a confession. The overwhelming consciousness of sins to be atoned for only by sincere penitence and with bitter weeping assails him, as he enters the second stage, that of Purgation. It was in this stage that he seems to have spent the longest time, and to which he returns most frequently. He has "A darting conscience full of stabs and fears", and it is from the thorns of humility that he receives the most grievous wounds. Accounts of his early sins and present unworthiness are scattered with profuse abundance throughout his poems. Even in the verses on the Nativity, that begin so happily, an agonizing conviction of unworthiness comes flooding in, changing the mood of the poem entirely:

"I would I had in my best part
 Fit Roomes for thee! or that my heart
 Were so clean as
 Thy manger was!
 But I am all filth, and obscene,
 Yet, if thou wilt, thou canst make clean."²

1. ii, 476.
 2. ii, 442.

But Vaughan, in his darkest moments, is not without hope. He is armed with Christian resignation, and consoles himself with the knowledge that afflictions are pills to purge the sinner.

It is curious to notice how medical, how very much the physician, Vaughan becomes when he deals with Affliction. The poem of that name which begins "Peace, peace; It is not so"¹ seems to be written in the awareness of some subtle parallel between the ills of the body and the fevers and faintings of the spirit. Affliction is physick; a pill that makes for "setled health"; it is "the great Elixir that turns gall To wine, and sweetness; Poverty to wealth, And brings man home". The afflictions of the individual are necessary, and they have, too, their counterpart among communities:

"Kingdomes too have their Physick, and for steel,
Exchange their peace, and furr".

Viewed in this light;

"Sickness is wholesome, and Crosses are but curbs",

and, as Vaughan has expressed it in the poem, "Chearfulness",² to the Christian, affliction becomes "meere pleasure".

Presently the consciousness of the sins of the past

1. ii, 459.
2. ii, 428.

becomes less acute. Their significance is seen to have diminished. Some radiance from the distant goal floods the landscape, and the pilgrim enters upon the third stage of his journey--that of Illumination.

In one of the finest and most vivid of his poems, the beautiful "Regeneration"¹ which he placed at the beginning of Silex Scintillans, Part I, Vaughan looks back, as it were, over the journey he has so far come, and in it leaves an account of the experiences of the soul in the first three stages of the Mystic Way. This is an important poem, both because of its formal felicity and its significant subject-matter. It has received some attention from two writers who have recently had occasion to deal with the poetry of Vaughan—Mr. Herbert Read and Mr. Edmund Blunden.² The former quotes from it in Phases of English Poetry as typical of Vaughan's style, noting the effect of directness and speed in which its clarity of diction results. After quoting the first four stanzas, Mr. Read comments as follows: "Four stanzas, but only two sentences, so admirably controlled in rhythm and construction that we are carried along with a smooth delightful ease, and yet the meaning is retained. This poem should be contrasted with more recent masters of ease, such as Swinburne, and it will then be seen that ease is often attained by a sacrifice of succinct meaning and direct narration. We get an ease of sound instead of, as in Vaughan's case, an ease of sense".³

1. ii, 397.

2. For another, but, I am convinced, mistaken interpretation of this poem cf. Edmund Blunden's interesting essay, On the Poems of Henry Vaughan, 1927.

3. p. 72.

This is true enough, as far as it goes. Ease, directness and speed are the effects which Vaughan does obtain in his best poems, but in the present poem, though the meaning is retained, that meaning is not on the surface, nor does Mr Read make any attempt to tell us what it is. The fact is, "Regeneration", in spite of its bright, crystal-like ✓ fluidity, is a "difficult" poem. It is symbolic, rather than allegorical, and the force of the distinction can be appreciated if it is compared with a poem by George Herbert that is not unlike it in form and purpose, the stanzas entitled "The Pilgrimage". Everything in Herbert's poem, as in The Pilgrim's Progress, is labelled. Herbert tells how he passes between "the gloomy cave of Desperation" and "the rock of Pride", arrives at "phantasies meadow", gets with difficulty through "cares cops", passes "the wilde of passion", climbs "the gladsome hill", and finally views his goal beyond the gate of death. Vaughan's journey is a more mysterious one. There are no names that can be given to the places passed, and the objects met with can only be presented to our apprehension as symbols. A "pinacle", a "paire of scales", "a faire, fresh field", "a grove", "a little Fountain . . . the Cisterne full of divers stones", "a banke of flowers", "a rushing wind": these are the things that Vaughan met with, and what they signify cannot be discovered from the context alone. "Regeneration", indeed, is one of that small class of poems Blake exalted to sublimity when he declared that "Allegory addressed to the Intellectual powers, while it is altogether

hidden from the Corporeal Understanding, is My Definition of the Most Sublime Poetry".¹ Vaughan is attempting to transmit the progression of emotions that accompanied an ineffable, spiritual experience, and his only method is that of symbolism ("Allegory addressed to the Intellectual Powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding"); Herbert is telling the plain story of his encouragements and discouragements in his attempt to subject his will to that of his Lord and Master, and allegory is the method applicable to the circumstance.

The clearest distinction between symbolism and allegory has been made in Mr W.B.Yeats' essay, "Symbolism in Painting",² and it is a distinction which holds good in a remarkable way when we apply it to these two poems. "Symbolism", Mr Yeats quotes a German symbolist as explaining, "said things which could not be said so perfectly in any other way, and needed but a right instinct for its understanding; while Allegory said things which could be said as well, or better, in another way, and needed a right knowledge for its understanding". This, of course, is in no sense a reflection upon the high poetic merit of Herbert's stanzas. To say that its substance could be given as well, or better, in another way, means only that the poet, wishing to transmit a particular experience and a particular emotion, had at the outset considerable freedom of choice as to the manner in which he would set about doing so; the same ex-

1. Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, Nonesuch Press, 1927, p.1076.

2. Essays, p.181.

perience and emotion could have been exhibited in a different allegorical frame. A symbol, on the other hand, is the only possible sign for something that cannot be otherwise expressed; and further, it is not representational. Thus "Regeneration" deals, in Crashaw's phrase, with "many a mystick thing . . . For which it is no shame That dull mortality must not know a name".¹

Now, admitting that any attempt to translate can be only partially accurate, we must not imagine that the attempt is altogether useless. Vaughan himself, it seems, held some such opinion, for in the preface to Silex Scintillans, he says, "In the perusal of it, (i.e. his book), you will (peradventure) observe some passages, whose history or reason may seem something remote; but were they brought nearer, and plainly exposed to your view, (though that (perhaps) might quiet your curiosity) yet would it not conduce much to your greater advantage."²

We cannot follow Vaughan as far as his last clause. All serious readers must feel that it would conduce to their advantage to be enlightened in the more obscure of Vaughan's poems, and in spite of the remark we have quoted to the effect that a symbol needs but a right instinct for its understanding, we would submit that there is a certain amount of preparation to be made before that instinct can come into play. The emotional appeal of a symbolic poem cannot be felt unless the reader knows something about the symbols it uses.

1. The Poems English Latin and Greek of Richard Crashaw, ed. L.C.Martin, 1927, p.330.
2. ii,392.

A cross on a sunset hill, for example, could have no intellectual or emotional significance to one who had never heard of Christ. But when the symbol has been linked with associations in the mind of the reader or spectator, then the communication which is the end of every work of art can be set up. It is very necessary, indeed, to make some such preliminary examination of the symbolism and "remoteness" in "Regeneration".¹

Editors of Vaughan have hesitated to explain in any detail the difficulties of this poem, and it will be advantageous in examining it to arrange our material in the shape of notes upon actual words and phrases from the text. The very first word in the poem explains the title, and relates Vaughan's individual experience to a sacrament of the Church.

Stanza 1:

"A Ward": because baptized: Cp. the words of the Baptism Service, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this Infant with thy holy Spirit, to receive him for thy own Child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church." "—and still in bonds"; still a sinner: before the awakening or conversion that is the first step upon the mystic way.

The "high-spring" and the "way Primros'd, and hung with shade" signify the apparent brave colours of the worldly life in which the poet at this youthful period indulged.

"Yet, was it frost within": In contrast we are shown the coldness of the worldly man's spiritual life.

The next three lines, to the end of the first stanza, tell of the events that brought about his spiritual awakening. "surly winds Blasted my infant buds": adversity, sickness and the deaths of friends. A growing inward conviction of sin was also responsible for the change.

Stanza 2:

The Awakening and its resulting joyful mood is hardly mentioned. "Storm'd thus", the poet passes in the second stanza to the stage of Purgation. It is described quite simply in verse 2 as a realization of the vanity of his past sinful life, and the emotion which accompanies it is one of bitter grief.

Stanza 3:

This is an account of the second stage, progression through which is made as the pilgrim's remorse for his past sins deepens: "So sigh'd I upwards still".¹ It is a difficult journey--" 'Twixt steps, and falls"--but a climax is reached:

"I reach'd the pinnacle, where plac'd
 I found a paire of scales,
 I tooke them up and layd
 In th' one late paines,
 The other smoake, and pleasures weigh'd
 But prov'd the heavier graines".

This is the Catholic doctrine that sin can and must be

1. The italics are mine.

wiped out by repentance and atoned for by remorse. His "late pains" had not yet become heavy enough to outweigh, or to atone for, the "smoake and pleasures" of his worldly sinful life, and therefore his pilgrimage is not complete. He can not yet attain to the desired union. A similar weighing, and with the same result, is recounted in the poem, "Repentance":

"A spring ran by, I told her tears,
But when these came unto the scale,
My sins alone outweigh'd them all."₁

Stanza 4:

In the next verse--"With that, some cryed, Away:"-- the journey is continued--"Full East", i.e. towards the Holy Land, the goal of all western Christian pilgrims. Translated from its symbolism, this means, "towards God". Cp. "The first Man . . . came from the East, and the breath of life was received there".²

The "faire, fresh field" which some called Jacob's Bed, is symbolic of this third stage--Illumination. The reason for the introduction of this symbol is clear: Jacob was visited with illumination, and was able to see into Heaven and view the angels descending and ascending between Heaven and earth. Jacob's vision has some of the most characteristic features of the third stage of the Mystic Way. It was an opening of the eyes, a looking into Heaven.

1. ii, 449.

2. The Mount of Olives: or, Solitary Devotions, 1682, "Man in Darkness," or, "A Discourse of Death." i, 169.

But it was not union. It was a heartening pre-view of the goal ahead. And it was not permanent. This third stage, as the concluding lines of stanza 4 make clear,—comes as a reward to but a few favoured ones, the intensity of whose spiritual life has made them deserving. It is symbolized as a "Virgin-soile

which no
Rude feet ere trod,
Where (since he stept there,) only go
Prophets, and friends of God."

Stanza 5:

The fifth verse commences, "Here, I repos'd", and the remainder of the poem is an account of what Vaughan found here.

The "grove descryed Of stately height, whose branches met And mixt on every side" is possibly the Bible. Compare in this connection the poem "Religion"¹, beginning "My God, when I walke in those groves", where there is no doubt as to the identification of "groves" with the Bible, and which has other points of contact with the present poem that will be noticed in a moment. The identification, however, should not be unduly stressed. The exquisite pictures of nature which fill this and the succeeding stanza indicate that Vaughan has forgotten the didactic parallel, and is rapt in the contemplation of God as He is manifested in nature and made evident with a new clarity to the eyes of illumination. Professor Martin quotes an interesting account

1. ii, 404.

by Thomas Vaughan of a similar vision.¹ The peculiar, dream-like beauty of these lines suggests that they are the recollection of an actual dream or vision.

Stanza 6:

Here the happiness of Illumination is presented in sharp contrast to the bitter spiritual struggle of Purgation as reflected in stanzas 2 and 3. One of the characteristics of this stage has been remarked by Miss Underhill as "clarity of vision . . . in regard to the phenomenal world. The actual physical perceptions are strangely heightened, so that the self perceives an added significance and reality in all natural things".²

This is seen very clearly in this stanza. What Vaughan had experienced was indeed a regeneration and it seems to him in this new state that all nature is sharing his experience: "A new spring", he writes in the preceding verse, "Did all my senses greet", and here, "The unthrifft Sunne shot vitall gold",³ "The aire was all in spice And every bush A garland wore".

Stanza 7:

This is a difficult verse, but the key to its symbolism lies probably in the following lines from "Religion":⁴

1. from Lumen de Lumine, 1651, pp. 1-2; cf. Martin, ii, 694.
2. Op. cit., p. 239.
3. The italics are mine.
4. ii, 404.

"No, no; Religion is a Spring
That from some secret, golden Mine
Derives her birth, and thence doth bring
Cordials in every drop, and Wine;

"But in her long, and hidden Course
Passing through the Earths darke veines,
Growes still from better unto worse,
And both her taste, and colour staines,

"Then drilling on, learns to encrease
False Ecchoes and Confused sounds,
And unawares doth often seize
On veines of Sulphur under ground;

"So poison'd, breaks forth in some Clime,
And at first sight doth many please,
But drunk, is puddle, or meere slime
And 'stead of Phisick, a disease;

"Just such a tainted sink we have . . ."

The reference here, of course, is to Puritanism. But "Religion is a spring". The fountain of stanza 7 is this same spring, religion found within the Bible's "grove". Water has always been a symbol of life, vitality, rebirth. It is used as such in the service of Baptism, and it is religion which is responsible for the spiritual regeneration with which the poem deals. The last part of this stanza,

"I drew her neere, and found
The Cisterne full
Of divers stones, some bright, and round
Others ill-shaped, and dull".

offers some interesting alternatives. The "divers stones" of which the "Cisterne" is full may be all those about whom the waters of religion flow—all the members of the

Anglican church—or, perhaps, more particularly, the clergy of that church. If the latter supposition is correct, the reference to the stones "ill-shap'd, and dull" would seem to be a rebuke to certain narrow Anglican clergy, similar, in some respects, to Milton's reference to "blind mouths".

Stanza 8:

This describes more fully the two kinds of stones—"some bright, and round, Others ill-shap'd, and dull". The fault that Vaughan had to find with those whom he is condemning is their lack of responsiveness. They do not look to find the spirit wherever it may blow, they are not bathed completely in every part of the stream. They are "dull", "more heavy then the night", "Nail'd to the Center". These stones are an impediment to the spring, religion, an evil of the same nature as the "veines of Sulphur" described in the lines from "Religion". But while, in that poem, the muddiness which has crept into the waters of religion is puritanism, here it would seem to be the stiffnecked narrowness of the more extreme members of the Anglican party. Vaughan, though a sincere Anglican, was not spiritually blind to certain of the beauties of puritanism and of Catholicism.

Stanza 9:

In the next verse we have a repetition of the two preceding stanzas. The "banke of flowers", like the fountain, is religion. The round bright stones have their counterpart in the watchers wide-awake, "broad-eyed And

taking in the Ray", and the ill-shaped dull stones in those "fast asleepe".

A simpler, and therefore, perhaps, better explanation of verses 7-9 is this: The fountain is God's grace, falling upon all alike. Some—the bright round stones, dancing in the flood—accept it gladly, are bathed completely in it, move about in it, are regenerated by it; others—the dull heavy stones nailed to the centre—remain fast in a killing materialism. Though they receive God's grace in equal measure, they make no response, do not move in harmony with the flowing waters, do not reflect the light that has been poured upon them. The bank of flowers is God's love—beauty, ease, protection, spread wide for all; but here again, some accept it thoughtfully, are wide awake and "taking in the Ray", others presumptuously repose upon it, unthinking and unthankful, "fast asleepe". The "rushing wind" is God's spirit that descends upon the mystic at the conclusion of his quest.

Stanza 10:

The final stanza describes how the poet looks everywhere for the source of this wind, but there is no outward sign of its inward and spiritual grace. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and the poem ends with a prayer for the final ecstasy of union:

"Lord, then said I, On me one breath,
And let me dye before my death!"

We have noted in stanza 6 how the heightened perception which accompanies the state of Illumination led Vaughan to look at nature, as it were, with newly-opened eyes. The chief characteristic of this stage, however, is the consciousness of being in joyful communion with the Absolute. The mystic experiences a twofold extension of consciousness, physical perceptions are made more vivid, and at the same time "the energy of the intuitional or transcendental self is enormously increased".¹ It is this spiritual energy which makes "Regeneration" one of Vaughan's greatest poems. It is manifested especially in the concluding verses where the joyous apprehension of the Absolute becomes definitely visionary in character and terminates in communion,—not permanent or wholly satisfying, but at least as an augury of hope.

There are a number of other poems by Vaughan that record the happiness and energy of the state of Illumination, though none are so completely representative as this. Vaughan is consumed by a strong joy, a holy cheerfulness. He breaks and buds from his cell of clay and frailty. He shines and moves "like those above." "How rich, O Lord! how fresh thy visits are!", he cries in a fine description of the soul moving from the darkness of the second stage into the illumination of the third,

"'Twas but Just now my bleak leaves hopeless hung
Sullied with dust and mud . . .

1. Underhill, op. cit., p. 289.

But since thou didst in one sweet glance survey
 Their sad decays, I flourish, and once more
 Breath all perfumes and spice;
 I smell a dew like Myrrh, and all the day
 Wear in my bosome a full Sun;"¹

A somewhat similar account is given at the beginning of the poem, "Disorder and frailty".² The consciousness, which in this stage completely fills the mystic, is that of the nearness of God. God is present, but the longed-for union has not taken place—the consciousness of that union remains as the final prize of the finished pilgrimage. For the present, however, Vaughan can write,

"I threaten heaven, and from my Cell
 Of Clay, and frailty break, and bud
 Touch'd by thy fire, and breath; Thy bloud
 Too, is my Dew, and springing wel."

He is a tree, sending out strong, healthy shoots and brave buds, and stretching up towards God; or he is a star, shining clear and strong in the highest heavens. But—"Alas, frail weed!" alas "Poor, falling Star!" This stage of happiness is only a transitory one. The soul becomes impatient for union with God, and in despair of its attainment, construes all else to be but an absence of God. Unworthiness again obtrudes itself upon the consciousness of the soul. The tree breaks from its "Cell Of Clay, and frailty." It threatens Heaven—

1. "Unprofitableness", ii, 441.

2. ii, 444.

"But while I grow
 And stretch to thee, aiming at all
 Thy stars, and spangled hall,
 Each fly doth tast,
 Poyson, and blast
 My yielding leaves; sometimes a shower
 Beats them quite off; and in an hour
 Not one poor shoot
 But the bare root
 Hid under ground survives the fall.
Alas, frail weed!"

Or, if his soul fancies for a time it is a star, the
 illumination does not last:

"like some sleeping Exhalation . . .
 Doth my weak fire
 Pine, and retire,
 And (after all my height of flames,)
 In sickly Expirations tames . . .
Poor, falling star!"

Vaughan is entering upon the fourth stage of his
 journey, that when God seems to absent himself completely,
 and which Miss Underhill names the Dark Night of the Soul,
 or the Mystic Death.

The poems in which Vaughan has expressed the emotions
 of this state are not, as we had cause to mention, numerous,
 but they are among his most impassioned writings. Despair
 when it made itself felt did so with a deep and deadening
 intensity, and the suffering which it engendered in Vaughan's
 tender and sensitive spirit was the stimulus of some of his
 finest lyrics.

Vaughan, it should be remembered, is a poet of darkness
 as well as of light. There is a clear white radiance to
 so much he has written that we are in danger of not noticing

his sensitiveness to shadow. Pure blackness, as we see in the poem "The Night,"¹ had its fascination for him, and at the places where extremes meet he is permitted to recognize a mystical kinship between darkness and light. It is this sensitiveness which convinces him of the hidden cleansing joy in every affliction and allows him to see in the thickest night some shadows of the day. And yet this night of God's absence is awful enough. At times it seemed a killing grief: "My dew, my dew! my early love. . .", he cries, "thy absence kills!"² In the poem "Anguish",³ he bows his despairing soul before his God and King. "Cast it, or tread it" is his prayer. In short spasmodic lines that have the immediacy of utterance of a confession from the rack, he cries out to the absent Father his "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me":

"My God, could I weep blood,
Gladly I would"—

and then, at the end;

"O my God, hear my cry;
Or let me dye!—"

This is the darkest moment of the Mystic Way. The prayer here is not the often uttered invocation to death as the liberator of the soul from the coarse body and the bearer

1. ii, 522.
2. "The Seed growing secretly", ii, 510.
3. ii, 526.

of the gift of eternal life; it is the cry for a much more fundamental death, for ease from an unbearable pain to be found only in the soul's extinction.

But Christ descended into Hell before he ascended into Heaven. The night seems blackest just before dawn. There is a moment in this night when the darkness becomes not an Absence but an Attribute of God, when it hides all else the better to reveal Him who is the object of the quest. Donne knew this when he wrote,

"To see God only, I goe out of sight:
And to scape stormy dayes, I chuse
An Everlasting night."¹

Vaughan felt it, and wrote the beautiful and passionate poem, "The Night".² Here the horrors of the dark have been left behind. The night has become a benediction, blessing both in what it hides and what it shows. It is the time of

"Gods silent, searching flight:
When my Lords head is fill'd with dew, and all
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;
His still, soft call;
His knocking time; The souls dumb watch,
When Spirits their fair kinred catch."

It is, indeed, no more a veil, but God himself, dark and obscure only because God is of necessity dark and obscure:

"There is in God (some say)
A deep, but dazzling darkness;"

1. "A Hymne to Christ, at the Author's last going into Germany",
Grierson, i, 353.

2. ii, 522.

There is no longer any feeling of "the horror of the shade"; this night has become something passionately desirable as the medium in which the longed-for union may take place.

"O for that night!" (cries Vaughan) "where I
in him
Might live invisible and dim."

This is the true mystic death, but for the most rapturous account of the ultimate joys which follow in its train we must turn to Crashaw's lines from the "Hymn to Saint Teresa:"

"O how oft shalt thou complain
Of a sweet & subtle PAIN.
Of intolerable IOYES;
Of a DEATH, in which who dyes
Loues his death, and dyes again.
And would for euer so be slain.
And liues, & dyes; and knowes not why
To liue, But that he thus may neuer leaue to DY."¹

There is nothing in Vaughan to equal this for ardour. For him the dawning of his journey's last stage comes with a calmer and whiter light. There is a sense of relief and peace in his homecoming. He opens, slowly and delicately, like a flower to the sun, under the warmth and light of God's love. "Unfold, unfold!" he writes in "The Revival", one of his few poems filled with the pure joy of finished pilgrimage, "take in his light,".

1. Crashaw, ed. Martin, op. cit., p. 319.

"Hark! how his winds have chang'd their note,
 And with warm whispers call thee out.
 The frosts are past, the storms are gone:
 And backward life at last comes on.
 The lofty groves in express Joyes
 Reply unto the Turtles voice,
 And here in dust and dirt, O here
 The Lilies of his love appear!"¹

But Vaughan's was a soul not so fortunate in this life as that of Saint Teresa or of Crashaw. The joys which it experienced could not satisfy it for ever. The ecstasy of union that it sometimes attained was dearly paid for, and of uncertain duration. To Vaughan, his most fortunate encounters were but a foretaste of the happiness which, so his faith assured him, was to be his in eternity. The emotion that kindled the poetry of "The Revival" was, after all, but

"Some drops and dews of future bliss".

In the end, it is to no mere trance that he would resign his bones, but to actual dissolution:

"Dissolve, dissolve! death cannot do
 What I would not submit unto".²

1. ii, 643.

2. "The Day-spring", ii, 644.

CHAPTER V

THOMAS VAUGHAN

It was not until very recently that the important influence of the magical writings of Thomas Vaughan upon the poems of his brother Henry Vaughan received any attention whatever. In 1927 Mr A.C.Judson in a paper entitled "The Source of Henry Vaughan's Ideas Concerning God in Nature", published in Studies in Philology,¹ drew an interesting parallel between the theological and mystical beliefs of the two brothers. Mr Judson showed that Henry Vaughan's conception of an immanental Deity was in close accord with Thomas Vaughan's ideas of a spiritual universe; that the conception of light and heat as an emanation of the divine spirit was common to the two brothers; and that their ideas of instinct - "the light of God in all His creatures"- were closely related. He saw in Henry Vaughan's idealization of childhood a particular case of Thomas Vaughan's belief in the doctrine of the soul's longing to return to God from whence it came. Mr Judson quoted a number of passages showing the close relationship of the thought of the two men, and in one instance was able to discover a very close verbal parallelism, and by this means to elucidate the difficult first stanza of Henry Vaughan's poem, "Cock-crowing".

Mr Judson has performed a valuable piece of work, but its importance is potential rather than intrinsic. A clue has been discovered that is worth following up. The real value of any such discovery lies in the light that is thrown upon certain

1. xxiv, pp.592-606.

obscure and difficult passages in the poems of Henry Vaughan. The purpose of the present chapter is to attempt to find in the mystical and theological ideas of Thomas Vaughan an ordered scheme into which the casual obscurities of his brother's poetry may appropriately be fitted, and thus elucidated in the light of their background. The difficulties in Vaughan's verse that have not been satisfactorily explained are connected with his constant references - explicit and implied - to magnetism, to light and darkness, and to the Resurrection, and it is upon these points that the magical books of Thomas Vaughan throw the most light. It would seem, too, that a certain amount of the poet's vocabulary - technical words from the dictionary of alchemy - is derived from Thomas Vaughan or the contacts made through him. The love of nature and of childhood so characteristic of Henry Vaughan is in evidence in the prose and the few poems of Thomas, though here it would be at once pedantic and fantastic to speak of influence. But in the more definitely theological conceptions that underlie Henry Vaughan's work there is much resemblance to the main ideas of his brother. Let us turn first to a consideration of these ideas.

In the writings of Thomas Vaughan¹, this mystical alchemist's ideas of God and nature and the universe, of man and his Creator, have been given something of the ordered scheme of a complete

1. The following references are to The Magical Writings of Thomas Vaughan, edited by Arthur Edward Waite, London, 1888. The works of Thomas Vaughan included in this volume are:
Anthroposomia Theomagica,
Anima Magica Abscondita,
Magia Adamica, or the Antiquitie of Magic,
A Perfect and Full Discoverie of the True Coelum Terrae,
or The Magician's Heavenly Chaos, and First Matter of all Things.

philosophy, and an adequate account of them will include a description of the nature of God, of the Trinity, and of the functions of heat and light in the creation and preservation of the universe. The idea of the spirituality of all things and the Hermetic conception of two worlds, visible and invisible, indissolubly linked, are an important part of a theology that draws nourishment from all sources, Christian, Platonic and Jewish. The nature of man and his relationship to God is a fundamental part of such a scheme of ideas, and a consideration of his death and resurrection its fitting crown. All of it is of extreme importance with reference to the poetry of Henry Vaughan.

To begin with, neither Thomas nor Henry Vaughan conceived solely of God as being immanent in the universe. The immanence of the Deity in nature was one of the beliefs which they had each acquired from the Neo-Platonic and Hermetical writers and which they had interpreted in the light of Anglican Christianity, but it was only one side of the medal. Nature is one manifestation of God - that which is apparent to our senses - but it is very far from being the complete God. The Deity transcends the universe as well as animating it. He is above and outside it, before it and after it, as well as within it and through it. God, as the mystics express it, is both Being and Becoming, and to Henry and Thomas Vaughan, as to them, He is at once both transcendent and immanent.

It is often convenient and, indeed, even necessary to make an arbitrary separation of these complementary ideas. It is hard to look two ways at once, and in the Vaughans it is now

one and now the other of these aspects of God which is dwelt upon. I will first cite some examples of their conception of God as a transcendental Being.

Thomas Vaughan speaks of "the Great World . . . above all which God himself is seated in that infinite, inaccessible Light which streames from his own nature."¹ And again: ". . . above the heavens God is manifested like an infinite burning world of light and fire" - so far, the transcendent God, but His co-existent immanence is implied in the next clauses - "so that hee overlooks all that he hath made, and the whole fabric stands in his heat and light, as a man stands here on earth in the Sun-shine."² This heat and light, however, in which the universe is bathed comes from God afar off. It is not inherent in Nature, and must not lead to a crude nature worship, to an adoration of the creature, forgetting the Creator. Henry Vaughan has been named a pantheist.³ He was nothing of the sort. In him, just as firmly as in Thomas Vaughan, is implanted the conception of God's utter transcendence. He writes of "The God above."⁴ "Climbe Unto thy God" is his injunction to the young Isaac about to be married.⁵ "Give wings to my fire," he prays, "And hatch my soul, untill it fly Up where thou art."⁶ He speaks of "the high transcendent bliss Of knowing thee."⁷ Heaven, as

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.27.

2. Coelum Terrae, pp.142-3.

3. Cf. Richard Garnett in the Dictionary of National Biography.

4. "Church-Service", Works of Henry Vaughan, edited by Martin, 1914. ii,426. All further references to the poems of Henry Vaughan are to this edition.

5. "Isaacs Marriage", ii,408.

6. "Disorder and frailty", ii,444.

7. "The Queer", ii,539. The italics are mine.

he writes of it in the beautiful and simple poem, "Peace",¹ is "a Countrie Far beyond the stars." The same image of God as a source of light flooding the world occurs in the dedicatory lines at the beginning of Silex Scintillans, but the corollary is drawn that what is imbued with God's spirit has no intrinsic virtue of its own:

"If the Sun rise on rocks, is't right,
To call it their inherent light?"²

Here is a definite repudiation of pantheism. There is a vast difference between recognizing the spirit of God in nature and identifying nature with God, and to both the Vaughans the distinction was clear. God was, nevertheless, not in spite of, but because of, his transcendental nature as a distant source, present as an animating spirit in the universe. Only a few lines below those just quoted His immanence is clearly postulated, when the poet addresses his "dear Redeemer" as "the worlds light, And life too".

God regarded as an immanent spirit was natural to both the brothers because it was the theological twist which their passionately religious temperaments gave to their no less passionate love of the beauties of nature, and it is this side of God's dual aspect which they more often dwelt upon. This is a case, however, where numbers do not count. Because we can find more references to God as an immanent spirit, it must not blind us to the Vaughans' vivid conception of the Deity as a transcendental

1. ii,430.

2. ii,395.

Being. Indeed, God's transcendence is considered - explicitly at least by Thomas Vaughan - as the fundamental quality, by reason of which and out of which His immanence arises.

The most obvious passages from Thomas Vaughan were noted by Mr Judson who developed a very clear comparison between the ideas of Henry and Thomas Vaughan concerning God as the immanent spirit of nature. He did not, however, show that this was but one side of their conception of the Deity. The thought of the two brothers might more justly be compared not from this single point of view but because they each conceived of God as at one and the same time both transcendent and immanent. It is convenient for the moment, however, to effect an arbitrary separation, and to consider the immanental side of the picture alone. It is clearly expressed in the following passage from Anima Magica Abscondita: "For Nature is 'the Voice of God,' not a meer sound or command, but a substantiall, active breath, proceeding from the Creatour, and penetrating all things."¹ Again, in Anthroposophia Theomagica, he writes, "The Breath or Spirit of Life is the Spirit of God. Neither is this Spirit in man alone but in all the Great World, though after another manner. For God breathes continually, and passeth through all things like an air that refresheth."²

Much of Thomas Vaughan's imagery here has been derived from Dionysius the Areopagite and from Pythagoras. In Magia Adamica, he finds additional authority in the theological beliefs of the ancient Egyptians. "Their Catholic Doctrine," he writes, "and wherein I find them all to agree, is this. Emepht, whereby they

1. p.55.

2. p.35.

expresse their supreme God, and verily they mind the true one, signifies properly an intelligence, or spirit converting all things into himself, and himself into all things."¹ This is perhaps the nearest approach that either of the Vaughans makes to pantheism, but from Thomas Vaughan's explanation of Egyptian theological symbolism, it is quite clear that when God "converts" himself into all things He does not cease to be Himself, outside and above all things, and in them only as an emanation of light and heat from Himself.

The correspondence of these ideas to those which find expression in some of the poems of Henry Vaughan is very marked. Henry Vaughan speaks of the Deity as "him, who fills (unseen,) both heaven, and earth."² In the eighth stanza of the lines beginning "I walkt the other day"³ we have the same conception of God as a source of light which we have observed in Thomas Vaughan. The poet prays that he may see

"Thy sacred way,
And by those hid ascents climb to that day
Which breaks from thee
Who art in all things, though invisibly".

In another poem, "The Stone,"⁴ Vaughan refers to God as Him "whose spirit feeds All things with life".

What is most striking in these quotations from the works of both the brothers is the implicit recognition that neither the immanent nor the transcendental conception of God is

1. p. 117.
2. "Psalm 121", ii, 458.
3. ii, 478.
4. ii, 514.

adequate alone. God is at once transcendent as a source and immanent as a spirit, and there can be no abiding separation of these two aspects. Indeed, where one point of view is explicit in a passage from Henry or Thomas Vaughan, its complement is usually found to be implied. Thus, in the few lines from "I walkt the other day" quoted above, though God's immanence is stated in the line,

"Who art in all things, though invisibly",

His transcendence is implicit in the symbolism of the Way and in the hid ascent to a God above. Similarly, in the passages cited from Thomas Vaughan, the immanent God is always the voice or the breath, the heat or the light, and there is implied a transcendent God as Mouth or Lungs or Sun.

But we do not need to discover this closely bound conception of the dual nature of God simply by implication. It is very definitely expressed in a passage which Thomas Vaughan approvingly quotes from the pseudo-Dionysius: "'Nay also (sayeth the Areopagite) they declare him to be present in our minds, and in our souls, and in our bodies, and to be in Heaven equally with earth, and in himself at the same time: the same also they declare to be in the world, around the world, above the world, above the Heaven, the superior Essence, sun, star, fire, water, spirit, dew, cloud, the very stone, and rock, to be in all things which are, and himself to be nothing which they are.'"¹

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.35.

Here in the concluding clauses we have the most concise and complete statement of the transcendental and immanent nature of God as conceived by both the brothers. God is in all things that are: this makes Him easy to be known. He is nothing which they are: in this lies His mystery. How did Thomas Vaughan approach this mystery? What was his conception of God, the source, the God above and different from his manifestations in nature?

In order to consider this aspect of the Deity, Thomas Vaughan pushes his enquiry back before the creation. Think of it as though the immanence of God were to be withdrawn: the divine emanation of light and heat flows back to its source in the transcendent God; all is cold and lifeless, and the world is reduced to the first matter out of which it was made when God blew upon it with His breath. Creation, indeed, as it appears in the accounts of Thomas Vaughan, is the acquirement by God of a new property, that of immanence. It is as though a quality which has been turned inward upon itself were permitted to extend outward in all directions, imparting its life to all upon which it falls. "You are to understand," he writes in Anthroposophia Theomagica, "that God before his work of creation was wrapped up and contracted in himself."¹ This work of creation is seen thus as a movement from the centre to the circumference. The universe possesses significance only because it is an extension of the power of God. The universe is not God, it is one particular way in which His energy is made manifest; or, to use another simile, He is in it as an image in a mirror: "God

in love with his own beauty frames a Glasse to view it by reflection".¹

We are touching now upon Thomas Vaughan's curiously Platonic ideas concerning God's purpose in creation. The essence of Platonism, according to Dean Inge, lies in "the recognition of an unseen world of unchanging reality behind the flux of phenomena, compared with which the world of appearance grew pale and unsubstantial and became only a symbol or even an illusion."² In Thomas Vaughan such a conception, mingled with foreshadowings of a later idealism, underlies his references to the creation and to God's motives in performing it. The universe was built according to no haphazard whim. It was modelled upon another world which God had created in the eternity of His imagination. "Meditation", Vaughan noted, "forerunns every solemne worke . . . There is also in God something analogicall to it." He quotes Jamblichus to the effect that "'The Gods did conceive within themselves the whole design before they generated it'," and declares that the true God did likewise: "God in His AEternall Idea foresaw that whereof as yet there was no materiall copy. The goodnesse and beauty of the one moved him to create the other".³

The visible, temporal universe, then, is but an image of an invisible, eternal world that exists in the meditation of God. In Coelum Terrae Vaughan quotes from The Cabala, "'The Building of the Sanctuarie which is here below is framed according to that of the Sanctuarie which is above'," and comments upon it, emphasizing the implied Platonism. "Here," he writes, "wee

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, The Author to the Reader, p.5.
2. W.R.Inge, The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought, p.8.
3. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.11.

have two worlds, visible and invisible, and two universall natures, visible and invisible, out of which both those worlds proceeded."¹ There is, however, a firm bond between these two worlds. Thomas Vaughan speaks of it as "the Universall Magnet which binds this great frame and moves all the members of it to a mutual compassion."² - but it is scornful of those "many Platonicks (and this last centurie hath afforded some apish disciples)"³ who think they know what it is. In setting such misguided ones right he repeats his idea of the creation as a change whereby a transcendent God becomes an immanent as well as a transcendent Being. "Those students then," he writes, "who would be better instructed must first know there is an Universall Agent, who when Hee was disposed to create had no other patterne or exemplar whereby to frame and mould his creatures but himself, but having infinite inward ideas or conceptions in himself, as Hee conceived, so He created that is to say, Hee created an outward forme answerable to the inward conception or figure of his mind."⁴

Thomas Vaughan refers time and again to these two worlds - that which we apprehend through our senses and that which is its eternal counterpart in the mind of God. In Magia Adamica the visible universe is considered as a symbol of God's idea, and

1. p.125.

2. Idem.

3. Idem. The reference here is to Henry More and the Cambridge Platonists. Vaughan enjoyed a violent controversy with More, who had replied to Vaughan's first two volumes. More's tract was entitled, Observations upon Anthroposophia Theomagica and Anima Magica Abscondita, and was published in 1650 over the signature Alazonomastix Philaletes.

4. Idem.

it is implied that its imperfections are the inherent imperfections of the sign as compared to the thing signified. "The material, corruptible shadow is not the object of faith, but the spiritual, aeternall prototype which answers to it . . ."¹ Nothing in the world is single, all things have their counterpart in eternity: "Now Malchuth is the Invisible, Archtypall Moone, by which our visible, coelestiall moone is governed and impregnated."² The archtypal perfect Man in whose image Adam was created is the Second Person of the Trinity, who was incarnated as Christ; and, since the symbol approximates to the thing signified, so all men are "a little Incarnation."³

This conception of the universe as the symbolic representation of God's eternal Idea finds no such definite Platonic, or rather Neo-Platonic, expression in the poetry of Henry Vaughan, but it is the general philosophical framework into which his curious and complex theories of terrestrial and heavenly magnetism can be fitted, and thereby explained. There is, he feels, a natural affinity between each created thing and the mind of its Creator. Implanted in the creature is a fundamental desire for union with the perfection of which it is the image, a desire which acts as an attractive force between this world of temporal visibles and the invisible eternal perfection. This force, of which the simplest name is Love, is what both the brothers have in mind in their constant references to magnetism.

"Sure, holyness the Magnet is,
And Love the Lure, that woos thee down;

1. p.97.

2. Magia Adamica, p.92.

3. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.23.

Which makes the high transcendent bliss
Of knowing thee, so rarely known."¹

So writes Henry Vaughan, whose imagination, as Mr Blunden has noted,² was captivated by the idea of magnetism as a vast operant in the universe, and who saw in all the workings of instinct the applications of magnetism to the organic world. The flower turning to the sun, the cock crowing at dawn, and the lode stone swinging to the north, all are instances of the same force.

To Thomas Vaughan also it is this magnetism which is the bond between the apparent and the real world, and he writes of it in passages that have not been without their influence upon his brother. He speaks of "the infallible Magnet, the Mystery of Union" by which "all things may be attracted, whether physicall or metaphysicall, be the distance never so great. This is Jacob's ladder; without this there is no ascent or descent, either influentiall or personall . . . This answers to God the Son, for it is that which mediates between extremes, and makes inferiors and superiors communicate."³ Again, in Anima Magica Abscondita, he writes, "For there is in Nature a certain chain, or subordinate propinquity of complexions between visibles and invisibles, and this is it by which the superiour, spirituell essences descend, and converse here below with the matter."⁴ That this chain and the influence which passes along it are looked upon as magnetic seems to be quite clearly shown in the following sentence that sketches a magnetic field with the definiteness

1. "The Queer", ii, 539.

2. Edmund Blunden, On the Poems of Henry Vaughan, 1927, p. 14.

3. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p. 20.

4. p. 50.

and particularity of a Gilbert: "The cōelestiall virtue" (the "superior spiritual essences" of the preceding quotation) "penetrates all the elements along invisible lines which, starting from all points, meet at the earth's centre . . ." ¹ It is by utilizing this terrestrial magnetism that the soul "(by an union with universall force)" can "infuse and communicate her thoughts to the absent, be the distance never so great." ²

In this mixture of superstition and science, of philosophy and observation, there is much that appears to have been incorporated into the body of Henry Vaughan's poetical musings upon the same group of ideas. We find there a similar conception of an unseen force, of magnetic attraction operating along a definite line, and of Absents being united by a mutual harmony with this force. The "difficult" verses beginning "Sure, there's a tye of Bodyes" ³ are a case in point, and when they are read in conjunction with Thomas Vaughan's treatment of the same theme are seen to be a clear, if abbreviated, statement of an identical belief.

"Sure, there's a tye of Bodyes! and as they
 Dissolve (with it,) to Clay,
 Love languisheth, and memory doth rust
 O'r-cast with that cold dust; . . .

"Absents within the Line Conspire, and Sense
 Things distant doth unite".

Mr Blunden has commented vaguely that "The 'Line' must be some presumed curve of magnetic influence," and explains "Sense" (by

1. p.66.

2. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.31.

3. ii,429.

a reference to the succeeding lines) as "Instinct".¹ Here, in the second case, I believe he has been led astray. What the poet is at pains to make clear is that this magnetic force which can join Absents is one which can be felt by the senses, it is "a tye of Bodyes", and this particular power dies when the body dies. In this respect there is a superficial difference between the ideas of Henry Vaughan and those expressed in the passages quoted from Thomas Vaughan. The latter speaks of a power possessed by the soul, the former of "a tye of Bodyes". A little further reading in Thomas Vaughan, however, resolves the difficulty. According to him, the soul has two spheres of activity, one spiritual and one natural or sensual, and when he says that the soul can unite herself with universal force to communicate with Absents he is referring - as is Henry Vaughan in the verses under discussion - to the natural, sensational function, to the "tye of Bodyes". Indeed, he expressly states, immediately after describing this power of the soul, "I omit to speak of her Magnet, wherewith she can attract all things, as well spirituall as naturall."² What this Magnet is, so far as it is concerned with spiritual things, must be inferred from the names given it by Henry Vaughan in the lines already quoted:

"Sure, holyness the Magnet is,
And Love the Lure";

but there is an illuminating passage in Anthroposophia Theomagica which shows how fundamental a part is played by the body in link-

1. Blunden, op.cit., p.15.

2. Anthroposophia Theomagica, pp.31-2. The italics are mine.

ing the individual soul to the soul of the world, and thus putting it into communication with those magnetic lines of influence through the medium of which Absents "conspire".

"As the Great World consists of three parts," writes Thomas Vaughan, " - the Elemental, the Coelestial, and the Spiritual . . . even so man hath in him his earthly, elemental parts, together with the coelestial and angelical natures, in the center of all which moves and shines the Divine Spirit. The sensuall, coelestial, aethereal part of man is that whereby we do move, see, feel, taste, and smell, and have a commerce with all material objects whatsoever. It is the same in us as in beasts, and it is derived from Heaven, where it is predominant, to all the inferiour earthly creatures. In plain terms, it is part of the Soul of the World."¹

It is, in other words, through the spirit of life in and through our bodies that our soul is able to tap the divine energy of the earth - the Anima Mundi of the Platonists. There is a "tye of Bodyes" because it is through the senses only that the soul can "have a commerce with all material objects". "Absents within the Line Conspire" by putting themselves into communication through the soul of the world, and along those lines which Thomas Vaughan described as "starting from all points" and meeting "at the earth's centre".

There is a reference probably to this same magnetic line in Henry Vaughan's poem "Ascension-Hymn":

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.27.

"Man of old
 Within the line
 Of Eden could
 Like the Sun shine
 All naked, innocent and bright,
 And intimate with Heav'n, as light"¹

The conception here expressed of Eden as a place or state in which man was in more intimate communication with the God-head and fount of light leads us to the consideration of another group of ideas which the two brothers possessed in common. The Garden of Eden, according to Thomas Vaughan, must be regarded as the symbol of a state rather than any actual place, and he looks upon the account given of it in the Bible as being "amongst other mystical speeches contained in Scripture."²

"Man in the beginning", he writes, "(I mean the substantial inward Man), both in and after his creation, for some short time, was a pure Intellectual Essence, free from all fleshly, sensual affections. In this state the Anima, or Sensitive Nature, did not prevail over the spirituall as it doth now in us. For the superior mentall part of man was united to God 'by an essential contact', and the Divine Light being received in, and conveyed to, the inferiour portions of the Soul, did mortifie all carnal desires, insomuch that in Adam the sensitive faculties were scarce at all employed, the spirituall prevailing over them in him, as they do over the spirituall now in us. Hence we read in Scripture, that during the state of innocence he did not know that he was naked . . ."³

Here we have all the essential ideas of the stanza previous-

1. ii, 483.

2. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.26.

3. Idem.

ly quoted from the "Ascension-Hymn" - the nakedness and innocence of Adam and the close union of man in Eden to the divine light. This latter aspect is expressed elsewhere and more concisely by Thomas Vaughan, when he writes in Magia Adamica, "It is the constant opinion of the Hebrewes that before the Fall of Adam there was a more plentiful and large communion between Heaven and Earth, God and the Elements, than there is now in our days."¹

"Sure, It was so", agrees Henry Vaughan, "Man in those early days Was not all stone, and Earth". The whole poem "Corruption", indeed, is an amplification of the ideas which were originally derived by Thomas Vaughan from the Bible and the Cabala. It was not only man, however, as is several times repeated throughout Silex Scintillans, who suffered by the Fall,

"He drew the Curse upon the world, and Crackt
The whole frame with his fall".²

All created things were his enemies, "for that Act That fel him, foyl'd them all".³ The bent palm-tree "now shut from the breath And air of Eden, like a malēcontent . . . thrives no where".⁴ And so, too, we read in Thomas Vaughan, that the curse which "was intended chiefly for man, who was the only cause of it . . . extended (also) to the elements. . . For if God had excluded him from Eden, and continued the earth in her primitive glories, He had but turned him out of one Paradise into another, wherefore he fits the dungeon to the slave, and sends a corruptible man into a corruptible world. But in truth it was not man,

1. pp.91-2.

2. ii,440.

3. Idem.

4. "The Palm-tree", ii,490.

nor the earth alone that suffered this Curse, but all other creatures also . . . "1

The identity of the two brothers' ideas concerning the fall of man and the consequent corruption of nature requires little exposition, and the passages quoted amply demonstrate its existence. The source of these ideas is to be found, as I have mentioned, in the Bible and in the Cabala. Thomas Vaughan draws his authority from both, and quotes each of them with the respect due to infallible authorities. Adam regarded himself as "a felon and a murderer," he writes, "being guilty of that curse and corruption which succeeded in the world because of his fall, as we have sufficiently proved out of the Mosaicall and Cabalisticall traditions."2

But let us return to the consideration of the Vaughans' ideas concerning magnetism. So far I have dealt only with one aspect of these, with the natural or material side of magnetism, a power which the soul utilizes with the aid of the body and through the senses. But it is much more than this. In its broader and more spiritual function it is the sympathy between the temporal visible world and the eternal perfect world, between the divinity isolated in man and divinity at its source in God. "Heaven and the elements were once but one substance,"3 writes Thomas Vaughan, and there is, hence, a mutual attraction between them. In Magia Adamica he enlarges upon the same idea: "Heaven here below differs not from that above but in her captivitie, and that above differs not from this below but in her libertie. The one is imprisoned in the matter, the other is freed from

1. Magia Adamica, p.94.

2. Ibid., pp.94-5.

3. Anima Magica Abscondita, p.66.

the grossness and impurities of it, but they are both of one and the same Nature so that they easily unite; and hence it is that the superior descends to the inferior to visit and comfort her in this sickly infectious habitation."¹ These generalities, of course, apply to the particular case of man. "Man" is "a little Incarnation";² "Man in his originall was a branch planted in God and . . . there was a continuall influxe from the Stock to the Scion".³ This was a purely spiritual commerce, and one which was much impeded when, at the Fall, the sensual inferior parts of man clouded and obscured the essential unmaterial spirit. Nevertheless this communion was not entirely destroyed, because God is Himself attracted by His spirit which is in man - "So transcendent and almost incredible a mercy had God treasured up in his secret will, being resolved to unite the nature of man to his own, and so vindicate him from death by taking him into the Deitie, which is the true fountain and centre of life".⁴ Union, the ultimate goal of the mystic, was to Thomas Vaughan the end for which all humanity was designed, being urged to such a consummation by an instinct within, and drawn thither by the love of a transcendent God. "He it is to whom we must be united by 'an essentiall contact'".⁵ When this union has been attained "we shall know all things, 'manifested face to face by a clear seeing into the Divine Light'. This influx from Him

1. p.119.

2. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.23..

3. Ibid., p.9.

4. Magia Adamica, p.95.

5. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.32.

is the true, proper efficient of our regeneration, that sperma of St John, the seed of God which remains in us."¹

The soul, in short, comes from God and would return thither; both soul and God desire it so. On the first page of Thomas Vaughan's first book, the Anthroposophia Theomagica, we have a statement that is curiously akin to the underlying thought of Wordsworth's great Ode, and if Henry Vaughan's "The Retreat" foreshadows Wordsworth's idealization of childhood, the following sentence is in close accord with the later poet's ideas concerning pre-existence: "Man had at the first, and so have all Souls before their intrance into the body, an explicit methodicall knowledge, but they are no sooner vesselled than that liberty is lost, and nothing remains but a vast confused notion of the creature".² It seems hardly likely that Thomas Vaughan was read by Wordsworth, but if Wordsworth has been influenced in any way by Henry Vaughan that influence stems originally from Thomas Vaughan.

The soul's sojourn in the body, it is seen, is regarded by Thomas Vaughan in the light of a captivity. He, as well as Henry Vaughan and Wordsworth, would acquiesce in the imagery "shades of the prison house", but he knows too that God in His mercy has not entirely refrained from visiting the imprisoned soul, and has not made the hope of ultimate union a vain and impossible one. There is "a tye of Bodyes" by means of which the souls of absent friends can be united on earth; and there is also a "tye" of souls which unites the spirit of God in man to its divine source. Although in one place Thomas Vaughan

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.32.

2. Ibid., p.9.

"omits to speak of" what this Magnet is, in Anthronosophia Theomagica he names it as the mystics most often have done, Love: "For this 'Love' is the medium which unites the Lover to that which is beloved".¹

To understand Thomas Vaughan's conception of divine love, the magnetic force between man and God, we must examine his ideas concerning the Trinity, the divine heat and light, and the function of these in the creation and preservation of the world. In doing so we shall discover another series of contacts between the thought of Henry and Thomas Vaughan.

In his conception of the triune nature of God Thomas Vaughan follows the orthodox teachings of mediaeval scholasticism. "God the Father", he declares, "is the Metaphysicall, Supercelestiall Sun, the Second Person is the Light, and the Third is 'Fiery Love', or a Divine Heate proceeding from both".² It is this Holy Spirit, the emanation of the Godhead, which is the magnetic force uniting the creature to the creator: "Sure, holyness the Magnet is, And Love the Lure",³ is Henry Vaughan's expression of the same idea, while Thomas Vaughan - a true son of the Renaissance in that he ever seeks to harmonize the dogmas of the Christian and Pagan philosophers - considers it to be probably "the Platonicks 'Chief Daimon, who doth unite us to the Rulers of Spirits.'"⁴ He quotes a comparison from the pseudo-Dionysius, whom he wrongly believed to have lived in Apostolic times, to the effect that God the Father is a root whose flowers are the Second and Third Persons. This conception of the Trinity is

1. p.12.

2. Ibid., pp.11-12.

3. "The Queer", ii, p.539.

4. Anthronosophia Theomagica, p.12.

the basis of Thomas Vaughan's ideas of a transcendent and immanent God. The First Person is a transcendent God, the Son and Holy Ghost immanent as the light and heat of that distant Source.

The function that each of these three aspects of the Deity played in the mechanism of the creation is interestingly described by Thomas Vaughan in Anthroposophia Theomagica, and more than once touched upon in the later books. "God the Father", he writes, "is the basis or supernaturall foundation of his creatures: God the Son is the Patterne in whose expresse image they were made: And God the Holy Ghost is the 'Spirit-Fabricator', or the Agent, who framed the creature in a just symetrie to his Type".¹

How was this great work performed? The whole process is looked upon as a progression of the Trinity from a centre to a circumference. God the Source was contracted in Himself. All without was cold and dark and formless. In this state He was called by the Cabalists Aleph Tenebrosum. "When the decreed instant of creation came, then appeared Aleph Lucidum, and the First Emanation was that of the Holy Ghost into the bosom of the matter, Thus we read that Darkenesse was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Here you are to observe that notwithstanding this processe of the Third Person, yet there was no Light, but Darknesse on the face of the deep illumination properly being the office of the second."²

Before continuing to the Fiat Lux, we must pause to con-

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.11.
2. Ibid., p.12.

sider Vaughan's conception of a first matter. Was there nothing before the creation of the universe, or did the matter out of which it was formed always exist? To begin with, What was the nature of this matter?

In a passage full of a quaint mixture of faith and the scientific spirit Vaughan tells us how he proceeded to inquire into the properties of "the matter". "In this perplexity I studied severall arts, and rambled over all those inventions which the folly of man called sciences; but these endeavours sorting not to my purpose, I quitted this booke-businesse, and thought it a better course to study Nature then Opinion. Here-upon I considered with myselfe that man was not the primitive immediate worke of God, but the world, out of which he was made. . . . But the world in generall being too large for inquisition, I resolved to take part for the whole, and to give a guesse at the frame by proportion. To perfect this my essay, I tooke to task the fruits of one Spring. Here I observed a great many vegetables fresh and beauteous in their time, but when I looked back on their original, they were no such things as vegetables. This observation I applied to the world, and gained by it this inference: that the world in the beginning was no such thing as it is, but some other seed or matter out of which that fabric which I now behold did arise. But, resting not here, I drove my conclusion further; I conceived those seeds whereof vegetables did spring must be something else at first then seeds, as having some prae-existent matter whereof they were made, but what that matter should be I could not guesse. Here was I forced to leave off speculation, and come up to experience. Whiles I sought

the world, I went beyond it, and I was now in quest of a substance which without Art I could not see. Nature wrapps this most strangely in hervery bosome, neither does she expose it to anything but her own Vitall Coelestially Breath. But in respect that God Almighty is the onely proper immediate Agent which actuates this Matter . . . we may know . . . the creatures by their Cause".¹

This brings us sharply back to God, but leaves us little wiser as to the nature of the first matter. In Magia Adamica, however, we are given a specific description of it: "In Genesis, . . . hee (Moses) hath discovered the minera of man, or that substance out of which man and all his fellow-creatures were made." . . . Vaughan it should be remembered has already stated that man was made from the same fundamental matter as the earth . . . "This is the First Matter of the Philosophers' Stone; Moses calls it sometimes water, sometimes Earth, for, in a certain place,² I read thus: 'And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowle that may fly above the earth in the open firmament'. But elsewhere wee read otherwise:³ 'And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowle of the aire' This substance then is both earth and water, yet neither of them in their common complexions, but it is a thick water and a subtle earth. In plain termes it is a slimie, spermatic, viscuos masse, impregnated with all powers coelestially and terrestrially".⁴

Whether this first matter was made by God or whether He

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, pp.9-10.

2. Gen.,i,20.

3. Gen.,ii,19.

4. p.107.

merely worked upon the material He found ready to His hand is a mystery concerning which Vaughan does not seem to have finally made up his mind. On the whole he inclines to the former hypothesis, that the first matter was created out of nothing, - that is, out of nothing but God: "In the beginning, in that dead silence, in that horrible and empty darknesse when as yet nothing was fashioned, then (saith the Lord) did I consider those things, and they all were made through me alone . . ." ¹ On the other hand, a few pages further on, we find Vaughan expressing considerable doubt. He is examining "that Lymbus or huddle of matter wherein all things were so strangely contained": and writes as follows: "It is the opinion of some men, and those learned, that this sluggish empty rudiment of the creature was noe created thing. I must confesse the point is obscure as the thing itself . . . If it be created, I conceive it the effect of the Divine Imagination, acting beyond it selfe in contemplation of that which was to come, and producing this passive darknesse for a subject to worke upon in the circumference". ²

To resume now Thomas Vaughan's account of the mechanism of creation. The pre-existence or the sudden calling into being of a first matter may be allowed to rest in the statement which Vaughan quotes from Zoroaster to the effect that "all things were made out of fire, . . . all things were produced by a single fire, that fire, to wit, which God, the inhabitant of essential flame (as Plato hath it), did bid appeare in the substance of Heaven, and Earth, at that time created rude and formless that

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.10.

2. Ibid., p.14. In The Mount of Olives Henry Vaughan speaks of God "who created all things of nothing". Martin, i, 176.

it might assume life and symmetrie".¹

Having been prepared by the Divine Heat the dark and formless mass becomes the material for Light, the Second Person, to work upon: "Wherefore God also when the Matter was prepared by Love for Light, gives out his Fiat Lux, which was no creation as most think, but an Emanation of the Word, in whom was life, and that life is the light of man."² Vaughan is very emphatic that this Light must in no sense be considered as having been created. It is a part of God "communicated and admitted to things formerly obscure, that they may be clarified and made splendid in its beauties".³

The metaphysics of Vaughan's universe is sketched in rapid outline as his story of the creation proceeds to its end. "No sooner", he continues, "had the Divine Light pierced the bosom of the Matter, but the Idea or Pattern of the whole material world appeared in those primitive waters like an image in a glasse. By this pattern it was that the Holy Ghost framed and modelled the universal structure."⁴

Drawing his analogies from alchemy, magic and philosophy Thomas Vaughan explains what occurs with the attention to detail we might expect in the report of a laboratory experiment: "This Idea before the coagulation of the seminall principles to a grosse, outward fabrick, which is the end of generation, impresseth in the vitall ethereall principles a modell or pattern after which the body is to be framed, and this is the first inward production, or draught of the creature. This is it which the Divine

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.12-13.

2. Idem.

3. Ibid., p.13. Vaughan here quotes from the De Harmonia Mundi of Georgius Venetus.

4. Ibid., p.13.

Spirit intimates to us in that Scripture where he saith, that God created every plant of the field before it was in the ground, and every herb of the field before it grew."¹

The next step in the process, "the gross work or mechanicks of the Spirit", was the separation of different substances from the formed but undifferentiated matter. The Divine Light and Heat had overcome the dark, moist and cold, passive and feminine principles of the original matter, and converted it into something living, dry and fiery, active and masculine. "Now as soone as the Holy Ghost and the Word (for it was not the one nor the other, but both . . .) had applyed themselves to the Matter, there was extracted from the bosome of it a third Spirituall Coelestiaall Substance, which receiving a tincture of heat and light proceeding from the Divine Treasures, became a pure, sincere, innoxious Fire. Of this the bodyes of angells consist, as also the Empyraeall Heaven, where Intellectual Essences have their residence . . . This extract being settled above, and separated from the Masse, retained in it a vast portion of Light, and made the first day without a sun. But the Splendour of the Word expelling the Darknesse downwards, it became more settled and compact towards the centre, and made a horrible thick night. Thus God (as the Hebrew hath it) was betweene the Light and the Darknesse, for the Spirit remained still on the face of the inferior portion to extract more from it".² The next extraction was "the nimble atmosphere", as Trismegistus calls it", the vital air which fills the space between the moon and the heavens, and which when condensed is water. This air is not the lower atmosphere which man breathes, nor is this water the ordinary

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.13

2. Ibid., p.14.

water of the seas and lakes. This is the "Body of the Interstellar Skie". "The inferior portion of this second extract from the Moon to the Earth remained Air still, partly to divide the inferior and superior waters, but chiefly for the respiration and nourishment of the creatures. This is that which is properly called the Firmament. . . . and in the outward geometrical composition it answers to 'the Middle Nature,' for it is spread through all things, hinders vacuity, and keeps all the parts of Nature in a firm, invincible Union. . . . Nothing now remained but the two inferior principles, as we commonly call them - Earth and Water. The Earth was an impure sulphureous subsidence, or caput mortuum of the creation. The water was also phlegmatick, crude, and raw, not so vitall as the former extractions. But the Divine Spirit, to make his work perfect, moving also upon these, imparted to them life and heate, and made them fit for future productions. The Earth was so overcast and mantled with the Water that no part thereof was to be seen; but that it might be the more immediately exposed to the Coelestiall Influences which are the cause of vegetation, the Spirit orders a retreat of the Waters . . . The Light as yet was not confined, but retaining his vast flux and primitive liberty, equally possesseth the whole creature. On the fourth day it was collected to a sun, and taught to know his fountain. The Darknesse whence proceed the corruptions and, consequently, the death of the creature, was imprisoned in the centre. . . ."¹

This, as Thomas Vaughan phrases it, is "a cursory and short expresse of the creation in generall"². It is the basic conception

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, pp.15-16.

2. Ibid., p.16.

of the universe, a conception which offers some striking resemblances to the thought of Henry Vaughan. One of the most difficult of the poems in Silex Scintillans is the profoundly metaphysical dialogue between the soul and the body, entitled "Resurrection and Immortality"¹; and because it affords such a close parallel to so many of Thomas Vaughan's ideas of the universe and death, it will be useful to examine it in some detail. The main conceptions underlying the poem are (1) that the universe is animated by the spirit of God, which was first made manifest at the creation, but which is continually operative as a preserving as well as a creative spirit; (2) nothing which has once been imbued with the divine breath can ever be destroyed - it can change, but it cannot die; (3) all material things return to the earth, but the spiritual essence of life continues in God from whom it came, until it is re-united to the trans-²figured body at the Resurrection. How close the poem is to the thought of Thomas Vaughan we shall see when we come to look at some further extracts from Thomas's writings. The poem which takes as its text the 20th verse of the 10th chapter of Hebrews - "By that new, and living way, which he hath prepared for us, through the veile, which is his flesh" - is a solemn and thoughtful inquisition upon death and resurrection, an expression of the same mood and of somewhat kindred thoughts that we find in Henry Vaughan's prose essay, Man in Darkness. The Body addresses the Soul, and attempts to reassure itself of immortality:

1. ii, 400.

2. This is almost identical with Donne's views expounded in Chapter II.

"Oft have I seen, when that renewing breath
 That binds, and loosens death
 Inspir'd a quickning power through the dead
 Creatures a bed,
 Some drowsie silk-worme creepe
 From that long sleepe
 And in weake, infant hummings chime, and knell.
 About her silent Cell
 Untill at last full with the vitall Ray
 She wing'd away,
 And proud with life, and sence,
 Heav'ns rich Expence,
 Esteem'd (vaine things!) of two whole Elements
 As meane, and spen-extents." 1

So far, we have the fruits of Henry Vaughan's scientific studies. The same example, and in an exactly similar sense, was used in Man in Darkness, the discourse on death included in The Mount of Olives, or Solitary Devotions: "There are in nature many creatures which at certain seasons, that their spirit is inconsistent with, fall into a dormition, or dead sleep which differs little from death, and convey themselves into secret places, as hollow trees, or some desolate ruins, where they may rest in safety during that season, as being taught by some secret informant that they shall awake again. Here have we a clear type of the resurrection . . . Do not we see divers birds of this regiment such as are commonly known to us, with other meaner Creatures as silk-worms and the humble-bee, which yet are not so contemptible, but they may serve us for noble instances in this point, seeing there is in them a living spirit . . . Do not we see that these birds and inferiour creatures which in the spring and summer continue here very merry and musical, do on a sudden leave us, and all winter-long suffer a kind of death,

and with the suns warmth in the youth of the year awake again,
 and refresh the world with their reviv'd notes? . . . How much
 more then shall Jesus Christ the Sun of righteousness rising
with healing under his wings, awake those that sleep in him,
 and bring them again with a joyful resurrection?"¹ Or, putting
 the question in the words of the poem,² -

"Shall I then thinke such providence will be
 Or that he can endure to be unjust
 Who keeps his Covenant even with our dust."²

Then the Soul replies:

"Poore, querulous handfull! was't for this
 I taught thee all that is?
 Unbowel'd nature, shew'd thee her recruits,
 And Change of suits
 And how of death we make
 A meere mistake,
 For no thing can to Nothing fall, but still
 Incorporates by skill,
 And then returns, and from the wombe of things
 Such treasure brings
 As Fhenix-like renew'th
 Both life, and youth;
 For a preserving spirit doth still passe
 Untainted through this Masse,
 Which doth resolve, produce, and ripen all
 That to it fall;
 Nor are those births which we
 Thus suffering see
 Destroy'd at all; But when times restles wave
 Their substance doth deprave
 And the more noble Essence finds his house
 Sickly, and loose,
 He, ever young, doth wing
 Unto that spring,
 And source of spirits, where he takes his lot
 Till time no more shall rot

1. i, 176-7.

2. "Resurrection and Immortality", ii, 400.

complexions between visibles and invisibles, and this is it by which the superiour, spirituall essences descend, and converse here below with the matter".¹ This refers to the "quickning power": but that it is one with the "preserving spirit" of the next stanza is shown by the following quotations:

"I say then that the God of Nature employes himself in a perpetuall coction, and this not onely to generate, but to preserve that which hath been generated".²

"The coelestiall virtue . . . generates and fosters the elementated worlds".³

"Nature . . . loves them (her works) still after shee hath made them, (and) hath an eye over them all . . ." ⁴

"Neither did he only generate them then, but he also preserves them now, with a perpetuall efflux of heat and spirit".⁵

The number of ideas or turns of expression in this poem which suggest comparison with the writings of Thomas Vaughan is so large as to make one suspect that it was written under his direct influence, or at least after a close study of his manuscripts. The actual phrasing of the line "No thing can to Nothing fall" is probably derived from Donne's "The Broken heart", but the conviction of its truth, as well as much of

1. p.50.

2. Coelum Terrae, p.143.

3. Anima Magica Abscondita, p.66.

4. Coelum Terrae, p.130.

5. Magia Adamica, To the Reader, p.85.

The italics in ~~notes~~ two, three and five are mine.
quotations

the thought of the poem we are discussing, comes from the following sentences from Anthroposophia Theomagica:

"It is a strange thing to consider that there are in Nature incorruptible, ^mortall principles. Our ordinary kitchen fire, which in some measure is an enemy to all compositions, notwithstanding doth not so much destroy as purifie some parts. This is clear out of the ashes of vegetables, for although their weaker, exterior elements expire by the violence of ~~the~~ Fire, yet their Earth cannot be destroyed, but vitrified. The fusion and transparency of this substance is occasioned by the radicall moysture or seminall water of the compound. This water resists the fury of the fire, and cannot possibly be vanquished. 'The rose lieth hidden through the winter in this water' (sayeth the learned Severine). These two principles are never separated, for Nature proceeds not so far in her dissolutions. When death hath done her worst, there is an union between these two, and out of them shall God raise us at the last day, and restore us to a spiritusall condition. Besides, there remains in them that primitive universall tincture of the Fire; this is still busie after death, brings Nature again into play, produceth wormes, and other inferiour generations. I do not conceive there shall be a Resurrection of every species, but rather their terrestrial parts together with the element of water (for 'there shall be no more sea') shall be united in one mixture with the Earth, and fixed to a pure, diaphanous substance. This is St John's Chrystall Gold, a fundamental of the New Jerusalem, so called not in respect of colour, but constitution. Their spirits, I

suppose, shall be reduced to their first Limbus, a sphere of pure, ethereall Fire, like rich eternall tapestry spread under the throne of God".¹

This paragraph, it would appear, is the inspiration of the second stanza, the Soul's long speech, in Henry Vaughan's poem, and especially of the concluding lines with their picture of the arisen body "cloath'd with shining light all pure and bright".

The lines,

"For no thing can to Nothing fall, but still
 Incorporates by skill,
 And then returns, and from the wombe of things
 Such treasure brings
 As Phenix-like renew'th
 Both life, and youth;
 For a preserving spirit doth still passe
 Untainted through this Masse,"

and so on, down to the end of the stanza should be compared also with the following passages from Thomas Vaughan:

"All things return to that place from whence they came, and that very place is earth . . . But towards the Spring, and fomentations of the sun, what rare pearls are there in this dung-hill? what glorious colours, and tinctures doth she discover?"²

"The Earth . . . is the nurse and receptacle of all things, for the Superior Natures ingulph themselves into her".³

1. pp.21-2.

2. Coelum Terrae, pp.128-9.

3. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.17.

"Death is 'the recession of life into the unknown', not the annihilation of any one particle, but a retreat of hidden natures to the same state they were in before they were manifested".¹

The use by Henry Vaughan of the word "Masse" for the earth when considered as separated from its animating spirit is quite in accord with the common practice of Thomas Vaughan: "The Earth . . . being the subsidence or remaines of that primitive masse which God formed out of Darknesse . . . In her is the principle residence of that Matrix which attracts and receives the sperme from the Masculine part of the World".² The earth as a "Wombe of things", again.

The epithet "passive" in "passive Cottage" is an assumption of the idea expressed by Thomas Vaughan when he wrote, "Materiall principles are passive, and can neither alter nor purifie, but well may they be altered and purified".³

The lines: "And the more noble Essence . . . ever young, doth wing Unto that spring, And source of spirits, where he takes his lot" - should be compared with some sentences of Thomas Vaughan.

"Man in the beginning . . . was a pure Intellectual Essence, free from all fleshly, sensuall affections".⁴

1. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.34.
2. Ibid., pp.16-17.
3. Anima Magice Abscondita, p.61.
4. Anthroposophia Theomagica, p.26.

notions of all things in the world. If she but fancies her selfe in the midst of the sea, presently she is there, and heares the rushing of the billowes. She makes an invisible voyage from one place to an other, and presents to her selfe things absent, as if they were present . . . But this is nothing. If she were once out of the body, she could act all that which she imagined".¹

The conception of a bodily resurrection so completely and "scientifically" described and accounted for by Thomas Vaughan is expressed in other poems by Henry Vaughan besides the one we have been dealing with. Thus "The Check"² is another such looking forward to a bodily transfiguration. Its feeling is deep and intense, but the thought is no less metaphysical. The poet imagines his dead and buried body, "A dusty story", "A speechlesse heap", his heart, "tame as all the rest". He imagines some "six years thence" his grave digg'd up, and pictures some "youthfull Eie" seeking there for symmetry, and finding none. Then comes the challenge -

"tell then dear flesh,
Where is thy glory?"

For the most part the rest of the poem is a conventional anti-toxin against the fears of death: "All things teach us to die"; "View thy fore-runners" and so on. But at the end of the third

1. p.51.
2. ii,443.

stanza the happy conception of the bodily resurrection, refinement, and reunion to the soul is once again touched upon. God is spoken of as He.

"Whose pow'r doth so excell
 As to make Clay
 A spirit, and true glory dwell
 In dust, and stones."

So far, we have shown the general similarity between the ideas of Thomas and Henry Vaughan concerning the immanent-transcendent nature of God; the correspondence of the world of sense to the ideal world of God's imagination; the magnetic powers of the soul, working naturally through the body and uniting living Absents, and acting spiritually and uniting the temporal and eternal worlds; and finally, concerning death and the resurrection of the body. We will cite, now, a more random collection of parallel passages, to illustrate further the close accord between the ideas of the two brothers.

In the eighth stanza of the poem beginning, "I walkt the other day", Henry Vaughan likens the creation to the hatching of an egg:

"O thou! whose spirit did at first inflame
 And warm the dead,
 And by a sacred Incubation fed
 With life this frame
 Which once had neither being, forme, nor name".¹

The same imagery is used by Thomas Vaughan, in a description

1. ii, 479. The italics are mine.

of the creation: "The Holy Spirit moving upon the Chaos, which action some divines compare to the incubation of a hen upon her eggs . . ." ¹ And again, elsewhere: "This is partly confirmed by the Habitation and Residence of God, for He is seated above all his creatures, to hatch, as it were, and cherish them with living eternal influences which daily and hourly proceed from Him". ²

I have already noticed one passage from Thomas Vaughan which expressed the underlying thought of Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality" and was in harmony with some of the most characteristic ideas of Henry Vaughan. A similar group of thoughts is bound up in the poet's idealization of childhood, and in Thomas Vaughan they are expressed in another Wordsworthian passage: "Wee see little children, who are newly come under her (Nature's) hand, will be dabling in dirt and water, and other idle sports affected by none but themselves. The reason is, they are not as yet captivated, which makes them seek their own pleasures; but when they come to age, then love or profit makes them square their actions according to other men's desires. Some cockney claps his revenues on his backe, but his galanterie is spoil'd, if his mistress doth not observe it. Another fights, but his victory is lost, if it be not printed, it is the world must heare of his valour". ³

Henry Vaughan's treatment of instinct as a close magnetic bond between nature and the God of nature has already been noticed. Thomas Vaughan, too, has dwelt upon the subject:

1. Magia Adamica, To the Reader, p.85. The italics are mine in this and the following quotation.
2. Anima Magica Abscondita, p.53.
3. Coelum Terrae, pp.130-1.

"Let us consider the exercise and practice of Nature here below", he writes in Anima Magica Abscondita, "and we shall finde her game such she cannot play it without this tutor (God's divine Light, the Second Person of the Trinity). In the first place, then, I would faine know who taught the spider his mathematicks? How comes he to lodge in the center of his web, that he may sally upon all occasions to any part of the circumference? How comes he to premeditate and forecast? For if he did not first know and imagine that there were flies, whereupon he must feede, he would not watch for them, nor spin out his netts in that exquisite form and texture. Verily, we must needs confesse that He who ordained flyes for his sustenance gave him also some small light to know and execute His ordinance. Tell me, if you can, who taught the hare to countermarch, when she doubles her trace in the pursuit to confound the scent and puzzle her persecuters? Who counsels her to stride from the double to her form, that her steps may be at a greater distance, and, by consequence, the more difficult to find out? Certainly this is a well-ordered policy, enough to prove that God is not absent from his creatures, but that 'Wisdom reacheth mightily from one end to another', and that 'his Incorruptible Spirit filleth all things'".¹ The conclusion is the same as that which a consideration of similar phenomena brings to the musings of Henry Vaughan.

The most interesting example of Henry Vaughan's direct indebtedness to the writings of his brother is that cited by Mr. Judson, who discovered no less than seven identical words

1. pp.53-4.

and phrases in the poem "Cock-crowing" and a paragraph from Anima Magica Abscondita. It is curious to notice that two sentences previous to this passage occurs another phrase which appears unchanged in an important poem of Henry Vaughan's. "But one thinks Nature complains of a prostitution, that I goe about to diminish her majesty, having almost broken her seall, and exposed her naked to the world".¹ In "Vanity of Spirit" are the lines:

"I summon'd nature: peirc'd through all her store,
Broke up some seales, which none had touch'd before".²

There is a similarity of thought though not of expression between some lines of Vaughan's poem beginning "When to my Eyes (Whilst deep sleep others catches,)"³ and a passage from Thomas Vaughan's Address to the Reader, prefixed to Magia Adamica. "Look up then to Heaven", he writes, "and when thou seest the coelestiall fires move in their swift and glorious circles, think also there are here below some cold natures which they overlook . . ." ⁴ "The starres", writes Henry Vaughan, "shine in their watches, . . .

What Emanations,
Quick vibrations
And bright stirs are there?
What thin Ejections,
Cold Affections,
And slow motions here?"

These are but random examples of similarity of thought and

1. p. 53. The italics are mine.
2. ii, 418.
3. ii, 421.
4. p. 84.

phrasing. One or two more may be given before we conclude. In accounting for man's natural desire for perfection and for God, Thomas Vaughan makes use of the imagery of a tree in a way that is very similar to that used by Henry Vaughan in the poem entitled "The Sap". Anthroposophia Theomagica begins with the following words: "When I found out this truth, that man in his originall was a branch planted in God and that there was a continuall influxe from the Stock to the Scion, I was much troubled at his corruptions, and wondered his fruits were not correspondent to his roote"¹, and the desperate consequences of the Fall are then dwelt upon. This is essentially the attitude of the poem "Corruption", but in "The Sap"² the imagery also is closely related:

"Come sapless Blossom, creep not stil on Earth
 Forgetting thy first birth;
 'Tis not from dust, or if so, why dost thou
 Thus cal and thirst for dew?"

The same poem has other interesting affinities to the thought of Thomas Vaughan. The conception of God's spirit in man as the mediator between the temporal and the eternal, and of the office of the Second Person of the Trinity, that "certain Chain, or subordinate propinquity of complexions between visibles and invisibles . . . by which the superiour, spirituall essences descend, and converse here below with the matter",³ - this idea appears here too.

1. p.9.

2. ii, 475.

3. Anima Magica Abscondita, p.50.

"Who plac'd thee here, did something then Infuse
 Which now can tel thee news.
 There is beyond the Stars an hil of myrrh
 From which some drops fal here,
 On it the Prince of Salem sits, who deals
 To thee thy secret meals,"¹

It will be seen, then, that the influence of the magical writings of Thomas Vaughan upon the thought and poetry of Henry Vaughan is extensive and fundamental, and we must agree with the conclusion which Mr. Judson reached after a consideration of much less evidence - that this influence is second only to that of George Herbert. That Henry Vaughan was a sensitive and impressionable poet is clearly demonstrated in the large number of derivations which the care and industry of Professor Martin have discovered. The first three of Thomas Vaughan's books were published in 1650, the year of the appearance of the first part of Silex Scintillans. It seems almost certain from the correspondence of so much in the poems and the prose that the brothers were in touch with each other during the period of composition, that they were reading the same authors, and talking over their religious and philosophical ideas. The two men had much in common. They were both intensely religious; they were both members of the Anglican Church; both ardent Royalists. To each of them scientific questioning was the first stage of religious inquiry. One was a physician, and though the other was a minister he was also an alchemist and a scientific experimenter. Finally, childhood and the beauties of nature made a strong appeal to the heart and mind of each. Scattered throughout Thomas Vaughan's writings are innumerable passages

where the beauties of a landscape or a scene are painted with the felicity and accuracy that come only from love. One of the best of his few poems is in praise of his native valley and the river Usk.

The very great value of comparing the thought of Thomas Vaughan with that of his more famous brother lies to some extent in its intrinsic worth, but mostly in the light which it throws upon the general metaphysical scheme at the back of Henry Vaughan's most difficult poems. Poems such as "Resurrection and Immortality", "Cock-crowing", "Sure, there's a tye of Bodies!", "I walkt the other day (to spend my hour,)", "The Sap", and numerous short passages and curious phrases gain an added significance and a new clearness when they are considered in the light of Thomas Vaughan's more complete exposition of their philosophy. The germ of Wordsworth's Ode would appear to go back further than to Henry Vaughan and to rest in the first place with Thomas. A new understanding of the Silurist's magnetic beliefs becomes possible, and the strong Neo-Platonic tinge which coloured his ideas is seen more clearly than ever. Most important of all is the conviction we arrive at that none of even the most obscure lines in Henry Vaughan's poetry may be dismissed as merely poetic fantasy. Every statement or implication is based upon a definite philosophical or metaphysical groundwork. The obscurity is only an obscurity so long as we remain ignorant of the main body of thought that the particular passage assumes. And though the writings of Thomas Vaughan will not explain all our difficulties, they explain many.

CHAPTER VI

THOMAS TRAHERNE

"Metaphysics, or the attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought", writes Bertrand Russell, "has been developed from the first by the union and conflict of two very different human impulses, the one urging men towards mysticism, the other urging them towards science. Some men have achieved greatness through one of these impulses alone, others through the other alone. . . . But the greatest men who have been philosophers have felt the need both of science and mysticism".¹

Thomas Traherne was one of these "greatest men". His prose masterpiece, Centuries of Meditations,² echoed and supplemented by his poems, is at once a spiritual autobiography of immense significance and an "attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought". Its beauty of style, its religious ardour and the revelation it makes of a character childlike, simple, original and profound have gained for it much highly deserved praise, and after more than two hundred years of chance obscurity Traherne has taken his place with the best known mystics, an English saint, an Anglican à Kempis, the author of a devotional work worthy to be placed beside the Imitation and St Augustine's Confessions.

1. Mysticism and Logic, p.1.

2. Edited by Bertram Dobell, 1908. All quotations are from the reprint of April 1927.

The romantic story of the recovery of Traherne's manuscripts is told in Mr Dobell's introduction to his edition of the Poetical Works.¹ Most of the little we know of Traherne is related by Anthony à Wood in the Athenae Oxonienses. Here we learn that Traherne was the son of a Hereford shoemaker. He was admitted to Brasenose College March 1st, 1652/3, and after taking his first degree became rector of the parish of Credenhill. This occurred, Mr Dobell has proved, in 1657. Traherne became Master of Arts in 1661 and Bachelor of Divinity in 1669. Two years before taking his B.D. degree he became private chaplain to Sir Orlando Bridgman, Lord Keeper of the Seals. The exact date of Traherne's death is not known, but he was buried under the reading-desk in Teddington church on October 10th 1674, a few months after the death of Sir Orlando.

This is the bare outline of Traherne's life, but it can be filled in with the much more significant knowledge that his writings supply. They are his spiritual life, more valuable than any list of facts, and in them we can learn to know the man. Apparently he was robust and healthy.² He took pleasure in physical activity and had a keen eye for the beauties of nature. He was sensitive and friendly, of a sanguine temperament, a philosopher upon whom, as upon Dr Johnson's friend, "cheerfulness was always breaking in". His greatest gifts were an intensely vivid imagination and a remarkable memory. The one

1. London, 1903.

2. Cf. A Serious and Pathetical Call, "Thanksgiving for the Body": "For the high Exaltation whereby thou hast glorified every body, Especially mine."

gave his thoughts the reality of concrete objects while the other enabled him to retain in undiminished glory the ideas and visions of an exceptional childhood. He recounts with a wealth of vivid detail the thoughts and experiences of his earliest years, and much of his originality lies in this, that he was able to keep the wise innocence of childhood all his life. He prized things that were good in themselves, like sunshine or love, and was never able to rate at their high and wholly artificial value the arbitrary creations of society, such as wealth, rich clothing or high estate. Consequently he lived a poor man and when he died had only a few pounds, his clothing and some books to bequeath. His determination not to seek wealth or advancement was definitely made and consistently adhered to. "When I came into the country", he writes in Centuries of Meditations, "and being seated among silent trees, and meads and hills, had all my time in mine own hands, I resolved to spend it all, whatever it cost me, in ~~the~~ search of happiness, and to satiate that burning thirst which Nature had enkindled in me from my youth. In which I was so resolute, that I chose rather to live upon ten pounds a year, and to go in leather clothes, and feed upon bread and water, so that I might have all my time clearly to myself, than to keep many thousands per annum in an estate of life where my time would be devoured in care and labour."¹

During the leisure thus obtained he devoted himself to study, contemplation and writing. Only one of his books was

1. iii,46.

published in his lifetime. This was Roman Forgeries, 1673, a controversial work in which only the "Address to the Reader" is free from dullness and in any way characteristic of the author. At the time of Traherne's death a far more interesting and important work, the Christian Ethicks, was in the printers' hands. It was published in 1675. In 1699 another work appeared - this time anonymously - under the title of A Serious and Pathetical Contemplation of the Mercies of God, and remained entirely unnoticed until the discovery of Traherne's poems drew Mr Dobell's attention to it. Undoubtedly this was one of the most original books of the seventeenth century. It was written in what would now be called "free verse", and modern critics have remarked its curious resemblance both in form and subject-matter to the poetry of Walt Whitman. It is not surprising, perhaps, that the correct eighteenth century, on the threshold of which it appeared, should have neglected its unorthodox originality, yet the letter to the booksellers, with which the volume is prefaced, reveals a nice discrimination and a just appreciation of the work. It was written by a well-known non-juring divine, the Reverend Dr George Hickes, who seems to have recognized with a good deal of perspicacity the nature of the difficulties which the poet tried, with a great measure of success, to overcome. "Had the Authour liv'd", he wrote, "it would have come abroad with greater advantage; for there are some places, which seem to require the hand of the same Architect who made them, to reform 'em, but they are but few . . . and we must not wonder that there are some uncorrect, and obscure passages in a

Book which is so full of Thoughts, and composed in Numbers, or numerous Periods, which though of the freer sort, are not so easy for an Authour to express his thoughts in, as plain and unconfined Prose."

The book consists of a series of Thanksgivings: "A Thanksgiving for the Body", for the Soul, for the Glory of God's Works, for the Blessedness of God's Ways, for the Blessedness of His Laws, for the Beauty of His Providence, for the Wisdom of His Word, for God's Attributes, and "A Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Nation".

The following lines from the "Thanksgiving for the Body" are representative of the thought and style of the whole work. Traherne offers grateful praise -

"For all the Mysteries, Engines, Instruments, wherewith
the World is filled, which we are able to frame and
use to thy Glory;
For all the Trades, variety of Operations, Cities, Temples,
Streets, Bridges, Mariners Compass, admirable Pictures,
Sculpture, Writing, Printing, Songs and Musick,
wherewith the World is beautified and adorned.

"Much more for the Regent Life
And Power of Perception,
Which rules within
That secret depth of fathomless Consideration
Of all our senses,
That makes our centre equal to the Heavens
And comprehendeth in itself the magnitude of
the world;
The involved mysteries
Of our common sense,
The inaccessible secret
Of perceptive Fancy,
The repository and treasury
Of things that are passed,
The presentation of things to come."

It is the lyrical poems, however, edited in our own day by Bertrand Dobell¹ and H.I. Bell,² and still more the prose meditations which testify to Traherne's genius as well as to his originality. His genius, though it was nothing like universal, was by no means narrow, limited or unduly specialized. It was exclusively religious perhaps, but in a sense that included philosophy and practice. Traherne wrote of Jesus like a lover, and what is more he lived the humble, pious, godly life of an early Christian. He belongs entirely to that little group of religious writers which is the glory of the Anglican Church in the seventeenth century and in which the names of George Herbert and Henry Vaughan are well-matched by his own. Yet when we compare Traherne with the other imaginative religious writers of his time it is the points of difference that impress us most. He was not of his age to the extent they were. Like Blake, he captured thoughts that were not of time but eternity, and consequently there is more in his ideas that can win the sympathy of modern minds than in those of most seventeenth century devotional writers. Among these, Henry Vaughan is his nearest kin, and the obvious similarity between some of Traherne's most characteristic conceptions and the ideas expressed by Vaughan in "The Retreat" and "Childhood" has been much commented on. Their ideas concerning the first innocence of man and the nature of the Fall present some analogies, and both men were much more sensitive to the beauties of nature than were most of their contemporaries. There was

1. The Poetical Works of Thomas Traherne, London, 1903.

2. Traherne's Poems of Felicity, Oxford, 1910.

for a time, indeed, some danger that the newly-discovered manuscript of Traherne's poems might be attributed to the Silurist, but the perspicacity and energy of Mr Dobell discovered the true authorship of the unsigned manuscript. Ten years later another draft of the poems, this time accompanied by the author's name, was discovered by Mr H.I. Bell, "while searching for something else", among the Burney MSS in the British Museum.

The resemblance of Traherne's thought to that of Henry Vaughan is only superficial, while his poetry itself is nothing like Vaughan's smooth and melodious verse. Certainly to each of them childhood was a period of exquisite and happy innocence when they felt their souls to be in close communion with God; but here the resemblance ends.

"I cannot reach it; and my striving eye
Dazzles at it, as at eternity."¹

writes Vaughan of this blest time, but for Traherne to have spoken of childhood in such terms would have been a confession of failure. He was able to reach it, and to live in it, - to become in respect of its light all eye, and not dazzled.

Again, Vaughan, there is no doubt, had a keener appreciation of the beauties of nature than any other seventeenth century poet except Traherne (and the secular Marvell) but for him these earthly beauties were as nothing to the unchanging loveliness of the Biblical heaven beyond the grave. For Traherne, on the other hand, the beauty of the temporal physical world was

1. Martin, ii, p. 520.

an essential part of eternal and universal beauty, and hence as much to be valued. For him there was no looking to death as a release, no thought of it as a gateway to eternal bliss or as a loop-hole of escape from the necessary evil of this life. Indeed it is in his full acceptance of life that Traherne is separated so sharply from the religious writers of his time. "If there were any other way to be saved and to get to Heaven, then by being born into this life, I would not wish to have come into this world", declares Donne.¹ Original sin, as we have seen, haunted Donne like a spectre and the thought of his youthful lust made him frantic to put away the flesh. Herbert and Vaughan lived in a world that was unsafe. Sin, "one cunning bosome-sinne", was constantly and insidiously sounding their hearts. Flesh was weak, the world was vanity, and there were many times when Herbert would have subscribed to Donne's melancholy judgement, while Vaughan turned to the permanence of death for that complete union with reality which nature could sometimes give him for a little while.

Traherne's outlook was in marked contrast to that of these authors. He scarcely mentions death. He rarely refers to sin. "I do not speak much of vice", he declared, "which is a far more easie Theme, because I am intirely taken up with the abundance of Worth and Beauty in Vertue."² The world and the senses by which he perceives it are good in themselves, here and now and for themselves, not merely as the anteroom to another world but as one aspect of a single entity. Critics have been right in

1. Fifty Sermons, 1649, p.223.

2. Christian Ethicks, Address to the Reader.

regarding Traherne as a mystic. He was absorbed in the problem of achieving union with the Absolute. He knew that the means to this end were spiritual and that the agent was love. He was convinced that it is better to give than to receive. And, furthermore, his convictions were reflected in action. Thus he shews the most important characteristics of the greatest mystics.¹ But in focussing one's attention solely on his mysticism there is the danger that an essential quality of that mysticism may be lost, for Traherne is the greater mystic because he is something else as well. His mysticism, though based on intuition, is confirmed by reason and, what is more, welcomes reason on equal terms as an ally whose support is invaluable.

In early childhood Traherne felt deeply that certain ideas he entertained concerning the world were true. At the university he studied natural and divine philosophy and there confirmed by intellectual means the truth of his early intuitions. This is a natural enough procedure, for reason is a controlling, harmonizing force, not a creative one. Even in the most purely logical activity it is insight which reaches what is new. There is always a gap across which the mind makes an intuitive leap. But it is reason which apprises what is found there. And Traherne found that there which all the philosophers and mystics have sought with varying success.

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"I knew by intuition", wrote Traherne, "those things which since my Apostasy, I collected again by the highest reason".² And again, "I remember the time when the dust of the streets

1. Cf. Underhill, op.cit., part 1, cap.iv.
2. Centuries of Meditations, iii,2.

were as precious as Gold to my infant eyes, and now they are more precious to the eye of reason."¹ He had been born in innocence and had looked around him with uncorrupted eyes. He was ignorant of the false values which custom imposes on non-essentials, and hence free to appreciate at their true worth those things which the "pure and virgin apprehensions I had from the womb"² commended as good. The sun, for instance, seemed more valuable than a gold coin, and the muddy earth better than a ball of precious metal. Infancy or early childhood he experienced as a state of perfect innocence. "I knew not"; he wrote, "that there were any sins, or complaints or laws. I dreamed not of poverties, contentions or vices. All tears and quarrels were hidden from mine eyes."³ He walked like a young Adam in a new world, and a garden was all about him:

"Only what Adam in his first Estate
 Did I behold;
 Hard Silver & dry Gold
 As yet lay under-ground: My happy Fate
 Was more acquainted with the old
 And innocent Delights w^{ch} he did see
 In his Original Simplicity. . .

"Mine Eys those Treasures first did see
 Which God first made: The first Effects of Lov
 My first Enjoyments upon Earth did prov.

"And were so Great, & so Divine, so Pure,
 So fair & sweet,
 So tru; when I did meet

1. Centuries of Meditations, 1,25.

2. Ibid,iii,1.

3. Ibid,iii,2.

Them here at first, they did my Soul allure,
 And drew away mine Infant-feet
 Quite from the Works of Men, that I might see
 The glorious Wonders of the DEITY."¹

Innocence such as this that Traherne possessed by natural right in his childhood and to which he returned by an act of will must not be confused with ignorance. Ignorance at first had its place in it: "I knew nothing of sickness or death or rents or exaction"² - but it was an ignorance only of non-essentials, of everything that would distract or mislead. Traherne looked at the world as every young child does. He had an open mind as well as an open eye, and he saw the things we all look at without noticing. He knew nothing of the artificial values society has placed upon artificial things, hence he was free to establish his own. In addition to this, he had the imagination of genius and a memory that could retain undimmed the thoughts and feelings of his earliest years. For Traherne, to think of an object was to be present with it and to possess it. "When I heard of any new kingdom beyond the seas", he says, "the light and glory of it pleased me immediately, it rose up within me, and I was enlarged wonderfully. I entered into it, I saw its commodities, rarities, springs, meadows, riches, inhabitants, and became possessor of that new room, as if it had been prepared for me, so much was I magnified and delighted in it."³ It was in this vividness of mental perception present from his earliest years that Traherne's interesting conception of

1. Bell, op.cit., pp.6-7; Dobell, pp.9-10.

2. Centuries of Meditations, iii,2.

3. Ibid., iii,24.

the reality of ideas had its intuitive origin. The mental picture of the world was to the child the true reality. He was impressed by its beauty and perfection. It seemed eternal and unlimited. Better than all this - he was the possessor of it.

The poems and Centuries of Meditations, especially the third century, are full of these themes as they emerged and developed during Traherne's childhood. Christ's injunction that one must be born again and become like a little child to enter the Kingdom of Heaven was of deeper import, Traherne thought, "than is generally believed". He considered that "It is not only in a careless reliance upon Divine Providence, that we are to become ~~little~~ little children, or in the feebleness and shortness of our anger and simplicity of our passions, but in the peace and purity of all our soul. Which purity also is a deeper thing than is commonly apprehended. For we must disrobe ourselves of all false colours, and unclothe our souls of evil habits; all our thoughts must be infant-like and clear; the powers of our soul free from the leaven of this world¹, and disentangled from men's conceits and customs. Grit in the eye or yellow jaundice will not let a man see those objects truly that are before it. And therefore it is requisite that we should be as very strangers to the thoughts, customs, and opinions of men in this world, as if we were but little children. . . Ambitions, trades, luxuries, inordinate affections, casual and accidental riches invented since the fall, would be

1. There is a clear distinction in Traherne's thought between the natural world of God's making and the false world of society.

gone, and only those things appear, which did to Adam in Paradise, in the same light and in the same colours."¹

Childhood to Traherne was a period of clear vision in which the world appeared in its true aspect, "apparell'd in celestial light".

In the poems "The Salutation" and "Wonder" and in some of the finest of the prose meditations we are given a picture of the bright and wonderful world on which Traherne opened his infant eyes. "How bright are all things here!" he cries:

"The Skies in their Magnificence,
The lovely lively Air,
Oh how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair!
The Stars did entertain my Sense;
And all the Works of God so bright & pure,
So rich & great, did seem,
As if they ever must endure
In my Esteem."²

He came as a stranger into a world of beauty and magnificence. To be alive, to be sentient, to move the limbs, to rejoice in the freedom and ease of a body: these were not the least of the joys and wonders prepared for his reception.

"I that so long
Was Nothing from Eternity,
Did little think such Joys as Ear & Tongue
To celebrat or see:
Such Sounds to hear, such Hands to feel, such Feet,
Such Eys & Objects, on the Ground to meet."³

1. Centuries of Meditations, iii,5.

2. "Wonder", Bell, p.5; Dobell, p.4.

3. "The Salutation", Bell, p.2; Dobell, p.1.

But the greatest wonder of all is that everything belongs to him, a gift from God, and the only condition - that he prize it:

"From Dust I rise
And out of Nothing now awake;
These brighter Regions w^{ch} salute mine Eys
A Gift from God I take:
The Earth, the Seas, the Light, the lofty Skies,
The Sun & Stars are mine; if these I prize.

"A Stranger here
Strange things doth meet, strange Glory see,
Strange Treasures lodg'd in this fair World appear,
Strange all & New to me:
But that they mine should be who Nothing was,
That Strangest is of all; yet brought to pass."¹

This is a thought to which Traherne often returns; it is a keystone of his philosophy. God is by nature bountiful, he believes. The Deity pours out his gifts freely: He delights "to make them glorious, and their enjoyment easy. For because His love is free, so are His treasures. He therefore that will despise them because he hath them is marvellously irrational: the way to possess them is to esteem them."² Again, he writes with that terrible clarity of vision which startles us in Blake: "They that prize not what they have are dead; their senses are laid asleep, and when they come to Hell they wake."³ The whole secret of felicity, Traherne felt, was to see the

1. "The Salutation", Bell, p.2; Dobell, p.1.

2. Centuries of Meditations, i,23.

3. Ibid., i,49.

world as it is, as God's gift and therefore beautiful and infinitely to be prized. Those who underestimate its excellence endure the greatest of all miseries. Contemplating such as these, Traherne was led to reflect "That while others live in a Golgotha or Prison, we should be in Eden, is a very great Mystery. And a mercy it is that we should be rejoicing in the Temple of Heaven, while they are toiling and lamenting in Hell, for the World is both a Paradise and a Prison to different persons."¹ Traherne hated "the abominable corruption of men in despising" the world - "There is so much blindness and ingratitude and damned folly in it. The world is a mirror of infinite beauty, yet no man sees it."² At times it seemed to him as if he were living in a world of beauty whose inhabitants all were mad. He saw how men had refused the gifts God freely offered and had "taken to themselves treasures of their own. . . scarce and rare, insufficient, hard to be gotten, little, movable and useless treasures". Worldly men sought these as though they were good in themselves, "And though they are all mad, yet having made a combination they seem wise; and it is a hard matter ^{to persuade} them either to Truth or Reason. There seemeth to be no way, but theirs: whereas", Traherne adds, "God knoweth they are as far out of the way of Happiness, as the East is from the West."³

But this necessity to esteem the world was based on some-

1. Centuries of Meditation, 1,36.

2. Ibid., 1,31.

3. Ibid., 1,33.

thing more fundamental than the world's beauty or even than the fact that it was given to man as a token of God's love. Traherne thought it served man in a more marvellous way. It satisfied his senses and, if rightly understood, enabled him to live in happiness. But the mystery was of still deeper import - the world was the means by which man could become like God.

To understand how this union - the desire for which is planted deep in the nature of man and God alike¹ - is to be brought about, we must examine in some detail Traherne's conception of God, man and the universe. The knowable falls into these three divisions, and the study of them and their intimate connection forms the subject of all Traherne's writings.²

We will examine first his ideas concerning the nature of the Deity.

Traherne's God was in many respects one with the God of Genesis and the God who answered Job out of the whirlwind, but he was not the cruel God who smote the enemies of Israel and demanded an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. He united to the majesty and awful powers of Jehovah love that was ready to die for man, and in both aspects "He is not an Object of Terror, but Delight".³ Traherne points out the futility of trying to discover God by discovering what He is not. He himself saw

1. Cf. Centuries of Meditations, i,71.

2. The unimportant Roman Forgeries excepted.

3. Centuries of Meditations, i,17.

God in all that was good and beautiful. "To know Him therefore as He is", he wrote, "is to frame the most beautiful idea in all Worlds."¹ In the same "meditation" Traherne summarizes the attributes of God. "To know God", he states, "is to know Goodness. It is to see the beauty of infinite Love: To see it attended with Almighty Power and Eternal Wisdom; and using both those in the magnifying of its object."² And again, elsewhere, "It is an Idea connatural to the Notion of God, to conceive him Wise and Good, and if we cannot see some Reason in his Ways, we are apt to suspect there is no Deity, or if there be, that he is Malevolent and Tyrannical, which is worse than none. For all Wisdom and Goodness are contained in Love."³

Early in the second of the Centuries of Meditations Traherne noted the close affinity between God and Beauty, and furnished a hint - which other parts of his work amply confirm - as to what he means by Beauty. God, he affirmed, is infinite Love, the extent and intensity of which infinitely aggravate any sin against it - "For to sin against infinite Love, is to make oneself infinitely deformed: to be infinitely deformed, is to be infinitely odious in His eyes whose love or beauty is the hatred of deformity."⁴

God, it is made clear, is a God of beauty, and beauty is the absence of deformity - conformity, in other words, to law.

1. Centuries of Meditations, i,17.
2. Idem.
3. Christian Ethicks, p.49.
4. Centuries of Meditations, ii,4.

In the poem "Adam's Fall"¹ sin is defined as "a Deviation from the Way Of God". The Love which is God's essence can forbear and forgive but it "can never be reconciled to an unlovely object . . . one act only of despite done to the smallest creature made you infinitely deformed."² In the verses entitled "The Vision", Traherne states definitely, "Order the Beauty ev'n of Beauty is, It is the Rule of Bliss, The very Life & Form & Caus of Pleasure".³ To him, beauty, order, obedience and joy were but different aspects of the same Divinity.

In the twenty-third chapter of Christian Ethicks under the heading "Of Temperance in God"⁴ Traherne considers how far the Deity is limited by law. Almighty Power, he affirms, could not exist without infinite Wisdom. No blind Power could be almighty because it could not do all that is excellent. In God there is no separation of Wisdom and Power, for He possesses no Power distinct from understanding. It is a strange paradox "That Power limited is Greater and more Effectual than Power let loose". God's Power is more infinite because it is bounded by Wisdom and Goodness. Nothing is possible to God but what is infinitely excellent, for in Him power, wisdom and will are identical.

"We are apt to think", Traherne not unreasonably remarks, "that nothing can be more than infinite", but, as he goes on to

1. Bell, p.23.

2. Centuries of Meditations, ii,30.

3. Bell,p.17; Dobell,p.21.

4. pp.341 et seq.

shew, God makes His effects more than infinite by limiting, regulating and arranging them in patterns. "God is infinitely more than what we conceive, while we think Him infinite; and . . . we infinitely wrong Him, while we limit His Essence to one single Infinity; Who is every way Infinite; in Himself, in all His Works, in all His Waies, in all His Counsells, in every one of His perfections; He hath made evry thing either Infinite, or better than so. For by variety of Effects He hath attained an end in the Beauty and Correspondence of all his Productions, far more Aimable and Divine than any one Effect is capable of being." The sum total of God's works, because of their lawful interdependence, is greater than the sum of the individual parts. It is harmony which makes infinity greater than infinity. "All things by a kind of Temperance are made, and ordered in Number, Weight, and Measure, so that they give and receive a Beauty and Perfection, everything to, and from all the residue, of inestimable value, in relation to the Goodness and Love of their Creator."

The limitation which God's Wisdom places upon His Power is not, however, a restraining but a guiding force. "Moderation is not so called from limiting and restraining but from Moderating and Ruling. If Reason require that a Thing should be Great, it is the Part of Temperance to make it so . . ."

Traherne, it will be seen, had a conception of eternal law that was as majestic and judicious as Hooker's. God's laws did not demand God's obedience - they were the channels in which His Power most efficiently operated. To moderate almighty Power "is to limit or extend it as Reason requires. Reason requires that

it should be so limited, as most tends to the perfection of the Universe."¹

God is limited, thus, only insofar as He can do nothing imperfectly. The operation of natural law is that which keeps the universe in a constant equilibrium at perfection. All created things are ordained for the preservation of this perfect balance. "If sands and atoms", wrote Traherne, "tend more to the perfection of the World than Angels; there where they do so, sands and atoms shall be made, and Angels there where they tend more to the perfection of the World. So that everything is best in its proper place."²

The innermost desire of the heart as well as the commands of reason were satisfied in Traherne by this conception of God as harmonious law and of the universe as its perfect expression. His God is the "Lawgiver of Heaven and Earth".³ The sun and stars serve Him only in serving His laws.⁴ It is by submission

1. Cp. with this and some of the preceding quotations: "If therefore it be demanded, why God having power and ability infinite, the effects notwithstanding of that power are all so limited as we see they are: the reason hereof is the end which he hath proposed, and the law whereby his wisdom hath stinted the effects of his power in such sort, that it doth not work infinitely, but correspondently unto the end for which it worketh, even 'all things $\chi\rho\eta\sigma\tau\omega\varsigma$ in most decent and comely sort', all things in Measure, Number, and Weight." - Hooker. Ecclesiastical Polity, I, ii, 3.

2. The similarity in spirit between this sentence and the conceptions of modern science becomes almost a similarity in fact when we continue to the sentence which follows it. "Were there no sands, or atoms there would be no Universe; for the Earth, the Sea, the Sky, the Air, all Bodies consist of these, either united or divided." - Christian Ethicks, p. 350. Here Traherne seems to be looking forward to Dalton rather than backward to Epicurus.

3. Centuries of Meditations, i, 70.

4. Ibid., i, 39.

that man may become like God. "Laws are the rules of blessed living":¹ none is so miserable as the lawless man. Significantly enough, it is the laws of thought that are intended here as the laws of blessed living. "To think well", according to Traherne, "is to serve God in the interior court".² And again, "We are like Him when our minds are in frame".³

Philosophers from Parmenides to Hegel have seen law and order as a signpost pointing to the divine unity, and Traherne who has written sentences that would be out of place in the works of neither the ancient nor the modern philosopher likewise found the surest attribute of God to be His unity. All that is good, beautiful and perfect is united in the Deity to Action. "God is not a Being compounded of body and soul, or substance and accident, or power and act, but is all act, pure act, a Simple Being whose essence is to be. . . His Being is to be perfect."⁴

God, as it were, has no potential energy. He leaves nothing undone that He may do: "Were there any Power in God unemployed He would be compounded of Power and Act . . ." ⁵ But God is Unity, "not a mixt and compounded Being, so that His Love is one thing and Himself another; but the most pure and simple of all Beings, all Act, and pure Love in the abstract."⁶

1. Centuries of Meditations, i,71.

2. Ibid., i,10.

3. Ibid., i,13.

4. Ibid., iii,63.

5. Ibid., iii,64.

6. Ibid., ii,39.

In many places Traherne asserts the complete harmony in God between ability and performance. "God is a being whose power from all Eternity was prevented with Act. He is one infinite Act of KNOWLEDGE and WISDOM."¹ Again, he declares that in God will is one with the "Highest Deed".² The fundamental unity of God consists in this, that He is infinite Power wholly and eternally exerted.³

What is the nature of this power? Traherne names it Love. "God", he writes, "is Love, INFINITE LOVE", and His unity is such that we cannot say "that His Love is one thing and Himself another", but, as we have already seen, God is defined as "pure Love in the abstract" completely expressed in action.⁴ Elsewhere

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 84.

2. Ibid., ii, 37.

3. It is probable that Traherne was indebted to Hooker for the conception of God's unity and law with which we have been dealing. The chapter "Of Temperance in God" in Christian Ethicks is almost pure Hooker. Sentences such as the following from the Ecclesiastical Polity contain ideas that are continually met with in Traherne. "That and nothing else is done by God, which to leave undone were not so good." I, ii, 3. "God alone excepted, who actually and everlastingly is whatsoever He may be, . . . all other things besides are somewhat in possibility, which as yet they are not in act . . . And because there is not in the world anything whereby another may not some way be made the perfecter, therefore all things that are, are good." I, v, 1. "There was never sin committed, wherein a less good was not preferred before a greater, and that wilfully; which cannot be done without the singular disgrace of Nature, and the utter disturbance of that divine order . . . There is not that good which concerneth us, but it hath evidence enough for itself, if Reason were diligent to search it out." I, vii, 7. This last sentence should be compared with Christian Ethicks, p. 3: "There is an eternal Property in reason to prefer the better above the worse. He that prefers the Worse above the better acts against Nature."

4. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 39.

Traherne names "Love in the abstract" as "a soul exerted".¹
 The same ideas are expressed in verse in the poem entitled
 "The Anticipation". This is a long metaphysical account of
 the nature of God. Stanzas xi and xii are as follows:

"His Essence is all Act: He died that He
 All Act might always be.
 His nature burns like fire;
 His goodness infinitely does desire
 To be by all possesst;
 His love makes others blest.
 It is the glory of His high estate,
 And that which I for evermore admire,
 He is an Act that doth communicate.

"From all to all Eternity He is
 That Act: an Act of bliss:
 Wherein all bliss to all
 That will receive the same, or on Him call,
 Is freely given: from whence
 Tis easy even to sense
 To apprehend that all Receivers are
 In Him, all gifts, all joys, all eyes, even all
 At once, that ever will or shall appear."²

It is clear that to Traherne God was not simply Power, or
 Power infinitely exerted, but Power exerted in a particular
 direction, towards a definite end. Love, he thought, was
 wrapped up in itself and idle unless it were manifested to an
 Object. "It seems", he writes, "that all love is so myster-
 ious that there is something in it which needs expression and
 can never be understood by any manifestation (of itself, in

1. Centuries of Meditations, iv,70.

2. Dobell, p,92.

itself), but only by mighty doings and sufferings."¹ It was because of this inner mystery which can be apprehended only in the symbolism of its works that Traherne was led to search for God in the structure and laws of nature. God is a fountain of love that never ceases until it has "poured out itself in all its communications",² and the knowledge of that love must be sought there - in its communications.

The object of God's love is Man. The creation of man and the nature of man result from this expansiveness in the nature of God. God is the source and man the receiver:

"All things do first receive, that give.
 Only 'tis God above,
 That from and in Himself doth live;
 Whose all-sufficient love
 Without original can flow
 And all the joys and glories show
 Which mortal man can take delight to know.
 He is the primitive eternal spring,
 The endless ocean of each glorious thing,
 The Soul a vessel is,
 A spacious bosom, to contain
 All the fair treasures of his bliss,
 Which run like rivers from, into the main,
 And all it doth receive returns again."³

God is not content with manifesting his love, for it seeks its own image and would return to its source. God, as well as man, longs for communion. Love wishes to delight its object, but its motives are not quite disinterested, for it is its own joy

1. Centuries of Meditations, iv,62.

2. Idem.

3. Dobell, p.79, "The Circulation".

in the object's delight that is its ultimate desire. "What can be more acceptable to love", asks Traherne, "than that it should be prized and magnified?" And so, too, with divine love, its end is the praises of man. "Because therefore God is love, and His measure infinite, He infinitely desires to be admired and beloved, and so our praises enter into the very secret of His Eternal Bosom, and mingle with Him who dwelleth in that light which is inaccessible."¹

The creation of man as an object of God's love carries with it a number of implications. First, the soul of man must be able to comprehend, value and return that love; and secondly, there must be a medium through which communication can take place. This implies the creation of the world, the purpose of which Traherne considered to be twofold - to delight mankind and to provide a medium in which the love of God could pass to man and the praise of man return to God. In the work of creation God desired to please man as well as Himself: "Infinite Goodness loves to abound, and to overflow infinitely with infinite treasures. Love loves to do somewhat for its object more than to create it. It is always more stately being surrounded with power, and more delightful being inaccessible in a multitude of treasures, and more honourable in the midst of admirers; and more glorious when it reigneth over many attendants. Love therefore hath prepared all these for itself and its object."²

1. Centuries of Meditations, iii, 82.

2. Ibid., i, 68.

But it is not only for this reason that the world is precious to man. Beauty, as we have seen, was to Traherne one of the most characteristic of God's attributes, and the highest beauty was order. Traherne was profoundly aware of the presence of an ordered unity in the world around him and, as an inevitable deduction, of the close affinity between the world and God. How was this affinity made manifest?

In the first place, by the close connection of every thing in the world with every other thing, each being essential in its proper place and testifying to the divine properties of law, order and unity. The same conceptions which make the first book of the Ecclesiastical Polity such majestic philosophy found frequent and characteristic expression in the writings of Traherne. "The WORLD is unknown", he declared, ". . . till the Beauty and the Serviceableness of its parts is considered."¹ This thought is repeated time and again. We have seen how it was expressed in Christian Ethicks. The Centuries of Meditations insist upon it with the emphasis that Traherne felt its importance deserved. To know the world, to enjoy the world, to possess the world was to conceive of it as the manifestation of law. "Everything in its place² is admirable, deep, and glorious: out of its place like a wandering bird, is desolate and good for nothing. How therefore it relateth to God and all creatures must be seen before it can be enjoyed."³

1. Centuries of Meditations, i, 18.

2. These italics, and those of the similar phrases quoted below, are not Traherne's.

3. Centuries of Meditations, iii, 55.

Only, indeed, as an exemplar of law can the world fulfil its purpose of ministering to man. "Everything" serves "you best in its proper place".¹ Gold and silver, Traherne thought, were the "very refuse of Nature, and the worst things in God's Kingdom": and yet, he adds, they are "truly good in their proper places".² The beginning of wisdom, the first step to the exaltation of perfect repose, he describes as the recognition that "All things were well in their proper places".³ The world, rightly understood, so manifests the goodness and wisdom of God that it were impossible any other or a more perfect should have been made.⁴

Beauty, law and unity, then, are qualities which the world possesses in common with God. Further, each of its minutest parts possesses them equally with the whole, and thus may be a mirror to see God in. The realization of this important truth is expressed by Traherne in sentences that remarkably anticipate Blake's "To see the world in a grain of sand". "You never enjoy the world aright, till you see how a sand exhibiteth the wisdom and power of God: And prize in everything the service which they do you, by manifesting His glory and goodness to your Soul, far more than the visible beauty on their surface, or the material services they can

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 13.

2. Ibid., iii, 62.

3. Ibid., iii, 60.

4. Ibid., i, 10.

do your body."¹ Elsewhere, the idea is developed: "Suppose a river, or a drop of water, an apple or a sand, an ear of corn, or an herb: God knoweth infinite excellencies in it more than we: He seeth how it relateth to angels and men; how it proceedeth from the most perfect Lover to the most perfectly Beloved; how it representeth all His attributes; how it conduceth in its place, by the best of means to the best of ends."² "O what a treasure", cries Traherne, "is every sand when truly understood!"³

What is even more significant in these quotations than the conception to which they bear witness of the world as an ordered unity is their identification of its "properties" with those of the Deity. A grain of sand, a drop of water, an ear of corn, each is intimately bound up with God, each representeth all His attributes.

A complete logical development of this idea is given early in the second Century.⁴ Traherne is discussing the nature of God and in the course of his argument has found it necessary to defend God's invisibility against those "that quarrel at the manner of God's revealing Himself". Whatever is visible, he reasons, is material. Whatever is material occupies space by excluding anything else from occupying the same place. But God is infinite. And hence if He were visible "He would make it impossible for anything to have a

1. Centuries of Meditations, i,27.

2. Ibid., ii,67.

3. Idem.

4. Ibid., ii,19-22.

being."¹ Again, matter and whatever may be discerned with the eyes is itself dead, but that which inspires matter with "motion, life and sense" is invisible and "distinct from the bulk which it inspireth". God, then, is not bulk, but the spirit that animates it. "He leaveth room for, and effecteth all things. He filleth nothing with a bodily presence, but includeth all."² The reason, in short, why God does not appear in a visible manner is because He is invisible, i.e. it is not the manner of His revelation but the very nature of God that those who are dissatisfied with invisibility would impugn. "By pretending to be visible He could but delude the World which as Plato learnedly observeth is contrary to the nature of the Deity."³

Traherne next deals with the contention that God might at least assume a body "and make Himself visible therein". But what kind of body should He take? It would have to represent at least some of His attributes. If it should represent His infinity the absurdity already discovered would be met with again; if His eternity, that cannot be represented in a body, nor can eternity and infinity in the abstract be apprehended by the senses. Perhaps it might represent His beauty - and following the train of thought which this suggests Traherne is led to an important hypothesis: "How do we know, but the world is that body, which the Deity hath assumed to manifest His Beauty and by which He maketh Himself as visible, as it is possible

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 19.

2. Idem.

3. Ibid., ii, 20.

He should?"¹

In the succeeding sections the "properties" of God are examined from the point of view of their symbolization in the world. "Ancient philosophers have thought God to be the Soul of the World. Since therefore this visible World is the body of God, not His natural body, but which He hath assumed; let us see how glorious His wisdom is in manifesting Himself thereby. It hath not only represented His infinity and eternity which we thought impossible to be represented by a body, but His beauty also, His wisdom, goodness, power, life and glory, His righteousness, love, and blessedness: all of which as out of a plentiful treasury, may be taken and collected out of this world."²

God's infinity is expressed in the shape of the world, in the illimitable extent of the universe and in the endless variety of its contents. "The very Earth alone being round and globous, is illimited. . . And yet it is but a centre compared to the universe. . . The Eternity of God is so apparent in it, that the wisest of philosophers thought the world eternal. We come into it, leave it, as if it had neither beginning nor ending."³ Concerning its beauty I need say nothing. No man can turn unto it but must be ravished with its appearance. . . "⁴

This is a visible, material beauty. But the beauty of God is spiritual. It is made of "Wisdom, Goodness, Life and Love, Power, Glory, Blessedness, &c. How therefore shall these

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 20.

2. Ibid., ii, 21.

3. Cp. "The World resembled his ETERNITY, In which my Soul did Walk;" - "Wonder", Bell, p.3; Dobell, p.4.

4. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 21.

be expressed in a material world?"¹ Wisdom is expressed in the purpose of the whole design, by manifesting infinity "in such a commodious manner"; Goodness in the beauty and utility of the world; Power in its creation and preservation. But the greatest and most wonderful expression of power is the creation of life and consciousness. "What shall I think", asks Traherne, "when the winds blow, the seas roar, the waters flow, the vapours ascend, the clouds fly, the drops of rain fall, the stars march forth in armies, the sun runneth swiftly round about the world? Can all these things move so without a life, or spring of motion? But the wheels in watches move, and so doth the hand that pointeth out the figures: this being a motion of dead things. Therefore hath God created living ones: that by lively motions, and sensible desires, we might be sensible of a Deity. They breathe, they see, they feel, they grow, they flourish, they know, they love. What a world of evidences! We are lost in abysses, we are now absorpt in wonders, and swallowed up of demonstrations."²

Thus Traherne is led to the consideration of conscious life as the highest exemplar of the attributes of God, and the steps by which this conclusion is reached can be traced in the closely knit metaphysical stanzas entitled "The Improvment".³ Here the train of thought is enwound with another that is very characteristic of Traherne, namely the conception that the idea of a thing is better than the thing itself, but for the moment it will be better to keep them separate and to consider only

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 21.

2. Ibid., ii, 22.

3. Bell, p. 61; Dobell, p. 25.

the lines relating to the immediate subject. The world, declares Traherne, cannot be the throne of God unless His attributes can be discerned in it,

"unless his Wisdom shine as Brother
Unto his Power, in the Fabrick, so
That we the one may in the other know.

"His Goodness also must in both appear,
And All the Children of his Lov be found,
In the Creation of the Starry Sphere,
And in the framing of the fruitful Ground,
Before we can that Happiness descry
Which is the Daughter of the DEITY.

"His Wisdom's seen in ord'ring this Great House;
His Power shines in governing the Sun;
His Goodness doth exceeding Marvellous
Appear in ev'ry Thing His Hand hath don:
And all his Works, in their Variety,
United or asunder, pleas the Ey.

"But neither Goodness, Wisdom, Power, nor Lov,
Nor Happiness its self, in things could be,
Did they not all in one fair Order mov,
And jointly by their Service end in Me.
Had He not made an Ey to be the Sphere
Of all these Things, How could their Use appear?"

The world thus is the material manifestation of God's spiritual attributes. Man is the object of God's love, and the world is the material through which it is transmitted. The purpose of the world is to make God known to man and thus enable union to take place. To be like God we must know the thoughts of God, and of these the world is a demonstration.

"His thoughts are hidden:" writes Traherne, "but He hath

revealed unto us the hidden Things of Darkness. By His works and by His attributes we know His Thoughts: and by thinking the same, are Divine and Blessed."¹ To lose oneself in the admiration of the world, Traherne considered "an happy loss", for it was "to find GOD in exchange for oneself".² He urges the unknown friend to whom his meditations are addressed never to despise the world nor to think of it as merely the prelude to a better one: rather "It is a glorious mirror wherein you may see the verity of all religion: enjoy the remainders of Paradise, and talk with the Deity. Apply yourself vigorously to the enjoyment of it, for in it you shall see the face of God, and by enjoying it, be wholly converted to Him."³

At the beginning of the beautiful Second Century Traherne explicitly states that the "Services which the world doth you" are to make the Deity intelligible. "It discovers the being of God unto you, it opens His nature, and shews you His wisdom, goodness and power, it magnifies His love unto you, it serves Angels and men for you, it entertains you with many lovely and glorious objects, it feeds you with joys, and becomes a theme that furnishes you with perpetual praises and thanksgivings, it enflameth you with the love of God, and is the link of your union and communion with Him."⁴ The world, thus, is an instrument of the divine love and man is the sole object of this love. God desired that His goodness should be exerted about an object

1. Centuries of Meditations, 1, 13.

2. Ibid., i, 18.

3. Ibid., ii, 17.

4. Ibid., ii, 1.

and that it should awaken an intelligent response. It follows that man's soul must be endowed with the powers of feeling, understanding and returning divine love. There is in the soul, Traherne believes, a likeness to its Creator which is ever tending to become more perfect until, if its potentialities are completely used, the mystic's goal of complete union is attained. In possibility the soul is already like God; it must strive to become so in act. How is this to be brought about?

It was a principle of Plotinus that to know the Good or the One it is necessary to become like it: Traherne would have said that to become like it one must know it. By knowledge which leads to possession and identification Traherne means knowledge plus love. Sympathetic knowledge, he believed, is the key to all felicity. To understand a thing is to be present with it, to possess it, to be united with it. The godlike possibilities of man depend upon his ability to comprehend the Deity. Perhaps the fundamental attribute of God is His "knowableness".¹

1. On this point Traherne differs very markedly from the scholastic ideas as exemplified in Donne. Donne held that man's knowledge of God can never be anything but partial and incomplete. To know a thing is to understand it as completely as is possible, but man can never hope to reach a point where God's knowledge is not infinitely greater than his. Knowledge of God can only be acquired by man in stages and by successive degrees; but God is one and indivisible. If man should know what God is, he would become the Deity, for Only God can know God. Traherne, more mystical than Donne, believed in the possibility of complete union with God, the attainment of which was the same as the attainment of complete knowledge of God. Sir Thomas Browne agrees with Donne and the Schoolmen when he writes in the Religio Medici, "God hath not made a creature that can comprehend him, 'tis the privilege of his own nature." While denying that man can attain to a complete knowledge of God, Donne declared that a partial, limited

"Man discovereth the glory of God;" writes Traherne, "who being himself Immortal, is the divinest creature. He hath a dominion over all the rest, and God over him. By him, the fountain of all these things is the end of them: for he can return to their Author deserved praises. Senses cannot resemble that which they cannot apprehend; nor express that which they cannot resemble, but in a shady manner. But man is made in the Image of God, and therefore is a mirror and representative of Him. And therefore in himself he may see God, which is his glory and felicity. His thoughts and desires can run out to everlasting. His love can extend to all objects, his understanding is an endless light, and can infinitely be present in all places, and see and examine all beings, survey the reasons, surmount the greatness, exceed the strength, contemplate the beauty, enjoy the benefit, and reign over all it sees and enjoys like the Eternal Godhead. Here is an invisible power, an indivisible omnipresence, a spiritual supremacy, an inward, hidden, unknown Being greater than all, a sublime and sovereign creature meet to live in communion with God, in the

knowledge is possible. God reveals Himself in the created world and in the Holy Scriptures. These are man's two books; and he has three aids to their interpretation:- reason, faith and grace. Miss Ramsay, to whose thesis Les Doctrines Médiévales chez Donne the reader is referred for a full discussion of this point, has expressed it thus: "L'homme, qui a ses deux livres devant lui, qui est guidé par la raison, soutenu par la foi, éclairé par la grâce, ne peut s'excuser de ne pas connaître Dieu dans la mesure où il lui est possible." (p.171) In Traherne's belief, on the contrary, all things were possible to the soul of man: otherwise God's purpose in its creation could not be fulfilled.

fruition of them".¹

Order was Heaven's first law to no one more clearly than to Traherne, but that law would be vain were it not comprehensible. "Heaven and Earth", he writes in Christian Ethicks, "would be dark and obscure, Angels and Men vain and unprofitable, all the Creatures base and unserviceable, Felicity impossible, were there no Knowledge. Nay, God himself without Knowledge and Love could not well exist, for his very Essence is seated in infinite Knowledge."²

There are certain salient thoughts in these passages which are met with again and again in the writings of Traherne: first, the insistence on the ability of man to know God, the belief that sense can apprehend the divine spirit; second, the importance which is assigned to the reason, to an intellectual examination of causes and a reasoned judging of values, as preparative to loving and being united with an object; and finally, the recognition of the ultimately spiritual nature of the kinship between God and man. The first stage of man's journey toward God might be called the sensual one. By means of the senses he becomes acquainted with the world and its creatures - the works of God. Then the reason and intellect must be brought into play. The divine law under which all things operate must be discerned, their causes and purposes understood, and the way in which they exemplify the attributes of divinity be made apparent. How this intellectual appreciation based on the data furnished by the senses leads inevitably, in

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 23.

2. p. 51.

Traherne's thought, to spirituality will appear later. In the meantime we must continue our examination of his beliefs concerning the potential greatness of man's soul.

That greatness is summed up in the mystic statement, Man was made in the Image of God, and the implications in it for Traherne are deep and manifold. It symbolizes all that man was and is and is to be.

"God hath not, or is not such an omnipotence", writes Donne, "as can do all things"¹, and here, at least, Traherne was in agreement with him. "It is no blasphemy to say that God cannot make a God"², he declares, "Since there cannot be two Gods the utmost endeavour of Almighty Power is the Image of God". And then follows a rhapsody on the infinite capacity enjoyed by this, "the most perfect creature". Man is a creature "endued with the most divine and perfect powers, for measure, kind, number, duration, and excellency . . . able to see all eternity with all its objects, and as a mirror to contain all that it seeth: able to love all it contains, and as a Sun to shine upon its loves: . . . able to be wise, holy, glorious, blessed in itself, as God is".

The sixty-seventh meditation of the first Century is a song of praise in thanksgiving for the divine powers of man's soul:

"O my Soul, He hath made thee His Image. Sing, O ye Angels, and laud His name, ye Cherubims: **L**et all the Kingdoms of the Earth be glad, and let all the Host of Heaven rejoice

1. Donne, Essays in Divinity, ed. Jessopp, 1885, pp.198-9.

2. Centuries of Meditations, iii, 61.

for He hath made His Image. . . . God from all Eternity was infinitely blessed, and desired to make one infinitely blessed. He was infinite Love, and being lovely in being so, would prepare for Himself a most lovely object. Having studied from all Eternity, He saw none more lovely than the Image of His Love, His own Similitude, O Dignity unmeasurable!"

If man is to satisfy the infinite Love which brought him into being, then in his powers he, too, must be infinite: "For infinite Love hath expressed and pleased itself in creating an infinite object". And again, elsewhere,¹ Traherne writes of the infiniteness of the soul as a necessity if God's purpose in its creation is to be fulfilled: "Infinite Love cannot be expressed in finite room: but must have infinite places wherein to utter and shew itself. It must therefore fill all Eternity and the Omnipresence of God with joys and treasures for my fruition. And yet it must be expressed in a finite room by making me able in a centre to enjoy them. It must be infinitely expressed in the smallest moment by making me able in every moment to see them all. It is both ways infinite, for my Soul is an infinite sphere in a centre God hath made your spirit a centre in eternity comprehending all".

The soul of man, then, in that it can apprehend the most mysterious of God's attributes is capable of becoming like God and being united with Him. According to Traherne infinity is the first thing naturally known. "That things are finite . . . we learn by our senses. But infinity we know and feel

1. Centuries of Meditation, ii, 80.

by our souls".¹ And infinity is one of the surest of God's attributes - "The truth of it is, it is individually in the soul: for God is there, and more near to us than we are to ourselves. So that we cannot feel our souls, but we must feel Him, in that first of properties, infinite space. And this we know so naturally, that it is the only primo et necessario cognitum in rerum natura . . . For we can unsuppose Heaven and Earth and annihilate the world in our imagination, but the place where they stood will remain behind, and we cannot unsuppose or annihilate that, do what we can".²

In the difficult and important poem, "My Spirit",³ Traherne describes with a wealth of detail and scrupulous accuracy the properties of an ideal soul, as he felt it to have existed in himself in childhood. It is the perfect instrument for the reception and return of God's love, an uncorrupted armory of the divine attributes. We have already seen that to Traherne God was unity, the simplest possible Being, an entity in which power and act were merged in one infinite Deed. The soul also in its original unsullied state has this perfect unity of power wholly exerted:

"My naked simple Life was I:
That Act so strongly shin'd
Upon the Earth, the Sea, the Sky,
It was the Substance of the Mind;
The Sense its self was I.

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 81.

2. Idem.

3. Bell, p.78; Dobell, p.41.

I felt no Dross nor Matter in my Soul,
 No Brims nor Borders, such as in a Bowl
 We see: My Essence was Capacity.
 That felt all things;
 The Thought that springs
 There-from's its Self: It hath no other Wings
 To spread abroad, nor Eys to see,
 No pair of Hands to feel,
 Nor Knees to kneel:
 But being Simple, like the Deity,
 In its own Center is a Sphere,
 Not limited, but evry-where.

"It acts not from a Center to
 Its Object, as remote;
 But present is, where it doth go
 To view the Being it doth note:
 Whatever it doth do,
 It doth not by another Engin mov,
 But by & of its self doth Activ prov:
 Its Essence is transform'd into a tru
 And perfect Act".

This extraordinary poetry, a perfect example of metaphysical poetry uncontaminated by the conceit, affords a contact with so many of Traherne's theories, and at so many diverse points, that its elucidation demands a complete exposition. We have in it the germ of all our author's ideas concerning the nature of God and the soul of man, of the relation between the soul and the senses, and of the reality of thoughts. The Soul here is seen as an Absolute, in its most perfect condition, a simple Act functioning by and in itself without the mediation of the sense organs. We must be careful in dealing with the aspect of Traherne's thought into which these lines will bring us to note the distinction he drew between the soul and the mind. Mind is the instrument of knowledge, soul the instrument of love; and though the second is the higher function, they are

both intimately connected. Knowledge if it is to be of any worth must become understanding, must be accompanied by sympathy and love, and requires the powers of the soul as well as of the mind. Love, though Traherne states that things unknown have a secret influence on the soul,¹ is essentially something that develops out of knowledge. One must first observe the world if one is to prize it, and become acquainted with the laws and attributes of God if one is to love them. The difference between mind and soul is not so much one of kind as of application. The soul is defined in "My Spirit" as a "Mind Exerted, reaching to Infinity". A number of scattered sentences bear witness to the interdependence (not interchangeability) of soul and mind in the thought of Traherne. "The services of things and their excellencies are spiritual: being objects not of the eye, but of the mind".² "In this hath God commended His Love, that by meditation it is enjoyed".³ "An Act of the understanding is the presence of the Soul".⁴ In God, soul and mind are identical, or rather, mind is infinitely exerted so that it becomes soul: "O Glorious Soul;", cries Traherne, "whose comprehensive understanding at once contains all Kingdoms and Ages! O glorious Mind! Whose love extendeth to all creatures!"⁵

The first step which man can take towards God is to seek

1. Centuries of Meditations, 1,2.

2. Ibid., 1,26. The italics in these quotations are mine.

3. Ibid., 1,8.

4. Ibid., ii,76.

5. Ibid., 1,62.

the knowledge of the world, and to make use of that "never-wearied faculty al-sufficient to love, number, take in, prize, and esteem".¹

In what way, we must now ask, can man have knowledge of a thing? and how does such knowledge as the senses and intellect supply lead ultimately to union with God? These questions are answered in considerable detail throughout many scattered sections of the Centuries of Meditations as well as by implication in a number of passages in the poems, and in Christien Ethicks. Collecting these furnishes us with an interesting account of Traherne's curious theories as to the reality of "Thoughts", which in some respects is a remarkable anticipation of Berkleyan Idealism and in others has affinities with Platonism.

Traherne believes that man can become one with God by the exercise of three faculties, and in three stages. The world must first be observed. Then the manner in which it exemplifies the attributes of God must be understood. And finally it must be prized. This implies the use of the senses in observing, of the intellect in comprehending, and of the soul in prizing or loving. "All satisfactions", he writes, "are near at hand . . . They are immediately near to the very gates of our senses. It becometh the bounty of God to prepare them freely: to make them glorious, and their enjoyment easy. For because His love is free, so are His treasures . . . the way to possess them is to esteem them. And the true way of reigning over them, is to break the world all into parts, to examine them asunder . . .

1. Centuries of Meditations, i,72.

We being then Kings over the whole world, when we restore the pieces to their proper places, being perfectly pleased with the whole composure".¹ The perception of the material world by means of the senses is man's first step towards God. "By the very right of your senses", declares Traherne, "you enjoy the World". Prize first the gifts of the senses "and you shall enjoy the Residue: Glory, Dominion, Power, Wisdom, Honor, Angels, Souls, Kingdoms, Ages."² "Without Seeing", he writes elsewhere, "it is impossible to enjoy our happiness, or find out the Way unto it; therefore is Knowledge necessary in all estates; without Loving it is impossible to Delight in its Goodness; the Office of Righteousness is to render to every Thing a due esteem."³

The next stage is mental. The thought of an object, Traherne believed to be better than the object itself. "In order to interior or contemplative happiness", he writes, "it is a good principle: that apprehensions within are better than their objects".⁴ The valuation here attempted is rather a practical than a philosophical one. Traherne is not concerned with the ultimate reality of a thing, but with its reality for a spectator. An apprehension is better than a material object because it is closer to us, and because "Whatever we misapprehend we cannot use; nor well enjoy what we cannot use . . . Nothing therefore can be our happiness, but that alone which we rightly apprehend".⁵ "Above all", he urges, "pray be sensible for the excellency of the Creation, for upon the due sense of its Excellency the life

1. Centuries of Meditations, i, 23.

2. Ibid., i, 21.

3. Christian Ethicks, p. 38.

4. Centuries of Meditations, iv, 15.

5. Idem.

of Felicity wholly dependeth".¹

The apprehension of an object re-creates it in the mind, the understanding of a thing places it within the soul. "An object seen, is in the faculty seeing it, and by that in the Soul of the seer".² "A tree apprehended is a tree in your mind".³ But it is not only concrete objects or material sensations that are given a more valuable existence in the soul: whatsoever is conceivable, however abstract, can exist within the mind. The soul to Traherne was eternal in a peculiarly metaphysical way. Like eternity it could contain all time: "Thus all ages are present in my soul".⁴ It was the receptacle of infinity: "In the Soul of Man ^{there} are innumerable infinities. One soul in the immensity of its intelligence, is greater and more excellent than the whole world . . . It being by its understanding a Temple of Eternity, and God's omnipresence".⁵ And again: "The Eternity and Infinity of God are in me for evermore. I being the living Temple and comprehensor of them".⁶

The full significance of this mental or spiritual world and Traherne's conviction of its superiority to the material are made clear in the ninetieth meditation of the second Century. Here once again we meet the idea that the contemplation of the world is the way to attain union with God, and are furnished with a theological reason for the superiority of thoughts to things. "We could easily show", writes Traherne in this Meditation, "that the idea of Heaven and Earth in the Soul of Man,

1. Christian Ethicks, "Address to the Reader".

2. Centuries of Meditations, i, 100.

3. Ibid., iv, 73.

4. Ibid., i, 100.

5. Ibid., ii, 70.

6. Ibid., i, 100.

is more precious with God than the things themselves and more excellent in nature". And then, with a charming gesture, he adds: "Which because it will surprise you a little, I will".

Heaven and earth, he declares, would be worthless without a spectator to enjoy them, and, as the end is better than the means, the thought of the world, by which it is enjoyed, is better than the world itself. "So is the idea of it in the Soul of Man, better than the World in the esteem of God: it being the end of the World, without which Heaven and Earth would be in vain". To seek to know and understand the world is thus seen to be man's duty to God, and to do so is to submit to the laws of his nature and to fulfil the purposes of creation. "How deformed would you be", the passage continues, "should all the World stand about you and you be idle? Were you able to create other worlds, God had rather you should think on this. For thereby you are united to Him. The sun in your eye is as much to you as the sun in the heavens. For by this the other is enjoyed. It would shine on all rivers, trees, and beasts in vain to you could you not think upon it . . . The world within you is an offering returned . . . Besides all which in its own nature also a Thought of the World, or the World in a Thought, is more excellent than the World, because it is spiritual and nearer unto God. The material world is dead and feeleth nothing, but this spiritual world, though it be invisible, hath all dimensions, and ¹is a divine and living Being, the voluntary Act of an obedient Soul".

It is apparent here that Traherne is not concerned with

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 90.

reality, but with value. Whether an object is real, in the sense that it has an existence apart from an observer, appeared to his practical temperament beside the point. His nearest approach to this problem is when he says, "Dead things are in a room containing them in a vain manner; unless they are objectively in the Soul of a seer"¹ and, "What are the cattle upon a thousand hills but carcasses, without creatures that can rejoice in God, and enjoy them?"² and, as above, "The sun . . . would shine in vain to you could you not think upon it".³

There is, however, one place, where Traherne seems to be on the verge of announcing the Berkleyan hypothesis that the reality and permanence of the world is due to its reality and permanence as a thought in the mind of God. As we have already seen, of course, the world has a reality as the assumed body of God, but it could be annihilated as easily as a thought can enter the mind or be banished from it. If God "would but suspend His power, no doubt but Heaven and Earth would straight be abolished, which He upholds in Himself as easily and as continually as we do the idea of them in our own mind".⁴

Traherne was faced with the practical problem of how to attain to union with the Deity, and for this purpose it was not the absolute reality of things that mattered, but the relative worth. The soul was created by God as the object of divine love; the world was created that it might serve as the means by which that love should be made manifest. It follows that the

1. Centuries of Meditations, 1,100.
2. Ibid., iii, 82.
3. Ibid., ii, 90. The italics are mine.
4. Ibid., ii, 87.

world, though "real" enough since it is the exemplar of God's attributes, is vain and useless without a soul to contemplate it. Its existence and its forms were designed, not to suffice in and for themselves, but to exhibit God to the mind of man. "The pleasure of an enjoyer is the very end why things placed are in any place".¹

But Traherne goes further than this. Just as the world would be a vain thing, shut up and contracted in itself, if there were no one to observe it, so would the Soul be were there nothing for it to contemplate. "Your Soul", he writes, "being naturally very dark, and deformed and empty when extended through infinite but empty space, the world serves you in beautifying and filling it with amiable ideas; for the perfecting of its stature in the eyes of God".² And again: "As the Sun would be unseen, and buried in itself, did it not scatter, and spread abroad its beams, by which alone it becometh glorious: so the Soul without extending, and living in its object, is dead within itself: An idle chaos of blind and confused powers. . ."³

We have seen now that Traherne believed an object thought about to be present in the mind, and an object understood to be present in the soul; that the idea of a thing is better than the thing itself; and that a world to be contemplated and a mind to contemplate it are mutually essential. There is one more conception to be considered: namely, that the soul possesses and is united to whatever it understands. This is one of the fundamental ideas of Traherne. His whole belief in the

1. Centuries of Meditations, i,100.

2. Ibid.,ii,84.

3. Ibid.,ii,56.

possibility of becoming united to God depends upon his belief in the knowableness of God. To understand a thing is to possess it, and to possess it is to be like it. "Objects are so far from diminishing, that they magnify the faculties of the soul beholding them", he declares. "A sand in your conception conformeth your soul, and reduceth it to the size and similitude of a sand. . . the whole hemisphere and the heavens magnify your soul to the wideness of the heavens; all the spaces above the heavens enlarge it wider to their own dimensions".¹ He compares the soul to a mirror, and after an ingenious analogy, concludes with these sentences: "As light varieth upon all objects whither it cometh, and returneth with the form and figure of them: so is the soul transformed into the Being of its object. Like light from the Sun, its first effigies is simple life, the pure resemblance of its primitive fountain, but on the object which it meeteth it is quickly changed, and by understanding becometh all Things".²

It is the "simple life" of the soul, "its first effigies", that is described in the stanzas from "My Spirit" quoted above. The soul, according to Traherne, must act. Absorbed in itself it is worthless. The "Act of Loving" confers upon it a three-fold benefit, "Three Subsistences in itself: . . . A glorious Spirit that abideth within, a glorious Spirit that floweth in the stream: a glorious Spirit that resideth in the object".³ Thus the soul enters into a "sweet communion" with all that it conceives of, and, through the medium of an object, with God who shares His attributes with that object. The nature of the

1. Centuries of Meditations, iv, 73.

2. Ibid., ii, 78. The italics are mine.

3. Ibid., ii, 56.

object is of little consequence - God is as evident in a sand as in a world - it is the eye that observes and the mind that contemplates which count. "I saw moreover that it did not so much concern us what objects were before us, as with what eyes we beheld them, with what affections we esteemed them, and what apprehensions we **had** about them. All men see the same objects, but do not equally understand them."¹ Traherne sketches the stages along which man's various faculties advance him in the direction of complete union. "Intelligence" (the senses) "is the tongue that discerns and tastes" all objects. "Knowledge" (intellect) "is the Light of Heaven, Love" (activity of the soul) "is the Wisdom and Glory of God".² The senses make man aware of the object; he comprehends it in the light of his mind; and it is the function of the soul to prize it.

This last and spiritual stage is the most important of all. We seek to know a thing only that we may love it. Love is the communication by which the Soul can flow out of itself and through an object to God. "There are many glorious excellencies in the material World", says Traherne, "but without Love they are all abortive. We might spend ages in contemplating the nature of the sun, and entertain ourselves many years with the beauty of the stars, and services of the sea; but the Soul of Man is above all these, it comprehendeth all ages in a moment; and unless it perceive something more excellent, is very desolate."³ Traherne's love of the beauties of the material world and his eulogies of the human body are unique in the literature of the

1. Centuries of Meditations, iii, 68. Cp. Blake's "A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees" - "Proverbs of Hell".

2. Ibid., iii, 68.

3. Ibid., ii, 62.

seventeenth century, yet his appreciation of the physical was never responsible for an exaltation of the body over the soul. "Love is a far more glorious Being", he says, "than flesh and bones." The body is "a lantern . . . to the candle of Love that shineth in thy Soul", and it is by Love, the similitude of God's power, that we become like Him: "Thy Love is illimited, Thy Love can extend to all objects. Thy Love can see God and accompany His Love throughout all Eternity. Thy Love is infinitely profitable to thyself and others. . ." It "can . . . take into itself all worlds, and all Eternities above all worlds and all the joys of God before and after".¹ To love, indeed, is to attain to union with God by submitting to the divine laws.

"What laws", asks Traherne, "can thy soul desire, than those that guide thee in the most amiable paths to the highest end?" And these are the rules of love. "By love alone is God enjoyed, . . . by love alone approached or admired. His Nature requires Love, thy nature requires Love. The law of Nature commands thee to Love Him: the Law of His nature, and the Law of thine".²

It is a part of this submission to see everything as good, to see it as God saw it when He rested from the labours of creation, and to appreciate all things for their divine excellence. We are the "sons of God in capacity" because we possess a "power to see Eternity, to survey His treasures, to love His children, to know and to love as He doth, to become righteous and holy as He is; . . ." We become "the Sons of God in act, when we are righteous, as He is righteous, and Holy as He is holy. When we prize all the things in Heaven and Earth, as He

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii,51.

2. Ibid., i,71.

prizeth Him, and make a conscience of doing it as He doth after His similitude . . . " Then it is as though we had been called¹ "out of Darkness, into His marvellous Light".

To become in act what we are in capacity is Traherne's most concise definition of union. God is a unity of eternal power infinitely exerted, a single Act uncontaminated by any unused energy, and to achieve in our own souls a like harmony of power and act is to be gathered into the oneness of God. This power, energy, act, is Love. It is a constant theme of Traherne's meditations. In sections sixty-six and sixty-seven of the Fourth Century he writes of it as the common attribute of God and man in the state of union. "Since Nature never created anything in vain", he says, "and Love of all other is the most glorious, there is not any relic or parcel of that that shall be unused. It is not like gold made to be buried and concealed in darkness, but like the sun to communicate itself wholly in its beams unto all." It is more excellent and more communicative. It is hid in a centre and nowhere at all, if we respect its body. But if you regard its soul, it is an interminable sphere, which as some say of the sun, is infinites infinita, in the extension of its beams, being equally vigorous in all places, equally near to all objects, equally acceptable to all persons, and equally abundant in all its overflowings . . . its greatness is spiritual, like the Deity's. It filleth the world, and exceeds what it filleth . . . it can see into further spaces, things present and things to come; height and depth being open before it, and all things in Heaven, Eternity, and Time, equally

1. Centuries of Meditations, i,99.

near". This Love is "the darling of God . . . it is His Image, and the Love of God . . ." It can be bestowed on Man. "This Love is your true self when you are in act what you are in power: the great Daemon of the world, the End of all things". In another place Traherne enjoins those who would be "angelical and celestial creatures" to take a divine and Kingly delight in the laws and works of God, for in the Kingdom of Heaven (or the state of union) every one being "disentangled from particular relations and private riches"¹ solaces himself in these alone.

A beautiful description of the perfect love which marks the state of union is given in iv,69. It is a love which "representeth every person in the light of Eternity, and loveth him with the love of all worlds, with a love conformable to God's, guided to the same ends, and founded upon the same causes. Which however lofty and divine it is, is ready to humble itself into the dust to serve the person beloved".

In passages such as this, which are scattered profusely through Traherne's prose, we see the delicate and gentle character of the man transmuting his ideal and abstract philosophy into a practical religion. It is well to dwell upon the reasonable and logical element which is noticeable in Traherne's thought, and to admire the philosophical insight that enables him to share in the vision of a Parmenides or a Plato, and to anticipate a Berkeley or a Hegel, but it is not, after all, as a philosopher in the severe and correct usage of the word that Traherne is entitled to most respect. He is a philosopher in the vulgar and popular sense of the word, which is perhaps the better

1. Centuries of Meditations, iii,72.

sense, by which it means "one who has found out how to live well". Traherne was essentially practical.¹ The object of his search was Felicity. That happiness which he desired came to him in the simplest and best of ways. He had but to submit to the dictates of his own heart, to accept those good things which God had freely given to him and to all men, but which most overlook because they are common, and to prize these was the way to God.

In what has so far been said there has been little to suggest that Traherne was a Christian of the Established Church. His temper, indeed, is more philosophical than that of most religious writers, and it has made him a lover of the abstract, of things "disentangled from particular relations".² His God can hardly be called a "personal" God, and yet, for Christ, Traherne has a deep and passionate love that fills the meditations in the First Century devoted to the Passion with rich poetry. "As therefore we see Thy flesh with our fleshly eyes, and handle Thy wounds with our bodily senses, let us see Thy understanding with our understandings, and read Thy love with our own".³ "O

1. Cf. Centuries of Meditations, 1,1,6.

2. The publisher of Christian Ethicks seems to have been conscious that Traherne's divinity was not confined to the doctrines of the Church; and in a prefatory address answers the possible objector thus: "Perhaps you will meet some new notions . . . but . . . there is not the least tittle pertaining to the Catholic Faith contradicted or altered in his Papers. For he firmly retains all that was established in the Ancient Councils, nay, and sees cause to do so, even in the highest and most transcendent mysteries; only he enriches all by farther opening the grandeur and glory of Religion with the interiour depths and Beauties of Faith".

Traherne's consciousness of being in conformity with the continuous Anglo-Catholic Church that deferred to the authority of the Fathers is of great significance.

3. Centuries of Meditations, 1,88.

Jesus, Thou King of Saints", he cries, ". . . let me so long eye Thee, till I be turned into Thee, and look upon me till Thou art formed in me, that I may be a mirror of Thy brightness, an habitation of Thy Love, and a temple of Thy glory".¹

Traherne's mysticism, indeed, though it was founded in the intuitions of childhood and supported by profane philosophy and natural science, was essentially a Christian mysticism. The spirit by which it strove to attain the desired union with God was a Christian spirit of humility and love - love based on understanding, and humility resulting from a conscious attempt to place the self in harmony with the world, with its fellow men and with the laws of God. To Traherne, the incarnation of a spiritual Deity in the person of Christ was the sweetest and most sublime of mysteries. It was a token of God's love, a sign that He wished communication with man, and a positive demonstration of the possibility of the union of God and man. Further, it was a glorification of the flesh. If God could will to enter into bones and Blood, He glorified them and the senses for ever. The happiness that Traherne intuitively experiences in contemplating the structure and uses of his body was sanctified and made spiritual by this act of the Deity. "This Body is not the cloud", he writes, thinking of the incarnate and crucified Christ, "but a pillar assumed to manifest His love unto us".² And so, too, the human body, though never to be exalted at the expense of

1. Centuries of Meditations, i, 86, 87. The similarity of thought and temper between these sentences and Crashaw's poems on the Passion is a good instance of the sympathy that all the Anglican poets occasionally show for the Catholic spirit.

2. Ibid., i, 90.

mind or spirit, was no obscure mist, but a visible, tangible manifestation of God's love.

All the bodily senses were once deemed worthy of God, and thus are a means of apprehending His goodness and bounty.

"My Palat is a Touch-stone fit
 To taste how Good Thou art;
 My other Members second it,
 Thy Praises to impart:
 There's not an Ey that's fram'd by Thee
 But is thy Life & Lov to see:
 Nor is there, Lord, upon mine Head, an Ear,
 But that the Musick of Thy Works should hear:
 Each Toe, each Finger, by Thy pow'ful Skill
 Created, should distill
 Ambrosia; more than Nectar flow
 From evry Joint I ow,
 B'ing well-employ'd; for they Thy Holy Will
 Are activ Instruments made to fulfill." -

1 2

Thus he writes in "The Estate", and again, in "The Person":

"The Naked Things
 Are most sublime, & brightest shew,
 When they alone are seen:
 Mens Hands than Angels Wings
 Are truer Wealth, tho here below;
 For those but seem.
 Their Worth they then do best reveal
 When we all Metaphors remov;
 For, Metaphors conceal,
 And only Vapors prov.
 They best are blazon'd when we see
 Th'Anatomy,
 Survey the Skin, cut up the Flesh, the Veins
 Unfold; the glory there remains:
 The Muscles, Fibres, Arteries, & Bones,
 Are better far than Artificial Stones."

Better poetry than either of these pieces is the unrhymed metrical chant from A Serious and Patheticall Contemplation of the Mercies of God:

1. Bell, p.97; Dobell, p.69.
2. Bell, p.95; Dobell, p.60.

"O Lord,
 Thou hast given me a body,
 Wherein the glory of Thy power shineth,
 Wonderfully composed above the beasts,
 Within distinguished into useful parts,
 Beautified without with many ornaments.
 Limbs rarely poised,
 And made for Heaven:
 Arteries fill'd
 With celestial spirits:
 Veins wherein blood floweth,
 Refreshing all my flesh,
 Like rivers:
 Sinews fraught with the mystery,
 Of wonderful strength,
 Stability,
 Feeling.
 O blessed be Thy glorious name!
 That Thou hast made it
 A Treasury of Wonders,
 Fit for its several Ages;
 For Dissections,
 For Sculptures in Brass,
 For Draughts in Anatomy,
 For the Contemplation of the Sages."

It was to such a body as this that God was willing to consign His Son, and it was Traherne's greatest happiness to believe that "God never shewed Himself more a God than when He appeared man".¹

The only other Christian mystery about which Traherne writes at any length is the one already referred to - the Passion. This mystery is intimately bound up with, and is the final outcome of the Incarnation. This consummation of the divine love, he held, was the great climax of the age-long story of God and man. It was the precious meeting place of flesh and spirit, death and life, man and God. "Our Saviour's cross is the throne of delights. That Centre of Eternity, that Tree of Life in the midst of the Paradise of God!"² Contemplating it, we are "entertained with the wonder

1. Centuries of Meditations, i, 90.

2. Ibid., i, 55.

of all ages", and "enter into the heart of the universe". All faculties must be employed in that contemplation: "Our eyes must be towards it, our hearts set upon it, our affections drawn, and our thoughts and minds united to it".¹

The Cross, to Traherne, was the sign of God's special favour. By it, man was given at once a demonstration of His love and a means of becoming united with Him. "The Cross of Christ is the Jacob's Ladder by which we ascend into the highest heavens".² Traherne's prose kindles to this mystical theme, and the rapturous ardour of the Meditations he devoted to it is unmatched even in an age that produced the sermons of Donne and Jeremy Taylor and the stately musings of Sir Thomas Browne. "The Cross is the abyss of wonders, the centre of desires . . . It is the root of happiness, and the gate of Heaven. Of all the things in Heaven and Earth it is the most peculiar. It is the most exalted of all objects. It is an Ensign lifted up for all nations . . . It is the Root of Comforts and the Fountain of Joys. It is the only supreme and sovereign spectacle in all Worlds. It is a Well of Life beneath in which we may see the face of Heaven above . . . That Cross is a tree set on fire with ~~an~~ invisible flame, that illuminateth all the world. The flame is Love: the Love is His bosom who died on it. In the light of which we see how to possess all the things in Heaven and Earth after His similitude. For He that suffered on it was the Son of God as you are: tho' He seemed only a mortal man. He had acquaintances and relations as you have, but he was a lover of Men and Angels. Was he not the Son of God; and Heir

1. Centuries of Meditations, i, 56.

2. Ibid., i, 60.

of the whole world? To this poor, bleeding, naked Man did all the corn and wine, and oil, and gold and silver in the world minister in an invisible manner, even as He was exposed lying and dying upon the Cross".¹

* * * * *

To sum up in conclusion: The originality of Traherne's thought must be said to lie in its all-inclusiveness and in its unity. In the deepest recesses of his mind he felt the existence of infinity and eternity and the need of a God. Three sources, the Bible, the sciences of natural philosophy and logic, and the use of his own senses and faculties in the observation of the world, were open to him to corroborate the testimony of intuition; and from them all he was able to synthesize a coherent and unified world-view. God was the supreme First Cause, and union with Him the natural object of man's endeavour. But whereas Donne and Herbert and Vaughan considered this world and the body as mean and somewhat inconvenient, though necessary, preludes to Heaven and a celestial spirit, Traherne accepted everything that God had created - including dust and worms and ligaments - as treasures of infinite joy, the mirror of God's attributes and the key to His innermost presence. All faculties, the sensual, the mental and the spiritual were necessary in attaining to God. An object must be perceived; then understood, then loved: and in that threefold act man becomes with respect to that object like God. To transform our powers of comprehending eternity, infinity, and divine love into this perfect act is "to grow

1. Centuries of Meditations, i, 58, 59, 60.

up into Him till we are filled with the fullness of His Godhead . . . we being of the same mind with Him who is an infinite eternal mind".¹ And the goal of mystic and philosopher alike is achieved.

Traherne's contribution to the imaginative literature of the Church of England is worthy of a place beside those of her greatest sons, and it is significant that in its clear and beautiful humanism, in its insistence upon the claims of this world, and in its recognition in a deeply religious way of the majesty and power of reason it breathes the spirit of the Renaissance and of its embodiment in the essentially Anglican writings of Hooker. Herbert is typical of the feeling that inspires the very services and ceremonies of the Church of England, Vaughan of its tender and delicate mysticism, Donne of the sombre majesty and intellectual power which at least in the seventeenth century it never lacked, but it is Traherne, the latest of all these, who in spite of his unique mystic intensity affords the closest link with the noble conception of a Church put forward by the author of The Ecclesiastical Polity.

The End.

1. Centuries of Meditations, ii, 84.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III

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Herbert's poetry is his spiritual autobiography. It is full of references to the events which affected or were affected by his religious life - his illnesses, the deaths of friends and patrons, his ordination. Some poems obviously are written after his entry into the priesthood; some are as certainly looking forward to such a step as the climax of early conflicts. Some are full of the vitality of early manhood; others breathe the resignation of middle age. By internal evidence many of them can be assigned pretty certainly to a fairly definite period of Herbert's life.

But internal evidence is not the only guide. There are three sources of the accepted text of *The Temple*. (1) The edition published by Ferrar in 1633, which will be referred to as A. (2) A manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, which will be referred to as B. (3) A manuscript discovered by Dr Grosart in the Williams Library, Gordon Square, London, which will be referred to as W. Manuscript B is in close accord with the text of the 1633 edition, and is the copy that was licensed for the press. Manuscript W contains only 72 of the 169 poems contained in B, and almost every one of its poems departs in its text from that of the printed version. It contains 6 English poems and a series of Latin poems not found in B.

G.H. Palmer argues convincingly that W is an early draft of poems written shortly before Herbert became a priest, and represents all the poems written before that date which he

wished to preserve. Palmer's reasons for this conclusion may be briefly enumerated. W contains a small number of poems. Poetically they are inferior to the versions which appear in A and B, and therefore are probably early drafts. The poems from W appear near the beginning of A and B, except a small number whose subject-matter explains their position at the end. Those poems not in W which come near the beginning of A and B owe their position to their connection with the thought of neighbouring poems. No poem in W hints that Herbert is a priest; many state he is not. This places the date of the manuscript as before 1630: but it could not have been prepared long before this date. The inclusion of "Affliction" - "When first thou didst entice to thee my heart" - fixes it as after the disappointment of Herbert's hopes of worldly advancement, while that of "The Pearl" places it as after Herbert's final decision to become a priest. Professor Palmer concludes that 1629 is the most probable date of W, and conjectures that it found its way to Little Gidding, with which its history connects it, as a result of the mutual interest Herbert and Ferrar found after 1626 in the re-building of Leighton Church.

Though there are doubtless some errors in detail, Palmer's general thesis seems the most plausible one that can be put forward to explain the facts as we have them, and where definite internal evidence was lacking I have made the inclusion in, or the absence from, W the test by which the poems discussed in the text are assigned to a period before or after Herbert's ordination ^{to the priesthood}. I have

used the poem "The Priesthood", absent from W, to illustrate the humility and awe which contributed to Herbert's final hesitation to enter the priesthood, but whether it was written just before, or soon after, he became a priest is of no consequence. That it represents Herbert's state of mind before that event is perfectly clear from the first stanza of the poem. In the case of the Bemerton poems, their absence from W is only one of the factors assigning them to a late date. References to the approach of the "harbingers" of age, a more intense and morbid delineation of his sickness, an absence of conceits or of the influence of Donne: all place them as the production of Herbert's last years.

Though his main contention is a sound one, Palmer sometimes errs in the dating of a poem. Thus, he attributes the long and important "Affliction" to 1628, but which for reasons given in the text I am confident was written during Herbert's retirement "to a friend in Kent" soon after the death of King James in 1625. If a poem so completely and sincerely autobiographical, and one which was so closely connected with matters upon which Herbert had sometimes been in disagreement with his mother, had been written after 1627 there would surely have been some mention of her death. The phrase "for my friends die" is quite as appropriate to 1625 or 6 as to 1628. By the end of 1625, the Duke of Lenox, the Marquis of Hamilton, and the King were all dead. The present tense of the verb would indicate that Herbert was writing at no long interval after the deaths of some of his

friends. It seems likely that the death of the king might have been distinguished by special mention if the poem were written after that event - but this is merely conjectural. In any case, however, 1625 or early in 1626 seems a much more likely date than 1628.

Another poem, "The Thanksgiving", which Palmer describes as "An early poem both in style and matter, looking to the future"¹, contains more clues to its date than most of Herbert's poems. Its presence in W places it before 1630. The lines,

"I will not marry; or, if she be mine,
She and her children shall be thine".

date it as before his marriage in 1629. Walton considers that Herbert's resolution to marry - which he had come to before his meeting with Jane Danvers - was bound up with his final decision to become a priest, for he writes that Herbert, while recovering from a consumption at the Earl of Danby's house at Dauntsey, in Wiltshire, "declared his resolution both to marry and to enter into the sacred orders of priesthood". "The Thanksgiving" was obviously written before the first of these ideas had ever been entertained, and while we know that the second had always been contemplated, there is no hint here that it is considered as anything but the most remote of possibilities.

1. ii, 286. Herbert's determination to devote his poetry to God, Palmer adds, is already completely formed, and he cites ll. 39-47. These lines, however, express a resolve similar to that expressed in the early sonnets sent to Mrs. Herbert. In a note on ll. 25-6 Palmer says, "Since this poem is included in W, it must have been written before Herbert took orders. Its style is Herbert's earliest, when he was under the strong influence of Donne."

The theme of the poem is the Passion of Christ, and the necessity which it places upon the Christian of making some adequate and thankful return. What can he himself offer? He suggests everything. He would gladly weep blood were that of any use.

"If thou dost give me wealth; I will restore
All back unto thee by the poore."

Should his bosome friend blaspheme, he will tear the blasphemer's name from his heart. He will quarrel with the world. He will dedicate his verse to God. In three years, if he is spared,

"I'll build a spittle, or mend common wayes,
But mend mine own without delayes."

He will do everything, in short, but enter the priesthood: of that there is no mention. Why? Because, I think, the poem was written too early for that to be anything but the most distant possibility. Taking all things into consideration, this poem must be placed with the two sonnets sent from Cambridge to his mother as a New Year's gift, March, 1610, and is thus among the earliest of Herbert's English poems. The style of the verses, the conceits, the marked influence of Donne - in these respects it is identical with the sonnets. The poem has the same air of youthful urgency that we find in the Cambridge sonnets. It has the same directness. There is the same rapid and impassioned list of rhetorical questions, and the same announcement of the abandonment of all secular subjects for his verse.

From the fact that there is no reference whatever to

any spiritual conflict having as its solution the entry into the priesthood, it seems unlikely that the poem was written after the death of the king and the disappointment of Herbert's worldly hopes. But there is no sign of any secular ambition either:

"The world and I will quarrell; and the yeare
Shall not perceive, that I am here."

This would seem to have been written before Herbert sought to become the university Orator. But the evidence of style is perhaps the strongest link with the earlier poetry, though there is still another biographical clue. Consider the lines,

"That three yeares hence, if I survive,
I'll build a spittle, or mend common wayes".

Herbert here is making a promise that he hopes to be able to fulfil after completing his preliminary work at the university. He went up to Trinity in 1609, and three years later graduated with his Bachelor's degree. Two years after this he was made a fellow and began seriously the study of divinity. Both the mention of three years and the absence of any conception of the ministry as an immediate goal connect "The Thanksgiving" with Herbert's first year at Cambridge. Further, this poem and the early Cambridge sonnets have a resemblance of style that is closer than can be found in any other two poems of Herbert's.

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